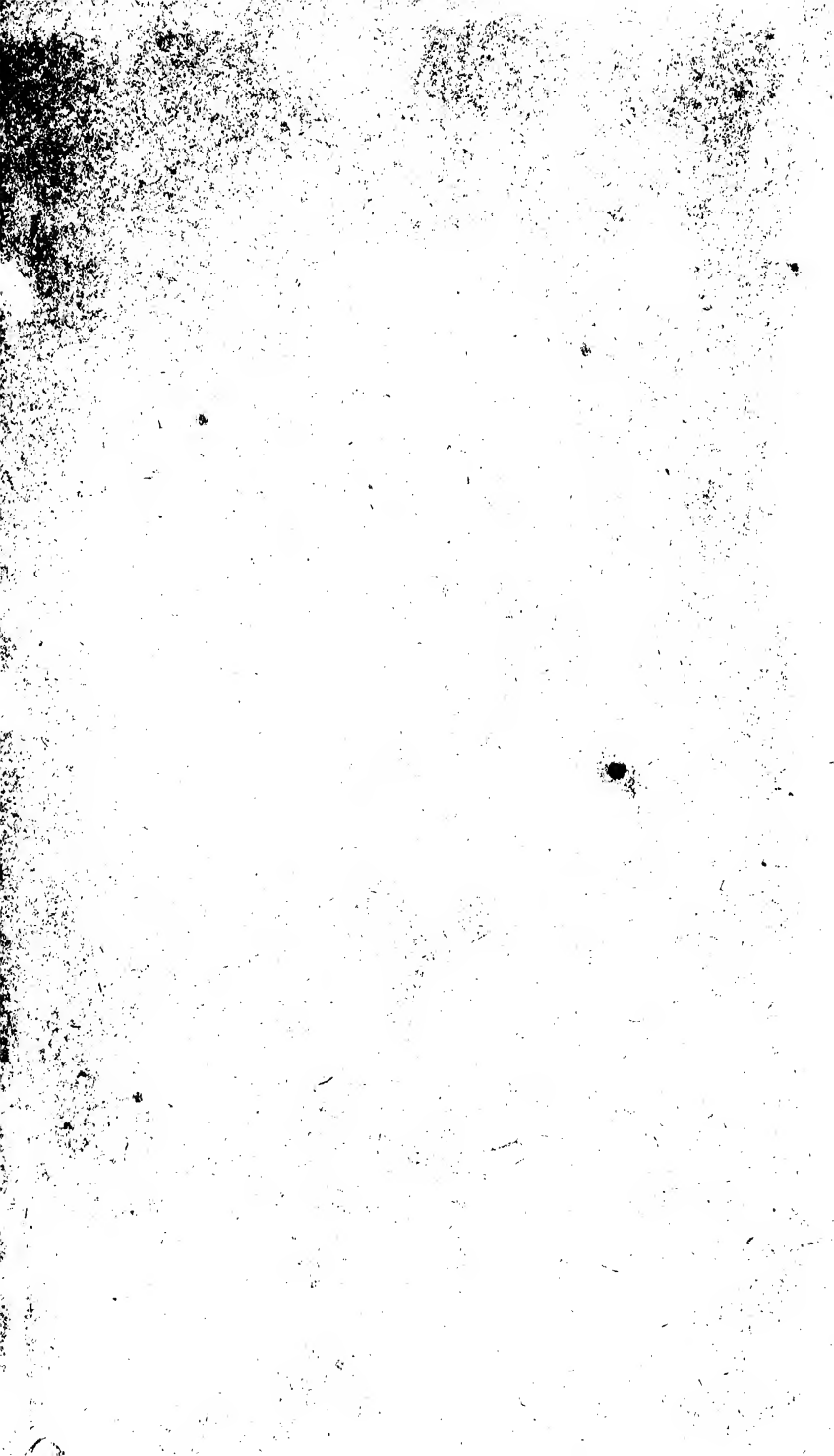






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THE
AFGHAN WAR.

A SPEECH

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS,

BY THE

RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT CRANBROOK,

(Secretary of State for India),

ON

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9TH, 1878.

CORRECTED ON AUTHORITY.

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DECEMBER, 1878.



S P E E C H

OF THE

RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT CRANBROOK,

(Secretary of State for India.)

VISCOUNT CRANBROOK.—My lords, I very much regret that it should have fallen to my lot, as Minister for India, to be the person whose duty it is to lay before the House of Lords the question of the war in that part of the world. I occupied for some years the office of Minister for War, but I am happy to say that while filling that office it was my good fortune to be a Minister of Peace, though during the whole of that time the department with which I was connected was occupied in making preparations, and I believe that the best way of preparing for war is to put a bold face on the matter—to say what you mean, and do what you have said. (Hear, hear.) My lords, the motion I have to make is in these terms:—“That, Her Majesty having directed a military expedition of her forces charged upon Indian revenues to be dispatched against the Ameer of Afghanistan, this House consents that the revenues of India shall be applied to defray the expenses of the military operations which may be carried on beyond the external frontiers of Her Majesty’s Indian possessions.” My lords, in 1858 the Act was passed for the Government of India, and with the view of putting a check to a certain extent on the powers of the Indian Government, clauses were introduced to which I shall refer and which are not in harmony with the supposed duty of the Government suggested by the noble earl (Earl Grey) who moved the amendment to the Address. The noble earl thought that the Cabinet should be entirely precluded from going to war until a preliminary notification of its intention to do so had been given to Parliament. I am not now going to argue whether or not in other kinds of war there is or should be such a principle; but I do say that by the Act of 1858 Parliament sanctioned the principle that Her Majesty’s Government may make war in India

