

This PDF was generated on 28/01/2022 from online resources of
the **Qatar Digital Library**

The online record can be viewed at:

http://www.qdl.qa/en/archive/81055/vdc_100000001491.0x000121

It contains extra information, high resolution zoomable views and transcriptions.

'Russia, India and the Persian Gulf'

Holding Institution	British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers
Reference	Mss Eur F111/380
Date(s)	1903 (CE, Gregorian)
Written in	English in Latin
Extent and Format	1 volume (21 folios)
Copyright for document	Public Domain



About this record

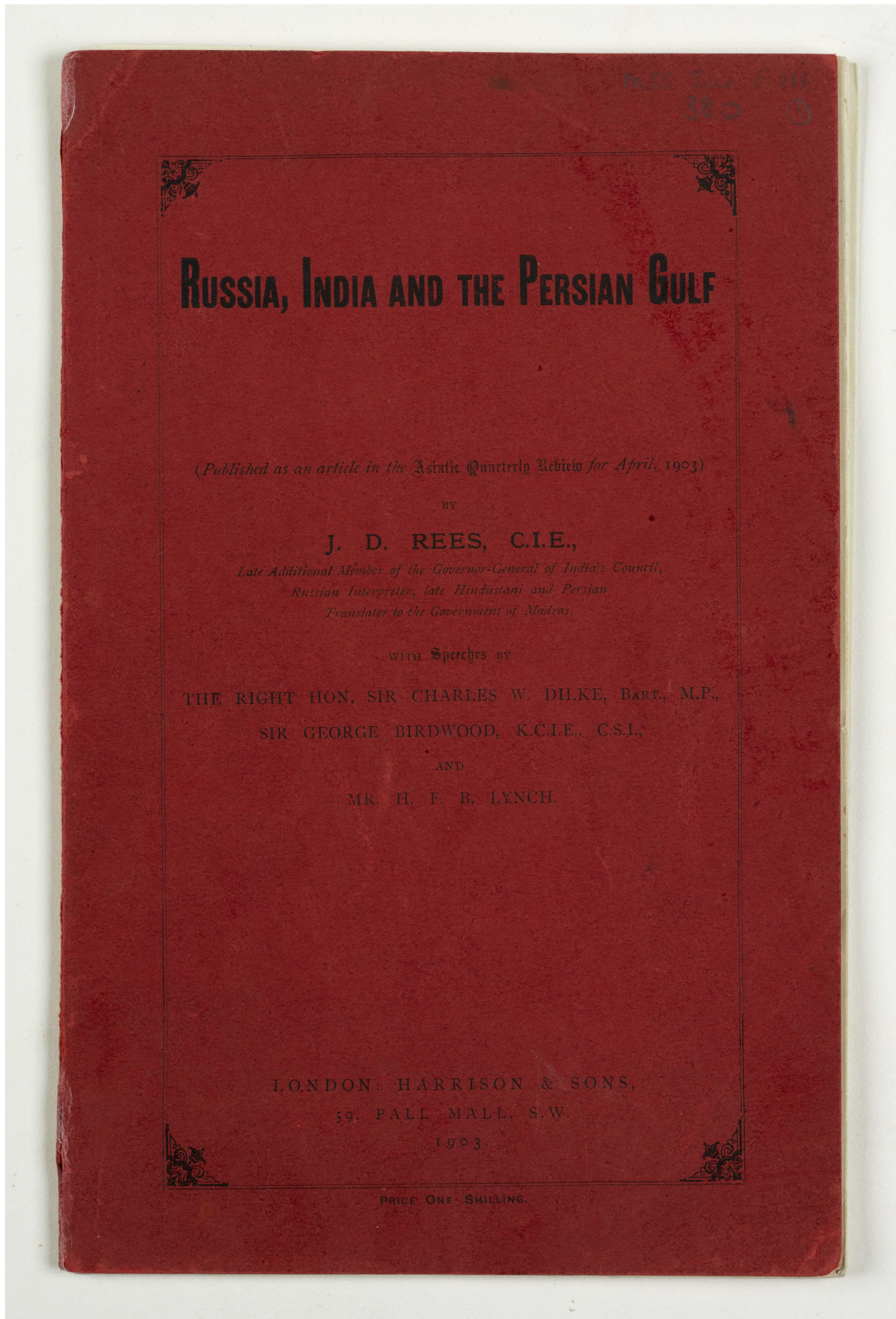
An article on the western frontiers of the Indian Empire by Sir John David Rees. The article deals with the threat posed by Russia from northern Persia and Afghanistan and discusses the measures that should be taken to defend and strengthen the British Empire in India.

At the front of the volume (folio 2) is a short foreword note signed by J D R, 31 March 1903.

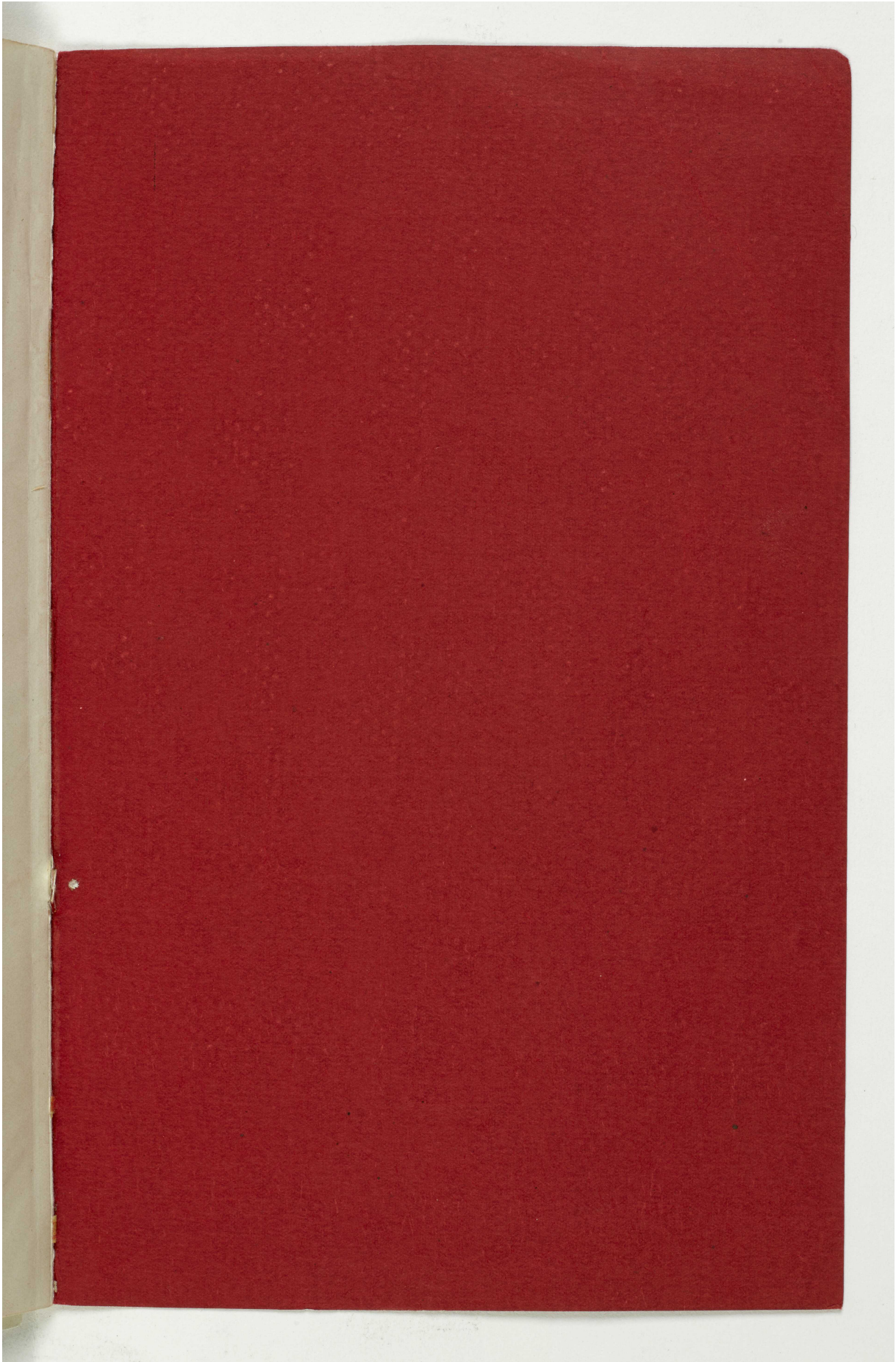
At the rear of the volume (folios 17-22) is the record of a meeting of the East India Association that took place at the Westminster Palace Hotel, 23 March 1903, and at which the article was delivered as a lecture.

The article was published by Harrison & Sons, at 59 Pall Mall, London, 1903. It was also published as an article in the Asiatic Quarterly Review, for April 1903.

'Russia, India and the Persian Gulf' [front] (1/46)



'Russia, India and the Persian Gulf' [front-i] (2/46)



(2)

The Prime Minister has just defended "Mr. Brodrick's Army" Scheme on the ground that it is justified by the needs of the North-West Frontier of India. The Duke of Devonshire put forward these and other justifications, all of which Lord Rosebery rejected. On the 23rd inst., at the East India Association, in a speech based on the following paper, I endeavoured to explain the conditions of this problem, and to show what Lord George Hamilton and Lord Curzon have in the last few years done, and what they are doing. Next day the *Morning Post*, in a leading article, said, "it was not on the strategical aspects of the Persian Gulf, which have recently been illustrated by Captain Mahan, so much as on the treatment of Persia in the scheme of British policy that Mr. Rees and those who like Mr. Lynch agree with him, were yesterday laying stress." That, indeed, is the chief purpose of this paper, which, however, also treats of the present Viceroy's policy on the North-West Frontier. On the 25th inst., the *Times*, in a leader, urged that the Middle Eastern Question must be treated as part of the general national problem, and reported Lord Curzon's speech in his Council of the 25th to the effect "that the freedom of Persia and Afghanistan, among other Eastern Kingdoms, was vital to the welfare of India, that he knew at present of no acute or menacing question, but advised his hearers not to sleep happy under the delusion that trouble would never come." Twenty centuries ago the Romans realized the close proximity of India better than we do to-day, "*Quantum enim est quod ab ultimis litoribus Hispaniæ usque at Indos jacet? paucissimorum dierum spatium.*" In the belief that this is a favourable opportunity for inducing folks in England to abandon their attitude of indifference and uninterest towards affairs in the East, which, in fact,

vitally affect their political, commercial, financial, and imperial interests, I publish this paper, together with the speeches of three experts, who have examined the problem from different points of view, and arrive at substantially the conclusions, which after studying this question in Russia, India and Persia, I, for myself, adopt.

J. D. R.

LONDON, 31st March, 1903.

RU

Tim
mea
inva
thre
sian
secc
defe
chie
cha
Chi
thor
poli
Ru
infl
Fra
finc
ind
of
nat
the
Ru
pro
tw
the
acr

3

RUSSIA, INDIA, AND THE PERSIAN GULF,

OR

THE WESTERN FRONTIERS OF INDIA.

BY J. D. REES, C.I.E.

