ENGLAND, INDIA, AND AFGHANISTAN

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First printed in London in 1879
First Indian Edition: 1931

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AND

THE STORY OF AFGHANISTAN

OR

WHY THE TORY GOVERNMENT GAGS THE INDIAN PRESS

A Plea for the Weak against the Strong

BY

ANNIE BESANT

THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE
ADYAR, MADRAS, INDIA
1931

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CHAPTER I

FIRST STEPS IN A FAR-OFF COUNTRY

IN the year 1600 was granted the first charter to an English Company trading with the East Indies. The venture was a purely commercial one; it was set on foot by English merchants, and was carried on without any kind of Government aid, and without any suggestion of territorial aggrandisement. The charter gave them the sole right of trading with the East Indies—the sole right of trading with China had been given in like manner to Abraham Gilbert and his associates in 1583—and this charter was confirmed and added to both by James I and by Charles II. The company was incorporated under the name of the "Governor and Society of Merchants of London," and the charter declared: "That the Company, their factors, and servants, and assignees, in the trade of merchandise, shall for ever have the whole and sole trade and traffic, and the whole freedom, use, and privilege of trading and merchandising, to and from the East Indies, in such manner as before mentioned; and that the East

Indies, or isles and places thereof, shall not be used or haunted by any of the King's subjects against the true intent of the letters patents." The privilege thus granted was jealously maintained, and in 1683 we read of an action brought by the East India Company—thus commonly termed, in order to distinguish it from the China Company, the Turkey Company, the Barbary Company, and others, all of which held similar patents for trading with these various countries—against one Sandys, who had "traded and merchandised" without leave granted by the Company, and after long argument (several times adjourned) the Lord Chief Justice Jefferies gave judgment in favour of the plaintiff, Declaring that the grant of "the sole trade to the Indies, exclusive of others, is a good grant".

The first attempt to establish commercial relations between England and India had taken place in the year 1591, when three ships were fitted out to trade with the East Indies; only one of these reached India in safety, and three years afterwards a second and more successful attempt was made. By the year 1600, when the Company was incorporated, its stock amounted to £72,000, and from that time forward it kept up a steady trade.

The English, however, were not the first adventurers who were lured by a dream of gold and gems to the far-off Eastern land. Since Vasco de Gama sailed from Portugal in 1497, and landed after sore peril, on the coast of Malabar, many a bold

Portuguese had followed him on the path he traced across the sea. The first European settlement was founded by the Portuguese at Cochin, in Travancore, in the year 1502; they also made settlements at Goa, and at other points along the western coast. The Dutch, having landed in India for the first time in 1601, established a "United East India Company" in the following year; the French settled at Pondicherry in 1668, and India thus became a battle-field of rival commercial companies before the close of the seventeenth century. The chief English settlement was for some time at Surat, where a Captain Best had established a factory; but in 1662 Bombay, a Portuguese colony, was ceded to England as part of the dowry of Catherine of Portugal on her marriage with Charles II, and that monarch, finding it worth little, handed it over to the East India Company, "at a rent of £10 in gold, payable yearly"; and thenceforward Bombay became the centre of authority over their factories on the western coast. In 1652 Madras—which had been founded as Fort St. George thirteen years before—was raised to the same rank for the south-eastern coast; and in 1698 the Company purchased Calcutta from the ruler of Bengal, and to protect it they built the stronghold called Fort William. Thus were founded the three famous Presidencies: they took their humble title from the fact that in each there resided the President of the Council for the district, and they consisted only of a factory

a fort, some dwellings, and some acres of ground, bought of or rented from the native Governments; yet these were to expand into the mighty Indian Empire, in which 189,613,238 people own the absolute sway of the monarch of Great Britain, and an additional 50,325,457 are more or less under the same ruler's protection or pression. The attitude of the English traders towards the Indian princes was, at first, of the most submissive character; they were simple merchants, craving leave to trade peaceably with the people of the country. They were permitted to build factories, and they erected forts to guard these factories; here and there they purchased a plot of ground, in order that they might carry on their business undisturbed, and in 1624 they obtained permission to have complete jurisdiction over their own servants, for the sake of preserving order. The Indian princes troubled themselves but little about their various European visitors; their rivalries, their jealousies, their quarrels, were a matter of indifference to the rulers of Hindustan. Now and then there was a slight rupture of peaceable relations, such as the aggression on the Nawab of Bengal in 1685, which was promptly repulsed and severely punished; but as a rule the East India Company was a purely mercantile society, trading with the people of Hindustan, and the very submissive servant of the princes of the country in which it made its wealth. Before tracing the steps by which this company of

traders became the masters of Hindustan, it is necessary to point out some important facts that require to be steadily kept in mind, if we are to understand the history of British rule in India.

First come the varieties of climate and of race in the great Indian continent. "India" is not a single country and a single nation in the sense in which such terms are applied to England, France, or Spain: had it been so, our rule there would have been impossible. The area of Hindustan is computed at 1,280,000 square miles; its climate varies from the heat of the torrid zone, eight degrees from the equator, to the temperate warmth of 34° north latitude; it has table-lands 2,000 feet above the level of the sea, and mountain valleys lying 6,000 feet higher. Ten distinct nations, each with its own language, live in this vast land; the Indian Pundits have reckoned that no less than eighty-four varying tongues are spoken in Hindustan; but this estimate must include every dialect as a separate language, and cannot be accepted as implying as many nationalities as there are varieties of speech. We shall find that the jealousies and quarrels of these different nations made the conquest of them, one by one, a far simpler task than might be expected by those who regard "India" as they might regard any European State. Passing from this important factor in the conquest of India, let us try for a moment to see the country as it really was when the first English factories were raised upon its coasts.

Some, who think of all nations as barbarous which are not European, are in the habit of speaking of the natives of India as though they were rude and savage peoples, rightly subjugated by the English, and owing to this subjugation all "the blessings of civilisation". Such ignorant persons forget that the civilisation of the East—while differing in much from that of the West—is not less polished, not less dignified, not less literary, not less luxurious, and far more ancient than our own. Anyone who will take the trouble to wade through the works on India of J. Tieffenthaler, of Anquetil du Perron, and of J. Rennell, will find, almost on every page traces of a high civilisation. M. Tieffenthaler, in a monograph of the geography of Hindustan, takes us step by step through India, and we read of one town: "It is full of the warehouses of merchants, sellers of cottons, and money-changers, without reckoning the shops which expose flour, peas, salt, and other eatables . . . The roads, especially in the evening, are full of people anxious to sell or to buy." Of another town we are told: "It is a large city, handsome and populous. Its streets are planted with well-grown trees . . . Flower-beds fill up the vacant spaces." M. Tieffenthaler wrote of what he saw in 1743, and surely his descriptions imply a long-preceding period of wealth, tranquillity, and good order in Hindustan. Anquetil du Perron quotes from Graaf, writing of Patna in 1670: "It has a large and handsome castle, with

terraces and towers. We see there beautiful houses, gardens, pagodas . . . From one end of the town to the other runs a long street, full of shops, where trading is briskly carried on, and where skilful workmen are to be found." During the last century the West has made mighty strides in science; but none the less is it true that there were astronomers and mathematicians and philosophers in the East while our Western ancestors fought naked and painted in the thick German woods and among wild mountains of Scotland and of Wales. "There," says Phillimore, "while England was inhabited by a few savages, struggling with wolves and bears, and muttering some two or three scarcely articulated sounds, was once spoken a language of the most exquisitely refined construction, to which, in common with other European dialects, that of Greece owes its origin. There were written poems which have been read with rapture and admiration by those to whom Homer, Euripides, Sophocles, Pindar, Dante, and Shakespeare were familiar" (*History of England during the Reign of George III*, Vol. i). It ill beseems the nations of Europe to speak contemptuously of those elder peoples who rocked the cradle of civilisation while the West was sunk in barbarism, and from whom, indeed, the West received the germs of its culture and the outlines of its most revered traditions.

The Hindus are of the aristocracy of the East: learned, acute, subtle, dignified, courteous, they

dwelt in their own land, with no more disturbance among the varying races which inhabited India than was to be found at the same period among the varying peoples of the Continent of Europe. Their customs, their laws, their Governments were indeed different from those of the West, but the mass of the people were, in much, far better off than among ourselves to-day. "They had reared cities larger and fairer than Saragossa or Toledo, and buildings more beautiful and costly than the cathedral of Seville. They could show bankers richer than the richest firms of Barcelona or Cadiz; viceroys whose splendour far surpassed that of Ferdinand the Catholic; myriads of cavalry and long trains of artillery which would have astonished the Great Captain" (Macaulay's *Essays*, p. 502). The very existence of these great bankers proves the general tranquillity of the country and the general respect for property; had India been the turbulent, anarchical country which some writers are pleased to describe, it would have been impossible for a class of wealthy bankers to exist: without settled government rich merchants are impossible.

In India there was no religious intolerance. "Neither Moslem nor Hindu was incapacitated for public employment on account of the belief in which he had been brought up. Muhammadan princes gladly confided to learned and astute Brahmins civil trusts of importance; and many a Mussalman rose to honour and won fortune in a Maharajah's

camp . . . The Governments of Southern Asia, when we began to meddle in their affairs, were strangers to the system of penal laws, which were then among the cherished institutions of our own and nearly every other European State. While no Catholic in Ireland could inherit freehold, command a regiment, or sit on the judicial bench; while in France the Huguenot weaver was driven into exile beyond the sea; and while in Sweden none but Lutherans could sit as jurors, and in Spain no heretic was permitted Christian burial—Sunis and Shiahs, Mahrattas and Sikhs, competed freely for distinction and profit in almost every city and camp of Hindustan. The tide of war ebbed and flowed as in Christian lands, leaving its desolating traces more or less deeply marked upon village homesteads or dilapidated towers; but mosque and temple stood unscathed where they had stood before, monuments of architectural taste and piety, unsurpassed for beauty and richness of decoration in any country of the world" (Torrens' *Empire in Asia*). When the Muhammadans conquered and settled in India, they did not persecute those who clung to the native creed; isolated cases of pressure might occur, but as a rule Mussalman and Hindu lived peaceably side by side. Akbar (1556-1605) strove earnestly to weld together his Muhammadan and Hindu subjects. "Philip IV and our own Elizabeth were the contemporaries of Akbar; and while Europe was convulsed and desolated with the wars

which arose out of the Reformation, India reposed in unexampled prosperity under the tolerant sway of her Mussalman autocrat. While Philip was extinguishing the last embers of industry and commerce in Spain, by the unremitting persecution of Morisco, Jew and heretic, and waging the most sanguinary warfare against the civil and religious liberties of the Low Countries, Akbar was endeavouring to blend, under one peaceful and equitable Government, the discordant elements of the vast Indian population" (*Quarterly Review*, Vol. LXVIII).

This mighty empire was founded by the Sultan Babar, who reigned from 1526-1530; it lasted until 1857, but from the year 1764 it was only a nominal sovereignty, and for many years before it had been gradually losing authority. The seat of empire was at Delhi, and the various great provinces were ruled by princes—Soubahdars—bearing various titles, all of whom owned the Mogul as suzerain. As the power of the Mogul waned, these princes became more and more independent, and it was with these nominally subordinate but practically almost sovereign rulers that the East India Company had principally to deal.

The land system of India, before the English interfered with it, was of the simple, patriarchal character which is so utterly antagonistic to the feudal systems of the West. The peasant who tilled the land held the land; military tenures were unknown; serfage or villeinage was never dreamed of. The

rajahs—the nobility—were not great land-holders living on land from which they extracted rent, but gave nothing back; the cultivators held the soil. The cultivators paid a land-tax to the Government; they were not owners absolute—for the land belonged to the Government—but no Government could dispossess them of their holdings so long as they paid the land-tax—*i.e.*, the rental of their land. It passed from the father to his children by inheritance, subject only to the due taxation, and might be sold by its owner. The soil was legally vested in the sovereign. The king "is the supreme lord of the soil" (*Laws of Manu*, ch. viii, 39). The produce was made into heaps for the purpose of taxation; certain defined shares were given to the priests, the mendicant Brahmins, and other officials; the remainder was divided into halves, one for the king and one for the cultivator.

"The settled and more respectable hereditary cultivators of Central India have still many privileges, and enjoy much consideration: their title to the fields their forefathers cultivated is never disputed while they pay the Government share. If they are unable from age, or want of means, to till their field, they may hire labourers, or make it over to another person, bargaining with him as they like about the produce; but the field stands in the Government book in the name of its original tenant. In general, a fixed known rent and established and understood dues or fees, are taken

from such persons, beyond which all demands are deemed violence and injustice. These, however, have been of late so universal that the condition of the hereditary cultivators, as compared with others, has been less enviable. Still their attachment to the fields their forefathers tilled, and the trees they planted leads them to endure much; and when they are compelled by extreme oppression to move, they are generally brought back, as it is considered the greatest misfortune that can befall a country to lose its hereditary husbandmen. Many of this class in Central India, notwithstanding changes and oppressions, arrive at very considerable wealth, and employ as many as forty or fifty ploughs" (Malcolm's *Central India*, vol. ii; the student will find in this history much very useful information). Anquetil du Perron, dealing with the land tenures of Coromandel, points out that the cultivators worked freely, under no restrictions, provided only that they paid to the Government a fixed proportion of their produce. Mr. Dalrymple, as quoted by Anquetil du Perron, states that "the Gentoo Government was unquestionably the best that ever existed . . . The revenues to the Government are certain fixed proportions of the produce of the land, paid in kind". The very foundation of Indian society was this right of the cultivators to the soil. If invasion swept over the land and desolated the country, so soon as the storm was past the people returned to their homes,

settling once more in the old plot, even though blackened walls remained to mark the site. In vain were high prices offered by new would-be settlers; so long as a chance remained of finding the original owner, the land was refused to every one else. Thus the Indians possessed that most valuable of all rights, the right to the soil, a right of which none of their rulers ever dared to deprive them.

The local self-government and the administration of justice among the Indians cannot be passed over in this necessarily imperfect sketch. "Each village," says Mr. Dalrymple, "is a small community within itself, living under the protection of the State, but governed by its own inhabitants." The head man of the community was the *Zemindar* or the *Maniu-karen*, who was responsible to the central Government for the due collection of its revenues; the office was hereditary, and had attached to it a portion of land and a percentage of the revenues collected. It was the business of the Zemindar—assisted by the *Chowdry* and the *Mehta*—to preserve peace and good order in his district, and to protect the cultivators from oppression, as well as to collect the Government dues. There is a good deal of dispute among Indian authorities as to the differences between these officials, some making the Chowdry of the Mahratta districts equal in rank to the Zemindar of the Rajpoot States, but in each case it was his duty to

decide all petty disputes, and in more important matters he was aided by a *Punchayet* or court. This court was composed of the five chief inhabitants of the district, elected to their offices by "the suffrage of their fellow-citizens," and a person who had gained a high reputation as a Punch became a permanent member, and was regarded as highly distinguished. If the quarrel were a serious one, the heads of the caste to which the litigants belonged were called in as assessors. An abstract of the proceedings was, if required, forwarded to the Dewan—a title given in Central India to the Prime Minister, who superintended every department of state, but apparently confined in Bengal to the office of Receiver-General of the Revenues—and the Dewan transmitted it to the Prince, to whom lay the final appeal. No official under the rank of governor of a province could inflict the penalty of death. When we come to deal with the English administration of law, we shall need to remember how simple and regular—as well as endeared to and trusted by the people—was the existing system which the English destroyed.

The Indian institutions were, as a rule, representative to a remarkable degree. "The Zemindar, the village chief, the village watchman, tradesmen and petty functionaries, but above all the village jurors of the Punchayet, appear to have been more or less selected by the votes of their little communities" (*Westminster Review*, October, 1825). This

independence was highly valued by the Indians, and was apparently generally respected by their rulers. "The local authorities have been cherished or neglected, according to the disposition of the sovereign. But, as far as we can trace the history of Central India, their rights and privileges have never been contested, even by the tyrants and oppressors who slighted them; while, on the other hand, all just princes have founded their chief reputation and claim to popularity on attention to them." (Malcolm's *Central India*, vol. i, p. 553.) The local independence, the local self-government, the sub-division of the land, the judicial system, all these tended to reduce to a *minimum* the injury wrought from time to time, by the quarrels of princes, the incursions of predatory tribes, the occasional unfair exactions of petty tyrants. The proofs of general and wide-spread well-being are too clear to be disputed. Speaking of the valley of the Ganges, Phillimore says: "There is no spot of the earth where all that is necessary for the support of its inhabitants is raised with more facility . . . Spices, grain, indigo, sandal-wood, opium, pepper, vegetables and fruit are equally abundant. Sugar, though it requires more labour, can be raised with the same success. The cattle, though small and yielding little milk, more than compensate by their numbers for their want of strength. Fish swarm in the rivers, the woods are full of game . . . When we seized upon this land, the overflowing of

its soil fed distant regions" (*History of England during the Reign of George III*, vol. i).

