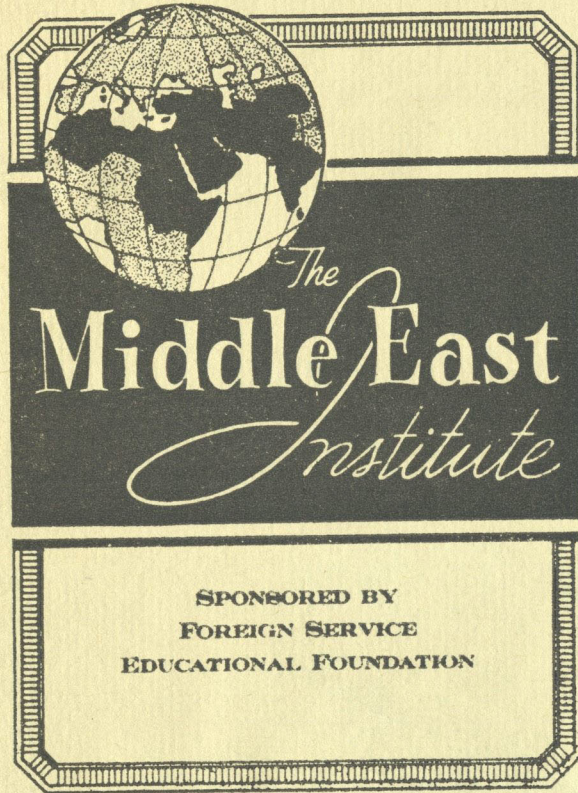


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New Year's Day, 1912.

THE PERSIAN CRISIS

of

December, 1911;

How It Arose and Whither It

May Lead Us

Compiled for the Use of The Persia Committee

By

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The present crisis in Persia, by far the most serious which has yet occurred, is directly due to a series of aggressive and provocative acts on the part of the Russian Government, or at any rate of its agents in Persia, which, continued since the early days of the establishment of Constitutional Government five years ago, have become very much more open and violent during the last six months.

Until the deposition of Muhammad Ali, the ex-Shah, in July, 1909, there was a constant struggle between him and his people. Although on his accession in January, 1907, and on several subsequent occasions, he swore fidelity to the Constitution granted by his father, Muzaffar-ud-Din, in the previous autumn, he persistently strove to recover the autocratic powers enjoyed by his ancestors. Within a year of his accession, in December, 1907, he attempted by a coup d'etat to destroy the Majlis or Parliament, while in the following June (1908) he succeeded, aided by his Cossacks and their Russian officers (of whom Colonel Liakhoff attained the chief notoriety), in bombarding and destroying the Parliament, killing or imprisoning a number of the leading reformers, and re-establishing autocratic government. The city of Tabriz, however, withstood this attempt to restore the old regime, and sustained a siege of nine months. By April, 1909, the city was reduced to the verge of starvation, and finally, with the approval of the British Foreign Office, a Russian force, commanded by General Znarsky, marched to Tabriz, raised the siege, and re-opened the roads. Although, as has been often pointed out, the effect of this step was unquestionably to avert what threatened to be a terrible catastrophe and to put an end to much suffering, it cannot be forgotten that consideration for the safety of the inhabitants was avowedly not the motive which prompted the sending of the

expedition. "It seems to me," wrote Sir Arthur Nicholson (at that time British Ambassador at St Petersburg, now Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office), "that it would be the Nationalists who would profit by the arrival of the Russian force, but I submit that the chief object to be kept in view is the safety of the Consuls, even at the risk of the measures which circumstances have rendered necessary proving of benefit to the popular movement at Tabriz" (White Book [Cd. 4733], No. 208). In spite of numerous and solemn promises that these troops would be withdrawn as soon as normal conditions were restored, they have remained at Tabriz in greater or lesser number from that day till this, and their presence has in many ways and on many occasions put great difficulties in the way of the Persian Government officials.

