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LECTURE.

Friday, December 13th, 1878.

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR HENRY C. RAWLINSON, K.C.B.
&c., &c., in the Chair.

THE STRATEGICAL CONDITIONS OF OUR INDIAN WEST FRONTIER.

By Major-General E. B. HAMLEY, C.B., R.A.

I APPEAR here, in compliance with the desire of the Council, to offer some remarks on our Indian frontier. I should not have volunteered to do so, and I do it, I will not say with reluctance, for I am happy to comply with any wish of the Council, but certainly not without misgiving, feeling that among you there are certainly some, perhaps many, Indian officials of the highest position. But I am encouraged by the thought that a personal acquaintance with a territory is not indispensable to the formation of a fair opinion about it—if it were, the majority of the military campaigns would never have been planned. I am encouraged also by feeling how little aid the subject requires from me to render it interesting—never has the interest it has excited been so strong, though for nearly thirty years it has been warmly discussed in the minds in India. These still contest each other's conclusions on widely divergent points of view, and I may therefore perhaps find it a point in my favour that I have approached the subject without bias, as I would any other strategical problem, desirous only to arrive at a right conclusion, and uninfluenced by the weight of opinion on one side or the other.

First, let us look to the Indus—often spoken of as the western frontier of India. To be a good line of defence a river, be it ever so difficult to cross, should have protected bridges in the position of the defender, connected by good communications on the one bank, and that bank should, at important points, command the river. The Indus is unbridged by any permanent structure. In its upper half it is a swift, even turbulent, stream flowing mostly over a rocky bed—from 100 to 400 yards wide—in its lower, more rapid, it flows between flat banks and frequently changes its course—insomuch that the bridge of one year might be left on

the next. When the snows melt the river rises and spreads over its banks—thus bridges would at times be swept away, merged, and roads along the bank would be useless. The bridge of boats at Attock which has been frequently carried away, another was thrown two years ago at Khooshalghur. Nevertheless I believe that permanent bridges might be thrown—it is a question of expense. The left bank is flat throughout and is frequently commanded by the right. These are circumstances taken into account when we are told that the Indus is the frontier of India.

Beyond the river, at an average distance of some fifty miles to the frontier line, which let us define for the present purpose as on the right by a point opposite the Khyber, on the left by a point opposite the Bolan. The distance measured along the river in a straight line from Attock to Sukkur is about 500 miles, the frontier course being considerably longer. This frontier runs for great part of its length along the foot of a mountain range, penetrated between the Bolan and the Khyber only by a few difficult passes. Natural barriers, that which gives most security, next perhaps to a desert, is a range of this kind, and hence a few thousand men prevent the depredations of the hill tribes, suffice to protect the frontier which, were it of a different kind, with a powerful force on the other side, would demand, in case of a formidable army, and even in peace very considerable forces, for its defence. There are several passes between the two I have named, but between the Khyber, it will only be necessary to speak of two in this part of the frontier, the Kurrum, issuing in our territory at Thull and the Gomal, issuing opposite Dera Ismail Khan. Other than these there is one that issues in the bed of the Kurrum river near Peshawar, but besides that we know little of them, except that they are generally difficult, there is another reason why I should not dwell at length on them at this time in describing any south of the Gomal.

There will be no dispute that the Khyber is, of these the most fit for the passage of a column of all arms. It is the shortest, the easiest, the best supplied with water, and it passes directly the most important points, namely, the city of Kabul, a favourable place for bridging the Indus at Attock, whence a great road, to Lahore, and thence into the valley of the Ganges.

Of the Kurrum we have learnt a good deal. It is easy to pass all the way from the Indus to the Paiwar Pass, but from that point where it joins the hill road between Caubul and Ghazni to Kushi, it is of exceeding difficulty, impassable for any kind of heavy carriage, and rendering the supply of even a lightly equipped column an arduous task. Whether General Roberts had at first any view of his train I do not know. It is to be inferred that he had, the fact that his light guns were carried on mules, his artillery on the backs of elephants—however this may be, very certain he has none now. The issue of this pass in our territory at Thull is 100 miles from that of the Khyber. A column so well equipped as to be independent could not pass here;

could not act independently would scarcely venture; and likely, therefore, that any serious attack will be made by w Kurrum, or of that other pass which issues near it.

The Gomal, from Ghuznee, does not present the insuperable of the Kurrum, and could be made practicable, though not a column of all arms; at the best it would still present m broken extent of track, and many narrow passes. It is cuitous, and about a third longer than the Khyber, from v distant 200 miles.

In forming an idea of a march in force through such pass assist us to remember that an English Army Corps, say 24,000 with artillery, extends with its combatant forces only, on a road about 16 miles in length, and with its trains 27 miles. only a slight increase for the nature of the road, the comba similar force in the pass would stretch 18 miles, the total v 30. Thus, when the head of the combatant column issued pass, its rear would be nearly two days' march behind; and e the host of animals required for the necessary supplies on s expedition, the rear of the trains could then scarcely be les days behind the head of the column, that is to say, only marches beyond Jellalabad.

Accustomed as we are to see the mountain chains of Europ fully passed by great armies, we must be careful to reme different in depth are those ranges from the hills of Afghan a couple of marches the Prussian armies were through the mountains, and presently combined in the attack at Sado here, the shortest pass through the barrier, that between C the Indus Valley, is 190 miles long—the Gomal nearly 300 r not days but weeks are occupied in the isolated march.

Now, when we remember what an invading army of India that it shall bear with it the means of passing the Indus—tl be prepared to encounter the forces of our Indian Empire—thus formidable in numbers and equipment, it must rely fo on the path through which it has issued, we shall form of the difficulties which would encompass an army in its e enter India by these routes; and these difficulties I will a bear in mind when I recur to this part of the subject. Let v what conditions another part of the theatre may present. B me pause to say what I understand by an invading army. J assembled forces of the Afghans—not such a Russian force lately assembling on the frontier of Bokhara—not such e Persia can at present send forth—any or all of these wou short of the requirements of such an enterprise. But I w that Russia has completed those improvements in her comm which we know she persistently contemplates; that she has Caspian and the Aral by a railway; or that, combining w she has made a convenient way from the southern shore of tl to Herat; that the ruler of Afghanistan has thrown in h them; and that within the fortified triangle Herat, Caubul, the dispositions for this great undertaking have be

deliberately, with all the aids of military science, to complete may be assured that an invading army of India, such as I afford to despise, will be no improvised force, no barbarous I truly formidable in numbers, organization, and leadership will further assume for the moment that, as has been so often mended, we await the attack in the valley of the Indus.

