

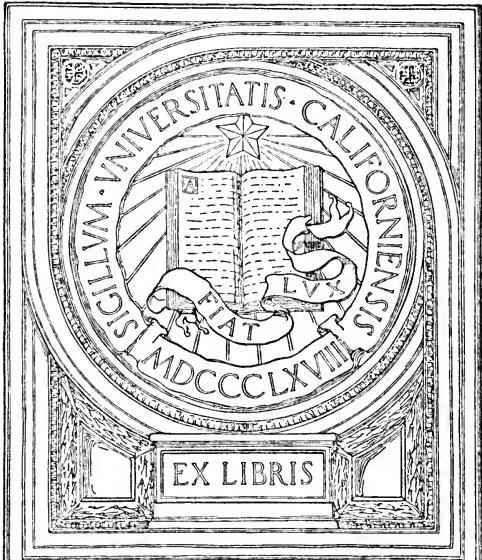
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# OUR AFGHAN POLICY

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AND

THE OCCUPATION

OF

# CANDAHAR.

BY

D. B.

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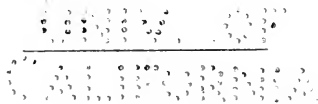
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TO THE  
MEMBERS OF THE

## OUR AFGHAN POLICY.

It has never been seriously alleged, so far as I am aware, that we were bound on grounds of morality to invade, conquer, or annex Afghanistan, and any justification of our recent action with regard to that country must be based on the plea that expediency demanded such action, and that, at the most, morality did not forbid it. If the invasion or annexation of Afghanistan or of any portion of it be not expedient, it is unnecessary to consider the morality of invasion or annexation, and the task to which I address myself is the discussion of the best policy to be followed in dealing with Afghanistan, assuming that policy to be determined solely on grounds of expediency, or in other words with exclusive reference to the material interests of the British Empire.

I cannot hope to advance any novel arguments on a subject which has been so long under discussion, but as the events of the last two years have drawn public attention to the relations existing between Russia, Afghanistan and India, and as our failures, our difficulties, and our successes during that period have thrown new light

on the question, and are still fresh in the public memory, I may not unreasonably hope that an attempt to state clearly the conditions of the problem and the conclusion to which they point will not be altogether profitless.

I shall avoid controversial matter as far as possible and eschew *a priori* reasoning altogether. Any other course would tend to obscure the real issues by raising profitless discussions on minor points, and the complex questions connected with Afghanistan cannot be solved by deductions from a few general propositions not shown to be universally true.

I have already stated that the invasion or annexation of Afghanistan has never been justified on the ground that annexation or invasion was required in the interests of morality, and it may be added that no one has ever recommended these measures on the ground that they would be a source of profit in themselves. Attempts have been made to prove that war with Afghanistan would not be costly, that it would not be very costly, or that in time a considerable portion of the outlay might be recovered from the country, but the plea for war has never been based on these grounds. Interference with Afghanistan can only be justified on the ground that such interference is necessary for the protection of India, and all attempts to show that the annexation of a portion of Afghanistan would not be costly have been



intended to minimize the objections to annexation. No one has ever justified the annexation of new territory on the sole ground that annexation would be profitable. If interference with Afghanistan can only be justified as a means of defence for India our primary duty is to define accurately the dangers, immediate or prospective, against which we wish to guard, to ascertain the cost in men and money of the remedies proposed, and to consider the efficacy of these remedies against the apprehended dangers.

The dangers against which we have to guard on the north-west frontier of India belong to one or other of two classes.

- I. Dangers arising from the action of the Afghans.
- II. Dangers arising from the action of Russia, on, through, or in conjunction with the Afghans.

It will be convenient to consider these two classes of dangers separately, and I shall assume that my readers possess some knowledge of the nature and extent of the territory that lies between the frontiers of Afghanistan, and that portion of Russia which is a source of strength and not of weakness to that country. I shall also assume that they now possess a general knowledge of the nature and extent of Afghanistan itself, and of the tribes alike turbulent, warlike, treacherous, and fanatical, who inhabit it, and who, above all other possessions, value and cling to their independence.