Meanwhile, encouraged by the protracted resistance offered by Tabriz to Muhammad Ali, two separate movements for the restoration of Constitutional Government arose and gathered force. Of one of these the centre was Resht, near the Caspian Sea, while the other involved the Bakhtiyari tribesmen who dwell to the south-west of Isfahan. Two armies, bent on marching on Teheran and compelling Muhammad Ali to restore the Constitution, were thus formed, and early in May, 1909, began a simultaneous advance on the capital, in spite of warnings from the Russian and British Legations, and threats that, in case of their persisting in their advance, a large number of Russian troops might be brought into the country "to guard the Teheran-Caspian road." Both Colonel Liakhoff, commander of the Shah's Persian Cossacks, and the Times correspondent were very confident at this time "that the (Cossack) Brigade alone was sufficient to deal with any attack by Revolutionaries or Bakhtiyaris, singly or combined," and the Times correspondent added that though the Russian officers in command of the Brigade were no longer on the active list of the Russian army, they were nevertheless "completely under the control of the Russian Government, owing to the fact that their pensions and their prospect of future re-instatement depend on their acting in

accordance with the wishes of St Petersburg." It must therefore be assumed that the active part taken by those Russian officers (Blazenoff, Zapolski and Peribonozoff) in the fight at Badamak on July 11 and 12, and in Teheran on July 13--17 by Colonel Liakhoff was "in accordance with the wishes of St Petersburg," and though Liakhoff was removed from Persia three weeks later (on August 4) it was not because he had fought but because he had failed to make good his boasts as to his ability to defeat the Nationalists. The astonishing thing is that, owing to some extraordinary lapse of memory, Sir Edward Grey should have publicly stated on three separate occasions (July 27, November 27 and December 14, 1911) that "if those Russian officers (of the Cossack Brigade) had interfered or lifted a finger, and used their influence in Teheran, the Shah would never have been expelled." Any reference to the contemporary accounts published in the Press, especially in the Times, would have shown him that they exerted themselves to the utmost to defeat the Nationalists, and failed.

The victorious Nationalists used their success with a moderation which excited the admiration even of the then Times correspondent. "Their behaviour," he telegraphed on July 14, 1909, "has been irreproachable. Order has been maintained in those parts of the town which they occupy, they have shewn mercy to their prisoners, and altogether they evince a laudable desire to carry out their plans in a civilized manner." Similarly the Daily Telegraph correspondent declared that "the behaviour of the Revolutionaries was absolutely correct," that "they were perfectly capable of maintaining order," and that "all were full of praise for their wisdom in preventing complications." The casualties on both sides amounted to about 500, according to the most authentic accounts, and it is worth noting that only one European was injured by a stray bullet during the five days street fighting.

The deposition of Muhammad Ali (who, seeing his cause to be hopeless, had taken refuge at the Russian Legation) next followed, but the negotiations as to his disposal and

pension were protracted until Sept. 7, 1909, when the Protocol concerning his abdication was finally signed. The yearly allowance which the Persian Government was to pay him was fixed at 100,000 tumans (116,666) a year; and the representatives of Russia and Great Britain on their part gave the following guarantee (Article 11 of the Protocol, Blue Book /Cd. 5120/, pp. 130-131, Inclosure in No. 232):--

"Art. 11. The two representatives undertake to give his Majesty Mohammed Ali Mirza strict injunctions to abstain in future from all political agitation against Persia, and the Imperial Russian Government promise on their side to take all effective steps in order to prevent any such agitation on his part. If His Majesty Mohammed Ali Mirza leaves Russia, and if it is proved to the satisfaction of the two Legations that in any country other than Russia he has carried on political agitation against Persia, the Persian Government shall have the right to cease payment of his pension."

During the Nationalist advance on Teheran, Russia had conveyed some 3000 more troops (on July 8) to Resht and Kazvin, and on July 13, 1909, Sir E. Grey admitted, in reply to a question by Mr Flynn, that there were some 4000 troops at Tabriz, 1700 between Resht and Kazvin, and 500 more in other places, adding that they would be withdrawn as soon as they were no longer required "for the protection of foreign lives and property from the possibility of danger."

During the two years which intervened between the deposition of Muhammad Ali and the first stages of the present crisis it might be supposed that the Persians, rid of their incubus, were free to devote themselves to the task of reforming the government of their country, and especially the finances. They were, however, hampered from the first by a series of troubles for most of which agents and partisans of the ex-Shah, aided and abetted in many cases by Russian officials, were responsible.