Such was India when the English East India Company built factories, raised forts, bought a few plots of ground. The rightful owners of the country possessed the land of their birth; they were willing to trade with the strangers who settled on their borders, but they asked of them nothing. They had their own disputes, there own wars of succession, their own difficulties, but they were accustomed to meet them in their own fashion, and needed no Portuguese, nor English, nor Dutch, nor French interference. They did not offer their country as the lists wherein foreigners might tourney, whenever matter of quarrel had arisen between their different nations in the West. They were content as they were, with their own traditions, their own rulers, their own magistrates, their own customs. They asked not that strangers should land on their coasts, invade their soil, ravage their property, destroy their villages, impose on them new rulers, change their land system, upset their judicial customs, plant "Western civilisation" in their midst. All these changes were wrought by England, not for India's sake but for her own: we exploited Hindustan, not for her benefit, but for the benefit of our younger sons, our restless adventurers, our quarrelsome and ne'er-do-well surplus population. At least, for the sake of common honesty, let us drop our hypocritical mask, and acknowledge that we seized India

from lust of conquest, from greed of gain, from the lowest and paltriest of desires. The means we took to reach our ends were worthy of the motives which prompted us.

CHAPTER II

CONQUEST AND TYRANNY

"THE records of modern Europe—though they contain the account (to say nothing of what happened in an earlier and more imperfect form of civilisation) of the murders committed by Borgia and Henry VIII, of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, of the devastation of the Palatinate, of the reigns of our Stuart kings, of the massacres of September, of the treatment of Hungary by Austria, and of Poland by the Emperor Nicholas, of the annexation of Norway to Sweden by ourselves, and of many other crimes almost equally flagitious—contain no record of such incessant treachery, of such cruel avarice, of such long, persevering, deliberate, cold-blooded oppression, and such utter indifference to the welfare of millions (I say nothing of unjust wars), as are to be met with, so long as it was governed by the East India Company, in the chronicles of Hindustan" (Phillimore's *History of England during the Reign of George III*). It is the story of this Company which we are now going to tell, and when even the brief outline we can here

trace is seen, surely our readers will exclaim, with the same eloquent writer: "It eminently behoves every native of this island to do what in him lies to absolve his country from the shame belonging to such transactions; and by disclaiming all sympathy with those who were the chief agents in them, by pointing out their frauds and stigmatising their rapacity, to show that though the English, from their insensibility to all that is distant, and aversion to all that is foreign—above all, from their incapacity of appreciating any form of civilisation but their own—have erred on the side of apathy and indifference, they are not so distant from all generous emotions, or so inaccessible to all the dictates that integrity and honour bid us venerate, as to think success and wealth any justification of such actions, or to abstain, when they are brought home to their eyes or ears, from joining with the choir of all civilised men (let their creed be what it will) in pronouncing their condemnation."

The fatal mistake made by the rulers of Hindustan was that, one after another, they sought aid from the strangers against each other; like the horse in Æsop's fable, who asked aid of the man against the stag, they found it impossible to shake off the power they had invoked. The first instance of this kind appears to have arisen in 1614, when the Portuguese and the Mogul Government were at war; the English defeated the Portuguese—with

whom they were continually quarrelling on their own account—and received as reward a grant authorising them to establish factories in any part of the Mogul dominions, Surat, Bengal, and Sind being specifically named. In this same year Sir Thomas Roe strongly advised the Company not to permit their servants to trade privately, but to pay them well, and then insist that they should only carry on their employers' business. Considerable abuses were even then growing out of the system of private trading under the privileges of the Company, the clerks and other servants using for their private advantage the authority only granted to the Company itself. During the succeeding half century rose the Mahratta empire—Mahratta from Maha Raschtsa, great warriors—shaking to its centre the authority of the Mogul; in 1664 the English successfully defended Surat against these new aggressors, and gained further advantages from the Delhi prince. The kingdom of the Deccan, under Nizam Ul Mulk, was meanwhile growing powerful, and the supreme authority of the Mogul was gradually slipping into the background. Later, Mysore, under Hyder Ali, also freed itself. In 1685 the English tried their hands first at absolute invasion, and were defeated with considerable loss, and we find the directors of the Company instructing their agents in 1689 that they must strive to increase their revenue, so that they might become "a nation in India".

From this time until almost the middle of the eighteenth century, there is no event of sufficient importance to be chronicled in so brief a sketch as this. The East India Company went on its way, trading with the natives of Hindustan, quarrelling with and trying to over-reach and oust the Dutch, Portuguese, and French merchants, and making great progress in every direction. At last, in 1743, the long-smouldering quarrel between the French and English settlers broke out into open and declared hostility.

In 1740 had occurred a great Mahratta invasion of the Carnatic, then governed by Dost Ali, as Viceroy of the Great Mogul. Dost Ali was slain in battle in 1739, and left his son, Sufdar Ali, and his son-in-law Chanda Sahib, rival claimants to the throne. Both these princes asked protection for their families from M. Dumas, the French governor of Pondicherry, but Sufdar Ali, jealous of Chanda Sahib, and anxious to succeed to his father's throne, as Nawab of the Carnatic, intrigued with the Mahrattas, promising them various advantages if they would aid him in ousting Chanda Sahib from Arcot, where he was exercising some limited authority. The Mahrattas attacked Arcot, seized Chanda Sahib, and besieged Pondicherry; Dumas beat back the attack, and the Great Mogul, in gratitude, recognised the French governor as Nawab, and confirmed to him a grant of territory. In 1741 Dumas resigned his authority,

and was succeeded by a man of undaunted courage and of great military and administrative genius, the famous Dupleix. The French settlement at Pondicherry and the English settlement at Madras now came to an open rupture; in 1742 the Madras authorities had willingly recognised, as Rajah of Tanjore, Pratab Sing, who dispossessed the Rajah Sahuji, and had sought his aid against the French; after many alternations of victory and defeat, La Bourdonnais, the French governor of Mauritiuse, arrived at Pondicherry in 1746, saved Dupleix from a threatened attack by Admiral Boscawen, the English commander, and then bombarded and took Madras. The governor and chief inhabitants of Madras were led through Pondicherry in triumph, and the army of the Nawab of Arcot, sent to aid the English, was beaten back. The dispossessed Rajah Sahuji prayed the English to aid him in recovering his throne, offering to them as reward the fort and district of Devicottah; the English—hitherto friendly to Pratab Sing—took up the cause of Sahuji, attacked Devicottah, and failed; attacked it a second time, took it, entered into negotiations with Pratab Sing, and in exchange for the fort and the surrounding district, with a revenue of 9,000 pagodas, seized the person of Sahuji, their ally, and made peace with his rival, taking £400 a year for the maintenance of Sahuji in prison. By this double treachery the East India Company became the masters of this valuable territory. But this success

was more than overbalanced by the growing influence of the French. Dupleix, efficiently seconded by the Marquis de Bussy, had aided Muzaffar Jung to obtain the Viceroyalty of the Deccan, and had himself been appointed governor of a vast district, with Chanda Sahib under him as deputy. The English, in opposition, espoused the cause of Mahommed Ali as Nawab of the Carnatic, although his rule was recognised nowhere save in Trichinopoly, and thus, under cover of the names of Indian princes, the old rivals struggled for supremacy. The French triumphed in every direction. Dupleix was building up a mighty French empire in Hindustan. But suddenly a new power appeared on the English side. One Robert Clive, a turbulent and ill-conditioned boy, the torment of Market Drayton, his native town, the despair of his family, who had been joyfully shipped up to India as a writer in the Company's service, and thus got rid of, flung down his pen, caught up his sword, pleaded to be sent on active service, was given 200 English soldiers and 300 sepoys, flung himself and his little army against Arcot in a storm of thunder and lightning, took it by surprise from its startled and panic-stricken garrison, and entrenched himself in his captured stronghold. Who and what was this Robert Clive? He was born in Market Drayton in the year 1725; as a boy, he made himself an unmitigated nuisance to all with whom he came into contact. "The old people of the neighbourhood still

remember to have heard from their parents how Bob Clive climbed to the top of the lofty steeple of Market Drayton, and with what terror the inhabitants saw him seated on a stone spout near the summit. They also relate how he formed all the idle lads of the town into a kind of predatory army, and compelled the shopkeepers to submit to a tribute of apples and half-pence, in consideration of which he guaranteed the security of their windows" (Macaulay's *Essays*, p. 503). The character of the man was the development of that of the boy; he made his army out of every desperate reckless dare-devil he could find; instead of levying tribute of apples he levied tribute of diamonds and of gold; in case of refusal, he did not break windows, but he broke hearts and burnt towns; instead of being a "very naughty boy," he was a very wicked man, careless of suffering, careless of justice, careless of principle, careful only to gratify his own lust of blood, of power and wealth. Glorious? Oh, yes! Robert Clive was glorious, if glory means burning towns, slaughtered men, ravished women, murdered children, desolated fields, fire-blackened houses; but if murder and rapine and gigantic robbery and fraud be crimes, the glories of Robert Clive lie only in the vastness of his infamy. The startling outbreak of this new leader was promptly met by Dupleix; he sent 150 French soldiers to strengthen the native army of 10,000 men rapidly collected by Chanda Sahib, and dispatched under his son's

command to retake Arcot. For fifty days 120 Englishmen and 200 sepoys, half famished, held the ruined fort against the vast beseiging force. At last the assault was made, a fierce combat was sustained for about an hour, and then, panic-stricken by the rapid and deadly fire of the English, the assailants fell back, leaving Clive master of the fort so bravely defended. In a brief space the whole aspect of affairs was changed; Clive conquered wherever he appeared; Chanda Sahib surrendered to the Rajah of Tanjore, and was put to death; Mahommed Ali was recognised as Nawab of the Carnatic; Dupleix was—by extraordinary blindness and ingratitude—recalled to France; the treaty of 1754 was signed, which gave up every advantage which the genius of Dupleix had secured for his country, and which bound both the French and the English "to renounce for ever all Indian government and dignity, and to interfere no more in the differences that might arise between the princes of the country". How admirably the East India Company kept their word, we shall immediately see.

A few months passed, and Mahommed Ali once more asked for English help against some tributary princes, offering them half the spoil which might be seized, and the Company sent its troops against Tinnevelly and Madura. The French remonstrated, urging the treaty just signed; but failing to prevent its breach on the part of the English, they again

took up arms, and invaded Tanjore. In 1756 Mirza, better known as Surajah Dowlah, became Soubahdar of Bengal on the death of his great uncle, the well-known Aliverdi Khan," under whose reign peace, plenty, and good order everywhere prevailed" (Stewart's *History of Bengal*). Aliverdi had kept a strong hand over his foreign visitors, but the French at Chandernagore were perpetually quarrelling. On the plea that the menacing attitude of the French made defensive preparations necessary, the English began to strengthen the fortifications of Calcutta. A native official, charged with embezzlement, took refuge within the lines, and an envoy of Surajah Dowlah was roughly repulsed when he came to demand the delivery of the culprit; Surajah, infuriated, ordered the English to raze their new fortifications, and, on their hesitation, seized their factory at Cossimbazaar, and then turned his arms against Calcutta. Drake, the English commander, fled: the startled garrison surrendered, and Surajah Dowlah marched into the town in triumph. One hundred and forty-six English prisoners fell into his hands, and promising that their lives should be spared, the Soubahdar committed them to the care of a native guard. There was used at that time as a garrison prison a dungeon twenty feet square, lighted by small air-holes, known as the Black Hole. The soldiers in charge of the English, puzzled apparently how to secure them, conceived the barbarous idea of driving

the whole number into a cell which would have been overcrowded with ten captives during the sultry heat of a Bengal midsummer night. The hundred and forty-six unfortunate prisoners were crushed into the narrow space. They went in strong and healthy men and women. At first cries, shouts, imprecations were heard by the guards outside. In the fierce madness of despair the captives fought even for the hot air that came through the narrow windows, and the stifled moans of those crushed down in the struggle mingled with the cries for water that came from those who had succeeded in reaching the holes in the prison walls. When the door was opened on the next morning, all was still; piles of corpses only, already showing signs of putrefaction, met the eyes of the native soldiers. Presently, as they lifted out the dead, room was made to move in that awful mass, and twenty-three survivors, livid, ghastly, crushed, torn, tottered out gasping into the morning air. They were led before Surajah Dowlah, who allowed all to go free except three men and one woman; but to his eternal disgrace he did not punish the soldiers whose brutality had caused such horrible suffering. Some of these unfortunate captives fled to Madras, where Clive then was, and roused the whole settlement with the tale of their agony. Clive had but just returned to India from England, eager to fill his emptied purse once more with the spoil of war; and after two months had been spent in disputing

over the distribution of the hoped-for prize-money, Clive was appointed to command the army for the invasion of Bengal. Admiral Watson was sent with a squadron to co-operate with the army, and the whole force set sail for the Hoogly on October 8th, and reached its destination on the 20th of December. By the end of January Clive had recovered Calcutta, and had sacked Hoogly, taking spoil to the amount of £ 150,000. Surajah gathered together his forces, and with 40,000 men advanced against the recovered English colony. The French at Chandernagore held aloof, refusing to join the Bengal prince in an attack on their old rivals and they offered to sign with the English a compact of neutrality. Clive, utterly overmatched in numbers, opened negotiations with Surajah, but these broke through, a wealthy Calcutta merchant named Omichund saving the lives of the English envoys by warning them of the treacherous designs of the Soubahdar. Clive's audacity was once more his salvation, and with his 2,650 men he attacked the huge mass of his assailants. A thick fog hid the smallness of his army, and though his attack was foiled, Surajah Dowlah shrunk back before the fiery English chief and the startling vigour of the trained English soldiers. Omichund stepped in as mediator, and with his aid Surajah was prevailed upon to sign a treaty which permitted the Company to fortify Calcutta, to trade free from all tax and duty on their merchandise, to coin their

own money, and to occupy twenty-seven villages in Bengal.

An offensive and defensive alliance was now concluded with Surajah Dowlah: Clive received from him magnificent presents, and—began to plot his destruction. We have just noted that the French had declined to take advantage of the straits to which the English had been reduced, and had offered to make a compact of neutrality. This offer was refused, and Clive, fearing lest they should in the future interfere with his plans of conquest, picked a quarrel with them, and rewarded them for their late neutrality by attacking Chandernagore. He was once more successful, and all danger from French interference was at an end. Meer Jaffer, commander of Surajah Dowlah's forces, aspired to seat himself on the throne of Bengal, and Clive selected this man as a tool who would serve his purpose. Omichund—the Calcutta merchant who had before befriended the English—was again the intermediary, and Jaffer offered vast sums of money to the army, the navy, and the individual members of the Council, in exchange for their assistance in his conspiracy. The treaty was drawn up, Omichund stipulating for a commission of three per cent on the money, and one-fourth of the jewels in Surajah's treasury. The price demanded was a high one, but the English had gone too far to draw back. Clive wrote to Surajah in the most friendly terms, and sent by the same envoy a letter to Meer

Jaffer, promising to join him with 5,000 men. He next drew up two treaties, a real one on white paper and a sham one on red; Omichund had insisted that the treaty with Meer Jaffer to be signed by the chief officers of the Company, should contain a clause securing the payment of his stipulated price; the clause was duly inserted in the red treaty and omitted in the white. It was true that Omichund had served the English well, and that he was only asking for his share of the spoil, which without him they could not have obtained, but honour was a word unknown to Clive and to the Company whom he served, and they signed the two treaties. One man only refused to soil his hands with this scandalous treachery—Admiral Watson declined to sign the red treaty; Clive was quite equal to the occasion; he quietly forged Admiral Watson's name. Everything was now ready, and the English army now marched against the prince with whom they had a few months before concluded an offensive and defensive alliance; Surajah took the field with an army of 55,000 men, and against him Clive led but 3,000, only 1,000 of whom were English. They met at Plassey; one of Meer Jaffer's friends advised Surajah to retreat, and Meer Jaffer himself drew off the troops under his own immediate command. The vast undisciplined crowd began to fall back; the English charged in a compact mass; the Indians were seized with panic; their elephants, terrified at the roar of the cannon, turned and trampled down

their owners ; Surajah Dowlah fled, and his army melted like snow in the sunshine. Thus fell the first great Indian prince who had trusted to the Company's good faith ; he was captured and slain by Meer Jaffer a few days after his defeat. Clive marched to Moorshedabad, and with great pomp placed Meer Jaffer on the throne of Bengal. Omichund came to share the triumph he had brought about, and was cordially welcomed by the English leader. The treaty between the Company and the new ruler was read ; Omichund's name did not appear in it. There was a moment's hesitation, Clive stepped forward. "It is time to undeceive Omichund," he said to Mr. Scrafton, one of the Company's servants. Mr. Scrafton turned to the unfortunate merchant, and dryly told him that the red treaty was only a fictitious one, and that there was nothing for him. Omichund stared helplessly at him for a moment, and then fell back, struck to the earth by palsy. He was carried away by his attendants, and never recovered his mind. Clive, with unexampled and revolting hypocrisy, visited his victim in a few days' time, and advised him to perform a pilgrimage to a great Indian shrine, but Omichund had been ruined, mind and body, and he died shortly afterwards, leaving his destroyer in the enjoyment of wealth and "honour". After a few occurrences of this kind, we can hardly wonder that Toullesan, king of Tanjore, should tell the Danish missionary Schwartz, that he "regarded

Europeans as men without law and without conscience, whom it was impossible to trust".

