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Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech, delivered by the Lords Commissioners to both Houses of Parliament, on Thursday, January 17, 1878.

My Lords and Gentlemen,

I HAVE thought fit to assemble you before the usual period of your meeting in order that you might become acquainted with the efforts I have made to terminate the war now devastating Eastern Europe and Armenia, and that I might have the advice and assistance of my Parliament in the present state of public affairs.

You are aware that, after having unsuccessfully striven to avert that war, I declared my intention to observe neutrality in a contest which I lamented, but had failed to prevent, so long as the interests of my Empire, as defined by my Government, were not threatened.

I expressed, at the same time, my earnest desire to avail myself of any opportunity which might present itself for promoting a peaceful settlement of the questions at issue between the belligerent Powers.

The successes obtained by the Russian arms, both in Europe and Asia, convinced the Porte that it should endeavour to bring to a close hostilities which were causing immense sufferings to its subjects. The Government of the Sultan accordingly addressed to the Neutral Powers, parties to the Treaties relating to the Turkish Empire, an appeal for their good offices.

It did not, however, appear to the majority of the Powers thus addressed that they could usefully comply with the request, and they communicated this opinion to the Porte.

The Porte then determined on making a separate appeal to my Government, and I at once agreed to make an inquiry of the Emperor of Russia whether His Imperial Majesty would entertain overtures for peace.

The Emperor expressed, in reply, his earnest desire for peace, and stated, at the same time, his opinion as to the course which should be pursued for its attainment.

Upon this subject communications have taken place between the Governments of Russia and Turkey through my good offices, and I earnestly trust that they may lead to a pacific solution of the points at issue and to a termination of the war. No efforts on my part will be wanting to promote that result.

Hitherto, so far as the war has proceeded, neither of the belligerents has infringed the con-

ditions on which my neutrality is founded, and I willingly believe that both parties are desirous to respect them, so far as it may be in their power. So long as these conditions are not infringed, my attitude will continue the same. But I cannot conceal from myself that, should hostilities be unfortunately prolonged, some unexpected occurrence may render it incumbent on me to adopt measures of precaution. Such measures could not be effectually taken without adequate preparation, and I trust to the liberality of my Parliament to supply the means which may be required for that purpose.

Papers on these affairs will be forthwith laid before you.

My relations with all foreign Powers continue to be friendly.

I am thankful that the terrible famine which has ravaged Southern India is nearly at an end. Strenuous and successful exertions have been made by my Local Governments to relieve the sufferings of the population, and in that duty they have been powerfully seconded by the liberal aid of my people at home and in my Colonies. I have directed that an enquiry should be made into the measures most proper to diminish the danger of such calamities for the future.

The condition of native affairs in South Africa has of late caused me some anxiety, and has demanded the watchful attention of my Government. I have thought it expedient to reinforce my troops in that part of my Empire. I trust that a peaceable and satisfactory settlement of all differences may be shortly obtained.

Gentlemen of the House of Commons,

I have directed the Estimates of the year to be prepared and presented to you without delay.

My Lords and Gentlemen,

A Bill will be laid before you upon the subject of County Government, and your attention will be again called to the consolidation of the Factory Law, and to the Summary Jurisdiction of Magistrates.

You will be asked at an early period of the Session to take into your consideration a Bill on the subject of Cattle Disease in this country.

The questions of Scottish Roads and Bridges, and of Endowed Schools and Hospitals in Scotland, will also be brought before you.