

THE AMEER

ABDUR

RAHMAN

STEPHEN WHEELER



PREFACE

AN Asiatic historian, who was also a man of action, observed, when introducing himself to the gentle reader, that the rank and dignity whereto writers of history may attain is not so exalted that one need strive after such distinction laboriously. Nevertheless, he hoped that his book, "driven by the whirlwind of pride and the waves of ignorance upon the shores of mean literary attainment," might be somewhat prized by them who dive in the ocean of excellence. To some extent, at least, the modest aspirations of Mirza Hyder, Dughlat, are shared by the present writer.

In no book about the East is it wise to omit a reference to the mysteries of Oriental spelling, and the transliteration of Oriental names. As when Landor wrote, every traveller in the East is still apt "to bring home a new name for the prophet Mahomed, and to trim his turban to his own taste." The system sanctioned by the British Museum is a counsel of perfection, unfitted for common usage.

The Indian Government favours a scheme almost as admirable, and the Royal Geographical Society professes to adopt it. Seeing, however, that the Indian authorities and the Society use the same accent for dissimilar purposes, the ordinary person may hesitate to follow either lead. So perhaps it would be better to take pattern by Mr. Will Honeycomb in the *Spectator*, who vowed, "with a little passion," that he disliked pedantry in spelling, and that for his part he thought it enough to spell like a gentleman, and not like a scholar.

For the rest it may be appropriate to recall the words of the learned Moor, Abu Abdulla of Spain : "Were my mind not wholly taken up with the Ameer, and with praises worthy his deserts, I should have sung the charms of my lovely Gazelle ; but engaged in the description of Majesty, I was forced to lay aside my laudation of Beauty."

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NOTE.—The above table is intended to show, as far as possible, the relationships of those mentioned in the text.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- 1844 Abdur Rahman born.
- 1845 First Sikh War.
- 1848 Second Sikh War : Dost Mahomed assists the Sikhs.
- 1852 Abdur Rahman's father Governor of Balkh.
- 1855 Treaty of Peshawur between English and Afghans.
- 1856 Persians capture Herat.
- 1857 English Mission to Kandahar : Sepoy Mutiny.
- 1858 Shere Ali nominated Heir-Apparent.
- 1863 Dost Mahomed captures Herat : Death of Dost Mahomed.
- 1864 The War of the Succession : Abdur Rahman's flight to Bokhara.
- 1865 (June). Return of Abdur Rahman.
- 1866 Afzul proclaimed Ameer.
- 1867 Death of Ameer Afzul : Mahomed Azim, Ameer.
- 1868 Shere Ali recovers Cabul.
- 1869 Defeat and Flight of Abdur Rahman : Death of Azim : Ameer Shere Ali meets Lord Mayo.
- 1870 Abdur Rahman at Samarcand.
- 1871 Yakoob Khan in rebellion.
- 1872 Lord Mayo assassinated : Seistan Boundary Commission.
- 1873 Anglo-Afghan Agreement : Russians capture Khiva.
- 1874 Imprisonment of Yakoob Khan.
- 1876 Lord Lytton Viceroy : Russians annex Khokand.
- 1877 Conference at Peshawur.
- 1878 Russian Mission at Cabul : English Mission turned back Lord Lytton declares war.
- 1879 Death of Shere Ali : Treaty of Gandamak : Cavagnari Mission massacred : Abdur Rahman leaves Samarcand.

- 1880 Abdur Rahman proclaimed Ameer: Battle of Maiwand: British troops withdrawn from Cabul.
- 1881 Scobleff captures Geok Tepe: English evacuate Kandahar: Abdur Rahman defeats Ayoob.
- 1882 Death of General Kaufmann: M. Lessar at Merve.
- 1883 Lord Ripon grants Subsidy to Abdur Rahman: Afghans occupy Shignan.
- 1884 Merve Turkomans submit to Russia: Anglo-Russian Boundary Commission.
- 1885 Abdur Rahman meets Lord Dufferin at Rawulpindi: the Panjdeh incident.
- 1886 Ghilzai revolt begins.
- 1887 Russians occupy Kerki: Ayoob Khan's attempt to return to Afghanistan.
- 1888 First train crosses Oxus Bridge: Is'hak's rebellion: Attempt to assassinate Abdur Rahman.
- 1889 Rebellion in Badakshan.
- 1890 English annex Zhob Valley.
- 1891 Rising of Hazaras.
- 1892 Fight at Somatash: Sher Afzul invades Chitral.
- 1893 Abdication of the Khan of Kelat: The Durand Mission.
- 1894 The Hon. G. Curzon at Cabul.
- 1895 Anglo-Russian Agreement concerning the Pamirs.

THE AMEER ABDUR RAHMAN

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

"The great names and writings of clever authors, by reason of their praise of famous kings, are stamped on the page of time."

KHONDAMÍR'S HUMÁYÚN-NÁMA.

Birth and parentage—The Ameer's father—The land and the people—
Origin of the Afghans—Historical retrospect—The Durani empire
—Rise of the Barakzais—Dost Mahomed—Asiatic character.

THE biographer of Ameer Abdur Rahman Khan, Barakzai, G.C.B., G.C.S.I., is confronted with a difficulty at the very beginning. The date and place of this great man's birth are alike unknown. According to one account, he was born about the year 1830, and fought against the English during the first Sikh war. This, however, is scarcely possible. A Russian writer, who knew Abdur Rahman in Samarcand, says that he was born in 1844, which is far more likely to be correct. No doubt it was what the Ameer himself said; and many years afterwards Abdur Rahman gave exactly the same information to his English physician. It may be worth mentioning that Sir John Kaye was unable to fix the date of Dost Mahomed's birth, and could only suggest that this event took place between the years 1788 and 1793.

The father of Abdur Rahman was Mahomed Afzul Khan, the son of Ameer Dost Mahomed by a woman of the Bangash, one of the tribes on the Punjab frontier. Afzul was born in 1811, during the days when his father was still a soldier of fortune. In 1837 he and his half brother, Akbar, were sent by their father at the head of a strong force, to attack the Sikhs who had occupied Jamrud, in the Khyber Pass. A battle was fought in which Runjit Singh lost his bravest general, and Afzul greatly distinguished himself. It was about this time that the famous Maharaja of the Punjab wrote of his Afghan rival: "His ear of sagacity is closed by the cotton of negligence. When it is of no avail to him, he will bite the hand of sorrow with the teeth of repentance." In 1839, when an English army invaded Afghanistan, to depose Dost Mahomed and replace Shah Shuja on the throne, Afzul, in command of a body of horsemen, marched southwards to oppose Sir John Keane's advance, and was in the neighbourhood of Ghuzni in July, 1839, when that historic citadel was taken by storm. On Dost Mahomed's flight to Bokhara, Afzul accompanied him. They returned to Afghanistan in the following year, and it was Afzul who on August 30, 1841, attacked the British outpost at Bajgah. He no doubt took part also in the engagements which followed, including the action at Parwandarra on November 2, when General Sale was defeated by Dost Mahomed's troops. A few days after that victory, which he did not dare to follow up, Dost Mahomed rode into Cabul, attended by a single horseman, and surrendered himself to Sir William Macnaghten. He was followed by Afzul Khan; and father and son

were deported to India, where they lived under surveillance until the beginning of 1843.

As already stated, there is reason to believe that Abdur Rahman, Afzul's more celebrated son, was born a year after Dost Mahomed recovered his kingdom. His mother was a daughter of the Nawab Samand Khan, at that time a conspicuous figure in Afghan politics. In March, 1852, Afzul was appointed by Dost Mahomed governor of the province of Balkh, which had been conquered a year or two earlier, and he held this post down to the time of his father's death. It may be assumed, therefore, that Abdur Rahman passed his boyhood in the country north of the Hindu Kush. This period of his life, however, remains a blank, and the earliest mention that can be found of him in official or other records is the statement that in the autumn of 1863 he suppressed a rising in Kunduz, the homeland of the Kattaghan Usbegs. This would have been about a month or two after the Ameer Dost Mahomed "left this world for Paradise," and before the civil war broke out in which the young *sirdar* first won distinction. From that period onwards the story of Abdur Rahman's life is full of strange vicissitudes and striking incident; while it furnishes, moreover, a key to much that would otherwise be inexplicable in the annals of the British government of India. It is not, perhaps, a story that will be read with unmixed delight. Indeed, one may turn to page after page of Afghan history, and each is stained by the shameless record of intrigue, treachery, and violence. Still more depressing are those which treat of England's past dealings with Afghanistan, for there too often we

discern the inevitable consequences of faltering purpose and inopportune interference. On the other hand, fortunately, there is much that may be told with no feeling of dissatisfaction. If at the present time there is a fair prospect that Afghanistan will continue to enjoy the blessings of peace, prosperity, and independence, it is due to the capacity of Abdur Rahman, and to the statecraft of his allies and protectors, who, when they do make a mistake, never fail to retrieve it.

A few words must be said about the people and the country over which it was Abdur Rahman's destiny to rule. In extent Afghanistan is rather larger than the empire of Austro-Hungary, with Bosnia and Hertzogovina thrown in. The population amounts to about a quarter of the population of Hungary. The country is described as a vast upraised plateau, crossed by broad mountain ridges, which reach an elevation three or four times that of Mont Blanc. It is a land of extremes, of pleasant valleys, and rugged peaks soaring above the line of eternal snow, with a winter of intense cold, and a summer when it is too hot to sleep indoors. At Cabul, in the hot-weather months, the temperature ranges from 90° to 100° Fahrenheit; in the winter the snow lies on the ground for months together, and the people sleep huddled close to their stoves. From about the middle of December till March, the passes over the Hindu Kush leading from Cabul to Afghan-Turkestan are closed to all but travellers on foot.

Of the inhabitants of this favoured region it has been said that nothing could be finer than their physique, nothing worse than their morals. Tall, robust, and well-

formed, they are turbulent, intractable, and vindictive. "They live," says Ferrier, "always armed to the teeth, and ready for the attack, always animated by the most ferocious instincts"; and the national character has hardly changed since the French traveller wrote. "Though they are full of duplicity," he added, "one is, nevertheless, frequently liable to be taken in by their apparent frankness. Manly and plain-spoken in their bearing towards strangers of high, accredited position, they are derisive and tyrannical towards the weak. Their inordinate avarice alone would be a strong argument in favour of the theory, which is otherwise incredible, that they are descended from the lost tribes of Palestine." The late Sir Bartle Frere, we are told by his biographer, held that the charge of faithlessness, so often brought against the Afghans, was altogether unfounded; but against this must be set the opinion of General Jacob, that as a people they are utterly untrustworthy, "never to be depended upon in war, and quarrelsome, unruly, and murderous in peace." The late General Reynell Taylor, who was no less anxious than Sir Bartle Frere to do justice to the Afghans, was fain to confess that, though the men have many fine qualities, though life among them is pleasant and genial, and though they are capable of chivalry and kindness, "they are not to be trusted when clouds rise on the political horizon."

The origin of the Afghans is a problem over which Oriental scholars continue to dispute. The weight of evidence is in favour of the theory that the true Afghans, in the limited sense of the term, are a race of Jewish or Arab extraction. More or less mixed up with them are

Pathans, of Indian descent, Ghilzais, who are identified with the Turk tribe of Kalagi, the Aryan Tajiks, the Mongolian Hazaras, and an assortment of other races. In the early centuries of the Christian era the Afghans and Ghilzais invaded the country then held by Pathans, adopted their language and many of their customs, and gave a name to the nation. "Thus," says Mr. Ibbetson, "the Afghans and Ghilzais are Pathans by virtue of their language, though not of Pathan origin; the Tajiks and Hazaras, who have retained their Aryan speech, are not Pathans; while all five are Afghans by virtue of location, though only one of them is of Afghan race."* The true Afghans, according to their own traditions, trace their descent from Afghana, the son of Jeremiah, the son of Saul. Afghana, it is said, was Solomon's Commander-in-Chief. They were transported from Syria to Persia by Nebuchadnezzar, and thence emigrated to the mountains of Ghor, and what is now the country of the Hazaras. They were converted to Islam by a party of their own tribe, who had gone to Arabia under a leader named Wais, and had there fought for the prophet Mahomed. This is the story told by the Afghans themselves; but, as will be seen when we come to speak of the Barakzais, the tribe to which the Ameer Abdur Rahman belongs, some authorities give a very different account of the origin of the Afghans.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the country now known as Afghanistan was partly under the dominion of the Kings of Persia, partly under that of the great Moghuls of Delhi. When the Moghuls were at

* *The Ethnology of the Punjab*, by DENZIL IBBETSON.

the height of their power, they held Cabul and Kandahar, Balkh and Badakshan ; and India was thus secure from the invasion of any conquering horde from Central Asia. At the end of the seventeenth century, both Kandahar and Herat belonged to the potentate, whom our forefathers called the Persian Sophy. In 1706 an Afghan chieftain, Mir Waiz, the Ghilzai, headed an insurrection against the Persian Governor of Kandahar ; and in 1722 the son of Mir Waiz, with an army of Afghans, invaded Persia, and overthrew the Suffavi Shah. Four or five years later, the Afghan invaders were driven back by the Turkoman, Nadir Shah, who in his turn made himself master of Afghanistan and the Punjab. Out of the anarchy that followed on Nadir Shah's death, in 1747, arose the modern kingdom of Afghanistan, founded by Ahmad Shah, a chief of the Sadozais. At the head of a body of horsemen, Ahmad Shah had joined Nadir in the invasion of India, and was in camp with him when the conqueror of the Moghul fell by the hand of an assassin. Immediately on the event, the Afghan, with a few followers, seized all the treasure he could lay his hands on, including the great diamond, the Koh-i-nur, purchased the goodwill of other Afghan chiefs, and proclaimed himself King of the Duranis. He was crowned on a rock overlooking the city of Kandahar. He reigned six-and-twenty years over a kingdom that extended at last from Meshed, in Khorassan, to Lahore, in the Punjab. With the great Moghul of Delhi, he made a treaty by which the rivers Indus and Sutlej became the boundary between the Indian and Afghan possessions.

Ahmad Shah died in 1773, and within thirty years

of his death his feeble descendants had allowed their authority to slip away from their hands into those of their more capable Vizier, the leader of the Barakzai tribe, which, like the tribe of Sadozai, is a branch of the great Durani division of the Afghan people. Into the vexed question of the origin of the great Durani clan, with its subdivisions of Barakzai, Populzai, &c, it would be dangerous to enter. The designation Durani was adopted by Ahmad Shah, on account, it is said, of a vision that came to a famous saint of those days. According to the late Surgeon-General Bellew, however, Durani is only a modern form of the antient Drangai, a people mentioned by Arrian as dwelling on the banks of the Helmund, at the time of Alexander the Great's invasion. The Barakzai Dr. Bellew identified with the Barkaioi of whom Herodotus heard, and who, according to the Greek traveller and historian, were transported to Asia from their original homeland in Lybia. This is going rather far back, and we must be content to know that the Barakzai at the present time are the most powerful tribe in Afghanistan.

The first Barakzai Vizier, Páinda Khan, and his son and successor, Fattah Khan, were content with the substance of power, the Sadozai Shahs retaining the title. Dost Mahomed, a younger son of Páinda Khan's, borne to him by a Kizzilbash* wife, was more ambitious, and after a long struggle made himself master of Cabul and Kandahar, that is of Eastern Afghanistan. In 1834 he assumed the title of Ameer-ul-Muminim, or Commander of the Faithful, and except for the brief interval during

* The Kizzilbashis are of Persian origin.



DOST MAHOMED KHAN.

which the Sadozai, Shah Shuja, reigned with the help of a British army, the rulers of Cabul have been known as Ameers to this day. The word Ameer, in its primary sense, simply means leader, and may be borne by any military chief; but there have been Commanders of the Faithful ever since the earliest days of Mahomedanism. The Kaliph Omar styled himself Ameer-ul-Muminim, and the designation has also been adopted by the Sultans of Turkey, and by the rulers of Bokhara.

Of the history of Afghanistan during the reign of Dost Mahomed, of his quarrel with the English and his expulsion from the kingdom, of his return after the failure of our attempt to restore the Sadozai dynasty, and of the gradual consolidation of his power over all the provinces now governed by his grandson Abdur Rahman, nothing need be said here. The story may be read in the pages of Kaye, though as regards the relations between Dost Mahomed and the Government of India, that writer's narrative is not always above suspicion of partiality.

Dost Mahomed was a vigorous and capable ruler. His audacity and success were vastly admired by his subjects, while his simple manners and rough and ready justice made him very popular. Although he had the good sense to perceive the advantages of a friendly alliance with the English, he was, nevertheless, careful to keep his country a close borough of Islam. "His manners," it was said by an Englishman who knew him during his exile in Calcutta, "evinced great urbanity and politeness, and an exercise of those easy and seducing ways which so effectually engage the affections." Both in person and

character his grandson Abdur Rahman closely resembles him. They could neither of them be described as typical Afghans, and it looks extremely probable that in the next generation there will be little or no trace left of Afghan descent, so far as outward appearance goes.

Of the materials which are available for a life of Abdur Rahman, it may be noted that, as far as quantity goes, there is abundance. His antecedents and exploits, his daily acts, and even the secrets of his council chamber, are being constantly revealed to the inquiring reader. The difficulty is, that half of what we hear about him is altogether unworthy of credence. Much of it comes from Asiatic sources, either from friends who find adulation profitable, or more often from enemies whose ingenuity in the invention of stories to his discredit is inexhaustible. Nor must implicit trust be placed in the statements of Europeans, whether officials or private persons, who at one time or another have had opportunities of watching the course of events in Afghanistan from points of vantage. Even to Englishmen who have spent half their lives in the East, the principles that form the character of an Asiatic and guide his actions are as often as not unrevealed mysteries. We may see, or imagine we see, the surface of things, and the truth is absolutely different. We may applaud an Eastern potentate who is quick to adopt such features of our civilization as railways and telegraphs, trial by jury, or free education for the masses ; and we may think how happy and prosperous his subjects should be, how they must needs love such a ruler, and how he does it all out of sheer admiration of our superior intelligence. The notion that an Asiatic likes or respects

us for our steam-engines is the vainest of illusions, and what we style moral and material progress is to him foolishness. We are equally astray when our pity is too lavishly bestowed on people who are supposed to be the victims of a corrupt or tyrannical administration. The Asiatic — except, perhaps, in Japan — is first of all a conservative, in the next place a fatalist. The evils he is accustomed to are preferable, in his eyes, to blessings which come in the guise of novelties. In considering the character of a ruler like Abdur Rahman, these are things which ought not to be forgotten.

Merely to set down in due order the bare facts of his career is no easy matter. Even in official records there is a large proportion of pure fiction, evolved from the imagination of native agents and news-writers; while this uncertain element enters still more largely into the information supplied by newspaper correspondents. Whether the Ameer's autobiography, if it is ever published, will throw any light on the obscurer passages of his life remains to be seen. In the present narrative an attempt will be made first to describe his earlier adventures, and then to show how he gradually came to hold his present position as the ruler of a united Afghanistan, and the ally of the British Government of India. Special attention will be paid to the origin and nature of the relationship that exists between the two Powers. This is frequently misunderstood, yet surely it is a matter of some importance that Englishmen should know to what extent we are pledged to defend Abdur Rahman and his kingdom against foreign aggression, and whether the obligations that have been incurred are subject to qualification or conditions.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY ENDEAVOURS.

"Inspired as I was with an ambition for conquest and wide dominion, I would not, for one or two defeats, sit down and look idly around me."

MEMOIRS OF SULTAN BABER.

Death of Dost Mahomed—The War of Succession—Abdur Rahman's father—Attitude of the Indian Government—Battle of Bajgah—Shere Ali's treachery—Flight of Abdur Rahman—The Ameer of Bokhara—John Lawrence and Shere Ali—Battle of Kajbaz—The heir-apparent killed—Abdur Rahman enters Cabul—Battle of Shaikhabad—Abdur Rahman's father proclaimed Ameer—Masterly inactivity—A Reign of Terror—Battle of Kelat-i-Ghilzai—Ameer Afzul acknowledged by the Viceroy—Fighting in the North—Abdur Rahman's victory—Death of Ameer Afzul—Ameer Azim Khan—Abdur Rahman besieges Maimana—A message to the Russians—Yakoob Captures Kandahar—Sir Henry Rawlinson's Memorandum—Shere Ali recovers his throne—Abdur Rahman a fugitive—A vision.

ABDUR RAHMAN'S grandfather, Dost Mahomed—the "great Ameer," as his subjects were used to call him—died at Herat on June 9, 1863, within a fortnight after he had captured the city by storm. Of the sixteen sons he left behind him, five at least aspired to reign in his stead; while of the remainder, some six or seven hoped to rule over separate and independent principalities. There ensued a fratricidal war, long, and at times fierce, for the throne; and although it might



SHERE ALI KHAN.

be tedious to relate the details, mention must be made of the main incidents, because Abdur Rahman played a prominent part therein. He was now nineteen; but young as he was, the day was close at hand when he would be counted among the four or five foremost men in the kingdom. Dost Mahomed five years before his death had appointed his son, Shere Ali, as heir-apparent, passing over two elder sons, Afzul and Azim. There was sufficient reason for the choice. The mother of Shere Ali was of high lineage, being a lady of the royal tribe; whereas Afzul and Azim were the children of Dost Mahomed by a Bangash woman from Kurram. When the great Ameer died, Afzul, the father of Abdur Rahman, was governor of Balkh, the northern province of the kingdom, and Azim governor of Kurram, toward the British frontier. At first they both feigned to acquiesce in the succession of Shere Ali. Afzul in particular was loud in his professions of loyalty to his half-brother. Azim, who was with the army before Herat, likewise seemed content with the new order of things.

But any hope there might have been of a peaceful succession was soon to be dissipated. The body of the dead Ameer had hardly been laid in its marble tomb when Azim abruptly left the camp at Herat, and went off to a hill fortress in his own province, there to get ready for active opposition. At the same time Afzul, in the north, encouraged, it was said, by the Usbeg Ameer of Bokhara beyond the Oxus, was preparing to make a descent on Cabul. The two brothers—both sons of the same mother—were possibly agreed as to what should be done. Both at any rate were in no mood to let the dominion of the

Barakzais pass quietly to Shere Ali. Afzul, the elder, was reputed to be the bravest of all the sons of Dost Mahomed. He had ruled his province with vigour, he had won distinction as a soldier, and he was popular. Azim, described by one who knew him as a man of commanding stature and dignified presence, had the reputation of being an adroit diplomatist. To the Afghan mind, perhaps, skilful diplomacy consists mainly in changing sides at the right moment. However, it was Azim who, in 1857, exhorted Dost Mahomed to hold his hand when the Afghans, almost to a man, were clamouring to be led against the English, hard pressed by the mutinous Sepoys. "As a good Mussulman," said Azim, "you may properly wage war against the infidel Feringhi; but before committing yourself to so hazardous an enterprise, count well your chances of success. We have had the English here before, when the Punjab lay wide between us, but now they stand at our very door; if you bring them here again, *Inshallah*, they will stay here." It was fortunate for us that Azim and not Shere Ali, whose voice was all for war, was listened to.

Afzul and Azim were now Shere Ali's most formidable rivals. The other competitors for the throne do not require mention here. The plot, if there was one, developed slowly, and it was not till the following January (1864) that Afzul proclaimed himself Ameer, and ordered the *Khutba* to be read in his name. Azim, in the meantime, had written to our Commissioner at Peshawur, saying that he meant to join with Afzul in resisting Shere Ali, and asking our assistance. Shere Ali himself had marched to Cabul, and had also written

to the English ; and in December, 1863, he had received a letter from the acting Governor-General, Sir William Denison, acknowledging him as the Dost's successor. It is a pity that this recognition was not more prompt. Unfortunately, however, when the news of Dost Mahomed's death reached India, Lord Elgin, the father of the present Viceroy, was himself ill.* It was urged afterwards, moreover, that the Indian Government had no option but to wait till the new Ameer was accepted by his subjects ; and that by the terms of the treaty with Dost Mahomed, it was precluded from interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. As it happened, Shere Ali profited little at the time, or for some few years to come, from the hesitating friendship of his English neighbours. By the spring of 1864, as we have seen, Afzul had proclaimed himself Ameer in Balkh, while Azim was collecting an army in Kurram. Another brother was organizing a revolt in Kandahar.

Azim's time was not yet come. He was defeated by Shere Ali's troops, and driven to seek a refuge with the English in India, who, remembering how he had served them well during the stormy days of the Mutiny, received him kindly, and for the present he drops out of the story. What took place in Balkh may be told to a large extent in the words of Abdur Rahman, who, some years afterwards, wrote an account of these events for the edification of the Russian Governor-General, General Kaufmann.† According to Abdur Rahman, Shere Ali,

* Lord Elgin died at Dharmasala, Nov. 20, 1863.

† This portion of his autobiography is quoted at some length in Colonel Soboleff's *History of the Afghan War*. See Appendix I.

as soon as the Dost died, conceived the idea of securing his own position by promiscuous fratricide, and it was this that led the Dost's other sons to revolt. Azim having been disposed of, Shere Ali marched against Afzul. In June, 1864, the two half-brothers met at Bajgah, 64 miles north of the famous Caves and Pass of Bamian; but the battle that ensued was indecisive. Abdur Rahman did not take part in this engagement, as his father had left him behind as commandant at Takhtapul, where he seems to have busied himself in the manufacture of weapons of war. A couple of days after the fight at Bajgah, Shere Ali sent envoys to offer terms of peace, and after further negotiations the rivals were reconciled.

Ameer Shere Ali swore solemnly on the Koran that he would treat Afzul fairly, and leave him in possession of the governorship which had been conferred upon him by their father, Dost Mahomed. The reconciliation was not lasting. Shere Ali seems to have fancied, and perhaps with good reason, that his nephew, the commandant of Takhtapul, was intriguing against him; and bidding the young Sirdar "give up all his proud schemes," he told him to go at once to Cabul or abide the consequences. Abdur Rahman refused to stir, and the Ameer's wrath was turned against the father. He ordered one of his followers to take a pair of leg irons, and bring Afzul before him in fetters. The Barakzai Sirdar would not obey, though the Ameer was furious. A general was then sent to carry out the command. Repairing to Afzul's quarters, he explained, with every mark of sympathy and respect, his ungrateful errand.

"It is the will of God," said the Prince ; and having spat thrice on his own beard, he stretched out his legs and quietly submitted while the irons were made fast to them. Abdur Rahman, when the story was told him, at first thought of attacking his uncle, the Ameer ; but a letter reached him, purporting to come from Afzul, and exhorting him to fly the country. "In accordance," he writes, "with what I supposed was my father's order, and as the road to Cabul was shut against me, I swam across the Oxus and set my face toward Bokhara."

Shere Ali having appointed a nephew, Fattah Mahomed,* to be governor of Balkh, returned in triumph to Cabul, taking Afzul with him, a prisoner in bonds. His treachery and the violation of his oath was condemned even by his own people as an act of peculiar perfidy. According to Ferrier, the Afghans enter into engagements, bind themselves by the most sacred oaths to abide by their pledged word, transcribe it on a Koran whereto their seal is affixed, and then perjure themselves with inconceivable effrontery. There must have been something unusually bad about the perjury of Shere Ali.

Though they live in the strict seclusion of the zenana, Afghan ladies often take a keen interest in public affairs, and know how to make their influence felt. The Bibi Marwarid, wife of Afzul Khan, and stepmother of Abdur Rahman, was a lady of considerable intelligence and undaunted spirit. She now wrote to her brother-in-law, Azim, in India, sending him a remittance of 25,000 rs., and telling him that the time was come to show his

* Son of the once famous Akbar Khan, the murderer of Sir William Macnaghten.

valour. If he possessed none, she said, he had best spend the money on the purchase of a shroud for himself; for in that case not another rupee would he get from her. Azim may not have needed the persuasion of feminine sneers; but the money was no doubt a welcome addition to his resources. Yet for some while he could do nothing but carry on a correspondence with the malcontents in Afghanistan; and even when he left his asylum in the Punjab and recrossed the border, he was fain to hide himself at first in the Waziri hills and there bide his chance. Not till the latter end of 1865 did he find an opportunity for once again taking a hand in the tumultuous game of Afghan politics. Travelling by perilous and difficult ways through Swat and Chitral, he reached the province of Badakshan, on the Upper Oxus, where he was made welcome by the chief, who not only gave him a sister in marriage, but, what was more to the purpose, lent him the services of two thousand horsemen. He was now ready to take the field. Nor had Abdur Rahman been idle in Bokhara. The chief of this state was the son of the bloodthirsty fanatic who put Stoddart and Conolly to death, and who kept Dost Mahomed in durance. "The Butcher"—to give him the very appropriate name by which he was known in Central Asia—had died some five years before, and his son, Muzaffar-ed-din, was reigning in his stead. The Russians had not yet reduced Muzaffar-ed-din to a position of abject dependence; so that his protection was worth having. He was a rigid Mussulman; and when his guest and son-in-law, for he had given Abdur Rahman a daughter to wife, showed him the identical Koran upon which

Shere Ali had perjured himself, he swore that such impiety should not go unpunished. The case was laid before the college of Mahomedan divines, and that body having solemnly pronounced sentence of excommunication on the faithless Afghan, the Ameer announced in durbar that he would champion Abdur Rahman's cause at the head of ten thousand men. As it turned out, he did not go himself; but in June, 1865, Abdur Rahman, with his assistance, was able to start for the Oxus and Afghanistan with a considerable force at his back, composed partly of troops raised in Bokhara, and partly of refugees from his father's army who had joined him in exile. In his autobiography he says: "I who had during the space of eleven months put my trust in God, left Bokhara with two hundred men, and marching along the Shirabad Road came out at the town of Akcha," which is in Northern Afghanistan. Faiz Mahomed, the Afghan commandant of Akcha, had allowed him to cross the Oxus without opposition, and had then openly declared in his favour. The example was followed in other parts of the country; and Abdur Rahman, without striking a blow, found himself master of Balkh, and the provinces north of the Hindu Kush.

Shere Ali had been busy elsewhere. In the South, at Kandahar, his full brothers, the impetuous Amin Khan and the shifty Sharif Khan, had formed a coalition against him. After the customary swearing on the Koran to be faithful to each other, they marched northwards from Kandahar in May, 1865. Shere Ali advanced from Cabul to check them; having first written to Sir John Lawrence, now Governor General, to tell him of his intention. Sir

John Lawrence, in his reply to this communication, expressed a pious hope "that the Ruler of all things would so order the course of events that a compromise might be effected among his Highness's relations, which would conduce to the prosperity of his country and the consolidation of his power." But events had gone beyond the stage of compromise. About the time that Abdur Rahman was starting from Bokhara, the Cabul and Kandahar armies met in battle at Kajbaz, on June 5, 1865. The issue was a victory for Shere Ali, but it was a victory dearly won. After four hours' hard fighting, the Kandahar troops seemed to be winning. Shere Ali, with bitter words, reproached his son and heir-apparent, Mahomed Ali, for his lack of energy; and the young prince, stung by his father's taunts, put himself at the head of a few men, and dashed into the fray. Before long he was face to face with his uncle, Amin. The two fought hand to hand, with their swords; till Amin, drawing a pistol from his girdle, shot the heir-apparent through the head. A few seconds afterwards Amin himself fell, being killed by Shere Ali's foot soldiers. The heir-apparent's desperate charge was the turning point of the day. The Kandahar troops wavered and fell back; the Ameer Shere Ali held the field. But grief, he said, for the loss of his son, who had been the chief hope of his faction, "clouded all the joy of victory"; and it was long before his spirits recovered from the blow. Reaching Kandahar a fortnight afterwards, he stayed there for months, buried in the deepest gloom and despondency. He was seldom heard to speak, save when he would threaten to cut the throat of every

man in Cabul and Kandahar, or would talk of leaving his country and seeking a rest from his cares in British or Russian territory or in holy Arabia. Once, about midnight, the Ameer threw himself into a tank, hoping to find, he said, the body of his dead son. He was rescued with difficulty by the guard. In the bazaars the rumour ran that Shere Ali had gone mad.

Fortune seemed all in Abdur Rahman's favour. We have seen how he had made himself master of the country between the Oxus and the Hindu Kush. On November 30, 1865, he was joined at Bamian by Azim Khan, who was no less eager than himself to march on Cabul. At the capital, the situation might well have been deemed hopeless. Many of the Sirdars secured their own safety by coming to terms with the advancing army, whose leaders, oddly enough, professed to be acting on behalf, not of the imprisoned Afzul, but of the Ameer of Bokhara. On February 24, 1866, Azim Khan and Abdur Rahman entered Cabul, most of the garrison having surrendered or fled.

The news that Cabul had fallen served to arouse Shere Ali from his lethargy; but his enemies were still too many for him. He marched, indeed, with the strongest force he could collect to Ghuzni, and some little way beyond; and then, at Shaikhabad, on May 10, 1866, he sustained a crushing defeat* at the hands of Abdur Rahman, who had advanced from Cabul to oppose him. "The mercy of God was so great," says Abdur Rahman, "that Shere Ali was defeated; and my father and his fellow prisoners, who were at Ghuzni in charge of a guard of two hundred men, having heard of my victory,

escaped. . . . I brought my father to Cabul, where I placed him on the throne of the Ameers." Shere Ali, who had lost everything—guns, elephants, and camp equipage—at Shaikhabad, galloped off with a handful of horsemen, past Ghuzni towards Kandahar, where, with revived energy, he set to work to retrieve the disaster.

Abdur Rahman's brilliant victory was celebrated at Cabul with a general illumination and much firing of guns; and on May 21, 1866, his father Afzul was installed as Ameer in the Bala Hissar. The native agent who represented the Indian Government was told to offer his congratulations. The policy of the Indian Government at the time, may be indicated by an extract from a Foreign Office despatch, dated Simla, April 17, 1866:

"It is difficult," the Governor-General in Council observed, "to foresee what may be the turn of events in Cabul. The Ameer, Shere Ali, may recover his power. He has shown that he in many respects possesses the qualities of a ruler, but he has also considerable defects. There can be little doubt that he has alienated from himself most of the influential chiefs; and his conduct towards his brother, Sirdar Mahomed Afzul Khan, whom he treacherously imprisoned after the most solemn promises and oaths of full security, shows that no faith can be placed in him. Still Afghan chiefs are not to be judged by the principles of Christendom, nor can we be sure that the nobles and people may not again rally round the Ameer (*i.e.* Shere Ali) if he shows resolution and vigour."

Sir John Lawrence went on to say what, in his opinion, ought to be done, or rather what ought not to be done:

"In the opinion of His Excellency in Council, sound policy dictates that we should not be hasty in giving up

the Ameer's cause as lost. We should await the development of events, and for the present continue to recognise Shere Ali as the Ameer of Afghanistan. If the Ameer fail in his attempt to recover Cabul, and Sirdar Mahomed Azim Khan establishes his power and makes overtures to the British Government, the latter can then be recognised as the ruler of such parts of the country as he may possess. It should be our policy to show clearly that we will not interfere in the struggle, that we will not aid either party, that we will leave the Afghans to settle their own quarrels, and that we are willing to be on good terms with the nation and with their rulers *de facto*."

This exposition of the principle of masterly inactivity was written shortly before Shere Ali's defeat at Shaikhabad. Two months after that event John Lawrence wrote to Afzul Khan, addressing him, not as Ameer, but as Wali of Cabul, in the following terms :

"It is incumbent on me to tell your Highness that it would be inconsistent with the fame and reputation of the British Government to break off its alliance with the Ameer Shere Ali Khan, who has given it no offence, so long as he retains his authority and power over a large portion of Afghanistan. That Ameer still rules in Kandahar and Herat. My friend! the relations of this Government are with the actual rulers of Afghanistan. If your Highness is able to consolidate your Highness's power in Cabul, and is sincerely desirous of being a friend and ally of the British Government, I shall be ready to accept your Highness as such ; but I cannot break the existing engagements with Ameer Shere Ali Khan, and I must continue to treat him as the ruler of that portion of Afghanistan over which he retains control. Sincerity and fair dealing induce me to write thus plainly and openly to your Highness."

And so Afzul Khan, the father of Abdur Rahman, began to reign at Cabul. He was little more than a tool in the hands of his clever brother Azim, much to the

chagrin of Abdur Rahman, who took no trouble to disguise his feelings. The authority thus exercised did not extend however very far. It was acknowledged at Cabul and at Ghuzni; but Shere Ali held Kandahar and Herat; while to the north the Governor of Balkh at first declared himself independent, and later (in September, 1866) announced that he held the country for Shere Ali. To make matters worse, Abdur Rahman's father, the titular Ameer of Cabul, opened the door of enjoyment, as a Mahomedan chronicler would write, to the delights of strong drink. "A sot and imbecile," John Lawrence called him. "Drink wine in moderation, that you may fight with lions; not in excess, that the crow may pluck out your eyes." Afzul paid no heed to this Turki maxim. It was said that he was intoxicated every day of his life, and could never be seen in public after four in the afternoon. Azim, on the other hand, was too energetic. Our native agent at Cabul wrote that the Cabulis were driven almost to desperation by his forced loans, confiscations, and excessive taxes. Intrigues and counter-intrigues, imprisonments and executions, were of daily occurrence. One instance among many may be cited. Mahomed Rafik Khan was the foremost soldier, statesman, and diplomatist of the time; but he had been friendly to the English, with whom Azim was enraged because in Sir John Lawrence's letter, already quoted, Afzul was styled not Ameer but Wali. In August, 1866, by Azim's order, Mahomed Rafik was suddenly arrested and strangled, all within the short space of an hour. His house and property were plundered, his women-folk were insulted and driven from their homes barefoot. His

corpse was flung naked and unwashed into a drain. Many other Sirdars suffered from the new tyranny; and it was reported that altogether no less than a hundred and fifty persons, great and small, were put in prison, from which many of them never passed out alive.

While Afzul, the Ameer, was drinking himself to death at Cabul, and Azim was inaugurating a reign of terror there, Shere Ali was again girding up his loins to strike a blow for the kingdom. The Kandahar bankers offered him a loan of a lakh of rupees, and his full brother, Sharif Khan, who since the battle of Kajbaz had changed sides more than once, but was now with him again, promised ten lakhs more. Thus provided with the sinews of war, Shere Ali raised a force of several thousand men, and on Christmas-day, 1866, once more set out from Kandahar for Cabul. Once more fortune failed him. Two days later, indeed, his advance guard drove back a detachment of the Cabul army, under Abdur Rahman; but on January 16, 1867, Shere Ali, having got as far as Kelat-i-Ghilzai, was there defeated by the combined forces of Abdur Rahman and Azim. Ten days later the victors entered Kandahar, Shere Ali having fled to Herat. In his autobiography Abdur Rahman takes all the credit for the victory at Kelat-i-Ghilzai, and makes no mention of his previous mishap. "God being on my side," he writes, "Shere Ali was again defeated, and my forces occupied Kandahar in the autumn of 1867." There is no reason, however, to doubt the accuracy of the reports quoted in the present narrative.

Afzul or his partizans were now in possession of Central and Southern Afghanistan, and on February 25, 1867,

Sir John Lawrence wrote to him, not as Wali, but as Ameer of Cabul and Kandahar, a further advance toward the title he coveted. The Governor-General said :

“My friend ! as I told your Highness in my former letter, the relations of the British Government are with the actual rulers of Afghanistan. Therefore, so long as Ameer Shere Ali Khan holds Herat, and maintains friendship with the British Government, I shall reciprocate his amity. But upon the same principle, I am prepared to recognize your Highness as Ameer of Cabul and Kandahar, and I frankly offer your Highness, in that capacity, the peace and goodwill of the British Government.”

