VARIOUS

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Содержание

MARLBOROUGH'S DISPATCHES 5
MOHAN LAL IN AFGHANISTAN 25
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. 36

Various
Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. 60, No. 373, November 1846

MARLBOROUGH'S DISPATCHES

1710-1711

Louis XIV. was one of the most remarkable sovereigns who ever sat upon the throne of France. Yet there is none of whose character, even at this comparatively remote period, it is more difficult to form a just estimate. Beyond measure eulogised by the poets, orators, and annalists of his own age, who lived on his bounty, or were flattered by his address, he has been proportionally vilified by the historians, both foreign and national, of subsequent times. The Roman Catholic writers, with some truth, represent him as the champion of their faith, the sovereign who extirpated the demon of heresy in his dominions, and restored to the church in undivided unity the realm of France. The Protestant authors, with not less reason, regard him as the deadliest enemy of their religion, and the cruellest foe of those who had embraced it; as a faithless tyrant, who scrupled not, at the bidding of bigoted priests, to violate the national faith plighted by the Edict of Nantes, and persecute, with unrelenting severity, the unhappy people who, from conscientious motives, had broken off from the Church of Rome. One set of writers paint him as a magnanimous monarch, whose mind, set on great things, and swayed by lofty desires, foreshadowed those vast designs which Napoleon, armed with the forces of the Revolution, afterwards for a brief space realised. Another set dwell on the foibles or the vices of his private character – depict him as alternately swayed by priests, or influenced by women; selfish in his desires, relentless in his hatred; and sacrificing the peace of Europe, and endangering the independence of France, for the gratification of personal vanity, or from the thirst of unbounded ambition.

It is the fate of all men who have made a great and durable impression on human affairs, and powerfully affected the interests, or thwarted the opinion of large bodies of men, to be represented in these opposite colours to future times. The party, whether in church or state, which they have elevated, the nation whose power or glory they have augmented, praise, as much as those whom they have oppressed and injured, whether at home or abroad, strive to vilify their memory. But in the case of Louis XIV., this general propensity has been greatly increased by the opposite, and, at first sight, inconsistent features of his character. There is almost equal truth in the magniloquent eulogies of his admirers, as in the impassioned invectives of his enemies. He was not less great and magnanimous than he is represented by the elegant flattery of Racine or Corneille, nor less cruel and hard-hearted than he is painted by the austere justice of Sismondi or D'Aubigné. Like many other men, but more than most, he was made up of lofty and elevated, and selfish and frivolous qualities. He could alternately boast, with truth, that there were no longer any Pyrenees, and rival his youngest courtiers in frivolous and often heartless gallantry. In his younger years he was equally assiduous in his application to business, and engrossed with personal vanity. When he ascended the throne, his first words were: "I intend that every paper, from a diplomatic dispatch to a private petition, shall be submitted to me;" and his vast powers of application enabled him to compass the task. Yet, at the same time, he deserted his queen for Madame la Vallière, and soon after broke La Vallière's heart by his desertion of her for Madame de Montespan. In mature life, his ambition to extend the bounds and enhance the glory of France, was equalled by his desire to win the admiration or gain

the favour of the fair sex. In his later days, he alternately engaged in devout austerities with Madame de Maintenon, and, with mournful resolution, asserted the independence of France against Europe in arms. Never was evinced a more striking exemplification of the saying, so well known among men of the world, that no one is a hero to his valet-de-chambre; nor a more remarkable confirmation of the truth, so often proclaimed by divines, that characters of imperfect goodness constitute the great majority of mankind.

That he was a great man, as well as a successful sovereign, is decisively demonstrated by the mighty changes which he effected in his own realm, as well as in the neighbouring states of Europe. When he ascended the throne, France, though it contained the elements of greatness, had never yet become great. It had been alternately wasted by the ravages of the English, and torn by the fury of the religious wars. The insurrection of the Fronde had shortly before involved the capital in all the horrors of civil conflict; – barricades had been erected in its streets; alternate victory and defeat had by turns elevated and depressed the rival faction. Turenne and Condé had displayed their consummate talents in miniature warfare within sight of Notre-Dame. Never had the monarchy been depressed to a greater pitch of weakness than during the reign of Louis XIII. and the minority of Louis XIV. But from the time the latter sovereign ascended the throne, order seemed to arise out of chaos. The ascendancy of a great mind made itself felt in every department. Civil war ceased; the rival faction disappeared; even the bitterness of religious hatred seemed for a time to be stilled by the influence of patriotic feeling. The energies of France, drawn forth during the agonies of civil conflict, were turned to public objects and the career of national aggrandisement – as those of England had been after the conclusion of the Great Rebellion, by the firm hand and magnanimous mind of Cromwell. From a pitiable state of anarchy, France at once appeared on the theatre of Europe, great, powerful, and united. It is no common capacity which can thus seize the helm and right the ship when it is reeling most violently, and the fury of contending elements has all but torn it in pieces. It is the highest proof of political capacity to discern the bent of the public mind, when most violently exerted, and, by falling in with the prevailing desire of the majority, convert the desolating vehemence of social conflict into the steady passion for national advancement. Napoleon did this with the political aspirations of the eighteenth, Louis XIV. with the religious fervour of the seventeenth century.

It was because his character and turn of mind coincided with the national desires at the moment of his ascending the throne, that this great monarch was enabled to achieve this marvellous transformation. If Napoleon was the incarnation of the Revolution, with not less truth it may be said that Louis XIV. was the incarnation of the monarchy. The feudal spirit, modified but not destroyed by the changes of time, appeared to be concentrated, with its highest lustre, in his person. He was still the head of the Franks – the lustre of the historic families yet surrounded his throne; but he was the head of the Franks only – that is, of a hundred thousand conquering warriors. Twenty million of conquered Gauls were neither regarded nor considered in his administration, except in so far as they augmented the national strength, or added to the national resources. But this distinction was then neither perceived nor regarded. Worn out with civil dissension, torn to pieces by religious passions, the fervent minds and restless ambition of the French longed for a *national* field for exertion – an arena in which social dissensions might be forgotten. Louis XIV. gave them this field: he opened this arena. He ascended the throne at the time when this desire had become so strong and general, as in a manner to concentrate the national will. His character, equally in all its parts, was adapted to the general want. He took the lead alike in the greatness and the foibles of his subjects. Were they ambitious? so was he: – were they desirous of renown? so was he: – were they set on national aggrandisement? so was he: – were they desirous of protection to industry? so was he: – were they prone to gallantry? so was he. His figure and countenance tall and majestic; his manner stately and commanding; his conversation dignified, but enlightened; his spirit ardent, but patriotic – qualified him to take the lead and preserve his ascendancy among a proud body of ancient nobles, whom the disasters of preceding reigns, and the astute policy of Cardinal Richelieu, had driven into the antechambers of Paris, but who preserved

in their ideas and habits the pride and recollections of the conquerors who followed the banners of Clovis. And the great body of the people, proud of their sovereign, proud of his victories, proud of his magnificence, proud of his fame, proud of his national spirit, proud of the literary glory which environed his throne, in secret proud of his gallantries, joyfully followed their nobles in the brilliant career which his ambition opened, and submitted with as much docility to his government as they ranged themselves round the banners of their respective chiefs on the day of battle.

It was the peculiarity of the government of Louis XIV., arising from this fortuitous, but to him fortunate combination of circumstances, that it united the distinctions of rank, family attachments, and ancient ideas of feudal times, with the vigour and efficiency of monarchical government, and the lustre and brilliancy of literary glory. Such a combination could not, in the nature of things, last long; it must soon work out its own destruction. In truth, it was sensibly weakened during the course of the latter part of the half century that he sat upon the throne. But while it endured, it produced a most formidable union; it engendered an extraordinary and hitherto unprecedented phalanx of talent. The feudal ideas still lingering in the hearts of the nation, produced subordination; the national spirit, excited by the genius of the sovereign, induced unanimity; the development of talent, elicited by his discernment, conferred power; the literary celebrity, encouraged by his munificence, diffused fame. The peculiar character of Louis, in which great talent was united with great pride, and unbounded ambition with heroic magnanimity, qualified him to turn to the best account this singular combination of circumstances, and to unite in France, for a brief period, the lofty aspirations and dignified manners of chivalry, with the energy of rising talent and the lustre of literary renown.

Louis XIV. was essentially monarchical. That was the secret of his success; it was because he first gave the powers of *unity* to the monarchy, that he rendered France so brilliant and powerful. All his changes, and they were many, from the dress of soldiers to the instructions to ambassadors, breathed the same spirit. He first introduced a *uniform* in the army. Before his time, the soldiers merely wore a banderole over their steel breast-plates and ordinary dresses. That was a great and symptomatic improvement; it at once induced an *esprit de corps* and a sense of responsibility. He first made the troops march with a measured step, and caused large bodies of men to move with the precision of a single company. The artillery and engineer service, under his auspices, made astonishing progress. His discerning eye selected the genius of Vauban, which invented, as it were, the modern system of fortification, and wellnigh brought it to its greatest elevation – and raised to the highest command that of Turenne, which carried the military art to the most consummate perfection. Skilfully turning the martial and enterprising genius of the Franks into the career of conquest, he multiplied tenfold their power, by conferring on them the inestimable advantages of skilled discipline and unity of action. He gathered the feudal array around his banner; he roused the ancient barons from their chateaux, the old retainers from their villages; but he arranged them in disciplined battalions of regular troops, who received the pay and obeyed the orders of government, and never left their banners. When he summoned the array of France to undertake the conquest of the Low Countries, he appeared at the head of a hundred and twenty thousand men, all regular and disciplined troops, with a hundred pieces of cannon. Modern Europe had never seen such an array. It was irresistible, and speedily brought the monarch to the gates of Amsterdam.

The same unity which the genius of Louis and his ministers communicated to the military power of France, he gave also to its naval forces and internal strength. To such a pitch of greatness did he raise the marine of the monarchy, that it all but outnumbered that of England; and the battle of La Hogue in 1792 alone determined, as Trafalgar did a century after, to which of these rival powers the dominion of the seas was to belong. He reduced the government of the interior to that regular and methodical system of governors of provinces, mayors of cities, and other subordinate authorities, all receiving their instructions from the Tuileries, which, under no subsequent change of government, imperial or royal, has been abandoned, and which has, in every succeeding age, formed the main source of its strength. He concentrated around the monarchy the rays of genius from all parts of the

country, and threw around its head a lustre of literary renown, which, more even than the exploits of his armies, dazzled and fascinated the minds of men. He arrayed the scholars, philosophers, and poets of his dominions like his soldiers and sailors; the whole academies of France, which have since become so famous, were of his institution; he sought to give discipline to thought, as he had done to his fleets and armies, and rewarded distinction in literary efforts, not less than warlike achievement. No monarch ever knew better the magical influence of intellectual strength on general thought, or felt more strongly the expedience of enlisting it on the side of authority. Not less than Hildebrand or Napoleon, he aimed at drawing, not over his own country alone, but the whole of Europe, the meshes of regulated and centralised opinion; and more durably than either he attained his object. The religious persecution, which constitutes the great blot on his reign, and caused its brilliant career to close in mourning, arose from the same cause. He was fain to give the same unity to the church which he had done to the army, navy, and civil strength of the monarchy. He saw no reason why the Huguenots should not, at the royal command, face about like one of Turenne's battalions. Schism in the church was viewed by him in exactly the same light as rebellion in the state. No efforts were spared by inducements, good deeds, and fair promises, to make proselytes; and when twelve hundred thousand Protestants resisted his seductions, the sword, the fagot, and the wheel were resorted to without mercy for their destruction.

Napoleon, it is well known, had the highest admiration of Louis XIV. Nor is this surprising: their principles of government and leading objects of ambition were the same. "L'état *c'est moi*," was the principle of this grandson of Henry IV.: "Your first duty is *to me*, your second to France," said the Emperor to his nephew Prince Louis Napoleon. In different words, the idea was the same. To concentrate Europe in France, France in Paris, Paris in the government, and the government in himself, was the ruling idea of each. But it was no concentration for selfish or unworthy purposes which was then desired; it was for great and lofty objects that this undivided power was desired. It was neither to gratify the desire of an Eastern seraglio, nor exercise the tyranny of a Roman emperor, that either coveted unbounded authority. It was to exalt the nation of which they formed the head, to augment its power, extend its dominion, enhance its fame, magnify its resources, that they both deemed themselves sent into the world. It was the general sense that this was the object of their administration which constituted the strength of both. Equally with the popular party in the present day, they regarded society as a pyramid, of which the multitude formed the base, and the monarch the head. Equally with the most ardent democrat, they desired the augmentation of the national resources, the increase of public felicity. But they both thought that these blessings must descend from the sovereign to his subject, not ascend from the subjects to their sovereign. "Every thing *for* the people, nothing *by* them," which Napoleon described as the secret of good government, was not less the maxim of the imperious despot of the Bourbon race.

