

reason for doing. Moreover, they have subjugated people who were easy to conquer, and the general result of all this, and of the rumours of untold legions of soldiers stationed in Russia proper, is to impress the Oriental mind with the idea that the Russians have a greater strength in comparison with the British than they perhaps actually have. Some English writers argue that the retirement from Afghanistan, in 1881, has had no effect upon British prestige. That retirement may have been wise on financial grounds, but that it did effect our prestige in Central Asia there can, I think, be little doubt. If we had gone to Kabul and Kandahar, and remained there, our prestige, for whatever it is worth, would certainly have stood higher than it does now, when it is perfectly well known throughout Asia that the Amir of Kabul practically closes Afghanistan to every Englishman. To keep up this prestige may not have been worth the money which it would have been necessary to expend in order to do so, but it is false to argue that the prestige is just as high after retirement as it was before. We cannot save up our money and expect the same results as if we had expended it. The shrewd native observers of our policy in Central Asia see perfectly well that we did not hold Afghanistan, because we had not sufficient men to do so. The Russians, chiefly because they have only had very unwarlike people to conquer, have never yet in Central Asia been put in the position of having to withdraw after a conquest.

Among other interesting features of my stay in Kashgar were my conversations with M. Petrovsky. He was a man with a large knowledge of the world, who had lived many years in St. Petersburg, as well as in Russian Turkestan and Kashgar. He had read largely on subjects connected with India and Central Asia; he had a number of our best books and Parliamentary Reports, and, like all Russians, he talked very freely, and, on subjects not connected with local politics, in which of course we were both concerned, very openly.