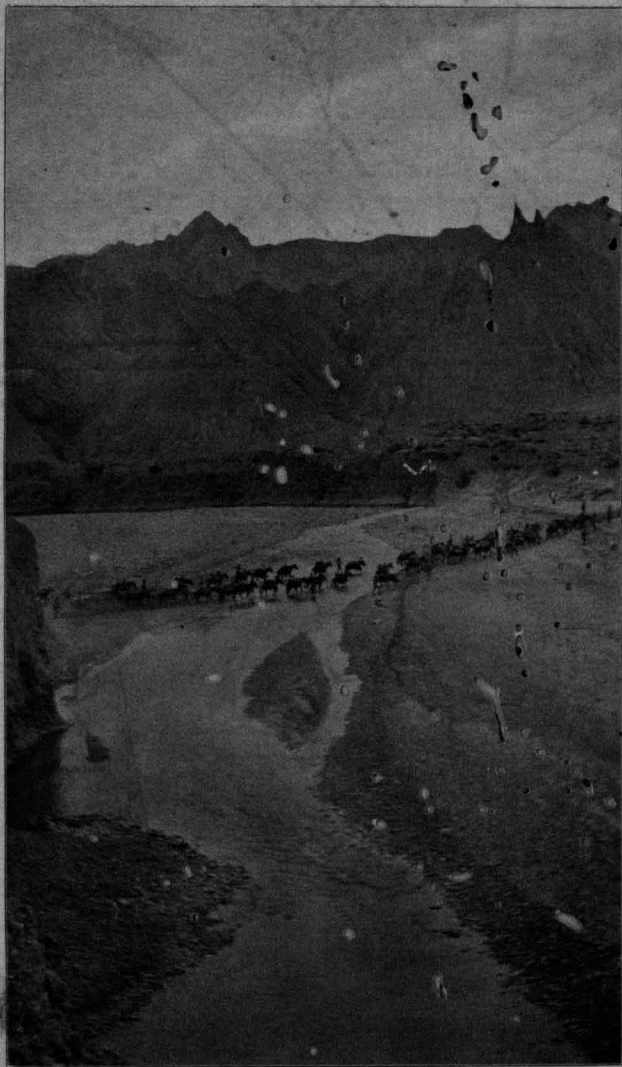


GOVERNMENT AND THE
INDIAN NORTH-WEST FRONTIER



MULES CROSSING THE MARAK IN THE PASS OF PASHAK.

Frontispiece.

172.500

GUN-RUNNING AND THE INDIAN NORTH - WEST FRONTIER

BY THE HON. ARNOLD KEPPEL

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS



FORT JELLALI, MUSCAT.

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TO

SIR GEORGE ROOSEVELT, K.C.I.E.

CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF THE NORTH WEST FRONTIER

AND AGENT TO THE GOVERNOR GENERAL

IN REMEMBRANCE OF A "COLD-WEATHER"

IN PESHAWAR

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INTRODUCTORY

OF late the interest of the British public has been centred on the internal problems of the Indian Empire, and chiefly those connected with the Hindu portion of the population. As a result of the alarming wave of sedition that swept over Bengal, accompanied by Brahminical revivals in the two Presidencies, the affairs of the North-West Frontier, together with the problems connected with the Mahomedan subjects of the King-Empire, have gradually been relegated to a hazardous obscurity, and have not received the attention they deserved. The crisis on the frontier in the autumn of 1910, as a direct result of the suppression of the arms traffic in the Persian Gulf, has had the effect of switching the limelight once again on to this most interesting quarter. People are at last beginning to realize that if the arming of the Pathan belt continues, a frontier rising in the future will be an affair of infinitely more gravity than heretofore. But in spite of this the operations of the blockading squadron in the Persian Gulf are not sufficiently recognized as an integral part of frontier policy, and have attracted atten-

tion more from the hazardous nature of the undertaking than from any bearing that the ultimate suppression of the traffic may have on the tranquillity of the frontier. It is with this object, namely, of emphasizing the connection between the operations of the blockading squadron and the preservation of peace on the Pathan border, that I have ventured on the publication of this book. Though it in no sense aims at bringing the history of the frontier up to date, yet so little has been written on this subject since the publication of Mr. Chirol's "Middle Eastern Question" and Mr. Angus Hamilton's "Afghanistan" (to both of which I am indebted as well for the interest I have felt in the subject as for the information therein contained) that I have thought it worth while to devote a chapter to a précis of the Zakka Khel and Mohmand Expeditions.

But it is not only against the independent tribes that anxiety is felt. For a long while now the attitude of the Amir has given cause for anxious speculation as to the real motives that have actuated his policy. Authorities on the frontier would be puzzled to give a dogmatic answer to the question, "What is the true policy of the Amir?" Many would say that he was honestly anxious to fulfil his treaty obligations with the British, but that he was debarred from doing so in an open manner through fear of the loss of influence with his subjects which would result from the maintenance of too close relations with the Govern-

ment of India. A smaller number would tell you that this was merely a pretext for a more far-seeing policy which aims at the complete independence of the Afghan kingdom of both Great Britain and Russia. Many circumstances point to the idea that the Amir is contemplating a coup of some sort in the near future. Not least among these is the feverish activity which characterizes the training of the Afghan army. At the review at Agra during his visit to India in January, 1907, the Amir is said to have reviled his Sirdars for having led him to believe in the efficiency of his army as a fighting machine. Turkish officers are now engaged in training the Afghan sepoys; modern guns and ammunition are manufactured in Kabul; great attention is paid to the mobility of the force as a whole, and to the clothing (especially boots) and comfort of the individual soldier. Armed with modern rifles, the Afghan army would no doubt prove a formidable fighting machine in war. But the danger lies in the fact that when the Amir takes it into his head that he is in a position to throw off our control he will probably make the attempt, and though we may be sure of the issue in the end, we shall not escape a lengthy campaign and a vast expenditure of treasure, coupled with the anxiety of seditious risings in India at any moment.

The account of the operations of the Mekran Field Force may have a certain interest, seeing that this corner of the Persian dominions has been so

rarely visited by Europeans. But the narrative must necessarily be rather *lax* of incident, for the cogent reason that "a man *hurried*" is not so likely to be admitted into the family circle of those against whom he is marching, or to see "the little savages at play," as a traveller of more peaceable intentions. On the march to Bint hardly a soul was seen, and what few villages we passed were deserted. It was the same story in Biyabân, though here we had the good-fortune to fall in with the gun-runners, my account of which I hope will compare with the account they gave of themselves.

I am indebted to the *Times* for permission to make use of articles of mine contributed from the scene of the operations, as well as for the one contained in the second half of the chapter on the Autumn Crisis on the Frontier. Much of the subject-matter has been rearranged to suit the lapse of time which has occurred. I am also indebted to the proprietors of the *Onlooker* for permission to reproduce photographs of the expedition, taken by myself, which appeared in that paper.

ARNOLD KEPPEL

QUIDENDHAM, NORFOLK

October 7, 1911.