The identity of their ideas, the similarity of their objects of ambition, appears in the monuments which both have left at Paris. Great as was the desire of the Emperor to add to its embellishment, magnificent as were his ideas in the attempt, he has yet been unable to equal the noble structures of the Bourbon dynasty. The splendid pile of Versailles, the glittering dome of the Invalides, still, after the lapse of a century and a half, overshadow all the other monuments in the metropolis; though the confiscations of the Revolution, and the victories of the Emperor, gave succeeding governments the resources of the half of Europe for their construction. The inscription on the arch of Louis, "Ludovico Magno," still seems to embody the gratitude of the citizens to the greatest benefactor of the capital; and it is not generally known that the two edifices which have added most since his time to the embellishment of the metropolis, and of which the revolution and the empire are fain to take the credit – the Pantheon and the Madeleine – were begun in 1764 by Louis XV., and owe their origin to the magnificent ideas which Louis XIV. transmitted to his, in other respects, unworthy descendant.[1]

[1] "La Madeleine comme le Pantheon avait été commencée la même année en 1764, par les ordres de Louis XV., le roi des grand

Had one dark and atrocious transaction not taken place, the annalist might have stopped here, and painted the French monarch, with a few foibles and weaknesses, the common bequest of mortality, still as, upon the whole, a noble and magnanimous ruler. His ambition, great as it was, and desolating as it proved, both to the adjoining states, and in the end his own subjects, was the "last infirmity of noble minds." He shared it with Cæsar and Alexander, with Charlemagne and Napoleon. Even his cruel and unnecessary ravaging of the Palatinate, though attended with dreadful private suffering, has too many parallels in the annals of military cruelty. His personal vanities and weaknesses, his love of show, his passion for women, his extravagant expenses, were common to him with his grandfather Henry IV.; they seemed inherent in the Bourbon race, and are the frailties to which heroic minds in every age have been most subject. But, for the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and the heartrending cruelties with which it was carried into execution, no such apology can be found. It admits neither of palliation nor excuse. But for the massacre of St Bartholomew, and the expulsion of the Morescoes from Spain, it would stand foremost in the annals of the world for kingly perfidy and priestly cruelty. The expulsion of five hundred thousand innocent human beings from their country, for no other cause but difference of religious opinion – the destruction, it is said, of nearly an hundred thousand by the frightful tortures of the wheel and the stake – the wholesale desolation of provinces and destruction of cities for conscience sake, never will and never should be forgotten. It is the eternal disgrace of the Roman Catholic religion – a disgrace to which the "execrations of ages have not yet affixed an adequate censure" – that all these infamous state crimes took their origin in the bigoted zeal, or sanguinary ambition of the Church of Rome. Nor have any of them passed without their just reward. The expulsion of the Moors, the most industrious and valuable inhabitants of the Peninsula, has entailed a weakness upon the Spanish monarchy, which the subsequent lapse of two centuries has been unable to repair. The reaction against the Romish atrocities produced the great league of which William III. was the head; it sharpened the swords of Eugene and Marlborough; it closed in mourning the reign of Louis XV. Nor did the national punishment stop here. The massacre of St Bartholomew, and revocation of the Edict of Nantes, were the remote, but certain cause of the French Revolution, and all the unutterable miseries which it brought both upon the Bourbon race and the professors of the Romish faith. Nations have no immortality; their punishment is inflicted in this world; it is visited with unerring certainty on the third and fourth generations. Providence has a certain way of dealing with the political sins of men – which is, to leave them to the consequences of their own actions.

If ever the characters of two important actors on the theatre of human affairs stood forth in striking and emphatic contrast to each other, they were those of Louis XIV. and William III. They were, in truth, the representatives of the principles for which they respectively so long contended; their characters embodied the doctrines, and were distinguished by the features, of the causes for which they fought through life. As much as the character – stately, magnanimous, and ambitious, but bigoted and unscrupulous – of Louis XIV. personified the Romish, did the firm and simple, but persevering and unconquerable mind of William, embody the principles of the Protestant faith. The positions they respectively held through life, the stations they occupied, the resources, moral and political, which they wielded, were not less characteristic of the causes of which they were severally the heads. Louis led on the feudal resources of the French monarchy. Inured to rigid discipline, directed by consummate talent, supported by immense resources, his armies, uniting the courage of feudal to the organisation of civilised times, like those of Cæsar, had at first only to appear to conquer. From his gorgeous palaces at Paris, he seemed able, like the Church of Rome from the halls of the Quirinal, to give law to the whole Christian world. William began the contest under very different circumstances. Sunk in obscure marshes, cooped up in a narrow territory, driven into a corner of Europe, the forces at his command appeared as nothing before the stupendous array of his adversary. He was the emblem of the Protestant faith, arising from small beginnings, springing from the energy

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monumens, et dont le regne a été travesti par la petite histoire." – Capefigue, *Histoire de Louis Philippe*, viii. 281.

of the middle classes, but destined to grow with ceaseless vigour, until it reached the gigantic strength of its awful antagonist.

The result soon proved the prodigious difference in the early resources of the parties. Down went tower and town before the apparition of Louis in his strength. The iron barriers of Flanders yielded almost without a struggle to his arms. The genius of Turenne and Vauban, the presence of Louis, proved for the time irresistible. The Rhine was crossed; a hundred thousand men appeared before the gates of Amsterdam. Dissension had paralysed its strength, terror all but mastered its resolution. England, influenced by French mistresses, or bought by French gold, held back, and ere long openly joined the oppressor, alike of its liberties and its religion. All seemed lost alike for the liberties of Europe and the Protestant faith. But William was not dismayed. He had a certain resource against subjugation left. In his own words, "he could die in the last ditch." He communicated his unconquerable spirit to his fainting fellow-citizens; he inspired them with the noble resolution to abandon their country rather than submit to the invaders, and "seek in a new hemisphere that liberty of which Europe had become unworthy." The generous effort was not made in vain. The Dutch rallied round a leader who was not wanting to himself in such a crisis. The dikes were cut; the labour of centuries was lost; the ocean resumed its sway over the fields reft from its domain. But the cause of freedom of religion was gained. The French armies recoiled from the watery waste, as those of Napoleon afterwards did from the flames of Moscow. Amsterdam was the limit of the conquests of Louis XIV. He there found the power which said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be staid." Long, and often doubtful, was the contest; it was bequeathed to a succeeding generation and another reign. But from the invasion of Holland, the French arms and Romish domination permanently receded; and but for the desertion of the alliance by England, at the peace of Utrecht, they would have given law in the palace of the Grand Monarque, bridled the tyranny of Bossuet and Tellier, and permanently established the Protestant faith in nearly the half of Europe.

Like many other men who are called on to play an important part in the affairs of the world, William seemed formed by nature for the duties he was destined to perform. Had his mind been stamped by a different die, his character cast in a different mould, he would have failed in his mission. He was not a monarch of the most brilliant, nor a general of the most daring kind. Had he been either the one or the other, he would have been shattered against the colossal strength of Louis XIV., and crushed in the very outset of his career. But he possessed in the highest perfection that great quality without which, in the hour of trial, all others prove of no avail – moral courage, and invincible determination. His enterprises, often designed with ability and executed with daring, were yet all based, like those of Wellington afterwards in Portugal, on a just sense of the necessity of husbanding his resources from the constant inferiority of his forces and means to those of the enemy. He was perseverance itself. Nothing could shake his resolution, nothing divert his purpose. With equal energy he laboured in the cabinet to construct and keep together the vast alliance necessary to restrain the ambition of the French monarch, and toiled in the field to baffle the enterprises of his able generals. With a force generally inferior in number, always less powerful than that of his adversaries in discipline, composition, and resources, he nevertheless contrived to sustain the contest, and gradually wrested from his powerful enemy the more important fortresses, which, in the first tumult of invasion, had submitted to his arms. If the treaties of Nimeguen and Ryswick were less detrimental to the French power than that of Utrecht afterwards proved, they were more glorious to the arms of the Dutch commonwealth and the guidance of William; for they were the result of efforts in which the weight of the conflict generally fell on Holland alone; and its honours were not to be shared with those won by the wisdom of a Marlborough, or the daring of a Eugene.

In private life, William was distinguished by the same qualities which marked his public career. He had not the chivalrous ardour which bespoke the nobles of France, nor the stately magnificence of their haughty sovereign. His manners and habits were such as arose from, and suited, the austere and laborious people among whom his life was passed. Without being insensible to the softer passions, he

never permitted them to influence his conduct, or incroach upon his time. He was patient, laborious, and indefatigable. To courtiers accustomed to the polished elegance of Paris, or the profligate gallantry of St James's, his manners appeared cold and unbending. It was easy to see he had not been bred in the saloons of Versailles or the *soirées* of Charles II. But he was steady and unwavering in his resolutions; his desires were set on great objects; and his external demeanour was correct, and often dignified. He was reproached by the English, not without reason, with being unduly partial, after his accession to the British throne, to his Dutch subjects; and he was influenced through life by a love of money, which, though at first arising from a bitter sense of its necessity in his long and arduous conflicts, degenerated in his older years into an avaricious turn. The national debt of England has been improperly ascribed to his policy. It arose unavoidably from the Revolution, and is the price which every nation pays for a lasting change, how necessary soever, in its ruling dynasty. When the sovereign can no longer depend on the unbought loyalty of his subjects, he has no resource but in their interested attachment. Louis Philippe's government has done the same, under the influence of the same necessity. Yet William was not a perfect character; more than one dark transaction has left a lasting stain on his memory; and the massacre of Glencoe, in particular, if it did not equal the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in the wide-spread misery with which it was attended, rivalled it in the perfidy in which it was conceived, and the cruelty with which it was executed.

On his arrival in Holland on the 18th March 1710, Marlborough again found himself practically involved in the still pending negotiations for peace, over which, on the decline of his influence at court, he had ceased to have any real control. Still exposed to the blasting imputation of seeking to prolong the war for his own private purposes, he was in reality doing his utmost to terminate hostilities. As the negotiation with the ostensible plenipotentiaries of the different courts was at an end, but Louis still continued to make private overtures to the Dutch, in the hope of detaching them from the confederacy, Marlborough took advantage of this circumstance to endeavour to effect an accommodation. At his request, the Dutch agent, Petcum, had again repaired to Paris in the end of 1709, to resume the negotiation; and the *Marlborough Papers* contain numerous letters from him to the Duke, detailing the progress of the overtures.[2] On the very day after Marlborough's arrival at the Hague, the plenipotentiaries made their report of the issue of the negotiation; but the views of the parties were still so much at variance, that it was evident no hopes of peace could be entertained. Louis was not yet sufficiently humbled to submit to the arrogant demands of the Allies, which went to strip him of nearly all his conquests; and the different powers of the confederacy were each set upon turning the general success of the alliance to their own private advantage.

Zenzindorf, on the part of Austria, insisted that not the smallest portion of the Spanish territories in Italy should be ceded to a prince of the house of Bourbon, and declared the resolution of his imperial master to perish with arms in his hands, rather than submit to a partition which would lead to his inevitable ruin. King Charles expressed the same determination, and insisted further for the cession of Roussillon, which had been wrested from Spain since the treaty of the Pyrenees. The Duke of Savoy, who aimed at the acquisition of Sicily from the spoils of the fallen monarch, was equally obstinate for the prosecution of the war. Godolphin, Somers, and the Dutch Pensionary, inclined to peace, and were willing to purchase it by the cession of Sicily to Louis; and Marlborough gave this his entire support, provided the evacuation of Spain, the great object of the war, could be secured.[3] But all their efforts were in vain. The ambitious designs of Austria and Savoy prevailed over their pacific counsels; and we have the valuable authority of Torcy, who, in the former congress, had accused the Duke of breaking off the negotiation, that in this year the rupture was entirely owing to the efforts of Count Zenzindorf.[4] Marlborough, however, never ceased to long for a termination of hostilities,

[2] Marlborough to the Earl of Sunderland, 8th Nov. 1709. *Disp.* iv. 647. Coxe, iv. 167.

[3] Coxe, iv. 169. Lamberti, vi. 37, 49.

[4] Note to Petcum, August 10, 1710. *Marlborough Papers*; and Coxe, iv. 173.

and took the field with a heavy heart, relieved only by the hope that one more successful campaign would give him what he so ardently desired, the rest consequent upon a general peace.[5]

War being resolved on, Marlborough and Eugene met at Tournay on the 28th April, and commenced the campaign by the capture of the fort of Mortagne, which capitulated on the same day. Their force already amounted to sixty thousand men, and, as the troops were daily coming up from their cantonments, it was expected soon to amount to double the number. The plan of operations was soon settled between these two great men; no difference of opinion ever occurred between them, no jealousy ever marred their co-operations. They determined to commence serious operations by attacking Douay – a strong fortress, and one of the last of the first order which, in that quarter, guarded the French territory. To succeed in this, however, it was necessary to pass the French lines, which were of great strength, and were guarded by Marshal Montesquieu at the head of forty battalions and twenty squadrons. Douay itself also was strongly protected both by art and nature. On the one side lay the Haine and the Scarpe; in the centre was the canal of Douay; on the other hand were the lines of La Bassie, which had been strengthened with additional works since the close of the campaign. Marlborough was very sanguine of success, as the French force was not yet collected, and he was considerably superior in number; and he wrote to Godolphin on the same night – "The orders are given for marching this night, so that I hope my next will give you an account of our being in Artois."[6]

The Duke operated at once by both wings. On the one wing he detached the Prince of Wirtemberg, with fifteen thousand men, by Pont-a-Tessin to Pont-a-Vendin, where the French lines met the Dyle and the canal of Douay; while Prince Eugene moved forward Count Fels, with a considerable corps, towards Pont Auby on the same canal. The whole army followed in two columns, the right commanded by Eugene, and the left by Marlborough. The English general secured the passage at Pont-a-Vendin without resistance; and Eugene, though baffled at Pont Auby, succeeded in passing the canal at Sant and Courieres without serious loss. The first defences were thus forced; and that night the two wings, having formed a junction, lay on their arms in the plain of Lens, while Montesquieu precipitately retired behind the Scarpe, in the neighbourhood of Vitry. Next morning the troops, overjoyed at their success, continued their advance. Marlborough sent forward General Cadogan, at the head of the English troops, to Pont-a-Rache, to circumscribe the garrison of Douay, on the canal of Marchiennes on the north; while Eugene, encamping on the other side of the Scarpe, completed the investment on the west. The perfect success of this enterprise without any loss was matter of equal surprise and joy to the Duke, who wrote to the Duchess in the highest strain of satisfaction at his bloodless triumph. It was entirely owing to the suddenness and secresy of his movements, which took the enemy completely unawares; for, had the enterprise been delayed four days longer, its issue would have been extremely doubtful, and thousands of men must, at all events, have been sacrificed.[7]

Douay, which was immediately invested after this success, is a fortress of considerable strength, in the second line which covers the French province of Artois. Less populous than Lille, it embraces a wider circuit within its ample walls. Its principal defence consists in the marshes, which, on the side of Tournay, where attack might be expected, render it extremely difficult of access, especially

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[5] "I am very sorry to tell you that the behaviour of the French looks as if they had no other desire than that of carrying on the war. I hope God will bless this campaign, for I see nothing else that can *give us peace either at home or abroad*. I am so discouraged by every thing I see, that I have never, during this war, gone into the field with so heavy a heart as at this time. I own to you, that the present humour in England gives me a good deal of trouble; for I cannot see how it is possible they should mend till every thing is yet worse." *Marlborough to Duchess Marlborough*, Hague, 14th April 1710. Coxe, iv. 179.