Thus in August, 1909, Rahim Khan, the notorious brigand who had played so conspicuous a part in the siege of Tabriz, revolted against the new regime. On August 29 he was captured by the Russians, but was released by them on

September 18 on payment of £20,000 Turkish and 180 camels. A month later he attacked Ardabil, thus affording a pretext to Russia for sending fresh troops into the country and for postponing the withdrawal of the troops already at Kazvin, and on November 9 he was threatening to march on Teheran, overturn the Constitutional Government, and restore the ex-Shah. By this time the Persian Government had already been compelled to spend £25,000 in the equipment of an army to take the field against him. On December 31, 1909, this army, led by Yeprem Khan, obtained a signal success against him, and on January 24, 1910, they had so far surrounded him that his only way of escape lay across the Russian frontier. The Persian Government called the attention of the Russian Government to this fact, and to Article XIV of the Treaty of Turkmanchay, in which it is provided that "His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias also promises on his part not to permit Persian refugees to establish themselves or take up their abode in the Khanates of Karabagh, Nakhchawan, or that part of the Khanate of Erivan situated on the right bank of the River Araxes," and begged them not to allow Rahim Khan to escape across their frontier, but nevertheless he was permitted to do so, and remained in Russian territory until January 1911, when he returned to Tabriz.

The case of Darab Mirza, a Persian prince naturalized as a Russian subject and holding a commission in the Labinsky Cossack regiment, which formed part of the Russian army of occupation at Kazvin, was even more flagrant. At the end of May, 1910, he obtained leave of absence, went to Zanjan, and endeavoured to overthrow the Constitutional Government there. In spite of the protests of the Persian Government, which were sent to arrest him. While returning with him to Kazvin they fell in with the Persian force sent to subdue him, fired upon them, and killed Ali Khan, the Persian officer in command. The Russian authorities denied all complicity in Darab Mirza's attempt to provoke civil war, but unfortunately for these denials a dossier of original documents has

reached this country containing incontestable evidence of the complicity of the Russian Colonel Rakuza, who supplied numerous disaffected Persians associated with Darab Mirza in his enterprize with safe conducts, written in Persian, but signed and sealed by himself in Russian, declaring the bearers to be under the protection of the Emperor of Russia, and threatening the direst penalties to any Persian official who should interfere with them or their families and followers. Some of the most active of Darab Mirza's supporters were supplied with such safe conducts signed by Colonel Rakuza.

Mention should also be made of the massacre of villagers at Varmuni near Astara by Russian troops in February, 1911, in which some 60 persons, including women and children, were slain; and of the case of Rashid-ul-Mulk, ex-Governor of Ardabil, who was imprisoned at Tabriz on a charge of treachery, but was forcibly released by the Russian Consul-General on July 28, 1911.

These were some of the endless series of troubles which continued, from the restoration of the Constitution in July, 1909, until the present time to embarrass, harrass, weaken and impoverish the Persian Government, which was never for a moment left free to devote its energies to the restoration of order in the more distant parts of Persia, especially the South. A fresh series of embarrassments was created by the obstacles placed by Russia and England in the way of Persia's attempt to obtain a loan, save a joint Anglo-Russian loan involving on Persia's part the acceptance of terms of tutelage incompatible with the national independence which she desired above all things to maintain. On December 13, 1909, Persia enquired of the two Governments on what terms such a loan (of £500,000) would be granted to her; but on April 10, 1910, two days after the expiry of Russia's Railway Concession, she rejected the proposed conditions as inconsistent with her national safety. Two months later she entered into negotiations with a private firm in London (Seligmann's) for a loan, and this was on the point of being concluded on terms satisfactory to both parties when, in October, 1910, the negotiations were frustrated by the action of the British acting in

harmony with the Russian Government, which latter at the same time prevented Persia from realizing money on the Crown jewels, said to have been valued by a French expert at £750,000. On August 25, 1910, Russia had also endeavoured to extort fresh concessions as the price of withdrawing her troops; a tacit admission on her part that their presence was no longer necessary for the protection of European residents which drew forth a remonstrance even from the Times.

About this time also occurred certain important changes in the diplomatic and consular services of Russia and England which corresponded with a harsher and more vigorous attitude of the two Powers towards Persia, and with a marked unfriendliness on the part of France (followed by England) towards Turkey which led immediately to a rapprochement between that country and Germany.