By this time, however, the danger in the north had grown to alarming dimensions. The Governor of Balkh, Faiz Mahomed, as already stated, had declared in favour of Shere Ali. This Faiz Mahomed was the man who treacherously allowed Abdur Rahman to cross the Oxus in the middle of 1865. The young prince, when he himself advanced upon Cabul, left Faiz Mahomed in charge of the province, promising that he should never be disturbed. In the following year, having reason to believe that the promise would not be kept, the Governor returned to his allegiance to Shere Ali. In January, 1867, he defeated a force from Cabul which had been sent against him under the command of Azim's eldest son. In April he again defeated the Cabul troops, scattering them so effectually that their leader fled incontinently to the capital. Shere Ali, at Herat, was so encouraged by the news that he resolved to join forces with Faiz Mahomed, and the two met at Takhtapul in May. Had they then marched without

delay on Cabul, the capital in all probability would have been theirs; but Shere Ali spent the best part of the summer in trying to get help from Persia and from the Russians beyond the Oxus.

In the meantime Abdur Rahman had left Kandahar, and rejoined his father at Cabul. The Ameer Afzul Khan was now seriously ill, and Abdur Rahman begged hard to be appointed heir-apparent. But Afzul, his faculties dimmed by strong drink and sickness, would not listen; and, notwithstanding his son's passionate remonstrance, declared that nothing could be done without Azim, who was still at Kandahar. Azim's rather brutal reply was that he could not put fresh life into a dying man; and that Abdul Rahman had better march against Shere Ali and Faiz Mahomed, who by the end of August, 1867, were at last moving on Cabul. The advice was sound, and was taken. Abdur Rahman writes:

"Leaving my sick father, I advanced against the enemy. When I reached the Panjsir Pass, I met the troops of Shere Ali and Faiz Mahomed. The fight which ensued lasted from early morning till the hour of evening prayer, when Faiz Mahomed was killed by the fire of my guns. Shere Ali hereupon took to flight, and did not stop till he reached Balkh."

This battle was fought on September 13, 1867; and early in the following month Abdur Rahman returned in triumph to Cabul. Azim had by this time come up from Kandahar; but it was impossible, as he had said, to put fresh life into the body of a dying man. The Ameer Afzul, who had been sinking rapidly, was gathered to his fathers three days after Abdur Rahman's return from the

front. He died at the age of fifty-six after a reign which lasted sixteen months.

What followed at Cabul on the demise of Afzul is by no means clear. Abdur Rahman, his son, had hoped to succeed him ; but Azim, the dead Ameer's full brother, was too powerful a rival to be swept out of the way by a youth. According to one account it was the Bibi Marwarid, Afzul's widow, who persuaded her step-son to abandon his pretensions. The British agent at Cabul added further details. Azim, he wrote, at a secret interview, told the young prince that he was quite willing to acknowledge and obey him as Ameer, but Abdur Rahman, knowing that he himself had few followers, declined the offer, and promised to support Azim. And though we cannot know what intrigues went on in the Bala Hissar, it is certain that at the end of four days Azim was installed as Ameer, and his nephew made over to him, in the durbar, the sword of State, retaining for himself the office of Commander-in-Chief.

In the following month John Lawrence wrote to "His Highness Ameer Mahomed Azim Khan, Wali of Cabul and Kandahar," saying, "It has given me much pleasure to learn, that with the consent of the son of the late Ameer, Sirdar Abdur Rahman Khan, and the approval of the chiefs and people of the county, you have been installed as the successor of your late brother." The letter ended, "My friend, it is my earnest hope that this auspicious event may tend toward the consolidation and prosperity of the kingdom."

Abdur Rahman, after mourning his father forty days, re-crossed the Hindu Kush in the hope, no doubt, of

crushing the Shere Ali faction, and establishing himself as independent ruler of all the country between the mountain passes and the Oxus. Hearing of this movement, Shere Ali retired to Herat. It was late in the year, and Abdur Rahman's forces suffered terribly in the snow. He pushed on, however, and found the people in the central districts waiting "with their hands in their sleeves" for what might befall. In the west, however, where Shere Ali had still many adherents, things looked more stormy, and Abdur Rahman proceeded to attack Akcha and Maimana. At Akcha, he is said to have buried two recalcitrant chiefs alive in order to strike awe into the hearts of the people, who quickly tendered their submission. At the more important town of Maimana he was not so successful. The fortress stood a siege for upwards of a month, and only made terms on May 18, 1868, when the Usbeg chief handed over to Abdur Rahman a large sum in gold and a celebrated piece of ordnance known as the Jehanghiri cannon, a relic possibly of Moghul dominion. Abdur Rahman then fell back on Takhtapul.

Abdur Rahman states in his biography that at this time there arrived two envoys from Bokhara, whose ostensible object was to condole with him on the death of his father, Afzul; their real mission being to ask, on behalf of the Ameer of Bokhara, the loan of twelve thousand soldiers to help in the war against Russia. "I answered the Bokharan envoys," Abdur Rahman writes, "that I myself was desirous of obtaining the White Czar's friendship, and that I would not give their master the troops he asked for. All this time I had a great wish to send a trustworthy

envoy to the White Czar's country. In order to give expression to my friendly sentiments towards the Governor General of Russian-Turkestan, I despatched one of my personal attendants, by name Saiyyid Mahomed, so that the Governor General might be informed concerning me, and learn how I considered my own affairs bound up with the interests of the White Czar." This, it must be remembered, was written expressly for the edification of General Kaufmann. According to other authorities, Abdur Rahman's answer to the Bokharan envoys was that he would be glad to assist the Ameer of Bokhara, but could not do so whilst Maimana held out.

The delay at Maimana prevented Abdur Rahman marching to Herat and attacking Shere Ali there. This was what Shere Ali had hoped for. He had sent his energetic son, Yakoob Khan, to capture Kandahar ; and, Yakoob having succeeded in this enterprise, Shere Ali followed him, as soon as he heard that Abdur Rahman had retired from Maimana. Everything now favoured Shere Ali. The Ameer Azim had made himself intensely unpopular in Cabul, and instead of taking steps to support his nephew in the North, and to recover Kandahar in the South, was always engaged in private consultation with a mysterious personage known as Saiyyid Roumi, a Turk from Constantinople, who was a bitter enemy of the English, and was believed to be a secret emissary of the Russian Government. Shere Ali reached Kandahar on June 17, 1868, and within the next fortnight he was also in possession of the country as far as Ghuzni. It was now that Sir Henry Rawlinson wrote his memorandum on the state of affairs in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Far

better would it have been, he argued, had we acknowledged and assisted Shere Ali from the beginning. With our support he would have summarily suppressed the opposition of his brothers and nephew, and would have retained his power unbroken. The opportunity had been missed ; but there was now another opening for the adoption of a strong and consistent policy. The fortunes of Shere Ali were again in the ascendant. He was already in possession of Herat, Kandahar, and Ghuzni, and in all likelihood would be installed before long at Cabul.

"He should be secured," Sir Henry Rawlinson thought, "in our interests without further delay. . . . It may, indeed, be necessary to furnish him with arms and officers, or even to place an auxiliary contingent at his disposal ; but whatever the price it must be paid—of such paramount importance is it to obtain at the present time a dominant position at Cabul, and to close that avenue of approach against Russia."

It was not long before Sir Henry Rawlinson's forecast was fulfilled. Shere Ali, after a brief halt at Kandahar, advanced toward Ghuzni and Cabul, and on July 31st, 1868, the Ameer Azim marched out of the capital to meet him. Azim got as far as Ghuzni, when tidings came of treachery and disaster in his rear. Cabul was invested by a Barakzai Sirdar, who only a few weeks before had been serving under Abdur Rahman, and who now had seized the opportunity for changing sides. On the night of August 21, this Ishmail Khan took the Bala Hissar by assault, and on the following day occupied the city in the name of Shere Ali. Shere Ali himself, evading Azim's force, at once pushed on to the capital, where, on

September 11, he was received with acclamation. From that day forward he reigned as Ameer of Afghanistan. Sir John Lawrence at once congratulated him on his success, "alone due," the Viceroy wrote, "to your courage, ability, and firmness." What was even more to the purpose, he presented him with six lakhs of rupees and 3,500 stand of arms.

The defeated Ameer, Azim, fled to Afghan-Turkestan ; but though he and Abdur Rahman made one last attempt to retrieve the situation, the game was lost. In January, 1869, they were utterly and completely defeated in the Hazara Hills, and fled in despair to Waziristan on the Punjab border. According to his own account Abdur Rahman had succeeded in capturing a fort held by adherents of Shere Ali, but in so doing had been separated from Azim, with the main body of the force. Then Shere Ali appeared on the scene. "I saw," Abdur Rahman wrote, "that I should be taken prisoner, and I therefore fled with three-fourths of my men. I could not make my way to the main body, as communication had been cut off. Therefore, against my will, I was obliged to hide myself in the mountains. I was joined by my uncle, Mahomed Azim, in the Waziri country."

Thence they wrote to the British authorities asking for an asylum. The frontier officer to whom they applied, misunderstanding, it would appear, the wishes of his Government, made answer that if they once entered British territory they would never again be allowed to return to Afghanistan, and they straightway broke off the negotiations. But for this little mistake the whole course of Abdur Rahman's later life might have been

different. As it was, the fugitives resolved to seek a refuge elsewhere. Leaving the Waziri country, in March, 1869, just as Shere Ali was about to meet the new Viceroy, Lord Mayo, at Umballa, they headed for Biluchistan. On their way through the Kakar Pathan country, they were attacked by the marauding tribesmen and lost their baggage and five followers. From Biluchistan they journeyed to Seistan, and thence to Meshed, in Persia. One of them, the ex-Ameer, was never again to set foot in his own country; while Abdur Rahman was only to return after years of exile.

Here perhaps, may be fitly introduced a quaint but characteristic story about the early adventures of Abdur Rahman, which was taken down from the lips of an Afghan trader, only a year or two ago, in the Calcutta bazaar. Abdur Rahman had been compelled to fly from his enemies, who were numberless like the sands of the sea shore. And it befell that he had ridden ahead of the little band of faithful followers, and found himself in the depths of a vast wood. Presently he came to a brook, with water white like milk; and being weary both in mind and body, he dismounted, let his horse drink, and himself laid down to sleep. As he slept, there appeared to him a vision of a Peri, shining and exceeding fair to look upon, who, addressing him, spoke as follows: "Abdur Rahman, Ameer of Cabulistan, great are thy sorrows, but they shall fade away like clouds before the rising sun. My son, sore have been thy trials; but thou art proved courageous and a hero. Thou shalt regain thy crown and thy country, and thy kingdom shall be feared among the nations. Mighty nations will tempt

and persuade and threaten, but be of good cheer, pay no heed to the tempter. Thy country shall be an apple of discord between two strong governments, who both will stretch forth the hand of friendship. Abdur Rahman, beware, trust not the traitor, neither east nor west, north nor south. If thou putttest faith in the words of the foreigner, thy kingdom shall fall, thou and thine be led for ever into the land of bondage. Yet if thou art wise, thou shalt resemble the jewel set high on the mountain peak, and thy seed shall multiply as the stars in heaven."

CHAPTER III.

IN BANISHMENT.

"To Bokhara? art thou mad?"

Nought but bondage there is had."

SUFI.

At Holy Meshed—Death of ex-Ameer Azim Khan—Abdur Rahman goes to Bokhara—Letters to General Kaufmann—Abdur Rahman reaches Samarcand—A pensioner of the Czar—England and Russia—General Kaufmann and Shere Ali—Mr. Schuyler visits Abdur Rahman—Interviewed by other travellers—Possibilities of the future—Hopes and aspirations—The pains of exile—Is'hak Khan—An appeal to the Czar—Abdur Rahman's intrigues—Imprisonment of his emissary—Shere Ali alarmed—A Russian threat—Sharpening the sword of intention—The course of events—Rupture between Shere Ali and England.

"I AM like a wooden cup," Shere Ali once said of himself, "though it may fall many times, it will not be broken; whereas Abdur Rahman Khan resembles a bowl of china or porcelain which, when it falls, is straightway broken to pieces." For years after his flight from Afghanistan, it seemed as if the exile's shattered fortunes were past mending. We have seen how with his uncle, Azim Khan, after encountering many perils by the way, he had reached the holy city of Meshed, in the dominions of the Shah of Persia. There he heard tidings of the Ameer Shere Ali's visit to Lord Mayo at Umballa, in the Punjab, and received a very exaggerated account of the favours

which the British Government had bestowed on his more fortunate cousin. He was told, moreover, that Shere Ali had agreed, in deference to the wishes and apprehensions of his new-found friends, to disarm the Afghans, to banish every Sirdar suspected of enmity to the English, and to enrol a regular army of forty thousand men for the protection of the Afghan frontier against a Russian attack. Needless to say no such bargain was struck at the Umballa Conference; yet Abdur Rahman's version of the compact was gravely quoted in Russian books on the Central Asian question as an accurate summary of the proceedings.

Though the shrine of Imam Reza affords ample protection to princes in distress and soldiers of misfortune, Abdur Rahman did not stay long at Meshed. According to his own story the Shah of Persia invited him to proceed to Teheran; but preferring to try his luck with the Russians, he turned his face towards Turkestan, leaving his uncle, Azim, to accept the hospitality of the Centre of the Universe. "My uncle," he wrote, "started for Teheran, while I, having engaged a good guide, and placing my trust in God, set out for Khiva, where I arrived after a journey of forty days." The ex-Ameer, Azim Khan, only got as far as Shahrud, half-way between Meshed and Teheran, and died there on October 6, 1869. His overbearing temper and his disagreements with Abdur Rahman had cost him his throne. "Though a man of more character than Afzul Khan, he proved himself," John Lawrence said, "unfit to rule, and a soldier of little capacity and courage."

Khiva, when Abdur Rahman arrived there, was ruled

over by Sâiyyid Mahomed Rahim Khan, who, indeed, still governs as much of the Khanate as the Russians have left him. In 1869 he was an independent chief, but the enemy was at his gates, and was already reckoning up his offences. Two years earlier he had contested General Kaufmann's right to interfere with the country south of the Jaxartes or Syr Daria. He was accused of poisoning the wells on the road to Krasnovodsk on the Caspian, where the Russians had built a fort. Many Russian subjects were held in captivity in Khiva. Abdur Rahman in his autobiography described the Khan as a young man of five-and-twenty, and states that his Prime Minister was a Ghilzai from Afghanistan. There were, he wrote, fifteen thousand prisoners at Khiva; Afghans, Persians, and men of other nationalities. Some of these unfortunates told him that were Khiva attacked by any of its neighbours, they would join the invader, and thereby regain their liberty. Three years later, it will be remembered, a Russian expedition advanced to the capital, bombarded the fortifications, released the slaves, and compelled the Khan to sign a treaty which placed his kingdom under Russian control.

From Khiva, Abdur Rahman went to the adjoining State of Bokhara, where the Ameer, Muzaffar-ed-din, who was now anxious to stand well with Shere Ali, put him under some sort of restraint. It seemed extremely probable, indeed, that he would be delivered up to his enemies and relations at Cabul. Bokhara was clearly no safe place of refuge for the fugitive. Already, however, Abdur Rahman had opened communications with the Russians. In July, 1869, four or five months before he

reached Bokhara, one of his kinsmen—possibly his mother's brother, Haji Jan—had come to the Russian frontier post at Samarcand, having been sent either from Meshed or from Waziriland, to ask whether the fugitive would be allowed to enter Russian territory. In December, 1869, letters were received at Tashkend in which Abdur Rahman informed General Kaufmann, the Governor-General, that everywhere in Afghanistan the people were disaffected, and that if the Russians would only aid him he could quickly overthrow Shere Ali. "Then will Afghanistan," he said, "and its wealth belong to the White Czar." In another letter he wrote :

"You are aware that our country has been given over to the protection of the English. I place my hopes upon you, because I well know that the dominions of the White Czar are far more extensive than those of the Germans, the French, and the English all added together. On my arrival at Meshed, I discovered that Persia* had become subordinate to the protection of the White Czar, and I therefore travelled across the Steppe of the Tekke Turkomans to Khiva, with the object of making my way to you."

The substance of Abdur Rahman's messages to General Kaufmann, and of the Governor-General's replies thereto, was embodied in a memorandum, which was communicated to our ambassador at St. Petersburg. This document said :

"Abdur Rahman Khan, detained temporarily by the Ameer of Bokhara, in the town of Karshi, sent a confidential messenger with several letters to General

* Shere Ali, when on his way to Umballa, to meet Lord Mayo, talked to our officers about the subservience of Persia to the Russians, and remarked that British influence in the country was quite powerless against that of Russia.

Kaufmann, offering him the benefit of his influence and connections in Afghanistan, and asking in return for the support necessary for the recovery of his rights. The General in reply informed him that Russia was determined not to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, and that in consequence all negotiation would be superfluous."

According to the Russian writer, Terentyeff, General Kaufmann, while promising Abdur Rhaman a hearty welcome, added :—"The present ruler of Afghanistan has been recognised as the rightful ruler of that country by a power on terms of friendly relations with Russia, namely, England; and until such time as Shere Ali breaks the peace and destroys the tranquillity on the Bokharan frontier, I have no reason for regarding him as an enemy of the Russians."

No doubt verbal messages were exchanged; but whatever their tenor, it was easy for Abdur Rahman to see that he would be better off with the Russians than if he stayed in Bokhara. He accordingly took his departure at the first opportunity. How he contrived to get away does not appear; but it is known that toward the end of February, 1870, the Sirdar Abdur Rahman, with a retinue of over two hundred followers, his cousin, Is'hak Khan, amongst them, arrived at Samarcand. Thence he presently repaired to Tashkend, the capital of the Russian province of Turkestan, and was admitted to an interview with the Governor-General. He now asked that the Russians would give him three thousand rifles and seven cannon; that he might be allowed to raise a corps of Afghan and Persian refugees; that the Ameer of Bokhara might be ordered or requested to let him establish

a post of observation on the Oxus at Kerki or Shirabad, whence he could issue proclamations to his adherents in Afghanistan ; and that so long as he remained in Russian territory he might be allowed to keep his following. He also pointed out that Shere Ali was no friend to the Russians, and deserved no consideration at their hands. General Kaufmann made answer that he would in no way assist Abdur Rahman against Shere Ali, and refused all his requests save that relating to the Prince's retinue. For the support of himself and his followers the Russian Government would make him an allowance of 18,000 roubles (about £1,800) a year.*

The Russian Government took particular pains to let the English Foreign Office know that Abdur Rahman was receiving no encouragement from its representatives and agents in Central Asia. In addition to the memorandum already quoted, Prince Gortchakoff gave our ambassador a copy of a letter in which General Kaufmann had informed Shere Ali of the fugitive's arrival at Tashkend, and had explained, for the Amcer's benefit, how his nephew and enemy would be treated. This letter was the earliest in date of those found at Cabul, after the capture of the city by General Roberts in 1879. It was dated Tashkend, March 28, 1870, and was to the following effect :—

“You have probably learnt already that your nephew, Abdur Rahman, came lately to Tashkend, and that I,

* This sum appears afterwards to have been increased ; but the exact figures are not clearly stated. According to Russian accounts, he received in 1873, 25,000 roubles (£2,526) ; in 1874, 24,300 roubles (£2,470) ; and from that time to 1880, £2,500 a year, approximately. The value of the rouble is not invariable.

as the representative of my august master and sovereign, received him with honour and cordiality. Being anxious that you should not take umbrage at the Afghan Sirdar's stay at Tashkend, I have considered it advisable to address this letter to you, in order to set before you truthfully and frankly my views concerning the relations existing between Russian-Turkestan and Afghanistan, and to make you acquainted with the principles by which I am guided in my intercourse with you. The Czar's possessions in Turkestan do not border on the countries at present under your rule: we are separated by the Khanate of Bokhara. . . . No collision or misunderstanding, therefore, can take place between us; though we are distant neighbours we can and ought to live in concord. . . . It was from this point of view that I replied to Abdur Rahman's request to be admitted to Tashkend—that my august master refused hospitality to no one, especially to a man in misfortune; but that he must not in any way count on my interference in his differences with you, or expect any help whatever from me.”

At this time, it should be noted, the relations between the governments of England and Russia were marked by extreme cordiality, and our Foreign Minister, Earl Granville, expressed himself highly gratified at the amiable tone in which General Kaufmann had written. A couple of months later Prince Gortchakoff handed to our ambassador a letter addressed to himself by General Kaufmann, in which the Governor-General stated that he had again warned Abdur Rahman not to look to Russia for assistance against his enemies. Abdur Rahman, General Kaufmann said, had tried to persuade him that in their own interests the Russians ought to help him against Shere Ali. “I pointed out to him,” General Kaufmann wrote, “that when we sheltered him

it was not as an enemy to England, or as a claimant to the throne of Cabul, but solely as an unfortunate and homeless man, deprived of all means of supplying his own wants and those of his family. I declared to him without circumlocution that our relations with the English, the immediate protectors of his uncle, Shere Ali, were marked with friendship and perfect harmony; that as regards Shere Ali, not only are we not dreaming of going to war with him, but we even wish him all prosperity."

And so Abdur Rahman Khan settled down "at Samarcand, by Oxus, Temir's throne," as a pensioner of the White Czar.

There the late Mr. Schuyler, the American traveller and diplomatist, saw him in 1873. He was living quietly, spending hardly more than five thousand roubles a year out of his pension. Mr. Schuyler described him as a tall, well-built man, with a large head and a full, curly beard. "He carries himself with much dignity, and every movement denotes a strong character and one accustomed to command." He was quite ready to talk about politics. Shere Ali, he said, had forbidden his name to be mentioned in Cabul under pain of death, which, however, did not trouble him, as he declared that people would, for that very reason, think about him twice as much. He told Mr. Schuyler that the subsidy which the English had given to Shere Ali would have no effect on the people. "If the English were to give Afghanistan all the revenues of India, the people would not love them the better for it." Mr. Schuyler asked him whether, in the event of the English in India being

attacked by some other power, the Afghans would be willing to join in the war. To this Abdur Rahman replied that if the war was not against India, but against the British Government there, the Afghans would readily join in it.

He did not appear to be greatly enamoured of the Russians. The first time he went to Tashkend, he said, the Governor-General put one of his own carriages at his disposal ; the next time it was an hired carriage ; and on the occasion of his third visit to the capital, he had to go on foot.

Two or three years later, the French archæologist, Professor Ujfalvy, and his wife, saw something of Abdur Rahman at Samarcand. Madame Ujfalvy was greatly impressed at his personal appearance. "C'est un assez bel homme, fort et trapu, qui me faisait l'effet d'un hercule forain." The Khan Abdour-Akhman, as she styles him, lived in rather a pitiful style ; saving as much as possible in view of another attempt to recover his throne. With the same object, he also condescended, at times, to do a little trading ; and offered M. Ujfalvy a couple of indifferent swords at an exorbitant price.

We have next a brief account of Abdur Rahman at this period from the not altogether reliable pen of Gospodin Pashino, who for a while acted as his interpreter. He tells us that Abdur Rahman could barely read or write Persian ; that he asked leave to accompany the Russian expedition to Khiva and was refused. A personal description is given. "Abdur Rahman," Pashino wrote, "is a man of medium height, rather stout, with a well-trimmed beard, regular nose, and large black eyes, more like a Persian than a Barakzai." He usually wore a Cossack

tunic, trimmed with the gold lace of a Russian general's uniform. His speech was very fluent, abounding with flowers of Eastern rhetoric ; his voice loud and agreeable.

Indian officials whose duty it was to keep their government informed concerning affairs in Central Asia and Afghanistan, had also formed their estimate of Abdur Rahman's character and prospects. Colonel Sir Richard Pollock* wrote :

“Abdur Rahman was well thought of as a soldier and commander in charge of an army ; but showed less talent for administrative work. He has now lost all his possessions, both at his home and at his place of refuge, and has no resources by which he could collect an army. Without help in money and arms he could do nothing. If supplied with money by Russia or Bokhara, he might attempt to recover his position. Probably such an attempt would be unsuccessful if made in Shere Ali's lifetime. If later, after the Ameer's death, and when Afghan-Turkestan had Mir Alum Khan as governor, or some equally corrupt, incapable person, the issue might be in Abdur Rahman's favour, so far as Afghan-Turkestan is concerned. On the Ameer's death, such an attempt may be looked upon as likely, unless a good governor should previously have taken Mir Alum's place. Abdur Rahman's influence has already declined rapidly, and fortune is never likely to favour him again to the extent it did when he was fighting for Afzul and Azim. There was strong sympathy on the part of the nation for the elder sons, who had been set aside by the Dost in favour of Shere Ali. Besides, the King of Bokhara afforded assistance, which he is not likely now or later to do.”

Perhaps if the dim outlines could be filled in, there would be no more wonderful chapter in the biography of Abdur Rahman than one which recounted in full detail the story of his exile. But it will never be written.

* His report is quoted in Hensman's *Afghan War*, p. 346.

While we only get an occasional glimpse of his outward life during this obscurer period, we can know nothing for a certainty of the ceaseless projects that occupied the Czar's pensioner, and little of the devices he was always trying, in the hope that one day his ambition might be fulfilled. Those, who like the present writer, have seen and conversed with Afghan refugees in India, may form some idea of his outward bearing at the time. We may picture him as he appeared to the people of the city, to officers of the Russian garrison, or to travellers from other continents, who, knowing the history of the man, sought his acquaintance. The stalwart frame, the soldierly presence, the air of one whose order thousands had obeyed, the courteous address of the well-born Mahomedan—it is easy to imagine all this. Thereto may be added the look of one who has gone through peril and tribulation, and has seen both victory and defeat. Surely too, there were traces not to be hidden of baffled schemes, yet also of confidence and undaunted resolution. Abdur Rahman was never the one to despair of his destiny. From the time of his flight till the longed-for day when he once more set foot on Afghan soil, he was ever working and plotting to recover his heritage. While he never ceased to importune his Russian hosts for assistance, he was equally pertinacious in his efforts to keep in touch with his adherents across the Oxus, and, if possible, to gain new ones.

General Soboleff states that in the spring of 1871, he himself was asked by Abdur Rahman to speak on his behalf to General Abramoff, the governor of the Zarafshan district. On this occasion Abdur Rahman declared that he had a strong party throughout Afghanistan, that he

could easily gain possession of the throne of Dost Mahomed. He would be a loyal friend to the Russians, if they would only give him a subsidy of £6,000. General Abramoff, in reply, said that he would refer the application to General Kaufmann, the Governor General ; but he added that it was not at all likely to be granted, since the Russian Government was disinclined to quarrel with England. "Abdur Rahman," General Soboleff adds, "in spite of his fiery disposition, bravely listened to the advice given him by the Russian authorities in Turkestan, and resolved patiently to abide a favourable opportunity for putting his cherished plans into execution."

Years afterwards Abdur Rahman told Sir S. Pyne that during his exile he was accustomed to pose as a man of dull understanding, in order that the Russians might leave him to his own devices. This is not altogether compatible with what we know of him from other sources, or with General Soboleff's observations. Possibly Abdur Rahman overrated his own powers as a dissembler. At any rate, there is sufficient reason for believing that his Russian friends regarded him as a man of great capacity and insatiable ambition. They were only mistaken if they fancied that he would be everlastingly grateful to them for their not too lavish hospitality. His cousin, Is'hak, it may be noted, was certainly looked upon as a person of weak intellect. It was owing, Pashino states, to his mental imbecility that he was not presented to General Kaufmann, and the same authority adds that at this time little boys used to jeer at him in the streets of Samarcand, and call him "*Tintak Khan*," or "Fool Khan."

In 1872, according to a report from a native newswriter

at Tashkurghan, Abdur Rahman started to go to Orenburg, intending, it was said, to make a personal appeal to the Czar. The story may or may not have been true; but it is worth quoting. The Sirdar, the news-letter said, had journeyed three stages beyond Tashkend, when he was met by a high official who had been sent from Russia to relieve, or more likely to act temporarily for, the Governor-General. Questioned by this authority Abdur Rahman said he intended to ask the Czar to give him ten pieces of ordnance and "four lakhs of *Zangas*," as he hoped to make himself master of Afghanistan. In the event of his petition being refused, he would beg for leave to depart from Russian territory. The high official, however, persuaded him to return to Samarcand, promising him that his petition should be forwarded and that he should have the Czar's answer within forty days. The result does not appear.

About this time General Kaufmann obtained from his Afghan guest certain information in regard to Badakshan, which was used in support of the Russian contention that this region should not be included within the possessions of Shere Ali, the limits of which formed the subject of a discussion between the Governments of England and Russia. The fact is worth remembering. The present writer's father, at that time assistant secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, drew up an historical memorandum on Afghan-Turkestan; and an extract from this was among the documents submitted to the Russian Government in disproof of the Russian claim.*

* The extract is printed in the *Central Asia Blue Book*, No. II, of 1873, p. 17.

Had Abdur Rahman's information been accepted as trustworthy, he might in after years have found his kingdom shorn of a province by which he now lays great store.

All this while Abdur Rahman was perpetually intriguing with his adherents south of the Oxus. In November, 1872, one of his emissaries turned up at Cabul, and had the misfortune to fall into Ameer Shere Ali's hands. He was "vigorously examined," possibly not without the aid of torture; and confessed that he had seen in Abdur Rahman's house at Samarcand a couple of iron field-pieces cast in Balkh. He also said that Abdur Rahman was corresponding with some of the chiefs in Afghan-Turkestan, and that he himself had brought a letter from the Sirdar to a certain Azim-ud-din Khan, a military officer at Indarab. The Ameer Shere Ali directed that a message should be sent to the Russian Governor General, asking that a check might be put on Abdur Rahman's correspondence, and that the British Government should also be asked to use its influence to the same end. The purport of Abdur Rahman's letter, doubtless a fair sample of his correspondence at this period, was as follows :

"As I have been informed that you bear affection and friendship for me, I have taken the opportunity of sending this letter to you. If you desire to propagate the Mahomedan religion, I hope you will gallantly join in partizanship with me, along with your friends, and propagate the Prophet's creed. The world is not always in one condition. You should exert yourself in a manly fashion in the propagation of our religion, because Shere Ali Khan is a servant of the English, and will ruin you, the Mahomedans. May I not be held answerable by God or by the Prophet! If you exert yourself zealously, you will gain both this world and eternity. You will

achieve nothing by doing service to Shere Ali. If you render yourself useful to me for a few days you will be exalted in both worlds."

The message of remonstrance addressed by Shere Ali's orders to the Russian Governor-General, was written by Naib Alum Khan, the Ameer's Governor of Balkh ; who said :—

"Notwithstanding that Sirdar Abdur Rahman is so far away from our territory as Samarcand, he desires to loosen the ties of friendship existing between us, and to disturb the peace enjoyed by the people. He has lately sent a letter in an unbecoming style to Azim-ud-din Khan, one of his adherents, and I submit the same in original to you, hoping that you will properly restrain him from entertaining such evil designs in future, in order that the friendship existing between us, and the tranquillity enjoyed by the people, may be confirmed."

It might be better, the Ameer's Governor also hinted, and would tend to promote the friendship existing between the Afghans and the Russians, were Abdur Rahman removed to some place further away from the Afghan frontier. The Russian Government, at one time, was inclined to listen to the suggestion ; and it was proposed to remove him to European Russia. Nothing was done, however, and Abdur Rahman continued to reside at Samarcand. The English Government was again assured that he would not be allowed to disturb the peace of Afghanistan. Prince Gortchakoff told Lord Augustus Loftus in January, 1874, that positive injunctions had been given to Abdur Rahman that he should abstain from all intrigues and designs against Shere Ali. This was the condition under which he was allowed to reside at Samarcand ; and Prince Gortchakoff added that,

if the Sirdar broke the compact, he would be removed to another place of residence.

Ten long years was Abdur Rahman an exile in Russian-Turkestan, sharpening the sword of intention, to speak Asiatically, but not knowing when it might be used. He was six-and-twenty when he first went to Samarcand ; and those should have been the most active of his whole life. Yet he is not the first great man in the history of Central Asia to whom good fortune has come late. Nadir Shah, at the age of forty, was nothing but a robber chieftain, with a couple of thousand horsemen at his beck. Sultan Baber, the Chaghatai, founder of the dynasty of Indian Moghuls, was little more than a soldier of fortune at that age. Ameer Timur,

“The mighty Tamurlane,
That was lord of all the land
Between Thrace and Samarcand,”

did not dispose of his rivals till he was six-and-thirty. Chingiz Khan was forty-four when at a great assembly he was proclaimed by that title. Whether Abdur Rahman, however, found any consolation in historical reflections of this kind is uncertain. They may not have occurred to him.

But we may be sure that he was careful to watch the course of events in Afghanistan and in the Usbeg Khanates ; and also, no doubt, in Eastern Turkestan. In 1871 when Yakoob Khan was in rebellion against his father, Shere Ali, Abdur Rahman was keenly on the look-out for a chance of taking part in the struggle. A couple of years later there were disturbances in Badakshan, in the fomenting of which he appears to have had a hand.

It need hardly be said that he looked on with eager interest at the progress of the quarrel between the Ameer Shere Ali and the Government of India; and we shall presently see how in the end the results of that unfortunate rupture gave him his opportunity.

Much else happened, also, during the period of Abdur Rahman's banishment. In 1870 the Russians occupied Michailovsk on the eastern shores of the Caspian; and in the following year sent an expedition against the Turkomans, which was practically the beginning of the conquest of the Trans-Caspian region. In 1872 the Russian Government made a treaty with Ameer Yakoob Beg of Kashgar, and recognised the independence of Eastern Turkestan. Early in 1873 the Governments of England and Russia agreed that the Oxus should be recognised as the northern boundary of Afghanistan. In May, 1873, the Russians captured Khiva. In 1875 they annexed the Khanate of Khokand, since constituted as a province under the name of Ferghana. In 1877 Yakoob Beg of Kashgar died, or was poisoned; leaving his kingdom to be re-occupied by the Chinese. In the following year, Russia prepared for war with England, by sending an envoy to Cabul, and marching troops towards the Afghan frontier and the Pamirs. The Treaty of Berlin was followed, not quite so promptly as might have been wished, by the abandonment of these aggressive designs; but the mischief had been done, and the end of the year saw us embroiled in a war with the Afghans. How Abdur Rahman profited by that event will be told in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WINNING OF CABUL.

*"A man meets with disaster from which God alone can release him.
But oftentimes when evil is complete, strongly rivetted with iron
bands, it passes away."*

AS SULI.

Death of Ameer Shere Ali—Accession of Yakoob Khan—The attack on the English Residency—Yakoob's resignation—Abdur Rahman crosses the Oxus—Submission of Badakshan—Abdur Rahman master of Balkh—Wanted an Ameer—Letters from the English—Lord Lytton's policy—A partition of Afghanistan—Politicians in a hurry—Abdur Rahman as a diplomatist—Lord Ripon Viceroy—England and Afghanistan—The separation of Kandahar—A new departure—The wager of the knife—Durbār at Cabul—Abdur Rahman proclaimed Ameer—The disaster at Maiwand—Meeting between Abdur Rahman and Sir Lepel Griffin—Description of the new Ameer—An Eastern apologue—A promise of support—The march to Kandahar—The evacuation of Sherpur—Abdur Rahman and Sir Donald Stewart—Abdur Rahman at Cabul—Subsidized by Lord Ripon.

THE death of Ameer Shere Ali, in February, 1879, must have seemed to Abdur Rahman a most excellent opportunity for again trying his luck in his own country. But his Russian hosts either refused to let him depart, or gave him scanty encouragement. According to Gospodin Pashino, they told him he might go where and when he liked, and that no one would interfere with his movements, but that if he failed in

his enterprise, he would not find a refuge a second time in Russian territory, and must look neither for protection nor support at their hands. It may be that they were reluctant to throw away a trump card just then ; or else the Russian Government wished to prove that the assurances it had formerly given in regard to Afghanistan had now, in diplomatic phrase, recovered their validity. In any case, Abdur Rahman stayed where he was, while the son and successor of Shere Ali, Ameer Yakoob Khan, was making terms with the English, and welcoming an English mission to his capital. It was acknowledged at St. Petersburg that Afghanistan was now completely under the domination of England. "Events," said a Russian newspaper, "have justified Lord Beaconsfield's policy, and the results which he sought will be obtained." But the attack on the British Residency on September 3rd, 1879, and the massacre of Sir Louis Cavagnari and his gallant companions, changed the situation. Afghanistan was once again in confusion. It might be split up into three or four separate states, some under English, others under Russian protection ; or it might be seized and controlled by a single chief powerful enough to hold his own, both at Cabul and in the outlying provinces. The St. Petersburg *Golos* reminded its readers that there were candidates for the Afghan throne who had gained popularity by many a deed of daring. "Let one of them appear at Herat, or in Afghan-Turkestan, where he continues to be remembered and loved by the people, and he will be at once surrounded by all who are ill-content with the present Ameer (Yakoob) and who object to his friendship with England." The writer went on

to say that if an ally of the English was to rule at Cabul, justice demanded that a protégé of the Czar should hold sway at Herat or in Balkh. This, there is not the least doubt, was meant to refer to Abdur Rahman and his chances. He was the chief who had won popularity in Afghanistan by his deeds of daring, and who in days to come might hold the northern provinces as the vassal of Russia. The notion of making the Hindu Kush a conterminous boundary between the English and Russian Empires is a favourite theme with our friends and rivals. It is an aspiration, however, that is still a long way from being fulfilled.

In the beginning of December, 1879, telegrams reached Tashkend stating that the Ex-Ameer Yakoob Khan, who had been a prisoner in the British camp since September 27, was no longer in Cabul. On December 1, he had been marched away under escort to India. General Kaufmann, the Governor-General, was not in Tashkend at the time, being on his way back from St. Petersburg; but his secretary, or deputy, had an interview with Abdur Rahman, told him the latest news from Cabul, and added that he was now at liberty to depart. Abdur Rahman took three days to think over the matter, and then, being urged, it is said, by the Governor-General's secretary not to throw away the golden chance—one would think he needed little urging—decided to go. To use Sultan Baber's favorite metaphor, he put the foot of ambition in the stirrup of daring. The Russians lent or gave him 5,000 Bokhara *tillas* (about £2,500) and presented him with a couple of hundred breech-loaders. According to another

account, he had two lakhs of rupees (about £16,500) in his treasure chest, mostly saved out of his pension. He started from Tashkend with only a hundred followers, exiles like himself. His direct route to Balkh would have been through Samarcand and Karshi; but he preferred, or was advised, to go by way of Oratippa, Hissar, and Kolab. He forded the Oxus near Rustak, a small town in the district of Kunduz. Early in February, 1880, rumours reached the English in Cabul that he had crossed the river and had occupied Ghorî. He had been joined, it was said, by Sultan Murad Khan, of Kunduz.

The name of Sultan Murad may be unfamiliar to the reader, but the chief of the Kattaghan Usbegs was a notable person in his way. It was for his grandfather's benefit that Moorcroft translated those chapters in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, which treat of Chingiz Khan and Tamurlane. Sultan Murad had at times sided with Abdur Rahman during the wars of 1863-68; but he was by no means a stalwart ally, and in 1869 he went over to Shere Ali, from whom he received a formal grant of the territory of Kunduz, which he had retained ever since. Toward the end of 1879 he sent letters to Sir Frederick Roberts at Cabul. In former days, he wrote, his grandfather and the great Lord Sahib (Alexander Burnes) had been friends; and now, if the English would treat him kindly he would serve them as long as he lived. The whole of India, he declared, had profited by British rule, "and I also have now become a servant of the British Government." General Roberts returned a civil answer, and advised the chief to devote his attention to the government and protection of his

country. His professions of esteem for the English did not prevent Sultan Murad from lending a hand to the adventurer who, as was generally believed, had come to expel them. He was one of the first leading men north of the Hindu Kush to declare in Abdur Rahman's favour; supplying him, moreover, with money and with clothing for his troops. It can hardly be doubted that at this time Abdur Rahman posed as the deliverer who would drive out the English, though whether he actually issued proclamations promising to rid the country of the foreigners is not altogether clear.