It is instructive to note that while these confederates in evil grudged any share of the spoil to Omichund, who had served them well, they by no means felt any delicacy in filling their own pockets, but, on the contrary, exacted huge sums as the price of their assistance. It may be that, as the work of a mean and treacherous one, they felt compelled to armour themselves in gold against the stings of conscience. At any rate the following is a list of the sums paid by Meer Jaffer to the officers of the Company for the betrayal of their ally, Surajah Dowlah:

	£
Mr. Drake (Governor)	31,500
Colonel Clive	234,000
Mr. Watts	117,000
Major Kilpatrick	60,750
Mr. Manningham	27,000
Mr. Becher	27,000
Six members of the Council	68,200
Mr. Walsh	56,250
Mr. Scrafton	22,500
Mr. Lushington	5,625
Captain Grant	11,250
Army and Navy	577,500
	11,238,575

Colonel Clive's modest share was made up of three sums, one as a bribe to him as a member of the Committee, the second as Commander-in-Chief, the third as a private *douceur*.

Clive was now made governor of the English settlements in Bengal, and in his lofty position carried on his schemes of conquest. He was busily engaged in driving the French from the Carnatic, when his creature, Meer Jaffer, was threatened with a new danger. The Mogul bestowed upon his eldest son, Shah Alum, the viceroyalty of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, and the prince gathered a large army and marched against Meer Jaffer, the usurper. Meer Jaffer, pitted against the supreme authority of the Great Mogul, desired to submit, and, by payment of a large tribute, to obtain the imperial confirmation of his rule; but Clive thought otherwise; he marched against the Mogul's army, and it fled at the mere news of his approach. Meer Jaffer bestowed upon him, as a reward, the rent paid to the ruler of Bengal by the East India Company for the lands held by them round Calcutta, and Clive added a rental of £30,000 a year to his growing fortune, and became the landlord of his employers. After attacking the Dutch—of whose power he was jealous—defeating them and forcing them to sign a treaty which bound them to abstain from fortifying themselves, and from raising more than a certain number of troops, Clive thought it was time to rest awhile, and he set sail for England

(in 1760) carrying with him his ill-gotten booty. His spoil during five years had amounted to a rental of £30,000 a year, £220,000 sent home through the Dutch and English Companies, large sums also sent home by private sources, jewels to a vast amount—£25,000 was invested by him in diamonds in Madras—and a huge fortune in ready money. When the poverty of India is talked of nowadays, it is as well to call to mind the leeches who have drained her of her wealth.

The internal quarrels in which Clive had interfered broke out again furiously when his strong hand loosed its grip; the Mogul was murdered; his son, Shah Alum, succeeded to his throne, and once more attacked Meer Jaffer. At first, aided by the English, the ruler of Bengal held his own, but he was being ruined from within as well as struck from without. His army was mutinous from want of pay; his subjects were rising against the exactions imposed to satisfy the demands of the Company. Meer Jaffer found himself face to face with an infuriate people and a rebellious army. To whom should he turn? The East India Company had caused his embarrassment; would they deliver him? No; he had served his turn; through him the great ruler of Bengal had been overthrown; through him the authority of the Mogul had been defied; now another tool could serve the Company better. Meer Jaffer's son-in-law, Meer Cassim, coveted the throne; he was prepared to pay down £200,269

for the Company's good offices. Meer Jaffer had been drained dry, he had nothing more to give; Meer Jaffer was consequently dethroned by English troops, spite of the solemn treaty binding the Company to him, and Meer Cassim took his place. To the new ruler, the English were only mercenaries to be bought by the highest bidder; he used them to subdue his feudatories; he used them to compel even the Mogul himself to come to terms. The Mogul was forced to confer on Meer Cassim the viceroyalty of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, subject only to the payment of a tribute of £272,800, and some hope of gradually growing prosperity might have dawned, if the Company would have left Meer Cassim alone. This prince—a man of great sagacity, of steady will, and of earnest justice—strove to do his best. We find that the President of the Company admitted on May 22, 1762, that he had discharged every debt he owed to the English, and he was rapidly setting matters on a sound and improving footing. Unhappily the Company cared but for one thing, the speedy enriching of its members, and they slew the goose which was laying the golden eggs. A very large proportion of the wealth of all Indian princes came from the duties levied by them upon the merchandise which passed through their territories. The Company had at various times obtained from the different rulers exceptional privileges. It was only compelled to pay a duty of nine per cent, where the Indian merchants paid

twenty-five, and the Company now claimed that any Englishman trading under its permit should pay no duty at all, save a small tax on salt. The demand seems incredible, but in some letters from "a Proprietor of India Stock"—published in London in 1764—we read the following: "When the Governor of Bengal went to Monjeer [Monghyr], he settled with the Nabob that the English private merchants trading for themselves should carry on their trade at the small duty of nine per cent, when, as we have said before, the Nabob's own subjects were paying twenty-five. How, then, will you be surprised when I tell you that one of the demands since made on the Nabob was that the Company's servants trading for themselves should pay no duties at all, excepting two and a half per cent on salt! The Nabob, upon receiving this unreasonable demand, said he would then lay open all trade, that his subjects might be upon a footing with the servants of the English Company; but this not answering the purpose of the gentlemen then in opposition to the governor, they carried in the council against him (to which he entered his protest) a resolution to send an embassy to the Nabob, insisting that he should not only free *them* from all duties, but should still continue to levy the duties upon his *own subjects*—the consequence of which must have been that the servants of the Company, by selling *duties* (or permits) to the subjects of the Nabob, would have collected the revenues arising from the

duties which were the undoubted right of the sovereign, or else by not selling the *duties*, but keeping the trade entirely in their own hands, would of course have excluded the most considerable black merchants." By this demand the English made all trade save their own, impossible, since no other merchants could compete with those who, paying no duty, could sell at a profit at a lower rate than would pay the bare cost to their rivals. "The servants of the Company obtained not for their employers, but for themselves, a monopoly of almost the whole internal trade. They forced the natives to buy dear and sell cheap. They insulted with impunity the tribunals, the police, and the fiscal authorities of the country. They covered with their protection a set of native dependents who ranged through the provinces, spreading desolation and terror wherever they appeared. Every servant of a British factor was armed with all the power of his master, and his master was armed with all the power of the Company. Enormous fortunes were thus rapidly accumulated at Calcutta, while thirty millions of human beings were reduced to the extremity of wretchedness. They had been accustomed to live under tyranny, but never under tyranny like this. They found the little fingers of the Company thicker than the loins of Surajah Dowlah. Under their old masters they had at least one resource; when the evil became insupportable, the people rose and pulled down the Government. But the English

Government was not to be so shaken off. That Government, oppressive as the most oppressive form of barbarian despotism, was strong with all the strength of civilisation. It resembled the government of evil genii rather than the government of human tyrants. Even despair could not inspire the soft Bengalee with courage to confront men of English breed, the hereditary nobility of mankind, whose skill and valour had so often triumphed in spite of tenfold odds. The unhappy race never attempted resistance. Sometimes they submitted in patient misery; sometimes they fled from the white man, as their fathers had been used to fly from the Mahratta, and the palanquin of the English traveller was often carried through silent villages and towns which the report of his approach had made desolate" (Macaulay's *Essays*, pp. 533, 534). Under this system the unhappy natives were ground to the very dust, and the revenue of the prince was deprived of its largest contribution. Meer Cassim's subjects appealed to him to interpose and save them from absolute ruin; the Company insisted on the preservation of their exclusive privileges. At last—as we see above—he abolished all duties, preferring to sacrifice his own revenue to ruining the whole internal trade of his country. But this the Company would not permit; they insisted that he should levy the duties on his own subjects, while he allowed the Company's servants to trade freely. Even Governor Vansittart protested. "It is not to

be expected," he said, "that the Nabob will join with us in endeavouring to deprive every merchant of the country of the means of carrying on his business—as must undoubtedly be the case soon if they are to pay heavy duties, and we are to remain on the footing before mentioned" (cited by Phillimore). The Company was obdurate. Meer Cassim, desperate and reckless, took up arms. Beaten by the English, he fled to the ruler of Oudh, but the battle of the Buxar—fought on October 23rd, 1764—in which Major Munro crushed the army of Oudh, decided his fate. The Mogul prayed for the protection of the invincible English; the prince of Oudh asked for peace; Meer Cassim fled to the Rohillas for protection, and his vacant throne was sold back to Meer Jaffer for £62,666 in money, the grant of the revenues of Burdwan, Chittagong, and Midnapore, the maintenance of 24,000 troops, the restoration of the unfair duties on the natives, the repayment to the Company's servants of all losses incurred, and the maintenance of all the Company's monopolies. "The unrelenting manner in which this privilege was exercised, the incessant demands on an exhausted treasury, the misery of a depopulated country, once the Garden of the East, broke even the hard heart of the Eastern despot. He expired the same year at Moorshedabad." (Phillimore.) On Meer Jaffer's death the throne of Bengal was once more sold to the highest bidder, and it was bought by Meer Jaffer's son, Nizam ul

Dowlah, for £139,357. At last even the directors of the Company in London took fright at the horrible scandals perpetrated in Bengal, and they besought Clive—now ennobled—to assume the office of President, and introduce some kind of regular government among their servants. Lord Clive set sail for India, and arrived there in May, 1765. He found his old ally, Meer Jaffer, dead, his successor Meer Cassim, fled, a new ruler on the musnud of Bengal, and the Great Mogul himself under the protection of the Company. He at once wrote to his employers that the whole aspect of things had changed, and that vast harvest of gain might be reaped by the Company; the same mail carried a letter to his private agent, bidding him invest in East India stock every penny that he could raise, while in India he entered into a partnership with other members of the Committee, which in nine months brought him in a profit of forty-five per cent. While he thus filled his own pockets, Clive wrote home to his employers in the loftiest strain of moral indignation: "Upon my arrival I am sorry I found your affairs in a situation nearly desperate—such as would have alarmed any set of men whose sense of honour and duty to their employers had not been estranged by the too eager pursuit of their own immediate advantages . . . Fortunes of £100,000 have been made in two years [and what of yours, Robert Clive ?], and individuals very young in the service are returning home with a million

and a half." It is interesting to learn that in the year following this moral letter, Clive received from a native princess a sum of £58,333. Clive, however, was by no means indifferent to the aggrandisement of his employers. Peace was made with Sujah ul Dowlah, the prince of Oudh, and he was left in possession of his territories, save of the districts of Allahabad and Corah, valued at £250,000 a year, which were given to the Company, and were by them passed on to the Great Mogul as equivalent for a tribute of £325,000 yearly, which they had bound themselves to pay him. Sujah ul Dowlah, in addition to the territories above mentioned, paid to the Company £500,000 as compensation for war expenses. The Company owed the Mogul £300,000. This the emperor—who had, be it remembered, placed himself under their protection—was compelled to resign, and he was further forced to constitute the Company the Dewan of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa—which implied rule over 25,000,000 of people, and the collection of a revenue of some £4,000,000—taking in exchange the promise of the Company to pay him £260,000 a year, and to provide for the expenses of the Soubahdar of these provinces. Thus the Company made a treaty, boasted Clive—careless of the shameful fact that it had been wrung from an ally who had trusted in the good faith of the English—which gave them a net revenue "amounting to £1,700,000 *per annum*," and it became the virtual ruler of Bengal, Behar,

and Orissa. This grant—regarded by many as the virtual commencement of British rule in India—is dated August 12th, 1765.

Lord Clive left India for the last time in January, 1767, to spend in England the vast wealth he had wrung from the unfortunate princes and people of Hindustan. For seven years he bore the burden of memory weighted with deeds of treachery, forgery, avarice, and fraud of every kind; at length the load became unendurable, and Robert Clive passed sentence of death upon himself on November 22nd, 1774.

In Bengal the grant of the Dewanny to the East India Company soon led to the most deplorable results.

The whole administration of justice remained in the hands of the native prince; the collection of taxes was made by natives under the control of the Company; hence a double system of government, which even increased the misery of the unhappy people. Small wonder that after five years of this drawn-out agony a terrible famine desolated the whole region, once so rich and fair! In 1768 the crops had partially failed, and the Company pressed its taxation claims more severely than they had ever been pressed before by the native rulers. In 1769, spite of the entire failure of the year's crops, the Company added ten per cent to the land tax. Mr. Hunter, in his *Annals of Rural Bengal*, gives a pathetic description of the horrible misery of 1770: "The husbandmen sold their cattle; they

sold their implements of agriculture; they devoured their seed-grain; they sold their sons and daughters, till at length no buyer of children could be found. They ate the leaves of trees and the grass in the field, and in June, 1770, the Resident at the Durbar affirmed that the living were feeding upon the dead." "Tender and delicate women," writes Macaulay, "whose veils had never been lifted before the public gaze, came forth from the inner chambers in which Eastern jealousy had kept watch over their beauty, threw themselves on the earth before the passer-by, and, with loud wailings, implored a handful of rice for their children. The Hoogly every day rolled down thousands of corpses close to the porticoes and gardens of the English conquerors. The very streets of Calcutta were blocked by the dying and dead." Ten millions of human beings died in this famine, and this in Bengal, in the very provinces the "overflowing of whose soil fed distant regions" before the Company-locusts settled down upon them.

It was to this ruined province that Warren Hastings—a man whose name is only too unhappily connected with our rule in India—was sent as Governor in 1772. He had come to India in 1750, had been mixed up in some of Clive's worst treacheries, and had resided in the Court of Meer Jaffer, as agent for the Company, from 1757 to 1761. In 1761 he was recalled to Calcutta, and made a member of the Council, an office he resigned in

1764, when he returned to England. In 1769 he once more sought employment under the Company, was made a member of the Council at Madras, and translated thence to Calcutta in 1772, to fill the important post of Governor.

Warren Hastings had, before this time, made up his mind that it would be better for the Company to rule Bengal nominally as well as really, and that the Court at Moorshedabad ought to be abolished. True, the Company had gained vast wealth and power through Meer Jaffer, whose child-son was the puppet-sovereign of Bengal, but when were gratitude or faith shown by the Company to the native princes of Hindustan? Hastings determined to follow the suggestion made by Mr. Holwell (*East India Tracts*, Zephaniah Holwell), that it would be better for the Company to become the Soubahdar of Bengal. He sent troops to seize on the person of Mahommed Reza Khan, the Mussalman minister of the young prince, abolished the office of minister altogether, assigned the prince a revenue while depriving him of all share in the government, and transferred the whole civil and criminal administration of Bengal into the hands of the Company. It will not be difficult for the student to imagine the utter *bouleversement* caused in Bengal by this high-handed and most unjust proceeding. Even as late as 1871, an Indian writer, Dinshah Ardeshir Talyarkhan, said sorrowfully of the rulers of Hindustan: "The susceptibilities and

sentiments, or usages and institutions of the masses, are in some great measure a sealed book to them." If this was true in 1871, how terribly true it was in 1772, when the English looked on India as a land of exile, where wealth was to be gathered as rapidly as possible, to be carried off to England and spent there. There was no kind of sympathy between the people and their new rulers; English youths shipped off to India to find their living, were suddenly placed as magistrates over communities of whose customs and laws they knew nothing; alien in sympathy and in tradition from the people they were called upon to rule, ignorant of the language of those whose disputes they were sent to settle, full of contempt for customs they did not understand, the administration of "justice" in Bengal became impossible. Sir E. Perry's words may well be applied to the Company's servants under Hastings' new system: "The chief administrators of our vast Indian empire are so completely severed from the bulk of the population by colour, race, language, religion, and material interests, that they are often, if not habitually, in complete ignorance of the most patent facts occurring around them" (*Cases Illustrative of Oriental Life*).