without any previous notification. That Act provides that the Government may do so if within three months after they have done so should Parliament be sitting, or in three months after the assembling of Parliament should Parliament not be sitting at the time, the Government announces the fact to both Houses. That is provided by one clause, and another clause provides for the obtaining of that consent of Parliament in respect of the revenues of India which my motion asks this House to accede to. Now, my lords, in reading a statute the proper rule to be observed is to read it as a whole; and, I think, that, taking the former clause, under which if Parliament should not be sitting the Government is not bound to acquaint it with the declaration of war for three months after it meets—and the Government might wait any number of months without advising the Queen to call it together—I think, taking that clause with clause 55, it is clearly contemplated that the application for funds is intended to be made subsequently to the declaration of war. The fact is, then, as stated the other night by my noble friend, we are taking Parliament into our confidence with greater rapidity than is required by the Act of Parliament. (Hear, hear.) We called Parliament together as soon as there was a certainty of the war. Up to the 20th of November there was not that certainty; but when the circumstances occurred with which your lordships are familiar, and there was no longer any uncertainty that our frontier must be passed, we resolved to call Parliament together. You cannot, however, in such a case wait and stay your hand until you have had the opportunity of consulting with Parliament. (Hear, hear.) At such a time a delay of days, or even of hours, may be of material consequence. And I think I may now say that the acting with such promptitude as the Government did tended materially to the success of the operations which have already been executed. (Cheers.) As to the question of the use of the Indian revenue, I do not know that much need be said. If the House consents to the revenues of India being applied to defray the expense of these operations, it will not follow from such consent that Parliament would be prevented from contributing to their cost; but I am bound to say, after looking very carefully into the financial condition of India, I believe it

will not be necessary, at least in the initial steps, to call on the revenues of England. I am in possession of facts, which, I think, would convince your lordships that, without unduly pressing on the revenues of India, there will be no necessity to call on the English revenue—at least, during the present financial year. (Hear, hear.) It was announced by my honourable friend, in another place, that, including the £1,500,000 famine fund raised by new taxes, the surplus of Indian revenue was estimated to amount to £2,156,000. The revenue has exceeded the estimate. In opium the increase is £1,245,000. But some of the charges, including the loss by exchange have been increased, so that the estimated surplus has been reduced to £1,800,000. Looking into the different calculations made on the subject, the supposition of the Indian Government is that during the present financial year the cost of the operations will not exceed £1,100,000, or £1,200,000. Take it at £1,250,000 and there would remain then a substantial surplus of about £550,000, after the payment of the charges for the expedition. (Hear, hear.) If it should be necessary in answer to any remarks on the subject, I will go into this question again; but for the present I shall pass from it, as the amendment of the noble viscount opposite (Viscount Halifax) is not addressed to this particular branch, but to the general question. I shall pass, then, at once to political matters. For at least half a century great interest has been felt in Afghanistan by those who have devoted any attention to Indian affairs. Its relations towards Great Britain have always throughout that period been regarded as very important to the Imperial interests of England. It has been considered that without proper relations between British India and Afghanistan our frontier could not be regarded as secure. This has not been a party question. The opinion to which I have just referred has not been that of any one Government or another, but an opinion expressed by all statesmen of every party. (Hear, hear.) Everyone must admit that statesmen of all parties have agreed in the necessity of a strong Afghanistan on friendly terms with this country; and so long as we could trust the rulers of Afghanistan, and so long as they were true to us, we were content. We desired nothing else and nothing more. (Hear, hear.) I do

not think I need occupy the time of your lordships by going back to the time of Dost Mahomed, but I may make one remark in reference to occurrences in Afghanistan which at the time of those occurrences painfully affected the imagination of this country, and of which unpleasant memories still remain. I say imagination, my lords, because the sufferings sustained by our troops in the war to which I am referring did not happen because the country was too weak to maintain her rights and put down all opposition by the sword, but because we were unfortunate. We were unfortunate in our political negotiators; we were unfortunate in our generals. (Hear, hear.) The commonest precautions were neglected, and from these causes, and not from any want of valour in the field, resulted those disasters which we all regret. (Hear, hear.) But, my lords, those occurrences did not permanently affect our relations with Dost Mahomed. Having been our prisoner and knowing our resources he was well affected towards us, and when he returned he was not influenced by any hostile feelings towards England; but circumstances obliged him to maintain silence and reserve. He had to consider not only himself but his country, and he felt obliged to maintain that attitude until he saw that his people forgot what they had suffered in the war. He then became a firm ally of the British Government. He felt our power, our position, and our resources, and in 1855 he entered into that treaty which is so well known to your lordships. As showing how implicit was his trust in the British Government, it is remarkable that while he by that treaty bound himself to regard our friends as his friends and his enemies as our enemies, there is no reciprocal declaration from us. And here, with respect to the papers in which this treaty has been printed, I wish, in answer to charges which have been made as to these papers, to say that no such papers were promised or asked for last Session. In reply to a question put in the other House to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, the papers relating to Central Asia were promised, but those Indian papers never were promised. Neither were they ever asked for, but as soon as we saw that the complications between this country and Afghanistan were likely to become serious we saw that those papers would be important, and I gave