From Caubul the confederated forces of the enemy, posted suggested, will threaten an advance through the western pass Kandahar they will threaten an advance through the Bolan follow the movements of what we may call the enemy's Army Bolan, assembled about Kandahar. As it moves south it will character of the country very different from that of the districts of the north. The hills are no longer of impenetrable manœuvring ground exists almost everywhere; a great part of the country consists of extensive plains; and though there are a few formidable if held, yet they are by no means such obstacles of the Suleiman range. Over one of these, the Khojak, passes to Quetta. From thence the main road, and the one used by caravans travelling to the Indus valley, is the Bolan Pass to Dadur. There is another excellent road to Dadur. From Khelat there are two ways into this portion of the Indus valley, one direct but difficult, the other circuitous but practicable leading on Gundava. But the best road, one that with a little might be called good, is that through the Bolan; the length of the pass is 59 miles.

But when I speak of these roads issuing in the valley of the Indus I must indicate the circumstances under which they enter the mountain barrier which has continued to define our frontier. At the point in advance of Mitteree on the Indus, there turns westward the frontier of Khelat for a considerable distance, when it reverts to the southerly direction. It follows that the right bank of the Indus about Mitteree to far below Larkhana is an immense plain. On passing along the river there, see the horizon extending like the ocean. Into this great plain the Army of the Bolan would advance a hundred miles from our frontier, and, while halting to concentrate its lengthened columns, and to fortify the passes in its rear, it would have before it a space of the valley of at least 150 miles in width, a part of which to direct its attack; and having formed its plan I am told on the best authority, advance in the dry season near where across this plain on a wide formation and accompanied by all its trains and baggage. Regular routes lead from Gundava to Larkhana, while Dadur, besides being in direct communication with Gundava, is the place whence most of the roads diverge to various points in the specified portion of the Indus valley.

Now, though this plain is poor, and though it requires a long and experienced management to obtain a good supply of water: I would put it to you whether such an invading army as I have imagined could reasonably hope for more favourable circumstances in which to enter a theatre of war than those in which it would find itself.

Pausing for a moment here, let us look back to the other side of the theatre, and suppose that an army is also moving from the Caubul to the Indus valley. We know that it will advance in long procession down the Gomal or the Khyber Passes—that it will issue through narrow gaps, into the presence of the defender's troops; that it will have, or ought to have, to fight with the heads of its columns even for the power of making its first deployments, and that if it has deployed the greater part of the army will have at its back the practicable lines of supply, or of retreat, but impassable mountains. It will not be contested that this is a very different situation from that of the Bolan Army—in the one case we have an army issuing in the form of columns, close to the enemy—in the other an army moving on a full front with the enemy still at a distance. It is therefore, that however the enemy may think it proper to disguise its movements by feints or diversions here, the main line of advance will be the Lower Indus.

Next, as to how we should meet the invasion. The port of Chittagong is a point where troops and stores from England, from the Mediterranean stations, from Bombay, can easily and conveniently concentrate. It is also the terminus of the Indus Valley Railway, which, if not actually completed, is so near completion that we may take it as an accomplished fact. By rail, and also by the river, it is available for large steamers to beyond Sukkur, the readiest means of concentrating from home and elsewhere, as indicated, upon the Lower Indus. From Lahore, by Mooltan, the same part of the Indus is reached by rail—the communication across the river being by steamers. And from Lahore also a railway now extending to, or beyond Sukkur, and which will shortly reach the Indus, affords a ready means of reinforcing Peshawur. This Indus Valley railway is not to be compared by the capacities of our English railways. It is only a six-foot gauge, burns wood for fuel, and maintains but a moderate rate of speed. But, as it is, it is invaluable; it enables the Bengal troops to move easily with those of Bombay, and it gives great facility in reinforcing either extremity of our frontier line. The Quetta has already profited by it, having been conveyed by rail from Mooltan to a station opposite Mithun Kote; and all troops from Bombay or Kurrachee will also experience its benefits. In a more momentous crisis than the present, such a one as has been supposing to exist, we should bring our whole power to bear in this part of the theatre. In fact, there is, I think, no country in the world where we could make such a military disposition of strength at short notice as on the Lower Indus. Thus, if the passes suitably guarded, the Army of the Lower Indus is established beyond the river, the reserves at Lahore and Mooltan can reinforce either of our two Armies, we should be in a situation of promise, and it was the consideration of it which caused me to express elsewhere the opinion that we ought, with good management, to give an excellent account of any foe who should attack the valley of the Indus.

But good grounds as there are for taking that view on the

have also just endeavoured to show that the enemy's *Arn Bolan* would meet us here under the most favourable circumstances that it could possibly hope for—its rear secured, its front advance easy, and with a wide space of our frontier upon which to direct its operations. Moreover, it is to be observed that this is so invaluable as our line of communication, and protects the upper portion by the river, runs from Sukkur to Kurrach on the right bank, and that we could scarcely hope, before having taken decisive action, to guard it against the enemy's enterprises over the wide extent on which they would menace it. I will now pass to the consideration of whether we shall not be at an enemy to much better advantage on a more advanced line.

The argument which is always put forward in support of remaining on the defensive is, that we should thus await the resources of an enemy who would have advanced to a great distance from his. The argument thus stated would imply that it is judicious to await invasion. But this is manifestly not true. A majority of brilliant campaigns have been those of invasion. It is sometimes a judicious course, sometimes not. It is judicious when taken by the weaker nation, deficient in the money, material, and organization which an offensive campaign implies, and at the same time possessing a frontier and a country topographically strong. But it is certainly not likely to consider ourselves as likely to be the party, either in resources or in organization, in the contest if we are tempted. Again, a defensive war will often combine the power of an otherwise discordant empire in a patriotic union against the enemy. But it is, I believe, the concurrent testimony of all that there is no territory on which it could be more perilous for an enemy the chance of winning a battle than our Indian Empire.

Let us look, then, towards a more advanced line; and here the case is much simplified by the fact that we have already occupied the frontier. By doing so, it is *we* who are in the position of commanding the entrance into the enemy's country, and of securing the passes in the mountain while we have the further inestimable advantage of having the back of the mountain district—that is to say, of holding the frontier, and of seeing before us a country, not of concealing its difficulties, but offering at the same time immensely increased facilities for skilled operations. We are thus, too, carrying out our theatre of war out of our own territory, which we can advance. And for communications, besides those before us, we have the construction of the branch railway from the Indus, already designed and officially talked of as intended, will greatly reduce the distance of Quetta from the frontier and the difficulties attending the march.