[6] Marlborough to Godolphin, 20th April, iv. 182.

[7] "In my last, I had but just time to tell you we had passed the lines. I hope this happy beginning will produce such success this campaign as must put an end to the war. I bless God for putting it into their heads not to defend their lines; for at Pont-a-Vendin, when I passed, the Marshal D'Artagnan was with twenty thousand men, which, if he had staid, must have rendered the event very doubtful. But, God be praised, we are come without the loss of any men. The excuse the French make is, that we came four days before they expected us." —*Marlborough to the Duchess*, 21st April 1710. Coxe, ix. 184.

in the rainy season. Access to it is defended by Fort Scarpe, a powerful outwork, capable of standing a separate siege. The garrison consisted of eight thousand men, under the command of the Marquis Albergotti, an officer of the highest talent and bravery; and under him were the renowned Valory, to direct the engineers, and the not less celebrated Chevalier de Jaucourt, to command the artillery. From a fortress of such strength so defended, the most resolute resistance might be expected, and no efforts were spared on the part of the Allied generals to overcome it.

The investment was completed on the 24th, and the trenches opened on the 5th May. On the 7th, the head of the sap was advanced to within two hundred and fifty yards of the exterior palisades; but the besiegers that night experienced a severe check from a vigorous sally of the besieged with twelve hundred men, by which two English regiments were nearly cut to pieces. But, on the 9th, a great train of artillery, consisting of two hundred pieces, with a large supply of artillery, arrived from Tournay; on the 11th, the advanced works were strongly armed, and the batteries were pushed up to the covered way, and thundered across the ditch against the rampart. The imminent danger of this important stronghold now seriously alarmed the French court; and Marshal Villars, who commanded their great army on the Flemish frontier, received the most positive orders to advance to its relief. By great exertions, he had now collected one hundred and fifty-three battalions and two hundred and sixty-two squadrons, which were pompously announced as mustering one hundred and fifty thousand combatants, and certainly amounted to more than eighty thousand. The Allied force was almost exactly equal; it consisted of one hundred and fifty-five battalions and two hundred and sixty-one squadrons. Villars broke up from the vicinity of Cambray on the 21st May, and advanced in great strength towards Douay. Marlborough and Eugene immediately made the most vigorous preparations to receive him. Thirty battalions only were left to prosecute the siege; twelve squadrons were placed in observation at Pont-a-Rache; and the whole remainder of the army, about seventy thousand strong, concentrated in a strong position, covering the siege, on which all the resources of art, so far as the short time would admit, had been lavished. Every thing was prepared for a mighty struggle. The whole guns were mounted on batteries four hundred paces from each other; the infantry was drawn up in a single line along the intrenchment, and filled up the whole interval between the artillery; the cavalry were arranged in two lines, seven hundred paces in rear of the foot-soldiers. It seemed another Malplaquet, in which the relative position of the two armies was reversed, and the French were to storm the intrenched position of the Allies. Every man in both armies fully expected a decisive battle; and Marlborough, who was heartily tired of the war, wrote to the Duchess, that he hoped for a victory, which should at once end the war, and restore him to private life.[8]

Yet there was no battle. The lustre of Blenheim and Ramilies played round Marlborough's bayonets; the recollection of Turin tripled the force of Eugene's squadrons. Villars advanced on the 1st June, with all the pomp and circumstance of war, to within musket-shot of the Allied position; and he had not only the authority but the recommendation of Louis to hazard a battle. He boasted that his force amounted to a hundred and sixty thousand men.[9] But he did not venture to make the attack. To Marlborough's great regret, he retired without fighting; and the English general, at the age of threescore, was left to pursue the fatigues and the labours of a protracted campaign, in which, for the first time in his life, he was doubtful of success, from knowing the malignant eyes with which he was regarded by the ruling factions in his own country. "I long," said he, "for an end of the war, so God's will be done; whatever the event may be, I shall have nothing to reproach myself with, having,

[8] "I hope God will so bless our efforts, that if the Queen should not be so happy as to have a prospect of peace before the opening of the next session of parliament, she and all her subjects may be convinced we do our best here in the army to put a speedy and good period to this bloody war." *Marlborough to the Duchess*, May 12, 1710."I hear of so many disagreeable things, that make it very reasonable, both for myself and you, to take no steps but what may lead to a quiet life. This being the case, am I not to be pitied that am every day in danger of exposing my life for the good of those who are seeking my ruin? God's will be done. If I can be so blessed as to end this campaign with success, things must very much alter to persuade me to come again at the head of the army." *Marlborough to the Duchess*, 19th May 1710. Coxe, iv. 191, 192.

[9] Marlborough to Godolphin, 26th May and 2d June 1710.

with all my heart, done my duty, and being hitherto blessed with more success than was ever known before. My wishes and duty are the same; but I can't say I have the same prophetic spirit I used to have; for in all the former actions I never did doubt of success, we having had constantly the great blessing of being of one mind. I cannot say it is so now; for I fear some are run so far into villanous faction, that it would more content them to see us beaten; but if I live I will be watchful that it shall not be in their power to do much hurt. The discourse of the Duke of Argyle is, that when I please there will then be peace. I suppose his friends speak the same language in England; so that I must every summer venture my life in a battle, and be found fault with in winter for not bringing home peace. No, I wish for it with all my heart and soul."[10]

Villars having retired without fighting, the operations of the siege were resumed with redoubled vigour. On the 16th June, signals of distress were sent up from the town, which the French marshal perceived, and he made in consequence a show of returning to interrupt the siege, but his movements came to nothing. Marlborough, to counteract his movement, repassed the Scarpe at Vitry, and took up a position directly barring the line of advance of the French marshal, while Eugene prosecuted the siege. Villars again retired without fighting. On the 22d, the Fort of Scarpe was breached, and the sap was advanced to the counterscarp of the fortress, the walls of which were violently shaken; and on the 26th, Albergotti, who had no longer any hope of being relieved, and who saw preparations made for a general assault, capitulated with the garrison, now reduced to four thousand five hundred men.[11]

On the surrender of Douay, the Allied generals intended to besiege Arras, the *last* of the triple line of fortresses which on that side covered France, and between which and Paris no fortified place remained to arrest the march of an invader. On the 10th July, Marlborough crossed the Scarpe at Vitry, and, joining Eugene, their united forces, nearly ninety thousand strong, advanced towards Arras. But Villars, who felt the extreme importance of this last stronghold, had exerted himself to the utmost for its defence. He had long employed his troops on the construction of new lines of great strength on the Crinchon, stretching from Arras and the Somme, and he had here collected nearly a hundred thousand men, and a hundred and thirty pieces of cannon. After reconnoitring this position, the Allied generals concurred in thinking that it was equally impossible to force them, and undertake the siege of Arras, while the enemy, in such strength, and so strongly posted, lay on its flank. Their first intention, on finding themselves baffled in this project, was to seize Hesdin on the Cancher, which would have left the enemy no strong place between them and the coast. But the skilful dispositions of Villars, who on this occasion displayed uncommon abilities and foresight, rendered this design abortive, and it was therefore determined to attack Bethune. This place, which was surrounded with very strong works, was garrisoned by nine thousand men, under the command of M. Puy Vauban, nephew, of the celebrated marshal of the same name. But as an attack on it had not been expected, the necessary supplies for a protracted resistance had not been fully introduced when the investment was completed on the 15th July.[12]

Villars, upon seeing the point of attack now fully declared, moved in right columns upon Hobarques, near Montenencourt. Eugene and Marlborough upon this assembled their covering army, and changed their front, taking up a new line stretching from Mont St Eloi to Le Comte. Upon advancing to reconnoitre the enemy, Marlborough discovered that the French, advancing to raise the siege, were busy strengthening a new set of lines, which stretched across the plain from the rivulet Ugie to the Lorraine, and the centre of which at Avesnes Le Comte was already strongly fortified. It now appeared how much Villars had gained by the skilful measures which had diverted the Allies from their projected attack upon Arras. It lay upon the direct road to Paris. Bethune, though of importance to the ultimate issue of the war, was not of the same present moment. It lay on the flank

[10] Marlborough to the Duchess, 12th June 1710. Coxe, iv. 197.

[11] Marlborough to Godolphin, 26th June 1710. *Disp.* iv. 696.

[12] *Considerat. sur la Camp. de 1710, par M. le Marshal Villars*; and Coxe, iv. 192.

on the second line, Arras in front, and was the only remaining fortress in the last. By means of the new lines which he had constructed, the able French marshal had erected a fresh protection for his country, when its last defences were wellnigh broken through. By simply holding them, the interior of France was covered from incursion, and time gained for raising fresh armaments in the interior for its defence, and, what was of more importance to Louis, awaiting the issue of the intrigues in England, which were expected soon to overthrow the Whig cabinet. Villars, on this occasion, proved the salvation of his country, and justly raised himself to the very highest rank among its military commanders. His measures were the more to be commended that they exposed him to the obloquy of leaving Bethune to its fate, which surrendered by capitulation, with its numerous garrison and accomplished commander, on the 28th August.[13]

Notwithstanding the loss of so many fortresses on the endangered frontier of his territory, Louis XIV. was so much encouraged by what he knew of the great change which was going on in the councils of Queen Anne, that, expecting daily an entire revolution in the ministry, and overthrow of the war party in the Cabinet, he resolved on the most vigorous prosecution of the contest. He made clandestine overtures to the secret advisers of the Queen, in the hope of establishing that separate negotiation which at no distant period proved so successful. Torcy, the Duke's enemy, triumphantly declared, "what we lose in Flanders, we shall gain in England."[14] To frustrate these machinations, and if possible rouse the national feeling more strongly in favour of a vigorous prosecution of the war, Marlborough determined to lay siege to Aire and St Venant, which, though off the line of direct attack on France, laid open the way to Calais, which, if supported at home, he hoped to reduce before the conclusion of the campaign.[15] He entertained the most sanguine hopes of success from this design, which was warmly supported by Godolphin; but he obtained at this time such discouraging accounts of the precarious condition of his influence at court, that he justly concluded he would not be adequately supported in them from England, from which the main supplies for the enterprise must be drawn. He wisely, therefore, resolved, in concert with Eugene, to forego this dazzling but perilous project for the present, and to content himself with the solid advantages, unattended with risk, of reducing Aire and St Venant.

Having takes their resolution, the confederate generals began their march in the beginning of September, and on the 6th of that month, both places were invested. Aire, which is comparatively of small extent, was garrisoned by only five thousand seven hundred men; but Venant was a place of great size and strength, and had a garrison of fourteen battalions of foot and three regiments of dragoons, mustering eight thousand combatants. They were under the command of the Count de Guebriant, a brave and skillful commander. Both were protected by inundations, which retarded extremely the operations of the besiegers, the more especially as the autumnal rains had early set in this year with more than usual severity. While anxiously awaiting the cessation of this obstacle, and the arrival of a great convoy of heavy cannon and ammunition which was coming up from Ghent, the Allied generals received the disheartening intelligence of the total defeat of this important convoy, which, though guarded by sixteen hundred men, was attacked and destroyed by a French corps on the 19th September. This loss affected Marlborough the more sensibly, that it was the first disaster of moment which had befallen him during nine years of incessant warfare.[16] But, notwithstanding this

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[13] Marlborough to Godolphin, 29th August 1710. *Disp.* iv. 581. Coxe, iv. 294.

[14] Coxe, iv. 343, 344.

[15] "I am of opinion that, after the siege of Aire, I shall have it in my power to attack Calais. This is a conquest which would very much prejudice France, and ought to have a good effect for the Queen's service in England; but I see so much malice levelled at me, that I am afraid it is not safe for me to make any proposition, lest, if it should not succeed, my enemies should turn it to my disadvantage." *Marlborough to Godolphin*, 11th August 1710. Coxe, iv. 343.

[16] "Till within these few days, during these *nine years* I have never had occasion to send ill news. Our powder and other stores, for the carrying on these two sieges, left Ghent last Thursday, under the convoy of twelve hundred foot and four hundred and fifty horse. They were attacked by the enemy and beaten, so that they blew up the powder, and sunk the store-boats." *Marlborough to the Duchess*, 22d September 1710. Coxe, iv. 365.

disaster, St Venant was so severely pressed by the fire of the besiegers, under the Prince of Anhalt, who conducted the operations with uncommon vigour and ability, that it was compelled to capitulate on the 29th, on condition of its garrison being conducted to St Omer, not to serve again till regularly exchanged.