These changes began with the departure of Lord Hardinge at Fenshurst (formerly Sir Charles Hardinge) from the British Foreign Office to take up the position of Viceroy of India, and the advent in his place of Sir Arthur Nicholson, hitherto British Ambassador at St Petersburg; an appointment warmly applauded by the organs of the Russian Government. About the same time (end of September, 1910) M. Izvolsky, the chief upholder in Russia of the Anglo-Russian Agreement, was removed from the position of Foreign Minister which he had hitherto held and sent as Ambassador to Paris, his place being taken at the Russian Foreign Office by M. Sazonoff, a reputed Germanophile. Last, but not least, M. Fokhitanoff, whose violent and high-handed behaviour when Consul-General at Tabriz was notorious, and who, with his colleague M. Petroff, was directly responsible for the two Ultimatums of November last which have produced the present crisis, was sent as Russian Consul to Teheran in October, 1910. Almost simultaneously (October 16) was despatched the British note to Persia on the state of the Southern Roads which was at first described as an "Ultimatum," though later attempts were made to invest it with a milder character. Represented in Vienna as "the debut of Sir Arthur Nicholson, an energetic and unscrupulous

politician," it caused the greatest excitement and alarm not only in Persia but in Turkey, where, at a great protest meeting held at Constantinople on October 23, 1910, violent speeches were made denouncing the action of England and Russia towards Persia, and an appeal was telegraphed to the German Emperor as the only European monarch animated by friendly feelings towards Islam. This appeal, which apparently evoked no reply, did not benefit Islam, but it probably greatly strengthened the German Emperor's position in dealing with the Tsar at Potsdam on November 5, 1910, and in formulating the terms of the celebrated Potsdam Agreement which came as such a disagreeable surprise to England and France when its terms became known. From this point onwards Russia, assured of Germany's recognition (on certain terms) of her "sphere of influence" in Persia, appears to have had the whip-hand over England, and to have been able (probably by threats, expressed or implied, of a closer rapprochement with Germany) to compel her partner to acquiesce with ever diminishing resistance in the abandonment of that respect for the "independence and integrity" of Persia which both Powers had repeatedly and solemnly declared to be the underlying principle on which the Anglo-Russian Agreement of August 31, 1907, was based.

To return to events in Persia. On October 29, 1910, Husayn-Kuli Khan, the Persian Foreign Minister, a man of unusual capacity and integrity, informed the two Legations that the Persian Government, having intercepted treasonable correspondence between the ex-Shah and some of the Turkman tribes on the Persian frontier east of the Caspian, proposed in accordance with the terms of the Protocol of August 25, 1909, to stop the payment of the next instalment of his allowance pending further investigations. In response to this communication not only did the two Legations refuse to consider the allegation against the ex-Shah, and insist on the immediate payment of the allowance, but they subjected Husayn-Kuli Khan to the insult of sending two Legation servants (ghulams) to follow him about everywhere, even into his house, until the money was paid. Strong protests were

made by the Persian Government at the humiliation thus inflicted upon them, which, though represented by Sir E. Grey in Parliament as "the custom of the country," was in fact an unprecedented and unparalleled outrage. The Russian Legation was, however, bent on getting rid of Husayn-Kuli Khan, whom they disliked both on account of his fearlessness and uprightness and his English education and alleged Anglophil tendencies; and on November 16, 1910, the Russian Minister demanded an apology from him for an alleged insult to the Russian Consular Agent at Kashan, a Persian of bad repute named Agha Hasan, to whose appointment the Persian Government had consistently objected. Finally Husayn-Kuli Khan was driven to resign on December 27, 1910.

Hardly had the ex-Shah's pension been paid as a result of the pressure described above, when it transpired that he had left Odessa (unknown, as was pretended, to the Russian Government) and started on a journey of intrigue through Europe, in the course of which he visited Vienna, Brussels, Berlin, Rome, Meran, Nice, Paris and other places where his old adherents were living in exile, and made his plans for the attempt to regain his throne which occurred last summer.

Early in the year 1911 occurred two assassinations which produced a very bad effect in Persia, because in both cases the assassins were claimed by Russia as her subjects, and were removed from Persian jurisdiction. The first case occurred on February 1 at Isfahan, when a certain Abbas, an ex-chief of police, shot at and wounded the Governor, Mutamad-i-Khakan, and killed his cousin, and then took refuge in the Russian Consulate. The second case occurred at Teheran five days later, when the Minister of Finance, Sani-ud-Dawla, a reputed Germanophil who appears to have been engaged in trying to negotiate a loan for Persia, was shot by two Georgians, who succeeded in wounding four of the police before they were arrested. Two days later the new Regent, Nasir-ul-Mulk, who had been elected to this responsible position on the death of Azud-ul-Mulk in the previous autumn, finally returned to Teheran. His advent aroused fresh hopes, especially as (in compliment, it was said, to him,

and to add prestige to his assumption to the Regency) the bulk of the Russian garrison (except 80 Cossacks) were withdrawn from Kazvin on March 13, a month after his arrival.

