

CHAPTER II

LORD ELGIN AND LORD LAWRENCE. OUR RELATIONS WITH AFGHANISTAN

THE new Viceroy, Lord Elgin, had been in his undergraduate days at Christ Church, Oxford, a contemporary and friend of both Dalhousie and Canning. As Governor of Jamaica from 1842 to 1846, and Governor-General of Canada from 1846 to 1854, he had enjoyed wide experience of colonial administration. In both these positions, and in the former immediately, he had succeeded the great Indian statesman, Sir Charles (afterwards Lord) Metcalfe. Appointed in 1857 special envoy and plenipotentiary to China, at the request of Lord Canning but on his own responsibility he had diverted to India, on the outbreak of the Mutiny, troops destined for the Further East, and had conducted the peace negotiations after the Chinese War of 1860. He assumed office in Calcutta in 1862, succeeding in his own words 'to a great man and a great war, with a humble task to be humbly discharged'.¹ Time failed him to display his undoubted abilities in the field of Indian administration, for he died at the hill station of Dharmasala, after a little more than a year of office, in November 1863.

At the time of his death a great danger threatened on the north-west frontier, and the Governor-Generalship was offered to Sir John Lawrence, who had so wide and profound a knowledge of that district and its troublesome peoples. At Sitana on the spurs of the Hindu Kush range, north of

¹ *Letters and Journals of Lord Elgin*, by T. Walrond, C.B., London, 1872, p. 396.