## I.—DANGERS ARISING FROM THE ACTION OF THE AFGHANS.

Our Indian empire may be injured either by the attacks of the independent, or semi-independent tribes, along the north-west frontier of India, or by an invasion under the leadership of the Ameer of Afghanistan.

The tribes on the north-west frontier have always been a source of trouble and annoyance. To keep them in check has required the services of a considerable force, composed partly of soldiers and partly of a military police. The injuries which we have received from them have, however, been essentially local. They would be unable to face our troops for five minutes in the open field, and they are incapable of any such combined and prolonged action as would render them a danger to the Indian Empire. Our only serious difficulties with them have arisen when a force has entered their country to inflict punishment for border raids, or other similar offences.

It would doubtless be more satisfactory if we had peaceable and friendly neighbours on our frontier, but we can hardly expect natural laws to be everywhere set aside in our favour, and any attempt to subdue the tribes would be excessively costly, and would require a force at least five times as great as that which for so many years was found sufficient to protect our Punjab frontier. Moreover

the conquest of the border tribes and annexation of their territory would only bring us face to face with another set of tribes, just as numerous and turbulent, equally suspicious of our motives, and prepared at all costs to maintain their savage independence. No danger to the Indian Empire need be apprehended from the border tribes, and no advance of our frontier would diminish their power to cause annoyance.

British India possesses a thoroughly organized and strong central government. The term "organization" can hardly be applied to the Afghan system, and the central government barely maintains a precarious existence under a strong ruler. India has about seventy times the revenue of Afghanistan, and about fifty times her population. The Indian army is incomparably greater than that which the late Ameer of Afghanistan got together by devoting the whole of his resources to it for a series of years; and the more numerous army is as superior to the Afghan army in organization, discipline, arms, supply of military stores, and officers, as it is in numbers. Behind India lies the sea, and a matchless navy ready to bear the resources of England to her assistance. To entertain any apprehension of an Afghan invasion is therefore out of the question so long as the Indian army remains faithful.

If we should ever be in extreme difficulties in India owing to mutiny, rebellion, or war with the

native princes, or from a combination of all three causes, an invasion by the Afghans, even though they should find it impossible to advance beyond the Indus, would add materially to the dangers of the position—and I have little doubt that the Afghans would invade India if they were once satisfied they could do so with a fair chance of success, and if our difficulties in India lasted for a sufficient time to enable them to prepare for invasion.

This danger is, however, one which, like the liability to mutiny of the native army, we must accept as a necessary result of our position in India. It could only be averted by the complete subjugation of Afghanistan and its permanent occupation by a force sufficiently strong to overcome all possible combinations among the Afghans, and composed of troops whose loyalty was above suspicion. It is not easy to calculate what it would cost to subdue and permanently hold in subjection the whole of Afghanistan, but judging from recent experience the thorough occupation of Afghanistan, including the Provinces of Cabul, Candahar, Herat, and Afghan Turkestan by troops who could under all circumstances be depended on, would require the services of 60,000 English troops, and would cost about ten millions sterling annually. It is out of the question, therefore, to attempt any such operation. England would never consent to find even one-third of the

men and money required for the purpose, and to employ 60,000 English and 40,000 Native troops in order to guard against a remote danger which might never arise, and which if it did arise would be amply met by a force of from 10,000 to 20,000 loyal troops acting within our own territory, is a proposal too preposterous to require discussion. If in spite of all difficulties the annexation of Afghanistan was completed and the Indian frontier advanced from the Suliman Mountains to the Oxus we should occupy in reference to Russia somewhat the same position that we have hitherto occupied with regard to the Afghans, and the fear of invasion by 80,000,000 of Russians would take the place of the fear of invasion by (say) 4,000,000 of Afghans.