directions that they should be prepared with all possible speed. I am satisfied that effect was given to these directions. (Hear, hear.) I will add that though there remain unprinted some papers which some persons may wish to see, nothing whatever has been kept back, and I believe there are in the papers on your lordships' table everything necessary not only for explaining the question, but for enabling anybody concerned to vindicate his own position, should he think it necessary to do so. (Hear, hear.) The next treaty to which it is necessary to allude is that of 1857, and in connexion with it there again arises proof that when we are at war with any of our Eastern neighbours the importance of Afghanistan comes into peculiar prominence. We were at war with Persia when that treaty was made. When Dost Mahomed died in 1863 and Shere Ali as his successor ascended the throne, he notified his accession to the Viceroy of that day. But during six months Shere Ali waited in vain for an acknowledgment of that announcement. I am not blaming anyone for that. In consequence of the illness of Lord Elgin there may have been delay. In consequence of the death of Lord Elgin there may have been still further delay; but, as a matter of fact, six months elapsed after Shere Ali announced his accession before he received an answer. I think we must admit that that occurrence was at least unfortunate. (Hear, hear.) It must have rankled in the mind of a man of his peculiar temperament, and the feeling to which it gave rise was perhaps intensified by events which followed. Struggles and complications followed. There were wars between Shere Ali and members of his family at the time when the noble lord opposite (Lord Lawrence) was at the head of British affairs in India. He pursued a policy of recognizing *de facto* Governments of Afghanistan, and not only of Afghanistan, but of parts of Afghanistan. The noble lord, though one of those who maintained the necessity, in the Imperial interests, of a strong Afghanistan, signalized his Viceroyalty by recognizing *de facto* Governments of portions of that country. When Shere Ali, though partially unsuccessful, retained a pre-eminence at Herat, the noble lord recognized him as the *de facto* ruler of Herat, while he at the same time recognized as *de facto* ruler of Cabul and Candahar Ameer Mahomed Afzul Khan, his brother, to whom he wrote

a letter congratulating him on his successes over Shere Ali. It was not until the latter was again on the throne of Cabul and seemed to be permanently seated there that the noble lord wrote to him offering that assistance which would have been so useful to him when he was struggling for that throne. (Hear, hear.) Shere Ali felt that. He accepted the acknowledgment of the Viceroy. Why? Because the first thing which he or any person who aspired to the rule of Afghanistan wished to obtain was the acknowledgment and recognition of the British Government. That recognition gave the title of the ruler of Afghanistan a validity which he could not otherwise obtain for it. That was the position of the Ameer just before the noble lord left India, and Shere Ali, being prudent in his generation, though he felt sore and was much vexed at what had been done in respect of his competitors, proposed to meet the noble lord and offered to make a treaty with him. But the noble lord refused to enter into any treaty engagement with him. He would give him "present assistance," but no definite promises. Shere Ali was engaged in trying to establish his dynasty and wished that our Government should recognize the successor of his choice. The noble lord conveyed to him that so long as he was content to maintain friendly relations with Her Majesty's Government so long might he rely on our assistance and friendship. No doubt that was valuable, but it was not what the Ameer wanted. Well, the noble lord was succeeded by my noble friend Lord Mayo; but let me for a moment turn to something which occurred, and which has reference to that policy which has been before alluded to. I believe there was a very general impression at the time to which I have now come that it would be very undesirable to enter into any treaty binding ourselves in any way to the Ameer in the future. That was a policy supported by many who held very different views on other public questions, and was not confined to one party. But in 1867 there was a paper written by Sir Henry Rawlinson treating of Russian advances in Central Asia, and which everyone will admit to be a paper of great ability. In that paper the writer called attention to the measures which in his judgment were necessary for maintaining for England a dominant position

in Afghanistan. The proposition that England should have such a position has, I think, remained unchallenged, although it has been made the subject of much writing, and the paper to which I allude has been reviewed in a great many other papers. One says, "We must use diplomatic measures;" another says, "We must use conciliatory measures;" but all look forward to a state of things when we must forbid any further advance, if it should be attempted, and, to use the words of the noble Lord near me, the Viceroy of that time, even he thought that, if a certain line is passed, Russia must be prepared for war with us in all parts of the world. (Cheers.) But when Lord Mayo arrived in India questions on foreign affairs were not in the ascendant. The question uppermost in the mind of the Ameer was that of his dynasty. This appears from despatches sent home by Lord Mayo and from a despatch from the Duke of Argyll, in which fault was found with what Lord Mayo had said and written. But that was not the case outside the conference which took place between the Ameer and Lord Mayo. You find by the papers that outside the conference conversations passed on various subjects, and at that time it appeared that the Ameer would have raised no difficulty to the residence of British officers in certain parts of Afghanistan, excluding Cabul. These things are, I repeat, to be gathered from what took place outside the conference, and records appear among the papers on the table. In the interviews with Lord Mayo personally, the Ameer was concerned about his dynasty. It was said that a course of action had been laid down. I look in vain for any instructions in despatches to Lord Mayo on those points. The noble lord (Lord Lawrence), who had taken his seat in this House, spoke on the 19th of April, 1869. He and the Duke of Argyll addressed the House on that occasion, and I find no other indication of their opinions; and the noble duke said:—

"I think it would be an extremely dangerous thing to govern by telegraph, or even to reply in Parliament upon telegraphs but I have every reason to believe that Lord Mayo has consistently pursued the same policy of non-intervention and of the avoidance of entangling engagements which was pursued by Lord Lawrence. So far as my own instructions to Lord Mayo are concerned, they certainly have been to avoid all entangling engage-

ments for the future with Afghanistan, and to maintain the British Government and the Government of India perfectly free in regard to that and other conterminous States."

Then Lord Lawrence, in reference to the Ameer's proposal to enter into a treaty as his father had done and to maintain friendly relations, said:—

"I thereupon wrote to the Ameer and told him that I was willing to help him further in a moderate way; that I could not bind myself by any treaty which would involve obligations on the part of Her Majesty's Government to assist him."

