his carpets to pieces and rifling his tent. "Take all that you find within," he cried, and urged his horse to the mountains. Captain James Outram rode hard at his heels, with Lawrence, Broadfoot, and certain other picked men, but they were thwarted by one of the Afghan chiefs in their company, who had betrayed every leader whom he ever served, and now contrived to delay the pursuit until the Amir was over the Afghan border, beyond which they might not follow him. All his family, except two sons, were in our hands.

So fair was the prospect, that it was generally expected that the English forces were about to withdraw and leave Shah Shuja and his subjects to themselves. But there was a fear that Dost Mohammad might find allies among the chiefs of the Hindu-Kush, and descend again upon Kabul. It was therefore arranged that for the present the greater part of the army should remain in Afghanistan.

Dost Mohammad continued a source of alarm for the next few months; as he said of himself, "I am like a wooden spoon; you may throw me hither and thither but I shall not be hurt." At one time he was a prisoner in Bokhara; then he escaped, and led General Sale up and down Kohistan. There was universal terror when in an engagement early in November he rode with

his blue standard into the front of the battle, and drove the 2nd Bengal Cavalry before him in headlong rout.

Next day, Sir William Macnaghten was returning from his evening ride, dolefully meditating upon a letter just received from Burnes, who considered that nothing was left for the force but retirement on Kabul. As he came near the Residency, a horseman rode up to him and asked whether he were the Envoy. When assured of this, the stranger announced, "The Amir is here." "What Amir?" asked Macnaghten. "Dost Mohammad Khan"—and the Dost rode up, sprang from his horse, and gave his sword into the Envoy's hands.

In spite of his success, he had realised that the game was ended for the present, and he knew that the English would be fantastically generous to a vanquished foe.

For ten days he remained in Kabul, as guest rather than prisoner, visited by all the officers of the garrison, who, we are told, "did all they could to soothe his feelings." When he was sent down under escort to India, there was general regret that such a "wonderful fellow" should have been deposed in favour of Shuja.

His last act in Kabul was characteristic of the man. Macnaghten, to assist in the process of

soothing his feelings, sent a shawl-merchant to his tent, with instructions that the Dost was to choose any shawls that he pleased. The prisoner carefully selected the best, pricing them himself. When the English officers were all out of the way he sent again for the merchant. "I have made the Feringhis pay twice the value of the shawls; give me the half of your profits on them."

With our most dangerous enemy a prisoner in Ludhiana, all seemed fair weather. When it was evident that our occupation of Kabul was to be prolonged, officers had sent for their wives and families to enjoy the cool, bracing air of the north. Lady Macnaghten was there, and Lady Sale, the wife of the General. English and Afghans enjoyed each other's sports, the Afghans entering horses for the English races, or watching cricket and football, the English betting on fights of cocks or quails. Wrestling matches were popular, and when the lake near Kabul was frozen over, the Afghans, who could beat the Englishmen in sliding, were amazed at seeing them skate. Afghan chiefs received English officers at their houses, and were entertained in turn. Plays acted by the English were a great amusement to an Afghan audience, when translated as they went on, by Burnes, who was still at Kabul, as he said himself, "in the most nondescript of situations"

—his employment being "to draw a large salary every month, and give advice that was never taken."[1]

In August 1841, Macnaghten could write, "The country is perfectly quiet from Dan to Beersheba."

Yet signs of storm had been plain from the beginning to those who had eyes to see. Some had been foresighted or honest enough to protest against the whole proceeding, but their warnings were unheeded. Our Sikh auxiliaries were mutinous; the old Lion of the Punjab had died on the very day on which our forces had left Kandahar for Ghazni, and the weak hands of his successor could not hold the reins. It was all too evident that Shah Shuja was not popular with his subjects; he was haughty and miserly, too proud to give his daughters in marriage to the chiefs, but keeping them within his palace, unwed. Dost Mohammad, whatever his shortcomings, had at least been accessible to gentle and simple; any man might cling to his skirt, when he rode forth, and call for justice. But this King was never to be seen unless surrounded by white-faced infidels, who helped him to gather in his taxes.

So there were revolts and insurrections all over the country; the Khaibaris were discontented, the Ghilzais rose, right and left; Akbar Khan, son of

[1] Kaye.

the Dost, heedless of his father's injunctions to come in and make peace, was moving about on the Bamian frontier.

Worst of all, the Government of India was beginning to find that a puppet king is a costly toy. At least a million and a quarter a year were drained from their Treasury for the support of Shah Shuja, and they were beginning to feel that they did not get their money's value. The Court of Directors, therefore, urged Macnaghten to cut down expenses.

It has always been characteristic of English policy to be extravagant where there is no need, and to be miserly where the occasion calls for lavishness. Macnaghten had begun by scattering gold with both hands; now, to save a few thousands, he cut down the stipends of the chiefs of Kohistan, whose duty it was to keep the mountain passes open, and answer for any outrages committed within their jurisdiction. "At a time when the maintenance of our position in Afghanistan depended on our army, and our army alone,"[1] we broke our compact with the men who had it in their power to cut off communications with India.

The Ghilzais had ever refused to submit to a conqueror. In the days of Nadir Shah they had

[1] Malleson.

fled to the depths of their hills, where for months together they lived upon such roots as they could dig out of the snow, sending him a handful with the message, "So long as we can find these, we will not submit." While their pay was continued, it was to their interest to be the friends of the English; but if bribery was no longer to be used they had little fear of coercion. Accordingly, the word was passed round, and at the beginning of October, 1841, the Kurd Kabul pass was blocked.

This was doubly inconvenient, as Sir William Macnaghten was on the point of returning to India, having been appointed Governor of Bombay, in recognition of his services. With him was to travel General Elphinstone, who had applied to be relieved from the command at Kabul. Loved and respected by nearly all who knew him, he had two fatal defects—he had no Indian experience, and he was almost helpless with fever and rheumatic gout. For a time he had struggled to do his work, but after three months of "almost incessant severe illness," he had realised that to remain "would be useless to the public service and distressing to himself."

The journey had to be postponed—"for a fortnight," they said, little guessing that it was to be for ever. Hints of their danger were given on all sides, but no one in authority would heed them.

It was known that Shuja's own servants were conspiring with the enemy; a friendly chief warned an English officer, who sent on the intelligence to Burnes, that "all Afghanistan was determined to get rid of the Feringhis, and that the whole country was ready to break out."