GUN-RUNNING AND THE INDIAN NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

CHAPTER

PESHAWAR AND THE KHYBER PASS

"When the spring sun flushes the desert grass,
Our Kafilas wind through the Khyber Pass
Lean are the camels, but fat the frails,
Light are the purses, but heavy the bales,
As the snow bound trade of the North comes down
To the market square of Peshawar Town"

Barrack-Room Ballads

THE rapidity with which, on the North-West Frontier of India, events develop into a crisis, and the latitude that must in consequence be allowed in dealing with them to the Political Officer in charge on the spot, led to the formation, by Lord Curzon in 1901, of the North-West Frontier Province, out of the trans-Indus districts of the Punjab, under Chief Commissioner directly in touch with the Government of India in the Foreign Department. A similar scheme had already been formulated and approved by Lord Lytton in 1877,

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which would have placed the political control of the frontier under the Foreign Department, the internal administration remaining, as before, under the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. The outbreak of the second Afghan War, however, prevented this scheme being carried into effect, and it was not till after the close of the Tirah Campaign that it was again revived under the viceroyalty of Lord Elgin. It remained, nevertheless, to Lord Curzon to point out the weak spot, and to insist on the transfer of both political and administrative departments to the Government of India as the only practical means of insuring a successful grappling with the frontier problem. By this masterstroke of constructive statesmanship Lord Curzon succeeded at one stroke in giving to the affairs of the frontier their proper place and true significance in the foreign policy of the Indian Empire. It was inevitable in a huge district like the Punjab, one of the richest in the whole of India, that the affairs of a few small hill-tribes should receive inadequate if conscientious attention, and that their petitions should be shelved and their legitimate aspirations misunderstood. The Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab had more than enough to do in superintending the economic development of the district under his care, in staving off the insistent claims of famine, disease, and pestilence; and questions which, owing to the pressure of ordinary administrative routine work, had to be held over to await their

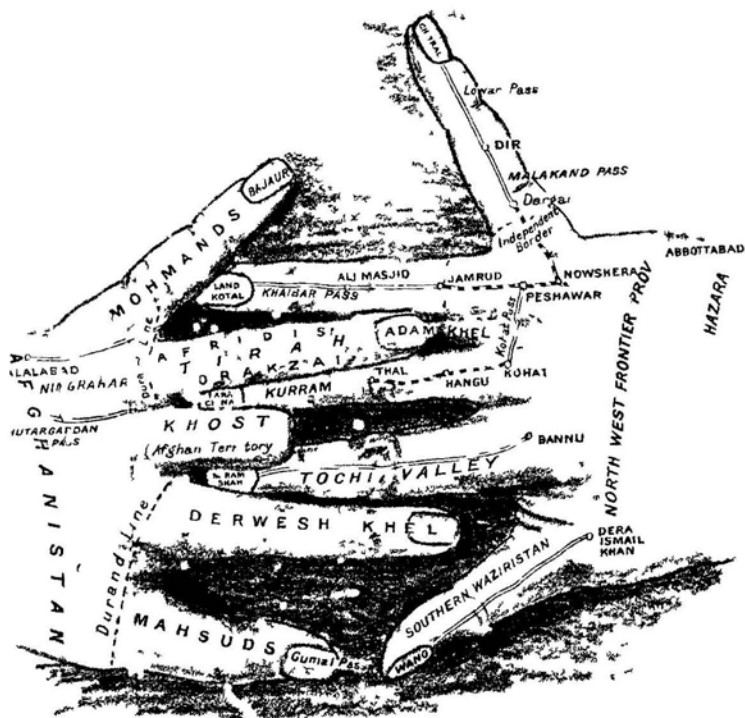
turn were found on examination to have assumed such dimensions, and to wear such a threatening aspect as to leave nothing to be done but to entrust the matter to the tender mercies of the Punjab Frontier Force. Moreover, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab might be an Indian civilian, with Indian civilian modes of thought, and the politics of the frontier might be to him the merest Greek. The task of coping with the innumerable little pitfalls of Pathan or Afghan statecraft requires a more than usually firm grasp of the working of the Pathan or Afghan mind, and more than a nodding acquaintance with the broad lines of frontier policy. Never did the personal equation enter more into the successful management of the people of India than it does with the wild and lawless tribes of the Afghan marches—wild and lawless through sheer wanton savagery, but capable of being schooled and led little by little and step by step into the paths of righteousness by a firm hand, and by the knowledge that their petitions are read and considered by someone who is interested in their welfare, just in his dealings, and, above all, who is in constant personal touch with the headmen, or “maliks,” of their tribe.

A mere glance at the map is totally inadequate to convey to the reader the tribal dispositions, the natural divisions, the artificial frontiers, and the character of the country of which the North-West Frontier is made up. In its extraordinary com-

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plexity, both politically and geographically, the serrated shark's-tooth line which bisects the province, forming what is known as the "Independent Border," cannot be better understood than by clasping the two hands together and interlacing the fingers, so that those of the right hand may represent the roads running up through independent territory to the British outposts or political agencies at their heads, and the fingers of the left hand the long spurs of mountainous independent territory that run down into the rich level plains of Peshawar and the Derajat. The knuckles of the right hand will then represent the five district centres of Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan. In each of these districts settled government exists, and the administration does not differ in essentials from that of other provinces. In independent territory, however, we do not attempt any administration in the ordinary acceptation of the word. No taxes are collected, and justice is meted out, not according to the Indian penal code, but by the "jirga," or assembly of the elders of the tribe. A mass meeting of the elders of the whole of the Affidi tribe, for instance, would correspond very much to the old "Shiremote" of the Saxon heptarchy; and, indeed, there is more in the simile than one would expect at the first glance, for the democratic spirit that is so characteristic a feature in the gradual growth of English customs finds its counterpart in the spirit of liberty and right of free

THE FRONTIER FINGERPOST



action that is one of the most cherished prerogatives of the Pathan tribesman, be he never so humble. This spirit finds its chief expression in the manly bearing, open countenance, and almost indefinable dignity of this hardy race of hillmen, whose life is one long struggle for the barest existence on the outskirts of a "promised land" of unsurpassed richness, and is one of the qualities that most inevitably endears him to the Englishman who has spent his life among them, and has, in consequence, acquired an almost native love for the wild and forbidding highland glens and their lawless denizens.

The Pathan has been dubbed cruel, treacherous, miserly, and, in fact, every epithet of an opprobrious nature has been showered on his devoted head at one time or another by men who were either incapable of seeing things from the Pathan point of view, and of making allowances for his shortcomings, or who were so hidebound by the humanity-mongering sentimentality which passes to-day for the hall-mark of a liberal mind that they shudderingly dismissed the Pathan from their thoughts (presumably with pious ejaculations) as an unreclaimable savage. And yet the same man, in all probability, would reserve a corner in his heart for Cesar Borgia, Louis XI., or King John, and even find an excuse for the atrocities of "Jack the Ripper" under the plea of *crime passionnel*. Here it may be as well to point out that the vast majority of murders committed on the North-

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West Frontier, for which the unlucky perpetrator would in all probability receive a sentence of death from the horrified Pharisee, are actuated by jealousy; that the vast majority of raids into British territory are committed out of sheer hunger and desperation; and that nearly every attack on British officers or civilians has been carefully planned by bigoted and fanatical priests, who hold out to their ignorant and only too willing tools the prospect of paradise and salvation as the reward for the killing of a hated "unbeliever." As to his miserliness, it is the miserliness of him from whom has been taken even that which he had; and though the Pathan is undoubtedly acquisitive, yet he lacks the cunning to turn this trait to good account, and the moneylenders of Peshawar and Kabul, who grow fat on the duller wits of the Semitic Afghan and Pathan, are the Hindu "bannias," who are tolerated in the midst of the Mahommedan community on account of their business capacity, but who are, however, compelled to wear a distinctive headgear on account of their religion, consisting either of a red or yellow puggaree or a small skullcap. These are the colours of the Hindu religion, and for this reason the Mahommedan don with the greatest reluctance the scarlet livery of the Sirkar.

But if the Pathan is unable to turn to advantage his miserly propensities, he knows full well how to dip his hook into the flesh-pots of the wealthy

Hindu bannias of Peshawar. Raids on Peshawar City itself in the old days were by no means an uncommon event, the last recorded being that which occurred early in 1908, when a band of from sixty to eighty Zakka Khel Afridis looted the Hindu quarter, always the first point to be made for, killing two policemen, wounding a score of men, and carrying off booty to the value of at least one lakh of rupees. It was this raid that heralded the despatch of an expedition against the Zakka Khel into the Bazar Valley. Since then the probability of successfully carrying out a raid on Peshawar has been materially reduced by the careful patrolling of the Peshawar border, and the immediate notification to all fortified posts, from Michni to Bara Fort, of the presence of any band of marauding tribes-people that may justly be suspected of being on the war-path. The opportunity of wrecking the Hindu quarter does, however, occur at certain intervals, when the coincidence of a Hindu and a Mahommedan festival causes racial feeling, and a riot ensues. Such a scene took place in March, 1910, when the Hindu festival of rejoicing (the "Holli") fell on the same day as the Mahommedan feast of mourning ("Barawafat"), when the mourners went about the streets, only to be pelted with bricks from the upper windows. The demise of one Mahommedan, who had been hit by one of the missiles, was the signal for a general rush to the Hindu quarter, which was incontinently stripped bare, the carpet-

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dealers losing practically the whole of their store of carpets, which had just arrived from Penjdeh. At such a time Peshawar is full of Musalmans from every part of Central Asia—Pathans, Ghilzais, Hazaras, Bokharans, Turcomans, 'Kabulis, and Heratis—and presents a curiously cosmopolitan aspect; so that it is truly said that when you have crossed the Indus you are no longer in India, but in Central Asia.

