

endure forever." An answering love towards Him, their Lord, woke in their hearts, though they knew Him not except as a fellow mortal. But the spring of love in the heart, in freedom of will flowing out towards another than self, threw open wide the portals of the intellect to the reception of truth; and thus God could again become the "Light of the world." The vine, the fig-tree, and the olive bloomed once more. The perception of the beauty and blessedness of Goodness in the externals of material every-day life, led to the perception of Truth, showed the path of joy in love of the neighbour, and found an unfailing source of "peace and good will" towards all in Love to God. The wilderness and the solitary place within man was made glad by the voice and presence of the Lord of the whole earth (the atonement was complete). *Man* reconciled to God, and harmony between man and man was again possible.

So still, as Christmas time comes round, men again are reminded of the only true way—God's way—whereby they in their finite degree can save and heal each his brother-man, as God did, in His infinite degree, restore to life the whole human race. The way is the same for us as for Him. He Himself *is* the way, the truth, and the life. We must do good as He did, yielding brotherly help and kindness to all who are in need of aid or sympathy; for so we too may be blessed to wake a love of others in other hearts, and so lead them to the source of all love and wisdom by the power of our Lord's life given to us. Let us enter upon it and give to others a joyous Christmas. Self may thus die and be lost; but he that thus "loseth his life shall keep it unto life eternal."

"F."

THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN.

The recent turn of events in Afghanistan aptly realizes the saying of an Anglo-Indian sportsman: "Tiger-hunting's all very well while you're hunting the tiger, but when the tiger takes to hunting *you*, it's quite another thing." For the thousandth time, the European has persisted in treating the Asiatic upon European principles, and with the usual result. The invaders might, perhaps, have been less jubilant over the "friendly spirit" of the border chiefs, could they have heard the advice given to a deputation of the latter in October 1877, by the late Ameer, Shere Ali: "You should remain outwardly on good terms with the English, and get as much money from them as you can, but be sure not to let them become acquainted with your mountain retreats. Manage to get back the hostages that you have given, and bind yourselves only on personal responsibility." These counsels have been as aptly followed as when they were given by Akbar Khan in 1841; and now, as then, the men who were the first to fawn upon the British while successful are the first to turn upon them when defeated. Indeed, the two campaigns are strikingly parallel in many points. The massacre of the British envoys, the swift and victorious advance of the invading army, the ominously ready submission of the native chiefs, the sudden appearance of the enemy in overwhelming force, and the hurried retreat of the British, figure prominently in both. It lies with the courage and skill of the disciplined troops to decide whether the parallel shall be completed by a successful defence like that of Jelalabad, or a massacre, like that of Kurd-Kabul.

The position is ominous enough. There is a sinister likeness between recent experience and the unlucky record of events at Cabul forty years ago, but there are certain circumstances which appear to tell in favour of the beleaguered forces. General Roberts has proved himself a splendid soldier. He has had large experience, and has thus far in Afghanistan been found equal to every emergency. He is sustained by able and experienced officers, and his soldiers are seasoned troops. The main body at Cabul holds a strong position, has fair accommodation, a large supply of fuel, and food for five months. Some of the smaller divisions are probably as well situated, and, if reduced to act for a considerable time merely on the defensive, most if not all of them may be able to hold out.

Of course it is an advantage for the Anglo-Indian army that its base of supply is but a short distance from the Indian side of the Khyber Pass, and that this base has railway communication with the great Indian arsenals and military depots. It would seem, therefore, wonderful if the Government of India should prove unable to get such reinforcements through the passes as may be needed.

Then, the Afghan army, suddenly gathered, and unprovided with large stores of food, must find it difficult to maintain its numerical superiority for want of such stores. But so soon as it begins to scatter, it will lay itself open to perhaps crushing defeat. To these considerations must be added those further ones—that the superiority of the Anglo-Indian army in equipment, training, and leadership must be very decided, and that the numerical odds against it is not greater than has often, by such an army, been successfully braved.

It thus appears that, whilst the cause for anxiety is great, the probability, that with more or less loss the Anglo-Indian army in Afghanistan will come off in the end victorious, is greater.

Late accounts say that a relieving force of 10,000 men is being organized

at Peshawur, a little beyond the Khyber Pass. No doubt it will be pushed forward with all possible energy. We could have no more cheering news for Christmas day than that which comes, telling us that General Gough with his reinforcement has been able to join General Roberts. One thing we may rest assured of, viz., that whatever British soldiers can do will be done.