Aire still held out, as the loss of the convoy from Ghent, and the dreadful rains which fell almost without intermission during the whole of October, rendered the progress of the siege almost impossible. The garrison, too, under the command of the brave governor, made a most resolute defence. Sickness prevailed to a great extent in the Allied army; the troops were for the most part up to the knees in mud and water; and the rains, which fell night and day without intermission, precluded the possibility of finding a dry place for their lodging. It was absolutely necessary, however, to continue the siege; for, independent of the credit of the army being staked on its success, it had become impossible, as Marlborough himself said, to draw the cannon from the trenches.[17] The perseverance of the Allied commanders was at length rewarded by success. On the 12th November the fortress capitulated, and the garrison, still three thousand six hundred and twenty-eight strong, marched out prisoners, leaving sixteen hundred sick and wounded in the town. This conquest, which concluded the campaign, was, however, dearly purchased by the loss of nearly seven thousand men killed and wounded in the Allied ranks, exclusive of the sick, who, amidst those pestilential marshes, had now swelled to double the number.[18]

Although the capture of four such important fortresses as Douay, Bethune, St Venant, and Aire, with their garrisons, amounting to thirty thousand men, who had been taken in them during the campaign, was a most substantial advantage, and could not fail to have a most important effect on the final issue of the war; yet it did not furnish the same subject for national exultation which preceding ones had done. There had been no brilliant victory like Blenheim, Ramilies, or Oudenarde, to silence envy and defy malignity; the successes, though little less real, had been not so dazzling. The intriguers about the court, the malcontents in the country, eagerly seized on this circumstance to calumniate the Duke, and accused him of unworthy motives in the conduct of the war. He was protracting it for his own private purposes, reducing it to a strife of lines and sieges, when he might at once terminate it by a decisive battle, and gratifying his ruling passion of avarice by the lucrative appointments which he enjoyed himself, or divided among his friends. Nor was it only among the populace and his political opponents that these surmises prevailed; his greatness and fame had become an object of envy to his own party. Orford, Wharton, and Halifax had on many occasions evinced their distrust of him; and even Somers, who had long stood his friend, was inclined to think the power of the Duke of Marlborough too great, and the emoluments and offices of his family and connexions immoderate.[19] The Duchess inflamed the discord between him and the Queen, by positively refusing to come to any reconciliation with her rival, Mrs Masham. The discord increased daily, and great were the efforts made to aggravate it. To the Queen, the never-failing device was adopted of representing the victorious general as lording it over the throne; as likely to eclipse even the crown by the lustre of his fame; as too dangerous and powerful a subject for a sovereign to tolerate. Matters came to such a pass, in the course of the summer of 1710, that Marlborough found himself thwarted in every request he made, every project he proposed; and he expressed his entire nullity to the Duchess, by the emphatic expression, that he was a "mere sheet of white paper, upon which his friends might write what they pleased."[20]

The spite at the Duke appeared in the difficulties which were now started by the Lords of the Treasury in regard to the prosecution of the works at Blenheim. This noble monument of a nation's

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[17] "Take it we must, for we cannot draw the guns from the batteries. But God knows when we shall have it: night and day our poor men are up to the knees in mud and water." *Marlborough to Godolphin*, 27th October 1710.

[18] Marlborough to Godolphin, 13th November 1710. *Disp.* iv. 685, 689. Coxe, iv. 366, 367.

[19] Cunningham, ii. 305.

[20] Marlborough to the Duchess, 26th July 1710. Coxe, iv. 299.

gratitude had hitherto proceeded rapidly; the stately design of Vanburgh was rapidly approaching its completion, and so anxious had the Queen been to see it finished, that she got a model of it placed in the royal palace of Kensington. Now, however, petty and unworthy objections were started on the score of expense, and attempts were made, by delaying payment of the sums from the Treasury, to throw the cost of completing the building on the great general. He had penetration enough, however, to avoid falling into the snare, and actually suspended the progress of the work when the Treasury warrants were withheld. He constantly directed that the management of the building should be left to the Queen's officers; and, by steadily adhering to this system, he shamed them into continuing the work.[21]

Marlborough's name and influence, however, were too great to be entirely neglected, and the party which was now rising into supremacy at court were anxious, if possible, to secure them to their own side. They made, accordingly, overtures in secret to him; and it was even insinuated that, if he would abandon the Whigs, and coalesce with them, he would entirely regain the royal favour, and might aspire to the highest situation which a subject could hold. Lord Bolingbroke has told us what the conditions of this alliance were to be: – "He was to abandon the Whigs, his new friends, and take up with the Tories, his old friends; to engage heartily in the true interests, and no longer leave his country a prey to rapine and faction. He was, besides, required to restrain the rage and fury of his wife. Their offers were coupled with threats of an impeachment, and boasts that sufficient evidence could be adduced to carry a prosecution through both Houses."[22] To terms so degrading, the Duke answered in terms worthy of his high reputation. He declared his resolution to be of no party, to vote according to his conscience, and to be as hearty as his new colleagues in support of the Queen's government and the welfare of the country. This manly reply increased the repulsive feelings with which he was regarded by the ministry, who seem now to have finally resolved on his ruin; while the intelligence that such overtures had been made having got wind, sowed distrust between him and the Whig leaders, which was never afterwards entirely removed. But he honourably declared that he would be governed by the Whigs, from whom he would never depart; and that they could not suspect the purity of his motives in so doing, as they had now lost the majority in the House of Commons.[23]

Parliament met on the 25th November; and Marlborough, in the end of the year, returned to London. But he soon received decisive proof of the altered temper both of government and the country towards him. In the Queen's speech, no notice was taken of the late successes in Flanders, no vote of thanks for his services in the campaign moved by ministers; and they even contrived, by a sidewind, to get quit of one proposed, to their no small embarrassment, by Lord Scarborough. The Duchess, too, was threatened with removal from her situation at court; and Marlborough avowed that he knew the Queen was "as desirous for her removal as Mr Harley and Mr Masham can be." The violent temper and proud unbending spirit of the Duchess were ill calculated to heal such a breach, which, in the course of the winter, became so wide, that her removal from the situation she held, as mistress of the robes, was only prevented by the fear that, in the vehemence of her resentment, she might publish the Queen's correspondence, and that the Duke, whose military services could not yet be spared, might resign his command. Libels against both the Duke and the Duchess daily appeared, and passed entirely unpunished, though the freedom of the press was far from being established. Three officers were dismissed from the army for drinking his health. When he waited on the Queen, on his arrival in England, in the end of December, she said – "I must request you will not suffer any vote of thanks to you to be moved in Parliament this year, *as my ministers will certainly oppose it*."

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[21] Marlborough to the Duchess, 25th October and 24th November 1710. Coxe, iv. 351, 352.

[22] Bolingbroke's *Corresp.*, i. 41; Mr Secretary St John to Mr Drummond, 20th Dec. 1710.

[23] "I beg you to lose no time in sending me, to the Hague, the opinion of our friend mentioned in my letter; for I would be governed by the Whigs, from whose principle and interest I will never depart. Whilst they had a majority in the House of Commons, they might suspect it might be my interest; but now they must do me the justice to see that it is my inclination and principle which makes me act." *Marlborough to the Duchess*, Nov. 9, 1710. Coxe, iv. 360.

Such was the return made by government to the hero who had raised the power and glory of England to an unprecedented pitch, and in that very campaign had cut deeper into the iron frontier of France than had ever been done in any former one.[24]

The female coterie who aided at St James's the male opponents of Marlborough, were naturally extremely solicitous to get the Duchess removed from her situations as head of the Queen's household and keeper of the privy purse; and ministers were only prevented from carrying their wishes into effect by their apprehension, if executed, of the Duke's resigning his command of the army. In an audience, on 17th January 1711, Marlborough presented a letter to her Majesty from the Duchess, couched in terms of extreme humility, in which she declared that his anxiety was such, at the requital his services had received, that she apprehended he would not live six months.[25] The Queen at first refused to read it; and when at length, at the Duke's earnest request, she agreed to do so, she coldly observed – "I cannot change my resolution." Marlborough, in the most moving terms, and with touching eloquence, intreated the Queen not to dismiss the Duchess till she had no more need of her services, by the war being finished, which, he hoped, would be in less than a year; but he received no other answer, but a peremptory demand for the surrender of the gold key, the symbol of her office, within three days. Unable to obtain any relaxation in his sovereign's resolution, Marlborough withdrew with the deepest emotions of indignation and sorrow. The Duchess, in a worthy spirit, immediately took his resolution; she sent in her resignation, with the gold key, that very night. So deeply was Marlborough hurt at this extraordinary ingratitude for all his services, that he at first resolved to resign his whole command, and retire altogether into private life. From this intention he was only diverted, and that with great difficulty, by the efforts of Godolphin and the Whigs at home, and Prince Eugene and the Pensionary Heinsius abroad, who earnestly besought him not to abandon the command, as that would at once dissolve the grand alliance, and ruin the common cause. We can sympathise with the feelings of a victorious warrior who felt reluctant to forego, by one hasty step, the fruit of nine years of victories: we cannot but respect the self-sacrifice of the patriot who preferred enduring mortifications himself, to endangering the great cause of religious freedom and European independence. Influenced by these considerations, Marlborough withheld his intended resignation. The Duchess of Somerset was made mistress of the robes, and Mrs Masham obtained the confidential situation of keeper of the privy purse. Malignity, now sure of impunity, heaped up invectives on the falling hero. His integrity was calumniated, his courage even questioned, and the most consummate general of that, or perhaps any other age, represented as the lowest of mankind.[26] It soon appeared how unfounded had been the aspersions cast upon the Duchess, as well as the Duke, for their conduct in office. Her accounts, after being rigidly scrutinised, were returned to her without any objection being stated against them; and Marlborough, anxious to quit that scene of ingratitude and intrigue for the real theatre of his glory, soon after set out for the army in Flanders.[27]

Marlborough arrived at the Hague on the 4th March; and, although no longer possessing the confidence of government, or intrusted with any control over diplomatic measures, he immediately set himself with the utmost vigour to prepare for military operations. Great efforts had been made by both parties, during the winter, for the resumption of hostilities, on even a more extended scale than in any preceding campaign. Marlborough found the army in the Low Countries extremely efficient and powerful; diversions were promised on the side both of Spain and Piedmont; and a treaty had been concluded with the Spanish malcontents, in consequence of which a large part of the Imperial forces were rendered disposable, which Prince Eugene was preparing to lead into the Low Countries.

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[24] Coxe, iv. 405.

[25] "Though I never thought of troubling your Majesty again in this manner, yet the circumstances I see my Lord Marlborough in, and the apprehension I have that he cannot live six months, if there is not some end put to his sufferings on my account, make it impossible for me to resist doing every thing in my power to ease him." *Duchess of Marlborough to Queen Anne*, 17th Jan. 1711. Coxe, iv. 410.

[26] Smollett, c. x. § 20.

[27] Marlborough to the Duchess, 24th May 1711. Coxe, v. 417-431.

But, in the midst of these flattering prospects, an event occurred which suddenly deranged then all, postponed for above a month the opening of the campaign, and, in its final result, changed the fate of Europe. This was the death of the Emperor Joseph, of the smallpox, which happened at Vienna on the 16th April – an event which was immediately followed by Charles, King of Spain, declaring himself a candidate for the Imperial throne. As his pretensions required to be supported by a powerful demonstration of troops, the march of a large part of Eugene's men to the Netherlands was immediately stopped, and that prince himself was hastily recalled from Mentz, to take the command of the empire at Ratisbon, as marshal. Charles was soon after elected Emperor. Thus Marlborough was left to commence the campaign alone, which was the more to be regretted, as the preparations of Louis, during the winter, for the defence of his dominions had been made on the most extensive scale, and Marshal Villars' lines had come to be regarded as the *ne plus ultra* of field fortification. Yet were Marlborough's forces most formidable; for, when reviewed at Orchies on the 30th April, between Lille and Douay, they were found, including Eugene's troops which had come up, to amount to one hundred and eighty-four battalions, and three hundred and sixty-four squadrons, mustering above one hundred thousand combatants.[28] But forty-one battalions and forty squadrons were in garrison, which reduced the effective force in the field to eighty thousand men.

The great object of Louis and his generals had been to construct such a line of defences as might prevent the irruption of the enemy into the French territory, now that the interior and last line of fortresses was so nearly broken through. In pursuance of this design, Villars had, with the aid of all the most experienced engineers in France, and at a vast expense of labour and money, constructed during the winter a series of lines and field-works, exceeding any thing yet seen in modern Europe in magnitude and strength, and to which the still more famous lines of Torres Vedras have alone, in subsequent times, afforded a parallel. The works extended from Namur on the Meuse, by a sort of irregular line, to the coast of Picardy. Running first along the marshy line of the Canche, they rested on the forts of Montreuil, Hesdin, and Trevant; while the great fortresses of Ypres, Calais, Gravelines, and St Omer, lying in their front, and still in the hands of the French, rendered any attempt to approach them both difficult and hazardous. Along the whole of this immense line, extending over so great a variety of ground, for above forty miles, every effort had been made, by joining the resources of art to the defences of nature, to render the position impregnable. The lines were not continuous, as in many places the ground was so rugged, or the obstacles of rocks, precipices, and ravines were so formidable, that it was evidently impossible to overcome them. But where*ever a passage was practicable, the approaches to it were protected in the most formidable manner. If a streamlet ran along the line, it was carefully dammed up, so as to be rendered impassible. Every morass was deepened, by stopping up its drains, or letting in the water of the larger rivers by artificial canals into it; redoubts were placed on the heights, so as to enfilade the plains between them; while in the open country, where no advantage of ground was to be met with, field-works were erected, armed with abundance of heavy cannon. To man these formidable lines, Villars had under his command one hundred and fifty-six battalions, and two hundred and twenty-seven squadrons in the field, containing seventy thousand infantry, and twenty thousand horse. He had ninety field guns and twelve howitzers. There was, besides, thirty-five battalions and eighty squadrons detached or in the forts; and, as Eugene soon took away twelve battalions and fifty squadrons from the Allied army, the forces on the opposite side, when they came to blows, were very nearly equal.[29]

Marlborough took the field on the 1st May, with eighty thousand men; and his whole force was soon grouped in and around Douay. The headquarters of Villars were at Cambray; but, seeing the forces of his adversary thus accumulated in one point, he made a corresponding concentration, and arranged his whole disposable forces between Bouchain on the right, and Monchy Le Preux

[28] Eugene to Marlborough, 23d April 1710; Marlborough to St John, 29th April 1710. Coxe, vi. 16. *Disp.* v. 319.