Another chief who hastened to side with Abdur Rahman was Mir Sura Beg, formerly governor of Kolab, a petty state north of the Oxus. The Mirs of Badakshan quickly went over to him, with the exception of Shahzada Hassan, who fled to Mastuj; and before very long, the events of 1865 were repeated so closely that by March, 1880, Abdur Rahman found himself master of nearly all Afghan-Turkestan. The Governor's troops went over to him in a body, and the Governor himself, Gholam Hyder Khan, Wardak, fled to Bokhara. The Usbeg chief of Maimana was the only person of any consequence north of the Hindu Kush who hung back.

On March 14, 1880, Lord Lytton telegraphed to the Secretary of State that it was necessary to find, without delay, some native authority to whom Cabul and Northern Afghanistan could be restored, on the evacuation of the country in the following autumn. There was no prospect, the Viceroy said, of finding anyone in Cabul strong enough to undertake the task. "I therefore advocate

early public recognition of Abdur Rahman as the legitimate heir of Dost Mahomed." The Viceroy also proposed to send a deputation of Sirdars to make him an offer of the throne. For the future government of Southern Afghanistan Lord Lytton proposed to set up a Barakzai Sirdar, named Shere Ali, as Wali, under British protection; a British force remaining in cantonment at or near the city. The latter measure presented no difficulties. Shere Ali was recognised as Wali without further delay; and at the same time steps were taken to open up communication with Abdur Rahman. The only doubt was whether he would be inclined to accept the government of Cabul and Balkh, without Kandahar and Herat. On April 1, 1880, a letter was sent to Abdur Rahman by Sir Lepel Griffin, now in political charge at Cabul, who wrote: "It has become known that you have entered Afghanistan, and consequently this letter is sent you by a confidential messenger, in order that you may submit to the British officers at Cabul any representations that you may desire to make to the British Government, with regard to your object in entering Afghanistan." Sir Lepel's messenger was also instructed to inform Abdur Rahman that the British Government wished him well. Though the Sirdar had long resided in Russian territory, the messenger was to say, and was in close relations with the Russians, he was not on that account regarded with suspicion. The British Government could do him more good than the Russians; and, therefore, it was to his own interests to enter into friendly correspondence with us. The written reply given by Abdur Rahman was as follows:

“Whereas at this happy time I have received the kind letter of the British officers who, calling me to mind, wrote in a spirit of justice and friendship to inquire what I wish in Afghanistan. My honoured friends, the servants of the great British Government, know well that throughout these twelve years of exile in the kingdom of the Emperor of Russia, night and day have I cherished the hope of returning to my native land. When the late Ameer Shere Ali died and there was no one to rule our tribes, I proposed to re-enter Afghanistan, but as it was not fated then, I turned to Tashkend. Thereafter Ameer Mahomed Yakoob Khan, having come to terms and made peace with the British Government was appointed Ameer of Afghanistan ; but since, after he left you, he listened to the advice of every dishonest person and raised fools to power until two ignorant men directed the affairs of Afghanistan, which in the reign of my grandfather, who had eighteen able sons, were so managed that night was bright like day. In consequence thereof Afghanistan was disgraced in the eyes of all nations, and was ruined. Now, therefore, that you seek to learn my hopes and wishes, they are these : that so long as your empire and that of Russia shall exist, my countrymen, the tribesmen of Afghanistan, should dwell in ease and tranquillity, and that these two States should find us true and faithful ; that we should have rest and peace between them, for my tribesmen are unable to contend with empires, and are ruined by want of commerce. And we hope of your friendship that, by granting assistance and sympathy to the people of Afghanistan, you will permanently establish them under the honourable protection of the two powers. This would redound to the credit of both, and would give peace to Afghanistan, and comfort and quiet to God’s people. This is my desire. For the rest it is yours to decide.”

The messenger, who returned to Cabul on April 21, stated that he had been heartily welcomed by Abdur Rahman, in whose camp in Kunduz he had rested four days. He also brought a verbal message from the Sirdar,

who said that he had been for twelve years the guest of the Russians, and had eaten their salt ; he would be loth to accept any conditions that might blacken him in their eyes, or make him appear ungrateful to them. He would endeavour to be the friend of both powers, but especially of the English, who, he hoped, would secure for him the same measure of independence that was enjoyed by Persia. He would be glad to come on to Charikar with five hundred horsemen, there to discuss matters with the English officers.

General Roberts and Sir Lepel Griffin agreed in the opinion that although Abdur Rahman had been assisted in his enterprise by the Russians, and was anxious not to quarrel with them, he was nevertheless willing to come to terms with the English. But before speaking of the negotiations which ultimately led to his recognition, it will be as well to explain the political principles upon which the Indian Government was acting. As already mentioned, Lord Lytton, with that boldness and foresight which always marked his statesmanship, had resolved in the middle of March that the pretender from beyond the Oxus was the man for Cabul ; and the suggestion was accepted by the Conservative Ministry at home. The Viceroy, however, insisted that only a portion of the once united kingdom of Afghanistan should be handed over to the successor of Yakooob. Kandahar was separated from Cabul ; and Sir Lepel Griffin was authorized to make Abdur Rahman understand that the southern province would never be restored. The crime which dissolved the treaty of Gundamuk had convinced the Indian Government that further adherence to the policy which aimed at

a united and friendly Afghanistan—"a policy dependent for its fruition on the gratitude, the good faith, the assumed self-interest, or the personal character of any Afghan prince"—would be perilous to the interests of India. With our advanced frontier positions at Kandahar and Kurram, the importance of Cabul would be materially diminished. The friendship of its ruler would ever be appreciated; but our relations with him would no longer be of paramount importance. Should he in course of time become susceptible to foreign influences adverse to our own, the Indian Government would take whatever steps it deemed requisite to counteract such influences; but the Government of India had no longer any motive or desire to enter into fresh treaty engagements with a ruler of Cabul. Abdur Rahman's suggestion that Afghanistan should be constituted a neutral state, under the joint protection of England and Russia, could neither be entertained nor discussed. It would be enough if as ruler of Cabul and the northern provinces he showed himself worthy of the friendship which the English were ready to extend to him. But the Indian Government required from him neither pledges, concessions, nor reciprocal engagements. "Our invitation was given to him, not as a preliminary to forming an alliance with the Cabul ruler, or that his consent to our political arrangements might be secured; but chiefly in order that by transferring the administration to a competent ruler we might be spared the necessity of leaving something like anarchy behind us whenever our troops should have been withdrawn."

It was on these lines that the negotiation proceeded

during the months of May and June. On April 30 Sir Lepel Griffin had again written to Abdur Rahman, urging him to come to Cabul without further delay. Mr. Gladstone's Government had now come into power, and was anxious to see Afghanistan evacuated as quickly as possible. In his reply (May 16, 1880) Abdur Rahman said :

"My friend, I had and still have great hope from the British Government, and your friendship has justified and equalled my expectations. You know well the nature of the people of Afghanistan. The word of one man can effect nothing until they feel that I speak for their good. . . . I trust in God for your honour that this people and I may some day unite to do you service, although the British Government has no need of it, but occasions of necessity may yet arise in this world."

Before sending off this letter Abdur Rahman had explained the situation to his followers ; and after consulting with them he gave out in durbar that there were questions upon which he desired to be further informed before he set out for Cabul. What, he asked, were to be the boundaries of his dominion, and would Kandahar be included therein ? Would a European envoy or a British force remain in Afghanistan ? What enemy of the British Government would he be expected to repel ? Above all, what benefits did the British Government propose to confer on him and his countrymen ? "These are matters," said Abdur Rahman, "which I must place before the chiefs of my country, and in concert with them I will, having ascertained how far I can do so, agree to such terms of a treaty as I can accept and carry out. For this purpose, as soon as I am informed on these points, I will at once go to Cabul ; and in order

to get a reply quickly, I will at once post mounted couriers at various places on the road. I will also issue a proclamation to my countrymen, directing them to assemble within their own bounds, and to abstain from advancing against the British army or provoking hostilities."

Abdur Rahman, it was clear, meant to play a waiting game. General Sir Charles MacGregor wrote in his diary, "he does not mean to come in till he knows exactly what we want, and I do not believe anyone can tell him, because no one knows." Abdur Rahman may have issued the proclamations he talked about; but it was also rumoured that he was engaged in making other appeals of a less satisfactory tenor to his countrymen. Letters purporting to come from him were intercepted, in which the tribes were bidden to be armed and ready. He was also said to be in close correspondence with Mahomed Jan, who was preparing to attack us. It looked very much as if he were endeavouring to bring pressure to bear upon his new-found friends, at the same time strengthening himself by appeals to the fanatical temper of the Afghans. Altogether the situation was by no means hopeful. In some quarters General Roberts was blamed for having sent Yakoob Khan away. The Foreign Secretary wrote to General MacGregor: "If you and Roberts and Baker had not been in such an unnecessary hurry to deport the wretched Yakoob, these difficulties would have been avoided."

By this time the Marquis of Ripon had arrived in India, and one of the first acts of his government was to give instructions that a letter couched in somewhat

more decided language should be sent to the still evasive Sirdar. To some extent it indicated a new departure ; but although a Liberal ministry had come into power at home, and a Liberal Viceroy had taken Lord Lytton's place, there was no notion, as yet, of accepting Abdur Rahman as the ruler of a united Afghanistan. No such notion, that is to say, was entertained at Simla, though the Home Government had already expressed a hope that this portion of Lord Lytton's programme might be reversed. The letter addressed by Sir Lepel Griffin to Abdur Rahman on June 14 requires to be quoted at some length. The political officer wrote :

"I am commanded to convey to you the replies of the Government of India to the questions you have asked. *Firstly*—With regard to the position of the ruler of Cabul in relation to foreign powers. Since the British Government admit no right of interference by foreign powers in Afghanistan, and since both Russia and Persia are pledged to abstain from all political interference with Afghan affairs, it is plain that the Cabul ruler can have no political relations with any foreign power except the English ; and if any such foreign power should attempt to interfere in Afghanistan, and if such interference should lead to unprovoked aggression on the Cabul ruler, then the British Government will be prepared to aid him, if necessary, to repel it, provided that he follows the advice of the British Government in regard to his external relations."

In the above passage it will be noted we have, in reasonably precise language, a full admission of the principle that foreign interference in the affairs of Afghanistan would be resisted by England. The point left in obscurity, and it is still obscure, in spite of all that has been said, was to what extent such resistance would be carried. Lord Ripon's representative went on to say :

"Secondly. With regard to limits of territory, I am directed to say that the whole province of Kandahar has been placed under a separate ruler, except Pishin and Sibi, which are retained in British possession. Consequently the Government is not able to enter into any negotiations with you on these points, nor in respect to arrangements with regard to the north-west frontier, which were concluded with the ex-Ameer Mahomed Yakoob Khan. With these reservations the British Government are willing that you should establish over Afghanistan (including Herat, the possession of which cannot be guaranteed to you, though Government are not disposed to hinder measures which you may take to obtain possession of it) as complete and extensive authority as has hitherto been exercised by any Ameer of your family. The British Government desires to exercise no interference in the internal affairs of these territories, nor will you be required to admit an English resident anywhere; although, for convenience of ordinary, friendly intercourse between two adjoining States, it may be advisable to station by agreement a Mahomedan agent of the British Government at Cabul."

Lord Lytton, when advocating the dissection of Afghanistan, had pointed out, six months earlier, that the annexation of Herat to Cabul or Kandahar would neither be popular at Herat, nor provide for the political security of a province peculiarly exposed to the intrigues and cupidity of its powerful neighbours. He had therefore recommended its transfer, under a sufficient guarantee, to Persia. That proposal had since been abandoned; and Abdur Rahman was told that he might take Herat, now held by Ayoob Khan,* whenever he liked, for all the British Government cared. This was one feature of the new design. The other point to be noticed was the

* Son of Ameer Shere Ali, and whole brother of Ameer Yakoob,

guarded promise to assist Abdur Rahman in the event of his being attacked by foreign enemies. This promise was now given in accordance with instructions received from the Secretary of State, who informed Lord Ripon that Her Majesty's Government were willing to renew the assurances offered to Shere Ali in 1873, by Lord Northbrook, to the effect that he might rely on the support of the British Government against unprovoked aggression, provided that he abided by its advice in regard to his external relations.

There is an Afghan saying, "Use not the wager of the knife"; which means, "Do not cut your melon before you have bought it." Abdur Rahman was not at all in a hurry to give himself away. A prompt reply was received from him indeed, in which he spoke of himself as the slave of God's threshold, and talked of the regard which had been shown for his welfare. On the other hand, he said nothing about the reservation of Kandahar. The British authorities at Cabul, moreover, were warned by their confidential advisers to put no trust in the Sirdar's sincerity; and as there seemed likely to be a renewal of disturbances in the neighbourhood—disturbances fomented this time, it was thought, by Abdur Rahman's emissaries—the situation gave rise to considerable anxiety. Sir Lepel Griffin and Sir Donald Stewart were both convinced that it would be unsafe to rely on Abdur Rahman. They even recommended that negotiations should be broken off, and that other means should be resorted to for establishing a friendly government at Cabul. "It is a great blunder," General MacGregor wrote, "having anything to say to Abdur Rahman, who is playing us false."

A few days later he wrote, "We have played long enough with this fellow." Many of the Afghans at Cabul had maintained all along that the Sirdar would neither take the Ameership at the hands of an English general, nor enter the city till it had been evacuated by our troops ; since by so doing, they said, he would lower himself in the estimation of his own countrymen. Most likely another motive weighed with him. "The friendship of the English," Shere Ali once said, in the bitterness of his heart, "is a word written on ice." Abdur Rahman, never yet beholden to us for succour or support, may have thought the same. At any rate it is more than probable that he mistrusted us quite as much as he was himself mistrusted by General Stewart and Sir Lepel Griffin. To some extent, at any rate, he shared the apprehension felt by his followers, that if he came straight to Cabul he would be at once arrested, and sent off to join Yakoob Khan in India.

But the tension was too strained to last. In response to reiterated invitations, Abdur Rahman crossed the Hindu Kush, and on July 20, 1880, arrived at Charikar in the Kohistan, or hill country north of the capital. Without further argument or circumlocution the British authorities at Cabul summoned a durbar of chiefs and notables, and in the presence of his three representatives,* proclaimed him Ameer of Cabul. In his speech to the assemblage Sir Lepel Griffin said :

"The course of events having placed Sirdar Abdur Rahman Khan in a position which fulfils the wishes and

* General Katol Khan, Mahomed Amin Khan, and the Saiyyid Sahib. (Hensman's *Afghan War*, p. 438.)

expectations of the Government, the Viceroy of India and the Government of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen Empress, are pleased to announce that they publicly recognise Sirdar Abdur Rahman Khan, grandson of the illustrious Ameer, Dost Mahomed Khan, as Ameer of Cabul. It is to the Government a source of satisfaction that the tribes and chiefs have preferred a distinguished member of the Barakzai family, who is a renowned soldier, wise, and experienced. His sentiments towards the British Government are most friendly; and so long as his rule shows that he is animated by those sentiments, he cannot fail to receive the support of the British Government. He will best show his friendship for the Government by treating those of his subjects who have done us service as his friends."

"None of the Sirdars looked pleased," General Mac Gregor wrote in his diary. Mr. Hensman, who was also present at the durbar, says the same. "Not a sign of intelligence," he writes, "nor an expression of approbation or dissent was made in the assembly. From the Sikh and Goorkha sentries, standing in rear of the tent to the fringe of retainers peering in over the Sirdars' heads, all were quiet, as if cogitating over the new policy enunciated." But the thing was done, and once more there was an Ameer of Cabul. On the following day his name was recited in the prayers in the mosque.

Within a week came tidings of a terrible disaster in the south. Sir Lepel Griffin was on the point of starting for Zimma, sixteen miles north of Cabul, where he was to meet the new Ameer for the first time, when a telegram was received stating that a whole brigade had been "annihilated" at Maiwand. The loss turned out to be exaggerated, but it was serious enough; and the necessity of terminating the negotiation with Abdur Rahman, so

that he might enter into his kingdom, became more than ever pressing. A picked force was to be sent from Cabul under Sir Frederick Roberts, to retrieve the reverse at Maiwand, and the remainder of the troops in northern Afghanistan were to be withdrawn without loss of time to India. There was no thought, therefore, of postponing the political agent's visit to the Ameer's camp, and the conference duly took place on July 30th, and the day following.

It must have been an impressive and striking scene, though on a small scale compared with the great durbar at Rawulpindi, where, five years later, Abdur Rahman was to meet a Governor-General of India. The political agent was escorted by two squadrons of cavalry; the Ameer by a wild-looking body-guard of a hundred horsemen from Afghan-Turkestan; miscellaneously armed with rifles, double-barrelled shot-guns, and matchlocks. His Highness came to the durbar tent preceded by a retainer bearing a huge red umbrella, and followed by a white charger in gorgeous caparisons. Abdur Rahman's demeanour, Mr. Hensman says, was a surprise to everyone, from Sir Lepel Griffin downwards. His photograph had done him but scant justice. In reality he was a middle-aged man, broadly-built but not unwieldy, with features marked and careworn, but lit up by a pleasant and animated smile. He was arrayed in a sort of undress blue tunic, cloth riding breeches and boots, and cap of Astrakhan fur; and he wore a sword. Sir Lepel Griffin's description of him may also be quoted from the blue book :—

“Ameer Abdur Rahman Khan is a man of about forty, of middle height, and rather stout. He has an

exceedingly intelligent face, brown eyes, a pleasant smile, and a frank, courteous manner. The impression that he left on me and the officers who were present at the interview was most favourable. He is by far the most prepossessing of all the Barakzai Sirdars whom I have met in Afghanistan, and in conversation showed both good sense and sound political judgment. He kept thoroughly to the point under discussion, and his remarks were characterised by shrewdness and ability. He appeared animated by a sincere desire to be on cordial terms with the Indian Government."

In reminiscences published some years later the same writer spoke of the Ameer's winning smile,* and eyes full of fun and vivacity. "His conversation," we are told, "showed him at once to be a man of much knowledge of men and the world, his estimate of the character of the persons regarding whom he conversed was reasonable and shrewd, while through his whole bearing there was clearly visible much natural good humour and *bonhomie*." He talked frankly enough about the Russians. They had been kind, and even liberal; but for all that, he did not mean to be dependent on them, and he scouted the notion that his invasion of Afghanistan had been instigated by them. He heard with concern of our reverse at Maiwand, and he feared that it might make things more difficult for himself. He was greatly in want of money, and hoped the British Government would assist him with a generous grant. The political agent

* A winning smile, by-the-bye, is not always considered an appropriate expression on the countenance of a Mahomedan potentate. Nadir Shah was advised by one of his friends that even a king might occasionally indulge in a smile, when no one was there to observe him. "What!" he said, "is not Nadir Shah present?" Abdur Rahman's smile, however, must go into history

mentioned the amount which the British Government might be willing to give to relieve his immediate necessities ; but this, Abdur Rahman said, would not be anything like sufficient, and by way of pointing his moral he related an effective and characteristic apologue, which may be quoted in his own words, as recalled by Sir Lepel Griffin :—

“Think of that story,” said the Ameer, “of the man who went to a tailor with a roll of cloth and asked him to make a morning suit. The tailor observed that his customer would doubtless like a riding suit as well, to which the man assented ; also one in which to appear in durbar. ‘Then,’ continued the tailor, ‘no doubt you would like clothes fitting for afternoon and evening wear?’ To all of this the customer agreed, pleased at the prospect of getting so many suits of clothes ; but the roll of cloth sufficed for no more than one full-sized suit, and when all five suits were sent to the customer he found them too small to be worn even by the smallest child. Now,” said the Ameer, “I seem to be like this fool who went on consenting to so many suits being made for him out of a piece of cloth only large enough for one. I agree to all your proposals, and promise everything ; but shall I have the means and power to carry them out?”

It was not only money that Abdur Rahman asked for. At the first day’s interview he begged earnestly for something in the shape of a written agreement. The request had been foreseen, and Lord Ripon’s Government, though adhering to its resolve that there should, for the present at any rate, be no treaty, had furnished the political agent with a document which, if Abdur Rahman asked for a formal agreement, might be handed to him. “I considered myself justified,” Sir Lepel Griffin wrote in his official report, “in accordance with the instructions

contained in the letter above quoted, to (*sic*) deliver to him a translation of the paper therewith received, duly sealed with the seal of the representative of the British Government in Cabul." The document in question has always formed the basis of our relationship with the Ameer Abdur Rahman, and must therefore be quoted *in extenso*. It is dated July, 1880, and is addressed to His Highness Abdur Rahman Khan, Ameer of Cabul. It runs as follows :

"After compliments. His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council has learnt with pleasure that your Highness has proceeded toward Cabul, in accordance with the invitation of the British Government. Therefore in consideration of the friendly sentiments by which your Highness is animated, and of the advantage to be derived by the Sirdars and people from the establishment of a settled government under your Highness's authority, the British Government recognises your Highness as Ameer of Cabul. I am further empowered, on the part of the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, to inform your Highness that the British Government has no desire to interfere in the internal government of the territories in possession of your Highness, and has no wish that an English resident should be stationed anywhere within those territories. For the convenience of ordinary friendly intercourse, such as is maintained between two adjoining states, it may be advisable that a Mahomedan agent of the British Government should reside, by agreement, at Cabul. Your Highness has requested that the views and intentions of the British Government, with regard to the position of the ruler of Cabul, in relation to foreign powers, should be placed on record for your Highness's information. The Viceroy and Governor-General in Council authorizes me to declare to you that since the British Government admits no right of interference by foreign powers within Afghanistan, and since both Persia and Russia are pledged to abstain from

all interference with the affairs of Afghanistan, it is plain that your Highness can have no political relations with any foreign power except with the British Government. If any foreign power should attempt to interfere in Afghanistan, and if such interference should lead to unprovoked aggression on the dominions of your Highness, in that event the British Government would be prepared to aid you to such extent and in such manner as may appear to the British Government necessary, in repelling it, provided that your Highness follows unreservedly the advice of the British Government in regard to your external relations."

With this Abdur Rahman seemed perfectly satisfied. At any rate he suggested no alterations. There was a second interview on the following day (Sunday, August 1), and while Abdur Rahman and the political officer were discussing questions of state, an incident occurred which deserves mention. A ragged *dervish* came to the door of the durbar tent, and began shrieking out abuse of the infidels. One of the Ameer's sentries promptly drove off the man with stones.

So ended the conference. A week afterwards the force under General Sir F. Roberts started on its famous march to Kandahar; and on August 10 the remainder of the troops, under General Sir Donald Stewart, evacuated Sherpur cantonment, and set out for India. The Ameer came in to Sherpur at the last moment to bid the English farewell. After being introduced to the General and the officers with him he made a short speech, in which he said that the British Government had honoured and distinguished him, that his gratitude for the favours he had received was great and enduring; and that his sword would ever be at the service of the

Viceroy, to whom he desired that his compliments and thanks might be tendered. One who was present on this occasion gave a personal description of the Ameer, which may be compared with those already quoted. It was published shortly afterwards in the *Times*.

“The impression made upon me by the Ameer was that he had not the usual characteristic features of an Afghan Sirdar. His features are softer and rounder; his eyes have a quiet expression, betokening love for an easy life; his lips are thick and his mouth large, but the loss of several teeth is a great disfigurement. He is of middle height and rather obese. He wears very black, bushy whiskers, moustachios, and beard. Altogether there was nothing very taking in his appearance. He simply did not strike me as being the man for Galway, but I hope I am mistaken.”

This may be compared with Vigne’s description of Dost Mahomed—“the worse part of his face is his mouth, which is large and coarse, but his appearance is altogether very *distingué*.” Dost Mahomed also looked more like a Persian than an Afghan, which was accounted for by the fact that his mother was a Persian lady.

The Ameer Abdur Rahman had still to make his entry into the Bala Hissar. He had wished, it was thought, to defer the ceremony until the British were well out of sight. His astrologers had advised him that the following Sunday would be a propitious day for the occasion, and also that ill-luck would attend it unless he wore an emerald ring, which had to be made, and engraved with the inscription “Ameer Abdur Rahman 1297,” the date according to the Mahomedan reckoning from the day of the Prophet’s flight.

Before the British troops left Cabul a sum of

Rs. 6,65,000 was paid to the Ameer, and it was arranged that he should receive another five lakhs (Rs. 5,00,000) in the following September. He was also presented with thirty guns ; and, moreover, at his earnest entreaty, the fortifications round Cabul were left standing. He declared that it would lower his prestige in the eyes of the people if, as had been intended, these defences should be dismantled.

So terminated the second British occupation of Cabul ; an eventful period, during which our troops had suffered heavy losses, and had in turn inflicted heavy defeats on the enemy. But this is not a history of the Afghan War, nor would it fall within the scope of the present volume to describe the memorable and glorious march of General Roberts from Cabul to Kandahar. It may here be noted, however, that the Ameer Abdur Rahman did what he could to facilitate the movements of the force that was to avenge the disaster at Maiwand. General Roberts was preceded by one of the Ameer's officers and a small party of subordinates, who were charged with the duty of collecting supplies and clearing the road of obstruction. The latter task they fulfilled by telling the tribesmen that the new Ameer was sending a division of the infidel army out of the country by way of Kandahar, and, by threatening them, that if they stirred from their homes, or attempted to molest the English, even by as much as throwing a stone, they should surely suffer for it. The terms of the warning were not too complimentary to us, but the Ameer's message proved effectual. Not even a stone was thrown at the force as it marched southward.

CHAPTER V.

THE SHAPING OF A KINGDOM.

*"Upon every nation of which God approves,
He bestows a virtuous ruler :
If He desires to lay the land desolate,
He places it in the grasp of a tyrant."*

FROM THE PERSIAN.

On the throne of his fathers—The friends of the foreigner—Family affairs—Wives, old and new—The question of Kandahar—A policy of scuttle—Experts at variance—Hauling down the flag—Defeat of Ayooob—Recovery of Kandahar and Herat—Maimana holds out—The Fort taken—Schemes of aggrandisement—Shignan and Roshan—Legends of Alexander the Great—The slave trade in Shignan—Political geography of the Upper Oxus—The Russians in Shignan—The Anglo-Russian agreement of 1873—The Afghan boundary—Earl Granville's theory—The delays of diplomacy—The land of the unruly—The value of Chitral—Baber in Bajaur—The rise of Umra Khan—The Afghans in Asmar—Abdur Rahman and Sher Afzul—Aggression on the Punjab frontier—Zhob and the Gomul Pass—Encroachments in Biluchistan.

OF the earlier acts of Abdur Rahman, after he was established at Cabul, and the British force had been withdrawn, little can be said with certainty. The reports that reached India were obtained through native news-writers, who not infrequently collect their most elaborate items of Cabul gossip in the bazaars of Peshawur and Lahore. According to the late Dr. Bellew, who probably knew as much as anyone what

was going on beyond the frontier, the Ameer's first proceeding, when the country was clear of English troops, was to seal up the provinces against all communication with India. Next he vigorously applied himself to the task of hunting out partizans of the Ameer Shere Ali, and people who had assisted the English during the occupation. Of the former some were driven out of Afghanistan, others met with a worse fate. The friends of the foreigner also had good cause to regret the accession of Abdur Rahman to the throne ; but it would perhaps be unjust to impute his harsh treatment of these people to any ill-feeling against ourselves. What the Ameer wanted was money, and he knew that they had been well paid for their services to the English.

To his own family and private affairs the new Ameer had also to devote some attention. Arrangements had to be made for bringing his wives and children to Cabul. When he started for Afghanistan they were left behind at Samarcand, and a trustworthy friend was now despatched to escort them to their new home. M. Bonvalot, the French traveller, accompanied the cavalcade as far as the Oxus. The Ameer also thought fit to increase his establishment ; and on November 22, 1880, he was married to the daughter of Atikulla Khan, the Bibi Halima, who is now the Queen of his Harem. Of this exalted lady we shall hear later on ; but a story was told at the time which may be noted here. Rumours reached India that the Ameer had been assassinated. It afterwards transpired that although the report was untrue, Abdur Rahman had actually disappeared from Cabul for two whole days. No one in the city knew what had become of him ; until it

was found that he had been staying at the house of his *fiancée's* father.

But neither new wives nor old ones could distract the Ameer's mind from what he believed to be his mission in life. Of Sultan Mahmud of Ghuzni it is said, in the *Tarikhi Yamini*, that contrary to the disposition of ordinary men he preferred a hard to a soft couch, and fine tempered sword blades to the soft cheeks of girls with bosoms like pomegranates. Ameer Abdur Rahman, by no means an ascetic, may not be altogether of Sultan Mahmud's way of thinking; but his ambition would not let him bide at ease, on hard couches or soft, till he could establish his power over all the countries ruled by his grandfather, Dost Mahomed. In the present chapter we shall see how he at once began to extend his dominion.

Abdur Rahman was now lord of Cabul. North of the Hindu Kush, his authority was acknowledged, or not openly disputed, by his cousin Is'hak Khan, whom he had left in charge as Governor of Balkh; while his companion in exile and trusted friend, Abdulla Khan,* a Tokhi Ghilzai, held Badakshan and Wakhan in his name. The Usbeg chief of Maimana declined to acknowledge the new Ameer, but he was not openly aggressive; and for the present, Abdur Rahman could afford to leave Afghan-Turkestan alone. But there was much to be done in other directions. The English were still in occupation of Kandahar; while Ayub Khan

* Abdulla Khan, and others who had shared Abdur Rahman's exile and returned with him to Afghanistan, are often spoken of as *feraris*, those who came back.

held Herat, whither he had retired after his defeat by Sir Frederick Roberts on September 1, 1880.

The British Government, however, had relinquished the project of setting up a separate government at Kandahar. The Wali Shere Ali, whom we had acknowledged as ruler of the province, did not turn out a success. His administration was feeble and he himself was unpopular. The advance of Ayoob Khan in the summer of 1880, the battle of Maiwand, and the investment of Kandahar, left him a ruler without authority; and when the Indian Government offered him an asylum, he cheerfully acquiesced. The history, however, of our dealings with him is not altogether a pleasing one. In May, 1880, Colonel (afterwards Sir O.) St. John had announced in durbar that Shere Ali was to be Wali of Kandahar, with the cherished right of coining money, and having the *Khutba* read in his name. "Under the just government," the Resident said, "of Wali Shere Ali Khan, and under the protection of England, Kandahar will, if it please God, remain free from foreign oppression, and will rise to such a height of wealth and prosperity that will be the envy of the whole of Islam." Six months later, the unfortunate Wali was fain to write to Lord Ripon that he was ready and willing to resign his position and to go with his family to Karachi; and there he has lived ever since with a pension of Rs. 5,000 a month. Mr. Gladstone's Government did not consider that we were any longer bound by any promises of support which had been given to the Wali, or that either our own interests or those of the inhabitants would be served by the restoration of a government which had

possessed no element of strength or permanence. So the Wali Shere Ali had to suffer for the incompetence of our military commanders.

Nor did the British Government adhere to its intention of keeping a hold on Kandahar by stationing a military force there or in the neighbourhood. General Roberts had said that our grasp on Kandahar ought never to be loosened. The military occupation of this *point strategique* was, he declared, of vital importance. The Indian Commander-in-Chief, Sir Frederick Haines, protested that by retiring from Kandahar we should lose all hold on Afghanistan, and forfeit every shadow of influence over the country. On the other hand, Sir Garnet (now Lord) Wolseley, at that time a member of the Secretary of State's Council, argued that we should secure no military advantage by the retention of Kandahar, while we must incur considerable military risk by remaining there. He added :—

“Whenever the Russians march upon Herat, we must certainly occupy Kandahar, unless we intend to give up India or allow it to be taken from us ; but the longer we can postpone the occupation, the better we shall be able to incur the vast expenditure it will necessarily entail upon us. As we can always get there with the greatest ease, I would deprecate in the strongest terms our going there until the necessity for doing so actually arises, and I am, therefore, of opinion, that the sooner the troops now there can be withdrawn from it with safety and honour the better it will be for the true interests of our Indian Empire.”

But it would be futile to rekindle the ashes of an extinct controversy. The arguments for evacuation prevailed, and it was decided to hand over Kandahar to Abdur

Rahman. At first the Ameer pretended reluctance to accept the gift. His want of arms, ammunition, and transport, he said, would make it difficult for him to hold the place; but arrangements were eventually made by which the city was evacuated and handed over to his deputy. The withdrawal of the British force began on April 15, 1881, and six days afterwards Colonel St. John was able to telegraph: "Evacuation completed without disturbance or trouble of any sort." The Union Jack was hauled down from the flagstaff on the citadel under a salute of thirty-one guns; and Kandahar once more came into possession of the ruler of Cabul. To relinquish a conquest, it has been said, is an acknowledgment of injustice, or incapacity, or fear. Under which head is to be placed the evacuation of Kandahar, is a question to be settled by the historian of to-morrow. That the Union Jack will some day wave again over the battlements is at any rate the confident belief of the present writer; unless, indeed, this symbol of unity is also to be thrown away.

But Abdur Rahman was not to acquire Kandahar without striking a blow. In the meantime Ayoob Khan at Herat had been strengthening himself for another effort to establish himself in Southern Afghanistan. In June, 1881, he marched southwards, and after defeating Hashim Khan, the Ameer's governor of Kandahar, near Giriskh, succeeded early in July in recovering the southern capital, which he occupied on July 27. The Ameer Abdur Rahman rose to the occasion. The outlook, indeed, was, to a distant observer, full of peril. His authority was not too firmly established in the Cabul province. There was

hardly anyone whom he could trust. Even the men who had been most eager in their protestations of fidelity were preparing to desert him, and were in correspondence with the victorious Ayoob. The Ghilzais were ripe for revolt, and the people of Wardak and Kohistan were also disaffected. But it would have been madness to leave Ayoob in power at Kandahar ; and in August, therefore, Abdur Rahman marched southwards in person to expel the invader. He was no longer the dashing soldier who had defeated Shere Ali at Sheikhabad ; but if less impetuous, he was more than a match for his rival in astuteness. He had kept the truculent and troublesome Ghilzais quiet for the time by cleverly playing off one chief against another ; and he presently made certain of a victory at Kandahar by buying over a portion of Ayoob's army. That accomplished, he had little difficulty in routing Ayoob in the action fought near the old city of Kandahar on September 22, 1881. Ayoob fled once more to Persia, and for the next two or three years little more was heard of him. It may be thought, perhaps, that a fuller account might be given of his advance to and capture of Kandahar and of his subsequent defeat ; but trustworthy details are wanting. It would be a mere waste of space to quote the exaggerated and sensational rumours that reached India. There, at one time, it was thought by many that Abdur Rahman's cause was all but lost ; and that Ayoob would be able to push on to Ghuzni and Cabul. The probability is that the new Ameer was only too glad to have a chance of meeting his cousin in the field, and never for a moment mistrusted his own good luck.

Fortune also befriended Abdur Rahman in another quarter. Before starting for Kandahar the Ameer had arranged with Is'hak Khan, the Governor of Balkh, for the despatch of an expedition against Herat, which place, it was supposed, Ayoob Khan would leave defenceless. It was said that Is'hak had originally proposed this *coup*, which, indeed, was rather a venturesome one. At any rate, the attacking force was sent, not from Cabul, but from Afghan-Turkestan, and was placed under the command of a protégé and favourite of Is'hak's, Abdul Kudus Khan by name, who was a son of the late Sultan Mahomed Khan* by a negro wife. Abdul Kudus captured the city with ease on August 4th, 1881. As a reward for his success, he was made Governor of Herat and Commander-in-Chief of the forces in the western province. He owed his promotion to his patron Is'hak, though the Ameer would have preferred to appoint a man of his own, and as a matter of fact did so, later on.

Abdur Rahman's power was now acknowledged everywhere in Afghanistan except in the little Usbeg State of Maimana, which Dilawar Khan held in the interests of Ayoob. We need not hesitate to ascribe his successes so far to the liberal assistance in the shape of arms and money which he had received from India. Maimana was not brought under subjection until 1884. The people of this place, according to Vambéry, are renowned throughout Central Asia for valour and determination; and they had certainly behaved with conspicuous gallantry when Abdur Rahman laid siege to the town in 1868.

* Sultan Mahomed Khan was a son of the celebrated Akbar Khan, the murderer of Macnaghten.

They also made a stubborn defence when the Ameer Shere Ali's general attacked their contumacious chief in October, 1875. The Russian traveller, Colonel (now General) Grodekoff, who visited Maimana two years after the latter event, says that the second siege lasted six months, till at length Shere Ali's forces made a breach in the walls and carried the city by storm. In 1880, Maimana was under the rule of Dilawar Khan, a cousin of Hussein Khan, the Usbeg chief who had been worsted by Shere Ali in 1876. When it became evident that Abdur Rahman did not mean to leave him in undisturbed enjoyment as Wali of Maimana, Dilawar Khan wrote to Sir Robert Sandeman, the Governor-General's Agent in Biluchistan, saying that he considered himself a servant of the British Government, and asking for protection. In reply he was advised to submit himself to the Ameer, and he then made overtures to the Turkomans at Merve, and to the Russians. There is some reason for believing that this latter appeal was not entirely futile, and that Is'hak Khan, the Governor of Balkh, was recommended by his correspondents across the Oxus to leave Maimana alone. At any rate when, in response to repeated orders from Cabul, he at last marched against the place, it was in such leisurely fashion that the threatened chief had ample time to make his preparations for defence. Then, after a pretence of besieging the place, Is'hak struck his camp and returned, *re infecta*, to his head-quarters. This must have been in 1882. Two years later Abdur Rahman again gave orders for an expedition against Maimana; and this time, lest Is'hak should again be inclined to play him false, a force was sent from Herat

to co-operate with his troops. According to reports which reached Colonel C. E. Stewart* at Meshed, the Herat contingent was under the command of Brigadier Zubberdast Khan, and consisted of a regiment of Herat infantry, 200 cavalry, and six guns. Yaluntush Khan, the Jamshedi chief, who afterwards distinguished himself in Panjdeh, was ordered to join with 600 irregulars. Zubberdast Khan left Herat for Maimana on April 10, 1884; Is'hak marching from the other direction at the head of 5,000 men. But there was little or no fighting. Abdur Rahman's agents bribed the garrison—with English rupees; and Maimana, after a week or two, surrendered quietly. Dilawar Khan was taken to Cabul and put in prison, and Mir Hussein was reinstated on promising to pay tribute. When our Boundary Commissioners passed through Maimana, Mir Hussein was still the nominal ruler; but under the close supervision of a Resident from Cabul, who was supported by a couple of Afghan regiments. The troops were quartered in the city, much to the annoyance and disgust of the Usbeg inhabitants. Maimana is described as a place two-thirds the size of Herat, with strong walls and a moat, but easily commanded from high ground to the east, and quite indefensible against any force with artillery.

Up to this time Abdur Rahman had been acting within his rights, and extending his authority over territories which he might fairly claim as the grandson of Dost Mahomed. Nor did his ambition in any way conflict with British interests. As we had given up Kandahar, and had abandoned the scheme of setting up an

* *Central Asia Blue Book*, II. of 1885, p. 45.

independent ruler there, we could not object to the reunion of this province with Cabul. It was still more to our advantage that Abdur Rahman should be acknowledged at Herat, and that he should bring Maimana under subjection. But we now come to enterprises of a more dubious nature, which it would have been better if the Ameer had never undertaken. To put it shortly, he began to spend the money he was receiving from the Indian Government on projects which could not fail to embarrass his friends and allies.