TIME was, and no distant time, when the Indian Frontier meant the North-West Frontier, the traditional gate whereby invaders have entered India. Already, however, there are three frontiers, the North-West, the Belooch, and the Persian Gulf, and probably the first-named is the less, as the second is the more, vulnerable, and the third the most defensible, and that for the defence of which the Empire is chiefly called upon to take measures lest its present inviolate character be impaired. The North-Eastern and the Burma-Chinese frontiers may for the present be left out of account, though they, too, are no longer unaffected by European politics, while Russia annexes Chinese provinces, and a Russian of Prince Ukhtomsky's political and journalistic influence, with cumbrous phrase, but clear meaning, urges France, "a nation sympathetic with the Slavonic ideal, to find an accommodation with Siam, which, retaining its independence, would see its enemy only in the conquerors of Burma, and not in those quarters, where it is time for the natives to identify their interests with the true needs of all the other Oriental nations, in the hope of the evolution of a Russo-Chinese world, in which the promise of power and prosperity lies hidden."

The present points of interest may be considered under two heads, the North-West and the Persian Gulf, because the Belooch frontier, in so far as it is open to a land attack across Eastern Persia and West Beloochistan, may be con-

veniently classed with the North-West, and so far as it is available for attack or defence from the sea, and in respect of communications with the interior and the shore, with the Persian Gulf. Indeed, the most recent writers on the border-land dwell on the "passes that beggar description," "the distances of 50 miles, with not the slightest sign of life," "the tiny villages kept alive by springs tapped in distant hills," which lie between comparatively fertile Seistan, and the objective of an invading army on the Indian frontier, protected by our dominating position at Quetta. Neither Sir Thomas Holdich nor Major Sykes describe a possible path for the successors of the Macedonian madman, whose coast route is also impracticable for modern armies. Even our new Quetta Nushki-Robat line is, as Professor Vambéry says, a "waterless, grassless steppe." The Gulf, with such communications as have it for their base, is of all the most important; for a hostile Power, with a port on its margin, might, if sufficiently strong by land and sea, entirely disregard all the defences of the border hills from Chitral to Quetta, upon which so much treasure has, in that case, to little purpose, been lavished. I do not personally know any Russian author who has dealt with the subject of an attack through Afghanistan, except Prince Ukhtomsky, who accompanied the present Czar throughout his travels in the East, and has subsequently occupied an important position in the Russian world, and was at any rate a prominent factor in the recent occurrences in China, in which, owing to our South African engagements, we played a part in no way adequate to our past traditions and former commercial supremacy. The Prince at any rate will serve my purpose. He says, "The bonds uniting our part of Europe with Iran and Turan, and through them with India and China, are so ancient and lasting that we do not fully comprehend their meaning, and the duties they entail on us in our home and foreign policy." Comprehension of these duties has increased since these words were written in 1890. Again, Ukhtomsky writes, "There is not the slightest doubt

4

The Western Frontiers of India.

3

of a future in which Asiatic Russia will mean all Asia; bonds historical and ethnographic unite the Russians with the peoples from the Caspian to the Ganges and the Deccan." The intervening countries of Persia and Afghanistan would be merely subjected to what the Prince calls, in a surely inimitable phrase, "painless identification with Russia." Again, "No one"—that is, no one in Russia—"has any intention of attacking England in Asia. England cherishes a rooted, though totally unfounded conviction, that the Russians are consciously drawn to the Indus and the Ganges. What calls up a smile to our lips appears a real threat to Albion, and to some extent is of advantage to us, for when portions of the North-West drop into their hands they seem to form fresh Gordian knots, causing heavy subsidiary expenses, especially for military purposes and increasing financial disorder. Of course we do not need India, but we are and must be supported by the mythical idea of an ever possible advance of the irresistible north over the Hindu Kush, the practicability of which history has proved." It may safely be affirmed that history proves nothing of the kind, for no Western Power after subduing Turkestan and the Central Asian Khanates, has proceeded through the further Mohammedan region of Afghanistan, armed to the teeth as it now is, to pass manned by tribes at the least hating a new anti-Mohammedan invader as much as ourselves, to find the powerful army of India before and behind the Indus, awaiting the starved survivors of a mad march. I dwelt upon this subject in an article entitled the "Czar's Friend," in the *Fortnightly Review* for April, 1901, and can now only say that after some study of this matter in Russia, Persia, and India, in which countries as an interpreter in Russian, Persian, and Hindustani I had at least some means of acquiring information, I firmly believe that Ukhtomsky is as open and truthful in regard to this invasion, as he obviously was in respect of Russian designs upon China, which ten years ago he frankly unfolded. True the contrary intention is continually asserted in Russian journals,

and the repetition of these provoking paragraphs in our newspapers serves the end in view of making us lavish on the already naturally fortified North-West Frontier money which would be far better expended on looking after our trade in Persia, or in providing floating defences and warships for the East India command. But these paragraphs are certainly as little likely to be penned by responsible Russian statesmen as portentous articles in English reviews, signed A, B, and C, are to be the literary offspring of Mr. Arthur Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain, or Lord Cranborne. In such articles and elsewhere is recommended an agreement with Russia regarding the Persian Gulf, which can only mean the fateful and fatal concession of a port in return for some vague assurance, which will, like most diplomatic assurances, last, in regard to any particular point, no longer than is convenient to the party in that behalf prejudiced. *Per contra*, since the question arises, we have in the *Nineteenth Century* for March one of the best living authorities, Professor Vambéry, writing down under his honoured name the true consequences of such a step, which the author of the standard work on Persia, Lord Curzon, truly says would justify the impeachment of the Minister who sanctioned it, if indeed all the military and pecuniary resources of the Empire were not at the time being, as they have of late been, poured out in an illimitable and indistinguishable stream into the lap of loyal, lukewarm, and disloyal Africa. For without money we can do nothing, and Russia finds funds for loans to States, the commercial and political conquest of which she covets, without counting the cost, and without insisting on the consequential acceptance of her own administrative methods and ideals, which we somewhat officiously made a condition in the like case.

The mention of Lord Curzon brings me at once to the present policy on the Indian Western and North-Western land frontier. As far back as 1897, on the termination of the Tirah campaign, the Secretary of State telegraphed

5

The Western Frontiers of India.

5

to Lord Elgin urging that with the cessation of hostilities our permanent position and policy should be defined, and agreeing with the Viceroy that our interference with independent tribes—so far as they can be called independent since the Durand line was drawn—should be strictly limited in order to avoid serious eventual responsibilities involved in the extension of administrative control over tribal territory. The Secretary of State also urged that the then existing arrangements should be modified in view to concentration of force. While he formally concurred with the Government of India in ascribing the concerted, simultaneous, and till then unprecedentedly serious, risings of the tribes to fanaticism, Lord George Hamilton could not conceal the fact that the delimitation of the spheres of British and Afghan influence, in accordance with the Durand convention, had naturally led the tribesmen to suspect designs upon their independence. There are not a few interested in frontier politics who consider that not only was this result to be expected, but that a mistake was made in determining upon this delimitation, which necessarily largely increased our responsibilities and intervention in tribal affairs. Among such apparently is Sir T. Holdich, a good judge, if there be one. No doubt there is a difficulty in preserving a state of civilized administration up to a certain point, and ignoring violence and rapine immediately beyond it, especially when the inhabitants of either side are not a constant but a changing and an interchanging quantity; but it is possible that our susceptibilities in this respect are too acute, and have led us on many occasions into interferences in matters we might well have ignored, and into vain and expensive expeditions. To some, at any rate, it would appear, even from the narratives of those responsible for the action in question, that the dynastic and domestic squabbles of the petty chief of Chitral were such as we might have disregarded. Yet they led to our occupation of what a great authority describes as “a useless, expensive, and burdensome post,”

since invasion from the North is impossible. One serious objection to such interference is that it can have no finality. If an obligation to impose law and order on the turbulent frontier tribes lies upon us in consequence of a higher standard than that of other nations, which we impose upon ourselves, why not upon similar tribes in Afghanistan? and if there, why not in Eastern Persia, in Persia generally, in Mesopotamia and Asia Minor? Where, indeed, in such a policy can the line be drawn? The money spent in mounting guns in solitary valleys, the treasure lavished upon fortifying natural forts, would have sufficed many times over to supply the loans solicited on very good security by Persia, our refusal to grant which threw the Shah into the arms of the all-willing Czar. Of course, the Indian and Home Budgets are separate, and independent of one another; but now at any rate it is idle to deny the fact that Persia is as much a frontier of India as is Afghanistan, but far weaker, far more vulnerable, far more the object of a rival Power's solicitude, so that Indian money might be spent on the shores of the Persian Gulf with as much propriety as upon cantonments, roads, and railways in and for the benefit of Chitral, and other robber-haunted border hills. It might be argued that the charges in both cases more properly fall on the Imperial Exchequer, which would, as regards expenditure in the Gulf, to some extent be recouped in consequence of the revival which would result in the fast falling trade with Persia. It is useless to suggest at present that any group of interests, however vital, can compete with those of South Africa, though neglect of the Indo-Persian question may well lead eventually to a conflagration beside which the war with the Transvaal would seem a feeble flame. Not, indeed, that Gulf questions have of late been neglected. The action of the Home Government and the Viceroy of India in regard to the efforts of the French to obtain a coaling station at Muscat, and of the Turks, whether or not of their own motion, to seize Koweit, was prompt, firm, and effectual. But more than this is wanted at the hands of the Home

6

The Western Frontiers of India.

7

Government if we are to retain our commercial predominance in the northern shores of the Gulf, which, in fact, the Shah owes to ourselves, for it is our might which gave reality to his previously hardly existing sovereignty over the chiefly Arab tribes which inhabit the lowlands between the mountains and the northern shore.

To return to the North-West Frontier proper, a great deal has been written in the last two or three years regarding the relations of the Punjab Government with the frontier tribes and with the Government of India, and the Viceroy's action in creating a new frontier Province out of the tribal hill tracts and the ordinary plains across the Indus, but it is evident from a perusal of the Blue Book that there is a most unusual consensus of opinion to the effect that such a step as Lord Curzon has taken is necessary, and that its necessity has long since been recognised. Sir Mackworth Young, the Lieutenant-Governor of the day, pointed out—as also did Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick, an ex-Lieutenant-Governor—that when the Lahore Administration appeared to differ with the Government of India, the fact was that the former simply represented the difficulties and risks inherent in some forward movement, with which it was the more impressed on account of their closer proximity. True, Sir M. Young disapproved, while Sir D. Fitzpatrick approved, the creation of a separate administration formed out of the frontier districts and tribal tracts, but Sir M. Young also agreed that, if the elimination of the Punjab Government was desired, it could only be brought about in the manner adopted. Due weight should be attached to his statement that “if the Punjab Government has been a drag on the forward school of frontier politicians, the most strenuous advocates of which will be found in military ranks, the elimination of its counsels will not strengthen the position of the Government of India.” But there is no fear that the present Viceroy will be led away by the military forward school, to which he has shown the utmost unwillingness to lend an ear, and it may well be that in the future the fact

that the centre of interest and of danger has left this locality —if, indeed, it ever really was focussed there—will probably lead to the relegation of these tribal difficulties to something more like their real relative importance, and to that abstention from interference which, in spite of all orders and warnings, has been too much practised by frontier officers, and too much favoured by the military element at the headquarters of the Government of India. Officers who have spent their lives and made their reputations on this frontier admit as much. Witness Sir F. Cunningham, who says: "In the policy which led to the occupation and, as the tribesmen view it" (are they not right?), "the practical annexation of Wana, Tochi, and Malakand, there are elements so contrary to the feelings, traditions, and aspirations of the clans, so likely to arouse their fear of loss of independence, that this alone would account for some of the difficulties experienced in carrying out the aims of Government on the North-West Frontier." Although, for instance, the Sandeman policy, "the occupation of a tribal tract with (the officially reported) assent of the clan," which worked very well among the Beloochees, though it extended our Empire well into Eastern Persia, although this policy was proved beyond all question to be utterly unsuitable for adoption among the wholly different Pathan tribes, "*Afreedi, Hazara, and Ghilzai, who clamour for plunder or bribes,*" efforts are none the less made even now in this country to represent that this method of extending our liabilities and responsibilities should be applied all along a frontier inhabited by tribes, who resemble one another in nothing, but in having no resemblance to the Beloochi, whose geographical position is moreover wholly different, in that they have a back door open towards Afghanistan.