Had Bengal been a savage country, with no settled system of its own, no well-understood laws, no administration of justice, even then the introduction of foreign magistrates would have been a matter needing much delicacy, but when we

remember the thoroughly established system of jurisprudence which was thus roughly supplanted, we cannot wonder at the hatred and terror with which the new officials were regarded. Accustomed to elect their own immediate administrators, and to exercise a right of appeal to the supreme Prince himself, the puzzled and terrified Hindus saw imposed upon them a number of strangers coming from they knew not whence, reversing all traditions of centuries, and claiming authority from a Company which was a byword for its tyranny, its cheating, and its exactions. Mr. Torrens well says, speaking of this substitution of English officials for the native administrators of justice: "To maim or paralyse such a system, reticulated minutely throughout the whole frame of society, and acting silently and habitually, without question or friction, to the remotest extremities, may well be deemed a policy which nothing but the arrogance of conquest could have dictated, and the blindness of irresponsible domination could have persisted in. Yet these municipal institutions, which confessedly had been scrupulously respected in all former changes of dynasty, whether Muhammadan or Mahratta, were henceforth to be disregarded, and many of them to be rudely uprooted by the new system of a foreign administration. Instead of the native punchayet there was established an arbitrary judge; instead of men being tried when accused, or appealing when wronged, to an elective jury of their fellow citizens,

they must go before a stranger, who could not, if he would, know half what every judge should know of the men and things to be dealt with; instead of confidence, there was organised distrust; instead of calm, popular, unquestioned justice, there was substituted necessarily imperfect inquiry, hopelessly puzzled intelligence, all the temptation to indolent inattention, and all the liabilities to unconscious mistake; the mute despair of injustice suffered, or the gnashing of teeth at irreparable wrong—not the less wrong when inadvertently and unintentionally done. A settled purpose was disclosed of substituting rudely the arbitrament of foreign officials, guessing at the facts through interpreters, and stumbling over habits and usages it must take a life-time to learn, but which every native juryman or elder could recall without effort, and apply to the facts before him without hesitation." (*Empire in Asia*). The act of 1773 completed this social revolution by establishing a High Court of Justice at Calcutta, and left the unhappy people of India face to face with an irresponsible power, which crushed them without appeal, and replied to their pitiful cry for justice—if mercy were impossible—by presenting to them the stern form of an alien and uncomprehending judge. Judge, do I say? Rather that most awful mockery of the highest human dignity, which shows to the suppliant for justice a prosecutor on the bench, and throws over the tyranny of triumphant might the sacred ermine of law.

CHAPTER III

INDIA'S AGONY

COMING to a country desolated by famine, one might have imagined that the first care of Warren Hastings would have been to nourish back into life the apparently dying industry of Bengal. He held a position unprecedented in its power either for good or for evil. By an Act passed through Parliament in 1773 the British Government—under Lord North—had claimed supreme authority in Hindustan. The East India Company was permitted to carry on its business as before, but the new dependencies were no longer to be severally governed from Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, each being ruled by its own Council, subject only to the Board of Directors in London; the Presidencies were to be controlled by a Governor-General, resident in Calcutta, holding his post for five years, and assisted by a Council of four. The first Council which thus ruled the British conquest in Hindustan consisted of General Clavering, Colonel Monson, Mr. Francis, and Mr. Barwell, and the first Governor-General was Warren Hastings, appointed President

of Bengal by the Company in the preceding year. Unprecedented either for good or for evil was Warren Hastings' position. Unhappily, both for India and for England, he chose the evil, not the good. His ability none can challenge; his deceit, his treachery, his far-sighted craftiness none can deny. He was at once most able and most unscrupulous; no means were too cruel or too base for his using, provided only that they led to the predetermined goal.

Warren Hastings' first important act as Governor-General would be enough, if it stood alone, to stamp his name for ever with irredeemable infamy. At the very commencement of his authority he had treated in most friendly—and most dishonest—fashion with Surajah Dowlah, Soubahdar of Oudh. He had taken back from the Great Mogul the districts of Allahabad and Corah—ceded to him in exchange for a debt shortly before (see page 41)—and had sold the stolen property to the Prince of Oudh for some £500,000; Surajah Dowlah was enormously wealthy; Hastings wanted money for his employers. Surajah Dowlah was troubled with no scruples. Hastings rivalled the Soubahdar in his freedom. Having bought from the Company two districts belonging to the Great Mogul, Surajah Dowlah next bid for another district on his frontier, over which the Company had as little right as over Corah and Allahabad. In the vales and mountains of Rohilkhand dwelt an industrious and valiant

people; they were diligent, agricultural, cultured and harmful to none; they dwelt in peace within their own borders, so long as they were left unmolested; but they were of Afghan blood, and if foe overtrod their boundary, 80,000 fair-haired Rohillas rose to beat back the aggressor. Industrious in peace, they were also valiant in war, and so bold-hearted and loyal were they that when in 1772 the Mahrattas menaced Oudh, and offered large gifts to the Rohillas if they would give them safe passage through their mountain lands, they steadily refused to do so, exposing themselves to the wrath of the terrible Mahratta cavalry, because they had made a treaty with Oudh—pressed thereunto by the Company—and would not break their faith. The Mahrattas swept over Rohilkhand in 1773, destroying as they went; the brunt of their attack fell on the gallant Rohillas, and they were ultimately repulsed by the troops of Oudh, aided by the British arms. So grateful was Surajah Dowlah for this brave service that he immediately took steps to incorporate the country of the free Rohillas into his own domains, and in 1778 we find him writing to Warren Hastings, asking his assistance to subdue his late defenders. Hastings, by his own confession, encouraged Surajah Dowlah in his basely treacherous design, but the Prince of Oudh feared to undertake the task alone. These gallant mountaineers, with their free, bold hearts and dauntless independence, were no children to pass under the yoke. The

luxurious people of Oudh could not hope to overbear them in battle-field; such an attempt would be foredoomed to failure. But there was one way open to success. There were some troops near Oudh fully equal to match with the warriors of Rohilkhand. If Warren Hastings could be bought over to the views of Surajah Dowlah, the coveted province might be wrested from its rightful possessors. The bribe was offered, £400,000 to the East India Company, and £20,000 to the Governor-General himself, if Hastings would sign a treaty to which was annexed a secret clause, pledging the Company to hire out British troops to the Prince of Oudh to enable him to seize Rohilkhand. Hastings consented, and signed the treaty in September, 1773, the stipulation being added that all the expenses of the war should be defrayed by the Soubahdar. In April, 1774, the execution of the treaty was claimed by Surajah Dowlah, and the troops of Oudh and of the Company entered Rohilkhand side by side. The Rohillas—their offers of peace being rejected—defended themselves with the courage of despair. "It is impossible," wrote Colonel Champion, commander of one of the brigades of the army of Bengal, "to describe a more obstinate firmness of resolution than they displayed." They ranged themselves along the hill-sides of their home, and fought furiously for liberty; chief after chief fell, and still the ranks stood firm. The troops of Oudh fled, but against them steadily

advanced the invincible European foe, and at last the Rohillas broke, leaving 2,000 men dead on the field of battle. To the mountain fastnesses fled Fyzoola Khan and his still resolute followers. The valleys of Rohilkhand were ravaged with fire and sword. The troops of Oudh, which had fled from the Rohilla warriors, plucked up heart of grace to seize the Rohilla women. The fair cities were burnt, the fruitful fields were laid waste; a price was set on the head of every Rohilla, and 100,000 people fled to the jungles, while British soldiers stood by, holding down the country. Hastings had kept his word; the Rohillas "were exterminated".

The Council at Calcutta—not too squeamish about trifles—protested against the black iniquity perpetrated in the name of the Company. Hastings scoffed at their remonstrances; while he lined his own pockets, he also sent home huge sums of money to the East India Directors, and he felt his seat secure. But the Council persevered in their resistance. Francis, above all, challenged the acts of the Governor-General, until in March, 1775, the Council passed a resolution affirming that "There is no species of peculation from which the Governor-General has thought it reasonable to abstain". At last the dispute grew too scandalous to be hushed up. There was a Hindu named Nundkumar, a Brahmin, who had held a high position in the Court of Moorshedabad. Here he had met Hastings and had quarrelled with him and the angry feelings

between them had been yet further embittered by disputes over the fall of the native Government of Bengal. Nundkumar thought that in the quarrel between the Governor and his Council he saw the way to his revenge. He wrote a paper against Hastings, charging him with receiving bribes, and with selling posts in the public service. Francis read the paper in Council, and demanded on Nundkumar's behalf that he should be brought face to face with the Governor. Hastings roughly refused to be thus practically put on his trial, and after much tumult he withdrew from the Council hall, followed by a single supporter. General Clavering was elected to the chair, and Nundkumar was called in and heard at length; his testimony concluded, the Council recorded in its minutes that Nundkumar's exposure had thrown a clear light upon the means whereby the Governor-General had made "the large fortune he was said to possess, upwards of 40 lacs of rupees (£ 400,000), which he must have amassed in the course of three years" (April 11, 1775).

Nundkumar was not left long in peace to enjoy his triumph. Just as Clive had not shrunk from forgery to gain his end, so now his worthy disciple did not shrink from murder. Nundkumar was seized and thrown into gaol on the charge of having, six years before, committed forgery. By the laws of England forgery was a capital offence, and those laws had been imposed upon India in 1773; but in

1769, the date of the alleged crime, Nundkumar was not under British rule at all. He was a man of high rank in the native court of Moorshedabad, owing no sort of allegiance to English law. Forgery only became a capital crime in British Hindustan in 1773, four years after its alleged committal by Nundkumar, and criminal law has no retrospective power; so that—putting aside the injustice of imposing English laws on a country to which they were unsuited—Nundkumar's case was not within either the law of the country or the jurisdiction of the court before which he was dragged. As a Brahmin, his life was sacred to his fellow-countrymen, and nothing could have been more impolitic—even had the punishment been just—than to outrage all native feeling by this sudden attack on the chief of the Brahmins of Bengal. When to all this we add that Nundkumar was tried, not by his fellow-countrymen, but by an English jury composed of the creatures of Hastings, and that it was never proved that he really committed the crime alleged against him, all honest men will re-echo Burke's passionate cry that Hastings "murdered Nundkumar by the hands of Sir Elijah Impey," the English judge. Nundkumar was publicly hanged on August 5, 1776, solely because of his knowledge of the Governor-General's crimes.

Having thus struck down the enemies immediately around him, and having kept his seat of Governor

by quietly repudiating a resignation sent by him to England during the stress of his trouble in Calcutta. Hastings turned his mind to matters further afield; and hearing that a treaty had been concluded between France and the Mahrattas, he dealt his first blows against the new allies, and set his army in motion. The tidings that war had broken out between England and France gave the Governor an excuse for strong action, and he promptly seized the French factories in Bengal, while his lieutenants strove to break the Mahratta power, and humble the pride of their chiefs, Scindia and Holkar. In 1780 peace was concluded with the Mahrattas—all territories taken on either side being restored—for a power was threatening Madras which menaced English supremacy with destruction. Hyder Ali, ruler of Mysore, had left Seringapatam in June, 1780, followed by 85,000 men, had swept over the Carnatic, reached the sea-coast, and by the 24th of July was encamped within forty-two miles of Madras. Hyder Ali's attack had been brought on themselves by the bad faith of the English. In 1769 a peace—ensuing on a war of invasion of Mysore by the English—had been signed under the very walls of Madras by the governor of that city and the triumphant Mysore chieftain. By the treaty the contracting powers bound themselves each to assist the other in all defensive warfare. In 1770 Hyder Ali was attacked by the Mahrattas, and appealed to the British to fulfil their pledge of help. They

declined to assist him, threw the weight of their influence on the side of his enemies, and earned the undying hatred of the betrayed prince. When war broke out between the English and French, Hyder Ali showed some inclination to side with the French; and when in 1778 the English threatened Mahe, a French town within the territories of Mysore, he warned them that if they succeeded in their attack he would invade the Carnatic. Mahe fell, and the Mysorean ruler kept his word. The conflict lasted for four years, and was fought out bravely and persistently on both sides. Hyder Ali died on December 7th, 1782, and the war was carried on by his son, Tippoo Sahib, until on March 11th, 1784, peace was signed at Mangalore, on the *status quo ante bellum*.

While this struggle was going on in the Carnatic, Bengal and the neighbouring provinces were also writhing helplessly against the ever-weightening British yoke. Warren Hastings was in want of money. The war expenses against French, Mahrattas, and Mysoreans pressed him hardly. The Court of Directors at home had to stop complaints with gold. His own pockets needed lining. Whence was money to come? The Mogul could bear no more squeezing. There was no new investment to be made such as the Rohilla loan. He turned his eyes towards Benares. This city was the shrine of India. Pilgrims crowded its streets. Rich offerings were laid upon its altars.

There rich sinners bought absolution, and pious rascals paid diamonds for crimes. There also was a centre of commercial wealth : the trade of Benares floated down the Ganges, and crossed the wide ocean to the capitals of the world. Benares stood forth as the wealthiest prize when Hastings was seeking gold and gems. And yet more, Benares might so easily be plundered. It was under the sway of the Company. The Vizier of Oudh had by treaty ceded to the Company all his rights over the great religious and commercial centre, and Chait Singh, the Prince of Benares, paid direct tribute to the English traders. In 1778 Hastings called on this prince, in addition to the covenanted tribute to furnish three battalions of native troops for the use of the Company, at a charge of £ 50,000. The Rajah, being helpless, submitted. In 1779 the same extra charge was paid. In 1780 the same charge was again demanded ; the Rajah pleaded for remission, and offered to Hastings, as a bribe, £ 20,000. The Governor took the money, and pressed the demand paying over—some time after —the £ 20,000 into the Company's coffer, and wringing out of the despairing Rajah another £ 10,000 as fine. It was paid ; but Hastings was not yet satisfied, or rather he desired to drive the Rajah into refusal, that he might have excuse for plundering him wholesale. He now demanded that the Rajah should further supply a body of cavalry for the Company's use, and on plea of

delay Hastings marched to Benares with an escort of troops. The unhappy prince offered as ransom for his town £ 200,000, and meeting Hastings at Buxar, made the most complete submission. Hastings offered to accept £ 500,000, and on the deprecating evasion of the Rajah, he seized him and committed him to prison. He had acted too audaciously, Chait Singh was beloved for his just and gentle rule, and the angry population rose in his defence. The Company's troops were put to the sword; Chait Singh escaped from his cell by a rope twisted out of the turbans of his friends, and gained a place of refuge. The English troops gathered, and subdued the city. A lad of nineteen years of age was set up as pageant prince, and Benares was added to the territories of the Company. Chait Singh's wealth, however, fell far short of the Governor's hopes, and his treasury was still empty. A great crime had been committed, and little gold had resulted as reward. Another effort must be made; since Benares, when squeezed, shed so little wealth, it would be well to try Oudh. Here the circumstances were peculiar, and vast sums were to be had in exchange for a shameful crime. The Vizier of Oudh was the Prince Asaph-ul-Dowlah, and his mother and grandmother were women of enormous wealth. These two Begums of Oudh were under the special protection of the English, and were therefore easily to be reached. Hastings met Asaph-ul-Dowlah at

Chunar, and arranged with him to plunder the Begums for their mutual benefit, the money to go to the Company, and to be taken as release for all claims against Oudh; the pretext was to be that these two old women had entered into a conspiracy with Chait Singh. But the conspiracy must be proved. Impey, the judge by whom Hastings had murdered Nundkumar, was summoned from Calcutta; he held a place worth £8,000 a year, given him by Hastings, and revocable at Hastings' pleasure, so he hastened to the assistance of his patron. The affidavits in support of the charge of conspiracy were in a dialect unknown to Impey, but why should such a trifle be allowed to delay "justice"? A sentence of confiscation of all lands and treasures was passed on the Begums. How was it to be enforced? The princesses dwelt in their palace of Fyzabad—the Beautiful—and woman's home in the East was sacred from tread of man. Small difficulty was such punctilio of courtesy to Warren Hastings. His troops surrounded the palace, and burst open the door. The two Begums were made prisoners in their own apartments; the two chief officers of the household, both aged men, were seized and fettered; and as no treasures were forthcoming, they were removed to the dungeons of Lucknow, where they were placed under British guard. What tortures they were subjected to, no one can tell; only this we know, that the British resident at Lucknow bade the guard, in writing,

let the torturers pass into the presence of their prisoners, "to be permitted to do with them as they shall see proper". Thick darkness remains over the "corporal punishment" thus inflicted on two helpless old men by British permission. While these horrors were being perpetrated at Lucknow, the Begums and their female servants were being almost starved to death at Fyzabad, until at last, bit by bit, £1,200,000 had been wrung out of their agony. Then all the miserable victims were set free, and the Company's treasury was full at last.

Meanwhile in England a storm was gathering against the crime-stained Governor-General. In 1782 a Select Committee of the House of Commons, moved for by Dundas, strongly censured the conduct of Hastings, and also that of Sir T. Rumbold, Governor of Madras; another Select Committee, moved for by Burke, censured Sullivan, the Chairman of the East India Company's Directors, and Sir Elijah Impey, the legal tool of Hastings. Impey was recalled by the Home Government, but the Directors refused to recall Hastings, and he held his seat until 1785, when he resigned of his own accord. The story of his trial need not be told here; Hastings passes out of the story of India, laden with the curses of the people he had oppressed and destroyed. Let him pass from ours with the final words of Burke's impeachment wringing in our ears: "I impeach him in the name of the

Commons' House of Parliament, whose trust he has betrayed. I impeach him in the name of the English nation, whose ancient honour he has sullied. I impeach him in the name of the people of India, whose rights he has trodden under foot, and whose country he has turned into a desert. Lastly, in the name of human nature itself, in the name of both sexes, in the name of every age, in the name of every rank, I impeach the common enemy and oppressor of all."