Looking next at the avenues *out* of Quetta, we find the *h* Kandahar, which offers no difficulty to the march of an army except the Khojak Pass, the nature of which as an obstacle, I believe, been greatly exaggerated. Another road to the left leads also over the Khojak range; and there is still another main road on the side of the desert. But, though our troops, in former

frequently marched through that country, being in small bodies they moved only on one road, and we know nothing from actual observation of the two I have mentioned. There is another road which, branching north-east from the Kandahar road, a little way out of Quetta, traverses the hill country, and this, though very rugged, we know can be used by troops of all arms, for the Bombay division moved by it in the former war from Ghuznee upon Quetta. And what I would specially call attention to, lest you should think I had dismissed the subject of the passes too briefly, is that by occupying Quetta we practically close all passes to the Indus Valley which issue south of Dera Ismail Khan.

Strategically, then, I hope there remains no doubt of the immense advantage of holding Quetta, whether as a means of controlling Afghanistan or of meeting such a formidable combination of enemies as I have contemplated. Proceeding to inquire what tactical features it may offer, it appears that, on passing the Bolan, the road goes for some twelve miles over a waterless plain, before entering the cultivated district, also a plain, which surrounds the town. Quetta stands round an isolated conical hill which commands the plain behind it, but is itself commanded by high ground in its front. It became, therefore, of importance to know how this might be remedied: and I am informed by the very capable Officer who surveyed the district, that a mile or two in front of the town, and within Khelat territory, there is an excellent position, far out of reach of any other commanding ground, and dominating the valley beyond. This seems to be confirmed by a late telegram from there, which mentions an additional fort just constructed as having rendered Quetta quite impregnable. On the left of Quetta, between it and the desert, the line of hills is only passable at a single gap; and a similar range, not passable at all, exists on the right. Tactically, then, as well as strategically, for defence, as well as offence, against either a powerful or an inferior enemy, it would appear alike advantageous; and while the policy of taking possession of it has for many years been powerfully opposed, and while the measure was carried into effect almost unnoticed in this country, it appears, if the advantages are such as I have stated, that we have here the most valuable possession on which England has laid her hand for many a day.

Having got so far, however, the question is not yet settled of whether we have yet reached our most advantageous frontier. I have considered the confederated forces as within the triangle Herat, Caubul, Kandahar—the richest, most open, and most temperate portion of Afghanistan: and if they meant to attack us, whether in the valley of the Indus, or at Quetta, their position would be strong, and strong also against attack. Caubul would, so long as they might hold it, threaten Peshawur—and Kandahar would form a strong point of concentration for an advance. And the hostile Army so placed might, without imprudence, send an advanced force to occupy the Khojak Pass, the only very difficult or specially defensible part of the road between Quetta and Kandahar, about 90 miles from Kandahar, 60 from

Quetta, thus acquiring the option of receiving battle the case of its advance, the gaining of so much ground.

I will go on, then, to suppose that the result of our preparations is to give us the power, if we choose to use it, of Kandahar, with a small space beyond it, necessary to complete gical value. The obstacle of the Khojak would thus disappear. Kandahar, the richest district of Afghanistan lies before us practicable roads lead from thence on Ghuznee and Can one side, on Herat on the other—and others lead from it Helmund to the Persian frontier and thence on Meshed, i of Herat. The space beyond should therefore include a the Helmund river, with the command of the passage a Of the communications with Quetta I have already spoken.

It is to be noted that between Herat and Caubul, two of cities which I have supposed the enemy to occupy, lies th the Hazarrah mountains, the road through which, between tl is so bad that the circuit by Kandahar, or by a route no mountains, is generally preferred. Hence another import quence would follow from our occupation of Kandahar, n rupture of the enemy's front; for if he occupied Caubul we co the forces there from those at Herat—if he did not, we sho to bring our whole strength to bear on the side of Herat. dahar, too, we should hold such a position towards Persia seriously affect her relations with Russia; and finally, o there would be almost decisive against any design of the invade India through the passes. Observe, I do not say occupy Kandahar, by friendly treaty, as we now occupy Qu

I think it is impossible to deny that our Army posted delightful climate, and with such strategical possibilities c could desire no better field in which to contest with Russi allies the Empire of India. And perhaps many of you with me that the leader of that Army will be, in his opporti most fortunate British soldier whom we have seen since We

Resting here, it becomes necessary to look at the other s strategical theatre, and to consider the question of an adva frontier-line from the Indus valley in that quarter also.

The road from the eastern issue of the Khyber to Caubul by two chief difficulties. With those of the Khurd Khyt sufficiently familiar. Issuing from it a more open regio itself, extending beyond Jellabad.

The idea that some advance of our frontier might be ex come to be generally contemplated; this is tantamount in n to considering that any step forward must be advantageou step that finds favour is that of pushing the frontier forwa side to Jellalabad. One reason assigned for this is that we command the valley which ascends from behind Jellalabad. This point would never, I confess, have occurred to me been indicated elsewhere; it seems to imply that we may Russians that way. But what does such an expectation means that Russia, after pushing her forces to the sou

Oxus—after forming a secondary base or fresh starting point on the plateau of Pamir—after crossing the Hindu Kush—is 250 miles down this valley, and for what? If she desires either Caubul or the Khyber, surely she will possess herself of a direct and convenient route to those places. If she does, this? If she does not, is it to be supposed that she will enter an enterprise by such a line? But it will be seen that the route is provided for in a general plan, and I will pass to the other side of that has been assigned, namely, that we should thus have secured the passage of the Khyber. Now, the permanent occupation of the country beyond that pass must have either a defensive or offensive character. First, as to the defensive. If a point in advance of the Khyber, the knot where a number of roads united which led from the Indus Valley, the policy of occupying it would be obviously covering nothing, and commands nothing, but the pass itself. The difficulty of supply by such a road would prevent a very large force from being permanently posted there. On the other hand, it would do nothing to prevent a powerful enemy who may possess Caubul from bringing any force he pleases to attack the permanent post in the rear of the Khyber, which must then be reinforced if possible. Nor would the difficulty be remedied—on the contrary—if our defensive post were pushed further, through the pass to the Caubul valley; a measure which, I believe, nobody has yet proposed. On the other hand, if the reason for proposing to occupy such a position is that we should thus have accomplished something towards obtaining entrance into the district beyond the Khyber, in an offensive campaign, we must remember that between the district and Jellalabad there are many difficult marches and a most formidable pass. None but a strong and well-equipped force, in fact an Army, could venture thus to menace such a fort as such support beyond it, as Caubul would present under the circumstances I have imagined.