Situated as it is at the very mouth of the Khaibar Pass, and forming as it does the connecting link between Central Asia and Hindustan, it is natural that Peshawar should constitute the chief entrepôt for Central Asian trade; and therefore the political centre for frontier intrigue. 'Dera Ismail Khan, in the south of the province, fills the same position with regard to Waziristan and Southern Afghanistan, since it constitutes the point of which the pass-roads through the Sulaiman Range converge. In a minor degree Kohat fulfils the same office for the Kurram and Tochi Valleys. But it is in Peshawar itself that the trained hand may keep its finger on the pulse of trans-border feeling, and in its bazaars that the first throb of unrest gives vague presage of trouble.

The city of Peshawar lies in a semicircular valley surrounded on all sides by mountains, low at first to the eastward, where the Kabul River and its muddy tributaries make their way to the Indus, but rising gradually as they sweep round to the north and to the south, until at length they

culminate due west in the massive peak of Lakka, the highest point in the Tartarra or Khaibar Range, which stands sentinel over the most historic pass in the history of the world. From the Gorkatri, the palace of the Governor of the old Sikh province, situated in the centre of the town, a magnificent view can be obtained towards sunset of the encircling panorama, and on a clear day to the north-west may be descried the mountains of Bajaur, and in winter, perhaps, a glimpse of the snows on the summit of the far-away Lowari Pass, which for four solid months divides the little garrison of Chitral from the outside world. It was in this palace that the terrible Sikh Governor, General Avitabile, an Italian by birth, known to his subjects and to posterity as Abu Tabela, seated on a sumptuous divan, and attired in a flowing garment of red silk, dispensed a summary and somewhat primitive justice to the turbulent populace of Peshawar. • It was his boast that he kept Peshawar in order by the simple expedient of hanging every week four of the most prominent citizens. Round the foot of this palace, and extending some way to the southward, lie the intricate and tortuous alleys, the mud hovels of the poor, the brick houses of the well-to-do, the bazaars of the coppersmiths and silversmiths, the leather-workers, the carpet-sellers, the silk-merchants, the tea-merchants, and a host of others, and in this labyrinth of filth and evil odours dwell 100,000 mysterious Orientals, here to-day and gone to-morrow, the

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places of those who leave for the passes always being filled by the constant stream of those that arrive. To stand at the western gate of the city and to watch the long files of camels as they dawdle past on their way to the "kafila-serai," gurgling and bellowing under their loads, is a liberal education in itself. Here a confused mass of long-haired, two-humped Battrian camels, supporting enormous bales of carpets, block the way, and behind them comes a long string of the one-humped Arabian variety, with a contribution of old rags and malodorous *asafoetida*, to the general discomfiture of a mixed flock of "dunba," or fat-tailed Afghan sheep, long-eared goats, and small brown cattle. These are goaded on by lanky youths armed with stout sticks, and ancient white puggarees wound round their heads. Presently will come a buffalo moving stolidly forward under at least a ton of sugar-cane, while an Afghan, with pointed "culla," henna-dyed beard, a drab-coloured Poshin coat embroidered with yellow silk, baggy white trousers caught in at the ankle, and curly-toed Peshauri shoon, all complete, jogs by on a mouse-coloured trotting donkey. All this vision of the teeming life of the frontier town is seen through a dense veil of dust, from out of which issues the raucous voice of invisible Jehus, bidding the unwary "Batchka! garhiwallah!" "Batchka! Apridiah!" (O Afridi), each in turn being apostrophized with unerring accuracy, according to the calling or the tribe to which his appearance indicates that he belongs;

while in the neighbouring caravanseraï the long-suffering camel subsides like a collapsing suspension bridge, to the muttered exhortation of the camel-man, "Ush! Ush! be imana!" (Kneel! kneel! O dishonourable one!)

• The Khaibar Pass itself is, of course, one of the principal places of pilgrimage for the traveller in India, attracting him from down-country wanderings with an almost hypnotic influence. I, too, was no stranger to these feelings, as in response to an invitation from Major Bickford, Commandant of the Khaibar Rifles, I hired a bazaar "tum-tum" (two-wheeled cart) and drove out through the long avenue of Peshawar Cantonment to spend a couple of days at Landi Kotal. Passing the lines of the Munsters and the 51st Sikhs, and the Guard House surrounded with barbed-wire entanglements as a precaution against rifle-stealers, we debouch upon the broad military road that leads straight as an arrow to the old Sikh fort of Jamrud. Parallel to us and on our left runs the single line of the Peshawar-Jamrud Railway, along which daily the "Flying Afridi" clanks and groans. Presently we reach Kacha Garhi, railway-station and fortified post, where the Kabul River Railway branches off northwards to its unknown terminus among the Mullagori Hills. Here I pick up my host, and we drive on to tiffin at Jamrud. On the way he points out to me the different landmarks in the surrounding country. To the north and north-west among those hills is the country of the Moh-

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mands ; to the west-south-west, behind a high ridge, the Bazar Valley ; to the south lies Tirah and the Bara Valley, and a little farther to the eastward the low neck of the Kohat Pass. Among those low foothills on our left dwell two sept^s of the Kuki Khel Afridi, at deadly feud with one another. Their fortified villages may just be descried in a fold of the hills. This feud is carried on by means of artillery. Each village has an old muzzle-loading cannon, but between them they can only muster thirteen or fourteen cannon-balls, the remainder being presumably embedded in the mud walls of the strongholds. These cannon-balls are solemnly fired backwards and forwards whenever the feud breaks out. The "game," of course, is to make a "corner" in cannon-balls, when terms may be dictated for the time being by the successful collector. But, like blackmail, the power which the possession of the cannon-balls gives is only efficacious as long as they remain unexpended. This never lasts for long, as the childish folk cannot long resist the intense pleasure of firing the cannon. From time to time we pass evil-looking scoundrels, who eye us with fierce and lowering brow, or perhaps their faces light up in answer to the cheery Pushtu salutation, "May you never be tired !" to which the invariable reply is, "May you never be poor !" The fact remains that the Afridi is poor—abjectly poor, though he is never tired.

The entrance to the Khaibar lies some two and

a half miles beyond Jamrud, and the change from the perfectly flat plain to the rocky, mountainous defile is very abrupt. Up and up leads the road in serpentine convolutions, doubling, twisting, writhing, until the Chargai Kotal is reached, with the Chargai Post perched on the top of an unscalable rock like a pinnacle of the temple. Here a gradual descent begins, and a little farther on the road up to the Chura Pass into the Bazar Valley is passed. It was close here that Sir Havelock Allan lost his life, shot by Afridis. And now the gorge begins to narrow, and the road sweeps down to Ali Masjid, situated at the narrowest and most forbidding portion of the pass. The ancient Sikh fortress, surmounted by the British fort, towers above, completely dominating the defile. Formerly the road lay along the bed of the streamlet, and one can well imagine the difficulties of its passage during the first Afghan War, and the awful reputation which it then gained. But since 1851 it runs along the northern scarp, though even now one can hardly repress a shudder at its dark and sombre aspect, so pregnant with disaster.