CHAPTER IV

CONSOLIDATION AND ITS RESULTS

IN 1784 the India Bill of Pitt was passed, establishing a Board of Control over the political affairs of the East India Company, and by this Bill it was provided, among other things, that the head of the Board should have a seat in the Cabinet, thus causing the Government of British India to be more immediately connected with that of Great Britain itself. Lord Cornwallis was fixed upon as the successor of Warren Hastings, and he sailed for India in April, 1786. Melancholy are the reports sent home of the desolation of the territories which had passed under the Company's rule; Lord Cornwallis himself declared in 1789, that one-third of their lands in Bengal was "a jungle, inhabited only by wild beasts," but none the less did the new Viceroy try to extend the sway of the desolating sceptre. An opportunity soon occurred. The rulers of the Madras Presidency had made up their minds that the power of Tippoo was a menace to their security; they

converted the Governor-General to their views, and he entered into a treaty with Nizam Ali and the Mahrattas to attack Mysore in concert with the English, binding each party not to make peace until half Mysore was divided among them. Lord Cornwallis himself took command of the British contingent, and the war was carried on fiercely right through the year 1791. In February, 1792, Tippoo submitted, ceding to his assailants half his territories—each of the three parties to annex the districts next to their respective domains—and paying £3,000,000 war indemnity. Lord Cornwallis was not even yet satisfied, and having two of Tippoo's children in his power as hostages, he compelled the foreign prince to give up to him also the province of Coorg, a district on the coast of 2,165 square miles. By this arrangement Lord Cornwallis added 24,000 square miles to the dominions of the Company, and placed a similar domain in the hands of the Nizam, who could be crushed in his turn. Having thus triumphed in war, Lord Cornwallis determined to signalise himself as statesman, and in the following year, 1792, he carried out the celebrated permanent land settlement of Bengal. If our readers glance back over our preceding pages, they will find sketched roughly the outline of the main principles of land-holding in Hindustan, and the suffering caused by the substitution of English officials and their cast iron regulations for the native collectors and the elastic tax exacted by them.

Lord Cornwallis, being—as well he might be—dissatisfied with the arrangements he found on his accession to office, conceived the notable idea of planting some more English civilisation in Hindustan, in the shape of a body of landowners, who should pay a fixed, duly assessed tax to Government. Looking about for the materials out of which to form his new class, he pitched upon the zemindars as the most suitable people ready to his hand, and he transformed them into absolute owners of the soil—ignoring wholly all rights of the cultivators, so sacredly guarded by immemorial Indian tradition—and fixed a land-tax to be regularly paid by them and by their heirs after them. The result of this settlement has been that the ryots of Bengal, once so prosperous, have been made the most poverty-stricken people in the world; that according to the *Calcutta Review* (No. 12) they may often "be seen fasting for days and nights for want of food"—that misery such as that of the cultivators of Bengal is not even found among the most oppressed labourers of other regions, and this in a province so fertile that "if you scratch the soil, it laughs into food," and whose population is frugal and temperate to an extreme.

The *Westminster Review* of October, 1825, gives a fair sketch of this unfortunate land settlement of Lord Cornwallis. Almost "the entire net produce of the soil," says the writer, "is absorbed by the State. Deduct the five per cent on the

gross produce paid to a nominal landholder, and which should rather be considered as the charge for collecting the revenue than as rent, deduct the cost of labour, stock, seed, and implements, and nothing—absolutely nothing—remains. The miserable *metayer* usually cultivates for half, sometimes two-fifths of the gross produce, and of the remainder, ten per cent goes to the *zemindar*, the agent and instrument of the Government for the collection of its revenues, who is responsible to the State for the equivalent in money of at least nine-twentieths of the whole gross produce—that is, for more than four-tenths of the Government's half. Thus the ordinary sources of accumulating capital, and the inducements for increasing the productiveness of the soil (so little productive now) are destroyed; and the wretched peasant is doomed to continue in the lowest state of human existence. His toil is unremitting and his poverty is hopeless; he cannot improve his own condition by his profits, for he has none; he cannot cultivate the earth with advantage, for he is destitute of the necessary capital; neither can he, by becoming a consumer of the produce or manufactures of this or any other country, contribute to extend the blessings of commerce, for his wants must be few, and those be satisfied with the readiest, the coarsest, and the basest material".

In 1797 a new Governor-General was bestowed upon India, in the person of Lord Mornington,

afterwards Marquis of Wellesley. He speedily sought new cause of quarrel against Tippoo—who, by economy and hard work, had gradually rebuilt much of his old power—being desirous of "seizing the whole maritime territory remaining" to the despoiled ruler of Mysore; Great Britain was a maritime power, and "scientifically" wished to gain possession of the coast, so, on a frivolous pretext, the English troops were poured into Mysore, Seringapatam was besieged, and on May 4th, 1799, Tippoo fell in one of the streets of his capital, vainly struggling to repel the triumphant soldiery of the Company. Thus perished the independence of Mysore. Seringapatam and some valuable districts were directly annexed to the British dominions; others were given to that most convenient of all allies, the Nizam; the remainder was assigned to a prince of the old Hindu reigning family, who was merely a feudatory of the British Government, and his State was garrisoned with Government troops. The resistance of the Mysoreans was crushed out by the English army, and any "rebel" noble found short shrift. The usual results followed. Misery and famine took the place of comfort and plenty. The nominal ruler, secured on his throne by British bayonets, had no longer the fear of revolt to check him in oppression; he felt safe from attack, while he threw on the shoulders of his masters all responsibility, and the people had neither the old security against bad

native government, nor the representative Parliaments which check the power of the Executive in the West. They suffered under the faults of both systems, and enjoyed the benefits of neither.

The Nizam did not long remain in possession of all his stolen property. In 1800 Lord Mornington—now Marquis of Wellesley—thought that it would be advisable to have some troops in the Nizam's domains; these troops would cost £400,000 *per annum* to maintain, and in order to guard the Company from danger of loss, the Governor-General exacted the cession of provinces whose revenues amounted to £650,000 a year. It was the Marquis of Wellesley's deliberate plan to station British troops in the territory of each Indian prince, on the plea of offering assistance, then to demand a cession of territory in lieu of payment of their expenses, then to gradually push the native ruler into the background by assuming more and more authority in his dominions, and lastly to take over the whole administration of the province, leaving only to the native prince the outside show of regal state. He carried out this plan in Mysore, Surat, Tanjore, and Oudh, and then turned his attention to the Mahratta empire, where two chiefs, Scindia and Holkar, were threatening the now merely nominal authority of the Peshwah. As usual, the British Government offered the permanent protection of its troops if the Peshwah would cede a district valued at £260,000 *per annum*. The prince, Baji Rao II,

hesitated, knowing how auxiliary troops gradually became masters of their master; at last, however, in 1802, Baji Rao was driven from his capital by Holkar, fled for aid to the British, was replaced by them on his throne, and signed a treaty which arranged that 6,000 infantry should remain in his State, as a permanent guard, that certain districts should be ceded in exchange to the Company, and that an alliance, offensive and defensive, should be maintained between the contracting parties, no treaties between the Peshwah and other native rulers to be made without the consent of the British.

The Mahratta chiefs, Scindia and Holkar, and the Rajah of Berar, declined to recognise the treaty of the Peshwah as binding in any fashion on them, and at last (in 1803), fearing the menacing attitude of the British, they all took up arms against the Company, not to invade its territories, but simply and solely to defend their own independence. Lord Lake was at this time Commander-in-Chief of the British forces, and he marched in person against Scindia from Cawnpore, aiming his attack at Delhi and Agra, with the intention of obtaining possession of the person of Shah Alam II, the Great Mogul, held in honourable captivity by Scindia. Other generals co-operated, marching to invade the Mahratta empire from many sides. Lord Lake was an able soldier and a brave leader, and in a battle fought six miles from Delhi he crushed the army of

Scindia to which he was opposed, and occupied the imperial city. Shah Alam changed his owners, and was nominally reinstated in power. The armies of Scindia and of the Rajah of Berar were destroyed at Assaye, where the English were under the command of General Wellesley (September 24th, 1803); the Rajah of Berar submitted, and a few weeks later Scindia also sued for peace; Holkar had held aloof all through, waiting the turn of events. Peace was accordingly made, and a treaty signed, which deprived Scindia of Delhi, Agra, Bundelkhand, Aligarh, and nearly all the territories south of the Ajanta Hills, as well as of a vast tract on the north-west; the Rajah of Berar was also forced to cede some valuable districts, and the Company's dominions were guarded by Gwalior, Dutteah, and other forts on the south-west, and Calpee and Etawah on the Jumna, while the acquisition of Bundelkhand rendered their remaining provinces secure. These vast gains were assigned to the Company by the Treaty of Surjee Arjengaum, signed December 30th, 1803, and six battalions of infantry were quartered near the borders of Scindia's shrunken territory, upon whom he might call in case of need, and who might crush him in case of "rebellion". The contest with Holkar followed, and was carried on with varying success until 1805, when peace was concluded without any cession of territory being demanded, for the Marquis of Wellesley gave place at the beginning of 1805 to Lord Cornwallis,

who strove to staunch some of the bleeding wounds which were draining India to death. The territorial aggrandisement had gone on too fast, even in his eyes, and he tried to check the military spirit rampant in British India. He had but short time, however, for his healing work, for he died at Ghazipore on October 5th of the same year.

For some few years the Government now endeavoured to avoid the constant struggles with the remaining princes of India which had brought so much misery on the unhappy continent which we were gradually reducing to submission. Arcot had fallen into our hands in 1802, the Nawab, an infant, being compelled to cede his dominions to us in exchange for a pension, and in 1809 a treaty with Lahore consolidated our paramount authority over the native princes east of the Jumna. In 1817 a slice was taken from Indore, and added to the British Dominions; and in the same year Baji Rao, the Peshwah, whom we had supported against Scindia and Holkar, found that, having crushed his enemies, we were now ready to turn our arms against himself. The Government insisted that Baji Rao should admit more troops into his State, and should cede a territory producing £340,000 a year for their maintenance; other degrading conditions were added to the treaty, and after a hopeless struggle the Peshwah submitted, only to conspire against the power which had mastered him. His plans were quickly discovered;

the English marched against him, dethroned him, and in February, 1818, his dominions were annexed by the Company. In 1813 the renewal of the Company's charter had been accompanied by a declaration that the sovereignty of all British territory in India vested in the British Crown, and it was not long before this sovereignty was held to include the right of succession to all provinces of which the native prince died without leaving a lawful heir. Gradually the British Crown claimed the supreme place, hitherto held by the Great Mogul, and became Lord Paramount of India.

Under Lord William Bentinck, from 1828 to 1835, Hindustan showed signs of prospering, spite of its long agony. The Government strove to rule India for the benefit of India, rather than for that of England; he reduced the pay of English officials, and admitted natives to many posts in the civil service, endeavouring to win over the conquered rather than to crush them down. During his seven years' rule he reduced the Indian debt more than £3,000,000, and when he quitted Hindustan he left behind him the name of the first Governor-General who had treated the sword-won empire as though justice, and not oppression, should be the bulwark of a State.

When Lord William Bentinck reached India, he found the native press strictly tied down. From 1818-23 it had been free, and into so vigorous a life had it sprung that a daily newspaper published in Calcutta realised to its proprietors an annual

income of £8,000. But as the hope of successful armed revolt grew weaker, the discontent of the natives grew yet more bitter, and this discontent found an outlet through the press. The tyrant's natural resource is to gag his victim's mouth, and in 1823 the brief-lived liberty of pen was practically destroyed by an ordinance which forbade any political publication without license, such license being revokable by the Governor-General in Council. This ordinance was published in March, and in April the Governor-General defined the crimes which would subject proprietors and editors to the forfeiture of their licenses; among these we find: "defamatory or contumelious reflections against the King or any of the members of the royal family": observations on the authorities "in any way tending to bring them into hatred or contempt": "discussions having a tendency to create alarm or suspicion among the native population of any intended official interference with their religious opinions and observances": "the republication from English or other papers of passages coming under the foregoing heads": "defamatory publications tending to disturb the peace, harmony, and good order of society": "anonymous appeals to the public relative to grievances of a professional or official nature, alleged to have been sustained by public officers in the service of his Majesty or the honourable Company."

Small liberty of press indeed was here; the simplest efforts at reform, the fairest criticism of any

governmental action, would come under these heads; such a law degraded the press into a mere gossip-monger, debarred from all legitimate influence over public life. The grossest tyranny might be perpetrated, but no word of protest was permitted; the most unjust favouritism might prevail, but no complaint might be urged; the safety-valve of suffering was fastened down, and yet people wonder why discontent, forbidden expression by pen, broke out in reckless desperation, from time to time in armed revolt.

Lord William Bentinck had, with characteristic wisdom, desired to restore full liberty of expression to those he governed; the reform, however, was not carried out by himself, but by Sir C. Metcalfe, who held supreme authority during the interval which elapsed between the resignation of the Governorship by Lord William and the most unhappy appointment of Lord Auckland.

As we shall deal with the war with Afghanistan in our next chapter, we pass over that melancholy story, and pause a moment on the next campaign, which ended in the annexation of Sind. Right of way had been granted to our troops in 1839, when we marched to invade Afghanistan, and on our return we coolly declined to withdraw our army entirely, and insisted that the rulers of Sind should accept a permanent guard of British troops. These chiefs—entitled Ameers—struggled hard for their independence, but at last gave way, and

Sir Charles Napier was appointed commander of the English forces in Sind (1842). Encroachment after encroachment was now made, until the warlike chiefs were at last irritated into resistance; and Sir Charles Napier, seizing his opportunity, took up arms against them, captured Hyderabad, and crushed out all resistance. Sind was annexed to British India, in June, 1843, as a reward to the Ameers for their grudging submission to our aggressions; and our shameful subjugation of this brave and warlike people may fairly claim to stand side by side in iniquity with our earlier Indian conquests. At the end of the same year Lord Ellenborough—who had succeeded Lord Auckland as Governor in 1842—took up arms against Gwalior, on the plea that Scindia's successor, a minor, was unable to prevent disorder in his dominions; the fort of Gwalior, "the Gibraltar of the East," was taken on December 29th, and a treaty was signed whereby the whole administration of the State was practically placed in the hands of the English Resident until the expiration of the minority of the boy prince.

Lord Ellenborough was recalled in 1844, and his place was taken by Sir Henry—afterwards Lord—Hardinge. The muffled sound of arms was already heard from beyond the Sutlej, and on December 14th, 1845, the Sikhs—fearing subjugation in their turn—crossed the river and attacked the British at Ferozepore. Sir H. Hardinge himself took

command of the English army, and at the battle of Moodkee, fought on December 18th, beat back the Sikh forces. Lahore was taken by Sir H. Gough, and a treaty signed on March 9th, 1846, which added a large district to the British possessions, imposed, as usual, the maintenance of a subsidiary British force in Lahore, fixed a Resident in its capital, and gave the guardianship of the young Maharajah Dhuleep Singh to the British until he should become of age, in 1854. All seemed quiet for a while, but the high-spirited Sikhs were fretting against their chains; the Maharanee, the mother of the young prince, was suspected of "treason," seized by order of the Resident, and carried away first to Benares and then to Shikarpore, while the allowance guaranteed to her by treaty was from £15,000 decreased to £1,200 a year, an open trial being denied her. Other high-handed acts of injustice followed, and at last the storm broke. The Sikhs rose in the spring of 1848, and it was not until March 14th, 1849, that they gave up the hopeless struggle. On March 29th the Panjab was formally annexed, our ward, the Maharajah Dhuleep Singh, being given, in exchange for his princedom, a pension of £40,000 a year. His family jewel, the Koh-i-noor—or Mountain of Light—was also stolen from him, and taken possession of for her Majesty Queen Victoria, who still owns it. Thus faithfully and loyally did we discharge our duties as guardians and trustees of the young Sikh prince.

Lord Dalhousie—Governor from 1847 to 1855—not being satisfied with this "scientific" rectification of his frontier, turned his attention eastwards. He picked up a quarrel with Burma, attacked Rangoon (November, 1851), and after a bloody war annexed Pegu to British India on December 20th, 1852. Not content with annexation by the sword, he vigorously applied the doctrine that where a prince died without leaving a natural heir, his kingdom escheated to the British Crown. He thus confiscated Satara in 1848, Jhansi in 1853, and Nagpore in 1854, refusing to recognise the immemorial native custom, that the reigning sovereign might select his successor from his family, or where there were no natural heirs, adopt some outsider. In Nagpore the disgraceful outrage on justice was consummated with especial offensiveness; the chosen prince succeeded as Maharajah as a matter of course; but Lord Dalhousie saw his opportunity. He sent troops to surround the prince's palace, seized the hereditary jewels of Nagpore, imprisoned the princesses of the reigning house, and annexed the province; the "Nagpore Jewels" were absolutely advertised for sale in Calcutta, and the advertisement may still be seen—by any who care to read the shame of Britain—in the *Morning Chronicle*, published in Calcutta, October 12th, 1855. While thus confiscating provinces, Lord Dalhousie did not disdain meaner spoils; the British had guaranteed to the Nawab of Arcot a fifth of the revenues of his

territory "for ever," the Company absorbing the remaining four-fifths. In 1853 Lord Dalhousie quietly appropriated this last fifth, despoiling the rightful owner. In the same year he demanded the fertile cotton-growing districts owned by the Nizam of Bengal, as maintenance for British troops whose presence was by no means desired, and obtained large tracts of land in Berar. He was in full train to add Oudh to his other annexations, when he was replaced by Lord Canning in 1855. His policy did not die with him. Oudh was annexed in February, 1856.