Now it is to be noted that an Army here would be as far from an Army on the Lower Indus by at least 500 miles—from Quetta by at least 700 miles—from one at Kandahar by 800 miles. The British armies would, therefore, be under separate command, operating with distinct objects; nor could they combine except for important successes gained within the enemy's territory. The enemy, on the other hand, would possess the advantage of operating from a central point against widely separated bodies advancing towards the Khyber. In fact, considering the difficulties of supplying this Khyber, we should be voluntarily adopting, in its worst form, the double-edged sword of all its disadvantages, and without the excuse of necessity, could throw our whole weight with full advantage on the other side. I think, therefore, there is much to be said against, nothing in favour of, the occupation of a post beyond the Khyber, and that it would be not of strength but of weakness.

In saying what I think should not be done, I am preparing the way for what I think should be done on this side; and it is hardly necessary for me to think that the alternative plan, while, in my

In like manner, an intrenched camp armed with heavy might be placed at the issue of the Gomal Pass and occupied by a garrison of Dera Ismail Khan; and another, though rather to soothe the feeling of security than from necessity, in front of the K

To complete the system of defence, these posts should have rear protected passages over the Indus, connected with the branch lines.

It is necessary to notice the plan of sending troops up the passes and occupying the crests by way of advancing our Now I scarcely think that those who propose it have considered it would be to maintain permanent posts on those inclines with only such lines of communication and supply behind the valleys afford. And considering them as a preparation for such operations in a campaign, we should, in using these passes to advance, be operating not by double but by quadruple or lines of operations. Surely it would be nothing short of thus to fritter away our strength when we can unite our force under a single leader, on the side of Quetta or Kandahar.

To leave no alternative untouched, I will now suppose the pushed through all the passes, made the mountain territory placed our posts on the road from Caubul to Kandahar. I sider for a moment how an extensive frontier is generally The line of communication between the posts should pass no but behind their front. Any of them when driven back sh secure lines by which to find support from others, and retiring should possess, in numerous roads, the means of con upon important points. But what of this do we see in our new frontier? There we have bodies widely apart, isolated b advance of the enemy, each with its own narrow pass to re entering which it continues to be isolated from the others

till it emerges, still at a great distance from them, in our territory. I trust we shall not incur the charge of such a vast barren territory, with its savage populations, for such a purpose, and that our notion of a rectified frontier will not consist of these isolated lines and posts thus unmeaningly thrust forth into the mountains. Any good that could possibly be hoped for them would be much more effectually accomplished by the fortification of Kandahar.

Apart from the question of a more formidable foe, it appears to be believed that these posts pushed up the passes would diminish the chances of future contests with the unruly hill-tribes. The presence of these posts would appear an excellent reason for keeping them in our front rather than in our rear. Posts separated by such distance in inaccessible country, can exercise no influence on the inhabitants between; on the contrary we should thus be offering them the most potent means of molesting us. I fear that slenderly-escorted convoys would offer irresistible temptations to the half-starved hill-tribes. Such a measure then, in time of war most mischievous, as in time of peace, in the chances of disaster, would be in time of peace costly and burdensome, for it would not in the least obviate the necessity of keeping a present line of frontier guards.

When, in the former war, our forces moved on Kandahar from the south were no less hostile and mischievous to us than the tribes to the north, and every march from the Bolan to the Kohistan was marked by their depredations on our trains, by the slaughter of our conductors, by the murder of stray soldiers and numbers of our camp followers. But a few years afterwards they were rendered thoroughly peaceable and friendly by vigorous handling and firm management. At least one most distinguished Officer who took a leading part in the process still lives to tell us what the present position is. It might be worth trying on other parts of the frontier; he may be, the result for us, and one well worth taking into consideration. That, to all appearance, our trains march as safely now from Kandahar to the Khojak as from London to Aldershot.

The plan, then, to which I arrive at the end of this train of thought, is that the frontier should be pushed up to the Kohistan, and has at least the merit of simplicity. The camps in front of the Kohistan should become the fixed pivot of operations: the main forces, assembled at the first instance where they can most easily assemble, that is, at the Lower Indus, are the active army. As I have said, I am confident of the result even in the valley of the Indus; the present position vastly improved by the occupation of Quetta; but I think it all we could desire if we occupied Kandahar. At either of these two points we select for the advanced post of operations, a camp must be made the site of an intrenched camp powerfully supplied by railway to Dadur must be made, and the roads between the main camp and the advanced camp everywhere improved.

There is one case in which the garrison of the camp in the Khyber might cease to be merely a defensive force. If, in the event of the campaign, as is likely, the Kandahar Army or part of

invest Caubul, the troops might come though the Khyber the siege and probably in subsequent operations.

Thus, then, I have endeavoured to sketch a definite plan by which to concentrate our resources, and by which to secure a frontier, and a permanent settlement of this large question. At the northern half of this part of our territory, I think we should be thankful for possessing a frontier so easily rendered impregnable. Looking at the southern half, we have no less reason to be thankful for having acquired, in Quetta, such means of vigorous action, and such an opportunity of securing new advantages of an important and decisive kind. With a garrison strongly posted on the lines at Kandahar, with all the routes and stages by which we might be assembled on that point, all sources of supply and arrangements for transport, laid down, as our trained Staff Officers are certainly capable of laying them down, we might view all possible complications before us, whether arising from the diminution of the military power of Russia in the East, from the success of her operations, or from her open hostility. The grounds of our assurance are manifest and easily understood, our native subjects would surely be disposed to appreciate them, and what would be security for us would be security for India.

