

standpoint. At the meeting Sher Ali showed himself eager to enter into much closer relations with the Indian government. He asked for a definite treaty, a fixed annual subsidy, assistance in arms and men whenever he should think needful to solicit it, an obligation on the part of the British to support his throne and dynasty, and the recognition of his favourite younger son, Abdulla Jan, as heir to the throne, instead of Yakub Khan, the elder son, who had helped so much in the past to restore him to the throne, but had since incurred his bitter enmity. These terms, however, went far beyond anything that Lord Mayo or the home government was prepared to concede. It is clear that they would dangerously have linked up British power and prestige in India with the fortunes of a notoriously unstable Oriental dynasty. Upon Lord Mayo was laid a difficult and delicate task. He was practically required to refuse all these proposals and yet retain, if possible, the friendship of Sher Ali. He succeeded mainly because of his diplomatic management of the interview, personal charm, and warm, hospitable, Irish manner, which quite won the heart of the Afghan chief.

While Lord Mayo told Sher Ali that under no circumstances would a British soldier cross his frontier to assist him in coercing rebellious subjects, and that no treaty binding us to give him or his dynasty unconditional support could even be considered, he gave him a written promise of moral support to be followed by gifts of money, arms, and ammunition whenever the British government deemed it desirable. Sher Ali was also informed that we should 'view with severe displeasure' any attempt to oust him from his throne. Exactly how much satisfaction he was expected to derive from this statement is perhaps not clear, but the important thing was that he was sent away on the whole contented, charmed with the geniality of the Viceroy, for whom he contracted a romantic friendship, and obviously