It has indeed been said that there is somewhere a "scientific" frontier which we could easily take up, and which a trifling force could defend against all possible attacks. This frontier, however, has never been accurately defined, nor are military authorities by any means unanimous as to where it may be found. I shall revert to the question of a scientific frontier hereafter ; for the present it is sufficient to say that the danger of invasion by the Afghans is no greater than the danger of invasion by any other weak power on our frontier in any part of the world, and that it is to be guarded against by the simple means of treating the weaker power with justice, avoiding interference with

what does not concern us, and seeing that our military power is not weakened by internal disturbances.

## II.—DANGERS ARISING FROM THE ACTION OF RUSSIA, ON, THROUGH, OR IN CONJUNCTION WITH, THE AFGHANS.

There are four ways in which danger may come to us in India through the action of Russia and Afghanistan—

- A. Russia may incite the Afghans to attack us.
- B. Russia may conquer and permanently occupy Afghanistan, and afterwards undertake the invasion of India.
- C. Russia may form an alliance with Afghanistan and march an army through Afghanistan as through a friendly country in order to invade India.
- D. Russia may acquire such a position in Afghanistan as to be able to intrigue successfully with any disaffected elements in India, and thus menace the Indian Empire.

*A.—Russia may incite the Afghans to attack us.*

This is a danger which we cannot avoid, but fortunately it is neither a great nor a probable one. An invasion of India by Afghans assisted by Russian arms, money, and (possibly) officers,

would no doubt be more formidable than an invasion by Afghans unassisted by any foreign power ; but, as I have already shown, a purely Afghan army could make no impression on India so long as our Indian army remained faithful. Its appearance on Indian soil would simply be the signal for its destruction. The danger would be vastly greater if the invasion occurred at a time when, from internal disturbance, we were in difficulties in India ; but it is a remote danger, depending on the simultaneous occurrence of war with Russia, and of mutiny or rebellion in India. The risk is reduced to a minimum if we rule India in such a way as to avoid any serious internal disturbance, if we take care that the frontier districts shall always be held by a strong European force, and if we scrupulously avoid the appearance of aggression on the Afghans which could only end by driving them into the arms of Russian emissaries. If there are any who are not content with the prospect of safety which these precautions hold out, I would ask them, in the first place, to recollect that there is no frontier in the world which is, or can be made, absolutely secure under all circumstances ; if we are disposed to fret at the burden of defence imposed on us by the existence of Russia and of Afghanistan beyond our frontiers, what would be our state if we were in the position of the French, the Germans, or the Austrians ? And, in the next place I would ask what

measures of aggression could we adopt that would not increase an hundredfold the danger against which we wish to guard? Would it be easier to invade, conquer, and permanently hold down the whole Afghan people acting in Afghanistan, than to defeat any Afghan army which might attempt to find its way into India? Would a mutiny or a rebellion in India, complicated by an invasion of Afghans assisted by Russia, be more dangerous than a mutiny or rebellion in India and Afghanistan fomented by Russia and complicated by a Russian invasion? Could we put as large a force on the Oxus as we could on the Indus? What would it cost to maintain that force, and what would be its fate in case of a reverse?

Some hold that it would not be necessary to annex all Afghanistan; that the occupation of a commanding position in that country would be sufficient to overawe the Afghans and prevent them from yielding to Russian intrigues. He must be deaf to all teaching who now holds any such belief. Recent events have shown how little influence our occupation of Candahar enables us to exercise over the ruler of Herat, and the annexation by England of any considerable portion of Afghanistan simply means war with the whole country. No doubt we should be successful in that war, and it would be followed by a sullen truce, lasting for a longer or a shorter time. The burden of occupation alone would not