[29] Lidiard, ii. 426. Coxe, vi. 21. 22.

on the left. This position of the French marshal, which extended in a concave semicircle with the fortresses, covering either flank, he considered, and with reason, as beyond the reach of attack. The English general was meditating a great enterprise, which should at once deprive the enemy of all his defences, and reduce him to the necessity of fighting a decisive battle, or losing his last frontier fortresses. But he was overwhelmed with gloomy anticipations; he felt his strength sinking under his incessant and protracted fatigues, and knew well he was serving a party who, envious of his fame, were ready only to decry his achievements.[30] He lay, accordingly, for three weeks awaiting the arrival of his illustrious colleague, Prince Eugene, who joined on the 23d May, and took part in a great celebration of the anniversary of the victory at Ramilies, which had taken place on that day. The plans of the Allied generals were soon formed; and, taking advantage of the enthusiasm excited by that commemoration, and the arrival of so illustrious a warrior, preparations were made for the immediate commencement of active operations. On the 28th, the two generals reviewed the whole army. But their designs were soon interrupted by an event which changed the whole fortune of the campaign. Early in June, Eugene received positive orders to march to Germany, with a considerable part of his troops, to oppose a French force, which was moving towards the Rhine, to influence the approaching election of Emperor. On the 13th June, Eugene and Marlborough separated, for *the last time*, with the deepest expressions of regret on both sides, and gloomy forebodings of the future. The former marched towards the Rhine with twelve battalions and fifty squadrons, while Marlborough's whole remaining force marched to the right in six divisions.[31]

Though Villars was relieved by the departure of Eugene from a considerable part of the force opposed to him, and he naturally felt desirous of now measuring his strength with his great antagonist in a decisive affair, yet he was restrained from hazarding a general engagement. Louis, trusting to the progress of the Tory intrigues in England, and daily expecting to see Marlborough and the war-party overthrown, sent him positive orders not to fight; and soon after detached twenty-five battalions and forty squadrons, in two divisions, to the Upper Rhine, to watch the movements of Eugene. Villars encouraged this separation, representing that the strength of his position was such, that he could afford to send a third detachment to the Upper Rhine, if it was thought proper. Marlborough, therefore, in vain offered battle, and drew up his army in the plain of Lens for that purpose. Villars cautiously remained on the defensive; and, though he threw eighteen bridges over the Scarpe, and made a show of intending to fight, he cautiously abstained from any steps which might bring on a general battle.[32] It was not without good reason that Louis thus enjoined his lieutenant to avoid compromising his army. The progress of the negotiations with England gave him the fairest ground for believing that he would obtain nearly all he desired from the favour with which he was regarded by the British cabinet without running any risk. He had commenced a *separate* negotiation with the court of St James's, which had been favourably received; and Mr Secretary St John had already transmitted to Lord Raby, the new plenipotentiary at the Hague, a sketch of six preliminary articles proposed by the French king, which were to be the basis of a general peace.[33]

The high tone of these proposals proved how largely Louis counted upon the altered dispositions of the British cabinet. The Spanish succession, the real object of the war, was evaded. Every thing was directed to British objects, and influenced by the desire to tempt the commercial cupidity of England to the abandonment of the great objects of her national policy. Real security was tendered to the British commerce with Spain, the Indus, and the Mediterranean; the barrier the Dutch had so

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[30] "I see my Lord Rochester has gone where we all must follow. I believe my journey will be hastened by the many vexations I meet with. I am sure I wish well to my country, and if I could do good, I should think no pains too great; but I find myself decay so very fast, that from my heart and soul I wish the Queen and my country a peace by which I might have the advantage of enjoying a little quiet, which is my greatest ambition." *Marlborough to the Duchess*, 25th May, 1711. Coxe, vi. 28.

[31] Marlborough to St John, 14th June 1711. *Disp.* v. 428. Coxe, vi. 29, 30.

[32] *Villars' Mem.* tom. ii. ann. 1711.

[33] *Bolingbroke's Corresp.* i. 172.

long contended for was agreed to; a reasonable satisfaction was tendered to the allies of England and Holland; and, as to the Spanish succession, it was to be left to "new expedients, to the satisfaction of all parties interested." These proposals were favourably received by the British ministry; they were in secret communicated to the Pensionary Heinsius, but concealed from the Austrian and Piedmontese plenipotentiaries; and they were *not communicated to Marlborough*– a decisive proof both of the altered feeling of the cabinet towards that general, and of the consciousness on their part of the tortuous path on which they were now entering.[34]

After much deliberation, and a due consideration of what could be effected by the diminished force now at his disposal, which, by the successive drafts to Eugene's army, was now reduced to one hundred and nineteen battalions, and two hundred and fifty-six squadrons, not mustering above seventy-five thousand combatants, Marlborough determined to break through the enemies' boasted lines; and, after doing so, undertake the siege of Bouchain, the possession of which would give him a solid footing within the French frontier. With this view, he had long and minutely studied the lines of Villars; and he hoped that, even with the force at his disposal, they might be broken through. To accomplish this, however, required an extraordinary combination of stratagem and force; and the manner in which Marlborough contrived to unite them, and bring the ardent mind and lively imagination of his adversary to play into his hands, to the defeat of all the objects he had most at heart, is perhaps the most wonderful part of his whole military achievements.[35]

During his encampment at Lewarde, opposite Villars, the English general had observed that a triangular piece of ground in front of the French position, between Cambray, Aubanchocil-au-bac, and the junction of the Sauzet and Scheldt, offered a position so strong, that a small body of men might defend it against a very considerable force. He resolved to make the occupation of this inconsiderable piece of ground the pivot on which the whole passage of the lines should be effected. A redoubt at Aubigny, which commanded the approach to it, was first carried without difficulty. Arleux, which also was fortified, was next attacked by seven hundred men, who issued from Douay in the night. That post also was taken, with one hundred and twenty prisoners. Marlborough instantly used all imaginable expedition in strengthening it; and Villars, jealous of a fortified post so close to his lines remaining in the hands of the Allies, attacked it in the night of the 9th July; and, though he failed in retaking the work, he surprised the Allies at that point, and made two hundred men and four hundred horses prisoners. Though much chagrined at the success of this nocturnal attack, the English general now saw his designs advancing to maturity. He therefore left Arleux to its own resources, and marched towards Bethune. That fort was immediately attacked by Marshal Montesquieu, and, after a stout resistance, carried by the French, who made the garrison, five hundred strong, prisoners. Villars immediately razed Arleux to the ground, and withdrew his troops; while Marlborough, who was in hopes the lure of these successes would induce Villars to hazard a general engagement, shut himself up in his tent, and appeared to be overwhelmed with mortification at the checks he had received.[36]

Villars was so much elated with these successes, and the accounts he received of Marlborough's mortification, that he wrote to the king of France a vain-glorious letter, in which he boasted that he had at length brought his antagonist to a *ne plus ultra*. Meanwhile, Marlborough sent off his heavy baggage to Douay; sent his artillery under a proper guard to the rear; and, with all imaginable secresy, baked bread for the whole troops for six days, which was privately brought up. Thus disencumbered and prepared, he broke up at four in the morning on the 1st of August, and marched in eight columns towards the front. During the three following days, the troops continued concentrated, and menacing sometimes one part of the French lines and sometimes another, so as to leave the real point of attack

[34] "The Duke of Marlborough has no communication from home on this affair; I suppose he will have none from the Hague." *Mr Secretary St John to Lord Raby*, 27th April 1711. *Bolingbroke's Corresp.* i. 175.

[35] Coxe, vi. 52-54.

[36] Kane's *Memoirs*, p. 89. Coxe, vi. 53, 55; *Disp.* v. 421, 428.

in a state of uncertainty. Seriously alarmed, Villars concentrated his whole force opposite the Allies, and drew in all his detachments, evacuating even Aubigny and Arleux, the object of so much eager contention some days before. On the evening of the 4th, Marlborough, affecting great chagrin at the check he had received, spoke openly to those around him of his intention of avenging them by a general action, and pointed to the direction the attacking columns were to take. He then returned to the camp, and gave orders to prepare for battle. Gloom hung on every countenance of those around him; it appeared nothing short of an act of madness to attack an enemy superior in number, and strongly posted in a camp surrounded with entrenchments, and bristling with cannon. They ascribed it to desperation, produced by the mortifications received from the government, and feared that, by one rash act, he would lose the fruit of all his victories. Proportionally great was the joy in the French camp, when the men, never doubting they were on the eve of a glorious victory, spent the night in the exultation which, in that excitable people, has so often been the prelude to disaster.[37]

Having brought the feeling of both armies to this point, and produced a concentration of Villars's army directly in his front, Marlborough, at dusk on the 4th, ordered the drums to beat; and before the roll had ceased, orders were given for the tents to be struck. Meanwhile Cadogan secretly left the camp, and met twenty-three battalions and seventeen squadrons, drawn from the garrisons of Lille and Tournay, which instantly marched; and continuing to advance all night, passed the lines rapidly to the left, without opposition at Arleux, at break of day. A little before nine, the Allied main army began to defile rapidly to the left, through the woods of Villers and Neuville – Marlborough himself leading the van, at the head of fifty squadrons. With such expedition did they march, still holding steadily on to the left, that before five in the morning of the 5th they reached Vitry on the Scarpe, where they found pontoons ready for their passage, and a considerable train of field artillery. At the same time, the English general here received the welcome intelligence of Cadogan's success. He instantly dispatched orders to every man and horse to press forward without delay. Such was the ardour of the troops, who all saw the brilliant manœuvre by which they had outwitted the enemy, and rendered all their labour abortive, that they marched *sixteen hours* without once halting; and by ten next morning, the whole had passed the enemies' lines without opposition, and without firing a shot! Villars received intelligence of the night-march having begun at eleven at night; but so utterly was he in the dark as to the plan his opponent was pursuing, that he came up to Verger, when Marlborough had drawn up his army on the *inner* side of the lines in order of battle, attended only by a hundred dragoons, and narrowly escaped being made prisoner. Altogether, the Allied troops marched thirty-six miles in sixteen hours, the most part of them in the dark, and crossed several rivers, without either falling into confusion or sustaining any loss. The annals of war scarcely afford an example of such a success being gained in so bloodless a manner. The famous French lines, which Villars boasted would form the *ne plus ultra* of Marlborough, had been passed without losing a man; the labour of nine months was at once rendered of no avail, and the French army, in deep dejection, had no alternative but to retire under the cannon of Cambray.[38]

This great success at once restored the lustre of Marlborough's reputation, and, for a short season, put to silence his detractors. Eugene, with the generosity which formed so striking a feature in his character, wrote to congratulate him on his achievement;[39] and even Bolingbroke admitted that this bloodless triumph rivalled his greatest achievements.[40] Marlborough immediately commenced

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[37] Kane's *Memoirs*, p. 92. Marlborough to Mr Secretary St John, 6th August, 1711. *Disp.* v. 428.

[38] Marlborough to Mr Secretary St John, 6th August 1711. *Disp.* v. 428. Coxe, vi. 60-65. *Kane's Mil. Mem.* 96-99.

[39] "No person takes a greater interest in your concerns than myself; your highness has penetrated into the *ne plus ultra*. I hope the siege of Bouchain will not last long." *Eugene to Marlborough*, 17th August 1711. Coxe, vi. 66.

[40] "My Lord Stair opened to us the general steps which your grace intended to take, in order to pass the lines in one part or another. It was, however, hard to imagine, and too much to hope, that a plan, which consisted of so many parts, wherein so many different corps were to co-operate personally together, should entirely succeed, and no one article fail of what your grace had projected. I most heartily congratulate your grace on this great event, of which I think no more needs be said, than that you have obtained, without losing a man, such an advantage, as we should have been glad to have purchased with the loss of several thousand lives." *Mr Secretary St*

the siege of Bouchain; but this was an enterprise of no small difficulty, as it was to be accomplished on very difficult ground, in presence of an army superior in force. The investment was formed on the very day after the lines had been passed, and an important piece of ground occupied, which might have enabled Villars to communicate with the town, and regain a defensible position. On the morning of the 8th August, a bridge was thrown over the Scheldt at Neuville, and sixty squadrons passed over, which barred the road from Douay. Villars upon this threw thirty battalions across the Seuzet, and made himself master of a hill above, on which he began to erect works, which would have kept open his communications with the town on its southern front. Marlborough saw at once this design, and at first determined to storm the works ere they were completed; and, with this view, General Fagel, with a strong body of troops, was secretly passed over the river. But Villars, having heard of the design, attacked the Allied posts at Ivry with such vigour, that Marlborough was obliged to counter-march in haste, to be at hand to support them. Baffled in this attempt, Marlborough erected a chain of works on the right bank of the Scheldt, from Houdain, through Ivry, to the Sette, near Haspres, while Cadogan strengthened himself with similar works on the left. Villars, however, still retained the fortified position which has been mentioned, and which kept up his communication with the town; and the intercepting this was another, and the last, of Marlborough's brilliant field operations.[41]

Notwithstanding all the diligence with which Villars laboured to strengthen his men on this important position, he could not equal the activity with which the English general strove to supplant them. During the night of the 13th, three redoubts were marked out, which would have completed the French marshal's communication with the town. But on the morning of the 14th they were all stormed by a large body of the Allied troops before the works could be armed. That very day the Allies carried their zig-zag down to the very edge of a morass which adjoined Bouchain on the south, so as to command a causeway from that town to Cambray, which the French still held, communicating with the besieged town. But, to complete the investment, it was necessary to win this causeway; and this last object was gained by Marlborough with equal daring and success. A battery, commanding the road, had been placed by Villars in a redoubt garrisoned by six hundred men, supported by three thousand more close in their rear. Marlborough, with incredible labour and diligence, constructed two roads, made of fascines, through part of the marsh, so as to render it passable to foot-soldiers; and, on the night of the 16th, six hundred chosen grenadiers were sent across them to attack the intrenched battery. They rapidly advanced in the dark till the fascine path ended, and then boldly plunging into the marsh, struggled on, with the water often up to their arm-pits, till they reached the foot of the intrenchment, into which they rushed, without firing a shot, with fixed bayonets. So complete was the surprise, that the enemy were driven from their guns with the loss only of six men; the work carried; and with such diligence were its defences strengthened, that before morning it was in a condition to bid defiance to any attack.[42]

Villars was now effectually cut off from Bouchain, and the operations of the siege were conducted with the utmost vigour. On the night of the 21st, the trenches were opened; three separate attacks were pushed at the same time against the eastern, western, and southern faces of the town, and a huge train of heavy guns and mortars thundered upon the works without intermission. The progress of the siege, notwithstanding a vigorous defence by the besieged, was unusually rapid. As fast as the outworks were breached they were stormed; and repeated attempts on the part of Villars to raise the siege were baffled by the skilful disposition and strong ground taken by Marlborough with the covering army. At length, on the 12th September, as the counterscarp was blown down, the rampart breached, and an assault of the fortress in preparation, the governor agreed to capitulate; and the garrison, still three thousand strong, marched out upon the glacis, laid down their arms, and were

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John to Marlborough, 31st July 1711. *Disp.* v. 429.