The next four months were probably, in spite of continued intrigues directed against the Government, the most hopeful which Persia experienced during these stormy years, May witnessed the arrival of Mr Morgan Shuster and the other American financial experts whom Persia had engaged to organize her revenue and expenditure. To enforce the payment of legal taxes by means of a carefully selected Treasury Gendarmerie was soon recognized as the first necessity. This organization was beginning to take shape in July, and the command of the new force was offered by Mr Shuster to Captain C. B. Stokes of the Indian Army, whose period of service as Military Attache to the British Legation had just come to an end. At first the British Government raised no objection, and Captain Stokes was given to understand that his resignation would be accepted; but within ten days Russia had protested against this appointment, on the ground that it involved the employment of a British officer in the so-called "Russian Sphere," and was therefore "contrary to the spirit of the Anglo-Russian Agreement." Prolonged negotiations ensued, and for a time there seemed some hope that Russia would waive her objection on learning that the appointment had no political significance, but had been determined on simply because no other available officer possessed Captain Stokes's exceptional qualifications for the post. The Novoe Vremya, however, and other reactionary organs of the Russian Press violently denounced the appointment, and the situation was suddenly further complicated by the reappearance of the ex-Shah on Persian territory with a considerable following of Turkmans, accompanied by his brother Shua-us-Saltana. He had returned through Russia, crossed the Caspian in a Russian steamer, the Christophoros, and was said to be accompanied by six Russian Naval Officers, while the Russian cargo-boat Djabbar lay at hand on the Caspian to enable him to retrace his steps if his adventure should fail. His second brother, Salar-ud-Dawla, meanwhile entered Persian territory on the

Western side, across the Turkish frontier, and, collecting an array of Lurs, attacked Kirmanshah.

Confronted by this double invasion and further harrassed by the Russian objections to Captain Stokes's appointment and the vigorous campaign they had now instituted against the able and honest American Treasurer-General, Mr Morgan Shuster, the Persian Government in vain protested to Russia and Great Britain against the violation of Article 11 of the Protocol of August 25, 1909, involved in the ex-Shah's return. The two Powers, while admitting that the ex-Shah had certainly forfeited his pension, declined to take any further steps in the matter, which, they said, now concerned only the Persian Government. Every effort was therefore made by the Persians to put an end to this fresh and most serious menace, and, after some indecisive engagements and many wild reports, the ex-Shah's most capable general Arshad-ud-Dawla was defeated and shot on September 5. The victory of the Government troops was complete, and a few days later the ex-Shah re-embarked on the Russian boat and fled back to Russia. Three weeks later his brother Salar-ud-Dawla suffered an equally decisive defeat in the West at Sawa and Nawbaran, and fled to Europe on October 4, while Hamadan, which he had occupied, was retaken by the Government troops two days later.

Now at last it seemed that, freed from these dangers, which it had overcome by its own energy, and from the burden of the ex-Shah's large allowance, the Persian Government might hope for a little breathing-space. But no sooner was it evident that the ex-Shah had hopelessly failed in his attempt than fresh difficulties were raised by both Russia and England. England, making no allowance for the serious preoccupations which had rendered it impossible for the Persian Government to send troops to restore order in the South, announced her intention of sending a number of Indian troops to Fars; while though, according to the Times, the Persian Government behaved in the most conciliatory manner towards Russia, a Russo-Persian conflict was provoked on October 9, by the overbearing conduct of Messrs Pokhitanoff and Petroff. The