be light, and every few years we should be engaged in fresh and probably extensive operations, while in case of a war with Russia the whole disposable force of India and a large portion of that of England would be required to withstand a united Afghan and Russian attack on our advanced position in Afghanistan. I am unwilling even to conjecture what the consequences might be if the crisis were aggravated by a mutiny or rebellion in India. Safety could only be purchased by putting forth the whole strength of England ; success would leave us exhausted by our exertions, while no serious injury would have been done to Russia, and the contest might be renewed by that power again and again. Under any circumstances a war with Russia would probably be attended with attempts at intrigue in Afghanistan, and these intrigues might be so far successful that they would compel us to keep a considerable force on the Indus. So long as we maintain our present frontier, however, the danger would not be great, and at any rate we must accept it just as Russia must accept the fact that in case of war with her we can blockade the Baltic coast in despite of anything she could do. Any attempt to improve our position by an advance into Afghanistan would merely render it certain that the Afghans would attack us in case of war with Russia, and would quadruple their chances of success in the attack.

B.—*Russia may conquer and permanently occupy Afghanistan, and afterwards undertake the invasion of India.*

Indian territory, fertile, populous, and intersected by railways, may be said roughly to extend to the Afghan frontier. A morning march from our chief military station in India is sufficient to place our troops on Afghan soil. Russia is separated from Afghanistan by vast waterless deserts, the less barren portions of which are held by races bitterly hostile to Russia, and either independent or only half subdued. For two years we have been at war with Afghanistan. The war has cost £20,000,000 and given occupation to every man who could be spared from the army in India, native and European. We have suffered two reverses, one of them very serious, and gained half a dozen victories in which numbers and fanaticism sometimes almost turned the scale against superiority in arms, discipline, and military skill. The result of our operations has been that we have held in force two of the chief cities in Afghanistan, and dominated as much of the country round them as was easily accessible to our troops. The lines of communication between these cities and India were with difficulty kept up by a strong military force assisted by the lavish payment of black mail to hostile tribes. I leave it to military experts to estimate with exactness in the light of our

last Afghan war what efforts on the part of India and England would have been required if instead of occupying the cities of Cabul and Candahar we had attempted to annex and permanently occupy the provinces bearing these names, as well as the province of Herat, and the vast and little-known territory which stretches from the Hindoo Koosh to the Oxus. It took 50,000 men to hold Cabul and Candahar. For all Afghanistan twice that number would have been required, and the expenditure would not have fallen short of £50,000,000. What then would have been the difficulty of this conquest if we had been at war with Russia, and if Russian gold, arms, and officers were being poured into the country to assist the Afghans, and if possibly a Russian force threatened us on the Oxus and at Herat?

England is much more favourably situated than Russia, both for attempting the conquest of Afghanistan, and for assisting the Afghans against any foreign invader, and it is therefore beyond doubt that the conquest of Afghanistan by Russia is a sheer impossibility so long as England is willing to assist the Afghans. Any attempt at conquest by Russia could end only in ruinous and discreditable failure, while the exertions required from England would be comparatively trifling.

The bitterest enemy of Russia could not desire for her a worse fate than that she should seriously undertake the invasion of Afghanistan.

C.—*Russia may form an alliance with Afghanistan and march an army through Afghanistan as through a friendly country, in order to invade India.*

A Russian invasion of India through Afghanistan would either be a serious attempt to overthrow the Empire of England in India, or a diversion intended to occupy our troops, and prevent them from taking part in a more important conflict elsewhere. If it were a serious effort to overthrow the Indian Empire it would be necessary that not less than 50,000 Russian troops should cross the Indian frontier, exclusive of the Afghan contingent. It would also be impossible for Russia, unless she blindly courted destruction, to throw 50,000 men into India without holding in force the line of advance and retreat.