But nothing was done—no attempt even was made to strengthen our position at Kabul. At first our troops had been quartered in the strong fortified palace called the "Bala Hissar," but in the previous year Shah Shuja had demanded this for his harem, and Macnaghten had yielded. The cantonments were in the worst possible position, on a piece of low swampy ground, commanded on all sides by hills and forts, and the commissariat stores had been placed outside, in a detached building, which would be practically indefensible in the event of an uprising.

It was small wonder if the Afghans believed that the infidels had been blinded by God, and given over to them for a prey.

XVI.

THE ILLUSTRIOUS GARRISON—
NOVEMBER 1841–APRIL 1842

"Trust in God, but tether your camel."—*Arab Proverb.*

XVI.

THE ILLUSTRIOUS GARRISON—

November 1841–April 1842.

Some time before the Afghanistan campaign, the 13th was reckoned among the worst of all regiments in her Majesty's service.

The greater number of its men died from the effects of the Burmese climate, and the ranks were filled up with the offscourings of the London streets and jails—a sullen, ill-conditioned rabble, whom the first taste of discipline impelled to covert mutiny. Several officers were shot; there were attempts to stab others, and letters poured in upon the Colonel, Robert Sale, threatening to serve him in like manner.

After receiving one of these, the Colonel would put it into his pocket, ride down to parade, and give the order to the regiment to load with blank cartridge and fire, sitting unmoved before them,

an easy target—then turn away, remarking, "Ah, if you don't shoot me, it's not my fault."

It took what modern disciplinarians would consider an inhuman amount of flogging to reduce the regiment to order; but it was done, with the result that the 13th became "as quiet as lambs" (excepting when they were called upon to fight), and adored their commander, whom they had nicknamed "Fighting Bob."

His habit of riding two miles ahead of his men, and engaging hand to hand in every action, made for popularity with the rank and file, though it caused needless anxiety to his staff, who repeatedly urged that a general was not required to do the work of a private. To all remonstrances Sale returned promises of amendment, but was certain to be in the forefront of the next battle, his vivid blue eyes dancing with excitement.

He had marched to Kabul in 1839, having by this time become a brigadier-general. When his regiment stormed Ghazni, he fought his way through the breach, and was gripped by a gigantic Afghan, in whose embrace he rolled over and over, among fallen stones and shivered beams, until for a moment he came uppermost, and was enabled to cleave the chief's skull with a blow of his sabre.

In the shower of honours that descended upon the Mission after the occupation of Kabul, Sale was made a K.C.B. Experts have decided that he was nothing of a general, avoiding responsibility, and lacking dash and initiative. He had at least enough military knowledge to protest against giving up the Bala Hissar to Shah Shuja's harem, and quartering the Mission in cantonments.

Reliefs having come up to Kabul, it was arranged that Sale's brigade should go down to India, and accordingly they started at the beginning of October. The force included the 13th and the 35th Native Infantry, a squadron of the 5th Bengal Light Cavalry, and a hundred of the very irregular and highly efficient Corps of Sappers, whom Captain George Broadfoot had raised among the broken clans of the hills, some of whom had begun by fighting against the English with almost as much energy and goodwill as they were to display in fighting for them.

They found the passes blocked—for the reason already explained,—and had to fight their way through the Butkak gorge and the Tazin valley, down to the military post of Gandamak, having sustained a certain number of casualties, and lost great part of their baggage in the skirmishes with the Ghilzais.

It was while they rested at Gandamak that disquieting rumours began to be spread abroad. No news had reached them from Kabul for nearly three weeks; the tribesmen of the valley, who at first had been eager to make their submission and bring supplies, were now swaggering with more than their usual insolence, and swept off most of the cattle turned out to graze beyond the walls. On November 10th came ill news. There had been an insurrection at Kabul; Sir Alexander Burnes had been murdered in his own house, with his brother and William Broadfoot, and their bodies cast into the street; Shah Shuja was besieged in the Bala Hissar, and the English Mission in its cantonments. Macnaghten sent orders that Sale was to return to Kabul "at all risks."

Whether the majority of the council of war that decided to disobey this order were right or wrong, is a question for military experts. So far as Sale was concerned, the return to Kabul must have been what he most desired; his wife, to whom he was devoted, and his lately married daughter, had both been left in the Mission cantonment. But he was too honest to deny his conviction that the return was, "in a military sense, impracticable." There were three hundred sick and wounded, whom he durst not

leave at Gandamak, and could not take back to Kabul; the whole of the camp equipage was destroyed, he had little transport, and only a limited amount of ammunition. He could not even remain where he was, since he was unable to command food or water for a day, and was hemmed in on all sides by hostile tribes, who might at any moment seize upon Jalalabad, and cut off his little force entirely.

So the decision was made, not to return to Kabul, but to march upon Jalalabad before the Afghans had taken possession of it.

The citizens of Jalalabad imagined that the English were on their way down to Hindustan, and when on the 12th of November they beheld Sale's brigade marching in at one city gate, they fled helter-skelter through another, too much surprised to think of resistance. The city and all it contained was in the hands of the English, without a shot having been fired.

Yet, when they came to examine their prize, there seemed little reason for exultation. The old winter capital of the Daurani kings had fallen into complete decay. There were three circles of ramparts around it, all broken or embedded in houses. The ditches were filled up, "to the consistency of thoroughfares," and roads led across and over the ramparts into the coun-

try. "There was a space of four hundred yards together, on which none of the garrison could show themselves excepting at one spot; the population within was disaffected, and the whole enceinte was surrounded by ruined forts, walls, mosques, tombs, and gardens, from which a fire could be opened upon the defenders at twenty and thirty yards."[1]

The stocks of provisions amounted to just one half-day's supply of flour, and some barley and Indian corn. All private baggage perforce had been left at Gandamak, and had been pillaged and burned by a regiment of Shah Shuja's cavalry quartered there, who made common cause with the rebels as soon as the brigade departed. Nothing had been brought on the march except such ammunition, hospital and commissariat stores as they had been able to collect.

As the wearied troops lay down to rest by companies, with their officers beside them, the tribesmen were flocking round the walls, fierce as wild bees disturbed from their nests. Their fires blazed in all directions; their wild dances and shouts of "Huk! huk!" resounded in the night. Some crept under cover of the ruins within earshot of the sentries, threatening the

[1] Sale.

infidels with death in hideous tortures if the town were not surrendered.