Major-General Sir FREDERIC GOLDSMID: Having been myself on two expeditions connected with Persia and Beloochistan, and another with Persia and Afghanistan, I know much of the western frontier of the latter country from personal observation. As regards the eastern frontier of Afghanistan, my acquaintance with the subject is strengthened by long residence among Afghans, Beloochis, and of the countries in the immediate neighbourhood, especially in Upper Kurrahee. I have, moreover, long felt very great interest in the question of the Indian frontiers in the north-west, and have made it, more or less, a study. I have, therefore, and some other claims, however small, to express an opinion on the subject, I venture to state my thorough conviction that what General Pitt Rivers proposed is exactly what we ought to do. I do not, indeed, know of a single objection that can be raised against his scheme, which has been so clearly put forward that it could hardly fail to be intelligible to all hearers. One very important advantage of holding Candahar is that by so doing, we really hold the main line of communication between Cabul and Herat. There may be another route to the north of the main line, by Maimana; but it is rather roundabout, and probably not so frequently frequented as that by Farrah, Candahar, and Ghuzni. The road between Cabul and Herat by the Hazarrah country is passable, and I believe troops have passed it. I have been looking only this morning at Conolly's map on the subject, and have examined it by the light of maps. It is hardly, in my opinion, a direct route. From Herat its course is apparently to the south-east; it then turns up and goes to Bokhara, and then inclines towards Cabul, and joins the road from that city to Bamian at a place called *Gardan-i-Diwar*. But I do not think that that road need really be taken into account, because it is a very difficult not only physically difficult, but difficult on account of the nature of the country through whose country it passes. There are, for instance, two sets of Hazarrah, the Sunni and the Shia divisions. To conciliate the one would not necessarily conciliate the other.

Lord WAVENEY: Those who have read the debate which has just taken place in the House of Lords will remember an exceedingly happy illustration, given by the then Chancellor, of the topographical circumstances of Afghanistan, in which he compared it to the Highlands of Scotland. He requested his audience to consider that before them a large mass of mountains, such as the Highlands of Scotland. I derive from that illustration an opportunity of observing how old matters

OUR INDIAN NORTH-WEST FRONTIER.

themselves, and how, when the new is ingrooved into the old, under the circumstances which have been presented by our lecturer, we may infer, from pr success, a success for the plan which he has proposed. Now it will be observ those who are familiar with the circumstances of the mass of mountains of Sc that those mountains were inhabited, in the old times, by tribes answering in the like character, as distinguished from those inhabiting the low lands, to the mo tribes of Afghanistan, as distinguished from the dwellers by the Indus ; and be recollected, that one of the great difficulties of the English Kings in the : ation process going on, was to deal with these tribes ; and practically Ed and his successors adopted the same principle for the permanent and su mode of disposing of the disturbing force from the mountains as is sug at the present moment by General Hamley, in closing the passes. It v observed by those who have travelled on the seaboard and the inland estuaries and rivers of Scotland that, at all points where a *débouché* from th might give opportunity for the northern clans to pour into the low lands, the be found a castle, not of ancient sea rovers, but a castle of the Norman n system. These castles show, by their position, what they were intended to c they had the effect for which they were designed, and in those castles I see the type of the fortresses projected by General Hamley. There is one point, I c on which I have always had considerable doubt. I suppose no Officer here i will recollect the battles of the Mysore and the irruption of the Mahratt Pindarces down the Western Ghauts into the plains of India, but I have he men describe the continued terror in which the plain countries were kept days when the Pindarces rode up to the gates of Madras. Where you have a m range beyond which the eye cannot penetrate, where you have not the m acquiring satisfactory headquarter information, you will be continually vex harassed by the apprehension of what forces of aggression may be coming on i and what may be prepared behind that screen. If, therefore, this plan of barr outlets, which has been adopted particularly in some portions of the Tyrol, a barring of the mountain outlets, I say that will be insufficient. It was very marked, by a very distinguished statesman in that last debate, when he said not only wanted the rectification of frontier, but we wanted to have eyes to ears to hear. One of the great troubles and difficulties of late years has be continual permeation of hostile rumours through the defiles, greater or i of the mountains of Afghanistan. But when the point of observation is pr into the plain, and represented by the intrenched camp at Candahar, we ti mountain screen and see the glacis of the fortress. I quoted on the last c the illustration given by a German writer, that the north-western frontier wa tress of which the glacis was not in the possession of the garrison. Now know, if our artillery fire is to be worth anything, we must see the foot of th We see along the reverse of the slope, as considered from the Indian fronte the outlook or *guérîte* of Candahar, and therefore the occupation of Canda an especial value. And it has this especial value : it must draw upon it i the attack of the enemy. We know what is the objective point of any force from the north-west ; and it has occurred to me, on looking at the map double advantage may probably be given by a road marked as abutting on th the westward of the line of Kurrachee, that passes through Bela, and gi double access to our natural base, for the natural base of British wa British fortress in communication with the sea, whence must come ou Woolwich should always be within reach of Kurrachee. It is at present. I doubt that the slopes of these hills within the territory of the Khan of Kelat made an additional line of defence ; therefore, as a means of keeping the ag force within its boundaries, as a means of seeing what is projected beyond o daries by a force that may become aggressive, I cannot but believe that in plicity this plan deserves most thoroughly the support which I am sur receive from those present, and will command the intelligent appreciator country.

General Sir GEORGE MALCOLM : I should be glad to know how we should our flank if we took up Candahar as an advanced post, and if it is not necess we should have positions in Eastern Afghanistan in order to secure moral i

over its tribes and make them our allies? I fancy that a passive defence is the weakest defence that we can possibly have. What has been said by General Hamley suggests to me that we would have, as it were, half our frontier passive and the other half actively defended. It seems to me that the tribes of Afghanistan could roll down on our communications between the Bolan and Candahar if we did not gain an ascendancy over them, and I do not think that a passive defence would be sufficient either to establish our influence over the tribes of Afghanistan or to maintain it when it may be established. Perhaps I may throw some light on this point in reply to what I have said.

Major-General Sir HENRY GREEN: I think that with regard to the question of the strategical conditions of our Indian frontier, General Hamley has left me nothing to say, I entirely concur with him on every point of reference to the questions asked by Sir G. Malcolm, I should hope that the conclusion of the present campaign we should find ourselves again on friendly terms with the Afghans, in which case we should not, I consider, require to meddle with Cabul. Holding Candahar, as suggested by General Hamley, a narrow strip leading from Quetta to that position, I would leave to the whole of the rest of their country, interfering with them as little as possible under such conditions I should have no fear for our communications with our officers as far as Quetta. They would pass through an entirely friendly State, and as Candahar there are no tribes likely to give trouble under proper arrangements. With regard to the Punjab frontier we must entirely separate its defence from the raids of the tribes inhabiting the Sulaiman range of mountains, from the one an Army of a powerful European State debouching into the plains to attacking India. To meet the latter contingency General Hamley would suggest the formation of a line of outposts along the whole front close under the mountains connected by a broad, bridged road, and that subjects residing within this line should be disarmed with a view to put an end to the blood feuds which are carried on between the tribes residing in the mountains and those in the plains, and the continuance of which are one of the chief causes of lead to raids within British territory, and tend to keep the frontier in a constant state of excitement; but in taking away the power of retaliation from our subjects we must be prepared to afford them protection, and for this purpose the strength of the Punjab Frontier Force is insufficient and ought to be increased to 12,000 to 20,000. I would also suggest that every inducement should be offered in the shape of free gifts of land, &c., to the mountain tribes to settle their families in British territory. Such a plan as that I have sketched has been found to answer, certainly on a smaller scale, on the Scinde frontier; but to have to deal with hostile tribes aggregating some 170,000 armed men, and who have no central authority, and owe allegiance to no one, not even to their tribal chiefs, except in a nominal form, is a question extremely difficult. I however entirely concur with General Hamley that such foes are far more dangerous to our front than in our rear, and that to push forward military posts amongst them only aggravate the present unsatisfactory state of affairs. In conclusion I add that with a British force stationed at Candahar, the Afghans, if they have an Afghan garrison holding Herat, assisted by a few selected British Officers, could contemplate without fear any movements of Russia in Central Asia having no object an attack upon our Indian Empire.