It would be tedious to consider all the routes by which Russia might possibly advance. The route by Merv, Candahar and the Bolan Pass, would present not greater difficulties than any other, and we may confine our attention to it alone. In advancing by this route it would be necessary for Russia to hold Merv, Herat, and Candahar with strong garrisons. Of 150,000 men landed on the east coast of the Caspian, she could not expect to bring more than 100,000 to Herat; while to garrison that city and Candahar, to keep open the communications and provide for losses from all causes as far

as the southern mouth of the Bolan, would require 50,000 men; an equal number would then be left, assisted by an Afghan army, to undertake the invasion of India. Before the first step towards any such enterprise could be taken, the Afghans must consent to admit into their country 100,000 foreign soldiers of a hated race and religion, and permit them to occupy two of the chief Afghan cities, as well as all forts and places of strength along a line of 800 miles. The Afghans are suspicious of the motives of others to a degree seldom equalled even among Asiatics, and their consent could never be obtained to the entry of Russian troops into their country in sufficient numbers to afford the slightest chance of success in an attack on India. They are not wanting in intelligence, and they would not believe that Russia, having conquered India by a prodigious effort, would make no attempt to recoup her outlay by holding the country, and they would know that Russia could not hold India without subduing and permanently occupying Afghanistan. The invasion of India is, therefore, not possible under the conditions assumed.

Even if the consent and friendly co-operation of the Afghans were assured, the physical conditions of the country to be traversed are such that a sufficient force could not be fed or supplied. Twice has England with all the resources of India at her disposal marched a considerable force along that

portion of the route which lies between Jacobabad and Candahar; the first time under Sir John Keane, and the second time under General Stewart. In neither case was any organized opposition offered, and the total force was inconsiderable compared with the combined Russian and Afghan army which would be necessary for the invasion of India. Yet Sir John Keane's army almost perished from want of supplies, while General Stewart's force could only advance by dribblets, and when, after a prodigious loss of transport animals, he arrived at Candahar, the greater portion of his troops was forced to return to India, for the simple reason that they could not be fed. No army of any civilized nation has ever marched from Herat to Candahar or *vice versâ*, and the difficulties to be encountered would certainly be very great.

The fact that Ayooob Khan with from 6,000 to 8,000 men and 36 light guns lately marched from Herat to Candahar, at the season when supplies were most plentiful, is no proof that ten times the number of Russians could follow the same route. Nor has the road from Merv to Herat ever been followed by a modern army, while we know that this is the second season during which the Russians have been vainly endeavouring to push 10,000 men along the route to Merv from the Caspian. The physical difficulties of the country alone are sufficient to prevent an invasion of India by

Russia, and a Russian Army marching through unheard-of difficulties from the shores of the Caspian to the Indus would not have the slightest chance of success against an English force with its base on the sea at Kurrachee, and carried by railways almost to the very field of battle.

If, however, we were at war with Russia and the Afghans were willing to attack us, it is within the bounds of possibility, though not probable, that the Russians might be willing to risk a contingent of 10,000 or 20,000 men to assist them, and it is also possible, though not probable, that the Afghans would admit a force of this strength into their country. No Afghan army assisted by 10,000 or even by 20,000 Russian troops would be in the least degree formidable on the plains of India so long as the Indian army remained faithful. If the invasion occurred at a time when our authority was shaken by internal disturbance, as it was during the Mutiny of 1857, the danger would be of the most serious nature, and Russia could inflict incalculable damage on England by the sacrifice of a comparatively small force, though it is unlikely that any appreciable position of the Russian force would under any circumstances ever return through Afghanistan to Russia.

Against this danger, which is a remote one depending on the simultaneous existence of serious internal disturbance in India, of a war with Russia, of a desire by the Afghans to attack India, of their

being prepared to do so, and of their consenting to admit a Russian army into their country, England can only provide by so ruling India that the danger from internal disturbance shall be reduced to a minimum, by abstaining from all measures of aggression which would tend to make the Afghans look to Russia for assistance, by adopting in the Punjab those military precautions which are necessary on a frontier exposed to attack, and by maintaining a sufficient European force along the frontier or close to it.