property of the ex-Shah's brother Shua-us-Saltana, who had taken part in the recent rebellion, was declared confiscated by the Persian Government, and Treasury Gendarmes were placed in charge of his estates of Mansuriyya, Dawlatabad and Mansurabad. The notorious M. Pokhitanoff, the Russian Consul-General, regardless of the fact that Shua-us-Saltana had placed himself under Turkish, not Russian, protection, and that, according to his own will, he not only owed nothing to the Russian Bank, but had a credit there of 18,000 tumans (13600), took upon himself to interfere. Two members of the Russian Consulate in uniform, accompanied by ten Russian Cossacks, entered the house and threatened to fire on the five Treasury Gendarmes unless they at once retired, which they did. Next day a strong body of Treasury Gendarmes returned, and, finding only a small guard of Persian Cossacks, evicted them. "All these proceedings," said the Times correspondent in his telegram of October 10, "appear to have been due to the initiative of M. Pokhitanoff, the Russian Consul-General. The Russian Minister appears to have rectified the matter, and the incident now seems to be closed, except that the Persian Government is now addressing a protest against the action of the Consul-General."

Unfortunately, so far from the incident being closed, it led directly to the present most serious crisis. After the confiscation had been effected by the Treasury Gendarmes, two officials of the Russian Consulate, Petroff and another, returned to the house and began to revile and abuse the Persian gendarmes on duty there. Being unable to provoke an incident of any kind (for the men had been strictly enjoined not to allow themselves to be drawn into any altercation), they departed to the Russian Consulate and declared that they had been insulted and threatened.

A few days after this (on October 17) Russia definitely refused to withdraw her objection to the appointment of Captain Stokes to command the Treasury Gendarmerie, and though the Times had stated on August 4 that "neither the British nor the Indian Government had any power to prevent Captain Stokes from accepting the appointment," means were

found to meet Russia's wishes and to prohibit him from taking up the post to his acceptance of which no objection had originally been made.

Next day the Times published a leader criticizing Mr Shuster's actions, and especially his protest against Anglo-Russian policy in Persia, which he described as essentially "hostile to the regeneration of Persia," and Mr Shuster at once announced his intention of justifying his criticisms by a statement of facts which had come under his observation. His indictment duly appeared in the Times of November 9 and 10, and was feebly criticized in a leading article of conspicuous weakness on November 11.

Meanwhile Russia, encouraged by her success in preventing the employment of Captain Stokes, and finding the indulgence of the British Foreign Office practically unlimited, raised, on October 22, a fresh objection to the appointment of twenty additional Swedish officers who had been asked for by the Persian Government, and apparently obliged the Swedish Government to yield on this point on November 7. On October 27 the first detachment of Indian troops landed at Bushire, and on the same day it was announced that 200 more Russian troops had landed at Enzeli, that they would be followed by 1700 more, and that 1900 more would advance from Julfa to Tabriz. That the sending of these Indian troops to the south would at once be followed by the sending of a much larger number of Russian troops to the north was exactly what had been feared by those who deprecated any partition of Persia, and the result in this case fully justified their apprehensions.

On November 2 there was a sudden recrudescence of the Shua-us-Saltana incident. The Russian Minister, M. Poklevski Kozzell, who was supposed to have dissociated himself entirely from the conduct of the consul-General, M. Pokhitanoff, presented a verbal Ultimatum to the Persian Government demanding: (1) that the Treasury Gendarmes should be at once removed from the Shua-us-Saltana's properties; and (2) that the Persian Foreign Minister should apologize for the alleged insult offered to the Russian Consular officers.

He also returned the Persian note of protest, although he had previously acknowledged and answered it, and demanded an immediate reply to his Ultimatum. The Persian Government at first refused to apologize for an offence never committed, but expressed their complete readiness to submit the whole question to impartial investigation, and to apologize if it could be shown that they or their officials had been guilty of any discourtesy, but finally, having received on November 11 a written Ultimatum in the same sense, and being advised by the British Legation, whose advice they sought, to yield to force majeure, they gave way, and the required apology was tendered on November 26 by the Persian Foreign Minister.

Any hope that this undeserved humiliation would appease the Russian Government was dispelled by the presentation of a second yet more unendurable Ultimatum on November 29, in which Russia put forward three fresh demands, viz.— (1) that the Persian Government should dismiss Mr Shuster and Mr Lecoffre; (2) that they should undertake to appoint in future no foreigners in the Government Service without first consulting the Russian and British Ministers; (3) that they should pay an indemnity for the expenses involved in the despatch of the Russian expedition, which the compliance of the Persians with the first Ultimatum had not stopped. Compliance with the terms of the second Ultimatum was also demanded within 48 hours.