Meanwhile, what will Russia do? Had she even a small army within distance of Cabul, it might go hard with the British, for their advancing reinforcements are little, if at all, stronger than the beleaguered garrison of Shirpur, and the coming up of any large force from India, through snow-blocked passes and hostile hill-tribes, must be a work of time and difficulty. But intrigue is always a surer weapon than force in Russian hands, as the recent treachery of the Afghan ex-Commander-in-Chief, of the Ameer himself, and of other leading natives, has amply shown. While Gen. Roberts is blockaded in Shirpur, and his would-be-rescuer, Gen. Gough, virtually surrounded on the road from Gandamak, half a dozen Russian envoys, well supplied with money, may work wonders among the chiefs of the countless clans into which Afghanistan is divided. A few Russian officers may accidentally find their way into the Afghan ranks, and teach the latter a more effective mode of attack than wasting their strength in headlong dashes upon the British intrenchments. Nor, even should the reported failure of Ayoo Khan's expedition against Kandahar prove true, can it make much difference to Russia. She has still in reserve one last resource, the most efficacious of all. This is to propose a direct partition of Afghanistan—Russia taking Herat, with the northwest Provinces, England Kandahar and Cabul, with those of the south—and in the event of a refusal, to proclaim as Ameer her protégé, Abd-ul-Rahman Khan, who, naturally able and energetic, thoroughly Russian in all his sympathies, and unboundedly popular with the Heratis and other northern clans, would be a far more dangerous enemy to England than his feeble and vacillating cousin, Ayoo Khan.

BANKING REFORMS.

In any discussion on this subject we may assume, as demonstrated, the proposition that no government can, in a crisis of the national life, utilize its credit to the full extent without a safe and stable system of currency and banking, and that no community can hope for permanent commercial prosperity whose entire banking system does not retain the full confidence of the public.

Leaving to specialists the question of currency, I will endeavour to outline in a future paper some few reforms that would, in my judgment, tend to give a feeling of security, and convince the public that our Canadian banks were more likely than heretofore to be able to meet their liabilities.

One has only to look over the list of defalcations, misleading reports and failures which have carried dire distress into hundreds of humble homes, to be convinced that our present system is lamentably insufficient to provide a check upon incompetent and dishonest men, and that the existing laws are ill-digested and were imposed upon the public in a state of crudity unwarrantable under a representative government and a free press.

In striking contrast to the way in which tariff reforms, banking reforms, and other weighty matters affecting the very marrow of our commercial life are hurried through our parliaments by strong party majorities, is the course suggested by the Lieut-Governor of Bengal with regard to amending the Bengal Rent Laws, and approved by the Secretary of State as meeting the demands of modern liberal ideas when radical changes in the law become of imperative demand.

Sir Ashley Eden is a Bengal civilian, steeped from his youth upwards in the traditions of the most despotic bureaucracy under the sun, yet he has a more acute perception of English liberal sentiments than our law makers who are in frequent personal contact with it.

Let advocates of banking reforms make "a special commission" their cry, and then, like the changes in the Bengal rent laws and English rent laws, our changes will embody the best thoughts of the best men in the community, and not simply furnish matter for self-congratulation in an after-dinner speech that so many pages have been added to the Statute Book.

I ask attention to the following extract from the communications of the Indian Press Commissioner, found in the Allahabad *Pioneer Mail* of the 8th November, and will, in an early paper, submit, with much diffidence, some few suggestions for the consideration of those more competent to deal with the subject in detail:—

"Writing on the proposed alterations in the law relating to rent in Bengal, and the correspondence between the Government of India and the Government of Bengal on the subject, the Secretary of State expresses his entire approval of the proposal of the Lieut-Governor, acceded to by the Government of India, to appoint a special commission for the investigation of the whole question, whose duties will be to prepare an analysis and digest of the existing law relating to rent, to consider the various suggestions for the amendment of that law which have been put forward of late years; and, finally, to prepare a draft bill, embodying the views they may themselves arrive at from the examination of the whole subject thus exhaustively made. The Secretary of State also considers expedient and approves of the proposal of the Lieutenant-Governor to invite the criticism of the High Court of the judicial and executive officers of his provinces and of the public generally upon the Bill before its final introduction into the Legislative Council."

Anglo-Indian.