Between Ali Masjid and the first Zakka Khel village that announces the end of the pass, we had the misfortune to pass one of the longest kafilas that I saw, either here in subsequent visits to the Khaibar, or in the Kurram, or crossing the bed of the Indus at Dera Ismail Khan. There must have been fully 800 camels, peacefully plodding along on their way to Kabul, with what

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unknown merchandise for the Amir I could not imagine, unless it were cases of 303 ammunition, and shell-fuses and such like 'contraband, carefully concealed among the bales of cotton and cloth, and in the square packing-cases. However, we managed eventually to overhaul the head of the caravan, with only a trifling damage, caused by a camel shying across the road with two enormous wooden packing-cases, with which he splintered our left mudguard. And now a few scattered fortified villages appear, belonging to Zakka Khel and Loargai Shinwari tribesmen, and the valley widens out as Landi Kotal is reached, twenty-seven miles from Peshawar.

A short distance from Landi Kotal is a hill, which, from the commanding view that can be obtained from its summit of the "promised land," Afghanistan, has been dubbed "Pisgah." This we ascended late in the afternoon, and gazed out over the confusion of mountain-tops to the Jellalabad Plain, where the last rays of the setting sun were sparkling on the far-away water of the Kabul River, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Dacca Fort—at least, so it seemed to me, although my eyes may have deceived me. Northward, in the faint distance, lay the massive range of the Hindu Kush, and in between the cone-like peaks of Kafiristan. To the south-west, through a vista in the hills above Landi Khana, a single white peak of the Sofed Koh gleamed like alabaster against the granite coldness of the nearer range—perhaps the

peak of Sikaram above Parachinar in Kurram, tall 15,000 feet high.

Up here it was quite chilly, the month being December, and we returned to the warm fire in the mess-room of the Khaibar Rifles in the fort, after paying a visit to the men's quarters and watching them prepare their evening meal of chupatties, curried dāl, and rice. Chupatties are merely unleavened pancakes made of flour, water, and ghee (clarified butter), baked on an iron girdle. Dal is a kind of lentil. We also entered the hospital in the fort, in which at the time there were no sepoys. There were, however, a few sick tribesmen from the surrounding villages, suffering from bronchitis, cataract, and other diseases, and a Laghman Afghan, who had sustained a severe wound in some trans-border affray. He was being nursed by his own father, who had brought him in. The surest way to the heart of an Afghan or a Pathan is the ability to heal him, and this certainly accounts for the personal immunity with which the famous "daktar-sahib" of Bannu, the Rev. Mr. Pennell, can move about in independent tribal territory, an "unbeliever" in a Muslim country, and for the respect in which he is held by the usually fanatical mullas.

On the following day, in company with Major Bickford and Captain Galbraith, 55th Coke's Rifles, P.F.F., I walked down to the Afghan frontier at Torkham, past the enormous mud-walled kafila-serai just outside Landi Kotal, and

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past the block-house at Michni Kandao, which was attacked by an Afghan "lashbar" during the Mohmand rising of 1908. Beyond this is the first Afghan post of Paindi Kakh. The boundary here has never been properly delimited, and the Afghans in consequence lay claim to the water-supply at Landi Khana, between Tor Kham and Michni Kandao, with the object of gaining control over the stream which rises here and drains into the Kabul River below Dakka Fort. The question of water-supply is always a very important one in a country where practically every crop depends on irrigation.

The inhabitants of the villages round Landi Kotal live chiefly by carrying firewood into Peshawar, and this also is the principal occupation of the poorer cave-dwelling Afridis, whose caves we had passed on our way up the Khaibar. To me it is a mystery where the wood comes from, as I never saw a tree of any kind, or even a shrub capable of producing firewood, except the sorry scrub that occasionally crops up in barren and unexpected places. As a second string to his bow, when firewood fails, the resourceful Afridi can always support life by raiding.

To the north of Landi Kotal lies the little-known territory of the Shilmanis and Mullagoris, dwelling on the right bank of the Kabul River. These two tribes inhabit the natural cul-de-sac formed by the great northerly bend that the Kabul River takes below Dakka Fort. Through

this country runs the Mullagori Road and the almost legendary Kabul River Railway, as alternative strategic routes from Peshawar. From the walls of Landi Kotal one may see the road stretching away to the north-east as far as the kandao which forms the southern barrier of the Kari Shilman Valley. What lies beyond is veiled in mystery. Torkamr—the point to which the Kabul River Railway was sanctioned by Parliament—is a mere geographical expression as far as the outside world is concerned. The difficulty of railway construction in the narrow gorge of the Kabul River may be apprehended from the heated discussions that took place over the selection of the route. We know that the railway never reached Torkamr, although the “flying Afridi” runs as far as Warsak,* the last station in the Peshawar plain.

The reasons for the construction of the Kabul River Railway are to be found in the inadequacy of the Khaibar roads for the rapid despatch of a large army into Afghanistan, and for provisioning it when there. Supposing we ever had occasion to send an army into Afghanistan, this one avenue is easily interrupted, flanked as it is on both sides by presumably hostile Afridi tribes. In any case this road would never be sufficient for supplying a body of, say, from 60,000 to 100,000 men, and so it was thought advisable to have alternative routes. In

* This Warsak must not be confused with the Warsak in the Loe Shilman Valley.

pursuance of this line of policy the Mullagori Road was constructed, and the Loe Shilman or Kabul River Railway sanctioned as far as Torkamr. In a later chapter we shall see what trouble arose out of its construction. Beyond Torkamr a discussion arose as to the best route to be followed to the Afghan frontier. Lord Kitchener, then Commander-in-Chief, advocated a direct route westward up the Loe Shilman Valley, thence through a tunnel to the west of Warsak to the village of Smatsai, below Dakka Fort. But, principally on account of the expense that the construction of this tunnel would have entailed, it was eventually decided to follow the course of the Kabul River upstream along the big northerly bend past Palosi, a route which presented fewer engineering difficulties. Ultimately further construction was postponed. It is to be hoped that this decision was dictated by consideration of real policy, and not by the wave of economy which from time to time seems to sweep over the India Office, like a plague of locusts, blighting every progressive or expedient measure it may happen to encounter.

Though by no means so frequented by former invaders of India as the Khaibar Pass, this route was undoubtedly known to the ancients, and would, indeed, be a more rational route to follow than the narrow and tortuous Khaibar, inhabited by the warlike Aparytæ (Afridi), as Herodotus calls them. Though a portion of Alexander's troops made the passage of the Khaibar, the majority are supposed

to have gone by the more northerly route. The old camel-road of the Buddhist pilgrims exists also, which was, and, I believe, still is, used on occasion by the Amir's "dak-runners" as an alternative to the Khaibar.

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CHAPTER II

THE ZAKKA KHEL AND MOHMAND EXPEDITIONS

" 'Tis War, red War, I'll give you then,
War till my sinews fail ;
For a wrong you have done to a Chief of Men,
And a Thief of the Zakka Kheyl."

