

SYRIA AND THE EUPHRATES.

A very interesting and instructive paper by Mr. W. P. Andrew of the Euphrates Valley Railway was read at the United Service Institution on Friday, the 23rd ult., Lord Strathnairn in the chair.

Owing to the indisposition of Mr. Andrew the paper was read by Captain Tyler. An animated discussion followed, which showed that, besides national apathy, the scheme has to encounter the opposition of economists and of the advocates of other routes.

No one was better fitted to take the chair on this occasion than the noble lord who has endeavoured, with, we regret to add, but little success, to impose the country and the Government with the importance of the science of strategy.

There is no panic just now, and many are so satisfied with the amount of instruction and the number of examinations in the Army, that they are quite convinced that a foe would have no chance; science has reached such a pitch that an enemy would be "spirited" away!

It has not occurred to such, however, that they have themselves a duty to perform, and that it is useless to expect a cook to cook your dinner if he or she has not the wherewithal, or that it is foolish to leave your doors and windows open, and then blame the police if you are robbed. So the country cannot expect its Army to be of much avail if, temporarily to save its pockets, it allows a formidable Power, an aggressive policy and opposite interests, to occupy all the strategical points.

About two years ago, during an invasion panic, we pointed out that Syria was the strategic centre of the British Empire, and that any first-class Power seizing that position would have the arteries of the existence of the empire at its mercy. Since then, Russia's progress in Central Asia, and the concessions recently granted for railways in Persia, although they seem directly to menace India, are really more formidable to that country from their proximity to Syria. An invasion of India would be an *undertaking* in the fullest sense of the term; nevertheless, there are many able men who regard Russia's designs as all tending that way. So they may be, but Russia's policy is less pugnacious than wily and plodding, and it would certainly be a smaller undertaking, less fighting, less expense, and less risk to take Syria. It is as easy to find an excuse for going to war with a Sultan as with a Khan, whereas it might require some consideration to frame a plausibly sound and serious ground of quarrel against a European State, and particularly against England. Moreover, with the latter Russia might fear that she would lay herself open to the dreadful "sell" of having arbitration proposed, just as all her arrangements were complete and her armies straining in the leash.

We think, therefore, that Russian diplomacy and strategy would secure Syria first, and unless we could then, with our centre pierced and our telegraphic communication severed, wrest that position from her, the British Empire would be at an end. A quick, eager mind might suggest, "we might open communications *via* Canada," to which we add "if America were neutral; but even so, Russia has the Amoor.

The question of the Euphrates Valley Railway, is, therefore, not only one of an alternative route to India; it affects the condition of an important strategical point. Such a work as that railway would bring increased wealth to Syria, and would develop its vast and long buried resources. Good internal

communications, roads and railways, would follow as a consequence, and instead of being an obstacle, it would always be available for us as a base so powerful, that the fact of our being able to assume it at any moment would probably be sufficient in itself to deter Russia from making any hostile move towards India.

As regards the different routes discussed, any line or lines that practically bring Russia, whether *via* Constantinople or Persia, nearer to Syria are to our disadvantage. Even the route whose termini are almost identical with Mr. Andrew's, but which crosses the Euphrates and Tigris, passing Mosul to obtain the trade of those districts, is faulty. It presents a salient towards our opponent; and the whole portion of it east of the rivers would fall into his hands at the first blow; while Mr. Andrew's line, covered by the river is perfectly safe from a strategical point of view; and, commercially, if the districts in question have any wants or anything to sell, they are quite near enough to the line to make it worth their while to make use of it, without our sacrificing strategical principles for the sole purpose of taking it past their doors.

Two speakers at the meeting differed widely in their statements regarding the capabilities of their country through which Mr. Andrew's line would pass; one asserting that it was an irreclaimable desert, and the other who had the advantage of a long residence in that country) contending that the soil was most productive *wherever cultivated*, and that its ruins and remains of countess canals, as well as the testimony of historians, prove it to have enjoyed long periods of wealth and splendour, which could not have been attained to by a country, whose soil contained no riches; and with this last we are disposed to concur.

The financial part of the scheme does credit both to Sir G. Jenkinson and to Mr. Andrew. The necessary loan of £10,000,000 could with little difficulty be raised for the Turkish Government, who guarantee a minimum dividend of 6 per cent, but Mr. Andrew desires that, to the extent of 5 per cent, per annum for twenty five years, it should be counter-guaranteed by England, as is already the case with the four per cent. loan. Thus we are not called upon to pay any portion of the interest, except in the event of Turkey failing to do so.

Now, Turkey has always fulfilled her engagements very honourably, and there is no reason for supposing that she will discontinue doing so, unless, indeed, she be dismembered and plundered by Russia, who is enclosing her in the coils of a system of railways, for which we ourselves are daily providing the money.

But, as regards the loan under consideration, it is usual with Turkey, Egypt, and some of the smaller states, when raising to name the revenues of some province, or the proceeds of some tax, as the guarantee, or the source from whence the obligations will be met, and in accordance with this custom the Porte agrees to assign as security in the present case "the customs, duties, and port charges of the ports of Alexandretta and Bassorah" (at either end of the railway, "as well as certain revenues and other resources of the provinces through which the railway may pass"; and also "an absolute mortgage upon the railway and land and works until the extinction of the loan."

Thus, any pecuniary risk which England would incur is bound up in that country which for strategical reasons she must defend to her last shilling. While, therefore, we

can successfully protect Syria from aggression (*i.e.*, so long as we can hold our empire together) we shall not be called upon to pay the interest of the £10,000,000.

The loan when raised is to be deposited in the Bank of England, in the name of a mixed committee, and applied exclusively to the construction of the railway and provision of rolling stock. The net income proceeds of the railway are to be paid into the Bank of England, and applied exclusively to the payment of the interest and the sinking fund. (See Report of Select Committee, July 22, 1872, and letter from Sir G. Jenkinson to H.E. Musurus Pacha, February 16, 1870, and reply of the latter, March 12, 1870.)

Surely never were so advantageous terms offered in respect of an undertaking of such vital importance or of so urgent necessity to the Empire, and, apart from M. Lesseps' recent proposals to the Russian Government or "the vindication" by Russia of her interests with Turkey, which the Russian journals informed us last month would shortly be a necessity, it is quite clear that any delay can only affect the now proffered terms to our disadvantage.—*Broad Arrow* 7th June

The Paris Government has received information which it regards as trustworthy, that instructions have been issued from the head of the Internationals in London to subordinate in France, to organize for service.

Labor strikes throughout Europe are to be carried out.

Prince Frederick Charles of Germany, has tendered Marshal Bazaine evidence in his favour on his trial for the surrender of Metz to the Prussian army. The Marshal, however, declines to permit the evidence to be introduced.

The *Journal de Paris* says the project of placing a Prince of the House of Hohenzollern upon the Throne of Spain has not been abandoned.

A number of discontented Carlist leaders and former Liberal Unionists are said to favor the Hohenzollern candidacy.

Duke d'Aumale has asked leave of absence from the Assembly to preside over the Courts Martial to try Marshal Bazaine.

An exciting debate took place in the Assembly to-day, (24th July) in the course of which violent religious partizanship was evoked.

It is probable the Assembly will adjourn on Thursday next.

Specie in the Bank of France increased six millions of francs during the past week.

The Carlists claim that their effective forces in Spain now number 30,000 men. They have disembarked a large quantity of arms and ammunition from England at Requeto.

The Carlists have made a formal demand of France for the recognition of their rights as belligerents. The French Government have refused and declared that it will remain perfectly neutral.