Major-General FYERS: I think, Sir, that the very interesting lecture of defence which we have heard from Major-General Hamley covers almost to the extent my own feelings and views in this matter, and that this important position of Candahar by Ghuznee to Cabul must always remain, in the eyes of military men, the chief strategic line of operation in opposing an enemy coming from the west. I think there can hardly be a difference of opinion on this point, that the approaches and passes there no doubt are, but I feel sure that the Afghan territories by the Bolan and by Quetta is that which will at the end of the day be most suitable and least open to objection of any kind. General Hamley has put forward the very superior claims which Candahar has over any other position for military purposes, principally of a defensive character; and in regard to this, I

there can be two opinions, for when you are at Candahar you are on the either to Cabul or to Herat. In regard to the grand series of mountains between the Bolan Pass and the Sulai-Koh Mountains, and again from to the independent territory of the Kafiristan valleys, I do think that change in our policy is desirable. My friend Sir Henry Green, with his experience, thinks otherwise; he still approves the policy of holding entire all the tribes in those mountains, and of regarding them as impracticable. Now I cannot but regard with suspicion and dislike a policy which proposes to entertain for these people those undying sentiments of suspicion and hostility; I feel compelled to believe that an honest desire for their improvement and the means of insuring that improvement; and that what may appear to appal in such an endeavour, would with each succeeding year yield to the compulsions of an organization having for its ultimate aim their good, and the being of their descendants. Whether this task is difficult or not, I think it will be carried out for our own sake, as well as for the people who are our subjects. At the close of this present war, Afghanistan must of necessity become a part of the British Empire—a position which we cannot escape from; whether we like it or not, Afghanistan must come under our guardianship and control. The sooner we recognize this to its full extent, the better for us and for the world.

Lieutenant-General OLPHERTS, V.C.: I am aware that it may appear presumptuous on my part to address such an assembly as this, particularly if it should seem to differ from those of such an able authority on military matters as General Hamley; and I am also conscious that everything bearing on the aspect of the question before us, must in this Institution be avoided as far as possible. Nevertheless, when I say that I am no politician, and am not a party man, and considering that I am at any rate an older man than General Hamley, I trust you will grant me your kind indulgence. It is now nearly twenty years since I went out to India as a boy—and at that time the first Afghan war was going on, and my relative, Sir William MacNaughten, was the Envoy there. He has not been killed in time I probably should have been sent up to join him, but he has been killed with him—so that the question of Afghanistan was pressed on my mind in my younger days, and that impression has remained since. I was also fortunate enough in those days to encounter men of whom one whose name should send a thrill of emotion through this meeting of course, Eldred Pottinger, of Herat celebrity. Herat was considered always must be, the key of India from the north-west; without it, we could have no proper military possession of India. The Hindu Kush is the natural barrier of India; its very name denotes this. No doubt, arrangements, good or bad, may be made of a temporary nature; but, depend upon it, the permanent boundary of India, if we are to stop short anywhere in that direction, must be Herat and Cabul, by which means we shall control Persia on our west, and keep Russia at arm's length, and not otherwise. I quite agree with General Hamley in what he says, and I can see he is of the same mind as I am, only he does not care to speak as audaciously as I may be doing. I say that, at the present moment that Russia is to be allowed to descend into the plains of Afghanistan before we meet her, is, to my mind, utterly wrong. We must not dream of such a thing. We may hold back from annexing Afghanistan, but the best thing we can do for the Afghans themselves, as for our own military supremacy in India, is to annex and incorporate that country into the Indian Empire. I told a brother of Lord Lawrence, who, I regret, has since himself to a different opinion, when he asked me what we should do, "Afghanistan, and keep it." This I said at the outset of the Afghan war, which was declared, and I have never since swerved from that opinion. It is contrary, it grows stronger with me every day I live. Depend upon it, we must have the Afghans far better friends of ours if we do so; we shall only irritate them by half measures, such as taking Candahar, and blocking them up in the other passes (on the wrong side, by the way). Are the tribes our friends or our enemies? I was with Sir Charles Napier in his hill campaign in the Sulai Valley, and also with Sir Neville Chamberlain, in an expedition against the Waziristan Kurram Valley, and likewise with Sir Colin Campbell and Sir Sydney

Peshawur Valley, and can therefore speak from experience of the frontier tri cannot put your nose safely out of Peshawur in the most peaceful times. go on for ever in this state? It is intolerable that we should have to do the only effectual remedy is to "take Afghanistan, and keep it," when India is perfectly quiet and tranquil, and the Russian boundary, if need be, cont with ours. Our true glacis is on the other side of the Hindu Kush dov Oxus; and anything short of that I consider unworthy of the dignity of th Empire!

In conclusion, I would beg to disclaim any idea of arguing with or pitting against such an able lecturer and strategist as General Hamley, who, if I to do so, would doubtless soon "turn my flank and stop up my passes!" and trespass too much on your kind consideration, I will now sit down.