KIPLING · *Lament of the Border
Cattle Thief.*

SINCE the final quelling of the revolt of 1897 in Tirah, the Afridi border had remained comparatively peaceful, but for the spasmodic raiding of various bands of outlaws, until in 1904 it again began to respond to the secret machinations of the fanatical Anglophobe party in Kabul. In that year large numbers of Afridis visited the Afghan metropolis, being well received by the Amir, and sent away with presents of money, after having purchased considerable quantities of arms and ammunition. Friendly relations with Kabul were still further cemented with the assistance of one Khawwas Khan, an ex-malik of the Zakka Khel and a former citizen of Peshawar, through whose instrumentality the Afridi clans were enabled more and more to count on the support of a powerful faction among the counsellors of the Amir. In fact, to such a



degree did this man gain an ascendancy over the mind of the Amir that the latter was wholly unable, when the time came, to prevent the insurrection which the Afridis were emboldened to make, relying on the support which his actions had given good cause for anticipating. Through Khawwas Khan and his myrmidons it was that the Afridis and the Mohmands, and even the Shinwaris, were gradually worked up to the belief that the time had come when the English should be driven back over the Indus by a general uprising of the independent tribes, in which Afghan lashkars would play no inconspicuous part. All through the year 1904 raids were frequent, and the Afridi allowances were stopped for a time. But though this had a salutary effect on the majority of the clans, the Zakka Khel continued to be the ringleaders in the raiding, and when the allowances were once more renewed, the Zakka Khel were excluded from the number. The defiant and uncompromising attitude of the Zakka Khel was no doubt due to the constant assurances of Khawwas Khan that they had nothing to fear, as well as to the fact that the Zakka Khel are the poorest and most "jungly" of all the Afridi clans, and have come least into contact with British rule. Situated as they are at the farthest point of Tirah from British territory, and the nearest to Afghanistan, they would be more susceptible to Afghan influences, and less likely to appreciate the probable consequences of their temerity. Their territory would also afford

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to the outlaws the surest sanctuary, and having already forfeited their allowances, they would as soon be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. Among the chief of the outlaws may be mentioned Dadai, Usman, and Multan, all of whom were notorious for the number of their crimes and the daring with which they were carried out. These three went constantly to Kabul, where they listened eagerly to the rash and malignant scheming of Khawwas Khan, returning to Tirah only to confirm the Zakka Khel more surely in their folly. The Shinwari mullas were also untiring in their efforts to bring about a crisis in Tirah and among the Mohmands, who were also at this time showing signs of disaffection on account of the construction of the Loe Shilman or Kabul River Railway, which they regarded as a prelude to the taking over of their country. In this connection, Alam Gul, the "Sufi Sahib" of Batikot, was the most indefatigable, dividing his attention equally between Tirah and the Mohmands. This gentleman, like the "Gud Mulla" (or Lame Mulla) of Inzari, was a disciple of the well-known Hadda Mulla, a native of the Jellalabad district, who in 1897, with a following of Afghans, had raided Shankargarh on the Mohmand border, and attacked the fort of Shabkadr. His anti-British propaganda had begun some years before, when in 1902 a new allowance had been granted to the Musa Khel Baezai Mohmands, which afforded him an excellent opportunity of denouncing the recipients as "kafirs,"

with the result that the Musa Khel and other Mohmand clans did not come in to receive their due.

Another principal cause for the suspicion and mistrust with which we were regarded at this time by the Mohmands was the proposed Mohmand Boundary Commission, which was intended to do away with the facility with which Afghan Mohmands could raid into what, strictly speaking, had been laid down as British territory by the Durand Agreement. Major (now Sir George) Roos-Keppel was deputed as the British Representative, and it was arranged that he should meet the Afghan Commissioner at the Nawa Kotal in Mohmand territory on February 1, 1903, and mark out the boundary, as far as the crest of the Sofaid Koh at the Peiwar Kotal in the Kurram, to the south of the Khaibar. But owing to the obstructive measures of the Amir, the Boundary Commission never started. If it had, it is quite possible that the British members of it would never have returned. During the construction of the Loe Shilman Railway the Tarakzai and Halimzai Mohmands, as well as the Mullagoris on the southern bank, who had undertaken to protect the line from attack, were repeatedly subjected to annoyances from the Afghan Mohmands. The Sarhang of Dakka especially showed a particular desire to pick a quarrel at any price and on any pretext, with the object of impeding the progress of the work. A dispute arose as to the ownership of

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logs and driftwood which the inhabitants of Smatsai, a small village on the right bank of the Kabul River a little below Dakka, had been 'accustomed to collect for fuel. The Sarhang, attacked the village, and, on a remonstrance from the British Government, claimed Smatsai as lying in Afghan territory. Whatever the justice of this claim, and it appears that the words of the Durand Agreement admit of a considerable elasticity of interpretation, we, at any rate, were perfectly justified in not recognizing the claim, seeing that it was through the obstructionist attitude of the Amir that the boundary had remained undemarcated. Thus in 1905 for the second time the question of demarcation was raised, only to come again to the same infructuous end. Meanwhile attacks on the Kabul River Railway, under the instigation of Sahib Haq, Akhundzada, son of the Mulla Khalil, occurred as before, and numerous raids were committed by such notorious outlaws as Mahazil, Khoda Khel Baezai, and Hakim Khan,* on the unprotected villages of the Mohmand border. The reinforcement of the frontier posts at this point led, however, to a temporary cessation of these annoyances.

During 1907 the Zakka Khel, in spite of the genuine efforts of the maliks of the remaining Afridi clans to restrain them, adopted a yet more

* The notorious outlaw Hakim Khan, with a following of twenty-nine, was taken near the village of Char Sadda on February 28, 1911. Hakim and twenty of his accomplices were killed, and the rest were captured and suffered death by hanging.

defiant attitude towards the British Government, and an Afridi jirga met at Landi Kotal in that year to deliberate on what steps should be taken to abate the nuisance. During this meeting and while the Afridi maliks were urging on the Government the advisability of occupying the Bazar Valley, a Zakka Khel jirga made its appearance, professing itself willing to come to terms. Not content with offering an unconditional surrender, the Zakka Khel in their turn made such preposterous and absurd demands, conditions, and stipulations, that the insincerity of their professions was made only too apparent, and they were immediately dismissed.

All this time the progress of the unrest was being watched with jealous care in Kabul, and secret agents continued to send in their quota of information to the leaders of the Anglophobe party. It is probable that at this time the Amir began to realize the nature of the whirlwind that was about to be reaped from the insignificant wind that had been sown by the presence of Khawwas Khan in Kabul.* Early in 1907 the Sufi Sahib, accompanied by Abdul Karim, a Shinwari of Deh Sarak, was preaching a "jehad" in Tirah, while Lala Pir, a secret agent from Kabul, was engaged in stirring up the tribes in Khost and Waziristan, and holding communication with the Mulla Powindah and the Hamzullah

* The *Pioneer* had repeatedly urged on the Government of India the advisability of obtaining the dismissal of Khawwas Khan from Kabul.

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Mulla, with the intent to incite the Wazirs and Mahsuds to revolt. Unsuccessful in Waziristan, he turned his attention to Khost, where, on the outbreak of hostilities, he raised a lashkar, which was to have co-operated with a Ghilzai lashkar from the Ghazni district in an attack on the Kurram Valley. Among the Mohmands and Ningraharis the "Hazrat Sahib" of Chaharbagh, Fidai Masun Jan, succeeded, with the help of the Sufi Sahib and the Gud Mulla, in raising a lashkar, principally composed of Afghan Mohmands and Shinwaris.

The Afridi maliks having proved themselves utterly incapable of exercising any influence over the Zakka Khel, the Government, after clutching at every straw that seemed to hold out a possibility of a settlement, suddenly sanctioned an expedition, as the result of a determined raid on Peshawar City undertaken by Multan and other outlaws on the night of January 28, 1908. This raid occurred in spite of the fact that the whole of the Jamrud, Bara, and Kohat Pass roads were being patrolled at the time. Three constables were wounded, two of whom died, and the raiding-party escaped over the city wall before any reinforcements could be brought up.

As soon as the intelligence was received by the Zakka Khels that punitive operations had been sanctioned against them, they began moving their families and flocks and herds through the passes into Ningrahar, whither also the outlaws Multan,

Dadai, and Usman also repaired, returning, however, to take part in the fighting. The Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province, Colonel Deane, summoned the Afridi maliks to a jirga in Peshawar, where he made it plain to them that the object of the expedition was merely to punish the Zakka Khel, and that no annexation of territory was in any way contemplated. This very timely declaration of our intentions had the very beneficial effect of securing to us the co-operation of the Afridi maliks throughout the campaign, in spite of the untiring efforts of Mulla Saiyid Akbar, Aka Khel, one of the ringleaders in 1897, to raise them. They were, in fact, induced to maintain a blockade of the passes from the Bazar Valley into Tirah, so that the passes into Afghanistan were the only avenues of supply for the leaguered Zakka Khel. It was proposed to take up two brigades into Bazar, and to hold one brigade in readiness at Nowshera. Major-General Sir James Willcocks was given full military and political control of the expedition, and Lieutenant-Colonel Roos-Keppel acted as Political Officer. The value to the Zakka Khel of one, at least, of the passes into Ningrahar was largely discounted by the rapidity with which this latter officer led a flying column into Bazar by way of the Bazar Pass, which opens out of the Khaibar a little short of Ali Masjid. By sending part of his baggage animals back from Ali Masjid to Jamrud, the Zakka Khel were led to believe that no entry was intended by way of the Bazar Pass;

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consequently the column was enabled to make the passage unopposed, and thus get between the Zakka Khel and their bolt-holes into Afghanistan, at the same time gaining possession of the village of China, commanding these exits. The second brigade entered the valley by the Chura Pass through Malikdin Khel country, and advanced to Walai, while the first brigade occupied Chura.