In 1883 Abdur Rahman turned his attention to Shignan and Koshan, two small hill states extending from the Pamirs across the Panja or Upper Oxus. These miniature principalities, between which there is a close connection, had been under the rule of Mir Shah Yusuf Ali, the descendant of a certain Shah-i-Khamosh, a dervish from Bokhara, who first converted the Shignis to Islam, and then ruled over them. Shah-i-Kamosh is supposed to have flourished in the seventh century. Like many chiefs in this part of Central Asia, the native rulers also claimed descent from Alexander the Great of Macedon. Legends of Sikundar Zulcarnein, Alexander of the two horns, are still current in the country about the Upper Oxus.* One tradition is that a famous magician, who had helped Alexander to capture Bagdad, cast spells about him, and transported him to Kala-i-Khumb in Durwaz. Many years afterwards,

* "Sikundar, after he had conquered the regions of the world, took counsel with his wise men, saying, 'Find me a place, out of reach of the Sultans of the time, where I may place my descendants.' The councillors chose Badakshan."—*Tarikh-i-Rasidi*, ed. Elias, p. 107.

Alexander's daughter, Diva Peri, having transformed herself into a bird, discovered where her father was, killed the magician, and set the imprisoned king at liberty.* Sir Henry Rawlinson suggests that Alexander's mistress, the beauteous Roxana, derived her name from Roshan. To this day the women of the adjoining district of Shignan are highly esteemed for their good looks; and not so many years ago the revenue of the State used to consist in part of handsome young Galtcha women, who were either handed over as tribute to the rulers of Badakshan, or sold as handmaidens to the powerful Khans of Khokand and Karategin. When Captain Wood, of the Indian navy, visited the Upper Oxus, a yearly tribute of fifteen slave girls was paid to Murad Beg, the chief of Kunduz.

Shah Yusuf Ali, the last native Mir of Shignan, was said to be popular with his subjects, but he was not altogether an estimable character. He began his reign by putting one of his father's widows to death. The unfortunate woman was tied to an inflated *mussuck*, the goat skin used by water carriers, and then thrown into the Oxus, to be stoned to death by men on the bank. The slave dealing that was carried on by Yusuf Ali, and by his predecessors during the past century and longer, had pretty well ruined the country. Slaves were the only article of commerce; and if a trader came to Shignan it was to barter his wares—clothing, saddlery or tea—for flesh and blood. If a luckless subject offended the Mir, he was promptly exported and sold; for a serious offence, his family shared in the penalty. When the local

* Royal Geographical Society's *Proceedings*, 1882, p. 416.

supply of slaves ran short, the Mir of Shignan would send a raiding expedition to the Pamirs, to carry off as many Kirghiz as could be caught; these defenceless nomades being an easy prey.

Mir Yusuf Ali has been described by Russian writers as a tributary of the Khan of Khokand; and his supposed relations with this ruler have been relied on as evidence in favour of the contention that Russia, having annexed Khokand, has an indisputable right also to Shignan. As a matter of fact, Yusuf Ali, like many small potentates in Central Asia, was in the habit of conciliating all his powerful neighbours in turn by commending himself to them as their vassal. Thus he sought the protection of Yakoob Beg of Eastern Turkestan, to whom, in 1870, he gave his sister in marriage, of the Ameer of Bokhara, of the Khan of Khokand, and of the Ameer of Afghanistan. Most likely he had paid tribute at one time or another to each of these rulers; though it is also probable that the Afghans were the neighbours of whom he was most afraid.

Shignan was visited in 1874 by Colonel (now General Sir T. E.) Gordon, who found the Mir of Shignan much perturbed at the news that England and Russia had agreed to make the Oxus the limit of Afghan territory. Yusuf Ali proposed, he told Colonel Gordon, to surrender his villages on the left bank of the Panja river to the Afghan Ameer, and, as ruler of whatever was left to him on the right bank, to place himself under the protection of Russia or Bokhara.

In 1882 the Russian explorer, Dr. Albert Regel, paid a visit to Shignan, and was hospitably received by Mir

Yusuf Ali, whom he described as a pleasant and affable personage. The Ameer Abdur Rahman, it is said, was exceedingly annoyed on hearing that the Russians had been allowed to enter Shignan, and resolved to depose Yusuf Ali. Whatever may have been the motive, the step was taken. In September, 1883, the unfortunate Yusuf was brought to Cabul and placed in confinement. The full story of his capture and deportation cannot be told, for want of trustworthy intelligence; and little else is known save that he and about a hundred of his followers were marched out of the country under a strong escort. One Gulzar Khan, a native of Kandahar, was appointed by the Ameer to be governor of Shignan, and it was he who in the autumn of 1883 stopped the exploring expedition under M. Ivanoff, which endeavoured to enter Shignan.

About the same time, that is, in 1883, the Ameer Abdur Rahman appointed Ghafar Khan, member of a Kirghiz family which had settled in Afghanistan, to be his governor of Wakhan, the hill state to the south of Shignan, in place of Ali Mardan Shah, the native chieftain.

The action taken by the Ameer in regard to Shignan gave rise to a good deal of trouble afterwards. The chief town in the state, Bar Panja, is a fortress overhanging the left or west bank of the Oxus, here called the P'anja. That is to say, it is situated within the limits of Afghan territory, as defined by the Anglo-Russian understanding of 1873. But the Shignan villages lie for the most part to the right or east of the river; and it was here that Ghafur Khan turned back the Russian survey expedition,

which, technically, was an act in contravention of the same understanding. The Russians, therefore, had at any rate some excuse for protesting; which they did without loss of time. Early in August, 1883, the St. Petersburg *Novoe Vremya* reported that Shignan, which it described as a small and hitherto independent Begdom, had been occupied by the Afghans. In the following December, a memorandum of remonstrance was formally submitted to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg. In this document the following remarks occur :

“The principality of Shignan and Roshan, which is contiguous, not only to Bokhara but also to the Russian province of Ferghana, has always enjoyed an independent existence, and although it has not escaped the consequences of the revolutions of which this part of Central Asia was once the scene, it has never ceased to be administered by native rulers. On the other hand it is not among the number of those provinces which were recognised by the agreement arrived at in 1873 between Russia and England, as forming part of the possessions of the Ameer of Afghanistan, and this circumstance is the best proof that the invasion of Shignan by the Khan of Badakshan is an arbitrary act in flagrant violation of the terms of the agreement in question, and that it may give rise to misunderstandings and complications between Bokhara and Afghanistan. Being themselves desirous of preventing such complications, the Imperial Cabinet are firmly convinced that Great Britain on her side will not remain indifferent to a state of affairs which threatens the basis of the arrangement established in 1873, an arrangement which has greatly contributed to the maintenance of peace for a period of ten years in this part of Central Asia. Under these circumstances the Imperial Cabinet hope that in conformity with the terms of the arrangement in question the Government of Her Majesty the Queen will employ all their influence to induce the Ameer of Cabul to withdraw as soon as possible, from

Shignan and Roshan, the lieutenant and the Afghan garrison now in that principality, and to renounce for ever all interference in its affairs."

To these representations, Lord Granville, after referring to the authorities in India, replied that in the view of the Ameer Abdur Rahman, Shignan and Roshan formed part of the province of Badakshan, a province which had been formally declared to belong to Afghanistan. The Indian Government, however, owing to the lack of precise information, could not pronounce a decided opinion on the matter; and Earl Granville was therefore willing to let an investigation be made on the spot by a joint commission. This reply was communicated to the Russian Government in June, 1884, and was not very favourably received. M. de Giers again pointed out that the provinces of Shignan and Roshan were not mentioned in the agreement of 1873, and, moreover, were outside the delimiting line marked by the course of Oxus from its source in Lake Sarikol (Wood's Lake). Abdur Rahman's pretensions, therefore, were incompatible, he argued, with the agreement of 1873, and M. de Giers hoped that Her Majesty's Government would recognize this fact. He did not object to the appointment of a commission to study the subject, and to ascertain whether the agreement of 1873 might be modified in the interests of the contracting powers. But the restoration of the *status quo ante* was held at St. Petersburg to be an essential preliminary; and the Afghan officials and soldiers must be recalled from Shignan and Roshan. Earl Granville demurred to the suggestion that there had been any departure from the

status quo ante. That was a question, he said, upon which Her Majesty's Government could not pronounce definitely without a local investigation.

There, for the time being, the matter rested. Further developments will be noticed in another chapter ; but it is advisable to indicate the result at once. In the end the British Government admitted that Abdur Rahman was debarred by the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1873 from annexing those portions of Shignan which lie to the east of the Panja. Why this admission was not made when the dispute first arose, is best known to our diplomatists. Nothing was gained by the delay, which, on the contrary, caused an immense amount of needless friction and avoidable irritation. In justice to the Ameer Abdur Rahman it should be mentioned that the extension of his authority over Shignan was in one way a blessing to the people ; since his officials put a stop to the exportation of slaves, which, under the native Mirs had been carried on in so ruthless a fashion. The rumour that a new order of things had been established began to spread far and wide. Miserable creatures, who had lived years in cruel bondage, escaped from their masters and made their way back to their homes in Shignan, where now, thanks to Abdur Rahman, they might abide in peace.

South of Shignan lies the district of Wakhan. South of that again rise the snow-clad peaks of the Hindu Kush. On the south of this mountain range is situated Chitral. Any good-sized map will show the relative positions of Kafiristan, Bajaur, and Swat ; though unless the heights of mountain passes and the lie of river

valleys are carefully noted, the reader will have but a faint conception of the difficulties of intercourse between these countries and the States which they adjoin. Abdur Rahman had more than one motive for interfering in this no-man's-land, which, roughly speaking, stretches from the Peshawur frontier northward to the Baroghil Pass, and from Kashmere to Badakshan. In regard to the Kafir tribes, infidels and idol-worshippers, he would fulfil the first duty of a ruler in Islam by waging war against them; while there were material advantages to be derived from the conquest of Yaghistan, the "Land of the Unruly," which includes Chitral, Bajaur, and Swat, Boner, Dir, and Chilas. And these were not the only considerations. The Ameer's frontier in this direction was undefined; there were reasons for believing that sooner or later the Indian Government would press for an exact delimitation; and Abdur Rahman no doubt argued that the more he could lay his hands on, the more he would be able to retain. This was the principle, as we shall see presently, upon which the Russians acted when they pushed their outposts towards Panjdeh and the Zulfikar Pass. As early as 1883 it was reported* that the Ameer was taking steps to extend his authority over the territories west and north of Peshawur; and the border tribes in Swat, Kunar, and Bajaur were not a little perturbed by the apprehension that they might be gradually absorbed by the powerful ruler of Afghanistan. Other matters, however, occupied Abdur Rahman's attention, and it was not till later that a serious move was made.

* *Punjab Administration Report*, 1883-84.

While Chitral was exposed to an Afghan attack from Badakshan, the Dora Pass being comparatively easy, Bajaur could be assailed from the south by a force marching up the Kunar Valley from Jelalabad. It was from this direction that Baber the Chagatai marched against the people of Bajaur in 1519. The first of the Indian Moghuls gives an interesting account of the expedition in his incomparable *Memoirs*. To his message inviting them to submit, the Bajauris, "a stupid and ill-advised set," returned an "absurd answer." Accordingly Baber gave orders for an advance. His army was equipped with scaling-ladders and engines for attacking fortresses, and also with Feringhi (Frankish) cannon and matchlocks. Baber tells us that when the Bajauris heard the matchlocks go off "they stood opposite to them, mocking and making unseemly and improper gestures." They paid dearly for their inopportune facetiousness, a great number of them being slaughtered. In 1858 the Ameer Dost Mahomed, whose brother had married the daughter of a Bajaur chief, and could not obtain payment of her dowry, prepared an expedition against the country, but was promptly advised by the Indian Government to keep his hands off.

The Ameer Abdur Rahman endeavoured at first to get a footing in Yaghistan by exercising his talents as a diplomatist. The leading chief in Bajaur, Umra Khan of Jandol, was inaccessible to negotiation; but Shah Tahmasp, Khan of Asmar, listened readily to his overtures. Shah Tahmasp, in November, 1887, attended a frontier durbar held by Lord Dufferin at Peshawur; but being dissatisfied, it is said, with the amount of attention

bestowed on him, he went shortly afterwards to Jelalabad, where the Ameer's officials soothed his wounded vanity so effectually, that he thenceforth looked to Cabul rather than to India for protection against his enemies, of whom Umra Khan was the most formidable. A year or two later Shah Tahmasp was murdered by a Kafir slave, and during the confusion which followed it seemed likely that Umra Khan would be able to establish himself at Asmar. In that case Umra Khan's authority would extend from Swat to the borders of Kafiristan. It was to prevent this development that Abdur Rahman, in December, 1891, ordered his general, Gholam Hyder, to advance on Asmar, and the place was captured. At the time it was believed that this move would be followed by further operations, either against Kafiristan on the north-west, against Chitral on the north, or against Bajaur on the south-east.* The Ameer was at once requested to abstain from any interference in the last-mentioned country; and one of the objects of the Durand mission to Cabul, in 1893, was to fix a limit to the expansion of Afghan rule over other districts bordering on Asmar. The result of the negotiation will be indicated in another chapter.

The Afghans, as already pointed out, can approach Chitral not only from the south, but also and more easily from Badakshan. Abdur Rahman, however, did not openly advance in this direction; but to explain his methods it is necessary to say something of the recent history of the Chitral State. Chitral, with Yassin, had for many years been under the rule of Aman-ul-Mulk,

* *Punjab Administration Report, 1892-93.*

known as the Mehtar or Badshah, and reputed on the border to be a wily and astute diplomatist. Colonel Biddulph, when British Agent at Gilgit in 1878, described him as shrewd, avaricious, unscrupulous, and deceitful. "He seemed utterly careless of what he said, so long as it served his purpose for the moment. He trusted nobody; he was not of a warlike disposition, but preferred working by fraud rather than by force." In 1885 the Indian Government despatched a mission under Colonel (now General) Sir William Lockhart, to establish friendly relations with this potentate, and an agreement was entered into by which Chitral practically became a British protectorate. This was part of the scheme for making the Indian frontier secure against any enemy attempting to attack India, either by direct advance or by intrigue, from the Pamirs. In August, 1892, Aman-ul-Mulk, now a man of great age, died or, as some say, was murdered by one of his sons. He was succeeded by his son Afzul Khan, a young chief, who entertained warm feelings of respect and friendship for the English in general, and for Colonel Lockhart in particular.

Abdur Rahman now saw an opening. Shere Afzul, an exiled brother of the late Mehtar's, had for some time past been living in Badakshan. Shortly after the death of Aman-ul-Mulk, he was allowed to enlist a few hundred fighting men, was supplied with arms and ammunition—this, at least, is the story usually told—and was encouraged to make a dash at Chitral. Early in November, 1892, he crossed the Dora Pass, pushed on to Chitral, surprised the garrison, and captured the fort. The young Mehtar, his nephew, was shot through

the head. Shere Afzul at once proclaimed himself Mehtar, styling himself the ally and servant of the Ameer of Afghanistan. To what extent the Ameer Abdur Rahman was really responsible for this successful but, from the English point of view, exceeding inconvenient enterprise may be doubtful; but it was generally recognised that the presence of the usurper in Chitral was altogether incompatible with our interests. The establishment of Afghan authority and influence in the State was one of the things which the Indian Government wished to prevent, and steps were accordingly taken to get Shere Afzul out of the way. Here it will be sufficient to say that Nizam-ul-Mulk, another son of the deceased Aman-ul-Mulk, was supplied by the British Agent at Gilgit with the means necessary for attacking the invader, and early in the following year Shere Afzul was driven out of the country. He again found a refuge with his Afghan protectors, but this time was taken to Cabul, and kept under surveillance there. He was seen by members of the Durand Mission looking out of the windows of a house near the Ameer's palace. The murder of Nizam-ul-Mulk, in January, 1895, the invasion of Chitral by the redoubtable Umra Khan, and the reappearance of Afzul Khan on the scene, are events which do not fall within the scope of the present narrative.

Besides endeavouring, with more or less success, to make his authority felt in countries lying between Kashmere and Badakshan, Abdur Rahman was also desirous of bringing various independent tribes bordering on British India from Peshawur to Quetta under his control. The Turis of Kurram, the Orakzais, the Waziris,

the Sheranis, and the inhabitants of Zhob, have all, at different times, been invited to accept him as their sovereign. The disputes that arose in Kurram will be referred to hereafter ; but something may be said here in regard to Abdur Rahman's proceedings further south.

In January, 1890, the Zhob district—a valley flanking the great caravan route by the Gomul Pass from the Punjab to Ghuzni—was formally annexed by order of the Indian Government, which had for some time past clearly perceived the necessity of obtaining a scientific frontier in this direction. The extension of our authority over Zhob was requisite not only to ensure the tranquillity of the British districts which were adjacent, to it, but also to secure our military communications. In the previous year the late Sir Robert Sandeman, the Governor-General's agent for Biluchistan, had marched from Lorelei through Zhob, and thence by the Gomul to Dera Ishmail Khan in the Punjab, and had found the Zhobwals, as the people of Zhob are styled, very ready to acquiesce in the arrangement which was now duly carried out. At the same time steps were taken to open up the Gomul Pass. Since then, it may be added, the annexation has proved in every way satisfactory. The Zhobwals have gladly accepted the advantages of our protection, and there is every reason to hope that they derive material, if not moral benefit, therefrom.

But Abdur Rahman viewed the new departure with suspicion, and his resentment was shown in a way that betokened something far short of the friendliness the Indian Government had a right to expect from a protected and subsidised ally. The Zhob valley had never belonged

either to him or to Dost Mahomed ; nor could he justly claim the right of interfering in the management of the Gomul Pass, even though it led to his city of Ghuzni, and was largely used by his subjects, the travelling Povinda merchants. Nevertheless he proceeded to act as if the Indian Government was his enemy. In the following January (1892) two of his officials, the Governors of Katawuz and Mukur, with an escort of over a hundred horsemen, marched down the Gomul river, arrived suddenly at Gakuch, just to the north of the Pass, and established an outpost there. In July another detachment of the Ameer's troops, under Sirdar Gul Mahomed, advanced to Gustoi, in the Zhob district ; and the Sirdar had the temerity to write to the political officer in Zhob, Major MacIvor, saying that the people of Gustoi were subjects of the Ameer, and that the English must not interfere with them. This extraordinary intrusion, which had probably been preceded by surreptitious communications with men of light and leading amongst the Zhobwals, created immense excitement in the district, and might easily have led to awkward complications. Major MacIvor, however, at once took steps to expel the Afghans ; and there would have been a fight had not Sirdar Gul Mahomed, considering discretion the better part of valour, taken his departure before the political agent appeared on the scene. It is significant that during the confusion three of the principal headmen in Zhob fled to Kandahar. On leaving Gustoi, the Afghan Sirdar went off to Wano in Waziriland, where also he had no business. Upon this a strongly worded letter of remonstrance was addressed to the Ameer Abdur Rahman. Seeing that we

meant business, he ordered Sirdar Gul Mahomed to retire ; but for some time the position of affairs continued to be highly unsatisfactory, and, as will be seen hereafter, a settlement was not finally arrived at till Sir Mortimer Durand was able to discuss it with the Ameer at Cabul.

But enough for the present has been said about Abdur Rahman's efforts to widen the boundaries of his kingdom. His encroachments on Biluchistan, in the neighbourhood of Chageh, will come under notice later on. That a ruler of his temperament should be always casting about for the means of adding to the territory under his sway is of course perfectly natural. The Afghans in former days have been in possession of the Punjab and Kashmere on the east, of a greater part of Persia on the west. A hundred years ago, perhaps, Abdur Rahman might have founded an empire, "one hand on Scythia, t'other on the Moor." But the pressure of two stronger Powers than his own curbed his ambition, and restrained his energy within the narrowest bounds. With England and Russia almost touching hands in Central Asia there is little space for a Sheibani Khan or a Timur. Abdur Rahman's schemes of aggrandisement have been petty projects after all. There was hardly an opening that was not straightway closed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE AMEER AND HIS NEIGHBOURS.

"An Afghan musician sang this verse, accompanying himself on the dulcimer—

*"When the whole universe is inimical to me,
If you befriend me, why should I be afraid?"*

TARIKHI DAUDI.

English Relations with* Afghanistan—Dost Mahomed and Shere Ali—The Umballa durbar—The validity of treaties—Yakooob Khan—Anti-Annexation—A Russian fallacy—Abdur Rahman and his subsidy—The English guarantee—The Russians at Merve—Lord Ripon's liberality—England's obligations—Our traditional policy—The integrity of Afghanistan—Lord Dufferin Viceroy—The Rawulpindi durbār—A speech by Abdur Rahman—Lord Dufferin's tact—The news from Panjdeh—The Grand Cross of the Star of India—Abdur Rahman and the Russians—The Ameer exhorts his subjects—The fable of the swan.

NOT every public man in England, perhaps, could give off-hand a lucid summary of our political relations with Afghanistan and the Afghans. Are we pledged to maintain the integrity of the country against attack from outside? Are we bound by any existing compact, given or understood, to refrain from annexation ourselves? Do our engagements, whatever they may be, terminate with the lifetime of Abdur Rahman, or is there anything in the shape of a promise to his dynasty? These are questions to which conflicting answers have

often been given, and it will be the main object of the present chapter to indicate the true state of the case ; or, at any rate, to provide the facts from which a solution must be deduced.

By the treaty signed at Peshawur, on March 30, 1855, and ratified by Lord Dalhousie, with the approval of Lord Aberdeen's Government, on May 1, a perpetual alliance was concluded between the Honourable East India Company, on the one side, and the Ameer Dost Mahomed on the other. The Company agreed to respect the territories then in the Ameer's possession, and never to interfere therein ; while the Dost engaged, on his own part and on the part of his heirs, to respect the Company's territories, and to be the friend of its friends and the enemy of its enemies. This, it must be admitted, was a one-sided compact. While the Ameer and his heirs were pledged to assist the English against their enemies, no corresponding obligation was undertaken by the Company. It may be noted that the territories then in possession of Dost Mahomed did not include Herat. In December, 1863, the acting Governor General of India, Sir William Denison, acknowledged Shere Ali as the successor of the Dost. Three years later the Government of Sir John Lawrence acknowledged Afzul Khan, and formally invited him, as Ameer of Cabul and Kandahar, to tender his adhesion to the treaty engagements which had been concluded by his father, Dost Mahomed. Sir John Lawrence wrote :

"I am prepared to recognize your Highness as Ameer of Cabul and Kandahar, and I frankly offer your Highness, in that capacity, peace and the goodwill of

the British Government. I shall expect your Highness, in return, to recognize as binding on your Highness's Government of Cabul and Kandahar the engagements concluded between the British Government and your Highness's father, the late Ameer Dost Mahomed Khan, as contained in the treaty of March 30, 1855."

When Shere Ali recovered his kingdom, Sir John Lawrence told him, in a letter written from Simla on October 2, 1863, that he was prepared not only to maintain the bonds of amity and goodwill which were established between Dost Mahomed and the British Government, but as far as might be practicable to strengthen those bonds.

Shere Ali, when he came to India at Lord Mayo's invitation in 1869, bitterly complained of the one-sided character of the treaty relations of 1855. He hoped to obtain a supplemental treaty, which would declare that we were the friends of his friends and the enemy of his enemies. This was not granted, but we did undertake to give him countenance and support if any attempt was made by his rivals to disturb his position.

That the obligations incurred by the treaty of 1855 retained validity down to the year 1878, may be sufficiently proved by reference to Lord Cranbrook's despatch of November 18, 1878, to the Government of India. In this document special mention is made of "the treaty of 1855, negotiated by Lord Dalhousie with the approval of Lord Aberdeen's Government, and still in force"; and the text of the compact is printed in a marginal note. The Ameer Shere Ali, however, between the years 1873 and 1878, by maintaining an attitude of isolation and scarcely-veiled hostility, had committed an

unmistakable breach of this treaty ; and it was argued that a continuance of such conduct would leave the British Government absolved from any obligation, and at full liberty to act as the circumstances of the moment might prescribe, without regard to his wishes or the interests of his dynasty. His reception of a Russian envoy, and his refusal to receive the mission sent by Lord Lytton, completed the infraction. With Lord Lytton's proclamation, issued on November 21, 1878, the treaty of 1855 ceased to have any binding force on the British Government.

In the following May, however, a treaty was made with Yakooob Khan "and his successors," which substituted a new compact for that of 1855. There was to be perpetual peace and friendship between the Ameer and his successors on the one hand and the British Government on the other. The Ameer's foreign relations were to be under the control of the British Government, which, on that condition, undertook to support him against any foreign aggression. A British representative was to reside at Cabul, and to the Ameer and his successors was to be paid an annual subsidy of six lakhs of rupees. It was not expressly stipulated, as in 1855, that the British Government should respect the independence of Afghanistan ; but the British Government undertook that its agents should never in any way interfere with the internal administration of the Ameer's dominions, and that if ever British troops should enter Afghan territory to repel foreign aggression, they should be withdrawn on their object being accomplished.

After the massacre of the Cavagnari mission, it was

announced in the proclamation dated Ali Khel, September 16, 1879, that the force under General Roberts was advancing not only for the purpose of "taking a public revenge," but also "to obtain satisfaction (literally, consolidation) of the terms entered into in the treaty of Gandamak." With Yakoob Khan's abdication on October 12, 1879, the treaty of Gundamak ceased to have effect. In the words of Lord Lytton, it was annulled by the series of events which terminated in the occupation of Cabul and the dissolution of Yakoob Khan's Government.

But the British Government did not abandon its resolve to abstain from annexing Afghanistan. In his speech on April 13, 1880, to the Sirdars, Khans, and Maliks of Cabul, Sir Lepel Griffin said, "The Government has no intention of annexing Afghanistan, and will occupy no more of it than may be necessary for the safety of its frontiers." So too, on March 15, General Sir Donald Stewart told the people of Kandahar that the British Government desired and intended to leave Afghanistan to be ruled by the Afghans themselves.

To sum up, the British Government in its treaty with Dost Mahomed pledged itself to respect the independence of Afghanistan, and that treaty remained in force until 1878, when it was held to be annulled by the contumacy of Shere Ali. By the treaty of Gundamak there was to be perpetual peace and friendship with Yakoob Khan and his heirs. This treaty likewise was annulled by Yakoob's abdication. Thenceforward the obligation to respect the independence of Afghanistan rested, not on explicit assurances given to its rulers, but rather on the principles of

policy which the British Government desired to follow ; and though the Afghan people and their chiefs were informed that we wished to adhere to these principles, there was nothing in the way of a solemn engagement to abide by them.

On more than one occasion the Russian Government has argued that we were bound by engagements entered into with them, if not with any Afghan ruler, to respect Afghan independence ; but this theory was repudiated by Lord Salisbury in December, 1878. On the other hand there can be no doubt that Russia is pledged to us to respect the integrity of Afghanistan. It will be sufficient here to quote the statement made by Prince Lobanoff on February 22, 1882, in the course of a conversation with Earl Granville. His Government, he said, acknowledged the continued validity of the agreement formerly entered into by Prince Gortchakoff in 1873, by which Afghanistan was admitted to be beyond the sphere of Russian influence. On two or three occasions since Abdur Rahman's accession, it has been found necessary to remind the Russians of this undertaking ; and the justice of such protests has not been denied. In October, 1880, Earl Granville was informed by the Russian Ambassador that General Kaufmann had been forbidden to enter into any communication, even of a complimentary character, with the Ameer Abdur Rahman. In October, 1883, M. de Giers said that strict orders had been sent to the Governor General of Turkestan to desist from the transmission of letters of ceremony, or even of letters of recommendation, to the Ameer in favour of travellers. "In fact," said M. de Giers, "all possible steps were taken to prevent

intercourse between Russia and Afghanistan, which latter country was considered to be in England's orbit."

An account has been given in a former chapter of Abdur Rahman's earlier dealings with the English. We have seen how he was invited to Cabul and recognised as ruler of the province ; how he was afterwards encouraged to take possession of Kandahar and Herat. The amount of material help which he received in the shape of arms, ammunition, and treasure is nowhere stated in any trustworthy publication ; but the accompanying account of sums paid to Abdur Rahman down to the middle of 1881 may be taken as correct :

Paid at Cabul, August, 1880	Rs. 6,65,000
Paid at Lundi-Kotal, September, 1880 . .	Rs. 5,00,000
Paid at Peshawur, October, 1880	Rs. 7,00,000
Paid at Peshawur, January, 1881	Rs. 1,00,000
Paid at Peshawur, February, 1881	Rs. 5,00,000
Paid at Kandahar to the Ameer's agent, April, 1881	Rs. 5,00,000
Paid at Peshawur, June, 1881	Rs. 5,00,000
Paid at Kandahar, April, May, June	Rs. 1,50,000
Total	Rs. 36,15,000

We were already paying rather heavily for the privilege of the Ameer's friendship.

But although the benefits we conferred on Abdur Rahman were mounting up, no modification had been made in the conditions of our agreement with him. The letter given to him by Sir Lepel Griffin in July, 1880, continued to be the only formal compact between the British Government and the ruler of Afghanistan. It was not a very precise understanding ; being nothing more, as the reader will recollect, than a statement that the British

Government would aid him, in the event of unprovoked aggression, to such extent and in such a manner as it thought fit, provided he followed our advice in all affairs of foreign policy. We had not pledged ourselves, in so many words, to go to war with any enemy who attacked him. We gave no pledge to his dynasty. It was, in fact, a vague and uncertain assurance, expressed in terms that may well have left a less astute ruler than Abdur Rahman in doubt as to our sincerity. It was not even announced openly, but was whispered in his ear, one might say, at a private interview ; and the Governor-General himself was not told, officially, that the document had been presented till three months afterwards. Yet this dubious promise remained the basis of the relationship. Sir John Gorst, as Under Secretary of State for India, declared in the House of Commons on July 29, 1890, that it was the only agreement that had been made with the Ameer, and that it had since undergone no modification.

On the other hand it has to be noted that on more than one occasion the British Government has interpreted the undertaking of 1880 in a way that leaves us no honourable escape from a serious and grave responsibility. If the letter given to Abdur Rahman was in no sense a treaty at the time, it has since been invested with the significance of a treaty. If at first it was no more than a conditional promise to help Abdur Rahman in defending the provinces of Cabul and Balkh, it subsequently came to be regarded as a guarantee applicable to the whole of Afghanistan, and was so regarded both by the British public and by the British Government. The first step towards developing the significance of the understanding

took place early in 1883 ; when the Government of India became disturbed by the intelligence that a convention had been signed, in the previous October, between the Ottemish section of the Merve Turcomans and the Russian governor of the Oxus district—by the reconnaissances of M. Lessar and by the visit of Lieutenant Alikhanoff to Merve in the disguise of a trader. There were other indications, too, of an impending advance in the direction of the Afghan frontier ; and no doubt it was in consequence of all this that Lord Ripon's Government deemed it advisable to let Abdur Rahman know that England was his friend and not Russia. Some such sentiment breathes through the letter which was sent to him in February, 1883. His Highness was told that he had no reason for alarm, though rumours of danger might be in the air. He was reminded that in the document handed to him by Sir Lepel Griffin in July, 1880, we had given him a conditional promise of aid in the event of his being attacked by a foreign enemy. The Governor General quoted the words of this document, and added : "Under these circumstances your Highness need be under no apprehension, but may rest in secure reliance that the British Government has both the will and the power to make good all its engagements with your Highness."

The sanction and emphasis hereby given to the undertaking of 1880 requires particular notice. Whatever doubt may have been felt as to the meaning or value of the original engagement, the interpretation now put upon it by Lord Ripon left no room for controversy as to its moral intent. Sir Alfred Lyall, writing in July, 1880, on

behalf of his Government, had been most careful to explain that the engagement was not a treaty. Sir Lepel Griffin had described it shortly afterwards as being not an agreement between two States, but merely a memorandum of obligation granted by the British Government. It was getting to be something very like an agreement now. On June 16, 1883, Lord Ripon again wrote to the Ameer. He had observed, he said with satisfaction, Abdur Rahman's assurances of good faith and loyalty to the British Government; and he was convinced that His Highness realized the necessity, in the interests of Afghanistan, of maintaining friendly relations with the Government of India. The letter concluded as follows:—

“Impressed by these considerations I have determined to offer to your Highness personally, a subsidy of twelve lakhs a year (Rs. 12,00,000) payable monthly, to be devoted to the payment of your troops, and to other measures required for your defence of your north-west frontier. I feel that I may safely trust to your Highness's good faith and practised skill to devote this addition to your resources to objects of such vital importance as those which I have above mentioned.”

Abdur Rahman' hastened to reply to this communication. In a letter dated July 11, 1883, he declared that his heart, the repository of concord, rejoiced exceedingly over the news of Lord Ripon's sound and perfect health; and referring to the grant of a subsidy, he went on to say:—

“I have announced the glad tidings of your Excellency's determination, which is calculated to conduce to the well-being of the British Government, and of the people of Afghanistan, and to put in order and keep going my affairs, to the people of Afghanistan

at large, who all offered up thanks, saying, 'For many years we, the Afghan nation, have been suffering from innumerable calamities. Thanks be to God that a glorious government like this has befriended us.' God willing, the people of Afghanistan will never allow their heads to swerve from the line of friendship to the illustrious British Government, and so long as I live I will not think of making friends with anyone but with the illustrious British Government. I have offered my prayers to God for the increased glory of that powerful Government."

Such was the position of affairs toward the end of Lord Ripon's Viceroyalty. Morally, though not by any formal treaty, we stood bound to defend the integrity of Afghanistan against external attack, so long as Ameer Abdur Rahman behaved as our friend and ally, managing his foreign affairs according to our advice. We had, moreover, undertaken to pay him an annual subsidy; and we had assured him of our ability and our desire to protect him. It may be argued that our pledges to the Ameer were conditional; and that their fulfilment would always depend on the circumstances of some future moment. To some extent this reservation might be justified; yet against it must be set the explicit statement made by Earl Granville, who in March, 1885, wrote as follows:—

"Her Majesty's Government have had opportunities of declaring in Parliament their adherence to the Imperial and traditional policy of this country with regard to India and Afghanistan—a policy long upheld by both the great parties in the State without distinction. This policy, as is well known, include agreements to the Ameer binding Her Majesty's Government to regard as a hostile act any aggression upon his territory—of which Herat is a salient point. Her Majesty's Government feel

sure that the Imperial (Russian) Government will readily understand that in circumstances such as those at the present moment, the Ameer, at the head of a comparatively feeble government, is entitled to expect from the Government of the Queen the most explicit assurances.”*

The fact that no such agreement as Lord Granville describes was in existence, detracts somewhat from the importance of the Foreign Minister's observations; but they may be held, at any rate, to imply that England, if true to herself, is bound to resent any attack on Afghanistan. That is a principle which Lord Ripon's successor, Lord Dufferin, did not hesitate to adopt; and it guided him in his negotiations with Abdur Rahman at Rawalpindi.

The Ameer had been ready, if not eager, to pay a visit to India in Lord Ripon's time. It was said that on one occasion he came down to Jelalabad fully expecting to be invited to Peshawur or perhaps Rawalpindi; and it was a pity that no invitation was forthcoming. Among the first things Lord Dufferin did, on arriving in India, was to arrange for a meeting with the ruler of Afghanistan; and the conference proved an immense success. Up to now our relations with the Ameer had been on a most unsatisfactory footing. We were paying him a handsome subsidy, and had been providing him with arms and ammunition; but the confidence and liberality were all on our side. It was a speculation tempered by the awkward certainty that Abdur Rahman had behaved with great harshness to those of his subjects who had been our friends, and by the suspicion that he was not altogether

* *Central Asia Papers, II. of 1875*, p. 183.

disinclined to cultivate amicable relations with Russia. After his visit to Lord Dufferin, it became evident to all that for the time being, to say the least, he was our firm ally.

A picturesque account of the historical conference may be found in the Marchioness of Dufferin's letters. The Ameer, a stout, fine looking man, was attended by a guard of his own cavalry, in bright orange tunics and long Russian boots. He had also brought with him his chief executioner, a gentleman in red velvet, girt with axe and strangling rope. "I must tell you," says her ladyship, "one nice, gentle little trait in the Ameer's character. He spent three hours yesterday morning arranging cut flowers in forty vases, and he expressed a wish to have large supplies sent him daily. And this is the man who cuts off heads and hangs people when at home." On April 6, 1885, there was a State dinner. Lord Dufferin proposed Abdur Rahman's health. To everyone's surprise, the Ameer got up and made a speech, in which he spoke of the friendship that existed between England and Afghanistan, complimented the British army, and expressed a hope that Afghanistan might become as flourishing as India, with which its interests were bound up. The great durbar took place on April 8, there being present, besides the Viceroy and Abdur Rahman, the Duke of Connaught, Sir Frederick Roberts, the Lieutenant Governors of the Punjab and North-West Provinces, seven of the Punjab Chiefs, including Patiala in a canary-coloured turban with chains of emeralds and diamonds, Bahawalpur with an immense aigrette of diamonds in his head-dress, and Nabha, who looked like

a knight of the Crusades. After the customary gifts had been presented, the Ameer asked permission to say a few words which might be heard by all. Permission granted, he spoke in Persian as follows :

“I am deeply sensible of the kindness which I have received from His Excellency the Viceroy, and of the favour shown to me by Her Majesty the Queen Empress. In return for this kindness and favour I am ready with my army and people to render any services that may be required of me or of the Afghan nation. As the British Government has declared that it will assist me in repelling any foreign enemy, so it is right and proper that Afghanistan should unite in the firmest manner and stand side by side with the British Government.” *

An amusing incident is recorded by Lady Dufferin. Among the presents for His Highness the Ameer was a mechanical singing bird, which somehow or other began a performance just as the Ameer was speaking. The interruption, however, in no way diminished the effect of Abdur Rahman's oratory, which was received with such plaudits as are seldom, if ever, heard at a viceregal durbar, and also, the Viceroy himself noted, with some astonishment, for the general public was still doubtful of the Ameer's feelings toward us.

But during the past ten days the ties that formed the bond of union between Afghanistan and the British Government had been greatly strengthened. Lord Dufferin and the Ameer had met daily to discuss the situation. Some day, no doubt, we shall know what took place at these interviews ; but for the present only the general results of the conference can be stated. At

* *Central Asia Papers, IV. of 1885, p. 4.*

first Abdur Rahman showed extreme caution and reticence. The Viceroy began by expounding at some length the views of the British Government in regard to the Afghan question. "And now," said His Excellency, "what are your proposals and opinions?" To this searching inquiry Abdur Rahman's not very hopeful or helpful answer was, "I do not think that is a fair question." But the cold reserve of the astute Asiatic thawed under the magic influence of Lord Dufferin's sympathetic tact. Before long he was speaking, the Viceroy wrote, with much sense and directness; and Lord Dufferin was favourably impressed with his ability and self-reliance. It would be wonderful if the Ameer on his side was not impressed by the readiness of the Viceroy, to make every allowance for the difficulties and dangers which must ever lie in the path of one who aspires to rule over a nation like the Afghans, a stiff-necked generation, habituated to violence and intrigue, fanatical, treacherous, and hard to drive. Not less, it is certain, was the Ameer convinced that in resolution and tenacity of purpose he had met his match; and that if Lord Dufferin, the first statesman of conspicuous ability he had come in contact with, was a generous friend, he was also one whom it would be perilous to oppose. Whatever his doubts may have been when he came to Peshawur, Abdur Rahman, we may safely believe, now saw his way clearly open before him, and knew that he might look to the English for support without losing his independence as the successor of Dost Mahomed.