Lord Elgin, on laying down office, claimed that he not only approved, but had followed, a policy of non-annexation and non-interference, and explained that the expeditions and advances he had made were inheritances; and Lord George Hamilton, who has been most insistent in forbidding

The Western Frontiers of India.

9

a forward policy, deferred passing orders on the proposals of the retiring Viceroy for garrisoning certain tribal tracts, until the Government of India had reported upon its general policy towards the tribes in view to the avoidance of the extension of administrative control over independent tribal territory. This left the matter for Lord Curzon, who with characteristic courage at once grasped the frontier nettle, giving an indication of the line he would take in one of his earliest despatches, when he laid down the principle that in the Khyber and elsewhere along the frontier the various corps of tribal militia or rifles or military police, though semi-military in organization, being more than semi-political in functions and object, should necessarily, except in time of active warfare, be under civil authority and control. At that time the Government of India stood committed to a policy involving the construction of fortifications and the retention of a large garrison in Chitral; the expenditure of several lakhs of rupees on a new fort at Lundi Kotal and on other fortified works in the Khyber Pass; the construction of a bed for a light railway from Jamrud to Lundi Kotal; the maintenance of a military garrison on the Samana range south of Tirah, and in the Kurram Valley, and considerable expenditure on forts and posts in the two last-named places; the maintenance of a garrison in the Tochi Valley; the establishment of a cantonment in the neighbourhood of Miranshah; and the maintenance of a garrison at Wana in South Waziristan to protect the Gomal Pass. These measures involved very large expenditure in themselves, as well as the risk that the maintenance of regular garrisons would tend to increase rather than diminish the extent of our interference with the tribes. Moreover, the cardinal principle of the concentration of our regular forces was in these measures ignored, and Lord Curzon, in the autumn of 1899, submitted to the Secretary of State the principles, upon which he considered a positive course of policy and action applicable along the entire border, should be based. These principles were :

1. To avoid locking up regular garrisons in costly fortified positions at a distance from our base, in which the troops themselves are practically lost to the effective strength of India, from which in time of emergency they need to be reinforced.

2. To interest the inhabitants of each district or post whence the garrison is withdrawn in their own defence, and to establish a lien on their loyalty by enrolling them as a tribal force to supply the local garrisons.

3. To maintain movable columns ready to march to the relief of the advanced tribal garrisons from bases on or near the administrative frontier of India, and to connect the frontier cantonments with the large Indian garrisons by light railways pushed forward from the existing railway systems.

In pursuance of this policy, which the India Office approved, with a recognition of the judgment, ability, and promptitude with which the questions had been treated, the garrisons at Chitral and Lundi Kotal were reduced; the proposed new fortifications on a large scale were abandoned; native levies were utilized in Chitral, and in a more regular corps, in the Khyber; the garrison duty of the Indian army was reduced; the publicity and exaggeration, the pomp and circumstance, of petty frontier expeditions was eliminated, to the dissatisfaction of the soldiers concerned, and to the advantage of the Indian taxpayer; the tribes were conciliated by the employment offered, and not alienated by interference; and the construction of a light railway from Nowshera to Dargai and the extension of the standard gauge line to Jamrood were sanctioned—the last two measures being such as conduce to the safety and convenience of trade and of the public, and are of equal value from a military or a civil point of view. Proceeding upon similar principles, it was decided to withdraw the military garrisons from the forts on the Samana range, replacing them by a battalion of military police raised from the tribes, commanded by police officers, and occupying an intermediate

The Western Frontiers of India.

11

position between the native levies of Chitral and the more military organization of the Khyber Rifles ; to withdraw the regular troops from the Kurram Valley, increasing simultaneously the local militia under police officers ; to establish a cantonment at Miranzai, in order to allow of the last-mentioned withdrawals, a corresponding saving being effected by giving up the proposed additional accommodation for the troops at Kohat ; to withdraw the regular troops from the Tochi and Gomal valleys and from Wana in North and South Waziristan as soon as possible, and to replace them by new, chiefly tribal, militia corps, similar to the Khyber Rifles and the Kurram Militia, one to hold the Tochi, and the other the Gomal, Valley.

All these proposals were made with the concurrence of the Punjab Government, and it was estimated at the time that they would effect a reduction upon the larger programme, which originally held the field, of about £175,000, without taking into account the savings which annually recur, which would not be less than £20,000. Nor should it be forgotten that, over and above these and other economies, the great merits of these plans are the addition to our defensive strength on the border by the enlistment of the tribesmen, and the increase to our offensive power by the recall and concentration of the troops of the regular army. Among the members of the Government of India who concurred with the proposals of Lord Curzon (who is, of course, like every Viceroy, and certainly not less than any preceding Viceroy, his own Foreign Minister) were Sir Clinton Dawkins and Generals Sir W. Lockhart and Sir Edwin Collen. The Viceroy, however, was not content to leave this policy to be carried out in future by the Government of India, acting as heretofore through the Punjab Administration. In the following year his Government—bereft now of the counsels of Sir William Lockhart by the hand of death, and of Sir Clinton Dawkins by his removal to another sphere, in which none the less his services were utilized in even more important public business — for-

warded to the Secretary of State a minute drawn up by himself, in which, after a full and clear review of the past history of the frontier, he described the existing administrative arrangements as "labour without responsibility for the local, and responsibility without control for the supreme, Government." Lord Curzon had visited the frontier, and examined the question on the spot before drawing up his exhaustive minute, in which he recommended the construction of a new agency or Province, under the immediate control of the Government of India, created out of the trans-Indus districts of the Punjab in which direct relations with the tribes occur, and he considered the adoption of such a scheme essential to the prosecution of the frontier policy which had just been approved, the main features of which are above described. Lord Curzon's minute was adopted by General Sir E. Collen and by his four civilian colleagues, and it may be regarded as certain that Sir Clinton Dawkins and Sir William Lockhart would have approved of a measure which set a seal upon the policy which they had already embraced.

A great deal has been said and written concerning alleged differences of opinion as to the creation of the frontier province. In fact, however, the Secretary of State had found the existing administrative conditions unsatisfactory; the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Mackworth Young, had objected to the scheme suggested by the India Office, which he thought would place the Frontier Commissioner in the position of serving two masters, and had recorded his opinion that if it was desired to eliminate the Punjab Government from trans-frontier control, this could only be done by removing the frontier districts, or such portions of them as were closely connected with trans-frontier tribes from the Lahore administration, and forming that tract into a separate charge under the direct orders of the Government of India. The Secretary of State had practically expressed such a desire, and Sir Mackworth Young, while disapproving the measure,

9

The Western Frontiers of India.

13

thought it better to face the objections to it than to adopt the half-hearted alternative suggested. Opinions in favour of some such scheme as that of Lord Curzon had been expressed by Sir B. Frere, Sir H. Durand, Sir J. Browne, Sir R. Sandeman, Sir W. Lockhart, Sir C. Aitchison, Sir G. Chesney, Lord Lytton, Lord Lansdowne, and Lord Roberts. The present Commander-in-Chief was actually designated head of such a new province as was then contemplated, and has now been made, when the outbreak of the Afghan War led to the abandonment of Lord Lytton's scheme, on the appointment of his successor, Lord Ripon. Lord Elgin is the latest authority, who with characteristic conscientiousness recorded for himself alone, and without committing his Government, the contrary opinion, just before he left India in 1898. He greatly, no one can say unduly, valued the opinion of the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Mackworth Young, but equal importance at least attaches to the contrary view of Sir Dennis Fitzpatrick, who agreed altogether in Lord Curzon's conclusions. Sir Dennis showed that the Punjab Government had been pushed on by the forward party in the Government of India, which held that after the delimitation of the Durand line, we were bound not only to establish such control over the tribes as was needed for our own protection and to check raids into Afghanistan, but such control as would enable us to settle the quarrels of the tribesmen among themselves; that the Punjab Government, being nearer the frontier, saw the difficulties and objections to such a policy, which indeed the Secretary of State had vetoed, knew that the so-called "Sandeman" system was wholly inapplicable to tribes entirely different in character, constitution, and geographical position from those with which Sandeman so successfully dealt, and held that in certain districts, such as the Khyber, the best plan was not to interfere with fighting among the tribesmen so long as their dissensions did not endanger the peace of the road, or any of our own interests. This policy would seem admirably

adapted to all such cases, but is opposed to the interests and aspirations of the military element, and to the traditional theory that it is the duty of a British Government to police all parts of the world in which, for any possible or plausible reason, we can make any kind of colourable claim to interfere. Sir Dennis could easily show that frontier outbreaks were not confined to tracts under the immediate supervision of Lahore, but he cordially approved Lord Curzon's plan of trying tribal militia, and said that if it stands the test of times of trouble in a country like Waziristan, it will do its inventor infinite credit. He remarked, however, that the omission to recommend such a scheme on the part of previous Lieutenant-Governors was equally shared by the advisers of successive Viceroys at Simla. Finally, after very clearly explaining how apparent differences of opinion had arisen, he expressed his own wish to repeat the instructions already sent to India to avoid any new responsibility not absolutely required by strategical necessities and the protection of the border, and to add a word of warning lest an exaggerated view should prevail of our obligations under the Durand Convention, and against pushing too far the theory that the local authority should be "given a free hand." The India Office evidently thought Lord Curzon's own attitude in this respect so satisfactory as to call for no admonition, and nothing indeed could be clearer than his expressed views on the subject. It is apparent, therefore, that a consensus of contemporaneous opinion supported Lord Curzon's scheme for carrying out the policy of His Majesty's Government.

In one of a series of able and interesting articles contributed to the *Times* in 1902, it was suggested that the Viceroy in placing portions of the plain districts of the Punjab under the new Chief Commissioner, as well as the wilder frontier tribes, contemplated a reversion in the former localities to a less complex and scientific kind of administration, and it was even hinted that the clock would be set back in other quarters, if this experiment proved a success.

10

The Western Frontiers of India.