The acceptance of this Ultimatum evidently involved on the one hand a complete renunciation of Persia's position as an independent State and the final abandonment of the hopeful reforms so energetically pushed forward by Mr Shuster, and on the other hand offered no sure hope of a final settlement. It was a case of the Wolf and the Lamb, and the Lamb at last turned at bay. On November 30 the Majlis "unanimously refused compliance with the Russian Ultimatum," and on December 1 Mr Morgan Shuster published a still stronger defence of his action, ending with the following words:—

"I was early offered the plain choice between serving the Persian people and only appearing to do so, while actually

serving foreign interests bent on Persia's national destruction. I have no apologies to offer for my course."

The events of December, 1911, are within the memory of all. There were delays and pauses which aroused transient hopes that the Russian advance might be stayed, and that Sir Edward Grey, while publicly defending every step taken by Russia, might in secret be endeavouring to restrain her cupidity, which evidently deemed the moment come for the satisfaction of her old ambitions in Persia. But the advance of the Russian troops continued, and on Christmas Day arrived sinister rumours of frightful bloodshed both at Tabriz and Resht, with open threats on the part of the Russian Government of field courts martial and wholesale executions on the model of those employed with such terrible ferocity in the Baltic provinces some years ago. The details of these events will not be fully known for some time, if ever, and telegraphic communication with Tabriz, Resht and even Teheran was interrupted, wholly or partly, down to the end of 1911, but there is every reason to fear that, as the Times correspondent said, "when the veil is lifted, it will reveal desolation."

Sir Edward Grey's incomprehensible complaisance to Russia, and complete reversal of the principles firmly held by all previous British statesmen as to the absolute necessity of maintaining buffer States between the British and the Russian Empires, has now brought us within measurable distance of a partition of Persia, having as its result not merely the destruction of an ancient and talented people whom in the very hour of their awakening we have abandoned to the mercy of the most ruthlessly retrograde Power in the world, but also the creation of a long, indefensible Anglo-Russian frontier, necessarily involving an enormous increase of military expenditure, and enabling Russia henceforth to exert direct pressure upon us in a way hitherto impossible. It is perhaps still not too late to save Persian independence and maintain the buffer State if, even at this eleventh hour, England will act with firmness, and tell Russia plainly that unless she is prepared to abide by the terms of the Anglo-Russian Agreement, "based as it is" (to quote the words of the British

Minister's Memorandum of September 4, 1907, to the Persian Foreign Office) "on a guarantee of Persia's independence and integrity," that Agreement and the Entente of which it is the expression must go, because no understanding or agreement is possible unless it is loyally observed by both sides.

But if this is not done; if England continues to show the same weak complaisance as heretofore with Russia's every fresh act of aggression, what will probably happen? Russia, having occupied her own "Sphere of Influence" (which includes the largest and richest half of Persia) will inevitably be tempted to push forward into the "Neutral Zone" until she reaches her old objective the Persian Gulf. Shall we then attempt to stop her, at much greater disadvantage than now, by force, or shall we allow her to establish herself on that sea hitherto so jealously guarded? In considering this question let us recall the following sayings of Lord Lansdowne (May 5, 1903) and Lord Curzon.

"I say it without hesitation, we should regard the establishment of a naval base or of a fortified port in the Persian Gulf by any other Power as a very grave menace to British interests, and we should certainly resist it by all the means at our disposal." (Lord Lansdowne.)

"I should regard the concession of a port upon the Persian Gulf to Russia by any Power as a deliberate insult to Great Britain, as a wanton rupture of the status quo, and as an intentional provocation to war; and I should impeach the British Minister who was guilty of acquiescing in such a surrender as a traitor to his country." (Lord Curzon.)

Let us also recall the following words which appeared in the St Petersburg Bourse Gazette (supposed to be the organ of M. de Witte) in October 1901:--

"Russian diplomacy...has put an end once and for all to the idle talk about dividing Persia into a northern sphere of influence belonging to Russia and a southern sphere belonging to England. There can be no division of spheres of influence in Persia, which, together with the waters which bathe its shores, must remain the object of Russian material and moral protection."