The news of the Russian attack on Panjdeh reached Rawalpindi on the evening of the grand durbar, and

was at once communicated to Abdur Rahman. Speaking at a meeting of the Legislative Council on January 4, 1886, Lord Dufferin said :—

“ But for the accidental circumstances of the Ameer being in my camp at Rawulpindi, and the fortunate fact of his being a prince of great capacity, experience, and calm judgment, the incident of Panjdeh alone, in the strained condition of the relations which then existed between Russia and ourselves, might of itself have proved the occasion of a long and miserable war.”

The incident of Panjdeh will be treated hereafter. The Ameer's visit to Rawulpindi came to a close on April 12 ; and he left that morning thoroughly pleased with himself. Lord Dufferin had promised him aid in arms and ammunition, and perhaps in money, should war break out with Russia. In the event, moreover, of certain contingencies, the basis of a satisfactory understanding with regard to the future action of the Indian Government had been laid down. Last of all the Ameer's request, that he might receive a decoration from the Queen, had been referred to London and graciously granted. He took his departure wearing the decoration of a Grand Commander of the Star of India.

In future chapters we shall see how, at times, Abdur Rahman was disposed to forget his eager protestations of warm friendship towards the Indian Government ; how misunderstandings arose which threatened to impair the relations established by Lord Dufferin ; and how in the end these misunderstandings were removed. It may be said, however, with confidence that the Ameer's loyalty towards England has never been seriously shaken. He has had his grievances against us ; but they have never

impelled him for a moment to look towards Tashkend for assistance or sympathy.

Abdur Rahman's sentiments in regard to Russia were set forth at great length in a state paper which he read or caused to be read in his durbar in June, 1886, and which was afterwards published as a pamphlet. To certain passages dealing with the Panjdch incident reference is made elsewhere. In this place the Ameer's views concerning his general relations with England and Russia will be noted. What was Shere Ali, he asked, but a fool and a madman, who brought disaster on his people and ruin on himself. The English Governor-General (Lord Lytton) would have accepted the alliance of the Afghans and desired to maintain them as a bulwark between the Russians and themselves. Shere Ali broke down the bulwark. Thus he was the enemy of his own kingdom, and became a prisoner in the hands of his own enemy. He turned to the Russians and besought them to drive out the English. The event cried aloud :—"O, fool ! had you driven out the English with Russian aid and expelled the foreigner from your country, to what Power would you then turn for help to rid yourself of the Russians. When you were powerful the English feared you not. When your limbs were rotten, and the countenance of your alliance was defaced by enmity, what store would they lay by you ? They are not fools, such as you were, to abandon your country. Now is it clear that you were not fit to rule, since you could not discern the difference between friend and foe. You were froward and sinful. God did not suffer you to prosper, and in exile you died. You perished in

Turkestan. You were not even permitted to cross the Oxus. You lit the fire of rebellion amidst your own people, but you could not destroy the stronghold of Islam." That, Abdur Rahman declared, speaking Asiatically, was what the event said of Shere Ali; and the Ameer passed on to consider the acts of Yakoob Khan.

"After Shere Ali's death," said the Ameer, "his foolish son (Yakoob) did what the most ignorant man could not do if left to his own devices. He was prompted how to do it. Let us tell the truth. When he could not protect the English, why did he put them to the trouble of coming here? When he thought of bringing them, why did he not consult his people and ask their opinion? His tribe (the Barakzais) was the same that had held rule for the past forty years. Did he know no more than the name of Shah Shuja? Did he not remember the proclamation of the English that their kingdom was from God, and the throne of the Ameer and his kingdom from the Company? The people thought that the proclamation was wrong, and that the English sought for the possession of the city. They believed, therefore, that Shah Shuja would kill himself rather than leave the kingdom in hands of the foreigner. But when Shah Shuja took another course, and did what was done, they rose and put him to death in shame and disgrace; and although they had no prince to lead them, they arose and drove out the foreigners from the city. When Yakoob Khan knew that his people were averse to the sojourn of Christians in their country, why did he not ask for a Mahomedan Resident from the English? Why did he bring an English Resident* to Cabul and allow him to be killed, and the flame of the war of forty years since to be rekindled? He let himself be taken captive, as if he had received the heritage of folly from his father. Whatsoever he did was not for the good of his people, whom he left helpless. They got ready to fight, and rose of

* Cavagnari.

their own accord in revolt, and made war, though they had no good officers and leaders. . . . If I, Abdur Rahman, had not come between them, and shown my people the way to prosperity and peace by making friends with the English, the fire of that war would never have been extinguished."

But the chief point of Abdur Rahman's argument was that an alliance or friendship with Russia would always be detrimental to Afghanistan. It might be all very well, he said, if the Russians had not an eye on India. In that case the English would not be offended were there friendship between Russia and Afghanistan. But the Russians aimed at the possession of India. To take India they must first pass through Afghanistan. The Ameer went on to consider how they would compass this object. To begin with, he said, they would declare that they had no quarrel with the Afghans, that they merely desired to march through Afghanistan in order to attack the English. But they would want to make themselves safe by disarming the Afghans, and would tell them to give up their weapons and ammunition; for the Russians would not run the risk of being attacked in the rear. What would the Afghans do? If they submissively surrendered their fighting gear, said the Ameer, they would become women. Their manliness and valour would melt away, and the Russians would obtain their desire. If, on the other hand, the Afghans refused to be disarmed, the Russians would reply: "Very well, if the Afghans are our friends, now is the time to show their good will. Let young men from each tribe come forward to join us in our march to India, and so confirm their friendship." At such a crisis, the Ameer proceeded

many foolish persons would gird up their loins, saying, "Why should we not assist our friends, the Russians"; and he went on to show what the result would be:—"Everyone would rise, and fighting men would gather together in bodies of one to six thousand men from every tribe and district, and they would leave their homes to march in front of the Russians to assist them." But they would be a particular mark for the cannon and rifles of the English. Thousands of lives would be lost; and if they were defeated and fell back, the Russians would shoot them from behind. These, said the Ameer, would be the first fruits of an alliance with Russia. But this would not be all. Not having disarmed the Afghans, the Russians would have been compelled to leave a part of their forces to garrison Afghanistan. There would be Russian soldiers in every city, town, and hamlet. They would want provisions, and the whole produce of the land would be consumed. And there was a still more grievous contingency to be taken into account. Imagine, said the Ameer, if the Russians, which God forbid, were to enter the city of Cabul!

"In the religion of the Afghans, the wife is subject to her husband, and if a woman is found with a stranger, and is taken in guilt, the husband slays her with impunity. But among the Christians the wife is superior to her husband. In every place where there was a Russian camp there would be adultery. The Afghans are a people who kill a man found with their family. Both the (Russian) soldiers and the (Afghan) women would be killed. The Russians would appeal to the (Afghan) ruler, and ask who slew their soldiers. . . . Then would friendship be changed into enmity, and war with the Russians would be inevitable."

It is evident, said the Ameer, that wise and prudent Afghans would never be the friends of the Russians, who, so long as they would not give up the idea of invading India, were enemies and destroyers of the Afghans.

Abdur Rahman also dealt with another possible case. The Russians might announce their intention of marching to India, not through Afghanistan but by way of Persia, and, we may suppose, Biluchistan. Would it then be wise to enter into friendly relations with them. This, also, he thought would be a mistake. The Russians would only be seeking to deceive them, meaning to attack Afghanistan in flank and to force a road through Afghan territory. It would be better, he declared, to fight the Russians to-day and stop their movements, rather than be ruined to-morrow by them. According to Abdur Rahman, he had wanted to fight them in 1883, and this reminiscence is rather interesting :—

“At the time when I had conquered Kandahar, I received a letter from the country of the Turkomans stating that the Russians were coming very near and advancing daily. They said they had no leader and that their country would be lost. They asked that I should be their leader. I sent this letter to the English, who restrained me from interfering. If the English had not prevented me but had allowed me to go from Kandahar, I would at once have settled disputes at Herat, and have advanced with an army to Merve to occupy the place. I would have conciliated the Turkomans and have given them security.”

In conclusion, the Ameer expressed a hope that the British Agent who attended the durbar would listen to his words and communicate them to his Government.

Should any English officer or statesman, with a view to pleasing the Russians, say that the Afghans would some day become the friends of the Russians, the British Ministers would not pay heed to his false statements.

This speech of the Ameer's has been quoted at some length, partly because its purport was very generally misunderstood when a translation was published some years afterwards by an Anglo-Indian newspaper; but more especially because it shows what Abdur Rahman thought—or wished his subjects to believe he thought—on the whole subject of his relations with England. In an Appendix will be found some more of his public utterances. An Anglo-Indian writer, Mr. S. S. Thorburn, tells us that on another occasion the Ameer sought to explain the position by means of a curious and characteristic apologue, which I venture to append, if only for the sake of its phraseology:—

“A swan,” said the Ameer, “was once swimming in a pond, watched with hungry eyes from one bank by a pack of wolves, and from the other by an old tigress. From fright or curiosity, the swan incautiously approached the latter. The tiger clawed at him and tore out some of his feathers. In his distress he swam over to the other bank, when the wolves made a rush and would have torn him to pieces, had he not escaped into deep water. Finding himself secure, he resolved to confine his movements to the middle of the pond. There resting at his ease, he noticed how the wolves snarled at each other, and how very shallow the water was near the edge. He reflected that were the pond to dry up, the tigress might and the wolves certainly would devour him.”*

* *Asiatic Neighbours*, by S. S. THORBURN.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ENEMY WITHIN.

*"Be merciful and learn to conquer without an army,
Seize upon the hearts of mankind, and be acknowledged
the world's conqueror."*

SAADI.

The divine right of Ameers—The lopping of heads—A hungry falcon—An Afghan poet—Recalcitrant tribesmen—Shinwarris—The Ghilzai revolt—A petition to the Queen—The Fragrance of the Universe—Spread of the Rebellion—A Ghilzai pretender—Fights with the rebels—Mutiny at Herat—Defeat of the insurgents—Abdur Rahman's proclamation—Punishment of offenders—Ayoob Khan—Is'hak Khan's rebellion—Battle of Ghuznichak—An appeal for English help—Abdur Rahman goes north—The Ameer's severity—Rising in Badakshan—Attempted assassination—Birth of a son—Abdur Rahman and the Russians—The Hazaras—The Ameer's clemency—Afghanistan tranquil.

THE Ameer Abdur Rahman has always held somewhat inflated notions as to the divine right of kings. He was firmly resolved from the first that his will should be supreme throughout Afghanistan. No power but his own should be allowed in the land. Every man of influence, rank, or position, must be taught humility or take the consequence; every unruly tribe be coerced into obedience and inured to discipline. The process began almost as soon as he mounted the *musnid*; and before very long there was scarcely left a single great man in the

kingdom save the Ameer himself. Some were driven into banishment, others met with an unkind fate. In particular those Afghans who had earned our goodwill during the British occupation were seemingly marked out as persons to be removed without compunction, either by deportation to India or by more summary methods. To a large number of the exiles the Indian Government granted compassionate allowances, thus adding considerably to the almost ruinous cost of our Afghan policy. In August, 1882, Abdur Rahman was asked to let some of them return, and his answer was, "They will never be my friends, nor can I afford to pay them three lakhs a year. If the British authorities send them to me, and do not mind it, I shall kill them all."

It is impossible to give a complete list of all who incurred the Ameer's wrath. Some were poisoned, others were beheaded or strangled. "There is a Thing," Abdur Rahman once remarked, "that goes about the streets of the city of Cabul by night. Should evil-doers come in the way of this Thing, they fare badly. Often they are found dead by the morning."

This terror that walked in darkness fell upon not a few of those who laboured, justly or not, under the suspicion of opposing the Ameer's will. On night in July, 1881, five leading Afghans were suddenly seized and hurried away to Afghan-Turkestan, where they were put to death by their escort. Saif-ud-din Khan, the friend of our friend, Daud Shah, the general who was wounded in an attempt to carry succour to Cavagnari, was imprisoned and put to torture, till he gave up certain monies of Daud Shah's which he held in trust. The two brothers, Ali Mardan

Kul and Shah Mardan Kul, sons of the Nawab Jubbar Khan, were put to the rack and squeezed of all their property, including three lakhs of rupees and the finest fort in the country. "The Ameer," one of his own officials once said, "is a falcon, hungry for much flesh."

Mahomed Jan, the Wardak general, who gave Lord Roberts so much trouble during the Afghan war, was put to death, an act which excited keen indignation at the time. The late Professor Darmsteter, who learnt a good deal about Afghan politics during his visit to Northern India, quotes the verses written by an Afghan poet at Jelalabad :

"Since Abdur Rahman has been installed at Cabul, man's faith in
man has vanished.

He massacres Ghazis in heaps by treason.

The warrior of God and martyr, Mahomed Jan, has gone from
this world.

The Ameer had him slain. He was captured by treachery."

According to M. Darmsteter, Abdur Rahman, during one of his visits to Jelalabad, heard these verses sung in the bazaar ; and getting down from his elephant, ordered the writer to be summoned to his presence. Instead, however, of despatching the uncourtly versifier to keep company with Mahomed Jan, the Ameer urbanely asked why he was accused of treachery, and even condescended to exculpate himself.

This is not a history of Afghanistan, and no attempt will be made to describe in detail the series of conflicts that ensued from the Ameer's determination to transform the more intractable tribes of the country into orderly, taxable subjects. Still something must be said of the

manner in which his policy was carried out. It was a hazardous experiment, for the Afghan tribes are ever averse to paying taxes. As a general rule an Afghan thinks he is rather unfortunate if he has to work more than one month in the twelve. He is, therefore, in a perpetual state of poverty ; and the most trivial impost is resented as the demand of tyranny. In many parts of Afghanistan, the revenue due to the State can only be collected by an army in the field ; in some it has not been paid within the memory of the oldest inhabitant.

It was in the Kohistan and in Wardak that Abdur Rahman's authority was first disputed. This was in 1881, when he was absent at Kandahar. There was a rising of some sort, which was speedily crushed, however, by his Governor of Cabul. A little later there was trouble with the Saiyyids of Kunar. In 1883, and more than once afterwards, the Shinwaris, a powerful and predatory tribe near Jelalabad, were incited by a partizan of Ayooob's to defy the Ameer's commands. According to a border proverb, no kindness will tame snakes, scorpions, or Shinwaris ; and Abdur Rahman used other expedients to cure them of their contumacy. Gholam Hyder, his Orakzai general, was commissioned to deal with them ; and before long a goodly quantity of ghastly heads were on view in the Jelalabad bazaar. Towards the end of the year the Mangals of Kurram and Zurmat were up. They defeated one of the Ameer's generals, who was brought back to Cabul in chains, to encourage the others ; but they were themselves defeated in April, 1884. In 1887 further attempts to collect revenue from the Shinwaris led to renewed resistance ; and there was more fighting. In

July of the following year they killed the members of a mission which had been sent to them from Jelalabad, and it was not till the spring of 1889 that they were finally subjugated.

The Ghilzais have given Abdur Rahman any amount of trouble from the first. In 1881 a Tokhi Ghilzai, named Sher Jan, pretended to be the late Ameer Shere Ali, and did his best to raise a rebellion in the Ghuzni district. Before much mischief was done he was captured and sent to Cabul in chains. About the same time Asmatulla Khan, the titular chief of all the Ghilzais, was discovered to be intriguing with Ayoob Khan, now in possession of Kandahar; for which offence he was seized and placed in durance, one Niaz Mahomed Khan being appointed chief of the Ghilzais in his stead. Asmatulla is said to have been hanged, in a quiet way, in October, 1882.

In 1886 the Mulla Abdul Karim, a son of the famous Muskhi Alum, "Fragrance of the Universe," with the help of Mir Afzul, Hotak, and Shah Khan, Mir Afzul's son, started a formidable revolt against Abdur Rahman. The origin of this disturbance is said to have been the withdrawal, by the Ameer's orders, of certain grants of money bestowed by Shere Ali and himself on Muskhi Alum and his kindred, and the assessment of land which this reverend family had hitherto enjoyed rent free. A most annoying demand for arrears of revenue had also been addressed both to the *mullas* and the Ghilzais generally. At first the malcontents sought to gain redress for their wrongs by appealing to the British Government, and in April, 1886, a petition was sent to Sir Oliver

St. John, addressed to Her Majesty the Queen, in which the Ghilzais said :—" If ever at any time you intended to benefit and cherish the distressful people of Afghanistan, pray do not throw away this opportunity, but come to our aid, and do not make a moment's delay." Whether this bitter cry ever reached Queen Victoria's ears, rumour does not say, but the Ghilzais were left to fight their own battles.

The first overt act of rebellion was an attack by Andari Ghilzais, the section to which the "Fragrance of the Universe" and his son belonged, on one of the Ameer's Durani regiments, which in the autumn of 1886 was marching without arms—it had but lately been raised—from Kandahar to Cabul. The rebels compelled the officer in command, Saiyyid Ali Khan, Mirza, to surrender 140 camels, 80 tents, and Rs. 30,000 in cash. Large numbers of the Ghilzais then joined the malcontents ; but, through the winter, the agitation smouldered, and did not burst out again till the approach of spring. Then, in March, 1887, the Mulla Abdul Karim issued a proclamation in which he said that 12,000 men had promised to follow him. He gave out that he was a *Khalifa* and proclaimed a holy war against the Ameer, who was an infidel and the friend of a foreign government. Meanwhile steps had been taken to check the rebels. It was believed in Cabul that the Hotak Ghilzais had shared in the disturbances of 1886, and Sarhang Sikundar Khan, an old and trusted servant of Abdur Rahman's, and the father of his General, Gholam Hyder Khan, Orakzai, was sent to punish them. The Ameer's orders were that a sword and gun were to be taken from each Hotak family as a penalty

for their alleged misbehaviour.* The Sarhang's proceedings, however, only tended to add fuel to the general exasperation. Amongst other things he seized a number of women belonging to the family of a rebel leader and sent them to Kandahar as prisoners, an act which excited bitter comment. In revenge, the Hotaks shut up one of his lieutenants in a hill stronghold. In March, 1887, however, the Sarhang sent a Koran with his seal to the rebels inviting them to make peace, but fully intending, it was said, in true Afghan fashion, to fall upon them unawares.

The revolt now began to spread with alarming rapidity, both amongst the Hotaks and the other Ghilzai tribes. By the end of March, 1887, the Andari and Tarakhi sections had sent their wives and children to the Hazara country, where they would be secure from molestation, and were themselves ready for the fray. The situation appeared so serious that quiet folk at Kandahar began to bury their valuables or despatch them to a place of safety.

When the storm burst, the Ameer had but few troops in the Ghilzai country. Besides his garrisons at Ghuzni, Kelat-i-Ghilzai, and Maruf, there was only the small body of regulars, with a number of tribal levies, under the Sarhang Sikundar Khan, and in the north, General Gholam Hyder's force, which consisted of a regiment of infantry and a detachment of cavalry. But prompt measures were taken to reinforce both commanders. From Kandahar, 500 infantry of the Sufi regiment were sent in March to Sikunder's assistance; and during the next two or three months strenuous efforts were made in the southern province to

* *Biluchistan Administration Report, 1887-88.*

enlist Durani tribesmen, both as regulars and *khassadars* (levies) and to push them on to the front. A considerable proportion, however, of these recruits proved of very little use; numbers of them deserting at the first opportunity. At Cabul steps were taken to strengthen the garrison of Ghuzni, and to reinforce General Gholam Hyder.

The luck at first was on the side of the rebels. The Ameer's Governor of Maruf (Isa Khan) was defeated at Atagarh by Shah Khan, Hotak, while trying to effect a junction with Sikundar; and shortly afterwards, on April 12, 1887, Sikundar himself met with a reverse at the same place, though he did his best to represent it as a victory. All this while General Gholam Hyder in the north, was dealing with the Andari and Tarakhi Ghilzais, and at one time he was reported to be in desperate straits. Nevertheless he managed to hold his own; and in the middle of May he was able to come to the relief of his father, Sikundar, who, as already said, had been hard pressed by the Hotaks. Their combined forces numbered four regiments of infantry, two of cavalry, and twenty guns, besides irregulars.

The rebels, however, were full of confidence. It was reported that 30,000 tribesmen were out, and that Shah Khan, Hotak, had been proclaimed Ameer. As a descendant of Mir Wais, the first of the so-called Ghilzai dynasty which had subjugated Persia, he was an adversary whom it would have been rash to despise. The rebels, moreover, were being supported by other refractory tribes; and according to one story they had sent an envoy to Merve to ask help of the Russians. Abdur Rahman was

evidently ill at ease, and reinforcements were hurried up from Herat, and even from Maimana on the far side of the Hindu Kush. Although he was suffering from bad health at the time, the Ameer declared that unless his generals made haste to quell the rebellion, he would take the field in person. A proclamation was also issued stating that the cause of the revolt was the embezzlement of the revenue by the tribal chiefs.

The fear was that the opposition to the Ameer's authority would extend to other parts of his dominions. The *Times* correspondent at Calcutta telegraphed that Abdur Rahman's popularity and prestige had been irretrievably shattered, and that unless we intervened on his behalf he must speedily fall. Ominous reports came from Herat, where the garrison was largely composed of Ghilzai troops, who were daily becoming more and more excited about the struggle in progress between their fellow tribesmen and the Ameer's soldiery. On June 6, 1887, the greater part of the Hazari regiment, which had eight hundred Andari Ghilzais in the ranks, broke out into open mutiny, looted the arsenal, and shut up the governor in the ark or citadel, along with the provincial commander-in-chief. Then, after a fight with a force of loyal troops who tried conclusions with them, the mutineers turned their backs on Herat, and marched off in good order for the scene of the revolt in the east. In the following month they joined a large body of rebel tribesmen which had collected round Murgha.

In the meantime General Gholam Hyder had not been idle. He had succeeded in starving out and dispersing the Hotaks who had gathered together about Atagarh ;

and then, leaving his father, Sikundar, in charge here, he marched northwards and twice defeated the Tarakhis in the neighbourhood of Lake Abistada. He had now to turn his attention to the gathering at Murgha, which, as already mentioned, had been joined by the mutineers from Herat. He himself had been reinforced by the opportune arrival of two loyal regiments and four hundred horsemen from the same city; and thus strengthened he advanced, about the close of Ramazan, against the enemy. A few weeks later, he was fortunate enough to meet with a detached body of them, and these he attacked and defeated on July 27, before the main body could come to their rescue.

Shortly before the good news reached Kandahar, a proclamation bearing the Ameer's seal was posted up in the bazaar. His subjects were therein given to understand that the Indian Government was holding seventy-two infantry regiments, with cavalry and guns, in readiness to come to his aid. He was quite able, the proclamation said, to dispense with such assistance, but English troops would be called in should Russia take advantage of the present disturbances to make encroachments on his frontier. Mention was also made of the startling but dubious intelligence, which had reached Abdur Rahman, of a meeting between the Sultan of Turkey and the King of Lebanon, who had concerted measures for meeting the common enemy of Turks and Afghans.

After his victory on July 27, General Gholam Hyder marched against the main body of the rebels, which fled,

* "The better moon" after Ramazan arose this year, 1887, on June 23.

and finally, being hard pressed and in want of food, was so effectually broken up that, though desultory fighting continued through the month of August, the Ghilzai rising, which at one time had been widespread and dangerous, came to an end.

The Ameer Abdur Rahman was delighted with the result. On the first opportunity he presented his victorious commander, in open durbar, with a jewelled medal, saying "Other men also fought, but Gholam Hyder, Orakzai, fought and at the same time carried on the administration: herein he has shown conspicuous ability."

Scant mercy, it is to be feared, was shown toward the vanquished. Fazl Khan, the brother of the rebel Mulla, is said to have been put to torture till he betrayed all he knew about the movement; then his beard was plucked out, and boiling oil was poured on his head till the wretched man died. The Mulla Abdul Karim fled to Kurram; while the body of his father, Muskhi Alum, was exhumed, and his grave ploughed up by asses. Timur Shah, a military officer who had aided and abetted the Ghilzai mutineers at Herat, was caught and sent to Cabul, where he was stoned to death on July 13. He had held a military command at Panjdeh, when the Russians attacked the Afghan outpost, and had narrowly escaped being hanged for his want of success on that occasion.

The year 1887 was also notable for Ayoob Khan's attempt to invade Afghanistan; and some reference must be made to the affair here, since his presence on the frontier of Herat and in Seistan served to

encourage the rebels within the borders of Abdur Rahman's kingdom. He managed to escape from Teheran in August, 1887, hoping, there is good reason to believe, to join the rebel Ghilzais. The Afghan authorities at Herat, however, had been warned of his design, and took prompt measures to prevent his entry into Afghanistan. A vigilant watch was kept along the frontier, and he had scarcely reached the neighbourhood of Ghorian when he was surprised and pursued into the desert. After enduring no little privation and hardship, he abandoned his enterprise and gave himself up to General MacLean, the Viceroy's Agent at Meshed. He is now living as a British pensioner in India. The failure of his plans and the news of his surrender no doubt helped to dishearten the rebels in Eastern Afghanistan and facilitated their suppression.

The rebellion of Is'hak Khan, the Governor of Afghan-Turkestan, was for a while a very formidable menace to the stability of Abdur Rahman's power; and yet there is some reason to believe that it was deliberately provoked by the Ameer himself, in order that the northern province might be brought completely under his own control. Is'hak, though nominally dependent on Cabul, had hitherto done pretty well what seemed right in his own eyes. He was the Ameer's first cousin, being the son of the Ameer Azim. His mother was an Armenian Christian whose father had settled as a merchant in Cabul. Though anything but an Afghan in outward appearance, he prided himself greatly on his descent from Dost Mahomed; and was a devout follower of the prophet. Contrary to what one often heard at the time, he was

no soldier, and was fonder of posing as a *mulla*, who could rule over Mahomedans in strict accordance with the principles of Islam ; being altogether different, that is, to his cousin, Abdur Rahman, who had trafficked with English infidels ; different, moreover, to Ayoob Khan, who was protected by the heretical Shias of Persia. When an exile in Central Asia he had joined the Nakhshbundis, a sect of dervishes founded in the time of Tamurlane by the famous mystic and patron saint of Bokhara, Khoja Baha-ud-din. Like Abdur Rahman, Is'hak had lived many years at Samarcand as a pensioner of the Russians. When at length they were given leave, or took it, to return to their own country, it was agreed that each should keep what he could get ; and doubtless the usual oaths were sworn on the Koran. According to one account they both crossed the Oxus about the same time ; but it has also been stated that Is'hak was the first to re-enter Afghanistan. According to the Usbeg proverb, "two *mullas* make a man, one *mulla* only makes a woman" ; yet though Is'hak was more of a priest than a general, he soon contrived to form a strong party and to establish his authority round and about Mazar-i-Sharif. When Abdur Rahman went on to Cabul, to treat with the English, Is'hak was left behind as Governor of Balkh ; and he was anything but pleased when his cousin, the Ameer, set up separate governors in Maimana to the east, and Badakshan to the west. In most respects he was now an independent ruler. For instance, he not only paid no tribute to Cabul, but even claimed and obtained a share of the treasure which Abdur Rahman received from India. He is said to have reminded the Ameer that in

the time of Dost Mahomed, Afzul Khan, Abdur Rahman's father, had only been expected to help the Ameer in case of urgent need. "In the same way," Is'hak wrote, "it is proper and right that you should acknowledge me as sole ruler of Afghan-Turkestan, liable only to render you assistance in cases of extreme urgency. My father was Ameer as well as yours, and my claims ought not to be overlooked."

The Ameer Abdur Rahman, probably, had never the slightest intention of sharing the heritage of Dost Mahomed with any of his relations; but there was much to be done before he could settle accounts with Is'hak. As already related, he first of all turned his attention to Kandahar and Herat; and was for a long while occupied with the task of suppressing refractory tribesmen, and otherwise making himself supreme in that part of Afghanistan which lies to the south of the Hindu Kush. Not that he left Is'hak entirely alone. When the English Boundary Commissioners passed through Mazar-i-Sharif, where Is'hak had his head-quarters, there were signs that his independence was in reality far from complete. It was true that he appointed his own deputy governors and military officers, but the chief revenue officials were nominated by the Ameer, and sent their accounts to Cabul to be inspected and passed. Is'hak himself seemed to devote most of his time to prayer, and his son had to follow his austere example. The administration, however, was rigid and efficient; chiefly owing, no doubt, to the submissiveness of the Usbeg population, long accustomed to the sternness of Afghan rule.

But after the return of the Boundary Commissioners

to India, and the settlement of the dispute about the Herat frontier, Abdur Rahman resolved that the time had come for dealing with his cousin. He accordingly summoned Is'hak to Cabul, to give an account of his stewardship. This was in the summer of 1888. Not unnaturally, Is'hak declined the invitation, and sent a subordinate officer in his stead, whom the Ameer incontinently beheaded. Is'hak then knew what he had to expect, and raised the standard of revolt. His chances were by no means contemptible. His regular troops were of the same stamp as Abdur Rahman's, and a good many of them were armed with the breechloaders we presented to the Ameer at the time of the Panjdeh scare. He was joined moreover, though rather late in the day, by Sultan Murad Beg of Kunduz, with a contingent of Kattaghan Usbeks. On the other hand, Is'hak was ill-provided with money, and, what was even more against him, he had not a warlike population at his back. The Usbeks of Kattaghan still retain something of the traditional valour that made the name known throughout Asia and as far away as Grand Cairo, where the Usbekiah Square perpetuates their fame. But in general, and outside Kunduz, there is little in the Usbek of Northern Afghanistan to remind the traveller of those

"Chiefs of the Uzbek race,
Waving their heron crests with haughty grace,"

who gave Baber the Moghul so much trouble. Abject in spirit and badly-armed, they could afford little support to a rebel governor; and provided the Russians lent Is'hak no assistance, the chances were all in the Ameer's

favour, if only "the sword of valour were brightened with the polish of good counsel," as the author of the *Zafar-Nama* puts it.

The Ameer acted promptly. Gholam Hyder Khan, Orakzai, the same who had crushed the Ghilzai revolt, was ordered to advance into Afghan-Turkestan by the Bamian route; while Abdulla Khan, the Ameer's trusted Governor of Badakshan, marched against Is'hak from the east. On September 17, 1888, General Gholam Hyder reached Aibak,* 160 miles north of Bamian, having met with but little opposition. Six days later he was joined by Abdulla Khan. The rebel forces were concentrated round Tashkurghan, thirty-eight miles to the north; and it was here, or rather at Ghuznichak (Little Ghuzni), three miles to the south of Tashkurghan, that the battle which decided Is'hak's fate was fought, on September 29.

Gholam Hyder's army is said to have consisted of four regiments of cavalry, thirteen of infantry, and twenty-six guns. The force to be attacked, if numerically stronger, was probably not so well equipped and armed. However, both sides meant fighting. Though Is'hak was no soldier, one of his generals proved himself a capable leader, and the battle of Ghuznichak looked at one time like a victory for the opposition. A wing of the Ameer's army, commanded by Abdulla Khan, was put to the rout; and had this success been followed up, Is'hak might have won the day. General Gholam Hyder, however, not only held his own, but attacked the main body of Is'hak's troops and utterly defeated

* Sometimes written Haibak.

them, capturing their artillery, baggage, and camp. That was the end of Is'hak's rebellion. Is'hak himself fled in hot haste across the Oxus, and sought a refuge at Kerki, where in May, 1887, the Russians had established an outpost.

Yet, strange to say, the first news of the fight that reached the Amcer was not of a glorious and decisive victory, but of a disastrous defeat. The soldiers of the routed wing made straight for Cabul, and before long the streets of the capital were swarming with fugitives, who averred that Is'hak had won. It is often difficult, even at Cabul, to get trustworthy intelligence about what goes on north of the passes over the Hindu Kush; and for some days after the fight, Abdur Rahman refused to believe the more gratifying rumour that his general had been successful, and that Is'hak, his rebellious cousin, was in full flight across the Oxus. So alarmed was the Amcer that he actually sent off an urgent appeal for help to the Indian Government. He begged us to give him more arms and ammunition, and to at once push forward troops to Chaman, Kurram, and Lundi Kotal, with a view to advancing, if need be, on Kandahar, Ghuzni, and Jelalabad. He even thought of inviting us to occupy Kandahar straight off, but was dissuaded by the British Agent at Cabul.

On learning what had really taken place, Abdur Rahman determined to go himself to Afghan-Turkestan; partly, no doubt, to reorganize the administration, but also to superintend the punishment of all who had sided with Is'hak. Leaving his son, Habibulla Khan, in charge at Cabul, he set out for Mazar-i-Sharif in October, or

November, 1888; and he did not return to Cabul till July, 1890. During the interval he was busily occupied in stamping out disaffection and restoring authority; and this he did with his customary vigour. Is'hak's followers felt the full weight of his hand. Some, like Sultan Murad of Kunduz, were hunted across the Oxus. Many others were sent away to Cabul and there put to death, in order that the Cabulis might have ocular demonstration of his triumph. Others were harried and shot down wherever they were caught. The Ameer's ruthless severity could not be allowed to pass without a remonstrance from the British Government, and in the winter of 1888 the Governor-General wrote to him that his proceedings were viewed with grave displeasure. Neither the letter nor the Ameer's reply have ever been published; but something is known of the tenour of these communications. Amongst other things Abdur Rahman was warned that a continuance of his severities might very likely give the Russians a pretext for interfering in Afghan-Turkestan. The Ameer is said to have replied that the Governor-General did not understand the situation, and that the only safe way of dealing with rebellious subjects was to make it impossible for them to repeat their offence. In July, 1890, it may be noted, a question was asked in the House of Commons by the late Mr. Bradlaugh concerning the punishment of rebels at Mazar-i Sharif. Probably if the whole truth had been known in London, there would have been an outburst of public resentment at deeds of slaughter and devastation perpetrated by a ruler who was under British protection and in receipt of a British subsidy.

Besides having to restore order in the districts which had been immediately under Is'hak Khan, the Ameer's attention was also engaged by some sort of rising in Badakshan. The facts are by no means clear; but it may be supposed that the disturbance began shortly after the Ameer's Governor, Abdulla Khan, advanced against Is'hak. At any rate it was reported early in February, 1889, that the Afghans had been driven out, and three descendants of the old reigning family set up in their place. This news was probably sent by the Cossack explorer, Captain Grombchevsky, who about this time was in Wakhan, and shortly afterwards visited Kanjut. In the following July (1889) further information reached India. It was then said that the Ameer had sent troops into the disturbed districts from Mazar-i-Sharif, and had also ordered reinforcements from Cabul. The insurgents were indifferently armed; and Abdur Rahman's soldiers, with their Martinis, must have made short work of them. Toward the end of August, 1889, reports were received saying that the insurrection had completely collapsed.*

Two other events which happened during Abdur Rahman's absence in Afghan-Turkestan may be conveniently recorded here. On December 26, 1888, when reviewing his troops at Mazar-i-Sharif, he narrowly escaped being assassinated. A twelvemonth afterwards Dr. Gray, then serving as the Ameer's physician, was asked to attend a page-boy who had broken his thigh. There was the scar of a bullet wound on the lad's body, and he told Dr. Gray the whole story. The Ameer was sitting in

* *Times* August 26, 1889.

his arm-chair and smoking a cigarette, as the troops marched past. On a sudden a soldier fired at him, and the bullet went through the back of the Ameer's chair, wounding the page-boy, and, according to one account, killing a soldier as well. Abdur Rahman went on smoking, but cried out, when a movement was made to cut down the assassin, that the man's life was to be spared. It was too late, however, and, whatever may have been his motive, it was never known, for he was killed on the spot. The officers of his regiment were punished severely.

The other event referred to was the birth on September 15, 1889, of the Ameer's son, the Shahzada Mahomed Omar Khan, who, since his mother was Abdur Rahman's principal wife, a lady of the royal tribe, soon came to be a personage of greater consideration, in many people's eyes, than the sons borne to the Ameer by less distinguished mothers.

Possibly to this period may also be assigned an incident which Abdur Rahman afterwards related to Sir Salter Pyne, with a keen appreciation of its humorous character and of his own talent for repartee. The Russian Governor of Turkestan, or it may have been some subordinate officer, perhaps General Christiani at Kerki, sent him a message saying that it was his intention to exercise a force of some five hundred men, cavalry and artillery, at a point near the Afghan frontier, and expressing a hope that the Ameer would not misinterpret this proceeding, which had a purely pacific intent, as a hostile demonstration. There was nothing he need be in the least alarmed at. To

which Abdur Rahman replied that he did not mind at all, especially as he himself proposed to exercise a force of five thousand troops of all arms exactly opposite the very spot.

There is no doubt that the Ameer's prolonged stay in the provinces immediately south of the Oxus, accompanied as he was by a strong and well-equipped army, was regarded with some anxiety both in Bokhara and at Tashkend. There were rumours even that he was making overtures to the Ameer of Bokhara, with a view to a holy war against the Russians. It was said that he had 30,000 troops with him, and that the Russian authorities had been compelled to strengthen their frontier outposts. As a matter of fact he had nothing like this force, and except that the implacable energy which he shewed in hunting down rebels, created some excitement in Bokhara, there is no reason to suppose that his neighbours across the Oxus had any real grounds for uneasiness. It only remains to say that Is'hak Khan was invited by the Russians, with more or less insistence, to take up his abode at Samarcand, where, in February, 1889, a newspaper correspondent found him smoking cigarettes and disinclined to say anything about his plans, saving that he held himself at the orders and disposal of the Czar.

On June 13, 1890, the Ameer Abdur Rahman left Mazar-i-Sharif, arriving on July 24 at Cabul, where a few days afterwards he held a grand review of his troops. It was said that 8,000 infantry, 4,000 cavalry, six mule batteries, two field, and two elephant batteries paraded before him.

Having overcome the Ghilzais and driven Is'hak out of the kingdom, he had little to fear from domestic enemies ; and as we have seen in the preceding chapter, he began to carry out certain projects for extending his dominion, which at one period strained the patience of the British Government almost to breaking point. Here we are concerned rather with his domestic policy. It was about this time that he resolved to bring all the Hazara tribes completely under subjection. These interesting people had in the past been more or less independent of any ruler of Cabul. They inhabit a mountainous region extending westward from Cabul, Ghuzni, and Kelat-i-Ghilzai, to the neighbourhood of Herat. Sultan Baber in the beginning of the sixteenth century found it necessary to chastise some Hazara tribesmen who had raided on the road between Ghuzni and Gardez. "I took the field," he writes in his autobiography, "for the purpose of falling on them by surprise. We cleared the pass of Nirkh by night, and, by the hour of morning prayers, fell upon the Hazaras and beat them to our heart's content."

The Hazara tribes, who are constantly fighting among themselves, most likely represent a mixture of races ; but there is no particular ground for rejecting the usual explanation that the modern Hazaras are descended from a military colony planted by the Mongols. The poet and historian, Abul Fazl, who wrote in the sixteenth century, states that they were the remains of the army of Mangu, the grandson of Chingiz Khan. In the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi* it is said that the Usbeg, Shaibani, in 1510 marched against the Hazaras, "who were descendants of the

Mongols of Khulagu."* Some, however, of the tribes who are roughly classed together as Hazaras may have had another origin. It has been said that there is a remarkable likeness between the Hazaras and the Sphinx-shaped statues of the Hyskos kings in the Boulak Museum ; and Canon Isaac Taylor quotes this as confirmation of the theory that the Hyskos were of Mongol race.

One thing, however, is quite certain, namely, that the Hazaras are not Afghans ; and they live in a country which is extremely difficult of access. Having determined to reduce them to obedience, Abdur Rahman appointed Abdul Kudus Khan, formerly governor of Herat, to be governor of Bamian, and ordered him to undertake the task. It proved a very difficult one, and for the next three or four years there were frequent accounts of fighting between the Hazaras and the troops sent against them. In the autumn of 1890 the Shaikh Ali Hazaras, who inhabit the country about Bamian and the sources of the Helmund river, attacked an Afghan detachment. On this occasion, it should be noted to his credit, the Ameer displayed unusual clemency. A number of Hazara headmen were seized and brought to Cabul ; but instead of ordering their instant execution, the Ameer gave them coats of honour, and sent them back with a message to say that he had no desire to quarrel with the Hazaras, and would treat them well, provided they would acknowledge his authority.