15

That this, however, was an entirely erroneous conclusion is obvious from Lord Curzon's minute. Perhaps he may entertain a doubt whether the Indian peasant appreciates the full merits of the Civil Code, scientific sanitation, and all the paraphernalia of an administration fashioned on the Western progress pattern. Indeed, he evidently thinks irrigation, communications, and commerce of at least equal importance. But the time has yet to come when a great officer of State in India will say as much on this subject as Lord George Hamilton has said in England, in and out of the House of Commons, and till then the daring individual who suggests that to let the people alone while educating them, and improving their material prosperity is the policy we should follow, and are almost pledged to follow, must be content to be written down an eccentric advocate of reaction. At any rate, no climbing down the advanced administrative ladder was foreshadowed in Lord Curzon's irrefutable reflections on the effects of the licentious litigiousness, fostered by our scientific system. These reflections and the whole minute are available to those who will, and there is no need on this occasion to quote from a State paper which has accomplished its purpose, and is a memorable addition to the archives of the Government of India. There are some, however, who will quote the following words with a purpose other than that of settling the question whether regions beyond the administrative border of British India, but within the sinister sphere of influence between that and the Durand line, should or should not be administered directly by the Government directly responsible for their administration. Lord Curzon writes : " It may be truly said that every change in the frontiers of India subsequent to 1877 has been a change dictated not by considerations arising out of or directly affecting the interests of the Punjab Government, but by Imperial considerations and by them alone." Is the word Imperial used in its Indian, or its all-British aspect ? It may be said no distinction can be drawn. But the Indian and British Budgets are

distinct. India's attitude towards Britain is very different from that of the loyal, the too much protesting loyal, Colonies, whose loyalty and whose aspirations for confederation will not stand the test of a collection. Will she always pay the bill as the frontiers are pushed farther and farther west, after so much of the Afghan hills and the roof of the world has been practically annexed, and Beluchistan added to the Empire, when the flank has been turned, and the frontier appears still farther west in Seistan, in Fars, in Arabistan, and in the Persian Gulf? Or will the burden be transferred to the patient shoulders of that uncomplaining beast of burden, the British taxpayer, who could a few years back have bought the position now occupied by Russia in Persia for a loan on excellent security of the one hundred and fiftieth part of what has already been spent on the Transvaal. This question will have to be faced one day, and it is no real use to censure those among us who have joined the Russians in creating the great North-West Frontier Phantom Invasion. What floating batteries, warships, and repairing docks might not have been created for the protection of the shores of the Gulf, and India's Malabar and Coromandel coasts, with the money poured out on an already naturally fortified frontier, often in removing stumbling-blocks from the paths of our enemies, and in subduing tribes whose fierce and unconquerable independence is at once their own and our most valuable asset, who would hate any invader, and most of all the arch-enemy of Islam in Central Asia! And in this aspect of the question no one, who like myself has been for years a regular student of the Persian and Hindustani newspapers, and of the views of Mohammedans in different parts of Asia, can help regretting that circumstances have made it difficult for us to avoid offending our Mohammedan friends and fellow-subjects. Neither to Shia nor Sunni do we seem altogether warm and dependable friends. Much of this is unfortunately unavoidable, but when the Cape, Somaliland, Greece, Egypt, and Venezuela give a moment's respite, a

(11)

The Western Frontiers of India.

17

section of our powerful press begins again the anti-Turkish agitation, supported by tales of atrocities, which are not conspicuously impartial. Not that way, at any rate, lie concessions for important trunk-lines, and a desire for the extension and consolidation of British interests on the part of other Powers.

Among those who do not consider a Russian invasion from the North-West altogether impracticable are Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Wilkinson, who none the less describe some of the passes as not affording room for two horsemen to ride abreast, or sustenance except for small parties, and allow that from the present Russian frontier an invasion by Herat and Kandahar, or by Cabul, is impossible. Napoleon thought such an operation, suggested by the Emperor Paul, impracticable; the Duke of Wellington thought that "troops would force their way through this wild country only to find the commencement of their difficulties," and in recent days Field-Marsals Sir N. Chamberlain and Sir D. Stewart, and General Sir J. Adye, have held the same opinion. The case, of course, would be different if Northern Afghanistan fell to Russia in a partition, such as is sometimes recommended by the same school, which would also bring about the far more fatal division of the shores of the Persian Gulf with the great Northern Power. But Sir Charles Dilke and his collaborateur summed up the Frontier Question in 1892 by saying, "Whatever measures we take, and whatever policy may be adopted, the fundamental condition of the defence of India will continue to be the readiness of England to send ample reinforcements when they are needed. In other words, the peace of India depends upon Great Britain having an efficient," not a large, "army at home and retaining the command of the sea." The history of the last ten years surely emphasizes the truth of this dictum, and particularly of the last words, now that the greatest naval Power after our own is closely associated with the great land Power, whose Oriental aspirations cause us such anxiety; and now that her Persian plan

of campaign includes the eventual possession of a port on the Persian Gulf, which would turn the flank of our North-West Frontier, with its costly and extended system of garrisons, fortifications, and road and railway communications.

Since Persia and the "*warm Persian sea-board*" are at present, far more than the Afghan Frontier, the point to which Russian activities are directed, and for the reason that Russia's arrival in Southern Persia would immediately transfer to that quarter all our anxieties for the safety of India, some reference is necessary to the recent progress of our Northern neighbours in the dominions of the Shah, since Lord Curzon in his standard work described the country and the Persian Question. Subsequently to that date Russia has made the Siberian Railway, has obtained practical possession of Manchuria, a port on the Pacific, a great if not preponderating influence in Northern China, has largely developed and linked up her Southern and Trans-Caucasian, and has commenced to join her Siberian and Transcaspian Railway systems, has enormously increased her commercial activities on the Caspian and the Black Seas, has constructed a carriage road from Resht, the Caspian port, to Teheran, the capital, from Askabad on the Transcaspian Railway to Meshed, the capital of Khorassan, is constructing other roads from Erivan to Tabriz, and from Kazvin to Hamadan, a route on which I* reported in 1885, has acquired almost a monopoly of the trade of Northern Persia, has organized a whole brigade of Persian Cossacks, to which the present spendthrift monarch is said to have been indebted for his undisputed succession, has stimulated the import of Russian goods into Persia by the elaboration of a system of bounties of from 15 to 20 per cent. *ad valorem*, and by the concession of special railway rates, has established in Teheran the Banque d'Escompte de Perse, which the *Times* has lately described as practically a branch of the Russian Ministry of Finance, and by repeated loans upon the security of the Customs has been placed in a position to insist upon the revision of the tariff in the interests of Russian trade, which

* "Notes of a Journey from Kazveen to Hamadan," by J. D. Rees.

(12)

The Western Frontiers of India.

19

has just been announced, whereby the duty on Indian tea has been increased by 95 and on cotton goods by 10 per cent. Lord Cranborne's answer as regards the former duty, to the effect that it will not prove prohibitive, because most of the Indian tea consumed in Persia is imported through Russia, needs explanation, unless different rates of duty are prescribed for Indian tea entering Persia, through Russia. At any rate, it is clear that the Russians intend to ruin the trade which has been developing overland from Quetta *via* Nushki, and Robat, to Seistan and Eastern Persia.

Russia has lent to the Shah's Government £3,500,000, or perhaps £5,500,000, or nearly four years' revenue, on the security of the Customs (other than those of the Gulf), has acquired the right to coin Persian currency, and has paid off all British claims on the Persian Treasury, binding Persia to borrow nothing from any other Foreign Power till 1912. By these means the Russian Finance Minister has found in Northern Persia an almost exclusive market for the protected products of Russian industry, while the Foreign Office has extended its influence over the moribund Persian monarchy, the independence of which she and England have alike engaged to respect. The money borrowed has not been spent in the improvement of the material condition of the people, and popular discontent is evidenced by a recrudescence of Babism,* a movement regarded as hostile to the established throne and religion, though really, as Professor Browne points out, part of "a certain circle of religious and philosophical ideas endemic in Persia, and liable at any moment, under a suitable stimulus, to become epidemic."

The result of these measures is seen in the figures (also from the *Times*), showing that, while Lord Curzon in 1889 estimated the value of British and Indian trade with Persia at £3,000,000, against a Russo-Persian trade of £2,000,000, the present (no doubt fairly accurate) returns, compiled by the Belgian Staff, which now collects Persian Customs for the Russians, shows that the Russians figure at £4,500,000,

* See *Nineteenth Century*, July, 1896—"Bab and the Babis," by J. D. Rees.

against £2,000,000 for the British, an increase of 125 against a decrease of 33 per cent. Further, a falling-off of 40 per cent. is calculated by the *Economist* in the returns of the imports of cotton goods in 1902 into Persia, and the Belgian Customs management at Mohammera indicates an intention of obstructing the development of the Karun River route, and the use of Lynch Road to Ispahan, while it is evident that the Bakhtiari hills, and their chiefs have of late been the subjects of Russian interest.

Time does not permit me on this occasion to trace the history of English supremacy in the Persian Gulf, by which other nations have been as free to profit as we ourselves, who, after the expenditure of much blood and treasure, have confirmed to Persia and in a measure to Turkey contiguous possessions, over which their control was hardly more than nominal, while putting down piracy and maintaining peace among the tribes on both the shores of the Gulf.

In 1894 a French Consul was appointed to Muscat, wherein is no French trade and no French subject, in order to co-operate with Russia in extending her influence in the Gulf; but the subsequent attempt to gain a coaling station or naval base was defeated by the action of Lord Curzon's Government. French, German, and Russian Consuls have also been appointed in other Gulf ports, and Russian merchantmen have been heavily subsidized in the hitherto not very successful endeavour to develop a trade. Russia has taken an engagement from Persia not to allow the construction of any railways to be commenced till 1905 unless she herself begins, as she no doubt will when ready, or if Germany acquires a port in the Gulf in view of the approaching construction of the Anatolian Railway to Baghdad and Koweit. The history of the recent efforts of the Sultan to assert or reassert his authority over the latter place, which we successfully resisted, throws a flood of light upon the political conditions of the shores of the Gulf. The Sultan does not resign his shadowy sovereignty; we maintain our actual supremacy; the Sheikh continues to be situated

(13)

The Western Frontiers of India.

21

between the devil and the deep sea; Germany may precipitate another difficulty at any moment; and Russia, in that case, must assert her claims to an equivalent position in the Gulf. Yet there was a time not long distant when we were unchallenged in the Gulf and in a position to do almost as we pleased in Turkish Arabia, wherein our trade, now borne by Messrs. Lynch's steamers on the Tigris, will in the future have to compete with the land-borne trade of the German railway. It will also have to face all the obstacles placed by the Turkish Administration upon navigation, and the access to the Kermanshah-Hamadan-Teheran trade-route, with which is worthy to be classed the attitude of the Persian Government in respect of the navigation of the Karun, of the trade of which 95 per cent. is British. No doubt it is this unwelcome preponderance in our favour which accounts for the obstruction placed in our way by the new Belgian administration of the Persian Customs.

The future of the Persian Gulf is irrevocably bound up with the fortunes of India, and it is hardly necessary now, when this subject has so recently received the attention of Captain Mahan and other eminent writers, to enlarge upon the many and obvious proofs of a position, which is only disputed by one or two Russophiles, whose eyes nothing can open, if a mere recital of the facts before mentioned does not point to the absolute necessity of allowing no encroachment in this quarter, even at the cost of a rupture with a great Power. Such a calamity as this is, indeed, more likely to be precipitated than avoided by concessions in regard to a matter vital to our Empire. We know now, after the event, that we had better not have given away at Panjdeh, and that Russia was not ready for the fray. The Russians are already linking up the Transcaspian Railway system with the Siberian Railway on the north and with Meshed on the south, and from the whole trend of their policy it is as clear as daylight that from Meshed through Seistan towards the Gulf will be the next, if not an early, move. Such a line would just avoid the border

of British Beluchistan, and unless it is understood that the acquisition of a port on the Gulf would be equivalent to a declaration of war, it is hard to see how we can prevent its construction. Our present policy counts upon the North-West Frontier as sufficiently protected, and upon a friendly and independent Persia on the western border; but Russia, with a railway to, and a port upon, the Gulf, would turn the flank of this position, and leave India unprotected, and indeed the weaker, for the unnatural extension of her limits into Beluchistan, and for the additions to the Afghan kingdom, which the Amir only holds by our help. For these, in the case supposed, together with the Belooch border, we could not without vast expenditure fortify and hold against Russia. Whence would the funds be drawn? It would be hard, indeed, to get much more out of India, and would the British taxpayer stand another shock such as that occasioned by the South African War, the full effects of which are not yet felt in Britain? Russia, warned off Afghanistan, makes Persia her protected pensioner, and it is hardly too much to say that this ancient kingdom now stands in much the same relation to her, as Afghanistan does to the Indian Empire.