Those distinct statements show that the policy of the noble duke and the noble lord was one of great caution and isolation, of independence of Afghanistan in respect of any entangling engagements. Lord Mayo had instructions not to enter into any entangling engagements for the future; but Lord Mayo's opinions would have the greatest weight, and Lord Mayo did attempt to have everything settled by diplomatic negotiation. He wrote in the most friendly manner to the Ameer, and it is a singular thing that Shere Ali appeared to regard the simple promise of Lord Mayo as stronger than the more solemn engagements of the Government given to him at another time. Evidently the Ameer believed in Lord Mayo's sincerity, and, no doubt, a man like my noble friend was such a one as would have impressed the chivalrous though somewhat erratic mind of Shere Ali. His feelings towards Yakoob Khan are clear and just. Lord Mayo wrote him a letter asking him to be reconciled to his son, and that letter was received without displeasure, a circumstance which, I think, was owing to regard for the writer and the manner in which it was worded. (Hear, hear.) With the death of Lord Mayo a great change occurred. My lords, I cannot but think that in the not taking advantage of what then happened, a great opportunity was lost. (Hear, hear.) Great progress had been effected by the Power which was overshadowing Asia. The advances made by that Power alarmed the Ruler of Afghanistan and he was impressed with those occurrences more than were those who ruled British India. He saw his neighbours disappearing one after the other, and he concluded that the time had arrived when he must put his own house in order and prepare for the

emergency. (Hear, hear.) The letter written by the Ameer in 1873 opened the way to a complete understanding. A conference was proposed and accepted, and on the 12th of July, 1873, the noble earl held his first conference with the Cabul Envoy, Syed Noor Mahomed Shah. The Ameer then wanted much, but in his view he got nothing, and in my opinion a great opportunity was then lost. I trust that in alluding to what then occurred I shall do so without personal references. I am quite content to take those occurrences as they stand on the papers, or even to take them as the noble earl himself wishes them to be accepted. When the other night I entered into the personal aspect of those events I did so in vindication of myself from attacks which I venture to think went somewhat further than they ought to have done, but I submit that we have had enough of personal squabbles. (Hear, hear.) The events with which we are engaged are too great to allow any place for personalities. (Cheers.) Well, then, I say that in 1873, when Shere Ali pointed out the danger which had arisen from Russian advances the time had come for a change in our policy towards Afghanistan (cheers); the time had come when we were bound to say that we would protect the Ameer, and protect him for the safety and security of the Empire. (Renewed cheers.) He had watched the inevitable tide submerging kingdom after kingdom, and filling up every valley. He foresaw what was coming, and was ready to build sea walls to keep out the advancing tide (cheers). He saw the futile efforts of Mrs. Partington with the diplomatic mop. The land yields, and every year the high water line is advanced, and now Russian agents are at Cabul. (Loud cheers.) Syud Noor Mahomed Shah said that whatever specific assurances Russia might give the people of Afghanistan could place no confidence in them, and would never rest satisfied unless they were assured of the aid of the British Government. The Ameer said—

“My anxiety which I feel on account of the Russians will never be removed unless the British Government adorns the Afghan Government with great assistance in money and ammunitions of war for the troops, and unless great aid is given for the construction of strong forts throughout the northern Afghan border. And further, if an emergency arises for the Afghan

Government to oppose the Russians, such opposition cannot take place without the co-operation of the disciplined troops of the British Government.”

Again, he said—

“Should the British Government intentionally overlook this matter with a view to temporizing for a few days, it is their own affair; but I will represent my circumstances in a clear form in detail without time-serving hesitation.” My lords, the Ameer represented his views through an influential Minister at great length to the noble earl at their interviews; that Minister got promises from the Viceroy which did not conciliate the Ameer. He considered that they did not in any degree tend to secure to him the assistance he wanted. Whoever may be to blame for it—and I do not now say that any one was to blame for it—from that time the Ameer distrusted England and began to look somewhere else. We have several proofs of the change in his mind. Take that letter in which he replied to the letter from the noble earl and ironically speaks of the delight at the arrival of that time when there is no danger of the peace being broken, and therefore no necessity for the precautions against such an occurrence. We have it on the authority of the noble earl and of a Minister that the Ameer took no notice of the request made of him in respect of British officers, though he was quite ready to accede to that before the conference with Syed Noor Mahomed in 1873. He did not let Mr. Forsyth pass through the country, and he did not communicate to the Viceroy his intention to choose a successor, but reported that his choice had been made. We find now that in his most recent letter he still strongly complains of the conduct of the Viceroy in interfering between him and his son as an indication of unfriendly feeling. His complaint is not only, however, of the interference, but of the manner in which it was effected. I admit that for the Ameer to have promised his son a safe conduct and then to have seized him and cast him into prison was a dastardly and a wicked thing; but what the noble earl did was not that which Lord Mayo did in reference to the Ameer's son—address him in a private letter. The noble earl directed the native envoy to go to Shere Ali and read him a lecture. Pride and haughtiness are character-

istics of Shere Ali, and one can imagine that to such an Eastern ruler there could not have been a more disagreeable thing than to have a lecture read to him on that subject, and that too without any previous inquiry as to whether anything had occurred to change the circumstances under which a guarantee of safe conduct had been given to his son. That the affair has rankled in his breast is clear from the last communication of his which has reached this country. (Hear, hear.) It is quite possible that since the time that written message was sent to the Ameer many friendly letters have passed between Russian generals and Shere Ali. (Hear, hear.) Some of what has passed since then we may know; but I believe we do not know all. (Hear.) There is another thing on which the Ameer has laid great stress—the fact that the present and complimentary messages were sent to the Khan of Wakhan without having been sent through him as ruler over that Khan. Well, in 1874 the present Government came into office, and, my lords, about the policy of the present Government there is no concealment in these papers. They fully and freely state the truth, and there is no question about what that policy is. In 1874 my noble friend (the Marquis of Salisbury) was struck by the scantiness of information on what was passing in Afghanistan in the hands of the Indian Government; and no one can read the Cabul diaries without arriving at the same conclusion as my noble friend. In January, 1875, after a year's reading of these precious papers, which gave us all that we could get about Afghanistan, my noble friend, dissatisfied with the imperfect ideas which could be formed on such materials, wrote to the Viceroy that it was desirable we should have a resident British officer, not, my lords, at Cabul, but at Herat, who should furnish us with fuller information. I should have thought that nothing could be more advantageous to the Ameer as well as to ourselves. The time had come when Europeans were acquiring power and influence in those parts, and it was essential that the movements of Europeans should be watched by Europeans. (Hear, hear.) The duty of watching them is one which Asiatics are incapable of performing. It is essential that the duty should be performed by civilized Europeans. (Cheers.) I shall read on this subject of

the Native envoys the opinion of one who is capable of forming a judgment on the point. Sir Bartle Frere says :—