In the summer of 1891 there was further harrying of the Hazaras, chiefly those of Urusghan, north-west of

* The reader is referred to some learned notes by Mr. N. Elias, in his edition of the *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*.

Kelat-i-Ghilzai; but no authentic information is on record beyond the statement that a Hazara chief was carried off to Cabul and there treated with kindness. In the following year the principal Hazara tribes combined to rise against the Ameer's authority, and the movement attained serious and alarming dimensions. It appears to have begun among the Urusghan Hazaras in the south-east of Hazarajat. The Ameer's commanders handled their men badly, and for a time the rebels closed the road between Cabul and Kandahar. Then the northern Hazaras rose; and it was reported that a large number of the rebels were armed with rifles. About the same time there was a rising of the Usbegs in Maimana; but this was put down without much difficulty. The Hazaras, however, proved more intractable; and in the beginning of August, 1892, Abdur Rahman pleaded his anxieties in this direction as an excuse for not receiving Lord Roberts, whom the Indian Government proposed to send on a mission to Jelalabad. In his letter to the Viceroy, he announced his intention of surrounding the Hazaras and starving them out. Late in September or early in the following month, a despatch was received from the Ameer's General, Brigadier Subhan Khan, stating that he had defeated the Urusghan Hazaras and occupied their valley. It was given out, too, that thirty mule loads of Hazara heads would shortly reach the capital. Mr. (now Sir S.) Pyne was ordered to prepare medals for the victorious troops, a gold one set in jewels being specially ordered for the decoration of the Brigadier.

For some months nothing more was heard of the Hazaras, but in the summer of 1893 they were again

in arms ; and this time Abdur Rahman, possibly in view of the approaching visit of the Durand Mission, seems to have resorted to a policy of conciliation. At any rate, it was reported that, on August 4, he held a durbar in Cabul, at which a number of Hazara chiefs who had been persuaded to "come in" were present, and received dresses of honour. When Sir Mortimer Durand reached Cabul, Afghanistan was everywhere enjoying unaccustomed tranquillity.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BOUNDARIES OF AFGHANISTAN.

"The country is God's. His slave has no kingdom; but he, to whom God gives it, will be the possessor." MIR-AT-I-MAS'UDI.

The agreement of 1873—The Oxus frontier—The Anglo-Russian Commission—Sir Peter Lumsden—Warlike projects—The Russian advance—The Ameer's rights—The defence of Panjdeh—The collision—Abdur Rahman's views—Panjdeh condoned—The demarcation—The Ameer on Sir Peter Lumsden—The Kazi Sadud-din—The final protocol—Summary of results—A letter from Abdur Rahman—Boundary disputes—The Pamir question—Sir Lepel Griffin—The sources of the Oxus—The fight at Somatash—The agreement of 1895.

THE demarcation of the northern boundary of Afghanistan, in places where, hitherto, it was vaguely indicated by an imaginary line of unknown flexibility, must be reckoned among the most memorable incidents of Abdur Rahman's reign. With the tedious and prolonged negotiations between the Governments of England and Russia, we are not, perhaps, mainly concerned;* but it is necessary, at least, to record the result, and also to show, as far as possible, how the Ameer and his subjects and successors are likely to be affected by the agreement arrived at. That the whole question of Afghan

* See an article in *Macmillan's Magazine*, May, 1888, by the present writer.

boundaries has a very serious import for Englishmen, is in these days a proposition beyond controversy. Responsible politicians of both parties in the United Kingdom have not only admitted, but have insisted, that England must resent any infraction of the frontier by a foreign power as an act of hostility. A few pages, therefore, may reasonably be occupied in explaining the circumstances in which this frontier came to be laid down.

In 1873, when Shere Ali was Ameer, the English and Russian Governments agreed that the River Oxus should be taken as the boundary of Afghanistan, from the Pamirs in the north-east to the post of Khoja Saleh* in the north-west. At one extremity of this line, the desert to the north-west of Andkhui was to belong to independent tribes of Turkomans. It was added that the Western Afghan frontier between the dependencies of Herat and Persia was well known, and did not require to be defined. There were some awkward blanks in the agreement. The clauses relating to the countries on the Upper Oxus were indistinct, if not misleading; while the omission to indicate anything like a precise line of division between Afghan territory and the Turkoman desert north-west of Andkhui led, twelve years later, to a dispute which almost developed into a war.

It was some three or four years after Abdur Rahman's accession that the necessity of elucidating and expanding the agreement of 1873 was forced on the attention of the British Government. When in February, 1884, our Foreign Office learnt that the Czar had

* Since identified with Khwaja Salar.

resolved to accept the proffered allegiance of the Merve Turkomans, Earl Granville invited Russia to propose some way of averting the complications that might be caused by her nearer approach towards Herat. In reply M. de Giers said that he himself had already suggested the appointment of a joint Boundary Commission to lay down a frontier line between the Oxus and the Heri Rud, and he still considered such a measure advisable. The first steps were accordingly taken. In July, 1884, General Sir Peter Lumsden was appointed British Commissioner for the boundary delimitation. The Russians on their side nominated General Zelenoi. Abdur Rahman was informed of the proposal on foot, and was invited to appoint an Afghan official to assist the joint Commission. Sir Peter Lumsden, on his appointment, also addressed a letter to the Ameer, and in due course received a reply in which Abdur Rahman said :—

“I hope that you will with great courage and valour negotiate with the Russian agents regarding the disputed frontier line, and you may rest assured that they have not in hand a dot of writing from me at any time which may be a pretext to enable them to enter and take possession of Afghan land. I am so firm in striving for my rights, that if the Russian agents should wish to take a piece of a fragment from the ruins of the Afghan frontier, it will be impossible for them to do so as long as the Afghans have strength and power to resist.”*

Meanwhile much was happening. Neither Russian frontier officers nor the Afghans would wait patiently for the tardy arbitrament of a Boundary Commission. While longer-winded diplomatists in London and St. Petersburg

* *Central Asia Papers, II. of 1885, p. 122.*

were diffusely arguing about a "zone" within which the inquiry was to be instituted, Afghan soldiers were sent to garrison Panjdeh, at the junction of the Kuskh and Murghab rivers; and the Russians advanced to Yulatan on the Murghab, and to Pul-i-Khatun—"My Lady's Bridge"—on the Heri Rud. Both movements were more or less indefensible. They were almost certain to precipitate conflicts of one kind or another, and to impede, if not prevent, a peaceful settlement of the difficulty.

Before very long the situation on the Herat frontier became alarming. On November 9, 1884, Sir Peter Lumsden reached Sarakhs, and toward the end of the month he was able to visit Panjdeh. Here he found that strongly-worded and even insulting communications had passed between the Russian Colonel Alikhanoff and General Ghaus-ud-din, commanding the Afghan garrison in Panjdeh. Alikhanoff called Ghaus-ud-din a liar, and Ghaus-ud-din retorted in kind. "Your Government," the Afghan general wrote, "is a great one, but you behave like thieves."

It was about this time that Abdur Rahman wrote the letter to which he referred in the speech and pamphlet quoted in the last chapter. According to his account of the correspondence, it was addressed to Sir Peter Lumsden, and was to the following effect :

"The Russian officers on the one hand talk of peace-making, and on the other hand they increased their armed force. The Russians come by hundreds and reinforce their army. I am concerned lest they should attack our people in the midst of the severe winter, when assistance from Herat could not reach our force, and

our people would be humiliated. Until something certain is settled, I might send an army from Cabul sufficiently strong to stand against the Russian force. If the question is settled satisfactorily, there is nothing wrong in keeping an army in my territory, and if any action occur we might not be shamed. I think that even if the Russians do not attack my force and try the Afghans in battle, they will not hold themselves back, and the affair will never be settled amicably."

To this, according to the Ameer's account of the correspondence, Sir Peter Lumsden replied that Abdur Rahman, if he sent troops, would himself be laying the foundations of a war, and that the endeavour to keep the peace would be frustrated. The British Commissioner added that he would not be answerable for what might happen if Abdur Rahman resolved to fight. "I said," the Ameer told his Sirdars, "may it be good until the truth of my advice is manifest." It should be noted that the blue books do not contain this correspondence.

In one of them, however, may be found an extract from a letter which Sir Peter Lumsden addressed on November 21, 1884, to the Ameer's representative with the Boundary Commission. Her Majesty's Commissioner wrote :

"I informed you verbally yesterday, and repeat now, that in my opinion it is extremely unlikely that any Russian party would attempt to enter a place occupied by Afghan troops when warned not to do so. Consequently, as matters stand at present, there appears to be no reason for sending any further troops to Panjdeh. Should any difficulty arise between your troops and the Russians, I should be near, and the question should be referred to me."*

* *Central Asia Papers, II. of 1885, p. 125.*

On December 19, 1884, Sir Peter Lumsden telegraphed to Earl Granville from Bala Murghab: "Ameer writes on 5th instant, protesting strongly against continued occupation of Pul-i-Khatun by Russian troops."

By the beginning of 1885 the tension was becoming still more strained. On February 22nd the Russians had their advanced posts at the Zulfikar Pass, Ak Robot, and Kizil Tapa. On March 3rd, 1885, Earl Granville wrote to Sir Peter Lumsden that while Her Majesty's Government could not advise the Afghans to attack the Russian troops in order to dislodge them from the positions they then occupied, it considered "that the further advance of the Russians should, subject to military considerations, be resisted by the Afghans."

At this time the English Foreign Office was firmly of opinion that Panjdeh belonged of right to the Ameer. Sir Peter Lumsden, when he met the Russian Commissioner (General Zelenoi) at Tiflis, said there was the strongest evidence that Panjdeh formed, and still continued to form, a portion of Afghanistan. In a memorandum handed to the Russian ambassador by Earl Granville on March 13th, 1885, it was said:

"Her Majesty's Government have to observe that, according to the information in their possession, Badgheis, including Panjdeh, has formed a part of Afghanistan ever since Afghanistan became a kingdom. . . . Her Majesty's Government think it right at once to say that they are unable to give their adhesion to any understanding by which Panjdeh or other districts claimed as Afghan shall, without enquiry on the spot, be excluded from Afghanistan."

By the beginning of March, 1885, the Russian picket

at Kizil Tapa* had been strongly reinforced. The Afghan post at Ak Tapa had likewise been strengthened, but the Ameer's troops were miserably armed; while the Russians were equipped with breechloaders. Moreover Ak Tapa was untenable against artillery, since it was commanded from heights, 1,200 yards away, on the left bank of the river. The Afghan forces in the Panjdeh valley were said to consist of 140 gunners, 400 regular cavalry, 500 irregular cavalry, two regiments of infantry, and 400 matchlock men, with four brass nine-pounder field guns, and four mountain guns.

On March 26 Captain Yate reported from Panjdeh, "Afghan guns in position and troops prepared to resist." By March 30 the bulk of the Afghan forces had been moved to the left bank of the Kuskh river; that is to say, from a bad position to a worse one. That being done, a collision became inevitable. On the previous day General Komaroff sent an ultimatum to the Afghan General requiring him to withdraw to the right bank. General Shams-ud-din refused to obey. On March 30, to quote Sir Peter Lumsden's report, "the Russians advanced to attack the Afghan position." The Afghans, who were said to number 4,000 men, with eight guns,

* Should the reader desire to consult the correspondence printed in the blue book, it will be as well to bear in mind the somewhat extraordinary circumstance that Sir Peter Lumsden worded his telegraphic despatches to the authorities in London in a way that can hardly have failed to perplex them. He afterwards explained that he used the name Pul-i-Khisti, instead of Kizil Tapa, "the former place being better known." They were about a mile apart. The Afghans held Pul-i-Khisti, while the Russians up to the last day of March had got no nearer than Kizil Tapa.—*Central Asia Papers*, V. of 1885, p. 2.

made a stubborn defence; but armed as they were, and placed as they were, they were no match for Cossacks.* Two companies were destroyed to a man in the entrenchments, and their total loss is said to have been five hundred killed. The Russians lost one Turkoman officer, ten Cossacks and Turkomans killed, and twenty-nine wounded.

The "incident" at Panjdeh is not a pleasant topic to write about, for more reasons than one, more especially because it might have been avoided. On March 16, 1885, Earl Granville telegraphed to Sir Peter Lumsden as follows :

"M. de Giers has assured Sir E. Thornton that the Russian force will not advance from the positions they now occupy, provided that the Afghans do not advance nor attack, or unless there should be some extraordinary reason, such as a disturbance in Panjdeh. M. de Giers has declared that the strictest orders have been sent to avoid a conflict by every possible means, and not to incite to a conflict, but his Excellency promised that these orders should be repeated to Colonel Alikhanoff."

On March 31, the day after the fight, Sir Peter Lumsden reported that since the receipt of the above telegram the Afghans had made no forward movement whatever. Unfortunately this was incorrect. When the Russians advanced in force to Kizil Tapa, the Afghans threw out vedettes to their front, and extended their pickets to Pul-i-Khisti on the left bank of the Kuskh.

* "The poor Afghans, with their Enfields and smooth bores, their caps and the powder in the nipples damped by a night spent in the rain, could do little against the Russian volleys. It was all over in less than an hour."—*The Afghan Boundary Commission*, A. C. YATE, p. 354.

They gradually strengthened this picket, till on March 30, as already mentioned, the bulk of their forces had been transferred across the river. This movement, which our officers at the front should have spared no effort to prevent, was regarded by the Russian commander as a provocation. It should have been prevented, because it was certain to be so regarded; and also because the Afghans could not by any possible chance withstand an attack with the faintest hope of being successful. If the British officers on the spot failed to make the Afghan commander listen to reason, they should have struck their camp and retired. To stay and see the Afghans shot down, or to remain at any rate almost within hearing of the fight, was to incur the odium of being on the Afghan side without firing a shot to aid them. The fact that the Afghans were advised to withdraw from the left bank of the Kuskh is on record. This was the counsel given them by Colonel (now Sir West) Ridgeway; and they maintained their position contrary to his advice.

In justice to Colonel Yate, however, it should be said that he had received orders from Sir Peter Lumsden to maintain his position at Panjdeh as long as possible.* Note should also be taken of Sir Peter Lumsden's reply to ill-informed and not too intelligent writers, who accused Colonel Yate of retiring with unseemly haste. What would these critics have said, Sir P. Lumsden asked, had Colonel Yate disregarded the instructions of the Government of the day, as well as the orders of their immediate chief, and by joining the Afghans had precipitated a war with Russia. "The Afghans," he went

* *The Afghan Boundary Commission.* By A. C. YATE, p. 458.

on to say, "were informed not once but many times that if they entered into a conflict with the Russians, they must do so on their own responsibility, and would receive no assistance from us. Their arrogance, however, decided them against advice to await attack and to try conclusions, with the well-known disastrous results." *

Perhaps the less said about it the better, but further reference must be made to Abdur Rahman's views regarding the Panjdeh incident. As the reader knows, he was at Rawulpindi, on a visit to the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, when the news of the collision came. In the Viceregal camp, as in London, there was wild excitement at the prospect of the long-expected war. But the Ameer was not in a bellicose mood. From the time of his first interview with Lord Dufferin he had seemed indifferent to the retention of Panjdeh. He could not tell, he said, which side the Sarik Turkomans would take. Their loyalty was not to be depended on. If they were faithful to Islam, they would send their wives and possessions into Afghanistan. Unless they did, he thought it was unlikely that they would fight for him. They were wealthy, he added, but he could get no tribute from them. This is not easily reconciled with Sir Peter Lumsden's report that the Ameer's control over Panjdeh had always been accepted by the Sarik Turkomans, who willingly responded to a demand for revenue. Then came the news of the fight on the Kuskh. The Ameer, Lord Dufferin said, "showed less emotion than might have been expected. Though he declared his determination to resist to the utmost any

* Sir Peter Lumsden's letter to the *Times*, dated October 19, 1887.

invasion of Afghan territory, he was not prepared to insist that Panjdeh did rightly belong to him." Rather than have a war with Russia he would sacrifice something. He seemed to think that Maruchak was the defensible frontier. As long as he could retain this place, along with Zulfikar and Gulran, the loss of Panjdeh would not greatly matter. He was content to accept any line approved by the British Government, provided it ran to the north of these three points.

In these circumstances the negotiations for the settlement of the boundary question easily passed out of the acute phase. The British Government agreed to exchange Panjdeh for Zulfikar, and the incident of the fight was eventually condoned. On May 8, 1885, a draft convention was agreed upon, by which the operations of the Boundary Commissioners were to be confined within certain specified limits. Possibly our Foreign Office would have shown itself still more accommodating; but in June, 1885, a Conservative Ministry came into power, and on September 10, 1885, the protocol, as it was called, was finally signed. It only remained to erect a line of boundary pillars in accordance with the principles therein formulated. This was done by Sir West Ridgeway, in co-operation with a Russian Commissioner; and though the harmony of the proceedings was occasionally interrupted by divergencies of opinion, necessitating frequent references to St. Petersburg, and toward the end, the deputation of Sir West Ridgeway to the Russian capital, the work was gradually completed.

To return to Abdur Rahman. In May, 1885, in reply

to a communication from India informing him that the Russians had consented to evacuate Zulfikar and to accept a line of frontier running north of Gulran and Maruchak, the Ameer wrote a long letter to Lord Dufferin in which he declared himself satisfied :—

“I cannot act contrary to the views of the kind and friendly advice of Her Majesty’s Government or to what they deem expedient or proper. To my thinking, what they have decided upon cannot but be advantageous to the two Governments, British and Afghan. I will most willingly accept the line of frontier which the illustrious British Government are going to adopt.”

Abdur Rahman asked, however, that a copy of the Anglo-Russian Convention might be given to him, duly authenticated with the seals of the two Powers. Unless his people, he said, could be shown such a writing, they would not believe that a partition of territory had been effected, and that peace and tranquillity had been obtained through the good offices of “the illustrious British Government.”

It cannot be supposed, however, that Abdur Rahman cared nothing about the defeat of his troops in Panjdeh. When he was at Rawalpindi, the honoured guest of the Indian Viceroy, he was, no doubt, able to put aside uncomfortable reflections ; but now that he was back in Cabul, out of range, as it were, of the soothing influence of Lord Dufferin’s sympathy, it was not so easy to feel that everything had been for the best. Two days after the date of his letter to the Viceroy, Abdur Rahman wrote to Sir Peter Lumsden, who had sent him an account of the Panjdeh fight. “Yes,” (the Ameer wrote) “from the very time of the arrival of the Commission of

the valiant English Government in this country, the Russians intended to pick a quarrel, and became tyrants, till they have broken faith, and what was destined has happened."

Abdur Rahman, in the speech and pamphlet already quoted, after referring to his correspondence with Sir Peter Lumsden, previous to the Panjdeh fight, went on to say :—

"In reality, the famous General Lumsden was willing to see an engagement between the Afghans and the Russians, because he had a foolish idea that if an engagement did not take place between the Afghans and the Russians, the Afghans, perhaps, would be willing to be friends with them. Now the friendship of the Afghans with their enemy would, in any circumstances, be altogether injurious to them, and General Lumsden was ignorant of this fact. His wisdom did not enable him to see the whole bearing of the matter to the end."

The Ameer's opinions, of course, are not quoted here because of their sagacity. We may be quite sure that Sir Peter Lumsden never for a moment entertained the "foolish idea" imputed to him. Nor is it possible to agree with Abdur Rahman that it was a mistake to discourage him when he had wanted to reinforce the garrison of Panjdeh. The Afghans, in the event of a collision, were certain to be beaten ; and no reinforcement that could be despatched from Cabul or Herat would have saved them. Abdur Rahman, however, was positive. In another passage of his speech he said :—

"If General Lumsden had accepted the support of the army I wanted to send from Cabul, the Russians would not have attacked first. And if they had attacked, they would not have been successful ; Panjdeh would not have

been lost. . . . The shame of the Afghans is owing to the foolish idea of General Lumsden. . . . General Lumsden had wisdom and prudence for his high station, but he had not enough for the great work which was entrusted to him."

When the Ameer read this statement in durbar, the demarcation of the frontier, in accordance with the protocol of September, 1885, was still proceeding. Colonel Sir West Ridgeway had succeeded Sir Peter Lumsden in command of the Boundary Mission on May 9, 1885, his Russian colleague being Colonel Kuhlberg. The details are of little interest now; but it may be noted that Abdur Rahman watched the proceedings with keen attention, and at times hindered the operations by interfering in a way that argued suspicion of our motives. Thus on March 16, 1886, he wrote to Lord Dufferin to complain of Her Majesty's Commissioner:

"Colonel Ridgeway," the Ameer wrote, "has called upon the officials and governors of the Turkestan province who are connected with" (? subordinate to) "this God-granted government to produce *sanads*,* and when they produce a *sanad*, however strong, he asks for one stronger than that. This finding fault with the *sanads* has excited suspicion in the minds of my officials, who fear lest he should give up Khamiab in the same way as he did the lands of the Kashan valley and the plain of Maruchak . . . I expect your Excellency will issue orders and instructions to Colonel Ridgeway, so that he may be acquainted with and may know the views and ideas of the people of Afghanistan, and that he may know that the more firm and unyielding he finds the Russian Commissioner in his unjust claims, the more unyielding and persistent he will find the Afghans in their just and true claim."

* Charters.

The Ameer's representative with the Boundary Commission, the Kazi Sad-ud-din Khan, was perhaps answerable in no small measure for the difficulties with which the English boundary Commissioner had to contend. The Kazi was ignorant and obstinate, and was altogether wanting in the sort of experience which would have been useful. In his youth he had been a *talib-ul-ilm*, a seeker after wisdom, a divinity student in the narrowest school of Mahomedan theology. He could discuss with a wonderful mastery of details and wealth of quotation the correct length of a true believer's hair and finger-nails, but he could not tell the points of the compass. He was in favour of an alliance with Russia, and thought meanly of the power and resources of the English. Had the Ameer deputed a capable and intelligent official to represent him, many wasted hours might have been saved.

But even a Boundary Commission cannot last for ever. The work was at length concluded, and on July 22, 1887, the final protocol was signed at St. Petersburg by Colonel Sir West Ridgeway and M. Zinovieff. It may be worth while to quote the following passage from Sir West Ridgeway's summary of what had been done. Her Majesty's Commissioner, in his report to Lord Salisbury, dated August 15, 1887, wrote:

"The demarcation of the north-western frontier of Afghanistan is now completed. I do not think that the Ameer has any reason to be dissatisfied with the result of the demarcation. He himself had pressed for the delimitation of the frontier, and he himself decided that Panjdeh was not worth fighting for. It seems to be supposed that we forced the Ameer to acquiesce in

the Russian annexation of Panjdeh ; but at the interview between Lord Dufferin and the Ameer^c at Rawulpindi, the Ameer, without any pressure by the Viceroy, decided to give up the valley. . . . Panjdeh was lost before the demarcation began, but through the demarcation of the frontier he has not lost a penny of revenue, a single subject, or an acre of land which was occupied or cultivated by any Afghan subject."

The point insisted on by Sir West Ridgeway was of no little importance. There are very few Afghans who can understand that it may be sometimes an advantage to recede from a frontier, when it happens to be difficult or expensive to hold. Actual loss of territory, in Afghan eyes, must always mean loss of *izzat* or prestige, to be avoided by all means possible. Sir West Ridgeway, therefore, knew perfectly well what he was about, when he laid stress on a calculation which has sometimes been thought of small consequence.

On August 1, 1887, Lord Dufferin had informed the Ameer of the termination of this long and wearisome business. Abdur Rahman's reply, dated August 16, was a striking example of his skill as an inditer of polite epistles. He said :—

"In the first place I feel much obliged, and am inspired with hope, on account of the great attention, and the far-seeing and Royal consideration of Her Imperial and Dignified Majesty the great Queen of England and Empress of India. Secondly, the good and state-adorning opinion of the representatives of the illustrious Government is worthy of praise and the cause of happiness and thanks ; for the knots in the thread of discussion with the Russian Government, which were tied with regard to the Afghan frontier, have been untied and opened with the tips of the fingers of excellent measures. They (the Queen and the representatives) adopted the right arrange-

ment, which is better than the first one. I know for certain that the representatives of the illustrious British Government have from the first stage of the demarcation until the conclusion of the question, reached their destination after having traversed many hard and difficult stages of discussion on the noble steed of minute thoughts. It is one of the results and consequences of the sincere friendship of the two parties that the Russian Government, notwithstanding its large number of troops, its power, and its natural noise and despotism, has entered the door of refraining from conquest and war with these two auspicious Governments, as it knew that a war would have an unhappy result and would entail a heavy loss on itself. Had it not seen the foundation of the friendship of these two united kingdoms to be strong and firm, and the basis of the affection and sympathy of the two parties to be solid and stable, it would hardly have come down from the palace of its desire and the mansions of its wish to subjugate Afghanistan and occupy India. I look upon the kind friendship of the illustrious British Government as the cause of the flourishing of the tree of the Afghan Government; and so it is without question. It is also plain and clear in the gracious sight of her Sublime Majesty the great Queen and in that of the representatives of the illustrious Government that my person, which exhibits sincerity, shuns and keeps away from the course and system of former Ameers of Afghanistan; and it will please God remain so firm and constant in the engagements of perpetual friendship with the said Government that among all the Powers it will be famous and distinguished in consequence of this exalted name and exalted character."*

On the whole the Ridgeway boundary has so far answered its purpose. It has been respected by the Russians; and if any misunderstandings have arisen, they have been speedily removed. In the autumn of 1891 the Russian frontier officers were reported to be establishing a

* *Central Asia Papers, I. of 1888, p. 21.*

military cantonment at Shaikh Junid on the Kuskh river, eighty miles north of Herat, and only ten miles to the north of the newly-delimited frontier. This was thought in some quarters to portend a forward movement, but nothing came of it. In the following year, June, 1892, a Russian officer at Panjdeh, endowed with more zeal than discretion, sent or led a detachment of Cossacks to raid across the frontier to Kila Nau, forty miles north-east of Herat. Some Hazaras at Kila Nau had been defying the Ameer's authority; and the officer in question seems to have regarded the opportunity for extending Russian influence as too good to be lost. His enterprise, however, was disavowed by superior authority, and he himself received a stern reprimand.

In 1893 a dispute arose as to the respective rights of Afghan and Russian subjects in the neighbourhood of Chaman-i-bid, the "meadow of willows." The land on the Russian side of the frontier had been cultivated by Sarik Turkomans, and by a party of colonists from European Russia. It was alleged that the Afghans higher up the valley of the Kuskh had drained away all the water for irrigating their own fields; thus depriving their neighbours of a fair share of the precious stream. Colonel Yate was deputed to effect a settlement of the dispute, in consultation with a Russian officer; and in the end a satisfactory agreement was arrived at. At the present time, the peace of the Afghan border between the Oxus and Heri-Rud is undisturbed; and it may be hoped that this happy state of things will continue.

But the demarcation of the Ridgeway boundary only served to settle some of the points which had been left

uncertain in the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1873. A fixed line was drawn, indeed, from the Heri-Rud to the Oxus, to mark the frontier of Afghanistan on the north-west; and thus a well-defined border was substituted for an indefinite one, along a distance of nearly four hundred miles. In the north-east, however, where Oxus leaves "his high mountain cradle in Pamere," the boundary line was still left doubtful. In regard to this section, the wording of the agreement of 1873 was not in accord with facts,* and misapprehensions had arisen which at one time or another have been the cause of a considerable amount of friction.

We have already seen how Abdur Rahman, in 1883, occupied Shignan and Roshan, two small states on the Upper Oxus. Reference has been made, also, to the protest of the Russian Government against an act which was regarded at St. Petersburg as a clear and unwarrantable violation of the agreement of 1873. Earl Granville, in June, 1884, declined to accept this view, though he expressed his willingness to have the matter referred to a Joint Commission. For some years afterwards, it continued to be an article of faith with English writers on the Central Asian question, that Abdur Rahman's claim could be justified, and that it would be supported by the British Government. In May, 1884, at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, Sir Lepel Griffin made some remarks on the subject. He maintained that it was a matter of small consequence whether one branch of the Oxus or the other was taken as the Afghan boundary.

* See an article in the *Pall Mall Magazine*, May, 1893, by the present writer.

The real point was that the Russian Government in 1873 had agreed to Badakshan and Wakhan 'being included within Afghanistan, and this inclusion, Sir Lepel Griffin said, was not affected by the geographical position of the districts of Shignan and Roshan, which formed part of Badakshan. Those wild and isolated regions, he added, with a very sparse population and yielding no revenue, might appear to many Englishmen to be of little political importance, but they commanded some of the easiest passes leading into India. He hoped the British Government would uphold "his friend," the Ameer of Afghanistan, in the possession of all territory which could be proved to belong to Afghanistan. In one form or another this line of argument was generally adopted by public writers both in India and in England down to very recent times. It was urged that, so far as Shignan and Roshan went, the agreement of 1873 would not bear a literal interpretation. Although in the despatches then exchanged between the English and Russian Governments, the stream issuing from Wood's Lake had been specified as the boundary of Afghanistan, this, it was said, did not apply. In the first place Shignan was an integral part of Badakshan, which Russia had agreed to regard as Afghan territory. Secondly, there were reasons, the advocates of no surrender maintained, for believing that the Aksu-Murghab, and not the river flowing from Wood's Lake, was the true head stream of the Oxus; and as the Aksu-Murghab ran to the north of the debateable territory, it was thought that the Ameer's claims could be supported without departing from the spirit of Earl Granville's agreement. Last of all, it was an undoubted fact that Bokhara,

a Russian feudatory, held a portion of Darwaz lying on the left bank of the Oxus, and it was urged that this justified the Ameer's advance into those portions of Shignan which lie on the right bank of the stream flowing from Lake Victoria.

Such special pleadings were relied on by writers in the English press down to a very recent period. The author of an article in *Blackwood's Magazine* for December, 1891, wrote: "Our obligation to defend these states (Shignan and Roshan) as Afghan territory, is one from which our duty, or to put it on a lower ground, our self-interest, will not allow us to swerve." The English Government, however, had come to exactly the opposite conclusion. It had decided that the agreement of 1873 must be interpreted literally. That is to say, the stream issuing from Lake Victoria (Wood's Lake) must be regarded as the northern limit of Afghan territory. The Ameer had accordingly been advised to withdraw his troops from the right bank of the river. As for the contention that the Aksu-Murghab was the true head stream of the Oxus, this was a circumstance, it was held, which had no bearing on the question, even if it was borne out by facts. As it happened, the theory had been tested and found wanting. The explorations of Mr. N. Elias * in 1885 had established the fact that the Panja or southern branch, and not the Aksu or northern branch, is the larger of the two contributories to the great river.

It will be as well, perhaps, to quote the actual text of the agreement of 1873, so far as it refers to the North-East boundary of Afghanistan. Among the territories then

* Now Her Majesty's Consul-General for Khorassan and Seistan.

recognised as belonging to the Ameer of Cabul was: "Badakshan, with its dependent district Wakhan, from the Sarikol (Wood's Lake) on the east to the junction of the Kokcha river with the Oxus (or Panja) *on the west, the stream of the Oxus thus forming the northern boundary of this Afghan province throughout its entire*

THE COUNTRIES ABOUT THE UPPER OXUS.



..... Boundary agreed upon in 1873 and 1895.

extent." In the blue book the words here printed in italics were left out by the carelessness of a copyist; but the omission is of small moment, as both England and Russia have recognised the intention of the agreement. What that intention was may be seen from the accompanying sketch map.

But although the British Government had come to the

conclusion that Abdur Rahman's claim to territory on the right bank of the Oxus could not be supported in face of the agreement of 1873, the whole question was allowed to remain open for years. This led to trouble. The Ameer was in no hurry to withdraw his troops from the forbidden ground; while the Russians, impatient at the delay, endeavoured to expedite his departure. In their attempts to accomplish this object, the Czar's officers on the frontier resorted to expedients which were viewed both in England and India with profound indignation. In the summer of 1892, Colonel Yanoff—the same officer who in the previous August had arrested Captain Young-husband—advanced to the borders of Shignan, and on July 24 came into collision with a detachment of Afghan troops under Colonel Shams-ud-din Khan at Somatash, on the eastern extremity of Yashil Kul (The Yellow Lake). The official account of the affair, published in the *Turkestan Gazette* was as follows :

“On July 23 (new style) the Kirghiz of the Alichur Pamir came to Colonel Yanoff and complained that they were oppressed and ill-treated by the Afghans, who had a post at Somatash. As this spot is beyond doubt Russian territory, the Colonel himself went thither with some Cossacks to establish order. On July 24 at six a.m., having arrived at Somatash, he discovered the Afghan post asleep at the foot of the mountain. The Colonel, with eighteen Cossacks, approached and sent his interpreter to ask the Afghan officer to come to him. This officer, Captain Gholam Hyder Khan, delayed a long time, and the interpreter said he was dressing. Meanwhile, the Afghan soldiers, coming out of their huts, began to put on their uniforms and load their rifles. The Afghan captain at length appeared armed with sword and revolver. Colonel Yanoff begged him to come over to him, guaranteeing

his safety ; but the captain, advancing with fourteen men within fourteen paces, roughly asked Colonel Yanoff what he was doing there. Colonel Yanoff answered quietly that by the Convention of 1872-73, this territory belonged to Russia. To this the Afghan retorted that he had nothing to do with England, and that the Alichur Pamir belonged to the Ameer. Thereupon Colonel Yanoff ordered the Afghans to lay down their arms and depart. A violent dispute ensued, in which the Afghan soldiers joined, and the Captain used language which the interpreter dared not translate. Colonel Yanoff finally ordered his Cossacks to disarm the Afghans. The latter at once opened fire, seriously wounding a Cossack ; and a fight ensued in which the Afghan Captain and five men were killed."

According to the report which reached the British outpost at Gilgit, the Afghan commandant at Somatash was Shams-ud-din Khan, who, being surprised in his tent by the Russians, came out to parley with them. On his declaring that he held the post for his master, the Ameer, and would obey no one else, Colonel Yanoff, it is said, ordered him back, and struck him slightly on the cheek. The Afghan drew his pistol and fired at the Russian officer. The ball glanced off Colonel Yanoff's belt and wounded a Cossack standing behind. Then followed the fight, in which Shams-ud-din Khan and six of his men were killed.

Incidents of this kind, as may easily be imagined, did not expedite the negotiations which were now proceeding between the Governments of England and Russia in regard to the Pamirs. The action of the Russians cannot be defended. Though it was true that by the agreement of 1873, the Afghans had no business at Somatash, it did not follow that this portion of Shignan belonged to

Russia. There is no need, however, to discuss the point here. In compliance with the representations made by Lord Rosebery, the Russian Government undertook that for the present no further expedition or reinforcements should be sent to the Pamirs, pending a settlement of the boundary question.

The long controversy about the Pamir region was not terminated until March, 1895, when it was agreed, between England and Russia, that the cis-Oxus portions of Darwaz should be ceded to Afghanistan by Bokhara, on condition that the Afghans evacuated those portions of Shignan and Roshan which lie on the right bank of the Panja branch of the Oxus. The stream issuing from Wood's Lake, or Lake Victoria, was thus recognised for the second time as the boundary of Afghan territory. Eastward of the lake a line will be drawn, running almost due east to the frontier of Chinese Turkestan. The terms of the Anglo-Russian agreement were embodied in the following letter, dated London, March 11, 1895, from the Earl of Kimberley to M. de Staal, Russian Ambassador at the Court of St. James :

“FOREIGN OFFICE, *March 11th*, 1895.

“YOUR EXCELLENCY,

“As a result of the negotiations which have taken place between our two Governments in regard to the spheres of influence of Great Britain and Russia in the country to the east of Lake Victoria (Zor Koul), the following points have been agreed upon between us—

“1. The spheres of influence of Great Britain and Russia to the east of Lake Victoria (Zor Koul) shall be divided by a line which, starting from a point on that lake near to its eastern extremity, shall follow the crests of the mountain

range, running somewhat to the south of the latitude of the lake, as far as the Bendersky and Orta-bel Passes. From thence the line shall run along the same range while it remains to the south of the latitude of the said lake. On reaching that latitude it shall descend a spur of the range towards Kizil Rabat on the Aksu River, if that locality is found not to be north of the latitude of Lake Victoria, and from thence it shall be prolonged in an easterly direction so as to meet the Chinese frontier. If it should be found that Kizil Rabat is situated to the north of the latitude of Lake Victoria, the line of demarcation shall be drawn to the nearest convenient point on the Aksu River south of that latitude, and from thence prolonged as aforesaid.

“2. The line shall be marked out, and its precise configuration shall be settled by a Joint Commission of a purely technical character, with a military escort not exceeding that which is strictly necessary for its proper protection. The Commission shall be composed of British and Russian Delegates, with the necessary technical assistance. Her Britannic Majesty's Government will arrange with the Ameer of Afghanistan as to the manner in which His Highness shall be represented on the Commission.

“3. The Commission shall also be charged to report any facts which can be ascertained on the spot bearing on the situation of the Chinese frontier, with a view to enable the two Governments to come to an agreement with the Chinese Government as to the limits of Chinese territory in the vicinity of the line, in such manner as may be found most convenient.

“4. Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia engage to abstain from exercising any political influence or control, the former to the north, the latter to the south, of the above line of demarcation.

“5. Her Britannic Majesty's Government engage that the territory lying within the British sphere of influence between the Hindu Kush and the line running from the east end of

Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier shall form part of the territory of the Ameer of Afghanistan, that it shall not be annexed to Great Britain, and that no military posts or forts shall be established in it.

"The execution of this Agreement is contingent upon the evacuation by the Ameer of Afghanistan of all the territories now occupied by His Highness on the right bank of the Panja, and on the evacuation by the Ameer of Bokhara of the portion of Darwaz which lies to the south of the Oxus, in regard to which Her Britannic Majesty's Government and the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia have agreed to use their influence respectively with the two Ameers.

"I shall be obliged if, in acknowledging the receipt of this note, your Excellency will record officially the Agreement which we have thus concluded in the name of our respective Governments.

"I am, &c.,

(Signed) "KIMBERLEY."

In a letter of the same date to the Earl of Kimberley, the Russian ambassador enumerated the above conditions, the acceptance of which by his Government he had been authorized to notify. So ended a prolonged and at times difficult negotiation. A Boundary Commission is about to start (May, 1895) for the Pamirs to demarcate the boundary in accordance with the terms of the convention. The frontiers of Afghanistan, from the Heri-Rud to Chinese-Turkestan, will thus be fixed by international agreement.

Abdur Rahman's reluctance to withdraw his troops and officials to the left bank of the Oxus seems to have been finally overcome after the visit of the Durand Mission to Cabul, when the envoy was able to convince him of the necessity of this measure. The evacuation of Shignan, trans-Oxus, was effected in the course of the

following year ; and before long, no doubt, the country will be under Russian rule. The cession of the cis-Oxus portion of Darwaz, formerly occupied by Bokhara, may to some extent compensate the Afghans for the loss they have sustained ; but we can scarcely count on their gratitude. Abdur Rahman himself, however, must be well aware that if he had been left to make his own bargain with Russia, he would have been compelled to part with more valuable possessions than a few villages in the valleys of the Ghand and Shakh Dara rivers.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DURAND MISSION.

"When your enemies are engaged with each other, sit down at your ease with your friends."

TARIKHI-RASHIDI.