D.—*Dangers arising from the acquisition by Russia of such a position in Afghanistan as would enable her to intrigue successfully with any disaffected elements in India, and thus menace the Indian empire.*

Before this branch of the question can be satisfactorily discussed a clear idea must be formed of the nature of the position which we fear that Russia may acquire. Clearly it is not a position acquired or retained by force of arms, for we have already seen that any attempt to invade Afghanistan could be successfully resisted by England with the most disastrous results to the invader. Nor need we fear any influence which the Russians might acquire over the Afghans by threats or by the massing of troops on or near the Afghan frontier. Any such measures would merely drive the Afghans into the arms of England, and a menace of war by



Russia on the northern frontier of Afghanistan would be a singular method of inducing that country to collect its troops on the southern frontier for an invasion of India. What we have to fear is that Russia should frame her action towards the Afghans with such moderation and foresight as to convince them (if it be at all possible to do so) that their country was in no danger from a Russian attack, and that no interference would be practised with regard to their internal or foreign policy, and should thereby induce them to admit Russian agents into the chief cities of Afghanistan. The danger arising from this state of affairs would be that in case of a war with Russia, that power would be in a somewhat better position than before to foment disturbances in India, to incite the Afghans to attack us, and possibly to induce them to allow a small Russian force to march through Afghanistan and assist in the attack on India.

The means of counteracting this danger are obvious. We should respect the independence of the Afghans and let them see that we do not covet one rupee of their revenue, or one foot of their territory ; we should not attempt to interfere with their internal policy, or to dictate to them their relations with foreign nations. Above all we should recollect that the appearance of an English envoy is considered in the East the sure prelude of war and annexation, and we should never attempt to

force English agents on an unwilling people. If in spite of these precautions Russian agents entered Afghanistan without our consent, pressure should be put on Russia to withdraw them, and we should carefully avoid playing the enemy's game by invading Afghanistan. It was the adoption of measures in every way the opposite of those I have enumerated which led to the present Afghan war in which we have made such heavy sacrifices, and gained so little.

If war between Russia and England were imminent when Russian Agents entered Afghanistan, Russia doubtless would not withdraw them at our bidding, and we might then have to face the possibility of a Russo-Afghan attack on India. I have already shown that no such attack would have the slightest chance of success unless in case of mutiny in India. The danger under this head is briefly as follows: if we go to war with Russia, and if we alienate the Afghans so that they become willing to admit Russian Agents into their country, and if they consent to attack India with Russian assistance, and if they are able to excite mutiny or rebellion in India before the war with Russia is concluded, we may find ourselves in very great difficulties in India; but this danger is one which we have already examined, namely, that in case of war with Russia, we may be exposed to a combined Russian and Afghan attack, and it is one which we must be prepared to meet when it

arises. It has already been shown that an advance into Afghanistan would render the danger certain instead of barely possible, and would place us in an infinitely worse position to meet it when it did arrive.

I have now concluded my examination of the dangers which may threaten us on the north-west frontier of India, and shown that no serious injury need be apprehended unless in case of an Afghan or Russo-Afghan invasion made simultaneously with an outbreak of mutiny or rebellion in India. I have also shown that the danger is a remote and improbable one, and that it can be met by so ruling India as to reduce the chance of mutiny or rebellion to a minimum, by respecting the independence of Afghanistan, by showing the Afghans that they have nothing to fear from us so long as they do not cross our frontier, by avoiding everything which could tend to make them look to Russia for protection, by taking all proper military precautions in the Punjab and Scinde, and by maintaining in those provinces a considerable European force at all events in case of war with Russia. If this policy were steadily followed we might securely await within our Indian frontier the inevitable day when Russia and Afghanistan would quarrel, and when, if she invaded Afghanistan, Russia would deliver herself into our hands for just so much punishment as we might think the provocation she had given required.