With the sole exception of the shores of the Gulf, there is no position in Persia in which the intrusion of Russia would so much embarrass us as in Seistan, and the country lying between Khorassan and the Arabian Sea. Yet nowhere is she more actively engaged. Since 1895 her Customs tariff has practically prohibited the importation of British and Indian trade into her Transcaspian Provinces through Khorassan, immediately south of which Seistan is situated. The latter district lies half-way between the point where Persia, Afghanistan, and Russia meet at Zulfikar, and the point where British Beluchistan and Persia meet upon the shores of the Gulf. It commands the all-important road from Herat to Kandahar, and it was in part as a counter move against the prohibitive Transcaspian tariff that the trade-route was opened from Quetta along the Belooch side

(14)

The Western Frontiers of India.

23

of the Afghan boundary to Seistan, the value of the trade of which has risen in five years from about £5,000 to £150,000, but is likely now, to the detriment of commerce in general, and the tea trade in particular, to decline to its original dimensions, if the new Russo-Persian tariff is, in spite of our diplomatic representations, maintained. If, as stated, the excellent prospects of this route as a trade artery inspired the decision to make a railway from Quetta to Nushki, it will, indeed, be doubtful whether, under present circumstances, the decision should be maintained though construction has already been commenced. The abandonment of this plan would, however, be agreeable to the Russian Government and the Russian press, which comments upon the aggressive character of this very mild measure, though the Russians keep a quarantine cordon of Cossacks on Persian territory to impede the development of British and Indian trade under the pretext of safeguarding Khorassan and Transcaspia from plague, the period of incubation of which is shorter than the minimum time required for the journey from our frontier to Turbat-i-Haideri, where the quarantine station is situated.

The following conclusions appear to be such as may be justly formed upon the facts to which such reference has been made above as time has allowed :

Firstly, that Russia altogether dominates Northern Persia, and geographically North-Western Afghanistan, and has been steadily advancing, while we have been marking time in some, and retrograding in other, quarters. She is also furnished with trained agents well acquainted with the countries, peoples, and languages with which they have to deal, while we, as Professor Vambéry and others have remarked, "feel grievously the want of men who combine a thorough knowledge of the literatures, languages, and history of Asia, with a careful practical knowledge of each people in particular, and an acquaintance with the political questions of the day." India, which should be a school for the supply of such men, is hardly more successful in this

behalf than our home educational systems. Indeed, proficiency in Oriental studies and languages is not conspicuously encouraged in our Eastern Empire.

Secondly, that Russia's methods, besides being such as proceed from a fixed, unalterable, and continuous purpose, are far more successful not only for these reasons, but because she pays equal attention to commercial and political expansion, if indeed it is possible in such regions to pursue the one, without subserving the other, end.

Thirdly, that it does not follow from the above conclusions that our Governments and Ministers have in the past necessarily been in fault. Indeed it is probable that to others than ourselves our diplomacy seems to have been most subtle and successful, for we have acquired and held all the stations necessary to a sea-power—that is to say, all the best positions in the world except Madagascar with its potentially very valuable port of Diego Suarez—with the corresponding spheres of influence inland, without incurring the expense of garrisoning large tracts of country, and if we have chosen to pay as much for our army at home as others pay for a vastly larger and more effective instrument, that is a matter of domestic politics, for except India, no other possession helps the Mother Country, in spite of the natural ties of which we have heard so much, and the lately discovered and highly extolled aspirations towards Imperial Federation. The cost of the army is the concern of the War Office, and here, at any rate, the Foreign Office has not been in fault.

Fourthly, that it is hopeless to expect that such measures as have sufficed in the past will prove equal to future needs, while the European populations seeking an outlet increase in numbers, naval States wax strong and prosper, and alliances directed against our command of the sea are made, with the result that our maritime supremacy is seriously impaired.

Fifthly, that Persia rather than Afghanistan is the danger-point at present, that measures taken now to show clearly that the Southern and Eastern provinces are within

(15)

The Western Frontiers of India.

25

our exclusive sphere of political influence are absolutely necessary, and that in order to bring this about communications from the Gulf to the cities of Arabistan, Fars, Kirman, and Seistan must be improved, that our commerce may not be killed, while the new Persian tariff should be the subject of a spirited protest, or of reprisals of the like nature, Great Britain having in her tariff an instrument of offence, though peaceful, only less potent than her fleet.

Sixthly, that the vigorous assertion of our political predominance in Southern and South-Western and South-Eastern Persia, the loss of which may easily lead to an eventual conflict with two of the greatest European Powers by sea and land, should be recognised as a proper subject for the expenditure of Imperial funds, the loss or retention of India being a matter concerning our Empire, quite as much as the Indians. The grant of a million such as is lightly passed for other purposes would work wonders, and would persuade the Persians we had not abdicated our position, which by certain outward and visible signs would appear to be the case. Nor could it be objected that such a grant was made to the financially independent India, whose borders, it must be presumed, cannot be pushed so far west as to include Persia. It would be far cheaper to give to this interest a portion of the millions lavished almost without question in South Africa, or on military schemes, in which even those who are responsible for them seem hardly to believe, than to essay to stop Russia, when she is ready, as she is not as yet, to occupy positions fatal to our financial peace in, and perhaps to our retention of, India. Already the military charges are very heavy, and until Lord Curzon formulated his tribal militia scheme, at the least, it may be said, there has been no attempt to reduce them. As one of their own poets has said in Persian :

رعیت چو بیخ است و دهقان درخت
درخت ای پسر باشد از بیخ سخت *

* "Without strength in the root, what strong growth can be ;
The peasant the root is, the lord is the tree."

It is with the greatest satisfaction that all friends of India see the burdens of the poor lightened in the new Budget, but further remissions may yet be expected if the seasons prove propitious. On the other hand, the condition of the Russian peasantry is such that it may well happen that Russia will in the future be unable to pursue her present foreign policy, and the Czar's manifesto is a significant sign of the times. In order to build new, which swallow up the profits of the older, railways the people are over-taxed. Agriculture, the great Russian, as it is the great Indian, interest, has been sacrificed to artificial bounties, state monopolies, and high protective duties, whereby new industries have been forced, which are perishing for want of a home market. There has been something very like a general industrial collapse, and the shipping trade in South Russia is said to be in a very bad way in consequence of overprotection of railways. Scarcity exists in one province or another almost as often as in our Indian Empire. As Sir T. Holdich says, Russia is far from ready to proceed with her Persian Gulf programme, and a railway across Persia is still a long way off. None the less, a steel thread as far as Seistan would greatly add to our embarrassments, and the Askabad-Meshed line could apparently, without any great difficulty, and without prohibitive expense, be extended so far.

Seventhly, that our position in the East Indies, including the Gulf, requires strengthening in ships, and by the provision of a repairing yard for the navy at some point on the Indian coast, preferably Madras, the future centre of trade with the East and South, Burmah, the Straits, Java, China, Japan and Australasia. The importance of this city and seaport has much increased now that the East Coast Railway has been completed, extensions are contemplated of all the local lines, and new routes to the north through the Central Provinces, and, above all, the Anatolian-Baghdad connection is sanctioned, the natural continuation of which will be from Bombay to Madras, and onwards to

16

The Western Frontiers of India.

27

the South and the Far East. Admiral Sir Edmund Fremantle and other writers have shown how erroneous is the usually received, Macaulay-made account of the conquest of India, how that was achieved not by isolated engagements on land, but by continued superiority by sea, the manner also in which alone it can in the future be maintained, now that the second sea Power is allied with the only Power with which we march by land.

Eighthly, since the defence of the coast, and of the land frontiers also depends on the navy, which must be strong enough to keep open communications and supply reinforcements, India is far more interested in the naval than in the army budget, which none the less makes perpetually increasing demands on her resources. It would not only be interesting but politic for the Government of India to make public, in some popular form, the savings effected up to date and expected, from the measures taken by Lord Curzon on the frontier. The extreme and not unnatural unpopularity among the Indians of all expenditure in this quarter will be greatly increased as it becomes more and more apparent that the forward school have perhaps been in error all through, and that the march of events, like the march of an invader, will probably leave the fortifications they have effected at such an expenditure of blood and treasure outside the real line of defence. There are, at least, two savings which might be effected in the administration—certainly in some provinces—by the more extended employment of Indians as judges and in other civil capacities, and by cutting down the annual building budget, which it is unnecessarily assumed should bear a certain proportion to other heads of expenditure. How, again, can large expenditure on local defences on the Indian coast be preferred—assuming, as they do, that Britain has lost command of the sea—to ships which can make it certain that she will never lose that command? The present Indian army cannot safely be reduced, but savings are needed for the provision of proper docks and for the

strengthening of our floating defences, as well as for remissions of onerous taxation.

Ninthly, the measures inaugurated by Lord Curzon on the frontier should be vigorously prosecuted for their financial, military, and political merits, and if he himself can be longer retained to carry his policy to completer fruition, so much the better for the public interests. Five years is but a short time in which to finish such a work. The forward party will not succumb without a struggle, and the transfer of the reins to other hands will be their occasion. The tribal levies have already shown at Bhaluh Khel, at Lundi Kotal, and elsewhere the stuff of which they are made, and it may be fairly said that no unexpected difficulties have up till the present time been experienced in respect of this novel, beneficial, and significant experiment. None so strenuously deny that theirs is a "forward policy" as those who none the less move forward, annex, civilize, assimilate, incorporate, peacefully penetrate or more or less "painlessly identify" new territories with the British Indian Empire. By their fruits, however, and by the bill shall all men know them. It is they who have sent surveyors to delimit spheres of influence in "*vast sky-neighbouring mountains of milk snow*," while Russia has more easily moved along the plains of "*the broad and yellow Oxus*" towards her goal, from which she draws us, the source of our strength and life, the sea.

Lastly, short shrift should be given to those who suggest concessions to Russia in the Gulf, though, even with recent experiences in China before them, there are not wanting some who would apparently concede what we should fight to a finish to prevent. Nothing will serve us like a conviction on all sides that the line must be drawn somewhere, and nothing would relieve the financial and political pressure on the Indian frontiers and elsewhere more than a very clear intimation by our deeds, not by our words, that we draw the line at the absorption of the rest of Persia.

17

29

PROCEEDINGS OF THE EAST INDIA ASSOCIATION.