Lord Roberts—Misunderstandings—Rumours of war—A troublesome ally—The raid on Chageh—The Khojak tunnel—An awkward document—The machine guns—Sir Mortimer Durand—Departure of the Mission—At Jelalabad—Arrival at Cabul—Grand Durbar—Speech by the Ameer—The Envoy's reply—The Mission returns—Result of the negotiations—The Marquis of Lansdowne—British pledges—The sphere of influence—The Waziri campaign—Umra Khan of Jandol—The defence of Chitral—Colonel Kelly's march—The demarcation of boundaries.

THE Queen's Government of India is represented at the Court of His Highness Abdur Rahman by a Mahomedan officer, Colonel Akram Khan. The selection of an Asiatic for this responsible duty may be regarded as a significant index to the nature of the political connection between England and Afghanistan. Some day it will become a matter of vital importance in the interests of both countries that the reigning Ameer should have an English Resident at his capital, to advise him, when desired, on affairs of internal administration, as well as to exercise that control over his foreign policy, which is the leading principle of the Anglo - Afghan

alliance. For the time being, it is convenient to dispense with the advantages that would 'be gained by keeping an English Resident at Cabul. The existing arrangement may be more acceptable both to the Ameer and to his subjects ; it involves less risk, and it does not excite the suspicions of Abdur Rahman's neighbours.

On the other hand, Afghanistan can hardly rank high even among semi-civilized states, so long as there is the least pretext for supposing that a European diplomatist, duly accredited as the representative of a Western Power, would be less secure from affront or outrage in Cabul than at Teheran, Cairo, or Constantinople. The feeling of insecurity is the natural result of what happened in 1879. Happily it is by degrees giving way to a sense of reciprocal confidence, and the wholesome change is in large measure due to the Ameer's sagacity. Whether in his time, or under his successor, an English officer will be sent to reside permanently at Cabul cannot be foreseen ; but that such a step will ultimately be taken is undoubted, and it stands to Abdur Rahman's credit that he has helped to make it possible. English officials employed on the boundary delimitation, or in connection with that undertaking, have travelled throughout the length and breadth of his kingdom ; some with an escort of Indian troops, others, like Mr. Elias and Colonel Yate, relying only on the protection of the Ameer's word. Englishmen and Englishwomen have lived for long periods at his capital. In 1893 the Ameer welcomed the visit of an English Envoy ; and, still later, he extended his hospitality to a much-travelled member of Parliament. The once formidable barrier of mutual

suspicion and mistrust is no longer a standing obstacle to that open and free intercourse which should unite friendly nations; and sooner or later we may expect to find other impediments removed.

But for unforeseen accidents a British Mission would have visited Cabul during the viceroyalty of Lord Dufferin, who fully recognised the benefits that would be attained thereby. In the month of August, 1888, shortly before the outbreak of disturbances in Afghan-Turkestan, it was announced that the Indian Government had been asked by the Ameer Abdur Rahman to send a confidential mission to Cabul to discuss affairs of State. According to a semi-official explanation published in the *Allahabad Pioneer*, the Ameer had recently made known to the authorities at Simla his earnest desire that some trusted official should pay a visit to him at his capital, and stay there for a while as his honoured guest, in order that he himself might learn what the views of the Indian Government were in regard to various matters which had from time to time come under discussion. There were, it was added, no particular circumstances on either side which had led to this action on Abdur Rahman's part, but the Ameer thought it a good opportunity for a friendly consideration of all doubtful points which had arisen between himself and the Indian Government. It had therefore been determined to send a mission, which was to start from Peshawur on October 1. The official chosen by Lord Dufferin for this delicate and anxious duty was the Foreign Secretary, Mr. (now Sir Mortimer) Durand. He was to be accompanied by Sir Donald Wallace, Lord Dufferin's private secretary, who would

convey a personal message of farewell from the Viceroy. A squadron of Indian cavalry would be sent to escort the mission, which would probably be absent, it was said, about five or six weeks, making a fortnight's stay at the Afghan capital. The requisite preparations had been all but completed, when letters were received from Abdur Rahman, asking that the mission might be put off. The rebellion of Is'hak Khan, and the Ameer's determination to proceed himself to the scene of the conflict, made it impossible for him to receive a British Envoy at his chief city; and although there was some talk of a conference at Kandahar in the following spring, nothing came of it. As already related, the Ameer was absent from Cabul till the summer of 1890. Perhaps it was just as well that the project fell through. The visit of an Envoy from the Indian Government might have strengthened the Ameer's hands and have increased his prestige in the eyes of his subjects, but it was not at all advisable that we should know too much about the means he was resorting to for the punishment of those who had rebelled against his authority. In a private letter written at the time a distinguished frontier official* said:—

“The Ameer's main reason for wishing for a mission is to strengthen himself and to increase his prestige with his rebellious tribes. It is not to our interest to do this. The policy we should follow is to show the big tribes—Duranis, Ghilzais, &c.—that we are their friends, and that we prefer their good will to that of this or that Ameer. The presence of an English Mission with the Ameer would be looked upon by the tribes as a demonstration against them, and be resented accordingly. So long as the Ameer sticks to his bargain as regards foreign

* The late Colonel Sir Oliver St. John.

relations, we are bound to carry out our share of it ; but to indicate approval of his internal government, or to do anything that will be construed by the people as an approval, would be a mistake."

Unquestionably there was much to be said in support of these views, even though they were not endorsed by public or official opinion.

The idea of a mission to Afghanistan was revived in 1892. Lord Lansdowne, who succeeded Lord Dufferin as Governor-General, had come to the conclusion that this would be the best means of healing the breach which had begun to divide the Ameer and the Indian Government. Abdur Rahman's interference with tribes on our border, the advance of his troops to Asmar, and the possibility of further aggression in Bajaur and elsewhere, had given rise to great uneasiness in India. In some quarters it was confidently believed that an open rupture was impending, which could only end in war. To avert so serious a disaster the Indian Government, in July, 1892, informed the Ameer of its wish to send the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Roberts, to discuss the situation, Jelalabad being named, then or in a later communication, as a suitable place for the conference. Many wild rumours were abroad as to the object of the proposed mission. It was even stated, and possibly believed, that Lord Roberts would be instructed to concert with Abdur Rahman measures of defence, or perhaps of offence, against the Russians, who were displaying inconvenient activity on the Pamirs. The real motive, it need hardly be said, was a desire to settle difficulties that had arisen nearer to the Indian frontier,

difficulties which now began to assume a very awkward shape.

Whether Lord Roberts would have succeeded in effecting a settlement is a question upon which it is unnecessary to speculate. The Ameer was unable to receive a mission. In his reply to the despatch from the Indian Government, he intimated that it had long been his wish to confer with an English Envoy; that it would give him great pleasure to meet the Commander-in-Chief, but that owing to the insurrection of the Hazara tribes, he was unable to say when a conference could take place. As Lord Roberts was shortly to leave India, on the expiry of his term of office, this was tantamount to a postponement of the mission *sine die*. The probability is that Abdur Rahman could easily have arranged to meet an English Envoy, had he cared to do so, and that the Hazaras were giving him no real anxiety. On the frontier, however, and still more in Afghanistan, highly-coloured rumours were flying about, in regard to the escort which was to go with Lord Roberts. In any case the Commander-in-Chief would not have travelled without a considerable force of troops, and it was believed in Cabul that he was coming at the head of a brigade at least. This would not have suited the Ameer at all. Without himself apprehending a military demonstration, he doubtless knew that the mission would wear this aspect in the eyes of his subjects; and it is not in the least surprising, therefore, that he pleaded his inability to receive Lord Roberts. In the opinion of those best competent to judge, it was just as well that the proposed Roberts Mission never came off. A soldier himself, Lord Roberts would most likely have

found Abdur Rahman wholly in accord with him as far as high politics and the interminable Central Asian question went. What was needed, however, was not a common understanding as to the best means of opposing the advance of Russia, but a settlement of minor points of dispute between the Ameer and the Indian authorities. If the Commander-in-Chief, as might have happened, was led to consider these of minor consequence, so long as Abdur Rahman showed himself a staunch advocate for an active alliance against the Russians, the main object of the mission would be lost sight of. If, on the other hand, Lord Roberts insisted on obtaining a satisfactory settlement of these minor points, any difference of opinion that arose would have assumed portentous dimensions. However, the reasonableness of such conjectures was not put to the test; and in the spring of 1893, Lord Roberts left India without having met Abdur Rahman in counsel.

Meanwhile the position of affairs continued to be most unsatisfactory. It almost looked as if the Ameer was bent on picking a quarrel with us. Some of the acts of aggression, by which he strained to breaking-point the patience of Anglo-Indian administrators, have already come under review. There were others even more irritating if not hostile. Sir James Browne, the Chief Commissioner of British Biluchistan, reported that a number of deserters from a newly-formed frontier regiment, the 40th Pathans, had escaped to Kandahar, where in every case they were received with high honour. It was said that these men were publicly praised by the Ameer's officials as good Mahomedans who had refused

to serve under infidels. The 40th Pathans is composed of Mahomedans from beyond the border, recruits being obtained from Bonair, Swat, and Bajaur. It was a new experiment in a way, and Abdur Rahman did not approve of the enlistment of tribesmen whom he hoped to bring under his own influence. This may have been the reason, but it is certainly not a valid excuse for the hospitality and kindness shown to the deserters, and the Indian authorities were righteously indignant.

Another occasion of misunderstanding was a raid by the Ameer's officials on Biluch territory. Certain of his subjects dwelling on the Helmund river had thought fit to emigrate into Persian Seistan, being induced to quit their homes, it was said, by reason of the rigour with which the revenue was collected. Thinking it not worth while or unwise to pursue them, Abdur Rahman's Governor of Kandahar adopted other means of bringing pressure to bear on the fugitives. They were an outlying section of a tribe located for the most part in and about Chageh, in Biluchistan. An Afghan expedition was accordingly sent to Chageh with orders to lay hands on as many tribesmen as could be caught. This was done, and a number of unfortunate wretches were seized and carried off to Furrah, where they were put into prison; the object, of course, of this outrageous proceeding being to make their fellow-tribesmen who had fled to Persia feel uncomfortable. Whether this part of the plan turned out a success does not appear, but the whole affair provoked a strongly-worded remonstrance from the Government of India. The boundary between Afghanistan and

Biluchistan was not too clearly defined, and had always varied with circumstances ; but the Calcutta Foreign Office held that Chageh was well within the Biluch border, and that the Afghans had been guilty of gross and unwarrantable encroachments on a State directly under British protection.

In justice to Abdur Rahman it should be mentioned that, in his own opinion at any rate, he had a clear grievance against the Indian Government. The English had driven a tunnel through the Khojak Amran hills, had built a railway station on his side of the range at New Chaman, and were always talking of an extension of the railway to Kandahar. The Ameer conceived a huge dislike to both tunnel and railway station. "These English," he said, "give out that they are my friends ; but the Khojak tunnel is like a knife thrust into my vitals." He stoutly maintained that New Chaman was situate in his own territory, though by our reckoning it is a good ten miles outside his border. In July, 1890, a sentry on guard at the British camp was attacked and wounded. His assailants fled to Kandahar ; and, in response to a demand for their surrender, the Ameer's Governor replied that the English, having encroached on Afghan soil, such outrages were the natural outcome of popular resentment.*

The first train was run through the Khojak tunnel in September, 1891. It was hoped that with a railway open right up to the Afghan frontier, there would be a marked increase of trade between British India and Southern Afghanistan. But the Ameer's orders were

* *Biluchistan Agency Report, 1890-91.*

that the tunnel and the new station were to be avoided ; and Afghan traders continued to send their merchandise on camel back over the Pass. Abdur Rahman's temper was not improved by the suggestion urged in the House of Commons more than once, and frequently in the English press, that the Indian Government should insist on the completion of the long-talked-of railway to Kandahar. To have adopted this policy would most likely have driven him to desperation ; and as it was, the mere talk about it served to render our ally still more intractable.

Yet who shall see into the mind of an Eastern king ? It would be an affectation of knowledge to affirm that any particular circumstance was the prime cause of Abdur Rahman's fits of unfriendliness. Gout may have had something to do with the recurrence of these moods, nor is it wholly improbable that the Ameer at times feigned more mislike and distrust of his English neighbours than he really felt. He may have judged it prudent, now and again, to play to an excitable gallery of truculent barons and bigoted priests ; on other occasions he perhaps thought that his grievances, real or imaginary, would remain unredressed if he did not make the most of them. However this may be, it happened more than once that misunderstandings were smoothed over by opportune explanation, or that a prompt and strong-worded remonstrance brought Abdur Rahman to his bearings when, inspired either by resentment or ambition, he tried the temper of the Indian Government too far. It was about this time that an incident occurred of which little or nothing has been said

hitherto outside official circles. The Ameer was shown by someone a map in which all the country north of the Hindu Kush was included within the dominion of the Czar. This document seemed to foreshadow the partition of his kingdom, and may have been drawn to illustrate the theory of the ethnological frontier which finds favour with certain political speculators. But Abdur Rahman was not enamoured of the idea, and he asked the authorities in India what the map meant. Were they cognisant of any such proposals, and did they countenance them? Of course Lord Lansdowne's government was able to assure the indignant Ameer that the map meant nothing, and that England and Russia had not agreed, and were not in the least likely to agree, to the arrangement it foreshadowed. The Ameer was satisfied, and no more was heard of the matter.

A soft answer turned away wrath. There were occasions, too, when a sharp one may save trouble in dealing with the rulers of Asia. Indeed, it might be laid down generally that whenever the Indian Government informed the Ameer in plain language that any particular act of aggression could on no account be tolerated, he took the hint not unkindly. If ever the correspondence that passed between Cabul and Simla is published, it will be found, most likely, that on more than one occasion Lord Lansdowne had to adopt the tone of one who must be obeyed, and that when he did so Abdur Rahman obeyed accordingly. Once, too, by way of making its meaning still more clear, the Indian Government tried the effect of retaliation. The Ameer had ordered, through his agents, some Hotchkiss guns from the

makers in England, who of course were the more ready to supply the wants of their esteemed customer since he was our friend and ally. So these ingenious and deadly engines of warfare were shipped to Karachi, and His Highness's agents were preparing to convey them up-country, over the Bolan Pass to Kandahar. But the transaction had come to the ears of the Simla Foreign Office. The guns were stopped at the seaport, and their expectant owner was informed that the British government did not see its way to permitting the transport of war material through our territory. There was trouble and tribulation no doubt in the palace at Cabul; but Abdur Rahman was too astute not to see that we, his friends, had scored off him, and perhaps not too irate—angry though he assuredly was—to admit that it was a fair stroke and a legitimate reprisal.

But the friction that existed was in every way deplorable, and it was a distinct relief when, toward the autumn of 1893, the Indian Government was able to announce that the Ameer had expressed his willingness to receive an English Mission at Cabul, and that Sir Mortimer Durand had been again selected for the important mission. This time no risk was run of alarming the Afghans by sending a large military escort. Lord Lansdowne's Foreign Secretary at once declared that, as he would be the guest of the Ameer, he should prefer to go to Cabul without an escort. It was a wise resolution, and those who knew the Afghan character, and were aware of the vigilant strictness of Abdur Rahman's rule, were satisfied that the Envoy might rely absolutely and entirely on the protection afforded by order of the Ameer, whose royal

pleasure it would be to secure not only the safety but also the comfort of his guest in every possible way. Nor in the end had Sir Mortimer Durand the slightest reason to repent of his confidence. He was everywhere treated not merely with civility, but with a profusion of kindly attention. Asiatic hospitality is at times superabundant, if not a trifle tedious. English visitors to a raja's court have been perplexed to find themselves provided day after day with an endless variety of things which they could do without, including, perhaps, a new tooth-brush and bottle of brandy every morning. Abdur Rahman stopped short of this, but the attentions he showed to the Mission were magnificent, and the Envoy on his return protested he had never been treated better in his life.

Sir Mortimer Durand started from Peshawur on September 19, 1893. On the frontier he was met by General Ghulam Hyder Khan, who conducted him to Cabul. With the Envoy went Colonel Elles, of the Quartermaster-General's Department, Captains MacMahon and Manners Smith, as political assistants, and Mr. Clarke, of the Foreign Department, with Surgeon-Major Fenn in medical charge. About a dozen troopers, Pathans from the 9th Bengal Lancers, went as orderlies; and there were about the same number of native clerks and translators. Reckoning the camp followers and servants, there were some three hundred men all told. For the transport of the party over two hundred camels, about the same number of mules, and perhaps fifty horses, were mustered. At Jelalabad, the Envoy stayed a day and a night in the new palace which the Ameer is building for himself there, an imposing edifice of white stucco with a terra-cotta

dome. Shortly before the cavalcade reached the capital, Mr. (now Sir Salter) Pyne rode in to join the Envoy with a message of welcome from the Ameer. On October 2, the Mission reached Cabul, being received with military honours. The residence of Sirdar Habibulla, at Indaki, had been prepared for the Ameer's guests, and re-furnished regardless of expense. For the Envoy there was a lordly bed upholstered in gold brocade and blue satin, with a piano hard by in case he felt a disposition for music. The Ameer was staying at his *villagiatura* a mile away. On the day after his arrival Sir Mortimer paid his first state visit to His Highness, who, as his manner is, improved the occasion with a speech. It was a source, he said, of extreme satisfaction to receive at his capital an Envoy of such high rank, and so trusted by the British Government, one, moreover, who was able to speak Persian, and with whom he could converse freely. The advent of the mission would prove to the world the reality of the Anglo-Afghan alliance. The anxiety of those who wished well to that alliance, and the malicious satisfaction of evil wishers, would alike be removed. The enemies of both countries would be discomfited. In great affairs of state, great men were required to clear away the dissensions caused by designing persons. Great men had come aforetime to Afghanistan, but they had come to make war, and not charged with errands of peace. He talked about his gout and a possible visit to England, about railways and other things. With Mr. Donald, a civilian who has served on the frontier, the Ameer conversed in Pushtu, the vernacular of Afghanistan and the borderland. In

days gone by, he said, when he was a fugitive in the country of the Waziris, after he had been defeated by his uncle, Shere Ali, he used to speak Pushtu a good deal; but in Turkestan he had grown accustomed to another language.

Of the gifts that were given and received by the Envoy, of visits to Sir S. Pyne's workshops, and excursions to places of interest in the vicinity of the capital, and of the courteous treatment which members of the mission received from Afghans of all conditions, endless accounts were given at the time. The strangers were much impressed by the magnificence of the Ameer's new palace, and were told, as Mr. Curzon was a year later, that in one of the rooms there was a contemporary portrait of the Ameer Timur.

On November 13 Sir Mortimer Durand and all the officers of the mission attended a grand durbar at the Ameer's palace. Writing on the day afterwards, the correspondent of the Allahabad *Pioneer* said:—

“Sir Mortimer and the officers of the Mission were received in the Durbar Hall by Sirdars Habibulla and Nasrulla (Abdur Rahman's two eldest sons), and conducted to seats at the top of the hall. Opposite were the seats of the Ameer's chief officials, civil and military. Amongst those in the front row were General Jan Mahomed, commanding the artillery, a smart, soldier-like looking man; General Mir Mahomed, who has lately been commanding in Hazara, and the Khan-i-Mulla, or chief priest. On the other side of the hall were rows of officers in the army. The Shahgassi, or Goldstick-in-Waiting, acted as Master of the Ceremonies, aided by another official, carrying a silver stick. In front of the Ameer's chair was a fine African lion's skin. On the Ameer's arrival the Durbar stood up. Walking in, he

shook hands with Sir Mortimer and the officers, and took his seat.

“After a few remarks about the want of a suitable place for durbars until he had built this fine hall, he commenced an excellent speech. He dwelt on the fact that since his accession he had unceasingly striven for the welfare and prosperity of his country; that every nation had need of powerful friends; and that he had sedulously cultivated the friendship of England, whose interests for weal and woe were identical with those of Afghanistan. For the purpose of cementing this friendship he had desired to receive the Mission, and it was a source of great satisfaction that a man had come at its head who was a trusted councillor of the Government of India, and who could discuss matters with him in the Persian language; one, moreover, who was an old friend, and whom he knew to be straightforward and trustworthy. He wished the people of Afghanistan to know that the result of the Mission was that the bond of friendship between England and Afghanistan was now established on a firm and permanent basis, which gave him great satisfaction. He wished the fact of this friendship to become known throughout Afghanistan, and to all Governments throughout the world.”

The Afghan notables present intimated their approval of the Ameer's speech, after which a written address was presented to the Ameer, and read out by him. It was signed by the chief Sirdars of Cabul, and was to the effect that they desired to express their gratitude to the Ameer for his efforts on their behalf. They had perfect confidence in any arrangements the Ameer might make for the benefit of the country, and they considered that the friendship between Afghanistan and England was a subject of rejoicing. They would continue to pray for the Ameer's health and welfare.

Sir Mortimer then rose, and addressing the Ameer in

Persian said, in reply, that the Ameer had spoken so fittingly concerning the results of the mission that there was little left for him to add. He informed the Ameer that he had just received a telegram from the Viceroy, expressing His Excellency's satisfaction at the happy terminations of the negotiations, and at the establishment of friendship on a secure basis. Sir Mortimer also referred to Lord Kimberley's allusion in the House of Lords to the Cabul Mission. He then offered the Ameer his sincere thanks for the hospitality and honour shown to the mission since they had set foot on Afghan soil. The Ameer seemed greatly to appreciate the sentiments expressed, and the durbar broke up. .

Two days after the grand durbar, the Envoy left Cabul for India, having successfully accomplished the object of his journey. Of his negotiations with the Ameer, no complete account can be given. They were conducted, it need hardly be said, in private; and only the general result is known. This, however, was altogether satisfactory. Abdur Rahman gave a definite promise that henceforth he would abstain from interference in Chitral, Bajaur, Swat, and the Afredi country; and he consented to the demarcation of a boundary line which would separate his dominions from other parts which the Indian Government desired to keep under its control, namely, the Kurram valley, Waziriland, the Gomul, and the district of Zhob. On the other hand, the Envoy, on behalf of the Indian Government, consented to the Ameer's retention of Asmar, and undertook, it is believed, that no opposition should be offered in the event of his desiring to establish

his authority over the people of Kafiristan. Moreover, he informed Abdur Rahman that the subsidy paid to him out of the Indian exchequer would be increased from twelve to sixteen lakhs of rupees (Rs. 160,000) a year.

It may also be assumed that Sir Mortimer Durand discussed with the Ameer the question of his rights and claims to a portion of the Pamirs. In a previous chapter particulars have been given of the agreement between the governments of England and Russia, by which certain districts on the Upper Oxus, at one time occupied by the Afghans, were handed over to Russia, while other districts, hitherto attached to Bokhara, were to be surrendered to the Ameer. There is no need to recur to the subject, unless it may be to suggest that Sir Mortimer Durand helped to reconcile Abdur Rahman to an exchange of territory which might otherwise have been exceedingly distasteful.

In a farewell speech delivered at Calcutta on January 23, 1894, the retiring Viceroy, the Marquis of Lansdowne, referred at some length to the success achieved by the Durand Mission.

“On our Western frontier (His Excellency said) there is a special reason for which we cannot afford to observe a policy of mere abstention as regards the border region. We are under a solemn obligation, in certain circumstances, to assist our ally, the Ameer of Afghanistan, in maintaining the integrity of his possessions. The pledges which we have given to him are, no doubt, carefully guarded and accompanied by indispensable reservations, but they are pledges which no British Government can ignore—pledges which may compel us in a certain event to meet an enemy beyond our frontier. In such an event

we should have to make use of the great natural avenues leading from British India towards Afghanistan, and we have consequently built a line of railway through the Bolan Pass, we have fortified Quetta as an advanced post, while, more lately still, the Gomul Pass has been opened, and our communications between Quetta and the mouth of the Gomul, through the Zhob Valley, have been considerably improved. Now, it is under these circumstances that there has grown up the idea of that which is conveniently described as a 'sphere of influence' adjoining the frontier, properly so-called, of the Indian Empire—a sphere, that is, within which we shall not attempt to administer the country ourselves, but within which we shall not allow any aggressions from outside . . .

"I think the Government of India may fairly take credit to itself for having, during the last two or three years, made some progress in establishing the limits of such a sphere of influence as I have described, and at no part of the frontier has that progress been more satisfactory than at the point where we are brought into contact with the dominions of our ally, the Ameer of Afghanistan. I venture to claim for the settlement recently effected by Sir Mortimer Durand—a settlement arrived at in the face of difficulties, the extent of which will not be understood until the history of these events comes to be written—a settlement which would, in my opinion, have been beyond our reach but for the admirable qualities of tact, patience, and sincerity which he displayed in so conspicuous a degree throughout an extremely delicate negotiation—qualities which won for him the confidence of His Highness—that it has done more to obviate the risk of future misunderstandings both with Afghanistan and with the intervening frontier tribes, and to prevent the recurrence of those 'ignoble little wars' to which I referred just now, than any number of successful expeditions or sanguinary successes over the warlike borderers, whom we have fought so often and with such small results."

The subsequent trouble in Waziriland, and the more recent disturbances in Chitral, the latter involving as they

did the despatch of an unusually large expedition to suppress the Bajaur chief, Umra Khan of Jandol, might seem to furnish a not altogether pleasing commentary on Lord Lansdowne's remarks ; but there is one point which must not be lost sight of. Had it not been for the settlement effected by Sir Mortimer Durand, the problems which the Indian Government has been compelled to face would have proved far more complicated. When the Waziris questioned our right to mark out the frontier of their territory, the Government had only the tribesmen to deal with ; and as the latter soon discovered that no help was forthcoming from Cabul, they quickly became amenable to the argument of irresistible force. So in regard to the revolution in Chitral and the aggressiveness of Umra Khan, our course was clear. The disturbed area was recognised as being within the British sphere of influence, and the only thing to be done was to restore order. There is every reason to hope that the result of the operations will be the establishment of British authority over all the country between the Baroghil Pass and Peshawur, and from Abdur Rahman's outpost at Asmar eastward to Kashmere. The heroic defence of the Chitral fort by Surgeon-Major Robertson and his gallant companions in arms, the splendid march of Colonel Kelly's force to the relief of the beleaguered garrison, and the skill and energy with which General Sir Robert Eow led his army into the innermost recesses of a region which may be described, in Mr. William Morris's words, as "a tossing world of stone," not only prove the magnificent capabilities of the army in India, but they will facilitate the pacification of a country which, until now, has defied

every effort to bring it within the range and reach of civilization. Hitherto these wild and rugged tracts have been known as Yaghistan, the "Land of the Unruly." The day is at last approaching when the designation will lose its meaning. Had the Indian Government failed in its attempt to come to an understanding with the Ameer Abdur Rahman, the settlement of Yaghistan might have been postponed for an indeterminate space of time.

Since Lord Elgin succeeded the Marquis of Lansdowne as Viceroy of India, steps have been taken to carry out the delimitation of the Anglo-Afghan frontier in accordance with the compact between the Ameer and Sir Mortimer Durand. A considerable portion of the work—the section, that is, from the Safed Koh, in the north, to Chaman, in the south—was completed by the beginning of April, 1895. The remaining section, including the line from Asmar towards Kafiristan, has proved a more difficult task; and the operations are at present (May, 1895) suspended.

CHAPTER X.

A RULER IN ISLAM.

"In order to preserve my authority, I took Justice in one hand and Equity in the other; and by the light of these twain I kept the palace of Royalty illumined."

MEMOIRS OF TAMURLANE.

The Ameer as a bureaucrat—Afghan Justice—The Cabul Police Code—The Army—A grand review—A Frenchman in Cabul—Brigadier Abdul Subhan—Mr. O'Meara—Court dentistry—Sir Salter Pyne—The Ameer's workshops—Englishwomen in Afghanistan—Dr. Hamilton—Church and State—Funerals in Cabul—The duties of a Mahomedan—Jehad—The Ameer's family—Shahzadas Habibulla and Nasrulla—The Queen of the Harem—Conclusion.

A SOLDIER above all things in his youth, Abdur Rahman, after his accession in middle age to a throne, became a vigorous bureaucrat. He applied himself to the task of re-organizing the administration with perfervid industry. The English officers of the Boundary Commission, when they passed through Cabul, were made acquainted with his system. The various secretaries — if Mirza may be thus rendered — used formerly to work each in his own house, and thus it took a week or ten days to get anything done. The Ameer accordingly erected a block of Government offices, so that he could have all the officials at headquarters under one roof, and himself superintend their labours. There

was a strict routine for every day of the week. Monday would be devoted to the affairs of Herat, Kandahar, and the outlying provinces; Thursday, to correspondence with India; on Tuesday there would be a military levee; on Wednesday and Saturday the Ameer sat as a high court of justice and appeal, when the meanest of his subjects might come before him with a petition; Friday was a day of rest; Sunday devoted to the Ameer's private affairs. M. Darmsteter, on whose authority this programme is given,* describes Abdur Rahman as delivering justice with a hand on his sword-hilt. A brigand brought before him ran a fair chance of being sentenced to immediate execution. Offences against property were punished with severity. If a traveller lost anything, passers-by were forbidden to pick it up, even to return it to the owner, on pain of having their hands cut off. Doubtless in distant ages it will be recorded, as it was of Sher Shah, the Afghan, that in the reign of Abdur Rahman a woman might travel in safety with all her gold ornaments, and that even the weakest feared not a Rustam. A grim sort of humour not infrequently inspired the Ameer's judgments. Once a man was brought before him who declared, in a state of unrepressed excitement, that the Russians were advancing to invade Afghanistan. "The Russians are coming?" said the Ameer; "then you shall be taken to the summit of yonder tower, and shall have no food till you see them arrive." M. Darmsteter did not say whether this heroic cure for a fit of Russophobia proved effectual, but later writers have invented a sequel.

* According to Khondamir, there was a very similar division of the week at the court of the Indian Moghul, Humayun (died 1556).

In the city of Cabul the Ameer did not give the enemies of law and order a chance. The chief magistrate became an object of public execration, but of wholesome dread. His spies were believed to be everywhere; and hardly a word could be spoken without it coming to the ears of the Naib Kotwal, and through him to the Ameer himself. The Cabul police code is curiously elaborate. It forbids evil speaking in the streets. The vituperation of a Saiyyid (a reputed descendant of the prophet Mahomed through his daughter Fatima), of a man of learning, or of a civic elder, renders the offender liable to twenty lashes and a fine of fifty rupees. If the bad language is only aimed at a common person, ten lashes with a fine of ten rupees is the penalty provided. Punishments are also laid down for dishonest tradesmen who cheat with false weights, or adulterate the food they sell; for the indecorous bather, the gambler, the purveyor of charms; as also for persons who misbehave in the mosque, forget to say their prayers, or to observe a fast day. The man who kisses anybody else's wife is to have thirty lashes and be sent to prison for further inquiry. Very careful directions are laid down in regard to the administration of the lash. The instrument itself, the regulations say, is to be of a particular pattern, made of three strips of camel, cow, and sheep skin, its handle of olive wood. The stripes are to be laid on with pious ejaculations; and the police officer (*mutahsib*) is exhorted to feel, if he cannot show, sorrow for the wrong doer, "since Mahomedans are all of one flesh." He should guard himself against vain glory, the prompting of the devil. Special cognisance is to be taken of offences

against religion. If any free-thinking Cabuli omits to bend his head with due reverence at the hour of prayer, the police officer should remonstrate with him gently at first; and if mild appeals failed, should use hard terms such as "O foolish, O stupid one." In the event of continued obstinacy, the stick is to be applied; and as a last resource, the Ameer is to be informed, who "will do the rest." The manner in which the law is administered in Afghanistan would perhaps seem barbarous to Europeans, but we must not forget that Orientals look at these things in quite a different light. It is related of Alptegin, that when he was in camp near Ghuzni, some of his servants stole fowls from the villagers. The Sultan ordered holes to be bored through their ears, and the fowls to be suspended therefrom by strings. The culprits were then marched through the ranks, the birds all the time tearing at their faces till blood poured in streams. "The news of this act of justice," says the Mahomedan chronicler, "having reached the ears of the people, they agreed that so just a man was worthy to be their ruler." That is how it strikes an Afghan.

Army reform, to which Abdur Rahman from the first paid keen attention, has proceeded on lines laid down by the Ameer Shere Ali, who, though he spoke contemptuously of our Sepoys, was ready enough to imitate our military methods. In the old days the Afghan army, in time of foreign invasion, was the nation in arms. Every male was born a soldier, and would be attached to this or that tribal chief from the day he could hold a musket. On the outbreak of war each chief with his contingent would hasten to the ruler's camp, whither

also would flock as many of the townsfolk as wished to join in the fight, and a variable number of free lances. The troops received no pay, and lived by plunder. For the most part they were horsemen, armed with firelock or carbine, pistols, and sword or lance, and a target a foot-and-a-half across. In fact, the Afghan army, as General Ferrier observed, was a miscellaneous and undisciplined rabble. "The inaptitude of the nation," the same authority wrote, "for military organization arises from their spirit of impatience under the slightest degree of restraint; and to this feeling their religion contributes, for they are taught to believe that having proclaimed a *Jehad* (holy war) the numerous battalions of the infidels are powerless against a handful of the Ghazis, or soldiers of the faith."

But Ameer Shere Ali, after his visit to Lord Mayo, resolved to have a regular army. Batteries of field and mountain artillery, and regiments of horse and foot, were raised; and the English field-exercise books for the three branches of the service were translated into Persian and Pushtu. Shere Ali also started foundries for cannon and small-arm factories. His military reforms, however, broke down at the first test. After the defeat of his armies at the Peiwar Kotal and Ali Musjid, the new discipline and the new organization went to pieces; and at Charasiab and Ahmad Khel the enemy was an undisciplined mass of armed men fighting pretty well as they pleased under the tribal leaders. And since this style suited the national temperament, they fought with courage and determination.

Abdur Rahman's talent for organization, even more

perhaps than his wish to have an effective army, led him to recur to the regular system which his uncle Shere Ali had introduced. Divisions, brigades, regiments, batteries, troops, and companies, were accordingly called into existence, and a scale of military pay was elaborated, in which a general of the first class was to receive 600 Cabuli rupees monthly, a brigadier two hundred and fifty, a colonel of cavalry two hundred, a major one hundred and twenty, captains of cavalry eighty, of infantry and artillery thirty, and so on down to corporals of foot, who received ten rupees. The rank and file was to be paid partly in kind, a trooper getting sixteen rupees in cash and four rupees worth of grain, a private of foot five rupees in cash and three rupees worth of grain. Every regiment was to have a *mulla* as chaplain, a physician (*hakim*), and surgeon (*yarrak*). As a rule the officers of the Ameer's army are men of family appointed direct, promotion from the ranks being rare. Besides the regular army there is a large body of irregular levies, consisting of the mounted retainers of the tribal chiefs, and militia infantry (*khassadars*), who receive pay at the rate of five or six rupees a month. Both with the regulars and the levies, pay is often months in arrears, and forced contributions are very generally exacted from the civil population. As regards numbers it was reported in 1882 that the Ameer's army in Cabul, Kandahar, Herat, and beyond the Hindu Kush consisted of 1,600 artillery, 9,750 cavalry, 30,890 infantry, 7,500 irregular cavalry, and 9,000 *khassadars*, a total of 58,740 men, with 182 guns. It was weak in artillery, there being few trained gunners. The cannon were

partly of English, partly of native manufacture, and were of various ages and patterns. The infantry rifles of the regulars, also, were of different make and pattern, including all sorts, from the old two-grooved Brunswick to the Martini-Henry. The *khassadars* were largely armed with matchlocks. The cavalry were armed with swords and carbines, and three regiments of lancers were being raised.

The English officers of the Boundary Commission were present at a review of the troops at Cabul in 1886. A force of 2,800 infantry, 800 cavalry, and 32 guns went on parade. Major Yate says that the men looked as if they only needed good leaders to be fit for a campaign, but the company commanders were scarcely up to the mark, and the lack of efficient officers was most likely the weak point in the Afghan army. This, being the opinion of a military man, is better worth noting than the unstinted praise which has been bestowed on the Afghan troops of the new model by civilian writers.

Although Abdur Rahman has never shown the least inclination to acquiesce in the appointment of a British Envoy to reside permanently at his capital or elsewhere in the kingdom, he has gladly availed himself of the services of Europeans who would be content to recognise him as their master and employer. His first experiment in this direction was not altogether a promising one. A French electrical engineer, a M. Jerome, was engaged by the Ameer; and this gentleman, in consultation with a Mahomedan from Kashmere, who was also in the Ameer's service, elaborated a scheme for the establishment of a manufactory of arms and ammunition at

Cabul. The Kashmeri referred to is a personage who deserves a few words to himself. Abdul Subhan Khan was formerly employed in the Government of India's Survey Department; and in his capacity as a surveyor, he accompanied the Forsyth Mission to Yarkund. He was also employed on survey work during the Afghan War. He then resigned and took service with Abdur Rahman, over whom he is said to have exercised from time to time a sinister influence. For some reason best known to himself, Abdul Subhan, who presently received the title of brigadier, developed a strong antipathy towards the English; and his alliance with the French engineer took a form which might ultimately have led to serious embarrassments. M. Jerome made it a condition that no Englishman was to be employed in his factories, and he is believed to have dilated, during the negotiations, on the usefulness of his project in the event of a quarrel between the Ameer and the British Government. But nothing came of it. M. Jerome was sent to India to make the necessary purchases; and after that, nothing more was heard of him except that a good deal of expensive machinery had been ordered which no one at Cabul knew how to work. It was in these circumstances and by the advice of Abdul Subhan that Mr. (now Sir Salter) Pyne was engaged by the Ameer.

But before referring to Sir S. Pyne's experiences, mention may be made of Mr. O'Meara's visit to Cabul in 1887. This gentleman is a surgeon dentist, and was invited to Cabul in his professional capacity. It was considered at the time rather a perilous adventure, yet Mr. O'Meara returned in safety, and seems to have

greatly enjoyed the trip. He found the Ameer immersed in the cares of state, receiving and answering despatches all day long. The operation of extracting teeth and putting in new ones was performed in open durbar, to the edification of all present. Mr. O'Meara was much struck with the Ameer's accessibility to his subjects. As he rode into Cabul from his summer residence at Pughman, Abdur Rahman would stop his horse to take a petition from the hand of the meanest wayfarer, even from an old woman by the roadside. Forty years before, the American adventurer, Mr. Harlan, saw Dost Mahomed doing exactly the same thing. Mr. O'Meara also tells us that Abdur Rahman complained in durbar of the difficulty there was in getting in the revenue. "One quarter of the money," said the Ameer, "which is rightly mine, I get without trouble; one quarter I get by fighting for it; one quarter I do not get at all; and those who ought to pay the fourth quarter do not know into whose hands they should place it." The set of artificial teeth which Mr. O'Meara made for his illustrious patient have since helped to impress untutored Afghans with a becoming sense of their ruler's power. Dr. Gray, who was afterwards in medical attendance on Abdur Rahman, relates that when the Ameer held his court at Mazar-i-Sharif he would sometimes remove his teeth in the presence of the lieges, clean and polish them with a brush, and solemnly put them back again, while all who beheld this marvel, more especially if they happened to be simple villagers or uncouth hill men, would look aghast at the king who could thus take himself to pieces before their very eyes.

To return to Sir Salter Pyne. There is no denying the fact that this shrewd and enterprising Yorkshireman did wonders in Cabul. When the Ameer Shere Ali came to India, in 1869, and was shown a photographic camera, he exclaimed, "Truly all nations are advancing in the arts of peace and civilization; it is only we Afghans who remain the ignorant asses we have ever been!" Abdur Rahman, going a step further, resolved to borrow some of the devices of Western civilization, and in Mr. Pyne he found the very man for his purpose, a trained mechanic, and one who could make the most of scanty resources and intractable instruments. Going to Cabul first in 1886, Mr. Pyne lost no time in starting a workshop, and he relates that after the lapse of three months the Ameer, when he came to inspect the building, delivered himself of the following sentences of wisdom: "This is one of the happiest days of my life. I have to-day seen the foundation of what is to be a great event for Afghanistan. Before these workshops can be finished there are three things needed—God's help, my money, your work. Your work and God's help without my money are of no avail. God's help and my money without your help, and your work and my money without God's help, are equally in vain. I will find the money, you will do the work, and we must hope for God's help."

