

is well prepared at sea. The Black Sea, the Caspian, and Lake Aral are all of them well guarded by naval forces. The Black Sea squadron comprises five screw-corvettes and two yachts, of collectively 1864-horse power and 47 guns, with three iron clad vessels besides in building; the Caspian squadron consists of fourteen sailing vessels and seventeen steamers, being collectively 990-horsepower, and 5 guns; and the squadron of Lake Aral is made up of six steamers with 190-horsepower and 8 guns. Moreover, there is the Siberian coast fleet, consisting of thirty four steamers of 1820 horsepower and with 61 guns.

Russian Policy in Central Asia.

Dr. Arminius Vambéry, writing in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* on the policy of Russia in Central Asia, says that it is now abundantly evident that this policy, notwithstanding the constant endeavour to conceal its true nature and objects, is one of simple conquest. "It is, indeed, a little surprising," he observes, "that Russian politicians should allege such motives for their conduct as every one who knows Central Asia must regard as utterly inadequate and groundless. Russia wishes to persuade Europe, who has placed great faith in her of late, that in striving to open a road from Khiva to Astrabad she is prompted by commercial motives alone. To talk of commercial objects in a district where from time immemorial it has never been possible to establish a regular caravan traffic is in itself sufficiently paradoxical, and the impracticability of realizing such a notion will be seen from the fact that the commercial roads from and through Central Asia have always taken a northerly, north-westerly, or southerly, but never a south westerly direction, and that the only traffic which is said to have existed between the Caspian and the Oxus dates from the time when the mouth of that river was in Balkan Bay. The warmest advocates of the 'civilizing mission' of Russia in Asia could not have failed to see that, completely ignoring the above facts, she began to penetrate the valleys of the Attek and Ghurgan even before the conquest of Khiva. After the completion of the Khivan campaign this equivocal policy was naturally pursued with increased energy; the Transcaspian district was formed, and alliances were entered into with the Yomud Turcomans, though it might have been known beforehand that such alliances would lead to an incessant state of war, that the object of this new acquisition was neither pacification of the Khanate of Khiva nor the restoration of the power of its princes, and that peace would only be restored when the Russians reached the frontiers of a more stable government—namely, Persia or Afghanistan. All these sham commercial relations between Khiva and the south-western shore of the Caspian have hitherto resulted in two poor Khivan caravans, which the Russian papers represent in enthusiastic articles as the inauguration of a new triumph of commercial activity. The good traders of Khiva, however, true to their practice of centuries, were not to be induced to help the Russian plans, and the road from Khiva to Astrabad has remained empty. In December last Colonel Goluchowski left Krasnovodsk at the head of a 'commercial caravan' in a south-easterly direction purposing to pass through the country of the Yomuds, the Goklans, and the Tekkes, to Meshed. . . . He of course knew better than any one that it would be impossible under present

circumstances to cross the steppe in that direction. The caravan was prevented by Turcoman hordes from proceeding beyond the first stage of its journey, and a little expedition had to be sent, 'in the interests of trade,' to punish these Turcomans.

According to Russian accounts, which alone reach the European press, the expedition has erected a fort at Kuren, and garrisoned it with a sufficient force of infantry, cavalry, and artillery; but the news coming from the Turcoman steppes by way of Merv speaks not of one, but of three forts, and of a considerable contingent of Turcoman horsemen who have entered the Russian service." M. Vambéry adds that an agreement between Russia and England as to their policy in Asia has now become impossible. "The first footing effected by Russia at the mouths of the Attek and Ghurgan must lead, as a necessary consequence, to the incorporation of Merv, and to the extension of the Russian frontier to the spurs of the Paropamisos. To remain stationary anywhere between these points is as impossible as it would be for Russia, if she had reached the vicinity of Herat, to refrain from pushing forward to the northern extremities of the Indian passes. . . . Nothing is more natural, under these circumstances, than that both in Afghanistan and on the northern frontier of Persia events should be advancing with unexpected rapidity towards a crisis. Even the most enlightened enemies of England must admit that, on the one hand, she is hardly in any way responsible for the approaching complications, and, on the other, that, however peacefully inclined she may be, she cannot continue to maintain a policy of indifference in presence of the conduct of Russia. If the politicians of St. Petersburg imagine that England will quietly look on while the influence of Russia—under the guise of civilization, trade, or humanity—goes on extending to the Bolan and the Khyber Pass, they are grievously in error."