General Sir EDWIN JOHNSON, R.A.: I have listened with extreme interest. General Hamley has said, and I can only regret that his observations were extended, and that he did not go further into details. I do not know General Hamley is aware that we have occupied Peshawur for nearly thirty years and that we are yet debating what description of fort we ought to erect. I should like to hear a description of the nature of the forts and works which he proposes to defend the entrance to the passes, whether they are situated with reference to the frontier tribes, or whether he anticipates a formidable foe. It would be advantageous if General Hamley would indicate whether his strategical arrangements are designed for the purpose of meeting aggressions of our old tribal frontier foes, or whether he has in view a more formidable enemy. The financial question of our frontier defence is a serious one, and our chairman, Sir Henry Rawlinson, will bear me out in that, mainly on financial, though partly on sanitary grounds, we have been thirty years deciding whether we shall have a fortified post at Peshawur. I should be very sorry to think that another thirty years will be spent in deciding what works shall be erected for the security of our rectified frontier. In those remarks in hopes that we may have a little further information on that which, however, I am quite aware is a tactical rather than a strategical one.

Major-General HAMLEY: I thought I had made it quite clear that the works proposed to establish in that place were against the most formidable enemy we expect, and that if those works were such as to provide against that enemy, they would so much the more provide against any incursions of the hill tribes which concur with all that the different speakers have said about the policy of the condition of those tribes. It seems to me a positive duty on the part of the country like ours that, when we come in contact with uncivilised people, we leave them better than we find them. But, while strongly of that opinion myself in the present case want to see the Afghans converted by sending missionaries up the passes. I dare say General Olpherts will excuse me for advancing stage of the discussion from following him into the recesses of the Hindu Kush. I will only observe, in reply to him, that the plan I proposed for those works in front of Peshawur at the issue of the path would close all the passes of the mountains, whether in the Hindu Kush or elsewhere, inasmuch as all the passes debouch into the one of which I spoke. As to the nature of the works to be placed there, which formed the subject of Sir Edwin Johnson's question, of course, he knows, as well as I do, that it is impossible for anybody not conversant with the country to tell precisely what description of works would suit the ground; but what an intrenched camp is, and I have not the least doubt that there are many engineer Officers now in that country who would in a week provide a plan which would sufficiently answer the purpose. In conclusion, I have only to say that I am impressed as I am with the truth of the views I have expressed, it has been my greatest gratification to me to find them receive the sanction and approval of so many distinguished Officers.

The CHAIRMAN: With my very limited practical experience of the work of the former Afghan campaign being the only occasion on which I have been in active service in the field, I feel it would be unbecoming in me to examine in detail the professional views which have been put forward by General Hamley, which have been generally approved in the course of the very instructive

which has followed. But perhaps I may be allowed to state that app subject from an entirely different point of view—that is, not exactly fro but from a general common-sense point of view—I concur, and concurred, with the views which General Hamley has expressed. It always been my opinion, since I first turned my attention to the subject our true policy to look to western Afghanistan, that is to Candahar rather than to Cabul, and if I may be allowed to read a very short what I wrote fourteen years ago, you will see that I then put on rec identical with those that have now been presented to you by General then said, “If Russia should take possession of the Oxus as she has a “possession of the Jaxartes, then as her outposts would be in contact “outposts it would become a question for serious consideration whe “Cabul and Ghuznee, the scene of our old disasters, to struggle o “anarchy, it may not be incumbent on us to secure a strong flankin “the occupation of the open country of Quetta and Candahar, and eve I further said, “The time may come when it will be our duty to re “outworks are as necessary to the defence of Empires as of fortres “in this view Herat and Candahar are the Malakoff and Mamelon of “in the East.” Now, without troubling you with details, perhaps I m briefly to state the reasons which led me to that conclusion. Cabul is, awkward a place to hold and to govern as any city in all Asia. In th the capital and its neighbourhood are inhabited by a fanatical and disc lation, incensed against us by the memories of the former war, who doubtful obedience even to Shere Ali himself, and who would, of c more unmanageable under any attempt at coercion on our part. I therefore, that it was desirable, if possible, to give such a place a wi General Hamley has now, I think, very satisfactorily pointed out that is possible, since Cabul, if left to itself, can do us no harm, provided that at Candahar; and that we also shut up the Khyber Pass so as to close the discontented and hostile spirits at Cabul to emerge upon the pla At Candahar, on the other hand, I desire to impress upon the meetin thing is in our favour. The people in the town and country aroun few instances real Afghans—they are Parsiwans opposed to the Afgha language, and in religion, and they have always been most friendly to us again is healthy and agreeable, supplies are abundant, and there woul difficulty, in a military point of view, in our holding Candahar than is ordinary cantonment in the Punjaub or in Scinde. The military positio is, moreover, admirable. General Hamley has already drawn attentio that it intercepts the line of communication between Herat and Cabu much more: in the first place it supports Herat in a very effective man posing us to be in possession of Candahar, with a railroad laid down as (and possibly to be continued through the Bolan Pass and on to the Afg we should be in a far more efficient position to succour Herat than Ru in to threaten it from her remote base on the Caspian or Aral. Agai sion of Candahar would render any attack on India from the Hindu impossible, either by Cabul and the Khyber, or by Ghuznee and Kurr position at Candahar would flank both lines. Another point to be cons Candahar is in the direct line of attack; for if an army ever should from the west or north-west, it would certainly march by the line of Can there are no mountains to be crossed, and no physical difficulties wortl to be encountered, the great line of the Hindu Kush being tur country being so flat and open that a carriage may be driven with com Helmund river to Teheran. There is hardly in fact a hill of 100 to 200 on the entire line, and if an invasion of India is ever to be attempted, tainly therefore be conducted by that route. I fully agree also Hamley that strong entrenched camps, not of course of the size of that description—not only fortresses, but large entrenched camps capable of holding a force of 10,000 or 20,000 men; such camps, mouths of the passes would render our position in India perfectly There are two or three smaller questions on which I am not prepared