At a meeting of the East India Association, held at the Westminster Palace Hotel, on Monday, March 23, 1903, a paper was read by J. D. Rees, Esq., C.I.E., on "The Western Frontiers of India." The Right Hon. Sir Charles W. Dilke, Bart., M.P., in the chair. The following, among others, were present: Mr. George Leveson-Gower, Mr. Williamson, C.M.G., Mr. Edward Tennant, Sir George Birdwood, K.C.S.I., the Hon. W. Peel, M.P., the Hon. Mrs. Rees, Mr. H. B. Lynch, Mr. Geo. Emmott, M.P., General Sir A. Badcock, K.C.B., Rev. Dr. Bhaba, Prince Ajit Singh of Morvi, General Shaw Stewart, General Dunne, Mr. J. Jardine, K.C., Lady Stonhouse, Colonel Davidson, Colonel Kilgour, Colonel Corbet, Major Pemberton, Mr. and Mrs. Aublet, Mr. H. P. Powell Rees, Mr. and Mrs. Lodowick Rees, Mrs. and Miss Arathoon, Miss Webster, Miss Campbell, Mr. H. F. Evans, Mr. J. Deas, I.C.S., Mr. A. Rogers, Mr. H. H. Shephard (late Judge Madras High Court), Mr. and Mrs. Page, Mr. J. McCartney, C.I.E., Mr. F. H. Brown, Mr. A. R. Bonus, Mr. Garbett, Mr. Ayāz Husain, Mr. J. G. Jeans, Mr. Cook, Mr. Mussenden, Mr. Hansray, Major Arthur E. Kay, Mr. C. W. Arathoon, Hon. Sec. Telegrams and letters, expressing regret at inability to attend, were received from General Sir E. Collen, G.C.I.E., Mr. Spencer Wilkinson, Mr. J. Walton, K.C., M.P., Sir Lepel Griffin, K.C.S.I., etc.

The CHAIRMAN having briefly introduced the lecturer,

The paper was read.

The CHAIRMAN said he had been deeply interested in the lecture. He should have to make some remarks which might seem to a certain extent hostile to Mr. Rees' paper, but they might assume his assent on all the general lines of the lecture. The lecturer had discussed a question which, in the last few weeks, had become a Parliamentary question—of the feasibility of a Russian invasion of India—and had said that, with the exception of Prince Oookhtomsky, he did not know of any Russian who had dealt with the subject. General Soboleff, however, had written on the subject in 1887, and one Popowski, an Austrian writer, who wrote in 1890, followed General Soboleff very closely, and had been translated into English by Mr. Black, so that anyone who wished to know Russian views on the subject would find them there; and there had not since then been any great change in the conditions of the problem. The changes which had taken place had been anticipated by those writers. Mr. Rees had thought that the Russian writers who assumed the practicability of an army crossing the Hindu Kush went too far; and then Mr. Rees himself stated what might be called the present conditions of the problem. He (the Chairman) quite adhered to the view of Mr. Rees, and so did Mr. Spencer Wilkinson, from whom a telegram, expressing his regret at not being able to be present, had just been received. He quite agreed that from the present Russian frontier no one of any authority had ever pronounced the invasion of India a practicable

30 *Proceedings of the East India Association.*

military operation. The amount of transport required for crossing Afghanistan by an army sufficiently large to reach India in a condition to encounter our army in India was prohibitive of invasion in any one campaign. That did not conclude the question as to what would happen if a partition of Afghanistan were to take place. If suggestions which at various times had been made that we should have a common frontier with Russia were carried into effect, they would have to face at once what would virtually be, not a first, but a second campaign, and the conditions of the problem would be wholly different. Mr. Rees had criticised certain proceedings which had been taken on behalf of India in modern times. For instance, he attacked the expenditure at Chitral, and congratulated Lord Curzon on having reduced it. He (the Chairman) was one of those who took the middle view about Chitral, which had been Lord Curzon's view, and which had been carried into effect. Although cavalry and guns could not come over, nor could much transport, still, small bodies of troops with mule transport could pass over and be collected in sufficient numbers to overcome anything like native resistance; so that there was some necessity for keeping our eyes open in that neighbourhood, although probably it was a mistake to undertake operations upon so large a scale. As against what Mr. Rees called the forward policy, he (the lecturer) had offered a Persian policy, which deserved investigation. Incidentally in doing so, he had doubted the applicability of what was called the Sandeman system to the tribes of Northern Afghanistan. As a great advocate of the Sandeman system, and admirer of Sandeman himself, he (the Chairman) could not but feel that the principle which had been adopted was, in fact, the Sandeman system. Tribes, of course, varied, but the Sandeman system had not led to any large expenditure in Beloochistan. Beloochistan was virtually a portion of India, but under the working of the Sandeman system the advance in that direction had been accomplished at no great cost, apart from what was spent on fortifications at Quetta, and in the construction of the Quetta Railways. It was marvellous what an amount of work had been accomplished virtually at no cost at all. The main principle of the Sandeman system was working through, and with, the tribes, by local militia rather than by regular troops. There was undoubtedly a danger with regard to the new province caused by the extraordinarily different nature of different portions of the province itself. For instance, a portion of the low country had always been under a settled administration, and that was lumped together with some of the wildest country in the world, inhabited by some of the wildest tribes. There was a risk that there would be an attempt towards ultimate uniformity throughout the province, which he thought would be disastrous. He was one of those who regretted the tendency towards uniformity throughout India. He had always felt that in dealing with a country of such extraordinary diversity the system of government ought to be extraordinarily diverse. Of course, it was easier to stereotype a system, but the dangers were immense. As contrasted with this policy, Mr. Rees had put forward a Persian policy and a naval policy. Before recommending expenditure upon such a policy, it was desirable to see exactly what was meant. Mr. Rees was of opinion that there would be

18

Proceedings of the East India Association. 31

enormous danger to India if any foreign power—to put it plainly, Russia—were to be in command of the Persian Gulf. What was meant by “in command of the Persian Gulf”? If they could imagine a naval Power seated in the Persian Gulf, with a fortified establishment, with docks, and with a fleet present there—such as, for instance, the Russian Pacific Squadron—it was obvious that we should have greatly to increase our naval squadron in those seas. That would involve an increase of naval expenditure. He agreed with Mr. Rees that what had been announced as the settled policy of the Government must be maintained—that is, that we should not allow (and we were in an international position to forbid) any naval Power to establish itself upon the Persian Gulf. He did not, however, agree with Mr. Rees' suggestion that money spent, for example, at Quetta on fortifications might better have been spent upon batteries, and war-ships, and repairing docks on the coast. The need for such expenditure, as compared with other more necessary expenditure, had not arisen. The places where, in modern warfare, great docks were needed for the repair of ironclad ships were the places where those ships had to be kept to fight, and, up to the present time, they had not had to keep them in Indian waters. In the Far East they had the use of their establishments at Hongkong, and the use of the Japanese establishments under the Treaty. They might have to fight there, and so there they had the docks. They had docks for their cruisers in Ceylon. So that he suggested that up to the present time the necessity had not arisen for the expenditure of money upon docks at Madras, or establishments on the Persian Gulf. Then came, probably, the most interesting question they had to consider—namely, in what direction the activities of Russia are most likely to be exhibited in the next few years. Mr. Rees had compared possible activity in the direction of India as in the nature of a feint rather than of an attack. He had hinted at Manchuria being, even more than Persia, the present sphere of the activity of Russia; he had suggested, in his final words, that the drain of these great experiments might be too great for Russia, and that she might break down in pursuing her present policy. He (the Chairman) could remember Russia very well some thirty years ago, and had travelled throughout the length and the breadth of the Russian Empire. In those days it used to be asserted that Russia was bankrupt, and could not hold on, but since that time she had trebled or quadrupled her army, created her gigantic fleet, and undertaken her marvellous railroad construction; she was racing down through Manchuria, and racing also with her railways straight for Peking. They would see a little place on the map called Kalgan. At the present moment, while public attention was directed to the Manchurian Railway to Port Arthur, the more important railway, strategically and politically speaking, was the direct line from the Siberian Railway to Kalgan. He did not himself believe that the extraordinary expansion of Russia in the Far East and in Persia was likely to be put a stop to by any failure of the Russian people to follow out their destinies to the end. The public in this country must not count upon any check in the activities of Russia from her internal position. They must, of course, face the fact that the development of Russia was, to some extent, an anti-British development; and undoubtedly in Persia, and in Manchuria, and in

Central Asia, measures of exclusion had been specially directed against the English. At the present time difficulties were thrown in the way of the British and the Japanese which were not thrown in the way of Americans, or Germans, or other people. They must, therefore, look upon this development as likely to be hostile to their trade. Mr. Rees had suggested that they should try in Persia to counteract the development of Russia not only by excluding her from the coast, but also by operations in the interior—for example, in improving the communications. He doubted whether Parliament would entertain the expenditure of British money behind the coast of Persia. They had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Lynch present, who, probably, knew more about the internal communications of Persia than any other man, and they would hear what he would tell them. He had now, he thought, dealt with all the larger points, but there were one or two subsidiary points as to which he would like to say one word. He wholly went with Mr. Rees in the view that we did not do enough in the way of informing ourselves nationally as to the movements of other Powers. There was an article in the *Times* on the position of the army, which spoke of how little had been done to promote intercommunication between the Japanese army and navy and our own. That was startling, because it was different from what would have been done by any other Power. A most interesting book had been published within the last few days called "Greater Russia," in which the author had pointed out with perfect truth that every Power except England was represented in Manchuria by agents, who were able to help forward the commercial operations of their own people. We were slow to move in these matters. Our Foreign Office was, under the dominion of the Treasury, slow to move, not only in the matter of increased expenditure, but also in rapid transfer from what had become useless to something more useful. Again, too often when we had consulates we put into them—or, might he say, "jobbed" into them?—persons who were not fit for the offices to which they were sent, and did not know the particular foreign languages that they ought to know, and were consequently useless. He thought he had now dealt with the points which seemed most worthy of criticism. He cordially agreed in the general lines of the rest of the paper, and congratulated Mr. Rees upon the paper which had been read.

MR. H. F. B. LYNCH thought they had listened to a most interesting speech giving the substance of a paper, the only fault to be found with which was that it embraced too wide a field. It was directed to two almost distinct subjects: the consideration of the new frontier province created by Lord Curzon, and the more important question of what he might call the outside frontier policy of the Government of India. He spoke not as one who was concerned with the internal questions of India, which he was content to leave to the care of his friend Lord Curzon, but as one interested in the countries west of India, and who had travelled widely in them. The object of his travels in those countries had been to ascertain whether they were of great or of little importance to this country. With regard to the question of the extraterritorial frontiers of India, Mr. Rees had made a number of propositions, but he thought in the limited time at his disposal he had better con-

(19)

Proceedings of the East India Association.

33

fine himself to one, and that was that we should endeavour to prevent at all cost the establishment of a European Power on the littoral of the Persian Gulf, and that we should spare no effort to maintain and develop our ascendancy in that quarter and the adjacent hinterland. He concurred with the lecturer, who had said that the future of the Persian Gulf was irrevocably bound up with the fortunes of India, and would congratulate him on having been among the first to recognise that the frontier policy of India must be based on very much wider conceptions than had hitherto prevailed. The lecturer had given them three frontiers: the North-West, the Belooch, and the Persian Gulf. He (Mr. Lynch) would link up the Belooch and the Persian Gulf frontiers and make them indissolubly connected. It seemed to him of no use to say that they should maintain themselves on the Persian Gulf, and at the same time disregard the countries that lay immediately behind. If they lined the Persian Gulf with ports, and the hinterland was in the possession of Russia, he thought they would have very short shrift given to them by those who directed the Russian policy. He thought the lecturer had been a little misunderstood by the Chairman in his remarks regarding expenditure on the North-West Frontier. He imagined the real meaning of the lecturer to be, that instead of spending large sums on the North-West Frontier of India, the firm of John Bull and Co. should take stock of the circumstances, and see whether it would not be more valuable—or, at all events, less costly—to develop in directions more susceptible of a Russian advance. He himself was of the opinion—shared, he believed, by Lord Curzon—that the high ground between the two great ranges stretching across Persia should be the boundary between the two spheres of Russia and Britain, and that the latter should continue to spread her influence inland from the blue water by a process of peaceful penetration.