The first step in the defence was to put all ranks, soldiers and civilians alike, upon half-rations, and then to make each man do the work of four. George Broadfoot, appointed garrison engineer, set his men to collect wood from ruined houses and iron from the surrounding country. Foraging parties brought in firewood and provisions, so soon as a sally of eleven hundred of the garrison, three days after their arrival, had beaten off some five thousand of the enemy.

The defenders were greatly assisted by the Afghans themselves, who, in an access of excitement, set fire one night to every building within their reach—thereby destroying their own cover, and relieving Sale of one of his worst anxieties.

Towards the end of November the enemy began again to invest the walls and to harass the working parties; another sortie relieved this annoyance for the time, and the garrison had an interval in which to strengthen their defences and to add to their supplies. They had achieved so much against such odds that they might have been hopeful for the Kabul garrison; but the air was heavy with rumours of ill. No better authority could be found

for any of the stories than "They say"; only this much was certain, that on December 17th Sale received a despatch which he read and put into his pocket without a word.

"All quiet," is the entry in a diary kept by one of the garrison on January 1, 1842. Next day came a letter from Eldred Pottinger, written from Kabul on Christmas Day:—

"We have had a sad Comedy of Errors, or rather tragedy, here. Macnaghten was called out to a conference and murdered. We have interchanged terms on the grounds he was treating on for leaving the country; but things are not finally settled. However, we are to fall back on Jellalabad to-morrow or next day. In the present disturbed state of the country we may expect opposition on the road, and we are likely to suffer much from the cold and hunger, as we expect to have no carriage for tents and superfluities."

On the heels of the messenger came another, to say that the brigade which had marched from Kandahar to the relief of Kabul, had found the roads beyond Ghazni impassable from snow, and had fallen back. And then an intercepted despatch was brought in, addressed to one of the neighbouring chiefs by Dost Mohammad's son, Akbar Khan, now commanding the insurgents

at Kabul, which proclaimed a Holy War against the infidels, "whose chief I have slain with my own hand, as you, I trust, will in like manner slay the chief of the Feringhis in Jalalabad."

The next week was spent in anxious waiting for the arrival of the Kabul force. Some hoped that they might fight their way through the passes, like Sale's brigade, which had only mustered a quarter of their strength; but Sale had not been encumbered with helpless women and children, and thousands of servants and camp-followers. None could feel very hopeful; and most convinced of ill was Colonel Dennie of the 13th, who had shown conspicuous gallantry during the march down to Jalalabad, and in command of the sortie on December 1st. Ever since the first ill-tidings came from the Mission, he had prophesied that the force would be annihilated. "You'll see," he repeated, "not a soul will escape from Kabul except one man; and he will come to tell us that the rest are destroyed."

On the 9th a flag of truce appeared at the gate of Jalalabad, borne by a few horsemen who proclaimed that they had come from Kabul, and bore a letter from General Elphinstone addressed to Captain Macgregor, the Political Agent with Sale's brigade.

It was ill reading for the Council of War hastily

summoned by the Agent and the General. The agreement for the evacuation of Afghanistan had been concluded; it was therefore the wish of Major Pottinger and General Elphinstone "that the troops at Jalalabad should return to India, commencing their march immediately after the receipt of this letter, leaving all guns, as also such stores and baggage as there may not be the means of carrying away."

The heads of the Jalalabad garrison wasted little time in debate. Macgregor's spies had told them that the tribes upon the road had been warned by Akbar Khan to attack the English as they retreated from Kabul; they knew that, to use Sale's own words, "the convention was forced from our Envoy and military commander with the knives at their throats." They therefore decided to remain where they were until ordered to retire by the Governor-General in Council.

On hearing the decision of their superiors, the men cheered loudly, and set to work with renewed vigour. All through the 11th and 12th they were busy digging a ditch to protect the north-west angle of the town, their arms piled close at hand, and the cavalry, with horses saddled, ready to sally to their help if any marauding party of the enemy should attack them.

A little after noon, on the 13th, the sentry posted on the ramparts looking towards Gandamak, called out that he saw a mounted man coming down the Kabul road. Officers crowded to the ramparts, and strained their eyes across the arid plain. The pony was wounded, stumbling, scarcely able to put one foot before the other; the man clung to its neck, unable to sit upright. As they looked, they saw by white face and tattered uniform that the rider was an Englishman. "Did I not say so?" cried Colonel Dennie. "Here comes the messenger!"

III.

The pony lay dead beneath the walls of Jalalabad; the man, Dr Brydon, sorely wounded but clear in mind, was telling his tale to the garrison. Some sixteen thousand men had left Kabul on January 6th; so far as he knew, he was the sole survivor.

Utterly demoralised, in spite of the bravery and coolness of individuals, the Envoy murdered, the General a helpless invalid, the next in command contumacious and insubordinate, the army out of heart and out of hand, instead of throwing themselves into the Bala Hissar, where they

might have held out for a year, the Mission had come to terms with Akbar Khan. Dost Mohammad was to be released from captivity; English and Sikh troops were to evacuate the country immediately, being assisted in their retreat by the Afghans "with money, protection, and provisions." Shah Shuja had permission to live where he pleased.

After Macnaghten's murder by Akbar Khan on the 23rd, the demoralisation of the force was complete. There was neither food nor forage left. Lady Sale's last meal in Kabul was cooked with her own mahogany dining-table. On January 6th, after the troops had been standing about, without food, in the deep snow for half the day, the retreat began.

We all know what followed—how the camp-followers, the sick, and the wounded dropped by the way, and lay down to die in the snow, Akbar Khan bidding his hordes not to blunt their knives on the worthless Hindus, but to follow up the English to the last man; how the tribesmen waited in the Khurd Kabul Pass and reaped their harvest of death, and the little children amused themselves with cutting the throats of wounded grenadiers; how, on the 9th, the women and children—some wearing no more than their night-dresses, and fasting since they left Kabul—

were delivered to Akbar Khan as the only means of saving their lives. Certain officers were also taken by him as hostages. The rest of the force —what was left of it—had struggled along under the Afghan fire from Khurd Kabul to Gandamak. On the right of the road at Gandamak is the hill where the survivors of the 44th Regiment, with only two cartridges left, made their last stand. They clubbed their muskets, and when they lay down for their last sleep, a ring of the enemy was piled dead around them.