Before very long, workshops, sawmills, steam hammers, lathes, and machines for making a variety of articles, from breech-loading cannon to soap and candles, were in full operation. Particular attention was given to the fashioning of arms and the supply of munitions of war. In 1893

fifty muzzle and breech-loading field-guns were cast and drilled at the Cabul factory, and a large number of Martini-Henry rifles were turned out. Cartridges were also being filled at the rate of three thousand daily. Opinions differ, indeed, as to the quality of the output. By some it is said that the Cabul guns and rifles are first-rate weapons, but, according to a less favourable report, portions of the mechanism are made by hand, and are imperfect. Soap boiling at Cabul does not seem to have been altogether a success, which possibly does not greatly distress a population accustomed to go unwashed ; but the candles are said to be of excellent quality, though the statement that the Afghans found them good eating is unworthy of credence. Under Sir Salter Pyne's auspices the electric light was installed in the workshops, and a short line of narrow-gauge railway was laid down.

Several British workmen were employed at one time or another under Sir S. Pyne, and the Ameer also engaged the services of an English physician, Dr. John Gray ; of a geologist, Captain Griesbach,* of a mining engineer, Mr. Arthur Collins, F.G.S., and of a master of the stud. English women, too, have resided in Cabul, safe under the powerful protection of Abdur Rahman. Such a thing had not happened for more than fifty years. During the British occupation of Afghanistan, in 1841, several of our officers had their wives and families with them in the cantonment. What befell them one may read in the pages of Kaye and other historians of the first Afghan war, as also in Lady Sale's journal ; how some perished during the first night of the disastrous

* Now Director of the Indian Geological Survey.

retreat ; how others struggled on, riding on horseback or in camel carts through fearful scenes of carnage, trying too often in vain to keep their children with them ; how at length Akbar Khan offered to take charge of the English women and children, promising to convey them in safety to Peshawur ; how ten or a dozen officers' wives and widows were entrusted to the chivalrous chief, and were thus saved from the destruction which overtook the retreating force. They were treated on the whole with kindness and consideration, and after eight months of captivity they, and the Englishmen with them, escaped from their prison, and made their way to the camp of the avenging army at Cabul. But the anguish and anxiety they had endured will ever be counted among the most terrible memories of that evil time. More grievous, indeed, and more bitter was the tribulation in store for Englishwomen in India ; and some day we may forget what Lady Sale and those with her had to endure in 1842. But the time has not yet come when it will be possible for most of us to hear with indifference that our countrywomen have incurred the peril that must still encompass a handful of Europeans whom duty or curiosity or profit takes to the cities of the Afghans. It is a mistake to let any Englishwoman go to Cabul on any pretext until a British Resident is posted there, and a railway, or at the least a line of telegraph, connects the place with India. The few Englishmen who take service under the Amœr are rightly informed of the risk they run ; and, after all, that risk is not greater than the danger incurred by a coal-miner, or by a railway passenger in England on a Bank Holiday. But the presence of English women

in Cabul is a needless aggravation of the peril. In the event of an outbreak, the escape of the little European colony would be hampered and impeded; while, if the worst happened, the Indian Government would have to share the blame, and might be compelled, by an outburst of public indignation at home, to prepare measures of rescue or vengeance leading to endless complications.

It is interesting, however, to have an English lady's impressions of life at Cabul. Doctor Lillias Hamilton, who was formerly in medical charge of the Lady Dufferin Hospital at Calcutta, spent several months at the Ameer's capital, and attended him during his illness in 1894 with a skill that would have done credit to Jalunis or Bocrat.* She lived in a small house in the precincts of the palace, with a military guard always on duty outside. "As regards living alone," she wrote, "if you are once under the Ameer's protection, it does not much matter where you are or who is with you; it seems to me you are equally safe anywhere. It is wonderful, as you pass through that wild country of wild men, how he is able to keep his people in check at all; but he does somehow." Besides Miss Hamilton—"see *doctor libentius audit*"—Mrs. Clemence, whose husband was in charge of the Ameer's stud, and Mrs. Walter went to Cabul in April, 1894, and spent the summer there. Mrs. Clemence had her child, a little boy of two, and his nurse with her. On their arrival, Abdur

* Galen and Hippocrates, from whom Afghan physicians profess to have learnt the science of healing. The Afghans generally are ready to take medicine from any Englishman, even when in good health. "I am not ill," an Afghan will say, "but I may become so," and he will swallow the pills on the spot.

Rahman gave them a carriage and an escort of four troopers.

"One afternoon," Mrs. Clemence relates, "my husband and I went out for a ride, and a *sowar* (trooper) rode behind us. While we were riding, night came on, and he lost us, so we went on alone, and even though we had to pass through the *bazaar* coming back, at about ten o'clock at night, the idea of being without an escort did not trouble us at all. As we went along people would salaam to us and say, 'Mánda nabáshi.'"^{*}

Mrs. Walter described "the Queen"—the Ameer's principal wife—as "exceedingly nice," and Prince Habi-bulla as remarkably polite and kind. Mrs. Clemence declares that the Queen is "most charming, and a fine handsome woman." An Oriental would say, "Her beauty outshines the sun, her figure shames the cypress." When they had an audience of the Ameer, the infant Clemence ran straight to Abdur Rahman and held up his face to be kissed. "His Highness," Mrs. Clemence remarks, "seemed quite pleased to see the little fellow run about the room and play with everything that attracted his notice."†

"I have heard," says the Emperor Tamurlane in his *Memoirs*, "that Church and State are twins, and that every sovereignty which is not supported by religion soon loses all prestige, and its orders are not obeyed; every person, worthy or unworthy, presuming to meddle therewith." The Ameer, Abdur Rahman, seems to be of the same opinion. Like all Afghans in the limited sense of

* The Persian equivalent of the Pushtu salutation familiar to every frontier officer, "*Starai ma sha*,"—"May you not be tired."

† Sir Salter Pyne is the only Englishman left in Cabul now (May, 1895), and the English ladies have also left.

the term, he is a Mahomedan of the Suni sect, and has shown his orthodoxy in many ways. It was partly due to the fact of their being Shiah, that the Hazaras were called to order. For the same reason the Kizzilbashis of Cabul, a people of Persian origin, have been rather harshly treated during Abdur Rahman's reign. As a champion of Islam he has long contemplated the conquest of Kafiristan, and the forcible conversion of the idolaters who inhabit this inaccessible and little known region. As the reader may perhaps be aware, there has lately sprung up in one of our great seaports a little community of English Mahomedans. These misguided people addressed a letter to the ruler of Afghanistan, and in due course received a reply, in which Abdur Rahman wrote as follows :

"God be praised that, according to His eternal will, as the holy Koran says, 'Truth is come, falsehood is vanished, and shall return no more'; and the perfect Unitarian religion of the seal of the apostles, and the Alpha and Omega of the prophets, is daily progressing throughout the face of the globe, while all polytheistic, false systems are getting weak and crushed. . . . We were extremely delighted to hear about your mosque and school, and grateful for the prayers offered for us in our absence in that mosque. There is a well-known tradition of our Prophet having said, 'The prayer for the absent one is most speedily accepted.' We regard your prayers for us as an unexpected boon, and are grateful for them. It is our conviction that the King of kings appointed us, as well as all the other rulers of the Moslem world, to be the guardians of the faith, and to protect, sympathise with, and patronize Mahomedans; therefore we shall do what we can for you whenever you need our assistance. We shall ever be pleased to hear about you and your congregation of new Moslems, about their welfare, and the progress of Islam."

The letter reflects credit on the writer, but the less said of the circumstances that evoked it the better. It is humiliating to think that, in Christian England, men of our own race can turn renegades, and pride themselves on their apostacy.

Abdur Rahman has made frequent endeavours to inspire his own subjects with a proper sense of their duties as good Mahomedans. His police regulations, in which certain crimes of irreverence are penalized, have already been quoted. In another State paper, "men of sense and understanding," are exhorted to eschew vain expenditure on funerals. When a rich man dies in Cabul, *mullas* are employed for several days to read prayers over his grave; and the Ameer may have thought that too much money was spent in this way. At any rate he issued a proclamation with a text from the Koran, which says, "Waste not thy substance profusely; for the prodigals are the brethren of devils."* "If a man," said the Ameer, "puts not his trust in the clear injunction of the Koran, he shall be turned out of the presence of God, and he shall deserve the fire of hell, from which may God preserve us."

But the most remarkable document of a theological kind to which Abdur Rahman gave his *imprimatur*, is the pamphlet printed by his order, if not compiled by his own hand, in December, 1887, and intended to set forth the duty of obedience to kings. A number of translated extracts from this work were given by the Allahabad *Pioneer*, and they show how Abdur Rahman posed, in the eyes of his subjects, as the enemy of

* SALE'S *Al Coran*, chapter xvii.

unbelievers. The materials for the pamphlet are said to have been collected by a committee of thirteen *mullas*, and to have been edited by the Ameer himself. The first chapter deals with *Jehad*, or religious war, and says :

“May it not remain hidden from all believers and followers of the prophet that the gracious God has imposed *Jehad* on all believers as a weighty debt and bounden duty ; and whoever shall deny this shall become a Kafir, since this has been established and made clear by the Koran and the traditions of the Prophet.”

Quoting a text from the Koran the pamphlet says :

“The object of this is that you should fight with the Kafirs who are near you, and it is necessary that the enemies of religion should be made to endure roughness in conversation. Before and during the fight you should show endurance and bravery. Fear not death, and repress your enemies thoroughly. And know that God is with the pious, to whom He renders help and gives victory. . . . It is necessary that all believers should join in *Jehad*, and not sit like women in their houses, but like brave men they should become *Ghazis* in the cause of God, and they should not fear death.”

The second chapter treats of the honours and rewards in heaven that await the warriors of God. Then follows a veritable call to arms :

“Therefore it is necessary that true and devout Mahomedans, whether foot soldiers or horsemen, should hasten to the frontiers, which they should guard and protect, and they should prevent the wicked Kafirs (unbelievers) from entering the territory of Islam. During the encounter they should fight bravely against them, and not allow these honourable rewards to slip out of their hands. They should make themselves worthy of Paradise, and of its beautiful and bejewelled *houris*. They should use their best endeavours to protect their religion. Therefore do we notify to all the

inhabitants, whether high or low, of all the cities, towns, and villages that insomuch as it is incumbent, in accordance with God's word, on all the people to render aid to the religion of Islam, in the same way as prayers and fasts are incumbent on them, so also in *Jehad* it is absolutely binding on all believers, since now there is a general rising and call to arms, and the frontiers of the territory of Islam have fallen into the possession of tyrants, that by the grace of God they should do their utmost to support the religion of Mahomed and to uphold its supremacy, and go forth to war, and like tigers meet the host of unbelievers on the field of battle, and with their swords mow down that pernicious body and use their heads as balls."

After another eloquent description of the joys of Paradise, reserved for those who join in *Jehad*, the Ameer's pamphlet says :

"Then, O ye believers, why do you not strive to attain Paradise, a high position in the next world, and pleasure and the grace of God, so that in this world you may gain honour and respect and exceeding happiness in Paradise, where a man of the lowest rank shall receive two-and-seventy *houris* with two-and-eighty thousand attendants? Each abider in Paradise shall have seventy couches for his repose, and the smallest pearl that adorns the diadems of the *houris* shall be of such brilliance and lustre as to illumine all space between east and west. And were one of the *houris* to visit this world, it would be lit with resplendent light, and the whole space between earth and sky would be filled with delicious perfume. The robe that covers these *houris* is more precious than this earth and all therein."

This is not the only inflammatory pamphlet that was issued by the Ameer during 1887.* Their obvious design was to rouse the people of Afghanistan to join in

See Appendix II.

a holy war against the infidel. In some places Russia was mentioned; but by implication, at any rate, the English were also included in the category of Kafirs or unbelievers. It was also reported that letters speaking of the English, in terms of disparagement were addressed to the heads of tribes.

In conclusion something must be said of the Ameer's wives and children. Before the date of his exile, if not during the lifetime of Dost Mahomed, Abdur Rahman was married to a daughter of the Sirdar Fakir Mahomed Khan, who was the Dost's nephew. This lady bore him a son, Abdulla Khan; but mother and child fell into Shere Ali's hands, when Abdur Rahman was driven from the country, and were imprisoned at Kandahar along with the exile's mother. Of the grievous suffering and cruel wrongs these high-born ladies underwent during their long captivity it were better not to speak. Shortly after the occupation of Kandahar, on January 8, 1879, by the column under General Donald Stewart,* the young Sirdar Abdulla Jan, then a youth about nineteen years old, came to pay his respects to Major St. John. His mother and grandmother were in a sad state of poverty, and had sold the few ornaments that were left them in order to buy clothes for the boy, so that he might appear before the Political Agent decently clad. "Who knows," wrote a correspondent at the time, "what revenges the whirligig of time may bring about for this wretched great-grandson of Dost Mahomed?" It may be supposed that steps were taken to relieve the necessities of the family. Some little time afterwards,

Now Field-Marshal Sir Donald Stewart.



SHAHZADA NASRULLA KHAN.

Abdulla Khan's mother became seriously ill, but was cured by the English doctors. Abdulla Khan, however, did not live to see his father on the throne, but died during the British occupation of Kandahar. His mother, apparently, is still alive in Cabul.

The Ameer's next wife was a daughter of Jehandar Shah, once Mir of Badakshan. This lady, whom Abdur Rahman married either before or during his exile, has no children; but her handmaid, a slave girl from Wakhan—known as Gulrez, on account of her pink and white beauty—found favour in her master's eye, and bore him four sons, of whom Habibulla and Nasrulla are still living. Habibulla was born at Samarcand about 1872, his brother Nasrulla being three years younger. The other two children by Gulrez, whom the Ameer afterwards married, were twins, who died when the family was journeying to Cabul in 1881. In the spring of that year the French traveller, M. Bonvalot, was allowed to accompany the party as far as the Oxus, and saw something of the two elder boys, whose portrait he gives, reproduced from a photograph taken at Tashkend.

But the Queen of the Ameer's harem is the Bibi Halima, whom he married shortly after his accession. Her mother, the Bibi Shams-i-Jehan, the daughter of Dost Mahomed, was Abdur Rahman's most trusted friend and adviser. The father of the Bibi Halima was Mir Atikulla Khan, son of the Mir Waiz of Cabul. She herself is said to be a confirmed Russophobe, and to entertain a profound dislike for everything that reminds her of Abdur Rahman's former connection with people beyond the Oxus. A story is told illustrative of this trait in the

Queen's character which, if not literally true, was at any rate credited by the people of Cabul. A certain Mulla Yakoob, said to have been a renegade Russian, and formerly a colonel in the Czar's army, came to the city in the early part of 1881, and rumour had it that he brought messages from the Governor-General at Tashkend. The Bibi Halima remarked that such men were not to be trusted. "It is our duty," she said to the Ameer, "to prove our absolute fidelity and abiding friendship for the English, who raised us from poverty to the throne of Afghanistan." The story goes that the Ameer was wroth, and recommended his wife to mind her own business, telling her, moreover, that the English owed more to him than he owed them, seeing that by accepting the task of ruling over the country he had helped them out of a difficulty.

Dr. Gray, when he was in Cabul, prescribed for the Queen of the Harem. She stretched out her hand through a curtain that he might feel her pulse. She seems to have been quite ready to talk with the English *hakim*, and showed him her photograph album, and her hats and bonnets, which were of English make. One of her hats was of sealskin, trimmed with a squirrel's tail and artificial flowers. Her medical adviser suggested that the flowers were in bad taste, and Her Highness took the hint in good part, tearing them out with her own hands, which the doctor assures us were very fair, as an Afghan lady's should be.

In July, 1881, the Bibi Halima gave birth to a son named Shams-ud-din Khan, who, however, died in September, 1883. On September 15th, 1889, a second

son, Mahomed Omar Khan, was born. This prince is still living, and his prospects are often the subject of much curious speculation. Being the son of a lady of the royal tribe, his claims to the succession are stronger, in one way, than those which can be urged on behalf of his elder half-brother, the Shahzada Habibulla. Abdur Rahman, however, is probably in no haste to make a final choice. An unalterable decision might lead to a storm in the harem.

It may be that the reader by this time has formed his own opinion of the character of Abdur Rahman. That the Ameer has shown himself to be a ruler of unusual ability cannot be denied. Sir West Ridgeway, who had good opportunities of judging, described him as one of the few great men living. He is certainly a successful one, yet how has success been achieved? His domestic policy, says Sir Lepel Griffin, has been harsh, rapacious, and cruel. He ruled, said Sir West Ridgeway, with a rod of iron. "He is a hard and cruel ruler, but he rules a hard and cruel people." The type is common enough in Oriental history, and many kings since Rehoboam have lashed their subjects with the whip of scorpions. Afghan chiefs, John Lawrence said, are not to be judged by the principles of Christendom. Abdu Rahman has succeeded in great undertakings. He has kept faith with his friends, and he has crushed his enemies. He has ruled over the Afghans for the space of fifteen years; and it will be to the benefit of his subjects if his reign is prolonged.

APPENDIX I.

ABDUR RAHMAN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

IT was reported some little time ago that the Ameer Abdur Rahman was engaged in writing his autobiography. The first chapter, it was said, contained details about his family, his birth, and boyhood; the second gives an account of the death of his father, Afzul Khan, and the history of Afghanistan down to the flight of his uncle, Azim Khan; the third describes Abdur Rahman's flight to Russia; the fourth his exile in Russian-Turkestan; the fifth treats of the death of Shere Ali, and the sixth of Abdur Rahman's return to Afghanistan; in the seventh the brief reign of Yakoob Khan is narrated; the eighth describes the author's visit to India and the Rawulpindi durbar; in the ninth the Ameer tells the story of Is'hak Khan's rebellion. Further chapters relate to the revolts of the Ghilzais and Hazaras, the capture of Asmar, and the Durand Mission. Portions of this, or possibly of an earlier autobiography, were given by the Ameer to the Governor-General of Russian-Turkestan during the time of his exile, and were translated into Russian. They were subsequently re-translated into English by Colonel Gowan, of the Indian Intelligence Branch; and as they are not easily accessible to the general reader, they are given below *in extenso*:

"Dost Mahomed himself died thirteen days after he had captured Herat. Whilst he was yet at Herat, the

Ameer Shere Ali conceived the evil intention of seizing all his brothers and casting them into prison. The Ameer Mahomed Azim Khan and Sirdar Mahomed Aslam Khan fled from Herat to those towns which had been conferred on them by Dost Mahomed. Shere Ali then left his son, Yakoob Khan, at Herat, and returned to Cabul. My father, the Ameer Afzul Khan, who had been for eleven years ruler of Balkh, received a letter from his brothers, the Ameer Azim Khan and Sirdar Aslam Khan, to say that the rest of his brothers had raised the standard of revolt, but that as he was the eldest brother they would obey him—that he could put an end to the enmity which had arisen amongst all the brothers, so that there should no longer be even the shadow of disagreement. Mahomed Afzul thereupon wrote a letter and despatched it to his brothers, in which he said that if they anywhere began to make disturbances he would most certainly punish them, wherever they might be. My uncles listened to the words of my father, and remained quiet at the places which had been conferred upon them. When, however, communication with Balkh became interrupted on account of the heavy falls of snow in the mountains, Shere Ali marched his troops against my uncles and deprived them of their possessions.

“In the spring of 1863, when the road between Cabul and Balkh became clear of snow, Shere Ali marched against my father. My father, at the head of 20,000 men, advanced to meet him, and awaited his arrival on the mountain of Baj-Gakh, which marks the boundary of Balkh territory. Shere Ali approached, however, from another direction. A fight took place, in which the losses on both sides amounted to between 2000 and 3000 men. The engagement lasted till the time of the evening prayer, when both forces drew off to their respective camps. In the course of two or three days the Ameer Shere Ali Khan sent out from his camp white-bearded old men bearing the Koran, and the conditions under which Dost Mahomed had made Balkh over to my father Afzul Khan, and he sent at the same time a letter

in which it was stated that if he, the writer, should raise the people against his brothers, then might the Koran be against him, and might evil prayers be offered up throughout the world against him. Afzul Khan then had an interview with Shere Ali, after which he directed his troops to return to Balkh, telling them he was going to remain two or three days with his brother. After two days the Ameer Shere Ali Khan told my father that he would take his troops to Cabul by the Guri route, *i.e.*, through my father's territory, because, as he said, the Hazara road was without supplies of forage, whilst along the Guri road there was forage enough for an army. My father, seeing the justice of the reason given, replied, 'Very good, you can go that way.' Accordingly the Ameer Shere Ali, accompanied by my father, marched his troops towards the town of Aibak.

"At Aibak, Shere Ali Khan conceived the notion of performing a pilgrimage to Ali's tomb, and he therefore set out for Tashkurgan. From here, accompanied by my father, he paid his respects at the burial-place of the named saint, staying there the whole of one night. The party then returned, my father going alone, as Shere Ali's guest, to Tashkurgan, whence he was to have returned home. When however they arrived at Tashkurgan, Shere Ali forgot his oaths on the Koran, and broke the terms of the treaty of peace, for he thrust my father into prison. At the time I was at Takhtapul, where is the residence of the ruler of Balkh. Here the news reached me of my father's incarceration. I at once collected a force with the object of destroying Shere Ali. At this time a letter reached me purporting to be from my father. It said that if I was his son I was, with trust in God, to quit Balkh in any direction. The Koran on which Shere Ali had sworn was also sent to me. Agreeably to what I thought was my father's order, as the road into Afghanistan was closed to me, I swam across the Amu-Daria, and turned my head towards Bokhara.

"In the spring of 1864 the Ameer Shere Ali Khan, appointed Futtah Mahomed Khan Governor of Balkh,

whilst he himself quieted the country in the space of three or four months. Then, after leaving an army 'at Balkh, he set out for Cabul, taking away my father and his family as prisoners.

"Winter at Cabul was by this time at an end. In the spring Shere Ali, with my father, Sirdar Shah Newaz Khan, Iskandar Khan, and Mahomed Omar Khan, who were also prisoners, moved towards Kandahar against Sirdar Mahomed Khan, who was Shere Ali's cousin.

"Shere Ali left his son, Mahomed Ibrahim Khan, as Governor of Cabul. A fight took place close to Kelat-i-Ghilzai, during which the loss was great on both sides. Sirdar Mahomed Amin Khan and Sirdar Mahomed Ali Khan, Shere Ali's son, were amongst the slain. As therefore Mahomed Amin, the Governor of Kandahar, had been killed, all his possessions passed into the hands of Shere Ali. I, who had during a period of eleven months reposed trust in God, left Bokhara with 200 horsemen, and proceeded along the Shirabad road, coming out at the town of Akcha, which had been bestowed on my uncle, Faiz Mahomed Khan, by my father. After consulting my uncle I went to Balkh, from which, by the favour of the Most High, Futteh Mahomed Khan, the ruler, fled to Guri. After setting up here my own administration, I sent for Faiz Mahomed from Akcha, and, leaving him at Takhtapul, I marched with 12,000 men to Guri. When I drew near to this town, Futteh Mahomed fled thence towards Bokhara. Having set up my own administration at Guri, I wrote conciliatory letters to important personages at Cabul, and then, with God's protection, turned my own face in the same direction. Shere Ali, on hearing of all these occurrences, despatched to his son at Cabul his whole army, with its artillery and commanders.

"As soon as I approached Cabul the important personages of the city came out to pay their respects to me, and I laid siege to the place. The investment of the city had lasted ten days when Ibrahim Khan, Shere Ali's son, came out and

surrendered the place to me. This occurred during the winter of 1865-66. I sent Ibrahim Khan to his father. As soon as he reached Kandahar, Shere Ali, with my father and Shah Newaz Khan, Iskandar Khan, and Omar Khan, who were all prisoners together, set out for Cabul. When I heard of their coming, I took my troops four marches beyond the city to meet them, leaving my uncle in charge of Cabul. A fight took place at Saidabad, which lies between Ghuzni and Cabul. The mercy of God was so great that Shere Ali was defeated, and my father and his fellow prisoners, who were in charge of a guard of 200 men, having heard at Ghuzni of my victory, escaped. This was in the spring of 1866. Shere Ali fled back to Kandahar. I brought my father to Cabul, where I placed him on the throne of the Ameers. News then reached us that Shere Ali Khan was collecting a large army, equipped with about twenty guns, and was making every preparation for the carrying on of the war. At the same time Shere Ali was constantly sending letters to the magnates of Cabul. Having duly considered the matter, I, in company with my uncle, Mahomed Azim, marched towards Kandahar.

Shere Ali engaged in a battle with us near Kelat-i-Ghilzai. Prior to this I had made over to Iskandar Khan 200 horsemen, letters, and some Hazaras, in the full assurance that he would march on Herat, according to his own expressed wishes. But when half-way there, he fled to Shere Ali at Kandahar, and, having come to terms with him, took part against me in the fight near Kelat-i-Ghilzai. God being on my side, Shere Ali was again defeated, and my troops occupied Kandahar in the autumn of 1866. Shere Ali now fled to Herat. My troops remained at Kandahar for two or three months, during which time Shere Ali sent an envoy from Herat to Faiz Mahomed at Balkh. He also made much of him, holding out great hopes, and even going so far as to conclude a treaty with him. After this Shere Ali went in person from Herat to Balkh. I subsequently learnt that the united forces of Shere Ali and of Faiz Mahomed were marching on Cabul. My father gave my cousin, Sarwar Khan, son

of my uncle, Mahomed Azim, the command of a force of 6000 men, and directed him to march towards Balkh. Sarwar Khan, having got as far as Baj-Gakh, half-way between Kabul and Balkh, met the enemy's forces, engaged them, and, being defeated, returned to Cabul. At this time a letter reached me at Kandahar from my father bidding me hasten back to Cabul. Leaving my uncle at Kandahar, in the spring of 1867, I marched my troops and artillery on Cabul, which I reached in six days. Hearing of my approach, Faiz Mahomed halted for two or three months, and then, after the completion of his preparations, and on the receipt of Shere Ali's consent, attacked Cabul from the Panjsir direction, that is, on the road leading to Cabul, from Guri. At the time that the news of Faiz Mahomed's advance reached Cabul my father was very ill. Placing my trust in God, I wrote a letter to my uncle at Kandahar, telling him that Shere Ali, Faiz Mahomed, and Mahomed Ibrahim were approaching Cabul from two sides, the former along the Panjsir road, the latter by the Bamian route. I went on to say that I was going to lead my troops against the Panjsir force, and that I would send my lieutenants to engage the Bamian portion of the enemy, that my father was ill, and that he, having left his son at Kandahar, was to march at the head of his troops at once on Cabul. Leaving my sick father, I then advanced against the enemy. When I reached the Panjsir Pass, I met the troops and guns of Shere Ali and Faiz Mahomed. The fight which ensued lasted from early morning until the hour of evening prayer, in a word, till Faiz Mahomed had been killed by the fire of my guns. Shere Ali hereupon took to flight, and did not stop until he had reached Balkh.

"On my return to Cabul my father was still unwell. At this time my uncle reached Cabul from Kandahar. Three days after my return my father died, and I was then occupied in his burial and in offering up prayers for the dead. News reached me during these ceremonies that Shere Ali was fortifying himself at Balkh. Having proclaimed my uncle Ameer of Cabul, I marched on Balkh at the head of 20,000

men. After marching half the distance I received the news that Shere Ali had fled *via* Maimana to Herat. As I wished extremely to come across Shere Ali, I sent after him, but the Balkh Usbegs shut themselves up in Akcha and Minglik. The latter place I attacked and took. Leaving 600 Usbegs there, I marched towards Maimana, which would not surrender. I then laid siege to it for the space of two months, after which the inhabitants, who desired to be left alone, came out with the Koran, and concluded a peace, by the terms of which they undertook to surrender all their guns and to pay an indemnity of 25,000 tillas.* They further agreed to be my friends and servants for all time. At this period there appeared on the frontiers of Maimana two Bokharan envoys, whose ostensible object in coming was to condole with me on the occasion of my father's death, but whose secret mission was to ask of me the services of 12,000 men, in return for which assistance they informed me I might ask for any towns I pleased, since their master was then waging war with the White Czar. I answered the Bokharan envoys that I was myself a seeker after the friendship of the White Czar, and that I would not give their master the troops which he had asked me for through them. All this time I had an extraordinary desire to send to the country of the White Czar a trustworthy man, but since the road thither lay through the territory of the Ameer of Bokhara such a notable envoy would not be allowed to pass. But in order to give expression to my friendly sentiments towards the Governor - General of Russian-Turkestan, I despatched one of my personal attendants, by name Saiyyid Mahomed, so that you might be informed concerning me, and how I considered my own affairs bound up with the interests of the territory of the White Czar. From Maimana I returned to Takhtapul, whence I dismissed the Bokharan envoys. When Shere Ali heard at Herat that I had left Maimana, he went with an army to Kandahar and took it. I could not send anyone to the Russians with news

* A golden coin of the value of about eight shillings.

Meanwhile I received a letter from Cabul from my friends and important personages, in which I learnt that Shere Ali had concluded the following friendly agreement with the English : (1) To despatch to India all suspected members of the Cabul aristocracy ; (2) to carry out a general disarmament ; (3) to enrol a fresh army of 40,000 men, so that both Balkh and Herat might be garrisoned with a view to opposing any possible attack of the Russians. This army was to be composed of infantry and cavalry, and no other regular troops were to be maintained. If the Ameer was not able to arrange this, it was to be supposed that he was not fit to reign. Shere Ali agreed to all this, and concluded a friendly compact. In return he was to be given 12 guns, 6,000 rupees, and as much more money as he asked for. Rifle and cannon-founders from India were at work daily at Cabul. This was the kind of agreement he came to with the English, and when he left India to return to Cabul an English agent accompanied him. Whatever money he required for the maintenance of his troops the English agent paid him. When therefore Shere Ali returned to Cabul, in the spring of 1869, the first thing he did was to order all his subjects to surrender their arms ; those that were given up were valued and paid for, and to all the enrolled soldiers arms were furnished at the expense of the State. Five days afterwards Shere Ali issued a strict order that every weapon in the country was to be given up, but the Afghans would not surrender their arms. When, therefore, Shere Ali saw that there was no possibility of collecting the arms of the population, he allowed his order to remain a dead letter. He then went on to the question of banishing the restless portion of his subjects, and having seized from ten to fifteen men he exiled them. After that, the money grants of certain cavalry retainers were confiscated, so that old and young alike saw that the English desired, through Shere Ali, to take from us the price of the English blood which we had shed. Everyone became depressed ; the Ghilzai and Kohistani chiefs settled amongst themselves

that they would not pay their respects to Shere Ali. Furthermore, Mir Alam Khan, of Gutuk, and several of the Sulaiman Khels, Tokhis, and Tereks, having joined forces, twice attacked Shere Ali's troops. Much blood was shed, both of the inhabitants of the country and of the troops. The Afghans to this day are convinced that, as they destroyed an English army in 1841, there can be neither friendship nor peace between the English and Shere Ali Khan, so that their sincere desire is to be on friendly terms with the White Czar, if only they could hope for any kind of support from him.

"When I was at Meshed I received a letter from the Shah Nasr-ed-din, inviting me to go to Teheran. On receipt of this I conferred with my uncle with a view to his going to Teheran alone, because there is a plenipotentiary of the White Czar with whom he could endeavour to establish friendly relations. I, on my part, expressed the desire, having previously sent a man to Samarcand, and having left guns and troops at Balkh, to go to Bokhara in order to obtain information regarding the force which I had left at Balkh, and also to be nearer to Balkh and Afghanistan. Whilst I was at Meshed I addressed a letter to your Excellency. This letter should have been handed to you by my respected Haji. After this my uncle started for Teheran, and I, having engaged a good guide, and placing my trust in God, set out for Khiva, which I reached after a journey of forty days. From Khiva I sent you a second letter, which was no doubt handed to you by my respected Haji. I stayed at Khiva for twenty days, enjoying great favours, and studying the perfections of the Khivan administration. The Khan of Khiva is a young man of twenty-five; his Prime Minister is a Ghilzai. I saw at Khiva about 15,000 prisoners, comprising Afghans, Persians, and men of various other races. They are extraordinarily overburdened with work, and they came to me to complain, and to say that if an army were to arrive in the country from any direction, they would make over all the Khivans, and so be released from slavery and restored to

their respective countries. After twenty days I left Khiva. As there is no other road but that which lies through Bokhara, and as I believed the Ameer of the country to be the friend of the White Czar, I directed my route accordingly, arriving in Bokhara in fifteen days. From there I sent you another letter. In five days' time a man came to me from the Ameer to say that his master desired to see me. Believing him to be the devoted slave of the White Czar, I went to the court of the Ameer. On my arrival at Karshi I sent off letters to the Mir of Maimana, who was on terms of friendship with me, and to the Mir of Shibirkhan, who is my kinsman, to the Turkomans dwelling in 20,000 kubitkas, to the Mir of Sar-i-pul, to Mahomed Khan, and to Afghans of note living at Balkh, a letter to each, and then I started off to see the Ameer of Bokhara, who was staying at Hissar. I saw and conversed with him. 'During my stay with him I perceived that he was trying to gain favour in both directions (with Russians and Afghans), but his special solicitude was to prefer his own interests, for he twice sent from Hissar envoys to Shere Ali.

"During the time that I was at Hissar, he sent off Abd'ul Karim, Toksaba, with presents for Shere Ali. To him also came an envoy bearing a letter and presents from Shere Ali; the letter contained an expression of perfect friendship between the two States.

"At this time I wrote the Ameer a letter to say how much I wished to arrive at the end of my journeying and to go to you. When the Ameer had read my letter he asked my servant, 'With what is the Sirdar dissatisfied? I will give him troops and guns and money to whatever extent he wishes, and I will carry out everything he desires; let him come with me to Karshi; there I will let him go with troops and guns.' I reflected that Karshi is closer to Samarcand, and that thence it would be possible for me to get to the territory of the White Czar. On arrival at Karshi I wished to go to you without the Ameer's permission. I then thought over the matter, and sent a letter to Hissar with an intimation

that if in ten days' time the Ameer would not let me go, you would send for me.

"When I reached Bokhara I received letters from all sides, viz., from the Mirs of Maimana, Shibirkhan, and of Sar-i-pul. These letters made me very cheerful. They informed me that if I would come to the Amu-Daria they would await me with impatience, that the Most High God would enable me to accomplish the most difficult business, and that their property and troops were all at my service. I wrote to each an answer, and made it over to the persons who had brought me these welcome letters for delivery. I said that I was going to the Governor-General of Russian-Turkestan at Samarcand, and that if God thought fit he would accede to all my wishes and requests; that I would then return, and that they were to remain quiet in expectation of my coming."

APPENDIX II.

REFERENCE has been made in the text to various proclamations issued by the Ameer Abdur Rahman. The following extracts are from one circulated in the spring of 1887, when the Ghilzai rebellion was seriously disturbing the peace of the country :—

“ May it be known to the *Raizes* great and small, cultivators, dervishes, and all Mussalmans of the holy religion of Mahomed in Afghanistan, that in this season of varying hues, matters of different colours have presented themselves within the country of Afghanistan. Outwardly they look awkward, and inwardly cause much grief. You are not acquainted with all these affairs, owing to your misfortune and perpetual wretchedness ; and you remain busily handling the cup of pleasure and amusement. You are engaged in the massacre of each other, but the axe will fall on your feet. From morning to evening you discourse nonsense and think not of your end or your future state. Your spirit and intelligence are much to be applauded !

The country of Afghanistan is a mere spot under the compass of two*infidels. This is quite apparent. And it is closely besieged ; yet although imprisoned men are always thinking of their release, you are indifferent to your bonds.

“ Although you suffer embarrassment at their hands, you think the present circumstances quite satisfactory. But they

will not leave you there. One from the east and the other from the west will by various artifices possess themselves of our country. Before the people they will say, 'who are senseless, that they intend to take Hindustan?' They disbelieve in the saying that the country of God is not circumscribed, and they consider Afghanistan as their passage and lull us in the sleep of the hare.

"I sometimes wonder that my sorrow is made a joke of, but sometimes I laugh myself. You leave all to luck, in a matter of life and death. By the grace of God we number some thirty million in all. You should ponder deeply yourselves, that notwithstanding so much strength, yet will our country be taken, and as many of God's creatures will pass into the mansion of death within sight of their enemies. Alas! alas! you do not feel shame because you have borne too great shame already. Alas! the name of Afghan should not have been given you by the giver of names, as you do not deserve it.

"You are not acquainted with the temperament of both nations, but I have full knowledge of their affairs, as I have lived long in their country and passed my life there; and like meat being roasted over the fire, I well understand being basted by the possessors of wealth. Both nations speak of our country as Asia, and outwardly are rivals purposing to take our country; but inwardly they are combined and one. O ye born blind! And O ye for ever unfortunate! Do you not see with the eyes of the world? If they really disagree together, why does not Russia take London and the British country, or *vice versa*? When they will sit happily at leisure after taking our country, they will compare together their spoils one with the other, and the heritage of the Mahomedans will remain with the infidels, whose end is evil.

"They will not be satisfied with the taking of the country of Afghanistan, but will introduce their customs, which are disgraceful in the extreme. For instance, husbands have no power to kill their wives for misconduct—a condition of

things hated in Afghanistan—and other evils besides that mentioned above, too numerous to speak of or write about. Therefore I tell you in all kindness to reply whether you can hear all that I have said; if you can, you will understand that your honour, religion, and wealth have all passed out of your hands; and if not, you will have to fight and die. I know that from the absence of kindly feeling you will commit yourselves to the sin of killing each other, but why do you not plan the prevention of the thing that will take place eventually? And why do you not seize the opportunity according to the sentence of the Koran, the meaning of which is, ‘Ye will repent of the thing which has once occurred, but it will be useless, as it will not come back again.’

“After finishing the above words, which have their attraction, I again say to you, O ye tribes of Afghanistan! You should hear with the ears of sense that one thing more which I want to explain, and which is according to our holy religion supported by a sentence of the Holy Koran. In the matter of war with the infidels, ‘Ye should prepare yourselves just as the infidels prepare themselves.’ As regards drill and organization, which duty has been placed upon you by the Koran, you should act accordingly, so that you may not be put to shame by the world and the religion. It is this, that it is necessary for you all, old and young, to commence your drill in your own houses, and send to me one man out of every twenty-one, and the remaining twenty heads should pay him from among themselves in due proportion until his time of service is over, when another man should similarly be sent and paid. And as such steps are taken in self-interest, no wages should be demanded. This has happened in the country of the Sultan of Turkey. You should profit by this example. You should use my words as the amulet of your lives, so that you may be protected against the wiles of your deceitful enemies.

“If you consider my words to be mere nonsense they will, to my sorrow, go forth in vain; but if you study the pith of my speech, and give place in your hearts to its meaning,

you will earn happiness therein and accept it. And you should send a paper denoting your assent and sealed with your seals to Cabul ; and this will be kept for ever as a deed. And if it may seem to you difficult to act upon my instructions, you should let me know, that I may point out to you again with reasons how this proposal for a new army can be carried out, that we may protect ourselves from the wickedness of our enemies. Both these ways are before you.

“As regards some of my affairs with the British Government, they are the result of fresh complications and of new matters. But I will soon invite the elders and influential men of Afghanistan, and take their opinion on these very matters.”