The Cause of Droughts

In the older settled States of the Union the inhabitants are suffering from a scarcity of water more acutely even than are the people of Michigan. Scientists agree in attributing the cause to the reckless and improvident manner in which they have upset the routine of nature by destroying the agents she employed in the execution of her laws. It is believed that when the pine woods of Michigan have been entirely destroyed, and the growth of hard woods has been reduced by the demands of the agriculturalist for cleared land to the mere patches absolutely necessary for current use, that long continued droughts would be the rule, and those who succeed us will experience a difficulty in procuring water of which we little dream.

Just now it looks as if the drought which will render winter of 1874-5 a memorable one in New England annals is over, but is not to late to consider its lesson. The *Boston Herald* says that, for six months, the people, of the Eastern States have been complaining of want of rain. Hardly a mill in New England has been obliged to shorten its working hours or perhaps shut down altogether. Hardly a city whose water supply has not been a source of anxiety for weeks, threatening to fail utterly if relief did not come from the clouds. Hardly a farmer whose cattle have not been saved from suffering by an extra amount of labour and expense in providing them with their daily drink. Water has been an article of

commerce in many of our towns, and the situation was growing worse day by day. There have been severe droughts in winter before, but not often one of such length, extent and far reaching influences. And we can blame only ourselves and ancestors for it. In old times a drought was the direct result of a limited rain-fall, but there has been so much less than usual this year as to cause all this trouble. In the last century new England was pretty well covered with trees, and the rain that fell soaked into the ground, ran slowly down the valleys and finally reached the ocean. Now the land is stripped of trees, the hills and mountain regions even, where the sources of our rivers are, have been bared to the scorching rays of the sun, and nearly two thirds of all the rain that falls evaporates before it reaches the seaboard. This has dried up the rivers into brooks, the brooks into mere rivulets, with dusty bottoms, for months. This has ruined many of our trout brooks. This, too, by causing the sudden departure of the snows in spring, causes many destructive freshets. In the thick Maine woods the gradual melting of the snow lasts for weeks and keeps the rivers at a high pitch, while the streams whose head waters flow from a country stripped of trees rise and fall with the suddenness of mountain brooks after a shower. The reckless improvidence, due to cupidity and carelessness, which has made so much of our territory a hideous expanse of ragged, rocky, worthless fields, is the cause of our droughts. Improvidence must bear the blame, not Providence.—*Maritime Trade Review*.

ANOTHER CHALLENGE.—Private Tammadge, holder of the 14th Challenge Cup, has received a challenge from Sergt. McColl, to shoot for its possession. It will be remembered that the Match of May 24th originated in a challenge from Sergt. McColl, who did not take part in the competition on that day. The reason for this seems to be that the letter fixing the date was taken out of the post office by another person of the same name, and was not handed to its rightful owner until the day after the match was shot. Consequently, McColl desires another chance. Mr. Tammadge, who is to sail for England with the Wimbledon team on the 19th, has fixed the date for Monday, 14th. He has already won the cup twice with the highest scores ever made on the range, and we cannot but hope that he will do so again, as the cup will then become his personal property. The competition will, however, be keen, as, in addition to Sergt. McColl, Major Hambly and Sergts. Bennet and Marsh have already announced their intention to compete.—*Bellefleur Intelligencer*.

France now seems to be the reservoir into which the gold of the world is pouring. In the first three months of the present year the imports of the precious metals exceeded 350,000,000 francs, or seventy million dollars, and almost four fifths of the whole was in gold coin and bullion. The sources of this supply were much more various than may be supposed, for much less than one half was sent England. The United States contributed about ten million dollars, and vast sums were also received from Germany. By the last received report of the Bank of France the cash locked up in its vaults was 1,535,000,000 francs, or \$307,000,000, while the Bank of England at the same time held only \$103,000,000.