[41] Marlborough to Mr Secretary St John, 10th August 1711. *Disp.* v. 437.

[42] Coxe, vi. 71-80; Marlborough to Mr Secretary St John, 14th, 17th, and 20th August 1711; *Disp.* v. 445, 450, 453.

conducted prisoners to Tournay.[43] The two armies then remained in their respective positions, the French under the cannon of Cambray, the Allied in the middle of their lines, resting on Bouchain; and Marlborough gave proof of the courtesy of his disposition, as well as his respect for exalted learning and piety, by planting a detachment of his troops to protect the estates of Fenelon, archbishop of Cambray, and conduct the grain from thence to the dwelling of the illustrious prelate in that town, which began now to be straitened for provisions.[44]

[43] Marlborough to Mr Secretary St John, 14th Sept. 1711. *Disp.* v. 490. *Coxe*, vi. 78-88.

[44] *Victoires de Marlborough*, iii. 22. Coxe, vi. 87.

MOHAN LAL IN AFGHANISTAN

The Life of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan of Kabul. By Mohan Lal, Esq., Knight of the Persian order of the Lion and Sun, lately attached to the Mission at Kabul, &c. &c. London: 1846.

We have arrived at an age when striking contrasts and seeming incongruities cease to startle and offend. If we have not yet attained the promised era when the lion shall lie down with the lamb – and even of that day a Van Amburgh and a Carter have given us significant intimations – we have certainly reached an epoch quite as extraordinary, and behold things as opposite conciliated, as hostile reconciled. We need not go far for illustrations: in the columns of newspapers, in the public market-place, at each street-corner, they force themselves upon us. The East and the West are brought together – the desert and the drawing-room are but a pace apart – European refinements intrude themselves into the haunts of barbarism – and bigoted Oriental potentates learn tolerance from the liberality of the Giaour. An article upon contrasts would fill a magazine. Ibrahim Pasha and religious liberty, the Red Sea and the Peninsular Steam Company, the Great Desert and the Narrow Gauge, are but one or two of a thousand that suggest themselves. On all sides Europe thrusts out the giant arms of innovation, spanning the globe, encompassing the world. England, especially, ever foremost in the race, by enterprise and ingenuity achieves seeming miracles. With steam for her active and potent agent, she drives highways across the wilderness, covers remote seas with smoky shipping, replaces dromedaries by locomotives, runs rails through the Arab village and the lion's lair. From his carpet and coffee, his pipe and *farniente*, the astonished Mussulman is roused by the rush and rattle of the train. On the sudden, by no gradual transition or slow approach, is this semi-savage brought in contact with the latest refinements and most astounding discoveries of civilisation. He is bewildered by sights and sounds of which yesterday he had not the remotest conception. Couriers traverse the desert with the regularity of a London and Edinburgh mail; caravans of well-dressed ladies and gentlemen ramble leisurely over the sands, and brave the simoon on a trip of pleasure to the far East; omnibuses, after the fashion of Paddington, have their stations on the Isthmus of Suez. Every where the hat is in juxtaposition with the turban, and the boot of the active Christian galls the slippered heel of Mahomet's indolent follower, spurring him to progress and improvement.

As strange as any of the incongruous associations already hinted at, is one that we are about to notice. That an Oriental should write a book, is in no way wonderful; that he should write it in English, more or less correct, may also be conceived, since abundant opportunities are afforded to our Eastern fellow-subjects for the acquirement of that language; but that he should write it, not out of the fulness of his knowledge, or to convey the results of long study and profound meditation, but merely, as the razors were made, to sell, does seem strangely out of character, sadly derogatory to the gravity and dignity of a Wise Man of the East. We have really much difficulty in portraying upon our mental speculum so anomalous an animal as an Oriental bookmaker. We cannot fancy a Knight of the very Persian order of the Lion and Sun transformed into a publisher's hack, driving bargains with printers, delivered over to devils, straining each nerve, resorting to every stale device to swell his volumes to a presentable size, as if bulk would atone for dulness, and wordiness for lack of interest. Such, nevertheless, is the painful picture now forced upon us by a Kashmirian gentleman of Delhi, Mohan Lal by name. Encouraged by the indulgent reception accorded to an earlier, less pretending, and more worthy literary attempt – allured also, perhaps, by visions of a shining river of rupees pleasantly flowing into his purse, the aforesaid Lal, Esquire – so does his title-page style him – has committed himself by the fabrication of two heavy volumes, whose interesting portions are, for the most part stale, and whose novelties are of little interest. Neither the fulsome dedication, nor the humility of the preface, nor the indifferent lithographs, purporting to represent notable Asiatics and Europeans,

can be admitted in palliation of this Kashmirian scribbler's literary misdemeanour. It is impossible to feel touched or mollified even by the plaintive tone in which he informs us that he has disbursed three hundred pounds for payment of copyists, paper, and portraits. The latter, by the bye, will hardly afford much gratification to their originals, at least if they be all as imperfect and unflattering in their resemblance as some two or three which we have had opportunities of comparing. But that is a minor matter. Illustration is a mania of the day – a crotchet of a public whose reading appetite, it is to be feared, is in no very healthy state. From penny tracts to quarto volumes, every thing must have pictures – the more the better – bad ones rather than none. Turning from the graphic embellishments of the books before us, we revert to the letterpress, and to the endeavour to sift something of interest or value out of the nine hundred pages through which, in conscientious fulfilment of our critical duties, we have wearisomely toiled.

The work in question purports to be a life of Dost Mohammed Khan, the well-known Amir of Kabul. It is what it professes to be, but it is also a great deal more; the whole has been named from a part. A history of the affairs of Sindh occupies nearly half a volume, and consists chiefly of copious extracts from works already published – such as *Pottinger's Bilochistan*, *Dr Burnes' Visit to the Court of Sindh*, *Sir A. Burnes' Travels in Bokhara*, *Thornton's British India*– from which sources the unscrupulous Lal helps himself unsparingly, and with scarce a word of apology either to reader or writer. We have long accounts of Russian intrigues, and of those alarming plots and combinations which frightened Lords Auckland and Palmerston from their propriety, and led to our interference and reverses in Afghanistan – interference so impotently followed up, reverses which neither have been nor ever can be fully redeemed. The mismanagement or incapacity of our political agents during the short time that we maintained the unfortunate Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul, is another fertile topic for the verbose Kashmirian; but this, it must be observed, is one of the best portions of his book, although it has no very direct reference to Dost Mohammed, "the lion of my subject and hero of my tale," as his historian styles him. Numerous copies of despatches, treaties and diplomatic correspondence, sundry testimonies of Mr. Lal's abilities and services, and various extraneous matters, complete the volumes. To give the barest outline of so voluminous a work would lead us far beyond our allotted limits. We should even be puzzled to effect the analysis of the first half volume, which sketches the history of Afghanistan from the period when Payandah Khan, chief of the powerful Barakzai tribe and father of Dost Mohammed, was the prime favourite and triumphant general of Taimur Shah, up to the date when the Dost himself, after a long series of bloody wars, sat upon the throne, was in the zenith of his prosperity, and when British diplomatists first began to make and meddle in the affairs of his kingdom. The perpetually recurring changes, the revolts, revolutions, and usurpations of which Afghanistan was the scene with little intermission during the whole of that period, the absence of dates, which Mohan Lal accounts for by the loss of his manuscripts during the Kabul insurrection, and the host of proper names introduced, render this part of the work most perplexingly confused. The reader, however attentive to his task, becomes fairly bewildered amidst the multitude of Khans, Shahs, Vazirs, Sardars, and other personages, who pass in hurried review before his eyes, and utterly puzzled by the strange manœuvres and seemingly unaccountable treasons of the actors in this great Eastern melodrama. In glancing at the book, we shall confine ourselves more strictly than Mohan Lal has done, to the personal exploits and history of Dost Mohammed.

On the death of Taimur Shah, leaving several sons, there was much difference of opinion amongst the nobles as to who should succeed him. Payandah Khan, who had received from the sovereign he had so faithfully served, the title of Sarfraz, or, the Lofty, and whose position and influence in the country enabled him in some sort to play the part of king-maker, solved the difficulty by placing Prince Zaman upon the throne. For a time Zaman was all gratitude, until evil advisers poisoned his mind, and accused Payandah and other chiefs of plotting to transfer the crown to Shah Shuja, another son of Taimur. Without trial or investigation, the persons accused were put to death; and the sons and nephews of Payandah became fugitives, and suffered great misery. Some were taken

prisoners, others begged their bread, or took shelter in the mausoleum of Ahmad Shah, in order to receive a share of the food there doled out for charity's sake. Fatah Khan, the eldest son of Payandah, fled to Persia; Dost Mohammed, the twentieth son of the same father, found protection in a fortress belonging to the husband of his mother, who, in conformity with an Afghan custom, had been claimed by and compelled to marry one of the nearest relatives of her deceased lord. This occurred when Dost was a child of seven or eight years old. After a while, Fatah Khan returned from Persia with an army, and accompanied by Mahmud Shah, another of Taimur's sons who pretended to the crown of Afghanistan. His first encounter with the troops of Shah Zaman was a triumph; and now, says the figurative Lal, the stars of the descendants of the Sarfraz began to shine. Fatah sought out his young brother, Dost Mohammed, gave him in charge to a trusty adherent, fixed an income for his support, and marched away to besiege Qandhar, which he took by escalade. This was the commencement of a war of succession, or rather of a series of wars, in which the two sons of Payandah played important parts. The elder met his death, the younger gained a crown. At first the contest was amongst the sons and grandsons of Taimur; to several of whom in turn Fatah and Dost gave their powerful support. It was not till after many years of civil strife that the last-named chief, prompted by ambition, and presuming on his popularity and high military reputation, set up on his own account, and bore away the prize from the more legitimate competitors.

When only in his twelfth year, Dost Mohammed Khan was attached to the retinue of his brother as *abdar*, or water-bearer. He soon acquired Fatah's confidence, and was admitted to share his secrets. Before he was fourteen years old, he displayed great energy and intrepidity, which qualities, added to his remarkable personal beauty, rendered him exceedingly popular in the country and a vast favourite with Fatah, but excited the jealousy of his other brothers – men of little more than ordinary capacity, totally unable to compete with him in any respect. Whilst still a mere lad, Dost, by his courage and sagacity, delivered Fatah from more than one imminent peril. At last Shah Zaman, who had been deposed and blinded, and his son Shah Zadah, laid a snare for Fatah in the palace-gardens at Qandhar. Ambushed men suddenly seized him, hurled him to the ground with such violence as to break his teeth, and kept him prisoner. Dost Mohammed made a dashing attempt at a rescue; but he had only five hundred followers, the palace was strongly garrisoned, and a heavy fire of matchlocks repelled him. Meanwhile large bodies of troops marched to occupy the city gates; and, for his own safety's sake, he was compelled to leave his brother in captivity, and cut his way out. Retreating to his stronghold of Giriskh, he awaited the passage of a rich caravan from Persia. This he plundered, thereby becoming possessed of about four lakhs of rupees, which he employed in raising troops. With these he invested Qandhar. After a three months' siege, the garrison had exhausted its provisions and ammunition; and Zadah, to get rid of the terrible Dost, released Fatah Khan. The prisoner's liberation was also partly owing to the intercession of Shah Shuja; notwithstanding which, Fatah and Dost, with an utter contempt of gratitude and loyalty, soon afterwards turned their arms against that prince. A great cavalry fight took place, in which the brave but unprincipled brothers were victorious. Dost Mohammed was made a field-marshal, and marched against an army commanded by Shah Shuja in person; a desperate battle ensued, terminated by negotiation, and once more Dost and the Shah were allies. But no sooner had poor Shuja gained over his enemies, than his friends revolted against him, and set up his nephew Zadah as king of Afghanistan; and very soon his new allies, with unparalleled treachery, and despite of the titles and presents he had showered upon them, once more abandoned him. Friend Lal, we are sorry to perceive, seems struck rather with admiration than horror of these double-dyed traitors, and talks of the brave heart and wise head of Dost Mohammed, and of the noble and independent notions which nature had cultivated in him; thus betraying a certain Oriental laxity of principle which European education and society might have been expected to eradicate. But he is perhaps dazzled and blinded by the brilliant military prowess of Dost, who, at the head of only three thousand men, fell upon the advanced-guard of the Shah's army, ten thousand strong, and, after a terrible slaughter, completely routed it. The news of this reverse greatly incensed and alarmed Shuja,

who said confidentially to his minister, that whilst Dost Mohammed was alive and at large, he (Shuja) could never expect victory or the enjoyment of his crown. A wonderful and true prophecy, observes Mohan Lal. Shortly afterwards, the remainder of the Shah's troops were defeated by Dost, and the Shah himself was once more a fugitive.