It needs not here to tell the sad story of the Mutiny of 1857; it was the natural Nemesis treading on the heels of the crimes of Clive, Hastings, Wellesley, Cornwallis, and Dalhousie. Desperate, hopeless of redress, reckless of consequences, certain that no misery could be greater than the misery of the day, India rose against her conquerors. The Begums of Oudh were avenged at Cawnpore, and Englishwomen paid the debt of dishonour exacted from Hindu and Mussalman women during a century of misrule. The "rebellion"—which, were we the "rebels," we should call "patriotism"—was crushed out, the Crown stepped in to assume all authority, and on September 1st, 1858, the rule of the East India Company ceased for evermore. Few records of conquest show stains as foul as the story of the subjugation of Hindustan by this originally merchant association.

On November 1st, 1858, a royal proclamation was issued, announcing that "for divers weighty reasons" Queen Victoria had taken on herself the royal word that the Queen desired "no extension of our territorial possessions," and would "respect the rights, dignity, and honour of native princes". Lord Canning thus became the first Viceroy of India. How faithfully her Majesty intends to keep her royal word, is shown by the late declaration of her Prime Minister, that we are going to give India a "scientific frontier" by removing our neighbour's landmark. Since 1858 her Majesty has assumed a further dignity in India. On January 1st, 1877, in accordance with 39 and 40 Vic., cap. 10, solemn proclamation was made at Delhi, the old imperial city, before the assembled princes and nobles of India, that the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland had assumed the new title of Indiae Imperatrix, and that India was thenceforth blessed with an Empress, an English Great Moguless, Lady Paramount of all mere native rulers. The waste of money involved in the magnificent ceremonial at Delhi, while the people were starving further south, provoked much bitter comment, but this only proved the ingratitude of the Hindus. What can one nation do for another that we have not done for these ungrateful Indians? We have invaded their country, burnt their homes, slaughtered their men, outraged their women, plundered their treasure-houses, destroyed their laws, pulled down their rulers, given them famine

for plenty, poverty for wealth—in a word, we have bestowed on them all the blessings of civilisation, and yet they do not love us, and they are not content with our sway.

And now let us consider what has been the ultimate outcome of our rule in India. We have seen what India was; let us now glance at India as it is. Is the continuance of our rule likely to be beneficial to India or not?

Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, in a paper read before the East India Association in 1870—in which great stress was laid on the enormous "price of foreign rule, which causes a great and continuous drain in consequence of the amount withdrawn from India, to the extent of £10,000,000 annually" says: "No foreign rule can maintain itself unless it manages to enable the country to produce not only sufficient for the ordinary wants of a civilised nation, but also for the price of the foreign rule itself. If the foreign rule fails to produce this result, its existence is naturally felt as a crushing burden to the nation, and either starvation, decimation, and poverty, or rebellion against the foreign rule, is the inevitable consequence." The total raw produce of India is reckoned by our writer at £200,000,000; the population is nearly 150,000,000. £10,000,000 is annually remitted to Great Britain, and making allowance for the unequal distribution of the £190,000,000 remaining, it is scarcely surprising that Lord Lawrence should have recorded his opinion that

"India is, on the whole, a very poor country. The mass of the people enjoy only a scanty subsistence" (Minute of March 26th, 1864), or that the present Viceroy, Lord Lytton, should say of the Indian people that its "entire labour provides only just food enough for its own annual sustenance" (Speech in Council, December 27th, 1877). Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji further complains of the rapid increase of State expenditure in India. In 1856 the total expenditure was less than £32,000,000; in 1870-71 the estimate was £49,000,000; in 1874-5 this had swollen to £54,500,545, and it is now said to be proposed to saddle India with the expense of the present unprovoked and most wicked war with Afghanistan.

It is sometimes urged that a good deal of money has been spent on railways, and that such works always make a good return for expenditure. A million and three quarters is yearly paid by the Indian Government as guaranteed interest on this capital invested in railways; but this money is yearly taken from the overtaxed people of India, and is paid to the shareholders, nearly all of whom are English, the very meetings of directors being held in London. Nor ought we to forget, in dealing with Indian railways, that they have been made for military rather than for civil use. The charge for freight makes them useless for all commercial purposes, and during the late famine it is a melancholy fact that people were dying of starvation,

while, 2,000 miles away, the railway stations were "encumbered with grain awaiting the means of transport" (Sir J. Strachey, Financial Member of the Council of the Governor-General, December, 1877). Mr. Burke, writing in the *Dublin University Magazine* of November, 1877, says on this point: "The amount of goods traffic, compared with the resources of the country, is absurd. The reason is obvious. The distances are so great that the rates charged for carriage are quite out of proportion to the value of the principal Indian products, such as grain and other bulky commodities. The cost of carriage of a ton of wheat to Bombay alone from the Nerbudda Valley—one of the richest grain districts in India, and indeed in the world—is greater than the cost of carriage of the same amount from Chicago to the London Docks."

The taxation of India is enormous, and is making life almost impossible to the native worker. The net expenditure on the army in 1876-77 and in 1877-78 was seventeen million sterling, and this army—paid for by the Indians—exists to keep them in forcible subjection. "We hold India by the sword," it is said. The yearly cost of administration is now between forty-eight and forty-nine millions sterling, and we are told that "a large share" of this is "in the expenditure recorded in the Home Accounts". In March, 1877, Sir John Strachey bitterly complained: "That the Indian revenues are liable to have great charges thrown

upon them without the Government of India being consulted, and almost without any power of remonstrance, is a fact the gravity of which can hardly be exaggerated."

The taxation is now calculated so as to leave a margin for famine expenditure, for among the blessings which we have conferred upon India must be reckoned the certainty of recurring famines. The Bengal famine of 1874 cost £ 6,750,000; the last famine cost £ 9,250,000. Lord Derby, at Liverpool, said that these famines were certain to recur, owing to the safety to life consequent on British rule. Lord Lytton, in a speech in council in December 27th, 1877, spoke in the same sense: "It is a population which, in some parts of India, under those securities for life which are the general consequence of British rule, has a tendency to increase more rapidly than the food it raises from the soil. It is a population whose consumption, in many places, trenches too closely on the crops already provided by its industry." If that industry were less heavily taxed, the margin of saving would of course be greater; for though in India, as in England, the radical remedy for over-population and consequent famine lies in conjugal prudence, this fact does not lessen the cruelty of the crushing taxation of India. During the year 1877 the taxation was raised by £ 1,100,000, and this from a people already ruined. The taxes themselves need reform, as now the life of the people is literally taxed. Salt,

which, with a vegetarian population, is so necessary to health, is taxed to such an extent that it is twenty times dearer in India than in England. The expense of collecting this scandalous tax is great, for the salt lies close at hand, and armies of custom-house officers are required to prevent smuggling. Sir John Strachey speaks well and hotly against this cruel burden; in the speech before quoted from, he says: "In order to bring under taxation the salt imported from Rajputana into Northern India, and to shut out salt taxed at a lower rate, this vast system of Customs lines stretches its lines, 'accursed of gods and men,' some 2,000 miles across the whole breadth of India . . . 8,000 men guard this unspeakable barrier. I have poured forth in times past such constant indignation against this abominable system that it is difficult for me to find fresh terms of opprobrium."

On the whole, glancing over the present state of affairs, we can scarcely congratulate ourselves on India as it is. Yet we cannot now simply try to throw off our vast responsibility; we cannot, having seized India, now fling it aside. What is our duty to this great land, and how may we best remedy our crimes in the past? The answer comes in one word: "Liberty". Train India for freedom; educate India for self-government. Do not only proclaim that Indians shall be eligible for the high places of the State: place them there. Let Indian judges administer justice: let Indian officers rise to high

command: let Indian civil servants win the prizes of administration. Let Indians be taken into the ruling council, and let the imposition of taxation pass into native hands. They understand the needs and the capabilities of their own people better than we do, and would be able to raise more money while inflicting less suffering. The work cannot be done in a day, but it might be begun. The steady resistance of English officialism must be overborne; the endeavour to keep all highly paid places in English hands must be defeated. Unhappily, the *will* is wanting, not the power. In the old days Indian institutions were representative; let the old genius of native rule be revivified, and let a system of representative government gradually replace the centralised despotism of our present sway. I would not, with Major Evans Bell—in his thoughtful and useful work, *Our Great Vassal Empire*—advocate the re-establishment of the native States, because with the re-establishment of many semi-independent States would also be re-established the old jealousies and rivalries perpetually threatening order and peace. I would let the supreme power gradually pass, not into the hands of the princes of India, but into the hands of the Indian people, so that a mighty self-governing nation should slowly arise from the ashes of the dead native and foreign despotisms.

We hear much now of the danger of Russian interference. Make India free and the Russian ghost

will be for ever laid to rest. At present, the oppressed Indians may look towards Russia as a possible deliverer from English tyranny, and may fancy that out of the struggle between two invaders they may win some chance of regaining their own country for themselves. But the Russian yoke is not so easy that a free India would bow the neck before it; begin, even, to build up Indian liberty, and Indians will be first to spring to their frontier to beat back the northern bear who would lay waste the garden of freedom. With India hostile, Russia may prove dangerous; with India friendly, the Cossack must seek other hunting-ground. Our fate is in our own power. Alas! that the moulding of it has been placed, by our own folly, in the hands of an Empress, inheriting the petty autocratic pride of German princelings, and of a clever and unscrupulous statesman, dazzled by the glitter of a military Imperialism, and the gauds of a pompous Court.

CHAPTER V

AFGHANISTAN

IN India much wrong has been done, but in the eyes of many this wrong is hidden by the glamour of victory and of successful empire, which, like charity, "covereth a multitude of sins". In our dealings with Afghanistan we have wrought much evil, wasted much treasure, spilt much blood, and have reaped only failure. At the present time we are reacting the story of forty years ago, and thus far with a curious identity of detail. Perchance the telling of that sad tale may act as warning, and may help to prevent the miserable ending being re-written to-morrow in our history.

Afghanistan is a wild, mountainous, and to a great extent, a desert country, bounded on the north by Bokhara, with the Hindu Koosh as a rampart on the north-east, on the east by the Suleiman Mountains, on the west by Persia, and on the south by Baloochistan. It is inhabited by wild and hardy tribes, impatient of control, restive even under the hand of a prince of their own selection, jealous of their independence, and resenting furiously any

indications of foreign interference in their land. The chiefs of the various tribes may acknowledge as head a single reigning prince, but they yield him no more supremacy than was yielded by the Norman barons to the Norman kings. No ruler of Afghanistan dare run wholly counter to the will and prejudices of his nobles if he desires to keep his throne secure. From many points of view Afghanistan is a desirable neighbour enough to our Indian Empire, *so long as we leave it alone.* It is too weak to threaten us with any danger worth mentioning, while, on the other hand, the nature of the country and the character of its people make it a valuable protection of our own frontier. Those who fear a Russian invasion of India should remember that an independent Afghanistan would be our best auxiliary, whether or no we were formally allied with it. The Afghans would fight right sturdily for their own independence, and would take much conquering before they were subdued; and even after being temporarily overcome, they would prove most troublesome raiders on the Russian line of communications. If we held Afghanistan the position would be reversed; the Russians then would come as deliverers from foreign usurpation, and—until they held the country—would be gladly welcomed by the tribes we had subdued. Sir H. Rawlinson, in his work on *England and Russia in the East*, speaks of the "necessity of . . . creating, without loss of time, a direct barrier in Afghanistan against

further Russian encroachment" (p. 14); such a barrier Afghanistan is, so long as we do not, by threatening her independence, convert her from our natural outpost into our irreconcilable foe.

The Indus, so long regarded as "the natural boundary of Hindustan on the north-west," is a river 1,800 miles in length, rising in the mountains of Thibet, entering Hindustan past the northernmost spur of the Himalayas, and flowing southwards, bordering Lahore and Sind, until it mingles its waters with those of the Arabian Sea. There can be no doubt that this mighty river is the best and most rational boundary of our Indian Empire; to advance beyond this is to entangle ourselves in a policy which can issue only in costly wars, and in the maintenance of an army on a war footing even in time of peace.

In 1838 we had not reached the Indus; the Punjab was ruled by the "Lion of the Punjab," Runjeet Singh, who, being a wise and wary monarch, was by no means inclined to quarrel with the mighty white-faced strangers who had built themselves an empire in the east and south. Runjeet Singh had extended his rule beyond the river Indus. Shah Soojah, prince of Afghanistan, had ceded to him the province of Peshawar; and although Shah Soojah had, since that cession, been driven from his throne, and had been succeeded by Dost Mahommed, Runjeet Singh had not loosened his grasp on the district he had gained. In vain did

Dost Mahommed strive to regain the land lost by his conquered predecessor; it was peopled by Afghans and Baloochees, and was part of the old Dooranee empire. To regain this would be to endear his sovereignty to the haughty and war-like tribes over which he ruled. The chief city, Peshawar, lies eighteen miles from the entrance to the Khyber Pass; the mountains were then—and are still—held by an Afghan tribe known distinctively as the Afreedees; the fertile plains surrounding Peshawar were inhabited by tribes of his own race; the Bara River, flowing into the Indus at Shekkan, was a flood of peculiar sanctity, and Dost Mahommed naturally longed to reunite this district to the lands which owned his sway. Runjeet Singh had seized Attock and Cashmere, had in 1823 crossed the Indus, won a great battle at Nashedra, taken Peshawar, and had thenceforth kept some kind of mastery over the rebellious Afghans; but the tribes were restless and uneasy, and were ready to rise if any chance appeared of regaining their lost independence. Runjeet Singh would not recede Peshawar; he was friendly with the British, so no help was to be looked for from Calcutta. Dost Mahommed turned to Persia, and here he found promise of assistance, and he sharpened his sword for battle. Shah Soojah, the exiled ruler of Afganistan, thought that he now saw chance of reinstalment; he was willing to confirm Runjeet Singh's rule over the disputed province, provided that Runjeet

Singh would aid him in regaining his lost authority beyond the Suleiman Range. Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India, was ready to join in the fray, and lend British troops to force Shah Soohah on the people who had rejected him.

But why should Lord Auckland meddle in a quarrel that was none of his? The Russian ghost had risen in Central Asia, and Lord Auckland feared a Russian invasion of India. Russian agents, it was said, were busy in the lands lying towards the Indus; Russian influence was spreading through Afghanistan; Russian envoys were making their way eastwards; Russian intrigue was spreading its network over Central Asia and over Afghanistan, and we should find ourselves attacked in India before we had awakened from our dream of fancied security. To crown all, our envoy, Mr. McNeile, had been insulted at Teheran, and immediate steps were necessary to re-establish our *prestige*. The British forces marched into Afghanistan, a Sikh force co-operating, and reached Candahar in April, 1839, where they proclaimed Shah Soojah, re-established as ruler of the country. On August 7th Cabul was taken. Dost Mahommed fled, but was soon afterwards captured and sent prisoner to Calcutta, and 5,000 British troops being left to support Shah Soojah's authority, the Afghan War was considered as at an end. Sir Alexander Burnes was placed at Cabul as Resident, General Elphinstone remained in command of the British army,

General Nott was at Candahar with a small body of soldiers, and General Sale was stationed at Jalalabad. Lord Auckland was triumphant, and Afghanistan was definitely brought "within the sphere of British influence". For more than a year the British kept Afghanistan down, but in November, 1841, the storm broke. The Afghans rose in Cabul, surrounded the Residency, and Sir A. Burnes and his suite were put to the sword. It is the Afghan boast that "every Afghan is a swordsman," and the swords flashed from their scabbards; the warrior tribes flew to arms to drive out the invader from their borders. The hated foreigner had been endured too long; now the hour of vengeance had arrived. The small British army was helpless in face of a nation in arms; an immediate retreat was the only hope of safety, and negotiations were opened with Akbar Khan, the Afghan leader. The terms imposed were severe, but not so severe as those which the British had many a time imposed on their conquered enemies; and in this case the British were the aggressors, and had invaded a foreign land without just cause of quarrel. Akbar Khan demanded as ransom £140,000, and the delivery of all the artillery save six guns. The terms were accepted, and the retreat began. But the whole country had risen, and threatening tribes barred the path back to India. Furious with their wrongs, the Afghan chiefs would not endorse the terms made by Akbar

Khan at Cabul; the British army was surrounded, and strove in vain to cut its way through to Jalalabad. In that terrible retreat, between the 6th and the 13th January, 1842, 5,000 troops and 11,000 camp-followers—some accounts say that the number of the retreating body amounted to 26,000 persons—perished by the sword, one man only escaping to carry the news of the awful catastrophe to Jalalabad. It will easily be understood that all the murdering was not left to the Afghans; an "army of revenge" was gathered together, marched into Afghanistan, and "chastised the rebels". Having thus re-established British *prestige*, peace was quickly concluded, the Government being then only too glad to leave the Afghans to manage their own affairs in their own way.

