

vernment, without materially checking the progress of his ambition.

Two of the principal advantages of withholding the declaration required seem to be, first, that government will be at liberty to come forward at any time when circumstances may require its interference; and, secondly, that the independent Sikh chiefs are not compelled to resign themselves in despair to the sovereignty of Runjeet Singh.

With respect to the first of these, I beg leave, with the utmost deference, to suggest as one of the grounds on which the sentiments which I am expressing are founded, that the right of self-defence cannot be altogether abandoned by a general declaration of non-interference. The same circumstances which would induce government now to oppose Runjeet Singh's progress on the frontier, viz., the dangerous operation of that progress against the interests of the British Government, might authorise, or, on the permanent principle of self-defence, to interfere hereafter, notwithstanding the declaration, if, as may not now be expected, his progress should become dangerous.

This is conceived on the presumption that government has it not at present in contemplation to oppose Runjeet Singh in his attempts to subjugate the Sikhs. If I am mistaken in this presumption, the case is altered, but then it may be observed, his encroachments are already nearly as far advanced as they can be, and he is not likely to be checked except by immediate opposition.

The other advantage of avoiding such a declaration to which I have alluded, viz., that as long as the British Government does not declare that it will never defend any of the Sikh chiefs against Runjeet Singh, these chiefs are not compelled to resign themselves in despondency to his sovereignty, must, I apprehend, be gradually diminished by his increasing unresisted aggressions, and it does not appear that any are led on by the hope of preserving their independence, and obtaining the eventual protection of the British Government, to offer any