Shah Mahmud was now placed upon the throne; Vazir Fatah Khan was his prime minister, and Dost received the title of Sardar, or chief. It was about this time that the "Sardar of my tale," as the worthy Lal affectionately styles his hero, committed the first of a series of murders which, were there no other infamous deeds recorded of him, would stamp him as vile, and destroy any sympathy that his bravery in the field and notable talents might otherwise excite in his favour. A Persian secretary, one Mirza Ali Khan, by his skill and conduct as a politician, and by his kindly disposition, gained a popularity and influence which offended the ambitious brothers, and Fatah desired Dost to make away with him.

"On receiving the orders of the Vazir, Dost Mohammed armed himself cap-a-pie, and taking six men with him, went and remained waiting on the road between the house of Mohammed Azim Khan and the Mirza. It was about midnight when the Mirza passed by Dost Mohammed Khan, whom he saw, and said, 'What has brought your highness here at this late hour? I hope all is good.' He also added, that Dost Mohammed should freely command his services if he could be of any use to him. He replied to the Mirza that he had got a secret communication for him, and would tell him if he moved aside from the servants. He stopped his horse, whereupon Dost Mohammed, holding the mane of the horse with his left hand, and taking his dagger in his right, asked the Mirza to bend his head to hear him. While Dost Mohammed pretended to tell him something of his own invention, and found that the Mirza was hearing him without any suspicion, he stabbed him between the shoulders, and throwing him off his horse, cut him in many places. This was the commencement of the murders which Dost Mohammed Khan afterwards frequently committed."

Notwithstanding his high military rank and great services, Dost was very submissive to Fatah, who was greatly his senior. He acted as his cup-bearer, and was a constant attendant at his nocturnal carouses, carrying a golden goblet, and helping him to wine. The morals of both brothers were as exceptionable in private as in public life. Their biographer gives details of an intrigue between Dost and the favourite wife of Fatah; and even hints a doubt whether the Vazir was not cognizant of the intercourse, which he took no steps to check or punish. Both brothers were fond of wine, and indulged in it to excess. Dost, especially, was at one time a most unmitigated sot, although his bibulous propensities had apparently no permanent effect upon his intellects and energies. His capacity for liquor, if Lal's account be authentic, was extraordinary. "It is said that he has emptied several dozens of bottles in one night, and did not cease from drinking until he was quite intoxicated, and could not drink a drop more. He has often become senseless from drinking, and has, on that account, kept himself confined in bed during many days. He has been often seen in a state of stupidity on horseback, and having no turban, but a skull-cap, on his head." At a later period of his life, Dost Mohammed, being abroad one evening, met two of his sons, Afzal Khan, and the well-known Akhbar Khan, in an intoxicated state. Less tolerant for his children than for himself, he gave them a sound thrashing, and, not satisfied with that, took them up to the roof of a house, and threw them down on stony ground, to the risk of their lives. The mother of Akhbar heard of this, and reproached her husband with punishing others for a vice he himself was prone to. Dost hung his head, and swore to drink wine no more. We are not told whether he kept the vow, but subsequently, when he was made Amirul-Momnim, or Commander of the Faithful, he did forsake his drunken habits. On his reinstatement at Kabul, after its final abandonment by the British, he relapsed into his old courses, saying, that whilst he was an enemy to wine, he was always unlucky; but that since he had resumed drinking, his prosperity had returned, and he had gained his liberty after being in "Qaid i Frang," which, being interpreted, means an English prison. When sitting over his bottle, he can sing a good song, and play upon the *rabab*, a sort of Afghan fiddle, with very considerable skill. Altogether, and setting aside

his throat-cuttings, and a few other peculiarities, Dost Mohammed must be considered as rather a jovial and good-humoured barbarian.

Although a fervent admirer of the fair sex, the valiant Sardar occasionally, in the hurry and excitement of war and victory, forgot the respect to which it is entitled. A blunder of this description was productive of fatal consequences to his brother the Vazir. A breach of decorum overthrew a dynasty: a lady's girdle changed the destinies of a kingdom. The circumstances were as follows: – By a well-executed stratagem, Dost Mohammed surprised the city of Hirat, seized Shah Zadah Firoz, who ruled there, and plundered the palace. Not content with appropriating the rich store of jewels, gold, and silver, found in the treasury, he despoiled the inmates of the harem, and committed an offence unpardonable in Eastern eyes, by taking off the jewelled band which fastened the trowsers of the daughter-in-law of Shah Zadah. The insulted fair one sent her profaned inexpressibles to her brother, a son of Mahmud Shah, known by the euphonious appellation of Kam Ran. Kam swore to be revenged. Even Fatah Khan was so shocked at the unparalleled impropriety of his brother's conduct, that he threatened to punish him; whereupon Dost, with habitual prudence, avoided the coming storm, and took refuge with another of his brothers, then governor of Kashmir. Kam Ran came to Hirat, found that Dost had given him the slip, and consoled himself by planning, in conjunction with some other chiefs, the destruction of Fatah Khan. They seized him, put out his eyes, and brought him pinioned before Mahmud Shah, whom he himself had set upon the throne. The Shah desired him to write to his rebellious brothers to submit: he steadily refused, and Mahmud then ordered his death. "The Vazir was cruelly and deliberately butchered by the courtiers, who cut him limb from limb, and joint from joint, as was reported, after his nose, ears, fingers, and lips, had been chopped off. His fortitude was so extraordinary, that he neither showed a sign of the pain he suffered, nor asked the perpetrators to diminish their cruelties; and his head was at last sliced from his lacerated body. Such was the shocking result of the misconduct of his brother, the Sardar Dost Mohammed Khan, towards the royal female in Hirat. However, the end of the Vazir, Fatah Khan, was the end of the Sadozai reign, and an omen for the accession of the new dynasty of the Barakzais, or his brothers, in Afghanistan."

It would be tiresome to trace in detail the events that followed the Vazir's death, – the numerous battles – the treaties concluded and violated – the reverses and triumphs of the various chiefs who contended for the supremacy. To revenge their brother, and gratify their own ambition, the Barakzais united together, expelled Mahmud, and divided the country amongst themselves. Mohammed Azim, the eldest brother, took Kabul, Sultan Mohammed had Peshavar, Purdil Khan received Qandhar, and to the Sardar Dost Mohammed Ghazni was allotted. Apparently all were content with this arrangement; but, in secret, Dost was far from satisfied, and plotted to improve his share. With this view, he entered into negotiations with Ranjit Singh and the Lahore chiefs; and at last, by intrigue and treachery, rather than by force of arms, he reduced Mohammed Azim to such extremities and despair, that he retired to Kabul, and there died broken-hearted. His son, Habib-Ullah, who succeeded him, fared no better. He was turned out of Kabul, and exposed to want and misery, which broke his spirit, and rendered him insane. He left the country with his wives and children, whom he murdered on the banks of the Indus, and threw into the river.

Whilst Dost was in full career of success and aggrandisement, achieved by the most treacherous and sanguinary means, Shah Shuja raised an army in Sindh, intending to invade Qandhar and recover his dominions. A report was spread by certain discontented chiefs in Dost Mohammed's and the Qandhar camps that the English favoured Shuja's attempt. To ascertain the truth of this, Dost Mohammed addressed a letter to Sir Claude Wade, then political agent at Loodianah, requesting to know whether the Shah was supported by the English. If so, he said, he would take the state of affairs into his deliberate consideration; but if the contrary was the case, he was ready to fight the Shah. Sir Claude Wade replied, that the British government took no share in the king's expedition against the Barakzai chief, but that it wished him well. Thereupon Dost and his son Akhbar Khan marched to meet the Shah. A battle was fought in front of Qandhar, and at first victory seemed to

incline to Shuja; but by the exertions and valour of the Sardar and his son, the tide was turned, and the threatened defeat converted into a signal victory. "All the tents, guns, and camp equipage of the ever-fugitive Shah Shuja fell into the hands of the Lion of Afghanistan, and a large bundle of the papers and correspondence of various chiefs in his country with the Shah. Among these he found many letters under the real or forged seal of Sir Claude Wade, to the address of certain chiefs, stating that any assistance given to Shah Shuja should be appreciated by the British government."

Whilst Mohammed thus successfully assisted his brothers, the Qandhar chiefs, against their common foe, Shah Shuja, his other brothers, the Peshavar chiefs, were dispossessed by the Sikhs, and compelled to take refuge at Jellalabad. There, expecting that Dost would be beaten by the Shah, they planned to seize upon Kabul. Their measures were taken, and in some districts they had actually appointed governors, when they learned Shuja's defeat, and their brother's triumphant return. This was the destruction of their ambitious projects; but with true Afghan craft and hypocrisy, they put a good face upon the matter, fired salutes in honour of the victory, disavowed the proceedings of those officers who, by their express order, had taken possession of the Sardar's villages, and went out to meet him with every appearance of cordiality and joy. Although not the dupe of this seeming friendship, Dost Mohammed received them well, and declared his intention of undertaking a religious war against the Sikhs to revenge their aggressions at Peshavar, and to punish them for having dared, as infidels, to make an inroad into a Mahomedan land. In acting thus, the cunning Sardar had two objects in view. One was to obtain recruits by appealing to the fanaticism of the people, for his funds were low, and the Afghans were weary of war; the other, which he at once attained, was to get himself made king, on the ground that religious wars, fought under the name and flag of any other than a crowned head, do not entitle those who fall in them to the glory of martyrdom. The priests, chiefs, and counsellors, consulted together, and agreed that Dost Mohammed ought to assume the royal title. The Sardar, without any preparation or feast, went out of the Bala Hisar with some of his courtiers; and in Idgah, Mir Vaiz, the head-priest of Kabul, put a few blades of grass on his head, and called him "Amirul-Momnin," or, "Commander of the Faithful." Thus did the wily and unscrupulous Dost at last possess the crown he so long had coveted. Instead, however, of being inflated by his dignity, the new Amir became still plainer in dress and habits, and more easy of access than before. Finding himself in want of money for his projected war, and unable to obtain it by fair means, he now commenced a system of extortion, which he carried to frightful lengths, pillaging bankers and merchants, confiscating property, and torturing those who refused to acquiesce in his unreasonable demands. One poor wretch, a trader of the name of Sabz Ali, was thrown into prison, branded and tormented in various ways, until he expired in agony. His relatives were compelled to pay the thirty thousand rupees which it had been the object of this barbarous treatment to extort. At last five lakhs of rupees were raised, wherewith to commence the religious war. Its result was disastrous and discreditable to the Amir. Without having fought a single battle, he was outwitted and outmanœuvred, and returned crestfallen to Kabul – his brothers, the Peshavar chiefs, who were jealous of his recent elevation, having aided in his discomfiture.

Although the Amir had many enemies both at home and abroad – the most inveterate amongst the former being some of his own brothers – and although he was often threatened by great dangers, he gradually succeeded in consolidating his power, and fixing himself firmly upon the throne he had usurped. Himself faithless and treacherous, he distrusted all men; and gradually removing the governors of various districts, he replaced them by his sons, who feared him, scrupulously obeyed his orders, and followed his system of government. In time his power became so well established that the intrigues of his dissatisfied brethren no longer alarmed him. The Sikhs gave him some uneasiness, but in a battle at Jam Road, near the entrance of the Khaibar Pass, his two sons, Afzal and Akhbar, defeated them and killed their general, Hari Singh. The victory was chiefly due to Afzal, but Akhbar got the credit, through the management of his mother, the Amir's favourite wife. This unjust

partiality, to which we shall again have occasion to refer when touching upon the future prospects of Afghanistan, greatly disheartened Afzal and his brothers, and indisposed them towards their father.

The brief and imperfect outline which we have been enabled to give of the career of Dost Mohammed, and of his arrival at the supreme power in Kabul, is entirely deficient in dates. The Afghans have no records, but preserve their history solely by tradition and memory. Mohan Lal having, as before mentioned, lost his manuscripts, containing information supplied by the Amir's relations and courtiers, was afterwards unable to place the circumstances of his history in chronological order. The deficiency is not very important, since it naturally ceases to exist from the time that British India became mixed up in the affairs of Afghanistan. The fight of Jam Road, in which the Afghans were the aggressors, and which was occasioned by the Amir's cravings after the province of Peshavar, brings us up to the latter part of the year 1836. Previously and subsequently to that battle, Dost Mohammed wrote several letters to the Governor-general of India, Lord Auckland, expressing his fear of the Sikhs, and asking advice and countenance. Lord Auckland resolved to accord him both, and dispatched Sir Alexander Burnes to Kabul to negotiate the opening of the Indus navigation. The presence of the British mission at the Amir's court, and the proposals made by the Governor-general to the Maharajah to mediate between him and Dost Mohammed, sufficed to check the advance of a powerful Sikh army which Ranjit Singh had assembled to revenge the reverse of Jam Road. The Amir was not satisfied with this protection; but urged Sir Alexander Burnes to make the Sikhs give up Peshavar to him. The reply was, that Peshavar had never belonged to the Amir, but to his brothers; that Ranjit Singh was a faithful ally of the English government, which could not use its authority directly in the case; but that endeavours should be made to induce the Maharajah amicably to yield Peshavar to its former chief, Sultan Mohammed Khan. This mode of viewing the question by no means met the wishes of the ambitious Amir; for he coveted the territory for himself, and would rather have seen it remain in the hands of the Sikhs than restored to Sultan Mohammed, who was his deadly enemy.[45] He expressed his dissatisfaction in very plain terms to Sir Alexander Burnes; and perceiving that the English were not disposed to aid him in his unjustifiable projects of aggrandisement, he threw himself into the arms of Russia and Persia, to which countries he had, with characteristic duplicity, communicated his grievances and made offers of alliance, at the same time that he professed, in his letters to Lord Auckland, to rely entirely upon British counsels and friendship.