Mountain warfare, as carried on on the North-West Frontier, does not lend itself to impassioned descriptions of bloody fields of battle, of cavalry charges and heroic actions done in the limelight before the astounded gaze of two armies. The Afridi does not rush down into the open to certain death, but retires gracefully before a stronger force sent against him, skulking along the sky-line, and ready to take advantage of the smallest mistake on the part of his opponents, or to cut off any straggler. He has been described as the finest natural skirmisher in the world. It is when the retirement of the British troops begins that he is at his best, and then it is that those deeds of heroism are committed by our British and Indian troops alike, when there is none to mark how those battery mules were got safely across that open nulla-bed, swept as it was, by a hail of bullets, or how So-and-so held on to an almost isolated position, at the risk of being cut off, for three minutes more than was necessary, in order to enable a wounded comrade or two to get a good start down the hill. At night, too, worn out and dog-tired by the constant hill-climbing, the soldier

must cook and eat his food in the dark, as no lights are allowed, for fear of attracting the fire of the snipers. Then he must dig himself into a narrow trench in the ground, and hope for sleep, while from the hills around an incessant firing is kept up till daylight. Those who by repeated experience of this kind of warfare may be considered competent judges declare that nothing is more nerve-racking or more demoralizing to troops than to have to undergo night after night this constant sniping, coupled with the apprehension of a night attack at any moment. The first indication of a night attack is like the rustling of the wind through autumn leaves, as the "chaplis" of the silent-footed foe slither over the rocky ground; then follows the confused, half-audible jangle of accoutrements, steel upon steel, and jangling neck ornaments, and the final rush and the blood-curdling pandemonium that is let loose as the wave of savagery breaks on the bristling perimeter of the camp. Occasionally one of those little incidents occurs which serve to relieve the tension and raise a smile all round, even though it be but a false alarm in the middle of the night, caused by an inconsiderate sepoy falling asleep with his shoulder against the firing-button of a machine-gun.

At the beginning of the operations the Amir had issued a declaration to his subjects forbidding them to join in the hostilities, but in spite of this and of his presence so close to the scene as Jellalabad, large numbers of Sangu Khel Shinwaris, Afghan

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Mohmands and Ningraharis of every description, entered the Bazar Valley by the Tsatsobi Pass, where they openly sold ammunition to the rebels, aided them in fighting, and proved particularly obnoxious by militating in every possible manner against the resumption of peaceful relations with the Zakka Khel. With fanatical zeal, they exhorted them not to conclude peace with us at any price, with the consequence that negotiations were conducted with the greatest difficulty, and our occupation of the valley was much longer than it need have been. At their instigation, too, the Zakka Khel sent messages to the Mohmands urging them to rise, and the Hazrat Sahib and the Sufi Sahib did everything that could be done to bring about a combined insurrection. But at length the Zakka Khel, having exhausted ammunition, supplies, and means alike, and having seen their fortified villages disappear skywards in a cloud of dust, were brought to their knees, and terms were at length agreed to through the mediation of the Afridi jirga. These latter undertook to punish the outlaws, to guarantee each a section of the Zakka Khel, and to deposit so many rifles until the Political Officer should consider that the Zakka Khel had sufficiently expiated their folly. The outlaw Dadai died of the wounds he had sustained, cursing Khawwas Khan and his own folly in bringing desolation on his clan.

The difficulties attending the satisfactory termination of the Zakka Khel rising were enhanced by

the necessity of keeping a watchful eye simultaneously on other parts of the frontier. Hardly a month elapsed before it again became necessary to send a punitive force into independent territory—this time against the Mohmands. All through February and the first fortnight in April, raiding had been increasing on the Abazai border, and the Shinwari lashkar that had collected in Ningrahar at the close of the Zakka Khel Expedition crossed the Kabul River at Lalpura and went off to throw in their lot with the Mohmands. The constant influx from the Afghan side led to reinforcements being early sent to the forts of Michni and Shankargarh. After telegraphic communications had been twice interrupted, villages raided, and posts fired on, it was at length decided to mobilize a second expedition under the command of General Willcocks. Brigadier-General Anderson, Major-General Barrett, and Major-General Ramsay, had command of Brigades, the Third Brigade being held in reserve. On April 24 two columns attacked the enemy's position west of Shankargarh, and the enemy were driven back with heavy loss. This defeat greatly discouraged the mullas, who were trying to raise Dir and Swat. At the same time every effort made to gain the co-operation of the Zakka Khel and the Loargai Shinwaris, proved unsuccessful, and many mullas retired in consequence into Afghanistan. The Mohmands' supplies were now running short, and many combatants availed themselves of the dead or wounded among their relations

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to accompany them back into Ningrahar, whence they were careful not to return. The Hazrat Sahib, however, doggedly remained in Mohmand country, though with a greatly reduced following, gradually retiring into the more remote valleys of that district. In Tirah the maliks had been successful in counteracting the efforts of Muḥah Saiyid Akbar to raise the Afridis, in spite of the latter's invitation to the Sufi Sahib to join him in the Lower Bāra Valley, whilst in the Bazar Valley what Zakka Khels yet remained—the majority having gone up into Maidan for the summer—intimated that they would oppose the Sufi's lashkar, if necessary, with force. The Mohmand trouble appeared to be dying a natural death, and the Government of India had already intimated to General Willcocks that no advance should be made into Mohmand country if it could possibly be avoided, when a diversion of a dangerous nature suddenly arose in the Khaḥbar. On April 29 the Mian Sahib of Tsappar arrived at Peshbolak in Ningrahar with a Khugiani lashkar some 6,000 strong. A junction with the force already assembled under the Sufi Sahib and other mullas brought the total of the combined lashkars up to nearly 20,000.

This formidable gathering, which was composed entirely of Afghans, moved up to Landi Khana, part of it, under the Sufi Sahib, entering Bazar. The fortified post of Michni Kandao, just below Landi Kotal, was attacked on the nights of May 2 and 3, and General Willcocks moved up to Landi Kotal

with reinforcements, with which on the following day he drove the Sufi's lashkar across the Afghan boundary.

As a result of this sudden and unexpected reverse to the Afghan supporters of the Mohmands, the Hazrat Sahib's following suffered a further decrease in numbers, and the voice of the Amir, which had been raised in half-audible protestations to which nobody paid any attention, now thundered forth in an authoritative recall of all subjects of His Majesty from independent territory. But by this time no such command was needed to insure the rapid exodus of Afghans from the Mohmand borders, though, no doubt, the Amir congratulated himself on his (somewhat tardy) loyalty to his treaty engagements with the English.

Up till this time only two of the Mohmand clans—namely, the Halimzai and the Pandiali Mohmands—had ventured to come in. The remainder had been deterred from following this example, probably by the fear that the Government contemplated an annexation of Mohmand territory.* These two clans undertook to induce the remaining sections to come in, and May 9 was fixed as the date by which their submission should take place. With the exception of the Musa Khel section of the Baezai, the Baezai and Khwaezai

* The Halimzai and Farakzai Mohmands, as well as the Shl manis and Mullagoris who live on the southern bank of the Kabul River, remained loyal to the Government throughout the campaign.