Some few pushed on towards Jagdallack, to find a six-foot-high barrier of prickly holly barring the road. Many more dropped here—among them a Captain Dodgin, who, disabled as he was —having lost one leg, — nevertheless killed five Afghans before he was pulled down.

Only half a dozen mounted officers were left to struggle on towards Jalalabad on the morning of January 13th. Dr Brydon, who had lost his horse, owed his life to an old subahdar who saw him stumbling along on foot. "I am wounded unto death, sahib, and can go no farther; take my pony, and save yourself." Soon after Brydon had mounted, the pony was shot through the loins, but still it bore him on. His sword was broken by a Ghilzai's stone, and when an Afghan attacked him he could not defend himself.

Wounded in several places, he fell forward on his empty holsters; the Afghan thought he was going to draw a pistol, wheeled his horse and rode off. For the rest of the way the pony never went beyond a shuffling trot. Three more men had ridden with him to within four miles of Jalalabad; then one had dropped wounded, the other two had turned back to help him, and neither of the three was seen alive again. A squadron of cavalry sent out from Jalalabad brought in their dead bodies.

As the officers in Jalalabad listened to the story, perhaps some of them may have had ironical recollections of a passage in a letter of instructions sent from Kabul to their division ere it marched through the valley of Tazin: "Our security must depend mainly upon our own prudence and vigilance."

For the next three weeks, the garrison exercised prudence and vigilance in comparative peace. The foraging parties collected cattle and sheep; every tree and bush that could give cover to an enemy was cut down. All able-bodied camp-followers were enrolled, and armed for the most part with pikes made out of scraps of old iron; spare muskets and rifles were few, and ammunition was running short, so that when a salute was fired on February 12th, on hearing of the

birth of a Prince of Wales, "the guns were loaded with very small charges."

Sale was indefatigable, going out with his gun to the walls and firing at the enemy, as did the other officers, to save ammunition. He was no marksman, and the bullet usually went wide. "Ah, General, now," would come the dutiful exclamation of his Irish orderly, "wasn't that a beautiful shot? Sure, you nearly did for him!" To which Sale would make reply, "You lie! I didn't; it was a d—d bad shot."

When off duty the old man would sit for hours in silence, thinking of his wife and daughter captive among the Afghans. One of his officers told how he had seen the General sitting mute, with the tears running down his cheeks, until some alarm was given. "He was up in a moment, cheering and encouraging everybody."

Once his resolution failed, when on January 21st came the news that Colonel Wild, ordered to march from Peshawar to their relief, had been beaten back at Ali Masjid. Then he told his subordinates that he was convinced that they had no more hope of relief, and must make terms with Akbar Khan. Macgregor was of the same opinion. George Broadfoot was not, but in spite of his fierce opposition, it was agreed by the majority to treat for surrender. "I must con-

gratulate you on the figure you will cut if a relieving force should arrive just as you are marching out," said Broadfoot grimly, as the Council dissolved.

Colonel Dennie declared that in such a case he should not go.

"We should make you," was Broadfoot's stern answer; "faith must be kept."

And though he knew that a letter had gone to Akbar, proposing terms of surrender, he set his men at once to dig a ditch round the works. Meanwhile he wrought upon the officers' minds to such good purpose that when Akbar's reply came, requiring them all to set their seals to the agreement in pledge of faith, several were ready to declare with Broadfoot that this suspicion of their honesty was adequate ground for a rupture.

General Sale, who had made up his mind to surrender, did not relish opposition, and expressed himself with such vigour that the Council had to be adjourned for an hour to give every one time to cool down. It says much for all concerned that, after weeks of nerve-destroying toil and strain, they still retained such self-command as to meet again in perfect friendliness. By this time, all but Sale and Macgregor were convinced that the only possible course was to hold on, and die sword in hand, and Sale allowed his opinion

to be overridden by the majority. Macgregor gloomily hoped that they might not be brought to regret the terms he had made for them.

On the very next day came messengers from General Pollock, who had been appointed by Lord Auckland to command at Peshawar, promising that in no circumstances should the garrison at Jalalabad be forced to make a disastrous retreat.

Sale and Macgregor sat down to write to Pollock. Communications were usually carried on in French, for fear of their being intercepted, and the General strove to express himself in that language with indifferent success. His letter concludes: "After writing the above, the dreadful earthquake of this day a fait tomber deux bastions et plusieurs autres sont culles."

It was too true; at about eleven o'clock on February 19th, "the fruits of two months' labour were destroyed in a minute."[1] The loss of life was small, but "the parapets were completely ruined, the ramparts in some places cracked, five bastions thrown down, three breaches made in the walls, and one of the gates almost thrown down."

The plight of the garrison might now seem hopeless. Their defences were ruined, and the enemy were closing down again upon them. Just

[1] MS. diary of Lieut. Frere.

across the river they could see the white English tents, part of the spoil from the Kabul Mission, where Akbar Khan had pitched his camp to invest the city. But the shock was scarcely passed, when they seized spade and pickaxe. "Before night, a parapet of dry clods was thrown up, all round the town, and the breaches made impracticable. In a week, the whole was almost in as good a state of repair as before," and the enemy, seeing no trace of the damage, vowed that English witchcraft was very potent, since Jalalabad was the only place that had not suffered from the great earthquake.

The siege dragged on for the next few weeks. There were almost daily mild shocks of earthquake, and incessant harassings from the besiegers. Sometimes there were false alarms, as when all the troops were under arms to repel an attack, and found the enemy to be "two old walls, which in the moonlight had the appearance of compact bodies of men." On March 15th they rejoiced at the news that "Akbar had been wounded," but it proved to be merely an accidental injury from the discharge of a gun by one of the chief's servants, who in consequence was burned alive with his brother. Then a Mullah in the camp having prophesied that an earthquake would knock down all the city walls on a certain date, the enemy

turned out to wait for it, but were disappointed, as, though the earthquake came at the proper time, it was too slight to do any harm.

In order to divert the enemy's fire from the working parties, some of the officers dressed up a dummy in uniform, put a cocked hat on his head, and raised it above the parapet. This answered well enough until the Afghans discovered the trick. The bullets which the enemy wasted were thankfully picked up by the garrison, who had plenty of powder, but little else. One officer collected in a single day as many as a hundred and thirty bullets.