Shah Soojah, whom we had re-established in 1839, was slain in 1842, and Dost Mahommed re-ascended the throne. Our interference had done nothing but mischief, and with the exception of the blood that had been shed, and the homes that had been made desolate, everything remained as it was before the war. In 1849, as we have seen, the Punjab was annexed, and Dost Mahommed knew that any attempt to wrest from the British what he had failed to recover from Runjeet Singh would be madness, so he submitted to necessity, and endeavoured to become on more friendly terms with us. At last, on March 13th, 1855, a treaty was concluded at Peshawar between the British Government and

"His Highness Ameer Dost Mahommed Khan, Walee of Cabul," etc. It was signed on the one hand by Mr. John Lawrence—then Chief Commissioner of the Punjab—and on the other by Ghulam Hyder, Heir Apparent of Afghanistan. By this treaty the contracting parties first bound themselves to "perpetual peace and friendship"; the Company then pledged itself to "respect those territories of Afghanistan now in his Highness' possession, and never to interfere therein," while in return the Ameer promised to respect the territories of the Company in like manner, and "to be the friend of the friends, and enemy of the enemies, of the Honourable East India Company". Dost Mahommed died in 1863, and a "war of succession" at once broke out. Ghulam Hyder had died before his father, and Dost Mahommed had chosen Sher Ali as his successor. The prince ascended his father's throne after a short contest with his half-brother Azim, and the fact was duly notified to the Government at Calcutta. Owing, apparently, to the intrigues of Azim, the recognition of the new Ameer by the British was delayed for six months, and during this time Azim Khan was busily fomenting disturbances in Afghanistan. Civil war soon again broke out, Azim once more trying the wager of battle. He was again defeated (April, 1864), and fled into British territory. Another half-brother, Afzal, next claimed the throne, but in June he also was conquered. Sher Ali's repose was,

however, of short duration, for although he held Afzal prisoner, Afzal's partisans were actively at work; and in June, 1865, in a battle fought near Candahar, the Ameer lost Mahommed Ali, his eldest and best-loved son. Azim crossed the frontier, and joining the forces under Abdoor Rahman, Afzal's son, he marched against Cabul, and captured the city in February, 1866. A great battle was fought in the following May; Sher Ali was defeated and driven to Candahar, while Afzal was set free, and was proclaimed Ameer of Afghanistan in Cabul. For some time the contests between the two Ameers, one reigning in Cabul and the other in Candahar, went on with varying success, until at last—Afzal having died in October, 1867, and having been succeeded by Azim—in 1868 Sher Ali triumphed, and re-established himself at Cabul.

During this protracted struggle Sir John Lawrence, as Viceroy of India, behaved, so far as we can judge from the published papers, wisely and well. He declined to mix himself up with the Afghan disputants; he left the Afghans to settle their own quarrels as they pleased, and contented himself with recognising the *de facto* ruler or rulers. Lord Mayo followed the same wise path, while endeavouring to place our relations with the Ameer on a thoroughly friendly footing, and it is but lately that this statesmanlike policy has been exchanged for one of adventure and "surprise".

We now find ourselves at war with Afghanistan, with no very clear idea on the part of the Government as to the reason for or the object of the war. The Queen alleges that "the hostility towards my Indian Government manifested by the Ameer of Afghanistan, and the manner in which he repulsed my friendly mission, left me no alternative but to make a peremptory demand for redress". The Prime Minister says that we have gone to war to secure "a scientific frontier". Lord Cranbrook agrees with the Queen. The Viceroy gives a long list of grievances; the Ameer's "closing to British subjects and commerce the road between India and Afghanistan; maltreating British subjects; permitting British traders to be plundered with impunity within his jurisdiction; and using cruelly and putting to death subjects of his own on the mere suspicion that they were in communication with the British Government". He has also "by words and deeds tried to stir up religious hatred against the English, and incite war against the Indian Empire; having excluded British officers from every part of his dominions, he refused to receive a British mission; he left unanswered friendly communications addressed to him by the Viceroy, and declined amicable intercourse between the British Government and himself, but nevertheless received formally, and publicly entertained at Cabul, an embassy from Russia, at a time when such an act derived special significance from the course of

events in Europe, and the attitude of England and Russia in relation to those events".

We have, therefore, no lack of warlike reasons to choose from. As to the pretence that we have gone to war because we desire to have our mission received, it may be enough to say that in 1869 the same proposal was made to the Ameer, and that he said that his nobles would resent the presence of a foreigner in Cabul, and that he was unable, therefore, to meet the wishes of the British Government. There seems no special reason for going to war in 1878 for that to which we yielded in 1869. The reception of the Russian mission does not alter the aspect of affairs. The Ameer might well receive a temporary mission, and refuse to receive a permanent resident; he might well show hospitality to a small and friendly party, and reject an envoy accompanied, as was ours, by a large body of troops. In India, whenever we intended to quietly annex a province, we introduced a Resident and a large armed escort; the Ameer may well be excused if he objected to the first steps of a policy which had been so fatal to every Indian prince. The reception of the Russian mission, however, cannot have given any real offence to our Government, because, if there were any such cause of complaint, we should have declared war against Russia, and not against Afghanistan; every dictate of honour and of courage would have made us strike at the strong aggressor, and not at his helpless tool. But if we have any

real fear of Russian advance towards our frontiers, then surely the best arrangement that we could make with Afghanistan would be to strengthen rather than to weaken it, to enlarge rather than to narrow it. Afghanistan strong, independent, and friendly, means a bulwark of our Indian Empire. War with Afghanistan, and annexation of Afghan territory, means the creation on our frontier of a foe in alliance with Russia.

But are we likely to lose India by Russian invasion? We are more likely, as was wisely said in 1842, to lose India by "financial convulsion" than by war. In Europe, said the speaker, the struggle will rage, and the decision will be made; India should never be defended against Russia "by the invasion of neutral nations and intermediate regions which even Russia has not assailed". To Lord Beaconsfield's attention I recall this speech, uttered by Benjamin Disraeli thirty-six years ago, and—with the increase of Indian debt and Indian taxation since 1842—I would pray him to ponder his own wise words: "He did not believe that we should be deprived of that Empire either by internal insurrection or by foreign invader. If ever we lost India it would be from financial convulsion. It would be lost by the pressure of circumstances which events like the war in Afghanistan were calculated to bring about, by exhausting the resources of the country in military expeditions."

THE STORY OF AFGHANISTAN:

OR

WHY THE TORY GOVERNMENT GAGS THE INDIAN PRESS

A PLEA FOR THE WEAK AGAINST THE STRONG

THE STORY OF AFGHANISTAN

AMONG the many grave charges to be brought against the Tory Government when at last—forced by the inevitable hand of Time—it is compelled to face its master, the people of Great Britain ; among the crimes to be alleged against it at the bar of public opinion ; among the counts of the indictment which is there to be presented against it—one weighty, one most fatal impeachment will come from the smouldering villages, the fire-blackened homes, the trampled harvests, the murdered men, the frozen women and children of the far-off Afghan land.

The history of English policy in Afghanistan is one which each citizen of Britain is now bound to study. No adult individual in a nation is free from responsibility of national policy—only some have votes, but all have influence. To-day the hands of the citizens are in so far clean that when this Tory Government was placed in power, it was placed there for inaction, for rest, for quietude. None voted that it should embroil us in Europe, in Asia, in Africa. None chose it that it should waste our savings and embarrass our finances. None raised

it that it should pour out our money as dross, nor shed human blood as water in three of the four continents of the globe. To-morrow, if England vote Tory, on England, and not on the Ministry, will rest the crimes of the last six years. England's the dishonour in south-eastern Europe if she endorse the war-with-disgrace-treaty of Berlin. England's the shame if she condone the murder of women and children in cold blood in South Africa, the slaughter of the helpless by dynamite as they crouched for shelter in the caves. England's the disgrace—and the rapidly advancing Nemesis—if she approve our broken treaties, our dishonoured promises, our inhuman cruelties, touching the wronged, the betrayed, the crushed races of the mountains and valleys of Afghanistan.

On behalf of the latter alone I raise my voice to-day. It is said to be unpatriotic to blame one's country. But not so have I read the history of England's noblest patriots. Love of England does not mean approval and endorsement of the policy of some Oriental adventurer whom chance and personal ability and unscrupulousness have raised to power. Love of England means reverence for her past, work for her future; it means sympathy with all that is noble and great in her history, and endeavour to render her yet more noble, yet more great; it means triumph in her victories over oppression, delight in her growing freedom, glory in her encouragement of all nations struggling towards

liberty; it means pride in her pure name, in her fair faith, in her unsoiled honour, in her loyal word; it means condemnation of her bullying, boasting, cruel imperialism since Lord Beaconsfield seduced her from her purity, and regretful remorseful turning back to the old paths of duty, of honour, and of faith.

Therefore this plea of mine for "the weak against the strong" is not an unpatriotic attack on our own beloved land, but rather the loving effort of a child to save a mother whose honour and whose life are threatened by unscrupulous betrayers.

In 1838 we first interfered in Afghan politics. An Afghan ruler, Shah Soojah, had ceded some of his realm to Runjeet Singh, "the Lion of the Punjab," and had been, therefore, driven into exile by his indignant countrymen. Dost Mahommed succeeded to the vacant throne, and Shah Soojah appealed to Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India, for aid against the selected of the Afghan people. He raised the ghost of Russian influence; he played on the unworthy fear of Russia that from time to time discredits English courage; he spoke of Russian spies, Russian designs, Russian intrigues, until Lord Auckland, panic-struck, rushed to meet the imagined danger, took up Shah Soojah's cause, placed an army at his virtual disposal, overran Afghanistan, entered Cabul, and propped up Shah Soojah on his throne with the sharp points of British bayonets. The seat was an uneasy one. In 1841 it gave way. Afghanistan rose. The hill-tribes

blocked the passes. From the 6th to the 13th January (1842), the English army of occupation strove to cut its way back to India. Food failed it. Snow blocked its path. Bitter cold destroyed its weaklings. Sharp swords cut down its loiterers. Out of 16,000 troops and camp followers one exhausted, starving, fainting, fugitive fell still living within the gates of Jalalabad.

Il va sans dire that massacre revenged massacre. By sword and fire British punished the Afghan uprising, and then—wise at length—withdrew her troops, recognised Dost Mahommed, practically admitted her blunder, and left Afghanistan free and independent, mistress of herself.

In 1849 we annexed the Punjab, and so advanced our border until it marched with that of Afghanistan. Dost Mahommed had no will to break himself against British power; he recognised the position of affairs, and in 1855 entered into a definite treaty with the British Government of India. In this treaty were two important pledges. One on the part of England promised that we would "never interfere" within the possessions of the Ameer. The other pledged the Ameer to be "friend of our friends, and enemy of our enemies". The phrase "never interfere" had a peculiar and important signification. For some fifty years English annexation in Hindustan had been remarkably rapid. This annexation ran through a well-defined cycle. First—an English Resident; then, advice

urgently pressed; then, complaint of misgovernment constantly published; then, interference; then compulsion; then, open annexation. The free and turbulent Afghan people saw this play repeated over and over again on the other side of the Suleiman Range. Hence arose a jealous fear of the like fate. Hence a keen dread of British interference. Hence an ineradicable distrust of British officers and a determination not to open the flood gates of subjugation by admittance of a British Resident. Therefore when the treaty of 1855 was signed, the promise of Afghan friendship was made to depend on the promise of England not to interfere within Afghanistan, not to send British Resident or Envoy to the Ameer's court.

In 1857 another treaty was made with Dost Mahommed. We were at war with Persia and subsidised the Ameer as our ally. By this treaty British officers were admitted to Cabul, Candahar, and Balkh to supervise the expenditure of our money in defence of Afghanistan. But in this very treaty their functions were carefully limited to "all military and political matters connected with the war". It was further agreed that "whenever the subsidy should cease, the British officers were to be withdrawn from the Ameer's country" (Art. 7), and that the British Government might appoint a Vakil (Agent) at Cabul, provided that such agent should not be "a European officer". Such was the clear and well-defined position of the British

Government towards Afghanistan. Dost Mahommed lived till 1863, and the promise on either side was carefully performed. In the war of succession which followed, England's faith was preserved untouched. Sir John Lawrence, her representative, permitted no interference, but simply recognised as Ameer the chosen of the Afghan people. We were safe, at peace, free from peril. Afghanistan was a bar between Russia and ourselves, and was a friendly Power, jealous of her own independence, but trustful in our faithfully kept pledge of non-interference within her borders.

Governments in England changed, but our policy towards Afghanistan did not alter. Sir John Lawrence, who, as Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, had negotiated the treaty of 1855, became, in 1863, Governor-General of India. Naturally, as Governor-General, he pursued the policy he had advocated as Chief Commissoner. When, in 1867, Afzal Khan triumphed at Cabul, he sent, under the 7th Article of the Treaty of 1857, a "Muhammadan gentleman of rank and character," as agent to the then Ameer, and when in 1868, Sher Ali again conquered, the same ties were maintained.

In 1867 Sir Stafford Northcote, then Secretary of State for India, frankly recognised that the Russian advances in Central Asia were likely to continue. He declared that they afforded "no reason for any uneasiness or for any jealousy," and that the conquests of Russia were "the natural result of the

circumstances in which she finds herself placed". Sir Stafford Northcote was not then the mere tool of Mr. Disraeli, as he now is of Lord Beaconsfield. He had then a character for discretion and for good sense; he was not yet bitten by the mad dog, Imperialism. Sir Henry Rawlinson, in 1868, in vain tried to alarm the Indian Secretary. Sir Stafford refused to be led away, and kept his head cool and clear. It is important to remember that the most rapid advances made by the Russians were made before 1869; that they had then establised themselves in Bokhara, and had thus become the immediate neighbours of Afghanistan. Lord Mayo succeeded Sir John Lawrence in 1869, and followed the same line of policy. Sher Ali was very anxious to obtain from England a pledge of future assistance in securing his family on the throne. This pledge Lord Mayo refused to give, but in March, 1869, he met the Ameer in Conference at Umballa. Writing home on March 10th, Lord Mayo declared: "We want no Resident at Cabul, or political influence in his kingdom," and with these views he went into the Conference. The Ameer complained somewhat bitterly that the Treaty of 1855 was one-sided, but Lord Mayo steadfastly declined to involve England in the local disputes of Afghanistan; he gave Sher Ali some money, some arms, and a distinct reiteration of the pledge that "no European officers should be placed as Residents in his cities," and so smoothed over the necessary refusal to actively

support his throne. Of Lord Mayo's promise there can be no doubt. He himself writes on June 3rd: "The only pledges given were, that we would not interfere in his affairs; that we would support his independence; that we would not force European officers or Residents upon him against his wish."

It is worthy of notice that ordinary communication between Russia and Afghanistan has not, until lately, been regarded as a matter of complaint. In 1870 General Kaufmann wrote to Sher Ali a letter which was communicated by Prince Gortshakoff to the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg. In this letter General Kaufmann warned the Ameer not to interfere with Bokhara; the letter was laid beford Lord Mayo, who, instead of objecting to the communication, expressed his approval of it. Other letters passed between General Kaufmann and the Ameer, and no word of complaint was ever heard from the English Government. Friendly communications were never objected to until Lord Beaconsfield's craven fear of Russia cast a green light of jealousy over all her actions.

In 1872 Lord Mayo was unfortunately assassinated, and was succeeded by Lord Northbrook. The Seistan arbitration, owing to the dissatisfaction of the Ameer, led to the conferences at Simla in 1873. Lord Northbrook suggested that a British officer should interview the Ameer at Cabul, or some other Afghan town; but Sher Ali said he would prefer to send into India one of his own

ministers, and Lord Northbrook, mindful of our pledges, at once accepted the offer. Here again arms were given to the Ameer, but he declined the money offered to him, and remained somewhat sulky, refusing to allow a British officer to inspect his northern frontiers with a view to their defence in case of need. He would not even permit Mr. Forsyth to pass through Afghanistan on his return from Yarkand. In spite of all this discontent on Sher Ali's part, the good faith and tact of Lord Northbrook again restored him to his former cordial relationship with us.