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are considered as Afghan subjects. The remaining Mohmand clans consisted of the Utmanzai, Dawezai, Isa Khel, Burhan Khel, and the Musa Khel Baezai. Nothing having occurred by May 9, the First and Second Brigades advanced into Mohmand territory. On May 15 the column arrived at the Kharappa and Nahaki Passes, in the Gundab Valley, without opposition. The enemy were, however, found in considerable force in the Khapāk Pass, having been joined by Baezai and Khwaezai Afghan Mohmands. The efforts of the First Brigade were directed against the Kandahari Sufis, while the Second Brigade ascended the valley of the Bohai Dag towards Kargha and Mulla Killai, in Utman Khel territory. By May 27 all the clans, with the exception of the Musa Khel Baezai, had tendered their submission, and, the latter having been punished on the following day, the troops began to evacuate Mohmand territory, which was effected by June 1.

CHAPTER III

THE POLICY OF THE AMIR

FOR close on half a century the nightmare of a Russian invasion of India through the passes of the Hindu Kush, or by way of Herat and the Paropamisus, has held the mind of the British public, clogging our foreign policy and forcing the hand of our diplomacy. In spite of the fact that since 1873 British statesmen have from time to time attempted to reassure the nation on this point, in no field of politics have alarmists and scaremongers obtained such a ready hearing as in this one of the Russian advance in Central Asia.

It is not necessary at this distance of time, and in view of our present relations with Russia, to rake up old scores, too highly coloured for the most part with the hues of national animus, but it may not be irrelevant to the subject to recall a few of the less hasty views of those British statesmen who, in the midst of the almost universal panic, still kept their heads.

In 1873 the Tsar had already intimated to the British Government, through Prince Gortchakoff, that he considered Afghanistan as lying altogether

outside the Russian sphere of influence, an assurance which Lord Granville saw no reason for not accepting. But in 1868 the capture of Samarkand had caused such an ebullition of feeling in England that Lord Clarendon felt constrained to inform Baron Brunnow that "although Her Majesty's Government feel neither suspicion nor alarm at these movements, yet something must be done to allay the uneasiness of the British and Indian public." A scheme was then discussed for the establishment of a neutral zone in Central Asia, resembling somewhat the present so-called neutral zone in Persia; a scheme which was afterwards abandoned when the object for which it had been broached—namely, the pacification of the English public—had been for the time being attained.*

When in 1878, after the Treaty of San Stefano, we sent Indian troops to the Mediterranean, Skobelev's plan, in the event of war breaking out between England and Russia, and provided he could gain the support of Shere Ali, was to make an invasion of India through the passes of the Hindu Kush. But it may be reasonably doubted that he would ever have contemplated such a step had he not fully believed that the whole of India was ready, at the mere approach of the Russians, to break out into a blaze of insurrection resembling the Mutiny of 1857.

It is a noticeable fact that, with one exception,

* Wheeler's "Life of Abdurrahman," practically the only really impartial review of the Russian question.

friction between Russia and England in Central Asia had always been preceded by strained relations between the two countries in Europe. This one exception was the "Penjdeh Incident" of 1885, when Gladstone's Parliament voted £11,000,000 for war preparations. The incident might easily have been avoided had we shown a little more firmness at the outset, and it is not at all clear that the Russians were prepared to back their views by resorting to extreme measures. Sir West Ridgeway, who succeeded Sir Peter Lumsden in command of the Boundary Commission, was of opinion that the Russians could not possibly have risked a war in view of the disturbed condition of the Mahommedan population under Russian rule at that time.*

To look for a moment at the Russian side of the question, a fact too often overlooked by the partisan historians of this period is that from 1868-1873 we, too, had caused the Russians considerable anxiety by our attempts, culminating in the Forsyth Mission, to establish commercial relations with Yakoub Beg of Kashgar. We had, in fact, ourselves been setting the example in what we afterwards complained so much of in Russia.

But to return to the question of the Russian invasion, Sir Donald Wallace, in his book "Russia," sums up the whole question in one pithy sentence:

* Wheeler's "Life of Abdurrahman," practically the only really impartial review of the Russian question.

"What *had* been seriously entertained, not only in the official world, but by the (Russian) Government itself, is the idea, strongly advocated by General Skobeleff, that Russia should as quickly as possible get within striking distance of our Indian possessions, so that she may always be able to bring strong diplomatic pressure to bear on the British Government, and, in the event of a conflict, immobilize a large part of the British army."

This places the whole matter in a much more reasonable and probable light, and is a strong argument against the notion that Russia ever harboured designs *per se* for the invasion of India.

Lastly, Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, at a banquet given for him on the eve of his departure for India by the county of Kent, said in reference to this question: "I have grave doubts as to whether such projects were ever seriously contemplated in those days by the Russians."

The elimination of the Russian question for the present from the sphere of practical politics on the North-West Frontier of India, if it cannot be said to have simplified the problems with which we are called upon to deal, at any rate must have the effect of modifying our policy in many of its hitherto most important aspects.

The situation now resolves itself into the three-cornered problem of—

1. Our relations with the Amir.
2. Our relations with the independent tribes.
3. Tribal relations with the Amir.

For the first time since the Vienna Congress of 1815, England is found acting in harmony with Russia, and the immediate consequence of this is that Afghanistan finds herself completely isolated. Hitherto the Amir's chief weapon has been his power to hold the balance between the two countries, and to play off England against Russia. He can now no longer count on the moral support of Russia in any situation where the interests of Great Britain and Afghanistan clash. We are, of course, still bound by our defensive treaty of alliance in the event of a foreign invasion of Afghanistan; and Russia, within the last two years or so, has renewed her assurances to us that she considers Afghanistan as lying altogether outside the sphere in which she may be called upon to act. At the same time, as long as the Amir observes the treaty negotiated in Kabul in 1905 by Sir Louis Dane, in which Habibullah undertook to be bound by the engagements that his father made with the Government of India, we are also bound to fulfil our side of the bargain, and to respect the independence of Afghanistan as a kingdom. By one of the Articles of the Durand Agreement of 1893 the Amir undertook not to exercise any interference in the independent territories on our side of the Durand line; but so often have risings among the border tribes been directly traceable to Afghan machinations as to lay Habibullah open to the charge of having violated, by commission or omission, this clause of his agreement.

What conceivable circumstances can be urged in defence of the following, or in what way can Habibullah seek to justify them? The reception of tribal jirgas in Kabul, either by the Amir or by Nasrullah, and their dismissal with gifts of money and arms; the presence of the proscribed ex-malik, Khawwas Khan, in Kabul, who attained such influence in the Amir's councils as ultimately to bring about a rising in the Bazar Valley; the open sale of rifles and ammunition to the Zakka Khel during the ensuing expedition, in direct defiance of the Amir's orders, and in spite of his presence not twenty miles away, at Jellalabad; finally, that a nest of outlaws should be permitted to exist in Khost, upon our very borders, and that no measures should be taken to put a stop to their depredations, until the capture of a native officer of a frontier militia rendered unpleasant complications with the Government of India an immediate possibility.

Whether personally guilty or not guilty, it is with Habibullah, as ruler of Afghanistan, that responsibility must ultimately rest. That such things should be possible calls for measures that shall arrest, once and for all, this gradual stultification of the Durand Agreement. The time has, in fact, come when we should intimate to him in no equivocal manner that relations of any political nature, either directly or indirectly, cannot longer be tolerated in independent territory. For, in the absence of the fanatical emissaries of the Kabul

Anglophobe party, the maliks have shown themselves, on the whole, capable of looking after the tribes under their charge, and inclined to discourage close relations with Afghanistan.