“I judge them only from the abstracts of their correspondence, which are, I conclude, weeded of much extraneous and trifling matter before they are printed and sent home, but even in the shape in which these abstracts reach us I find a vast portion of durbar gossip in proportion to the important items of intelligence, &c. I find no scale of proportion by which to estimate the relative value and probability of the important and unimportant, the undoubted, the doubtful, and the mere hearsay; . . . still less do I find any discriminating description of persons such as may assist the Viceroy and his advisers in judging of men and events. A man in the Ameer’s position knows well that he can trust almost any English officer who comes to him as a representative of the English Government.”

Well, the noble earl (Lord Northbrook) as Viceroy, in the exercise of his discretion, did not think the time had arrived when the demand for the admission into Afghanistan of such officers should be made. The question was how long we ought to wait. The noble earl thought that the Russians had not approached near enough to cause any danger. The noble earl said that if they advanced to Merv it would become necessary to take action. If they had been at Merv, within twelve marches of Herat, I have no doubt that the noble earl would have thought it a good thing to have a British officer there—perhaps to receive them. (A laugh, and “Hear, hear.”) The country from Merv to Herat is a well watered one, and without saying that I regard Herat as the “key of India,” there can be no doubt that it has always been recognized as a place which might be made to exercise a considerable influence in frontier policy. But the noble earl apparently wished to follow his own way, and the time passed. There is such a time in politics as too late (cheers), and I hope that here, at least, the question of the present time will not be argued as it has been argued elsewhere. I hope it will not be argued as if we were dealing with the state of things which existed ten years ago. (Hear.) Events are crowding upon each other in Europe and Asia, and to speak of the policy of 1868 as the policy of 1878 would be what, if it were not

for the character and position of those who do argue so, I should describe as positively childish. (Hear.) Again the noble earl was appealed to by my noble friend, but he did not think the time had come, which shows me, begging the noble earl's pardon, that he had not realised the real state of Afghanistan. Well, the noble earl left in 1876, and the present Viceroy succeeded him. The instructions with which he set out are contained in these papers. I venture to say this for him, since so many accusations on the point have been made—that the steps taken by Lord Lytton were in strict accordance with the instructions given to him. The Government accept the responsibility of those instructions, and have no desire of making a scape goat of Lord Lytton, who carried them into action. The policy on which he was instructed to act was a just, right, and true policy for the interests of Afghanistan, the interests of England, and the interests of the Empire; and when Lord Lytton was prevented from giving it effect it was not from any fault on his part. It was, I regret to believe, because the opportunity had passed. It was too late. (Hear, hear.) My lords, I must say for myself, and I know I can say it for my colleagues and for the noble Viceroy, that anything more repugnant to our feelings than to be obliged to coerce Afghanistan, instead of being able to enter into intimate and friendly relations with her, cannot be imagined. (Cheers.) I cannot help saying that he would be a madman who, if he were able to keep a united and friendly Afghanistan in union with him, would do anything to break up the strength and force which that state of things would place at his disposal. That was not our intention, nor is there a sign of such a design to be found in the papers, and when our policy was rejected by the Ameer he was told that we regretted that rejection. Well, in May, 1876, Lord Lytton applied to the Ameer to receive a mission for the purpose of consultation—a friendly mission to announce the accession of the Viceroy, and to announce that Her Majesty had assumed the title of Empress of India, and, further, to invite the Ameer to attend the great celebration on the 1st of January, on that subject. A fitter subject for such a mission cannot possibly be conceived. (Hear, hear.) It was opportune, too, as

it would have given Lord Lytton the means of ascertaining what was going on in Afghanistan, what the feelings of the Ameer really were towards us, and of communicating to him what our feelings were towards him. The mission was rejected. Why was it rejected? There had been nothing in the conduct of Lord Lytton to cause the Ameer apprehension. He had taken no step to weaken the friendly feeling which had before existed between the Ameer and the Indian Government. The only reference to affairs which the Ameer considered objectionable related to Khelat, but that referred to what had been done, and rightly done, not by Lord Lytton but by the noble earl, the previous Viceroy, with a view to get Beloochistan into something like good order. The Ameer states in his letter of the 19th of November, that a friendly mission is always received. But when Lord Lytton proposed it he rejected a friendly mission, and why? Because there was rankling in his mind all that had previously taken place and to which I have referred, and he said so. He was written to again and told how foolish he was to take such a course, and then he suggested that he should send to the Viceroy our own native envoy in order that he should state what was the real state of things in Cabul. My lords, I cannot conceive anything more conciliatory than Lord Lytton's reception of that message, of which it might be said that it was not very complimentary that the Ameer, who had refused to receive our mission, should suggest that he should send our own envoy to confer with the Viceroy. (Hear, hear.) But Lord Lytton did not object; he concurred in the suggestion in the most conciliatory manner. My lords, the noble earl (Lord Granville) the other night complained of the language of Lord Lytton, but that language was used to his own confidential officer—it was spoken in confidence, and was only an expression of his own feelings. Well, our native envoy came down. He was one of those gentlemen who were relied on for information from Cabul, but it was found very difficult to squeeze information out of him. It could only be obtained by degrees. It was manifest, however, from more than one circumstance, that nothing had been sent from Cabul but what the Ameer wished; that the native envoys were obliged to show