And now commenced those intrigues and machinations of Russia, of which so great a bugbear was made both in India and England. Mohan Lal maintains that the apprehensions occasioned by these manœuvres were legitimate and well-founded; that the views of Russia were encroaching and dangerous; and that her name and influence were already seriously injurious to British interests, as far even as the eastern bank of the Indus. Vague rumours of Russian power and valour had spread through British India; had been exaggerated by Eastern hyperbole, and during their passage through many mouths; and had rendered numerous chiefs, Rajput as well as Mahomedan, restless and eager for a fray. Throughout the country there was a growing belief that English power was on the eve of a reverse. We are told of the mission of Captain Vikovich, of Muscovite ducats poured into Afghan pockets, of an extension of influence sought by Russia in Turkistan and Kabul, of arms to be supplied by Persia, and of a Persian army to be marched into Afghanistan to seize upon the disputed province of Peshavar. As the companion and friend of Sir Alexander Burnes during his mission to Kabul, Mohan Lal coincides in the opinions of that officer with respect to the necessity of taking vigorous

[45] There were special reasons for the mutual hatred of these two brothers. One of the Amir's wives was a lady of the royal family of Sadozai, who, when the decline of that dynasty commenced, had attracted the attention of Sultan Mohammed Khan, and a correspondence took place between them. She prepared to leave Kabul to be married to him, when the Amir, who was also smitten with her charms, forcibly seized her and compelled her to become his wife. This at once created, and has ever since maintained, a fatal animosity between the brothers; and Sultan Mohammed Khan has often been heard to say, that nothing would afford him greater pleasure, even at breathing his last, than to drink the blood of the Amir. Such is the nature of the brotherly feeling now existing between them. – See *Life of Dost Mohammed Khan*, vol. i. p. 222, 223.

and immediate steps to counteract the united intrigues of the Shah of Persia and Count Simonich, the Russian ambassador at Tehran. This necessity was pressed upon Lord Auckland in numerous and alarming despatches from Sir A. Burnes and other Anglo-Indian diplomatists.

With such opinions and prognostications daily ringing in his ears, Lord Auckland, who at first, we are told, did not attach much importance to the Vikovich mission and the Russian intrigues, at last took fright, and prepared to adopt the decisive measures so plausibly and perseveringly urged by the alarmists. The well-known and notable plan to be resorted to, was the expulsion of the Amir Dost Mohammed and of the other Barakzai chiefs inimical to the British, and the establishment of a friendly prince upon the throne of Kabul. Who was to be chosen? Two candidates alone appeared eligible – Sultan Mohammed Khan, chief of Peshavar, brother and bitter foe of the Amir, and Shah Shuja, the deposed but legitimate sovereign of Afghanistan. The Shah, who had long lived inactive and retired at Loodianah, was believed, not without reason, to have lost any ability or talent for reigning which he had ever possessed; nevertheless, his name and hereditary right caused him to be preferred by Lord Auckland, whose advisers also were unanimous in their recommendation of Shuja. "As for Shah Shuja," wrote Sir Alexander Burnes, who had now left Kabul, in his letter to the Governor-general, dated 3d June 1838, "the British government have only to send him to Peshavar with an agent, one or two of its own regiments as an honorary escort, and an avowal to the Afghans that we have taken up his cause, to ensure his being fixed *for ever* on his throne."

"The British government," said one of those on whose information that government acted, (Mr Masson,) "could employ interference without offending half-a-dozen individuals. Shah Shuja, under their auspices, would not even encounter opposition," &c. – (*Thornton's British India*, vol. vi. p. 150.)

"Annoyed at Dost Mohammed's reception of Vikovich, the Russian emissary, and disquieted by the departure of the British agent, they (the Afghans)" says Lieutenant Wood, "looked to the Amir as the sole cause of their troubles, and thought of Shah Shuja and redress."

Sir C. Wade, Mr Lord, and other authorities supposed to be well versed in the politics of the land where mischief was imagined to be brewing, expressed opinions similar in substance to those just cited. It was decided that Shuja was the man; and Sir William M'Naghten started for the court of Lahore to negotiate a tripartite treaty between the Maharajah, the Shah, and the British government. Wade and Burnes were to co-operate with the envoy. The treaty was concluded and signed, advices from Lord Palmerston strengthened and confirmed Lord Auckland in his predilection for "vigorous measures," and a declaration of war was proclaimed and circulated throughout India and Afghanistan.

Lord Auckland is, we dare to say, a very well-meaning man – albeit not exactly of the stuff of which viceroys of vast empires ought to be made; and we willingly believe that he acted to the best of his judgment in undertaking the Afghan war. Unfortunately, that is not saying much. His lordship's advisers may have been right in supposing that the people of Kabul were weary of the Amir's extortionate and tyrannical rule, and desired the milder government of Shah Shuja; but if so, it is the more to be regretted that, when we had established Shuja on the throne, the mismanagement and want of unity of British agents – amongst whom were some of those very advisers – should so rapidly have changed the partiality of the Afghans for the Shah into contempt, their friendly dispositions towards the British into aversion and fierce hatred. Mohan Lal strenuously insists upon the blamelessness of Lord Auckland in the whole of the unfortunate affairs of Afghanistan; lauds his judicious measures, and maintains that had they not been adopted, "disasters and outbreaks would soon have appeared in the very heart of India. The object of the governor-general was to annihilate the Russian and Persian influence and intrigues in Afghanistan, both at that time, and for all time to come, unless they adopt open measures; and this object he fortunately and completely attained, in a manner worthy of the British name, and laudable to himself as a statesman." We could say a word or two on this head, but refrain, not wishing to rake up old grievances, or discuss so uninteresting a subject as Lord Auckland's merits and abilities. Mr Lal admits that his lordship made two enormous blunders: one "in appointing two such talented men as Sir William M'Naghten and Sir Alexander Burnes, to act at the same time,

in one field of honour; the second was, that on hearing of the outbreak at Kabul, he delayed in insisting upon the commander-in-chief to order an immediate despatch of the troops towards Peshavar." "He being the superior head of the government," continues this long-winded Kashmirian, "he ought not to allow hesitation to approach and to embarrass his sound judgement, at the crisis when immediate and energetic attention was required." *De mortuis nil*, &c.; and therefore, of the two unfortunate gentlemen above referred to, we will merely say, that many have considered their talents far less remarkable than their blunders. As to the Earl of Auckland – "Save me from my friends!" his lordship might well exclaim. Indecision and lack of discrimination compose a nice character for a governor-general. One great criterion of ability to rule is a judicious choice of subordinate agents. Lord Auckland's reason for not sending the reinforcements so terribly required by our troops in Kabul, is thus curiously rendered by his Eastern advocate: – "His lordship had already made every arrangement to retire from the Indian government, and therefore did not wish to prolong the time for his departure by embarking in other and new operations." Truly a most ingenious defence! So, because the governor-general was in haste to be off, an army must be consigned to destruction. Most sapient Lal! his lordship is obliged to you. "Call you that backing your friends?" May our worst enemy have you for his apologist.

We return to Dost Mohammed and his fortunes. Shah Shuja was publicly installed upon the throne; numerous chiefs tendered him their allegiance; Kalat, Qandhar, and Ghazni fell into the hands of his British allies, before the Amir himself gave sign of life. This he did by sending his brother, Navab Jabbar Khan, who was considered a stanch friend of Europeans, and especially of the English, to treat with Sir William M'Naghten. The Navab stated that the Amir was desirous to surrender, on condition that he should be made Vazir or Prime Minister of the Shah, to which post he had an hereditary claim. The condition was refused; as was also the Navab's request that his niece, the wife of Haidar Khan, the captured governor of Ghazni, should be given up to him. Altogether, the poor Navab was treated in no very friendly manner; and he returned to Kabul with his affection for the English considerably weakened. As he had long been suspected of intriguing against the Amir, he took this opportunity to wipe off the imputation, by encouraging the people to rise and oppose his brother's enemies. "The Amir called an assembly in the garden which surrounds the tomb of Taimur Shah, and made a speech, petitioning his subjects to support him in maintaining his power, and in driving off the infidels from the Mahomedan country. Many people who were present stated to me that his words were most touching and moving, but they gained no friends." He also invented various stories to frighten the lower orders into resistance, saying that during their march from Sindh to Ghazni, the English had ill-treated the women, and boiled and eaten the young children. Arguments and lies – all were in vain. The Kohistanis, his own subjects, who had been induced to rise against him, descended from their valley, and threatened to attack the Kabulis, if they allowed the Amir to remain amongst them. The army of the Indus drew near, and at last Dost Mohammed abandoned the city, and fled to Bamian, leaving his artillery and heavy baggage at Maidan. There it was taken possession of by the British, and given up to Shah Shuja; and on the 7th of August 1839, that prince, after an exile of thirty years, re-entered the capital of his kingdom.

Hard upon the track of the fugitive Amir, followed Colonel Outram, with several other officers, and some Afghans under Haji Khan Kaker, in all about eight hundred foot and horse. Dost Mohammed had with him a handful of followers, including the Navab Jabbar Khan and Akhbar Khan, the latter of whom was sick and travelled in a litter. On the 21st August, Colonel Outram was informed that he was within a day's march of the object of his pursuit, whose escape, on that occasion, he attributes to the treachery of Haji Khan. One night the Hazarahs stole twenty of the Amir's horses, which greatly reduced the numbers of his little escort. At last, however, he found himself in safety amongst the Uzbegs, and thence wished to proceed to Persia; but the difficulties of the road, already nearly impassible on account of the snow, decided him to accept the proferred protection of the Amir of Bokhara. By this half-mad monarch he was very queerly treated; at one time his life was in peril – a treacherous attempt being made to drown him, his sons, and relations, whilst crossing the river

Oxus in a boat. At last he was forbidden to leave his house, even to make his prayers at the mosque, and was in fact a prisoner. His two sons, Afzal and Akhbar, shared his captivity.

For the easy conquest of Afghanistan, and for the popularity of the English during the early days of its occupation, a long string of reasons is given by Mohan Lal. By various parts of his conduct, especially by his injustice and extortions, the Amir had made himself unpopular with the Afghans, who, on the other hand, remembered the liberality displayed by the Honourable Montstuart Elphinstone in the days of his mission to Kabul, and being by nature exceedingly avaricious, hoped to derive immense profit and advantage from British occupation of their country. The recent intercourse and friendship of the Amir with the Shah of Persia had also excited the indignation of his subjects, who, being Sunnies by sect, were deadly enemies of the Persian Shias. The English, in short, were as popular as the Barakzais were detested. Nevertheless it behoved the Shah Shuja and his European supporters to be circumspect and conciliatory; for Dost Mohammed was still at large, and lingering on the frontier, and any offence given to the Kabulis might be the signal for his recall. "Notwithstanding," says Mohan Lal, "all these points of grave concern, we sent a large portion of the army back, with Lord Keane, to India; and yet we interfered in the administration of the country, and introduced such reforms amongst the obstinate Afghans just on our arrival, as even in India, the quietest part of the world, Lords Clive and Wellesley had hesitated to do but slowly." The administration of the principal frontier towns was now confided to the Shah's officers; but these were not suffered to rule undisturbed, for Sir W. MacNaghten's political assistants every where watched their conduct and interfered in their jurisdictions. The occult nature of this interference prevented benefit to the people, whilst it caused a disregard for the local authorities. An undecided course was the bane of our Afghanistan policy. The government was neither entirely taken into the hands of the British, nor wholly left in those of the Shah. Outwardly, we were neutral; in reality, we constantly interfered: thus annoying the king and disappointing the people. Shah Shuja grew jealous of British influence, and began to suspect that he was but the shadow of a sovereign, a puppet whose strings were pulled for foreign advantage. Sir A. Burnes introduced reductions in the duties on all articles of commerce. Trade improved, but the Shah's servants frequently deviated from the new tariff, and extorted more than the legal imposts. When complaints were made to the English, they were referred to the Shah's Vazir, Mulla Shakur, who, instead of giving redress, beat and imprisoned the aggrieved parties for having appealed against the king's authority. Persons known to be favoured by the English were vexed and annoyed by the Shah's government; and it soon became evident that Mulla Shakur was striving to form a party for Shuja, in order to make him independent of British support. The people began to look upon the Shah as the unwilling slave of the Europeans; the priests omitted the "Khutbah," or prayer for the king, saying that it could only be recited for an independent sovereign. Soon the high price of provisions gave rise to grave dissensions. The purchases of grain made by the English commissariat raised the market, and placed that description of food out of reach of the poorer classes. Forage, meat, and vegetables, all rose in proportion, and a cry of famine was set up. Both in town and country, the landlords and dealers kept back the produce, or sent the whole of it to the English camp. A proclamation made by Mulla Shakur, forbidding the hoarding of provisions, or their sale above a fixed price, was disregarded. The poor assembled in throngs before the house of Sir A. Burnes, who was compelled to make gratuitous distributions of bread. At last the Shah's government adopted the course usual in Afghanistan in such emergencies; the store-keepers were seized, and compelled to sell their grain at a moderate price. They complained to the English agents, who unwisely interfered. Mohan Lal was ordered to wait upon Mulla Shakur, and to request him to release the traders. The result of this was a universal cry throughout the kingdom, that the English were killing the people by starvation. What wretched work was this? what miserable mismanagement? and how deluded must those men have been who thought it possible, by pursuing such a course, to conciliate an ignorant and barbarous people, and secure the permanence of Shah Shuja's reign? "After the outbreak of Kabul," says Mohan Lal, whose evidence on these matters must have weight, as that of an eyewitness, and of

one who, from his position as servant of the East India Company, would not venture to distort the truth, "when I was concealed in the Persian quarters, I heard both the men and the women saying that the English enriched the grain and the grass-sellers, &c., whilst they reduced the chiefs to poverty and killed the poor by starvation."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.