By the end of March, the garrison were nearly desperate; the stock of grain had run so low that the combatants only received quarter allowance; there was none for the camp-followers. The supply of salt meat was coming to an end, and not a single sheep or bullock was left. Up to this time the general health, in spite of incessant toil and short rations, had been excellent; now the camp-followers began to fall ill, and it was only a question of time for the sickness to spread among the fighting men.

A favourite manœuvre of the enemy at this time was to drive flocks of sheep, under an escort, as near as within six hundred yards from the crest of the glacis, in order to entice the garrison from

their defences. On the first of April a sortie succeeded in carrying off five hundred head of sheep, with the loss of one man killed and two or three wounded, in the very teeth of the enemy. When the sheep were distributed, the 35th Native Infantry sent a deputation to Sale; they were not used to much animal food, and could do without it—might their share be given to their English brothers, the 13th Regiment?

A little animal food was sorely needed to put heart into the garrison in the next few days; contradictory rumours of Pollock's movements came from one quarter and another, until, on the evening of the 5th, Macgregor's spies declared that he had been defeated and driven back from the Khyber Pass. Next morning the hills around Jalalabad were booming and echoing with the thunders of a royal salute from Akbar's camp, evidently in honour of some good news.

It seemed that the last stage had come, and the defenders of Jalalabad were ready to face it, as they had faced all else. Food was nearly all gone, ammunition was running short; it was better to make an end quickly. At daybreak next morning, they would throw themselves upon the enemy; it might be that they should clear the road for Pollock, after all—for a wild rumour had come in that Akbar Khan was breaking up

his camp in order to suppress a fresh revolution at Kabul; it might be that, even though Pollock were defeated, they would cut their way down to him. At any rate, they would die like men, not wait for the Afghans to crush them like flies.

Akbar was ready for them next morning, his army drawn up between a fort and the Kabul river. Only twelve men were left on guard at each gate of the city; the camp-followers manned the walls, and the garrison moved down to what might be their last fight. Colonel Dennie, leading his men to the attack, was shot, and died before he could be taken back to the city, and before he could know that the day was won. The troops manœuvred with as much coolness and precision as if they were on a field-day, and fought with a desperation that nothing could withstand. "The battle was over and the enemy in full retreat by about 7 A.M. We have made ourselves masters of two cavalry standards, recaptured four guns lost by the Kabul and Gandamack forces, the restoration of which to our Government is a matter of much honest exultation among our troops, seized and destroyed a great quantity of material and ordnance stores, and burnt the whole of the enemy's tents."

So wrote Sale, flushed with the pride of a "com-

plete and signal" victory, gained at the cost of eleven killed and about fifty wounded. The only member of the garrison who had reason for dissatisfaction with the day's work was George Broadfoot, who, having been shot through the thigh in the month of March, was not sufficiently recovered to take any part in the action.

The tide had turned; the country-folk crowded to the gates of Jalalabad, bringing food and supplies. On the 14th came news that Pollock had succeeded in doing what the army of no ruler of India, from the great Akbar himself up to that time, had ever achieved, and had forced the Khyber Pass. On April 16th, the band of the 13th played him into Jalalabad, to the Jacobite air, "Oh, but ye've been lang o' coming."

XVII.

THE END OF AN EXPERIMENT—1842

"There is another world for the expiation of guilt; but the wages of folly are payable here below."—LORD ACTON.

XVII.

THE END OF AN EXPERIMENT—1842.

If Pollock had been "lang o' coming" to the relief of the beleaguered city it was not his fault. On his arrival at Peshawar, he found almost complete demoralisation. The disastrous repulse of Wild's brigade at the mouth of the Khyber Pass had put the finishing touches to what the fate of the Kabul Mission had begun. Our allies, the Sikhs, were openly disaffected, refusing obedience, and tampering with the sepoy regiments. The sepoys were horror-stricken at the sight of the miserable camp-followers, survivors from Kabul, some of whom had straggled back to Peshawar, mutilated and frost-bitten. Moreover, they feared to lose their caste in Afghanistan, where "red mutton" (beef) was often the only food to be had. In the brigade of four regiments, no less than one thousand men were returned as sick. The demoralisation had

spread to some of the English officers, who publicly expressed the opinion that to force the Khyber would be to lose more than half their men, and that it would be better to leave Jalalabad to its fate rather than to risk another advance.

Happily there were still some Englishmen in Peshawar ready to take any odds. There was Mr Mackeson, for instance, whose capture of the fort of Ali Masjid, in the heart of the Khyber, was a feat worthy of the Black Douglas, or of Du Guesclin. Sent with a small party of friendly Eusafzais to make a survey in the neighbourhood, it had occurred to him that it might be possible to surprise the fort, and he proved it. When he and his men had settled themselves in the place of the Afghan garrison, they discovered that Ali Masjid's one strategic defect was the absence of any water-supply. So Mackeson proclaimed to the tribesmen swarming round the fort, upon whom his men practised their shooting, that he would restore to them the bodies of their dead, in return for two skins of water apiece. This process of barter went on for some time, to the satisfaction of both parties. Mackeson fell ill, and, unable to walk, was carried on his rounds, until the provisions ran out. Then, as Wild's repulse forbade all hope of securing more supplies, the garrison of Ali Masjid cut their way back to Peshawar. There, in spite

of being only a civilian, Mackeson was appointed to command a levy of native pioneers, with whom at length he marched to Kabul.

But for one like Mackeson, there were many who openly declared that all was lost. Pollock, kindliest and most even-tempered of men, had need of all his tact and patience. He visited the sick in hospital on the day after his arrival; he ordered warm stockings and gloves to be supplied to the shivering sepoys. He forbade the Sikh troops to enter his camp. He personally expostulated or reasoned with those who were notoriously faint-hearted. A lesser man, eager for self-advertisement, or overcome by the urgency of the need at Jalalabad, might have ruined all by a precipitate advance; Pollock would not stir until he could trust his forces.

He never would have been able to write, after the first action in the Khyber, "The sepoys behaved nobly; they are in the highest spirits, and have a thorough contempt for the enemy," if he had not taught them to trust him within Peshawar.