The CHAIRMAN observed that it was a mistake to suppose that much money had been spent on fortifications on the North-West Frontier of India.

MR. LYNCH thought the Persian Gulf back-country a question which was a very good subject of discussion. With regard to the question how far he would go in the policy of controlling the hinterland, he would call their attention to the map. They would see there two great ranges, one on the north, the other on the south. If they took Persia they had the range on the north represented by portions of Afghanistan and by Khorassan, and on the south the mountainous portions of Beloochistan and Luristan. Between the two ranges they had a great table-land, and it was characteristic of the country that in the centre, separated by the two ranges, they had on the table-land a Salt Desert. A long examination had led him to this conviction: that the true frontier between Russian influence and British influence in Persia was that great Salt Desert. No armies could march across it. It was the only neutral ground in that part of the world not penetrable by armies under any conditions. If they accepted that proposition the whole of the mountainous fertile ground on the north fell naturally to Russia, and the southern portion to us, and that was already exclusively occupied by our commerce. He held that the maintenance of our hold on the waters of the Persian Gulf

and the hinterland, so far as the Salt Desert, was a perfectly practicable arrangement which should be adopted by this country. As they knew, when Russia ran down from the north we always had complaints, and a rousing of public opinion in this country. He remembered when she came to Merv they all suffered from what people called "Mervousness." The same thing would happen with regard to the Persian Gulf question. He did not believe they could ever consent to the principle that Russia, or any other European Power, should control the Persian Gulf and the hinterland. On that question he thought the back of this country was placed against the wall, and the sooner the question was faced the better it would be for European peace. It might be objected that he was going in for a forward and costly policy. That was by no means the case. They had been told that Beloochistan was administered practically without any expense to this country. He did not contemplate that they should even think of annexing districts contiguous belonging to Persia; but if Russia ever absorbed the northern provinces of Persia, they would have to face the question of an occupation of those districts, and he did not believe the occupation would cost more than the occupation of Beloochistan. They must further consider that the hinterland and the Persian Gulf was at the present day bringing in considerable sums to this country, and that every year, in consequence of our vacillating and withdrawing policy, those sums were being lost to the country. He did not believe in a statical policy. He did not believe they could oppose the dynamical policy of Russia through Persia by any standing upon the *status quo*. As Russia came down from the north, so they must go up from the south. He submitted that to the dynamical policy of Russia they should oppose, not a Jingo policy, but a policy based on that of Russia, of peaceful penetration into the interior. Such a policy, he maintained, would not only increase commerce, but in the end would be far less costly than any alternative that could be proposed. (Applause.)

DR. OSWALD desired to ask Mr. Lynch what he thought would happen as to the hinterland at the head of the Gulf when Russia possibly wished to go there from* Armenia.

The CHAIRMAN: Mr. Lynch has occupied more than his allotted time, but I did not keep him to it, because his remarks were of extraordinary interest. He has finished his speech, and I must not ask him to speak again.

MR. EMMOTT thought that the effect of the new tariff on cotton goods, our chief export to Persia, had been a little bit exaggerated. At the same time they must not hide from themselves the fact that the tariff as a whole was designed against British interests; and whatever might be said about cotton goods, there was no question as to the effect of the enormous increase of 95 per cent. on the tariff on tea from India. The question how far they should assist railways in the future was of very great interest. It appeared to him they were rapidly reaching into a position in which they ought to consider the advisability of assisting railways in certain localities, where their construction was of great advantage to British trade.

MR. MARTIN WOOD said the lecturer had gone a great deal beyond the

* The answer will be found in Mr. Lynch's "Armenia."

20

Proceedings of the East India Association.

35

subject of the Western Frontiers of India. What were those Western Frontiers? The true frontier was the line they took from the Sikhs. Beyond that it was entirely foreign territory.

MAJOR PEMBERTON thought the effect of the discussion would be educational throughout the country, and Mr. Rees would be doing a public service if he could see his way to deliver this lecture in other places in the United Kingdom. As the British people would have to pay the cost, they would claim through their representatives in the House of Commons a voice in the line of policy to be adopted. When the democracy was educated in this matter the British Cabinet could be trusted to bring forward adequate and proper measures, and the House of Commons trusted to vote the necessary supplies; but we must bear in mind that until the general public was aroused to a sense of the momentous issues involved, and possessed some acquaintance with the subject, the Government would not have behind it a sufficient body of informed public opinion to enable it to grapple with this grave question in an adequate manner. Mr. Lynch's remarks had been most interesting, and he was able to agree with a great deal of what he had said, though he feared the words "Too late" must almost be the verdict on the policy outlined by him. A few years ago, as was well known, we had thrown away a great and unique opportunity of strengthening our position at Teheran, and it was doubtful whether the opportunity had not gone for ever. Should the speaker, however, be considered too pessimistic in thinking the die already cast, he would be the first to welcome a thorough discussion of the line of policy advocated so ably by Mr. Lynch. Such a discussion would clear the air, and enable the country to come to a decision after weighing the cost. Mr. Lynch, in his opinion, had made somewhat light of the cost of improving the existing means of access from the Persian Ports into the interior of the country. Major Pemberton feared that the development of the hinterland, by the construction of roads and railways, would prove a costly affair. He mentioned the expense because money entered largely into the question of policy, especially in a democratic community like ours; that was a fact that had to be faced, and it would be no use ignoring it, but at the same time let the policy advocated be judged on its merits and not condemned solely because of its assumed costliness. Leaving Persia, however, for the moment, and reverting to the North-West Frontier of India, Major Pemberton thought there was too great a tendency to look at the problem of the defence of India as it presents itself in its main features at the present day; in consequence, the conclusion come to by many was that the invasion of India by Russia was a practical impossibility—a chimera, in fact! He submitted, however, that the proper way to deal with the question was to forecast the future, and to consider the condition of things as it is likely to be some fifteen or twenty years hence, when lines of railways traversing Afghanistan will probably either have been made or will be in course of construction. Then matters would assuredly wear a different aspect, and it was to deal with that state of things that we as a nation should now commence our preparations. Surely no sane man should comfort himself with the thought that armies could not march

36 *Proceedings of the East India Association.*

across salt deserts, when everybody knew that such could be spanned by lines of railway. Russia had shown her ability to build railways through the most difficult country, and the veriest sceptic would not doubt her power to push her railways into Afghanistan when the political situation should favour her doing so. Major Pemberton firmly believed that Russia would in the course of the present century make an attempt to cause us trouble in India, and it rested with us to now determine by our action or inaction what measure of success should meet such aggression on her part. Personally, he spoke with no other feeling than one of amity towards Russia, a country he knew well. In the course of his travels throughout the Russian Empire he had come in contact with Russians of all classes, and had invariably received the greatest possible kindness, and been struck by the liking shown for individual Englishmen.

SIR GEORGE BIRDWOOD said he had respectfully declined the invitation to open the discussion on Mr. Rees' paper, as he was not competent to deal with its all-important and pressing subject; but he had the greatest pleasure in proposing the vote of thanks to Mr. Rees. He always felt thankful that a retired Indian civilian of Mr. Rees' position and experience had the energy and the patriotic spirit to enter into the public discussion in this country of questions affecting the interests of India. It was an imperial loss that the influence of these retired Indian civilians—the only people who really knew anything of India—was so little exercised in this country, entirely owing to their diffidence in addressing popular meetings; but Mr. Rees had resolutely overcome that obstacle, and was always to the fore wherever any subject connected with India was being debated, and was always convincing and impressive. His set papers and speeches were always valuable contributions to knowledge, and in debate he was most effective, and his brilliant repartees in reply to irrepressible faddists and cranks, warps and crotcheteers of every tribe, always gave him especial enjoyment and delight. The lecture had been admirable in itself, and not less so from the weighty observations it had called forth from Major Pemberton, Mr. Lynch, and their distinguished chairman, Sir Charles Dilke, the first and foremost of living authorities on its subject. Most suggestive, in his opinion, if it was worth expressing, was the casual question put by Dr. Oswald to Mr. Lynch as to what he would say if Russia got into the hinterland of Persia by way of Armenia. He thought that a fundamental and the vital question. But for the conquest of the Caucasus, confirmed by the cession of Batoum to Russia, the Russians would never have found it possible to approach India from beyond the Caspian. Dr. Oswald's question suggested the answer that the vulnerable points of Russia were on the Black Sea and the Baltic. The pursuit of a hinterland policy must take you to the Caucasus and St. Petersburg at last, and why not begin there? He could not but help agreeing with what had been said by their distinguished chairman in defence of the fortifications of the Indian North-West Frontier. It seemed to him that the moneys spent on them had in no sense been misspent. Russia had now for some time realized the difficulties of the approach to India in that direction, and India was, indeed, now practically impregnable from that direction, and we owed this

(21)

Proceedings of the East India Association. 37

emphatically to Lord Roberts. He had been especially interested in the point Mr. Rees had sought to make of the entirely imaginary futility of Alexander's invasion of India. Alexander undertook the expedition partly for glory, partly for commercial inquiry and scientific research, and chiefly for the propagation of Hellenic culture, and altogether he found it a most enjoyable Jameson's Raid on an extended scale, and, fortunately, entirely successful. He had dealt with that question at length in the report in the *Journal of the Society of Arts* of a paper read in 1901 before the Society by General Sir Thomas Holdich on "Alexander's Expedition to India" and of the discussion thereon. He did not like nursing suspicions of any foreign Power, but he happened to be the editor of the English translation of Prince Oukhtomsky's "Travels of the Czarewitch," published by Messrs. Archibald Constable, and in going through it he had been literally amazed by the audacity, the absolutely brazen effrontery, with which all the way from Alexandria to Singapore—while the young Czarewitch, the present Emperor of Russia, was enjoying the hospitality of this country—the Prince discussed the question of the reversionary interest of Russia in India. After such a revelation it was impossible to ignore what were the sinister hopes and aspirations and intentions with regard to India of the Russian statesmen, or of some of them, in the immediate and close intimacy of the Czar. But he in no way shared the despair of some of the speakers of our yet being able to hold our own in the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean. Looking back on all our past history, he found that God had always been with us, and the strongest conviction of his soul was that God was with us still, and always would be. Where should we have been to-day but for the Jameson Raid?—an entirely providential act, outside all the calculations, the very conceptions, of our statesmen. He was deeply grateful to Mr. Rees for his most interesting and instructive paper, and he must add, also, to Sir Charles Dilke for his masterful exposition of the problem of our present and future policy toward Russia, with reference to the defence of the North-West Frontier of India.