The evil genius alike of Hindustan and of South Africa now appeared on the scene. Sir Bartle Frere, in January, 1875, wrote to the Government that it was advisable to occupy Quetta, and to establish British officers in Afghanistan. Sir Bartle Frere, with his customary immoral disregard of good faith towards the weak, ignored our repeated pledges not to so establish them, and he sarcastically mocked the notion—a mockery somewhat lurid in the glare of the fate of Sir Louis Cavagnari—that they would be in any risk of life from Afghan jealousy. Sir Bartle Frere is wont to advise others to go into peril "with a light heart," but history recordeth no case of his putting his advice personally into effect.

Immediately on the receipt of this letter Lord Salisbury, as Secretary of State for India, wrote to Lord Northbrook, directing him to obtain the assent

of the Ameer to the establishment of British officers at Herat and then at Candahar, alleging that if the Ameer's "intentions are still loyal, it is not possible that he will make any serious difficulty now". With astounding ignorance, or want of honesty, Lord Salisbury ignored the repeated pledges given by England that she would not send European agents into Afghanistan. With the same recklessness Lord Salisbury averred at Manchester that Afghanistan was the only country in which we were not represented, when he ought to have known that we had an accredited, though not European, agent at Cabul. Lord Northbrook on receiving this dispatch, most honourably hesitated to obey it. He asked if discretion were allowed him, or if he were compelled to obey. He was directed to consult Sir Richard Pollock, Mr. Thornton, and Mr. Girdlestone, and after some delay Lord Northbrook wrote home (June 7, 1875), urging that we were bound by our pledges, and had no reason, no ground, for departing from them.

The unhappy policy of the Tory Government in Europe now began to cast its fatal blight over our policy in Asia. The Russophobia diligently cultured by Lords Beaconsfield and Salisbury drove wild a large part of the British people, and the two Earls now felt that the time had come when they might venture to disregard all good faith, pleading in excuse *La patrie en danger*. In November, 1875, Lord Salisbury penned the infamous command to

"induce him [the Ameer] to receive a temporary Embassy in his capital. It need not be publicly connected with the establishment of a permanent Mission within his dominions. There would be many advantages in ostensibly directing it to some object of smaller political interest, which it will not be difficult for your Excellency to find, or, if need be, to create". Every decent English citizen must feel his cheeks burn with shame when he reads of one of his Ministers condescending to treachery so mean as well as so wicked.

Lord Northbrook—being an Englishman and a gentleman—declined to "find" or to "create" an "ostensible pretext," under cover of which he might disregard the treaties and promises made by England. Refusing to act as Lord Salisbury's tool, he was compelled to resign, and a more supple Viceroy was appointed in the person of Lord Lytton (1876).

The Tory Government instructed Lord Lytton to demand from the Ameer for their agents "undisputed access to the frontier positions" of his kingdom, and to insist that these agents would expect "becoming attention to their friendly counsels". Sir Lewis Pelly—who had just destroyed the native Government of Baroda—was chosen as the messenger to convey these peremptory demands, and no permission was, as usual, asked from the Ameer as to sending the Envoy, but he was requested simply to say where he would receive him. "The ostensible

pretext" "created" by Lord Lytton was his own assumption of the Viceroyalty, and the new title of Empress so foolishly allowed to the Queen by Parliament. The Ameer—with the courtesy of suspicion—"gushed" in reply, but suggested that there was no need for the coming of any new Envoy, as the existing relations were sufficiently defined by former agreements.

As the lamb declined to be coaxed into offering himself for dinner, the wolf began to growl. Sher Ali was told that he would incur "gravé responsibility" by his refusal, and as this veiled menace had no effect he was sharply informed that England might make an arrangement with Russia "which might have the effect of wiping Afghanistan out of the map altogether"; that he was "an earthen pipkin between two iron pots"; and that "the British Government is able to pour an overwhelming force into Afghanistan, which could spread round him like a ring of iron, but if he became our enemy, it could break him as a reed". Wise and conciliatory language if we desired a good understanding! Nevertheless, it was well chosen if we sought "to create" an "ostensible pretext" for a declaration of war.

Meantime Lord Lytton was preparing for the invasion of Afghanistan. While messengers were passing backwards and forwards to Cabul, the Viceroy was arranging for permanent barracks at Quetta, massing soldiers there and building a

bridge across the Indus ready for the passage of troops (November, 1876). Stores were gathered, troops collected, and the Maharajah of Cashmere stirred up to attack tribes subject to Sher Ali. Threatened by word and act the Ameer gave way, consented to send an Envoy to meet Sir Lewis Pelly and nominated Noor Mahommed Khan, his Prime Minister, as his agent at the proposed Conference. Foiled in his first attempt to make war, the Viceroy was compelled to stand by his own proposition and to send Sir Lewis Pelly to meet the Ameer's Envoy. Sir Lewis was supplied with two treaties, a public and a private one, the private one so narrowing down and guarding the promises made in the public one that they were rendered almost nugatory. The Envoys met at Peshawar in January, 1877. The account of the interview can only be read with shame. Noor Mahommed asked, what "if this Viceroy should make an agreement and a successor should say 'I am not bound by it'?" Again: were "all the agreements and treaties from the time of Sir John Lawrence and the late Ameer up to the time of Lord Northbrook and the present Ameer, invalid and annulled"? Sir Louis Pelly fenced and equivocated, but no answer was possible to the sad, straightforward challenge of the Afghan Envoy. Noor Mahommed then made a long and elaborate statement recalling the former pledges of the English Government, and concluding with a prayer not to urge the establishment of

British officers and so "abrogate the former treaties and agreements". A month later Sir Louis Pelly gave his answer, under written instructions from Lord Lytton. This melancholy State Document asserts that the 7th Article of the Treaty of 1857 had "nothing whatever to do with the matters now under consideration" (!) and that all treaties existing between us and Afghanistan being old, they "afforded no basis for further negotiation". When we remember that the Tory Government posed as upholders of the treaty obligations of 1856 in Europe, it is interesting to learn that treaty obligations of 1855 and 1857 in Asia were too old to be of any binding force. It was next alleged that the "utterances" of previous Viceroys had not "the force of a Treaty"; yet surely the promises of England's highest Asian representatives ought to be held sacred. But Sir Louis Pelly actually stated: "His Excellency the Viceroy instructs me to inform your Excellency plainly that the British Government neither recognises, nor has recognised, the obligation of these promises." Alas for our national honour! Alas for our lost good faith! What more could the more treacherous nation do than repudiate all pledges given by its representatives? The whole tone of the answer was rough, menacing, provocative, and Noor Mahommed, long ill, died in the hopeless attempt to reason with the peremptory Envoy of England. The Ameer, anxious at all risks to preserve our friendship, hearing of Noor Mahommed's

serious illness, despatched another Envoy to Peshawar with instructions to yield to any demand that might be made. But submission was not what Lord Lytton desired. He telegraphed to Sir Louis Pelly to close the Conference, adding that if any new Envoy had arrived, all negotiations with him were to be refused. At the same time Lord Lytton recalled our agent in Cabul, and broke off all diplomatic communication with the Ameer. And this was deliberately done in order to forestall the undesired submission of Sher Ali to our unjustifiable demands.

Meanwhile in Europe our antagonism to Russia had been plainly shewn. We had made a grant of six millions to thwart her; we had summoned troops from India to fight her; we had called out our Reserves. Russia probably thought that if Indian troops were to fight in Europe, she might as well find them employment nearer home, and—very probably to embarrass us, or to feel her way—she despatched a mission to Cabul. Not very willingly, apparently, Sher Ali received the Russian Mission; but the "earthen pipkin" may have thought it wise to make friends with one of the "iron pots," as the other was threatening to break him. Whether he desired friendship with Russia or not matters little, for the Treaty of Berlin was signed, and the Russian Mission immediately withdrew. While the Russians left Cabul, a message arrived from Lord Lytton, stating that Sir Neville Chamberlain would

"immediately" visit the Ameer; the messenger arrived to find the Ameer mourning the death of his best-loved son and heir, Abdoolah Jan. Reckless of the father's pain, Lord Lytton declared that any delay in receiving the British Mission would be regarded as "open hostility". The Russian Envoy left Cabul on August 25th. Abdoolah Jan had died on August 17th, and as the Russians had left before Lord Lytton's first letter reached Cabul, there was no need to worry the unhappy Ameer during the forty days of mourning required by the custom of his country. But, cruelly pressed as he was, the Ameer did not, as has been pretended, refuse to receive the Mission. He only pleaded for the delay of a decent interval, and for outward courtesy. "I do not agree," he said, "to the Mission arriving in this manner. It is as if they wish to disgrace me. I am a friend as before, and entertain no ill-will. The Russian Envoy has come, and has come with my permission. I am still afflicted with grief at the loss of my son, and have had no time to think over the matter." He declared that he would send for the Mission, that he believed a personal interview would be useful, and only asked that the decent delay during the mourning might be granted him, and that the mission might not seem to come by force, without his consent. Our own messenger, Ghulam Hussein Khan, even sent word from Cabul that if the "Mission will await Ameer's permission, everything will be arranged If the Mission

starts on 18th without waiting for the Ameer's permission, there would be no hope left for the renewal of friendship or communication". But Lord Lytton meant war, and did not desire to grant time for arrangement, so the Mission advanced to Ali Musjid before the forty days of mourning were expired, and was there stopped. It has been pretended that the Mission was repulsed with insult, but Major Cavagnari himself reported that the Afghan officer behaved "in a most courteous manner, and very favourably impressed both Colonel Jenkins and myself". Sher Ali wrote, complaining of the "hard words, repugnant to courtesy and politeness" used publicly to himself and to his chiefs. But complaint was useless. An "ostensible pretext" had been created for war, and war was declared.

Public opinion at home had, meanwhile, been sedulously misled. The Gagging Act had silenced the Indian Press; the telegraphs were in the hands of the Government; news was sent home that the Afghans had fired on our Mission and had insulted our flag. The fiction set aflame the hot English pride, and the now admitted falsehood served its intended purpose. Our troops—prepared beforehand by Lord Lytton—advanced rapidly, the hill tribes were bribed, and we marched triumphantly forward, overrunning Afghanistan.

It might have at least been supposed that a war begun avowedly to protect our interests would have

been carried on with some regard to humanity. We loudly proclaimed that we had no quarrel with the Afghan nation; yet we burned their villages, destroyed their crops, stole their cattle, looted their homes, hanged their men as "rebels" if they resisted, while we drove out their women and children to perish in the snow. If thus we treat those with whom we have no quarrel, what distinction do we draw between our friends and our foes?

All the world knows how we hunted out Sher Ali to perish broken-hearted. How we raised a puppet Ameer in his stead. How against all warning, all prayer, we established our Mission. How our Envoy perished—as Sher Ali had predicted—and how Yakoob Khan was driven out as traitor to his own people. All the world has heard also of our revenge. How we marched into Afghanistan murdering as "rebels" all who loved their country and their freedom well enough to face us. How we hanged by the hundred the wicked "traitors" who defended their own homes. How we refused quarter to the flying, and "cut up" the stragglers who had been vile enough to resist the invaders. These horrors have been committed under the pretence that the Afghans were "rebels". Rebels to whom? Where there is no rightful claim to authority there can be no rebellion in resistance. Resistance to the invader is a duty that each man owes to his fatherland, and the war of self-defence, of defence of wife and child, of hearth and home, is

a righteous—aye, the only righteous—war. In such war every soldier is a patriot; in such war every death is a martyrdom. The defence of the road to Cabul, the battle of Charasiab, were episodes in such a war, and not in a rebellion. They were carried on by the regular Afghan army, led by its own officers, fighting honourably and gallantly. The Afghans were defeated, and contrary to the rules of civilised warfare, all quarter was refused, all "prisoners taken in fight" were shot. Then General Roberts issued a proclamation offering rewards "for any person who has fought against British troops since September 3rd; larger rewards offered for rebel officers of Afghan army". Again: "Amnesty not extended to soldiers or civilians . . . who were guilty of instigating the troops and people to oppose the British troops. Such persons will be treated without mercy as rebels." Under this bloodthirsty proclamation the religious leaders of the people have been pitilessly murdered; the military leaders when found have shared the same fate. The *Statesman* gives the crimes of some of those who were thus killed:

"Muhammad Aslam Khan, chief magistrate of Cabul, issued a proclamation calling upon all true Muhammadans to go out and fight the British.

"Sultan Aziz, a Barukzye of the Royal blood, bore a standard at Kharasiab.

"Kwaja Nazir, a city moola, gave his followers a standard to be borne as a sign of a holy war."

An unknown number of prisoners—reckoned by hundreds—have been found guilty of defending their country and have been hanged. Well may Frederic Harrison cry aloud in burning indignation: "Let the old watchwords be erased from all English flags: *Dieu et mon driot—Honi soit*—and the rest, are stale enough. We will have a new imperial standard for the new Empress of Asia, and emblazon on it—*Imperium et Barbaries*."

In dealing with these executions, the *Daily News* has a letter so horrible, so forcibly in contrast with the humanity for which it is honourably remarkable, that one can only imagine that it is written by one of General Roberts' staff officers, and printed by the *Daily News* to show the spirit prevailing in our Afghan army. The correspondent first tells how some villages were ransacked, and all disbanded Afghan soldiers were seized, and how on one occasion eighty-nine were brought in. Of these forty were released, as they were able to show that they had not been engaged against the British troops, but any who had been at Cabul during the outbreak, or who had "returned later to fight against us," were hanged, and forty-nine were thus murdered in cold blood on November 10, 11 and 12. The letter then goes on:

"Our great regret is that, while we are sending the rank and file to the gallows, the ringleaders are still at large. Such poor specimens of humanity as these marched daily to execution are of but little

account in our sight, and will not be missed in a country like this; whereas the execution of leading men—as Kushdil Khan, Nek Mahomed, or Mahommed Jan—would have a wholesome effect on the whole tribe of intriguers who have brought Yakoob Khan so low. Unfortunately we have not these sirdars in our hands; they are still living, and capable of further evil-doing."

It seems impossible to believe that these words were written by an English soldier. Mahommed Jan is the gallant leader of the Afghan resistance; he is a soldier who has fought bravely and honourably against us. In the old days such a foe, when defeated, would have been treated with the respect due to a brave man, but the wild beasts who dishonour English manhood in Afghanistan long for the moment when defeat shall enable them to strangle him. The result of this butchery is seen in the now general rising in Afghanistan, and it is not likely that the Afghans, driven to madness by our murder of prisoners, will show any more mercy to our wounded or to any prisoners who may fall into their hands than we have shown to them.

If our conduct towards men defending their country has been criminal, what shall we say of our conduct towards the non-combatants? These, at least, are held sacred in wars carried on by civilised powers. But the word "civilised" is forgotten by our army in Afghanistan, and non-combatants share the fate of other rebels. Sword and halter

are not enough—the torch is also called in to assist in the march of civilisation. By the light of flaming villages may be traced the blessings of the Empress of India's advancing rule. While the combatants dangle in the air from the gallows, the non-combatants freeze to death on the ground. We have burned villages when the thermometer registered 20° below freezing point, and, while we carefully sheltered our soldiers in thick tents, we have driven out women and children, houseless and foodless, to perish in the awful cold. Nine villages were thus destroyed in a single day. In this way do we discharge, to use Lord Lytton's words, "our high duties to God and man as the greatest civilising Power": in this way do Bishops in our House of Lords vote for the spreading of the Gospel of Christ.

General Roberts may well lay claim to the succession of the title of "Butcher," borne by the Duke of Cumberland of Scotch renown, and when he returns to his welcome at Windsor, her Imperial Majesty might bestow on him, with his other decorations, a new coat of arms, emblazoned with a drumhead and halter, crest a scull, supporters a frozen woman clasping a child, and a strangled Muhammadan mullah.

Well may General Roberts silence all independent correspondence. Well may Lord Lytton gag the Indian Press, and manipulate Indian telegrams. Yet even in the few facts that creep out from time to time England is learning how her name is being

soiled, her honour tarnished by bloodthirsty cruelty, by stony-hearted recklessness of human pain. From out the darkness that veils Afghanistan moans of suffering reach us, and we shrink in horror from the work which is being done in our name. These frozen women cry aloud against us. These starved babes wail out our condemnation. These stiffened corpses, these fire-blackened districts, these snow-covered, blood-stained plains, appeal to Humanity to curse us. Englishmen, with wives nestled warm in your bosoms, remember these Afghan husbands, maddened by their wrongs. Englishwomen, with babes smiling on your breasts, think of these sister-women, bereft of their little ones. The Afghan loves wife and child as ye do. He also is husband and father. He also has his love, his pain, and his despair. To him also the home is happy, the hearth is sacred. To you he cries from his desolate fireside, from his ravaged land. In your hands is his cause. You only can deliver him. And his deliverance can come only through the ballot-box. Peace can return only when the "wicked earl" has fallen. The message that carries the news of the defeat of the Tory Government will carry peace, liberty, and hope to South Africa, to India, and to Afghanistan. Will England be loyal to her love of truth and her hatred of oppression, or has she begun to tread the path of disregard of all duty, of contempt for all morality, the path that inevitably leads to national decay?

Printed by A. K. Sitarama Shastri, at the Vasanta Press,
Adyar Madras.