Once at Jalalabad, he was again doomed to months of inactivity—this time, not through the fault of his men, but through the policy of the Governor-General. Lord Auckland had sailed for England, his last recommendation urging the

rescue of the English prisoners; Lord Ellenborough, his successor, arrived committed to a policy of peace, and seemingly indifferent what price he paid for it. He had written a warm letter of appreciation to Sale, calling the defenders of Jalalabad "that illustrious garrison"—a name which has clung to them ever since; otherwise he was weary of the whole Afghan imbroglio, and only wished to get it off his hands as quickly as possible.

There was a certain amount of excuse for withdrawal in the fact that our puppet had been broken to pieces. Left at Kabul after January 6th, still nominally King of Afghanistan, he had been torn hither and thither by contending interests, now vowing to the chiefs to lead a holy war against the infidel, now writing long and plaintive letters to the Governor-General, swearing unalterable faith, and begging for money. His own people distrusted him, and hated his parsimony; the Government of India, having no more money to throw away, could only be liberal with advice.

"I always said to Sir William Macnaghten that this affair would end badly," he complains in one of his letters; and it was to end badly for him as well as for those who had tried to use him for their own ends. Forced by the chiefs to leave Kabul, in order to place himself at the head of the

army to be sent against Jalalabad, he was carried in a chair of state from the Bala Hissar to the camp. As he went towards his tent an ambush fired upon him. He sprang from the chair, and ran across a field, trying to shelter in a ditch. "For God's sake, save me! What offence have I done?" he vainly cried. The murderers finished their work; the body was taken back to Kabul, where it remained unburied for months, until it was thrown into a ruinous mosque. The cannons that had wakened the echoes of Jalalabad on April 6th, were fired by Akbar on receiving the intelligence of the murder.

From first to last, jewels play a part in Shuja's story. He had been in the habit of carrying those which he most valued in a small bag at his girdle; as he ran from his assassins, he cast it from him. An Afghan, coming to look at the dead king, picked up the bag, and showed its contents to a townsman of Kabul, who persuaded him that they were only coloured glass, and made a favour of giving him ten pounds for them. The Afghan, a "savage hillman," was pleased with his bargain; so was the trader, who had acquired what was worth many thousands at a trifling expenditure—until he was summoned before the chief who had slain Shah Shuja, and bidden to disgorge, if he would not be blown from a gun. Once more

the king's jewels changed hands, and the unhappy trader was dismissed without repayment of the ten pounds.

Shah Shuja for the time was replaced by his second son, but the Government of India were not prepared to do anything for his assistance. They had enough to do to pay for imposing one poor king upon a people who did not want him. On April 29th, Pollock received instructions; Nott was to evacuate Kandahar and retire upon Quetta, while he was "to withdraw every British soldier from Jalalabad to Peshawar."

As for the prisoners in the hands of the Afghans, the women and children, and the hostages, they were to be left to their fate.

"A soldier only knows his orders"; but happily some soldiers have known how to obtain the orders they desired. Knowing that to disobey might be his ruin, Pollock, nevertheless, on receipt of this letter, wrote at once to Nott, requiring him on no account to retire, whatever commands he might receive from other quarters, until he should hear from him again. "Stopping Nott for a few days after his receipt of orders to retire, was perhaps a very bold step," Pollock wrote in after years, "but I looked upon it as the only safe course to pursue, and it succeeded. If it had not succeeded, I knew that I might lose my commission, but I felt pretty

certain that if we worked together in earnest, the game would be ours."

Nott was of a different type to Pollock. A man of no birth, soured by having been passed over for promotion in favour of others with better connections or manners, his crabbed temper and habit of telling unpleasant truths without consideration for his superiors' feelings had prevented his being sent to command at Kabul in the previous year. He hated the thought of retiring from Afghanistan as much as any man could, but had seen no alternative; he now gladly undertook not to move without Pollock's sanction.

In the meanwhile Pollock had written to the Governor-General, boldly asserting that in his opinion it was essential to remain or even to advance "to uphold the character of the British nation," and such a storm of resentment was rising in India, and at home, that Lord Ellenborough, although he affected indifference to public opinion, was obliged to bow to it. Pollock's astute representations as to the difficulty of moving in the height of summer, gained him leave to remain where he was until October. On July 4th, Ellenborough wrote to him and to Nott, suggesting that "perhaps General Nott might feel disposed to retire from Kandahar to the provinces of India by the route of Ghazni, Kabul, and Jellalabad;

and that perhaps General Pollock might feel disposed to assist the retreat of the Kandahar force by moving forward upon Kabul." But if done at all, it must be on their own responsibility.

A glance at the map will show that there was justification for the comment of certain persons that this was to recommend a retreat to London from York by the route of Edinburgh.

Sale wrote at once to Nott, asking what course he meant to adopt. Historians say that there is no truth in the tradition that his message was in two words only—"Advance, Nott." By the middle of August, a reply came to say that Nott was about to adopt the Governor-General's suggestion as to the line of his retreat.

The force at Jalalabad had been suffering cruelly from the inevitable reaction. The water was bad; bare food was procurable, but no luxuries of any sort. A plague of flies poisoned everything. Men dropped in scores with dysentery and fever, and those who were still able to drag themselves about, looked like ghosts. But at the news of the advance, all was changed. Sir Robert Sale, "so excited that he could scarcely write," assured the General that he would take no carriage from the commissariat, and that his officers were ready to "double up four" in one of the little sepoy tents, generally considered inadequate

protection from the sun for English soldiers. He and Pollock were so luxurious as to take one of these tents apiece. Broadfoot offered to take his Sappers up to Kabul with no tents at all. As for carriage, at Pollock's suggestion, the mounted troopers could carry grain in their spare pairs of trousers.

Thus they made their way up through the mountain passes, where the dead bodies of Elphinstone's army lay so thick where they had fallen that the guns had to be driven over them. In many cases the features were "hideously perfect," and could be recognised. In the valley of Tazin, Pollock's forces had a decisive encounter with the Afghans, who, occupying the high ground, fired down upon them as they charged up-hill. The heights were won by the bayonet, and Broadfoot's Sappers distinguished themselves by "clambering up the steepest ascents under the hottest fire." Meanwhile Nott had advanced from Kandahar, retaken Ghazni, and reached Kabul, the day after Pollock had planted the flag on the Bala Hissar.

Akbar had fled towards the Hindu-Kush, and the chief to whom he had entrusted the greater part of his captives was susceptible to the arguments of George Lawrence and Eldred Pottinger, especially when backed with substantial bribes.