what they were about to send; that they were under duress. Finally, it was agreed that the Prime Minister of the Ameer should come and confer with the Indian Government, and he came; but nothing could be more unfortunate than the state of mind in which that unfortunate man approached the work of his mission. He trembled at the probable result to himself as well as to his country. This, however, he said not only to Sir Lewis Pelly but more strongly to Dr. Bellew, but to an intimate friend of his:—"It is all very well, but the Ameer has a rooted mistrust of the British Government, as he says in his latest letter he regards that Government with aversion and apprehension." And he therefore anticipated that there was very little chance of any satisfactory conclusion being arrived at. Then occurred the death of the Minister, and the mission came to a close. An attack has been made upon Lord Lytton for closing it; but what occurred. In the first place the Ameer's Minister had never expressed his assent to that which Lord Lytton laid down as the essential condition to the very beginning of the conference. Lord Lytton had said: "It is no use conferring on other points unless you agree that British officers shall be placed on the frontier of Afghanistan. I cannot undertake the obligation of protecting you unless I know what is going on—unless I have an opportunity of informing you also on that subject." But throughout those long debates and discussions Syud Noor Mahomed continually evaded giving any promise on the subject. Although he did not actually say it, he used language that what was required was not possible, that everything was against it, and that he would be in danger of his life if he agreed to it. Therefore, my lords, the very basis of the negotiation was at an end, for after the death of the Minister his colleague, Mir Akhor, had no instructions and no power to go on with it. (Hear, hear.) I say without hesitation that it would have involved the dignity of the Government of India, if the Viceroy had not at once put an end to that mission. (Cheers.) But you will remember, my lords, that it was still open to the Ameer to make any proposal he thought fit, and my noble friend near me referred to that fact.

Writing to the Viceroy he said—"You will wait a reasonable time and give the Ameer an opportunity of himself opening fresh negotiations—a proposal which we shall be only too happy to accept, because we are as much interested in a friendly Afghanistan as ever; but if he will not approach us, if he rejects our approaches, then the British Government stands unpledged to any obligations and will be at liberty to adopt such measures for the protection and tranquility of the North West frontier as may be expedient without regard to the wishes of Shere Ali or the interests of his dynasty." (Hear, hear.) My lords, I say that the transaction on the part of Lord Lytton is defensible from beginning to end. (Hear, hear.) It was straightforward. There was no concealment about it, no device to conceal his intention. He told the Ameer what he would do and what he would not do. He said, "I must be supported by political officers of my own on the Afghan frontier, who will tell me what is going on." That there might be no mistake Lord Lytton told the Ameer the terms on which he was prepared to assist him—to acknowledge his dynasty, and to be the friend of his friends and the enemy of his enemies. (Hear, hear.) The noble earl said that his terms were as large as ours. That may be so as to one part of our proposal, but a treaty does not consist of one clause, but of many, and any one who would indicate to an Afghan ruler that he would be responsible for his foreign policy without having a voice in that policy would undertake a grave responsibility, and therefore Lord Lytton took care to provide that that policy should be in harmony with his own. The noble Earl declined further pledges, but the consequence would have been that you would have pledged your honour to a potentate who did not understand the limits and conditions imposed upon him, and the time would come when he would be in distress, and you could not, without in his eyes forfeiture of your honour, fail to assist him; for by dallying about promises which he considered you had made, he might well have cause to conclude that you did not mean to comply with them. (Hear, hear.) So things remained at the close of the conference, and for a certain period there was no intercourse between Lord

Lytton and the Ameer. There was no hostility on our part. Lord Lytton merely said to the Ameer, "What is offered you is as much to your advantage as ours; we press nothing on you; you are left to yourself." Now, my lords, what happened? The Ameer did not remain by himself. He began more frequently to hold communication with Russia. He began to send, himself, I think, emissaries. Moreover, during the period of the negotiations he was actually attempting to incite the tribes against us, and to raise a Jihad against us—that is to say, he was actually engaged in hostile operations against us. Well, we pardoned him. "We will leave him," we said, "till he is in a better frame of mind." But, instead of getting into a better frame of mind, what did he do? He waited till a time when hostilities appeared probable between this country and Russia, and then he, who had made it an excuse for not receiving a mission from us that he should in that case be compelled to receive a Russian mission, received a Russian envoy with ostentatious pomp and ceremony. The Duke of Argyll in his published letter said he had reason to believe the Ameer had received the Russian mission with reluctance. I am bound to say we have received no official information to that effect. Private letters which I have seen tend to show, on the contrary, that the Russian General was treated with actually embarrassing ceremony—more like a king than an envoy. He was received with salutes and attended by armies, and everything was done to show him he was welcome. It has been set forth in the Russian papers that his reception was of a magnificent character. So far, therefore, from this Russian mission being forced on the Ameer, the Russian envoy was received and entertained to the best of the Ameer's ability. Well, my lords, I do not hesitate to say that if England, representing India and herself, had said that that conduct on the part of the Ameer was a distinct declaration of hostility against us, she would have been perfectly justified. The Ameer was aware of Russia's pledge not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, and yet he accepts a Russian mission and refuses ours. The noble duke in his letter says he would never allow Russia to absorb Afghanistan. There is room for Russia and England in Central Asia, as my