give in my adhesion as completely as General Hamley would wish. In this instance, it is still a question whether, putting aside the idea of going as far interior as Jellalabad or Ghuznee, it still might not be desirable to hold there by a small post at the upper end, as well as the intrenched camp at the lower. This is a minor point, I know, but it is one in which my mind is not satisfied with General Hamley's scheme. The holding the Khyber, for instance, a small post at Dacca, as well as by the large camp at the southern entrance give us a command of the whole length of the pass, which would be invaluable for the protection of trade and for general passage; whereas, if we only held the mouth of the pass, we might be perfectly safe and strong strategically, but should be neglecting those legitimate calls on our protection which the valley would seem to require. In the same way, I should be very loth to rest Kurrum Valley to the Afghans. How far the Peiwar Pass can be held by a post at the upper end of the valley I cannot attempt to say, but the valley is certainly a very desirable position, since the inhabitants are friendly and the soil fertile, and the geographical situation is certainly of value in enabling us to force within a very convenient distance both of Cabul and Ghuznee. Although I may disagree with General Hamley on small points of this sort, I am bound to say that, in regard to the great general question, we should not attempt to occupy the whole country of Afghanistan, but should rather block up the eastern end with intrenched camps and merely hold the western part of the country in check by strength; on that broad question I am entirely in accord with him. I think it hardly worth while to go into the still larger question which has been put forward by General Eyers and General Olpherts. To step at once from the plains of the Hindu Kush to the line of the Hindu Kush is such an enormous stride in itself that it almost takes away one's breath to think of it. We certainly could not hold that line of frontier and defend it without an enormous increase to our military strength, which would entail extra expense of a million or two millions a year in the present state of the finances of India, I really do not see where the money is to come from. I would beg, gentlemen, to remember that in all matters, military as well as political, we have to regulate our proceedings according to the old maxim "cutting your coat according to your cloth." With an impoverished exchequer we cannot branch out into theoretical or sentimental lines of frontier. We cannot occupy the line of the Hindu Kush, although upon the map such a frontier appears very symmetrical and very desirable, with any ordinary regard to the resources of India. India cannot afford it, and I am obliged, therefore, to my line of vision to something less ambitious, but more practical, to measure defence less expensive, but, as I believe, thoroughly sound and scientific, have been treated of by General Hamley. I will only further say that, in our military action may be, either in the passes adjoining our frontier or in the distance in the plains of Candahar, I feel satisfied that our influence and presence may be made most beneficial, not to ourselves only, but to the people of the country. Wherever we have already established posts along the frontier of the Afghan hills, we have exerted a most civilizing influence on the tribes of the neighbourhood; and it has often occurred to me, arguing from this experience of years, that if we had only continued to have held Afghanistan from the year 1818 we needlessly abandoned the country, and to have exerted the same kindly beneficent influence that we have exerted in the districts below the hills, I believe the whole of Afghanistan at the present day would be as orderly, as quiet, and as flourishing as the happy provinces of the Punjaub and Sindh. Remembering what have occurred in the past, it is a pleasing prospect to look forward to something of the same sort in the future. I will, in conclusion, ask you to pass a vote of thanks to General Hamley.

Lord ELCHO: Before we close, I should like to put a question. The question of Herat has been alluded to in the discussion upon the very able paper, to which we have listened. General Hamley proposes that the extreme point we should hold in this so-called rectification of frontier should be Candahar. General Olpherts says that Herat was the key to India, and I believe Russian opinion is the same. I am a correspondent in the East who is in frequent communication with the Russians, and he informs me that they speak extremely freely to him upon various points

that they are unanimous as to the value of Herat. They further lau English who are deluded into the belief that they (the Russians) eventu designs upon India. He further says that they look upon it that it mus who can get first to Herat. Now we have heard, from our Chairman, able paper upon the political aspect of the question, which is publi Parliamentary papers, contains all the law and the prophets on this s about the time when that paper was written, he considered Herat and (the Malakoff and Mamelon of India. Now the Malakoff, we all know important than the Mamelon, and I should like, as General Haml occupied the Mamelon, which is Candahar, to hear from General Rawlins still of the opinion which he expressed, ten or twelve years ago, that it is with a view to our safety, that we should occupy Herat as that we shu Candahar.

The CHAIRMAN: I purposely avoided touching on the question of H in general terms, on account of the extreme difficulty of discussing it. General Hamley proposed, or foreshadowed the possibility of, our suppo from Candahar. Candahar is necessarily the first stage of our procee should be almost inclined to say "Sufficient unto the day is the evil th any rate, we must occupy Candahar in the first instance. If the necessit it may arise, I then would venture on a further advance from Candah but I must be allowed to repeat the qualifying clause "if the necessity long as Herat is not threatened, I think it would be very rash, and in fac offensive, to thrust a force nearly 400 miles in advance of Candahar, which would cause great additional expense in keeping up the communi would, moreover, keep us more or less in hot water with all our neighb have no hesitation in saying that rather than Russia should occupy Her imperil the safety of India, in order to gain possession of it. I would the rest of Afghanistan rather than that Herat should be in the hand but so long as it remains in its present condition in the hands of the Af pendent of Persia and independent of Russia, so long I would not in an fere with it further than by giving it our moral support from our advan at Candahar.

NOTE BY COLONEL SIR WILLIAM MEREWETHER.—General Hamley' of the value of Candahar to the holders of India is certainly n Candahar is *the* strategic point. It not only forms the best position to advance to Herat when necessary, and to afford support to th thereof; but no hostile force could dare to venture on attempt proach to India by Kabool and the Khyber while we hold Candahar i Candahar thus held would do away with the necessity of the pro fort at the mouth (eastern end) of the Khyber Pass. Candahar great advantages, viz., in facility of communication with its base it and Quetta the country is easy of transit. There is but one pass, which sappers would soon make practicable for wheel traffic. The inh always shown themselves most friendly towards us, and, we hear, are de Quetta commands *all* the good roads from Afghanistan to the sea—not by the Bolan, but the others by Kelat and the Moola Pass to Gundava, hill route through Beloochistan to Soonmeauee and Kurrachee. Our i Beloochistan being now secured, all these roads are perfectly safe. From Daduris but 84 miles, of which some 60 are through the defile of the B road for a mountain pass. Beyond Dadur to the sea, a distance of nearl mainly through British territory, is all dead plain. Railway communica exists for more than 300 miles of this distance, from Sukkur on the Indus to and a few months more should see this extended to Dadur. The immedi Candahar is unquestionably Kurrachee. It is the nearest and most quic The connection is complete and safe. All the resources of the Bombay with which it is in easy (two and a half days) communication by sea be readily availed of. And at the same time every facility exists for ex

call for the best munitions of war and reinforcements to Woolwich for to the home garrisons for the last.

The troop-ships leaving Portsmouth could reach Kurrachee in 30 Kurrachee is 160 miles nearer Aden than Bombay is. The harbour at Kurrachee, by its improvement, has 28 feet of water on the bar. This will allow of the entering the port at any time during the fair season—also the trooping October till May. Troops and stores would then be placed on the railway and be conveyed to Sukkur in twenty hours. In addition to the railway, the river can be used for the conveyance of stores. There is a fleet of steamers, each of which tows two large cargo barges, and the trip from Kotree to Sukkur takes six to twelve days, according to whether the river is high or low. The difficulties in navigating the river in this part. With rail and river the transport of stores of all kinds would be most easy and expeditious.