There is however a school of writers who have never been content with a policy so cheap, so simple, and to their minds so contemptible. It is true that they are not agreed among themselves as to what should be done, but on one point they are unanimous ; the Indian frontier must be crossed at all hazards and more or less of Afghan territory occupied. Some of them have sketched the outlines of a scheme for the defence against Russia of an imaginary frontier, stretching from the Black Sea to some point on the borders of China. Others would be content with the annexation of all Afghanistan, the garrisoning of Herat by a British army, and the holding of the line of the Oxus in force. A still more moderate party would annex Afghanistan up to the Hindoo Koosh, and hold the cities of Herat, Cabul, and Candahar. A fourth party limits itself to the occupation of a commanding position in Afghanistan.

I shall offer no further remarks on any of these proposals. Recent events have shown how delusive were the arguments on which they were put forward. They all afford a swift and certain means of establishing an intolerable drain of men and money on India and England, and a serious attempt to carry any of them into practice would mean that we were content to place our position in India at the mercy of Russia.

There remains for consideration only the scheme of a "scientific frontier." It is held by some that

if we only make up our minds to annex certain portions of Afghan territory we can establish a new frontier of such natural strength that a moderate force would suffice to hold it against the united attacks of Russia and Afghanistan. It is unfortunate for my purpose that this new frontier has never been clearly and authoritatively defined, and that we have never been told by what forces it could be held and where they would be placed. All we really know about the scientific frontier is that it would necessitate the holding of the Khyber Pass, the Kurram Valley, and the city of Candahar. There has even been a want of unanimity about the Khyber Pass and the Kurram Valley. Military authorities of weight have held that it was unnecessary and would even be injurious to hold either of these places, but all who have advocated a forward policy pin their faith to the occupation of Candahar ; if England cannot be persuaded to hold Candahar they would wish as the next best thing to take up a position as close as possible to that city. Recent events may have somewhat weakened their arguments, but their faith is unshaken. Shere Ali can no longer be put forward as the chosen of Candahar, nor did the inhabitants of that city and the neighbouring villages exhibit during the retreat from Maiwand and the subsequent siege that amount of good will for their conquerors which we had been led to expect.

Candahar, however, still stands where it did, and the advocates of a scientific frontier allege that a British force at that place would effectually block the way to India.

It is admitted that the occupation of Candahar would impose a burden on the army and finances of India in quiet times, but this burden, it is said, would be like the payments on a policy of assurance, and a tenfold reward would be reaped in the hour of invasion and danger. If, then, it can be shown that the holding of Candahar would be a positive addition to our risks in time of trial, I may fairly claim to have shown that the scientific frontier has no real existence.

The occupation of the city and province of Candahar would require the services of not less than 20,000 men, of whom we may assume 10,000 to be European troops. The total number may seem large and the proportion of Europeans excessive, but it must be recollected that the province of Candahar is of immense extent, that it has no natural frontiers which could be easily defended, that it is exposed to attack from both Cabul and Herat, that reliance can no longer be placed on troops locally raised, that a considerable force would be required to guard the railway which would doubtless be extended to Candahar, that Indian troops are most unwilling to serve in Afghanistan, and that no risks must be run of disasters like that of Maiwand or of the massacre

of working parties and plunder of treasure and baggage by the Murrees, or other predatory tribes. The occupation of Candahar would then require 20,000 men, and would cost annually at least £2,000,000 sterling.

It has already been shown that India is in no danger from Afghans or Russians, or from both combined, so long as the Indian army remains faithful, and to ascertain the value of the occupation of Candahar we need only consider what gain such occupation would bring to us in case of another mutiny like that of 1857. In this case a large proportion of the troops on the Candahar line would be disaffected. The Mahommedan troops would desert and join the Afghans. Some of the Hindoos might remain faithful, but all would fall under suspicion. The value of the loyal native troops would be neutralized by the danger from the disaffected, and they would probably all be disarmed as on the whole the best and simplest method of dealing with them. There would then remain 10,000 men to hold the city and province of Candahar, to protect the railway, and hold the line of communication with India. So favourable an opportunity for attack would not be neglected by the Afghans, (smarting under a hated yoke and the loss of their richest province) and the 10,000 men would be forced to abandon the open country, and would be blockaded in Candahar, and in the various posts provided for