noble friend (Lord Beaconsfield) once said, but I say distinctly there is not room for England and Russia in Afghanistan. The noble earl (Earl Grey) who, when a Russian mission is received at Cabul, can anticipate the lapse of 50 or 100 years before the question of danger to India can arise, is indeed a consistent advocate of masterly inactivity. Were we to blind ourselves to facts as he does, we might hear, when it was too late, the warning cry in our very chambers, "The Philistines be upon you ;" and although in our struggles we might then bring ruin upon others, we should also bring it certainly upon ourselves. (Cheers.) The Russian mission having been received at Cabul, the Viceroy sent a message to the Ameer demanding the admission of a friendly mission, coupling with it a letter of condolence couched in the most proper terms on the death of his Highness's heir Abdoolah Jan. My lords, there is in the East no greater insult than to delay an answer to a letter of condolence. But it was long before that letter was answered, and to the native mind in India the delay was an insult of a character which would in itself have justified hostilities. (Murmurs.) I say in the native mind of India. I do not mean to say it would have justified hostilities from the European point of view, nor was it so regarded by us. Anybody who has been connected with India, even so short a time as I have been, knows how differently from ourselves the Eastern mind views transactions of this kind. Well, my lords, we demanded the admission of a friendly mission ; we insisted upon it ; and we have been told that this was an outrage to the Ameer. It so happens, however, that this is not the first time we have insisted upon things with the Ameer. The noble earl himself, on one occasion, thought proper to insist upon the admission of an envoy of his own to Afghanistan. A great deal has been said in this country about the "independence" of Afghanistan, but the word on English lips as applied to Afghanistan is absurd and misleading. Afghanistan has constantly been asking our protection. The noble earl himself has admitted that it is impossible to interpret neutrality in a strict sense in relation to Afghanistan. And how did he view the question of "insistance" when it arose? "When we had reason to suppose," he writes,

“that Shere Ali intended to demur to our reasonable request that our envoy should pass through Afghanistan with a communication from us to the Khan of Wakhan, we insisted upon compliance with our wishes ; and we should insist upon a similar course under the same circumstances.” To insist means, if necessary, to resort to force of arms, and this is what the noble earl who has been held up as the advocate of masterly inactivity was, on the occasion referred to, prepared to do, in the event of a passage being denied to his envoy through the Ameer’s dominions. The step, we have taken is, therefore, not so very different from that which the noble earl was himself prepared to take in similar circumstances. We asked for the admission of a friendly mission. It was refused ; and refused by force of arms and with threats. Sir N. Chamberlain, of all men, was the least disposed to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan. “No man”—to use his own words—“was ever more anxious than I to preserve peace and secure “friendly relations.” Yet what does he add? That “it was plainly “the Ameer’s intention to drive us into a corner, and that we had “either to obey all his behests or to stand upon our own rights. “Nothing could have been more distinct, nothing more humiliating to the dignity of the British Crown and nation. But “for the tact displayed by Major Cavagnari at one period of “the interview, even the lives of the British officers and of “their small escort would have been endangered,” and “the mission failed because of the Ameer’s indifference to any indignity imposed by him on the British Government, while he himself would not tolerate anything which could be strained to bear even the appearance of a slight to his kingly privileges.” We then come to the time when everyone in India thought an actual declaration of war necessary. Her Majesty’s Government at home, though they thought it justifiable, felt so keenly the importance of the occasion that they resolved to make one last attempt to bring the Ameer to a proper frame of mind, and shew him where his true interests lay. The *ultimatum* was accordingly sent. It was absolutely essential that at such a period we should inform the Ameer of the *minimum* we should insist upon. That *minimum* was an apology for the repulse of

the mission, and the reception of a permanent mission. The noble lord opposite in one of his letters to the newspapers said that no doubt Shere Ali would have made us an apology if we had consented to withdraw the mission. But, my lords, that would not have been an apology from him but from us. (Cheers.) We required an apology from the Ameer for having stopped by force of arms a friendly mission. The mission was not accompanied by an armed force, and Major Cavagnari himself by very few attendants. So careful, indeed, had been Lord Lytton to avoid the appearance of a movement of troops that he even held back the change of reliefs. The escort of the mission consisted of little over 200 men, which was not so many as the Ameer had himself brought to the conference at Umballa. Such a body of men could not have threatened the integrity or interests of Afghanistan; it was no more than sufficient as a protection for our Envoy. Accompanying the mission were native gentlemen, to show the Ameer that India practically was represented by us, and that it was not merely a British mission, but that we came with the assent of those in whom we take so deep an interest in India. And, my lords, let me here say, by the way, if anyone, as I lament many do, imputes unfriendliness to the native Princes of India, let him look at what these Princes have offered us. They have offered to be at our side with their contingents in the campaign; and shame ought to cause a blush to rise to the cheek of any man who imputes disloyalty to them at such a time and on such an occasion. (Cheers.) I do not blame the Afghan representative, who was a soldier, and obeyed orders, but acting on those orders he said that but for his friendship with Major Cavagnari, he would have fired on the mission? Your lordships may suppose that the mission was at the time in Afghanistan, but that is an absolute delusion—Ali Musjid does not belong to the Ameer—it belongs to the Khyberi tribes, the Afridis and others; and therefore the mission had not entered the Ameer's territory when this hostile action was threatened against us. The mission, as it was directed, immediately withdrew, and the Viceroy was informed of its withdrawal. When we are spoken of as making an unnecessary war, it must be remembered that