As regards the moral aspect of the question it is hardly possible to speak with moderation. An earlier and nobler generation of Englishmen, who held the partition of Poland to be a crime of the first magnitude, would have refused to believe that their own country could, under a Government calling itself "Liberal," actually aid and abet the arch-enemy of Freedom in so cruel an act as the destruction of an ancient nation, which, after suffering centuries of oppression, seemed, after six years' desperate struggle, to be at last on the high-road to regeneration. In a letter written on December 6, 1911, to one of his friends in this country, Mr Morgan Shuster, the upright, able and honest American to whom Persia entrusted the reorganization of her finances, and who, because it became clear that he would, if unimpeded, succeed in that reorganization, was driven from his post by Russia, with the acquiescence if not the support of England, speaks as follows:--

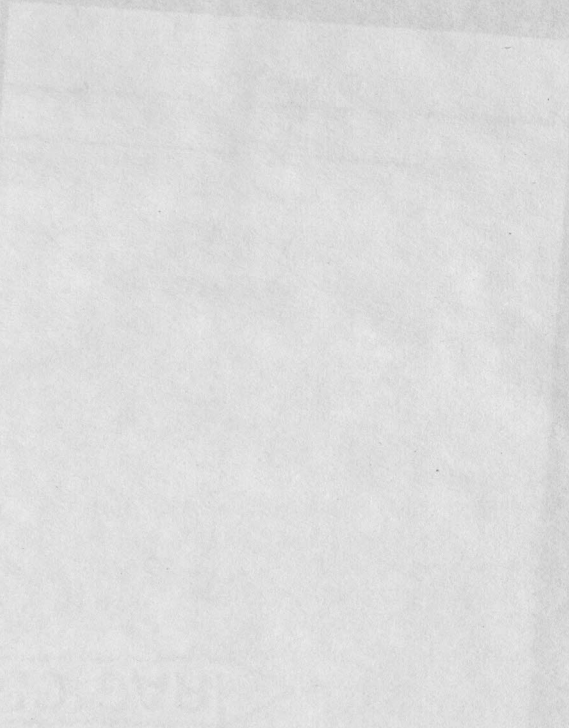
"It would take volumes and weeks to describe all the details of the complications of the situation here, and I shall not attempt to do so until I have more leisure than at present; but I can assure you as a man that the spectacle now presented to us here of the strangling of the national spirit of a people who have lived for centuries under the most frightful despotism and tyranny, and only recently have begun to enjoy even the sentiment of liberty, though without many of its practical benefits, is a most sickening and melancholy one. You, I believe, are rated by that esteemed London Times as a 'dreamer' and 'sentimentalist.' From their smug editorials I take it that they consider any man who dares to look further than his own pantry or larder as stamped with this seal, and that they publicly uphold a far different code of ethics and morality in dealing with a whole nation of people from that which they would be willing to countenance in transactions between private individuals or business corporations. While I am no student of England's political problems, I cannot but believe that if the British people permit themselves to be carried along these lines to the inevitable conclusion, their prestige, and even the integrity of the British Empire itself

will before many years have suffered a series of surprising shocks."

On September 4, 1907, the British representative at Teheran communicated to the Persian Foreign Office a Memorandum, in Persian, designed to reassure the Persians as to the nature and effects of the Anglo-Russian Agreement signed on August 31 of the same year, and though Mr Acland (on December 5, 1911) and Sir E. Grey (on December 14, 1911) professed ignorance as to this document, its genuineness is indisputable and beyond all question. This is how it concludes:--

"From the above statements you will see how baseless and unfounded are these rumours which have lately prevailed in Persia concerning the political ambitions of England and Russia in this country. The object of the two Powers in making this Agreement is not in any way to attack, but rather to assure for ever the independence of Persia. Not only do they not wish to have at hand any excuse for intervention, but their object in these friendly negotiations was not to allow one another to intervene on the pretext of safeguarding their interests. The two Powers hope that in the future Persia will be for ever delivered from the fear of foreign intervention, and will thus be perfectly free to manage her affairs in her own way, whereby advantage will accrue both to herself and to the whole world."

Was ever so explicit a promise so flagrantly violated within so short a period as four years? By our association with the Russian Government in this matter we have not restrained them in any effective way from the pursuit of ends which they have scarcely troubled to disguise: we have only made ourselves jointly responsible for actions which have brought dishonour on both partners, but material advantage only to one. To England this ill-starred and unequal partnership has given "neither this world nor the next": we have lost "the Here and the Hereafter, and this is the Conspicuous Loss."



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