The CHAIRMAN, in seconding the vote of thanks, observed that the true strategical doctrine was that you could only defend your possessions against attack by operations in all parts of the world; and, curiously enough, although Sir George Birdwood was a man of peace, it had been left to him to take them into those larger considerations. He differed from Sir George Birdwood with regard to the suggestion that Russia was vulnerable in the Caucasus. That was a thing of the past. But there was this fact which would keep them from lying awake—that Russia, while she was a few years ago almost invulnerable to our arms in the event of war, had become more vulnerable than she was—not in the immediate neighbourhood of India, but in that part of the world to which Russian energy was at present principally directed. He doubted whether Mr. Lynch would see so much of Russian energy in Persia in the next few years as he had anticipated. His own belief was that the energy which she displayed in the direction of Peking pointed to the true objective of Russia. Her operations in Manchuria, Mongolia, and Northern China made her more vulnerable than she had hitherto been, which went to show that when people took on them-

38 *Proceedings of the East India Association.*

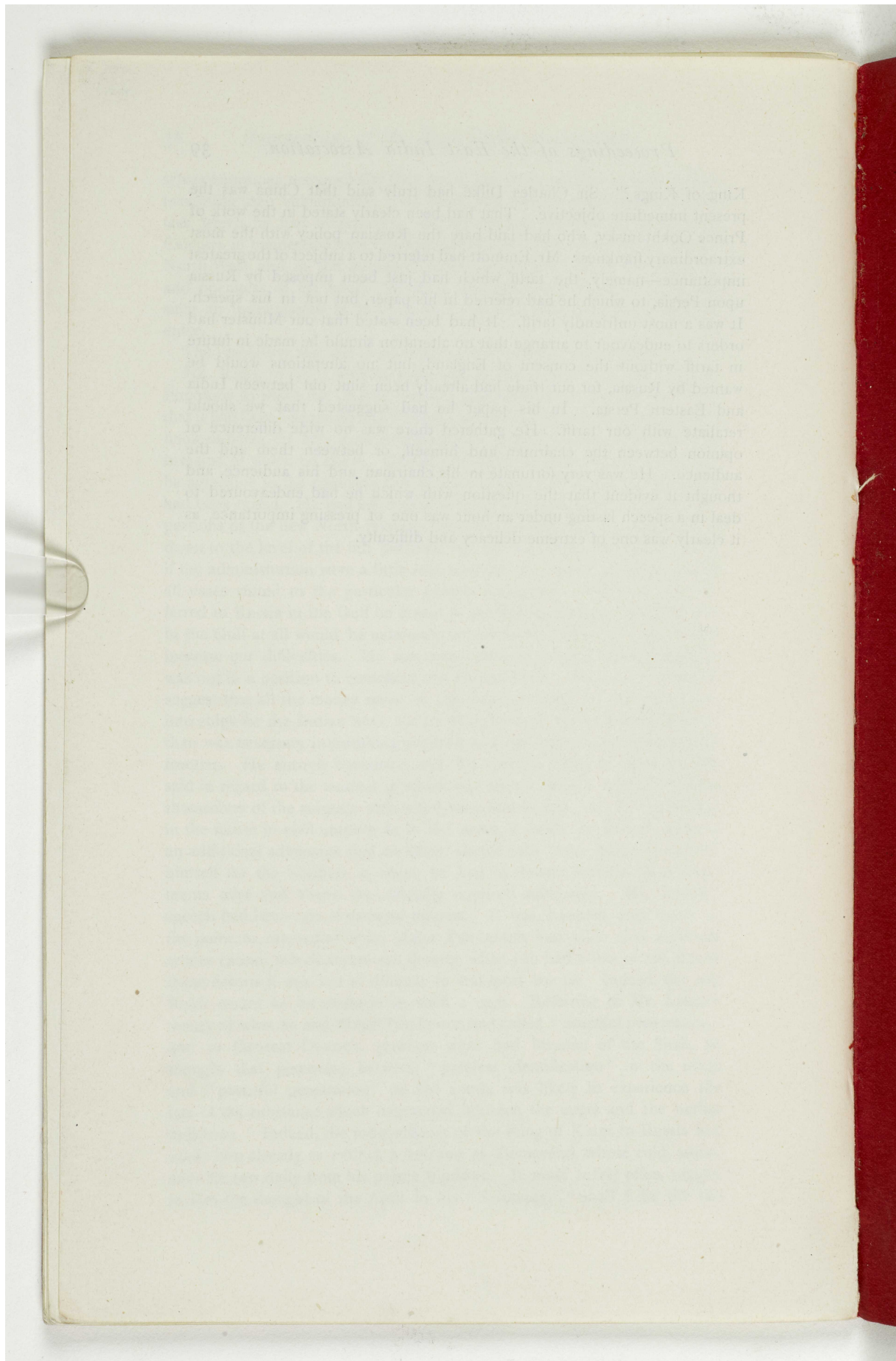
selves enormous responsibility they could not do so without to some extent increasing their vulnerability. Mr. Rees had special qualifications for the task which he had undertaken. By his Persian scholarship, his work at Calcutta in connection with the Viceroy's Council, his travels in the Indian North-West and in the Russian Empire, and, above all, by the alertness and openness of his mind, Mr. Rees was peculiarly fitted to undertake such an investigation as that on which he had that day invited them to enter.

The resolution was put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

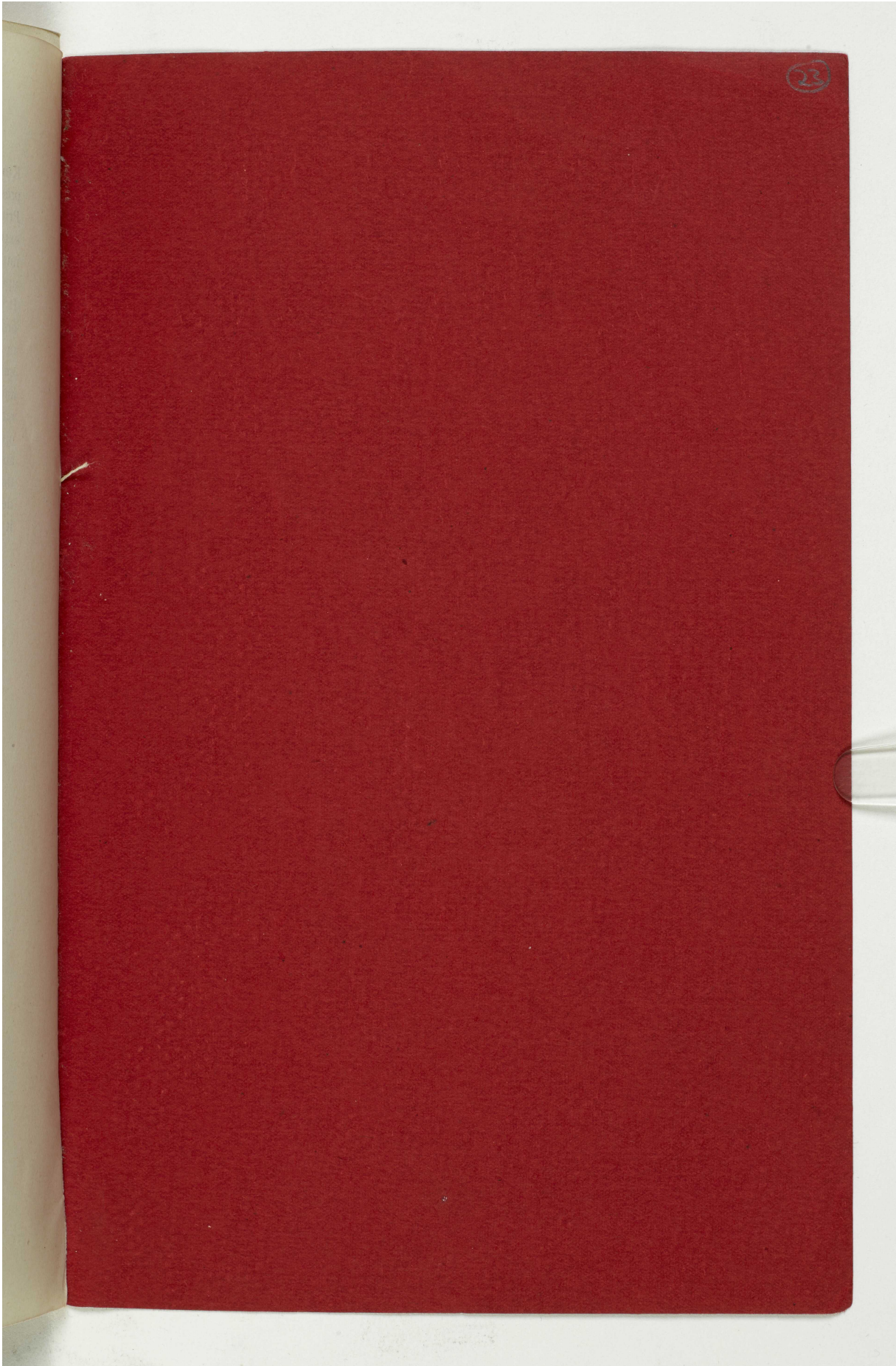
MR. REES, in reply, said he was aware of the existence of the book of Popowski to which Sir Charles referred, and had read it, but did not know that it had been translated into English; and he had spoken of Ookhtomsky's book as being the only work translated into English relating to the Russian invasion of which he knew. He did not think at that late hour it would be agreeable to the company that he should deal with all the points which had been raised. He had not meant to imply that he felt that the advanced portions of the new North-Western Province would suffer by being brought down to the level of the hill portions, but he did think it would be better if the administration were a little less scientific in certain quarters, and in all cases suited to the particular people concerned. When he had referred to Russia in the Gulf he meant to say that he thought their presence in the Gulf at all would be extremely inconvenient, and would very much increase our difficulties. He was aware that at present Russia, happily, was not in a position to command the Persian Gulf. He did not mean to suggest that all the money spent on the frontier ought to have been put into ships for the Indian Seas, but he thought more money had been spent than was necessary in fortifying portions of a naturally almost impregnable frontier. He entirely concurred with Sir Charles Dilke in what he had said in regard to the manner in which our agents should specially inform themselves of the subjects with which they had to deal, and he hoped that in the future in civil employ, as in the army, it would be looked upon as an additional advantage that an officer should take some pains to qualify himself for the business to which he had to devote himself by acquirements over and above the officially required minimum. Mr. Lynch's speech had been one of extreme interest. It was, however, very much to the point to remember what Major Pemberton had said: that although armies cannot march across salt deserts, when you had a line of rail across those deserts it was not so difficult to transport troops. Indeed, the salt Kavir would be no obstacle in such a case. Referring to Mr. Lynch's theory of what he and Major Pemberton had called "peaceful penetration," and to General Dunne's question what had become of the Shah, he thought that potentate, between "painless identification" in the north and "peaceful penetration" on the south, was likely to experience the fate of the substance which intervened between the upper and the nether millstone. Indeed, the indebtedness of the King of Kings to Russia had made him already as extinct a volcano as Demavend, whose cold, snowy cone he saw daily from his palace windows. It must surely often suggest to him the thought of the Amir in his "Soliloquy," "Shall I be the last

Proceedings of the East India Association. 39

King of Kings?" Sir Charles Dilke had truly said that China was the present immediate objective. That had been clearly stated in the work of Prince Ookhtomsky, who had laid bare the Russian policy with the most extraordinary frankness. Mr. Emmott had referred to a subject of the greatest importance—namely, the tariff which had just been imposed by Russia upon Persia, to which he had referred in his paper, but not in his speech. It was a most unfriendly tariff. It had been stated that our Minister had orders to endeavour to arrange that no alteration should be made in future in tariff without the consent of England, but no alterations would be wanted by Russia, for our trade had already been shut out between India and Eastern Persia. In his paper he had suggested that we should retaliate with our tariff. He gathered there was no wide difference of opinion between the chairman and himself, or between them and the audience. He was very fortunate in his chairman and his audience, and thought it evident that the question with which he had endeavoured to deal in a speech lasting under an hour was one of pressing importance, as it clearly was one of extreme delicacy and difficulty.



'Russia, India and the Persian Gulf' [back-i] (45/46)



'Russia, India and the Persian Gulf' [back] (46/46)