The exact attitude of the Amir towards us is a subject on which considerable difference of opinion exists. Whilst full of protestations of good-will towards us, he is sometimes so backward in giving practical effect to them as to furnish legitimate cause for doubting his sincerity. No doubt he is saddled with a difficult task in properly fulfilling his treaty obligations, and at the same time preserving his character among the Afghans as an uncompromising upholder of Afghan integrity and independence. To this and to the fact that his brother, Nasrullah Khan, has ever evinced the most thoroughgoing antagonism to everything British, may be attributed his waning popularity. It may even be doubted whether his popularity at any time since his visit to Hindustan would have been sufficient to keep him upon the throne but for the loyalty of his brother, who exercises by far the greater influence of the two, and who would probably be received with the greatest acclamation by the people did he choose to proclaim himself. However, at his accession he at least had the foresight to win over the soldiery by the simple expedient of increasing its pay, an operation which he has repeated at intervals since, although compelled to disband the inferior portion of his troops in order to defray the increasing cost of upkeep. But since

Nasrullah is Commander-in-Chief, it seems improbable that Habibullah could count on the undivided loyalty, except against an external foe, of any but the Kabul garrison.

Habibullah has been described as too easy-going to attempt any curtailment of Nasrullah's influence, relying, no doubt, on the Government of India to see him through any family crisis; and though Nasrullah has a great affection for his brother, he is said to have been much displeased at the nomination of Inayatullah, the Amir's son, as successor to the throne. It is also rumoured that Nasrullah is physically afraid of the Amir, and that when circumstances of a sufficiently peremptory nature have decided the latter on a definite course, the remonstrances of the Commander-in-Chief are swept away as chaff before the storm.

As Commander-in-Chief of the army, and at the same time spiritual head of the community and chief prop of the State, Nasrullah is to all outward appearances a dictator. Like the warrior-bishop of the Middle Ages, he is keenly alive to the advantages of combining the spiritual with the temporal power, and it is to the acquisition of supreme spiritual power that all his stealthy energies have been directed. Well he knows that in a country like Afghanistan, where the fanatical and warlike propensities of the population are shrewdly turned to account by the mullas, whose only principles are subordinated to motives of political expediency and to the preservation of their own influence, the

acquisition of such power is the passport to ultimate supremacy. In this he has been aided by circumstances. According to Musalman law anyone who, having prayed after the "chief imam" or preacher in the mosque, afterwards acts contrary to his commands, is counted an infidel, and ceases to belong to the company of the faithful. Most Afghans at one time or another have prayed after Nasrullah in his capacity of chief imam in the large open-air Masjid-i-pul-i-Pukhtu in Kabul, a mosque capable of accommodating several thousand people. Among these are sure to have been many tribespeople from our side the border, and hence it is not too much to say that it is only necessary for Nasrullah to despatch a body of mullas to preach a holy war against the British to cause in response a movement of unrest along the whole length of the frontier.

The first instinct of an Oriental monarch on ascending the throne is to get rid of all superfluous members of his family who may be suspected of any leanings towards the purple. This is effected by banishment or by harsher methods. At his death in 1823 Timur Shah left twenty-three sons, all of whom, during the disputed succession which followed, gradually disappeared, until only Shah Shujah and ~~Dost~~ Dost Mahommed were left. Forty years later, on the death of the Dost, there was another disputed succession, many of the actors in which are still living in exile in either Russia or British India. On his accession Habibullah was

spared the inconvenience of asserting his right to the throne, owing to the thoroughness with which his father, the lamented Abdurrahman, had previously cleared the country of all possible claimants. Yakoub Khan and Ayoub Khan, the sons of Shere Ali, who fled from Afghanistan in 1879, are now at Lahore, and, though both are over sixty years of age, probably still have some adherents among the Afghan Mohmands, their mother having been a lady of that tribe, a sister of Sa'adat Khan of Lalpura. A still more ancient link with the past survives in the person of Is'hak Khan, now over seventy years of age, if, indeed, he still lives, and an exile in Samarkand, Habibullah's birthplace. In fact, with the exception of his brother Nasrullah and of his half-brother, Mohammedi Umar, a grandson of Shere Ali, a quarrelsome and irascible youth from all accounts, there has been no one who could show any pretence to the throne. For some years Bibi Halima, the mother of Mohammedi Umar, was the cause of considerable friction at Kabul, but since Mohammed Umar (who never participated in the ambitious schemes his mother entertained for his future) slew the Amir's Master of Horse in a fit of passion, and on another occasion wounded Nasrullah in a quarrel, he has been allowed to go his own way, which does not differ in essentials from that of other ne'er-do-weels. He is no longer to be reckoned with as a possible claimant at Inayatullah's accession. One other there is who, if any credence may be given to the tales of Kabuli

merchants in Peshawar, is causing Habibullah a succession of *mayvans quarts d'heure*. The Shahgassi Mulki, Sirdar Yahya Khan, the brother of the first Queen, who was driven from Afghanistan by Abdurrahman, has now been back in Afghanistan for about four years. Saving Nasrullah's priestly following, he commands the sympathy, so 'tis said, of all the tribes to the south and east of Kabul. The Ghilzais, moreover, are known to have procured many rifles during the recent gun-running, and, inspired by the knowledge that they are well armed, have been showing signs of restlessness; whilst only the other day the Amir despatched the Hazrat Sahib Charbagh (one of the disciples of the well-known Hadda Mulla) to pacify the Sangu Khel, a Shinwari clan in the vicinity of Jellalabad, which had become intractable.

So long as Nasrullah retains his position at the head of the mullas he has nothing to fear. As a Durani, he evidently prefers to pull together with Habibullah than to risk the loss to his family of the legacy of subject tribes—Hazaras, Kafirs, Ghilzais, Usbegs, and Turcomans—that Abdurrahman bequeathed to the present Amir as the independent kingdom of Afghanistan, a kingdom that requires a firm hand if the unruly elements of which it is composed are to be held together.

Vexed by internal movements and hampered by the Anglophobe party in his dealings with us, the position of the Amir is certainly not an enviable one, nor is the administration of the country all

that can be desired. What government there is in Afghanistan is conducted in the most haphazard fashion—at least, in the outlying districts, which for the most part are farmed out to governors or “hakims.” The collection of the revenue is usually deferred to some two years after the expiry of their terms of office, when the hakims receive a summons to Kabul, and the major portion of their property is unceremoniously confiscated to supply the deficits in the exchequer. Corruption is rife. Under these circumstances it is not to be wondered at that the affairs of remote districts do not always come to the notice of the central Government as promptly as might be desired, in spite of the fact that in 1906 telephonic communication was established between Kabul and the principal provincial capitals. In many instances the first intimation of disorderly conduct on the part of his subjects reaches the Amir through the Government of India.

In this way Habibullah has made out a very plausible case for himself, and the sympathetic British lion has been within an ace of being caught napping. To all outward appearances, the Amir is merely an Oriental monarch, bound to Great Britain by certain treaty obligations, which he is honestly trying to fulfil, even at the risk of the allegiance of his subjects. He hears with regret (from the Government of India) that raids into British territory are being made from his side the Durand line. He replies that he has not yet been informed of the matter by his own officials,

but that he will do all in his power to put an end to the raiding. He receives jirgas in Kabul, and, true to his engagements, he counsels them against any unfriendly attitude towards the British. They are then handed over to the chief imam. . . . He forbids the sale of rifles and ammunition to the independent tribes, but not the smallest attention is paid to this injunction. He pays a friendly visit to the Viceroy in India, where we are careful to inform him that we only wish to consolidate his position in his own kingdom, and to see Afghanistan able to defend herself. He accepts our assurances of friendship, and the howitzers presented to him by Lord Curzon, some of which, metaphorically, he mounts pointing towards Russia, some towards India. He spends the "allowance" granted to him on the defences of the Khurd Kabul Pass, and as soon as we propose building, as an earnest of our defensive treaty of alliance, a railway that shall facilitate the throwing of troops into Afghanistan in the event of a foreign invasion, he bares his teeth. Even while Sir Louis Dane was yet in Kabul, it was known in India that the Mission of 1905 was a complete fiasco. The proposals we had to make, according to the *Times* of January 26, 1905—the linking up of Peshawar and Jellalabad by rail and telegraph, the training of Afghan troops by British officers, the purchase of war material from England alone—Habibullah refused to discuss, substituting in their place Nasrullah's pet scheme, advocated as far back as 1897,