A few days after arriving at Kabul, Sir Robert Sale was noticed to be unusually excitable and restless, spending the day in excursions from his own tent to Pollock's, and back again. He had heard that Lady Sale and his daughter were actually on their way to Kabul, with several other ladies and their children, and some officers and privates who had shared their captivity. It was on the 20th of September that Sale met the captives in the hills to the south-east of Kabul. No one could speak, least of all Sale himself, who twisted his face into horrible grimaces, and galloped away when one of the officers tried to congratulate him.

After this, there was no more to detain the army in Kabul, and after blowing up the bazaar in which Macnaghten's mutilated body had been exposed, and the mosque built by the Afghans to commemorate their triumph, the homeward march was begun.

All the fruit of the Mission to Afghanistan was a pair of sandal-wood gates, which Lord Ellenborough had commanded Nott to bring away from Ghazni, being persuaded that these were the gates which Mahmud the Idol-breaker had carried off from the temple of Somnauth. Unluckily, it was discovered that they were of a later date than the eleventh century, and so,

instead of being restored with great ceremony to the Brahmans, they were left in the Fort at Agra, where they may be seen to this day.

Our prestige was gone, our honour stained. Sikhs and sepoys had learned that we could be worsted outright, and were to apply the lesson within a few years. As for Afghanistan, in a little while all was as before our intervention, save that certain chiefs, who had been more or less friendly, were left, as they complained, "in the mouth of lions," to reckon with Dost Mohammad.

Finally, the affair had cost the Government of India more than eight millions of money.

The principal actors in the story met with varying fates. In October 1842, Dost Mohammad, released from a nominal captivity, returned to Kabul, where he ruled with great success, and by one of the strangest of Time's revenges, was destined to stand our friend at a time when the English dominion in India was trembling in the balance.

Sale came home, to be feasted and honoured, then returned to India to die a soldier's death in the battle of Mudki; his daughter married again, and she and her second husband were among the first victims of the Indian Mutiny.

Dr Brydon, being in Lucknow in 1857, was

severely wounded, but survived the siege, and ended his days in England.

Pollock was over eighty years of age before he was gazetted Field-Marshal, as a tardy recognition of his services; Nott was invalided home to die, about a year after the Afghan campaign.

George Broadfoot was made a Companion of the Bath, and first appointed Commissioner of Moulmein, then made Agent to the Governor-General on the Sikh frontier. At the battle of Ferozeshah he was mortally wounded—"an irreparable loss," as Sir Henry Hardinge testified.

Lord Ellenborough was created an Earl, as Lord John Russell pointed out to the House of Commons, for supplying provisions to the troops already collected by Lord Auckland, and for "not preventing" the forward operations against Ghazni and Kabul.

XVIII.

THE HEIRS OF RANJIT SINGH—
1839-1845

"There are perhaps no characters in history more repulsive than Rajas Gulab Singh and Dhian Singh. Their splendid talents and their undoubted bravery count as nothing in the presence of their atrocious cruelty, their avarice, their treachery, and their unscrupulous ambition."

—Sir L. Griffin.

XVIII.

THE HEIRS OF RANJIT SINGH— 1839-1845.

The lion was dead, and his prey was left to the jackals.

Miss Eden's lively pen has described the principal personages at Lahore in 1838. There was Kharak Singh, the half-imbecile heir-apparent, and Nao Nahal Singh, his son, "very interesting-looking, with enormous black eyes"; Sher Singh, "a very jolly dog," always ready to sit at table and drink with the English Mission, though he declined eating with them, and his seven-year-old boy, Pertab Singh, "a dear, good child, with eyes as big as saucers, and emeralds bigger than his eyes." There was Ajit Singh of the great Sindhanwalia clan, whose extraordinary cleverness made a great impression upon the Governor-General; there were Hira Singh, "a handsome boy, loaded with emeralds and pearls," Dhian

Singh, Hira Singh's father, the Prime Minister, "uncommonly good-looking," and his brother Suchet Singh, "the great dandy of the Punjab."

Had any one with second-sight looked upon these chiefs during the festivities given in honour of Lord Auckland's visit, he would have seen the winding-sheets rising high about them all.

Dhian Singh, Suchet Singh, and their brother Gulab Singh, were the evil geniuses of the Khalsa. Their rise dated from the time when Gulab Singh, a common *sowar* or trooper of the Dogra tribe, having killed his enemy in a feud, took refuge in Ranjit's tent during a review of the troops. His audacity pleased the Maharaja, who took him into favour, and with him rose his two brothers. Of Gulab Singh no one appears to have had any good to say. Dhian Singh's pleasing manners gained him a certain amount of liking, which wore off upon a better acquaintance. Next to Ranjit, he was the most able of all the Sikhs, and, like him, he was wholly illiterate.

In the last years of Ranjit's life Dhian Singh's influence was paramount; no one was allowed to enter the Maharaja's presence without his leave, and even Kharak Singh and Sher Singh were obliged sometimes to wait for hours and to bribe attendants before they were admitted. Ranjit made a great favourite of Hira Singh, whose chair

was set in durbar when every one else must stand, and would scarcely let him out of his sight. Both father and son were allowed to enter Ranjit's zenana at their pleasure, and the women feared and served Dhian Singh more than their own lawful master. Dhian lost no opportunity of impressing on Ranjit that Prince Kharak Singh was an idiot, and expected that the old Maharaja's fondness for Hira Singh would cause the boy to be appointed as his successor.

All his schemes were upset when Ranjit on his deathbed proclaimed Kharak Singh to be his heir, telling Dhian Singh that the only return he expected for his past favours was that the Prime Minister would be loyal to the new Maharaja.

The day after Ranjit's death, his corpse was burned on a sandal-wood pyre before the palace gates. Four of his queens, and seven Kashmiri slave-girls of great beauty, dressed in their richest *saris* and jewels, burned with him. The chief Rani, ere she died, took the hand of Dhian Singh, and placing it on the breast of the dead Maharaja, bade him swear to be true man to Kharak Singh and his son, and faithful to the Khalsa; then Kharak Singh, in his turn, swore to be true master to Dhian Singh. The women, sitting round their dead, neither wept nor shrieked as the flames rose; but Dhian shed tears, and four times strove to

spring upon the burning pyre, and four times was held back by those who stood near him.