there was something more involved than our own honour as affected by the affront we had received; we had pledged our words to the Khyberis tribes that if they gave us a safe conduct to Ali Musjid we would hold ourselves responsible for their safety; and it appears that the house of a chief had already been burnt. The Kyberis called upon us to fulfil our pledges, and even if they had not it was our duty to take such steps that they should not be placed in danger. Therefore, when we argue for the necessity for war, we say it became necessary on account of our obligations to them, as I think it was also necessary on account of the affront which had been offered to ourselves. The *ultimatum* is sent, and the 20th of November is fixed upon as the date before which the Ameer's reply must be received. The term allowed left eight or nine clear days to the Ameer to prepare his reply before despatching his messenger. No reply came by the 21st, and, of course, the troops had by that time advanced towards the frontier to fulfil the duties imposed upon them. How they have fulfilled them has been nobly described by a noble earl opposite on a former occasion; but I should ill discharge my duty as Secretary of State for India if I did not add my tribute to that which has been already paid by saying that praise is well merited by those who have achieved such great results with such small loss of life and such moderate means. We might have sent large armies and have been involved in extravagant expenditure; but the officers made only such demands as they thought necessary for the purpose. India has had all our resources placed at her disposal; but she has been content with what she had; and Indian soldiers have added another laurel to the crown which Indian soldiers have won. (Cheers.) Since these events occurred a long letter has come from the Ameer; and it has been said by anonymous slanderers that the Government were in possession of this letter before Parliament met on Thursday last. My lords, that is an absolute fabrication. (Cheers.) It is stated and reasoned upon as if it were an ascertained and known fact; and I think it is only my duty to give that absolute denial. (Cheers.) The Government had received notice that a letter had been addressed to Major Cavagnari, and was waiting for him,—that the messenger

was waiting for him to give it to him ; and, as it will be remembered, we had announced in the papers that we had heard of it, and therefore there was not the least concealment on our part. The summary was received on the Thursday night ; and it was deciphered by about one o'clock on Friday morning ; and it was delivered to me early that morning with an intimation that the full text would follow rapidly afterwards. Therefore, we determined, and I think justifiably, that we would wait for the full text before publishing anything, and the full text arrived yesterday. It was a very long business to decipher it ; I did not receive it until about three o'clock in the afternoon, and I lost no time in making arrangements for its being in your lordships' hands through the newspapers this morning. I think this is a complete answer to the fictions circulated in order to discredit the Government. My lords, that letter is no answer to the *ultimatum*. If it had come on the 20th of November, according to the instructions which my colleagues and I had given to the Viceroy the troops must have advanced. It is an evasive reply ; it makes no apology ; it does not give any undertaking with respect to the Khyberis ; it says nothing with regard to the mission ; it is in character such a letter as would not be sent by one friendly person to another. We read these things too much with European eyes ; but this must be read by Eastern eyes, because it is only in that way we can discern the real meaning which underlies these apparently friendly expressions. We have arrived at this point ; and I say the time has gone by for "masterly inactivity." (Cheers.) The time has gone by for verbal engagements ; the time has come for distinct, definite, perfect understandings, whether it be with those west of Afghanistan, or with Afghanistan itself. I wish, as everyone would, to speak with respect of one of the great countries which forms part of the concert of the nations of Europe ; I would not willingly say anything that would be offensive or disrespectful to that country or its Government. It has been driven on, by events I dare say, and by necessity, to effect larger seizures of Asiatic territory than it originally contemplated ; and with its advances it has continued to give us assurances, solemn pledges, reiterated again and again, and not even denied now ; and it

has admitted that this particular Russian mission was sent because of the apprehension of war between us. Be it so; it proves that the weak point in our armour was considered to be Afghanistan; it proves that they thought they could turn our watch-dog, the Ameer, into a bloodhound against us; and if you have a faithless porter at your door you must dispose of him, and take the charge of it from him. We are driven to this step. It is no light matter that will make any man carry the country into a war; but, my lords, our honour, our safety, and our interests alike impelled us to this course. We have been driven to it step by step; and the day has come when there can be no paltering with our duty. I admit that within these Eastern nations you may be compelled from time to time to take further advances than those that were originally contemplated. Be it so, but let us now enter into some conditions about which there can be no mistake; let us say distinctly that in Afghanistan we must be paramount and supreme, that in Afghanistan, holding the doors of India, we must either have a friendly porter or we must take the keys ourselves. The objects of this war, then, are those of justice and security. It is a just war, because an unfriendly neighbour has insulted us and threatens our allies, it is necessary because we are not bound to wait attacks until an enemy shall come upon us in force at his own time; when we see what is coming upon us we have the duty and the right to exert ourselves to avert it. Such is our course, my lords, and I am sorry that an amendment should be moved on this occasion by my noble friend. (Cheers.) He has on all occasions avowed a desire to avoid giving a party aspect to Indian questions, and when India becomes a Parliamentary question in that sense the day of our empire will be drawing rapidly to a close. You must have a despotic Government in India; you must make the executive Government responsible for India. I am far from saying that Parliament shall not exercise its right to speak of what we have done; I am not complaining of it. I only say I deeply regret that it should be thought that any occasion had arisen for it, and that during a war our hands should seem to be weakened. I ask you, our opponents, what you would have done

if you had known that a Russian mission had been received with honour at Cabul? Would you have asked the Ameer to let you send a friendly mission to explain what the relations between him and you ought to be, or would you have dealt with the question with a retiring modesty such as that exhibited on a former occasion by the noble lord, a late Governor-General of India, who, after England had fought her way to Peshawur suggested that she should retire beyond the Indus, a suggestion received with a shudder by such men as Edwardes, Nicholson and others best qualified to form an opinion? That is not the way in which India was won or the way in which India is to be held. My lords, India was looking on. The people saw us at the gates of Afghanistan demanding admittance; they saw us repulsed; what would be the effect on the Indian mind and Indian feelings? That is a matter of some importance to us the Imperial race who have to govern the country. They thought that we were hesitating too long, and that we were afraid; that there was something behind Afghanistan we durst not meet. This was in their minds, and if we had retired they would have been justified in supposing that such fears were entertained. We have no such fears and call upon you as we call upon the country, to support us in the policy we have adopted for the safety, honour, and welfare of Her Majesty and her dominions. (Loud cheers.)

His lordship concluded by moving the resolution.

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