

From East to West.

(From a Military Correspondent in Afghanistan.)

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,—I can only re-echo your wish that you were here now, though I do not doubt for a moment that you would be breaking your heart, as I am, at the chaos of affairs in this country. Friends write and ask me to say what will be the result of it all, to tell them what is the best solution of the Afghan question? Every one has now become an upholder of the Lawrencian policy. But it is too late. Most of us of that school who raised up our voices and used our pens against any advance into the country see no other solution of the Afghan question than a total annexation of this huge frontier province or quadrilateral. The anarchy and confusion is hopeless, and I say that just as the murder of Cavagnari was laid at the door of Lord Lytton, so I now honestly declare that a total withdrawal of our forces from either northern or southern Afghanistan will be a national crime to be laid at the door of that Government which orders it. No one appreciates more than I do the immense burden which would be thrown on the Indian revenues by annexation, a burden such as India alone would find it difficult to bear; no one would more candidly admit than I do—and I laid great stress on this fact four years ago, when trying in a humble way to show the folly of a war—that the country can never support the expense of an army necessary to hold it in peace and safety, but at the same time I see no prospect of any one man being able to hold the reins of Government without the aid of British bayonets. If we leave the country, we leave every one who has given us the slightest assistance during our occupation, to murder and rapine, and in my opinion the British flag, the British honor of which we are all so justly proud, will be fouled with a stain so deep and black as to be indelible. I write strongly as I feel strongly. Only the other day the Logar Valley was occupied by a brigade or division of the Kabul army. Our troops were rationed and assisted by the Sirdar of the district. Hardly were our forces withdrawn than the Sirdar and all his followers were foully murdered, and publicly too, for having been friendly to us. And this same fate awaits hundreds and thousands. To me it is a wonder that they help us in any way after the public proclamation of our withdrawal. I firmly believe that all the people and a great number of the Sirdars would welcome us as conquerors and occupiers of their country. To come to minor political points, we have raised up, by our own ill-digested policy, a host of aspirants to the throne, and have allowed numbers of quite unknown and formerly impotent chiefs to taste the fascinating sweets of independence. For months past these have been roaming the country and carrying sword and fire at their wicked will. Will they quietly accept a Lew Ameer, whoever he may be? Whereas three years ago there were only three aspirants to the "Guddee," viz: Yahob Khan, Abdoola Jan and Abdul Rahman, now there are at least ten. Of these I believe the former to be the strongest; but, of course, after his murderous treachery he cannot be allowed to return. Abdul Rahman, I infer, has been too long away from Afghanistan to have any real hold on the people. Abdoola Jan would probably have a strong following, but no general or powerful influence. As for the others we need not name them. The hatred of the English in Afghanistan, fanned as it by fanaticism of the Mullahs, has become so intense now that it has become known that we are about to withdraw from the country, that we may say the part of the Afghans the strife is a religious war, to drive us beyond the frontier. Our forced inaction all tends to increase and encourage this feeling, and to me there seems to be but one solution—Annexation. We may have to beat and break up each of these chiefs in succession, but there will be a large proportion of the Afghans—those who have helped us already and those who would have but for fear of after consequences, who will join our standard at once. For years our difficulties would be great, perhaps even the next generation might not see the taming of some of the tribes, but we should have saved thousands from a merciless death, and keep our national honor unstained. If I could only hope that we could find a strong man who would give us some tangible security for the well-being and safety of those friends we left behind us, then I say let us clear out of the country south as well as north as fast as possible. But I cannot bring myself to realize an Afghan monarch true, staunch and powerful enough to be capable of carrying out a humane policy. For enlightenment we cannot look. Mercy is not a component part of Pathan nature. Annexation, with all its evils, with all its burdens is the only solution possible of the Afghan question, as it now stands in July, 1880. There, old friend, I have let my thoughts run away with my pen. When you are reading this by your fire-side in Canada, you may have telegrams in your hands crying how utterly wrong I am in all I have written. I would ask you to wait. Our difficulties began in 1841, when the Governor of India ordered a partial withdrawal of the troops. Let us see what will

of the Afghans won't accept. But there, I have bored you enough with my evil prognostications and become verbose into the bargain. The numbers of your new military journals reached me all safely and actually—such are the vagaries of our postal service—before your letter. I think the attempt capital, and you must certainly place my name on your list as a subscriber. I am so glad to see Canada attracting attention in more ways than one. I come down as one of your Manitoban colonists. I shall never set foot in England, and should like to hang up my sword with yours.

Afghanistan, 11th July, 1880.

Echoes from the Military Clubs.

(From a London correspondent.)

We are all distressed at the sad news arrived to-day from India, Colonel St. John, Royal Engineers, who sends the telegram from Candahar is an old friend of mine. His knowledge of the country and language led to his appointment as political adviser to General Burrows. It now appears that the General did not arrive at Candahar among the first, but a doctor of the same name. The General has come into Candahar with the remainder of his Brigade. I know the Afghans, and therefore can safely say that no wounded or prisoners need be looked for—all left behind are slain.

The cause of the disaster would appear to rest with those who left a brigade of troops 50 miles from their base, when an army was known to be advancing upon them. With regard to the fight, I do not see any blame to be attached to any one. The General marched out to fight when the enemy appeared in battle array. This is the correct thing in India; to retire is to bring every man of the enemy and every villager en route on one's back.

The battle having begun, the 36 Afghan guns being well managed, and also of a superior calibre, soon began to tell on our 6 horse artillery guns. Then followed the advance of 12,000 men against our 2,500, ending in a rush of swordsmen. It is said to be one of the most stirring sights to see the onward rush of 4,000 or 5,000 of these stalwart hillmen, exactly as did the Highlanders of old. The two Bombay regiments of Native Infantry were shaken and fell back on the 86th, and it is probable that in less than five minutes afterwards a mixed, confused and retreating fight began, ending as we are told in little short of a total destruction.

It is now that the want of a railway to Candahar is felt. That reminds me that the Premier of Canada is in London attending to your great railway, the Pacific line. Some of your people argue that as this railway assists Imperial interests, England ought to assist in its construction. Nothing could be fairer, and I cannot help thinking that when the Royal Defence Commission delivers its finding, that Sir John Macdonald's hands will be greatly strengthened in his arduous task of forming a Company for your line, I have reason to believe that the Royal Defence Commission will dwell on the necessity of securing Esquimaux Harbor and the coal mine of Nanaimo against all comers. It has lately been pointed out in the London press that these valuable localities are, in fact, the terminus of Sir John Macdonald's Railway. I believe that Esquimaux will in time become an Imperial station of the greatest importance, and, therefore, it will have a strong garrison and dockyard, and the coal mines will also be protected. To carry out this, it is plain that the railway will be of the greatest possible use to the station, and that the latter will increase the value of the railway. The one will act on the other in the most beneficial manner. It is not easy, however, to let this be known through our press, and, therefore, to those who would probably take shares in the undertaking. The public must be educated up to the point, and especially in their