It would have been better for the new Maharaja, and for the country, if the Prime Minister had been allowed to fulfil his intention. There were varying opinions about the measure of Kharak Singh's imbecility; "some people say he only affects it, to keep Ranjit from being jealous of him, but it looks like very unaffected and complete folly," says Miss Eden. He was certainly not equal to his Prime Minister, with whom he fell out in a few weeks. Their differences began with his forbidding Dhian Singh and Hira Singh to enter the royal zenana for the future; when Dhian Singh protested that he could no longer govern the Punjab if he were not conversant with all the intrigues of the women, Kharak listened to a favourite who declared that if the Prime Minister would not do his duty, others might be found to take his place.

At the beginning of October, rumours, fathered by the Dogra brothers, were flying around the bazaars, that the Maharaja was going to put himself under British protection, to pay six annas out of every rupee in the revenue to the Company, and to disband the army of the Khalsa. The soldiers were furious, and when Nao Nahal Singh made a rapid journey from Peshawar to Lahore,

summoned by a messenger from Dhian Singh, he and the three brothers had no difficulty in getting into the palace by night, killing the favourite, and sending the Maharaja prisoner to the fort.

From that time, though Kharak Singh sometimes appeared at durbars in his royal robes, he was to all intents a prisoner, and all authority was in the hands of the young prince. It is said that Dhian Singh widened the breach between father and son by carrying false reports of one to the other, and by contriving that they should not meet, even when, in his dying agonies, the Maharaja called upon his son to come and receive his forgiveness. Some say that Kharak Singh died of a broken heart; the process may have been hastened by the acetate of lead and corrosive sublimate mixed with his food.

One solace was left to him in his captivity, the Koh-i-Nur, which he wore upon his arm. It is said that Ranjit had come to dread its curse, and though he could not bring himself to part with it during his lifetime, he ordered upon his deathbed that it should be sent to a Hindu temple, in spite of the remonstrances of his sirdars, who pleaded that such a diamond would purchase Hindustan itself. But the Court jeweller refused to part with it, unless the order were signed by the Maharaja, who by that time was unable even to

make the impression of his five fingers on paper, and the diamond passed to Kharak, who wore it until his agonies were cut short by death, thirteen months after his deposition.

Nao Nahal Singh was not yet twenty years of age, capable, energetic, with much of his grandfather's ability but with little of his shrewdness. He disliked the English, and is said to have drawn his sword in open durbar and vowed to use it against them. It is certain that during his regency, the arsenals at Lahore were filled, anti-English emissaries were stirring up strife in various quarters, and it was debated whether the English troops should be allowed to pass through the Punjab on their way to and from Afghanistan. Nothing but the watchfulness, tact, and diplomacy of George Russell Clerk, then Political Agent for Sikh affairs, could have prevented a rupture. As it was, wiser counsels prevailed; Dhian Singh, though he fervently hated the English, saw that it might be fatal to pick a quarrel with them, and the new Maharaja had not declared war when he attended the funeral ceremonies the day after his father's death.

The corpse was burned near the mausoleum of Ranjit Singh, and with it burned three slave-girls, and one of Kharak's ranis, Ishar Kour, a most beautiful woman whom Ranjit had sent to his son

from his own zenana. Kharak's principal rani, Chand Kaur, always jealous of her "sister-wife," now forced her to become *sati*, in spite of her entreaties. The sun was hot, and Nao Nahal grew very weary, and insisted, in defiance of etiquette, in going down to the bank of the Ravi to make the ceremonial ablutions, before the pyre was consumed. As custom forbade him to ride past the burning place, his elephants waited for him at a little distance. The washing was done, and the Maharaja walked back, hand-in-hand with his favourite companion, the eldest son of Gulab Singh. "He had to pass first through a gateway, then across a courtyard, and lastly through a deep archway leading from this courtyard to the spot on which the corpse had been burned, and near which the elephants were now in waiting."[1] On the threshold of the archway, he called for water, but there was none. All the sacred Ganges water brought for the funeral rites had been sprinkled upon the pyre. "An evil omen!" murmured the sirdars; the Maharaja laughed. At that moment came a crashing sound; the parapet wall collapsed, and beams, stones, tiles, and bricks fell upon the heads of the two who stood beneath the archway.

Gulab Singh's son was killed instantaneously by the largest of the stones; the Maharaja was still

[1] Carmichael Smyth.

breathing when Dhian Singh lifted him and placed him in a palki. He was carried to the garden-house of the fort, the doors were locked, and not even his wives allowed to enter.

Letters were sent to Multan, to Peshawar, and even to Mr Clerk, to say that the Maharaja was injured but expected to recover. According to one story, his mother, Chand Kaur, came and beat at the gates of the fort with her own hands, and was not admitted. Dhian Singh pacified her with an assurance that she should reign in her son's stead, if she would hold her tongue for the next few hours. Meanwhile he was sending messengers post-haste to Sher Singh, who was then some eighty miles away, and placing relays of horses all along the road for his use. When the prince arrived, it was acknowledged that Nao Nahal Singh had died within an hour of the accident, and his body was burned with two of his ranis.

There were ugly rumours that the fall of the masonry was caused not by accident but by the arrangement of Dhian Singh, who had found the young Maharaja unfriendly and intractable, and that when the parapet wall failed to kill, he had completed the business in the garden-house. So many crimes can justly be laid to Dhian Singh's account, that it is not worth while to argue the case for and against him over this one.

II.

Whether the Maharaja's death were a murder or a casualty, it was necessary to conceal it until Sher Singh's arrival, if the throne were not to be seized by the rival claimant, Chand Kaur.

There is a custom among the Sikhs that, in default of male issue, a widow succeeds in preference to a brother. Chand Kaur was a spirited woman, who had already seized upon the Koh-i-Nur, and she was ready to do battle for the throne. She had her supporters, among them Ajit Singh, her lover—for she was still comely though no longer young, and growing very stout. On the other hand, though every one knew the true story of Sher Singh's birth, even a spurious son of the great Maharaja made appeal to the army, with whom he was popular. Finding herself likely to be worsted, she declared that her daughter-in-law, one of Nao Nahal Singh's surviving widows, was expecting the birth of a child, which would necessitate a regency for at least six months.

Then followed wranglings as to who was to be regent. Sher Singh's party declared that fighting men could not be governed by a woman. "Eng-