the protection of the road to India. It is doubtful whether with mutiny and rebellion surging through India reinforcements could be sent to them, and if not they would either be destroyed by want of food and supplies, or be driven to attempt a disastrous retreat to India. If 10,000 loyal troops could be added to them in time, they would doubtless hold their ground, if they could be fed, and would thus prevent any hostile Afghan attack on India through the Bolan pass. It is not, however, through the Bolan pass that the Afghans could make a really serious attack on India. Such attacks would be made on the trans-Indus districts of the Punjab, either by the border tribes or by a force acting from the direction of Cabul, and the troops on the Candahar line even if raised to 20,000 men, would be unable to prevent such attacks by detaching a force sufficiently strong to threaten Cabul. The occupation of Candahar would in short be of not the slightest value to England in time of danger, but would be a source of very great additional risk. Under the most favourable circumstances it would lock up 10,000 loyal troops, and prevent them from affording any assistance in pacifying India, or in resisting invasion by the Afghans at the points where invasion is most to be feared. And if the 10,000 men were not to be ultimately sacrificed the same number of equally loyal troops must be sent to their assistance, and the Indian Government deprived of the services of



20,000 trustworthy soldiers at a time when every man was required in India.

If war with Russia broke out simultaneously with a mutiny in India the result would be still more disastrous. I have conceded to the advocates of a forward policy that in case of war with Russia a Russian force of 10,000, or 20,000 men might enter Afghanistan to assist the Afghans. An attack on Candahar by the Afghans assisted by 10,000 Russians advancing by way of Herat, and by an equal number at Cabul would require more than 20,000 British troops on the Candahar line. In such case 35,000 men would be far from excessive for the protection of that city, and the loss of the services of 35,000 loyal troops during a crisis in India would be an evil of incalculable magnitude.

The case may be summed up as follows :

If we occupy Candahar we shall require for this purpose in quiet times a force of 20,000 men, and we must incur an annual expenditure of at least two millions sterling; no such burden would fall upon us if we kept within our own frontiers: if we occupy Candahar we shall be liable to continual attacks from time to time, which would not be made if we kept within our own frontiers: if we occupy Candahar and a mutiny breaks out in India we shall certainly be attacked by the Afghans; if we kept within our own frontiers we should probably avoid this danger as we did in 1857: if

we occupy Candahar and engage in war with Russia we shall certainly be attacked by the Afghans assisted by the Russians; if we kept within our own frontiers we should probably not be attacked at all: if we occupy Candahar and a mutiny occurs in the native army we shall lose the services of at least 10,000 loyal troops, and possibly of twice that number; this would not be the case if we kept within our own frontiers: if we occupy Candahar and if war with Russia and mutiny in India occur simultaneously, we must either abandon Candahar at once or be prepared to defend it with not less than 35,000 loyal troops whose services would be lost for the purpose of pacifying India; if we kept within our own frontiers these troops could be utilised for putting down rebellion in the Punjab, they would probably not have to meet a Russo-Afghan attack at all, and under the most unfavourable circumstances they would be better supported, and better placed for defence than if they held a position at the extremity of a line of 400 miles, extending through hostile, barren, and difficult country, and requiring a force of 10,000 men to keep it open.

To me these arguments appear conclusive against the occupation of Candahar, or any portion of Afghan territory whatever. Every day during which we prolong our stay in Afghanistan we risk the occurrence of some event which may render

retirement more difficult. It is only by prompt withdrawal at the earliest opportunity, and by the careful avoidance of aggressive interference in future, that we can hope to place India at some remote period, if ever, in as secure a position as that which she occupied before the reversal of the policy which has been specially identified with the name of the late Lord Lawrence.

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