

I would observe, in which the Committee did not agree. I would also add, that as during the war the Germans were unprovided with an effective mitrailleuse, and as the destructive effects of the fire on the French weapon had been bruited abroad with the object of elevating the morale of their own troops and depressing that of the enemy, it became almost necessary for the Prussian staff to decry its powers, and disabuse the minds of these soldiers of an exaggerated fear of its effects.

[To be Concluded in our next]

THE CENTRAL ASIA QUESTION.

It would really seem, from the comments which the press has been making on the advance of Russia into Central Asia, as if it took especial delight in keeping us in a perpetual state of hot water. The excitement growing out of wars and the "rumours of wars" may be all very well as tending to keep the public mind at fever heat. It may also be found very efficacious in enabling the publishers of the daily papers to turn the "nimble penny," and fall like mamma upon a very large class of half-pay people who are looking out for something to do. To the trader and the merchant, however, such rumours are by no means acceptable. Not, be it remembered, that they are less patriotic than he whose profession is the sword, or he who lives by the manufacture of those compounds in which "villainous saltpetre" forms a component part, but because they are but rumours and nothing more, and being so interfere unduly with the direct action of trade. Rumours and "false teaching" did more than anything else to strand us in the arbitrations over the Washington Treaty and the San Juan question. Neady politicians and hungry place-hunters are ever ready to precipitate John Bull head foremost into the first quarrel that turns up. If he demurs to this off-hand kind of action he is "spirited" into committing himself irretrievably by the leading rangers of the day affirming that "public opinion" demands that he should be "up and doing." Now, as "opinion" has been largely invoked in regard to "the onward march of Russia in Central Asia," we may easily estimate its magnitude when we remember that not one in a thousand knows anything about the matter. We are not of those who are disposed to attach much credit to the *bona fides* of Russia, but we are of those who believe that too much has been made of this subject, and that a great deal of unnecessary alarm has been created, not only in this country, but on the Continent and in India, in reference to her designs in the East. We believe our Government to be equal to the occasion, and we believe—what we stated in a recent issue—that an interview has taken place between Count Schouvaloff and Earl Granville, and that the former is commissioned to tell his Royal master "that thus far he may go, and no farther"—in a word, that Earl Granville has put his "foot down," and that he means to keep it to the line defined. What need, then, of the constant badgering which characterises the outpourings of the daily and weekly press? The day is very far distant when Russia can undermine our influence in the East. Every day Eastern institutions are becoming more and more assimilated to our own, and we have ample evidence that her people are satisfied with our wise and liberal rule. Indeed, good government is the best possible bulwark we can set up between India and the assumed

subtle encroachments of the Czar. If it be true, as reported, that atrocious cruelties have been practised towards the Russian prisoners in Khiva, then Russia has a right to demand satisfaction of the Khan. Theodore dealt harshly with British subjects, and we went into Abyssinia and set them free. What we did in Abyssinia we have no right—good and sufficient grounds existing—to deny to Russia in Khiva.

A recent number of the *Vossische Zeitung* contains an exhaustive article weighing the relative strength of Russia and England in Central Asia, and points out that, by the recent transformation of the Russian army formerly employed in the Caucasus into an Asiatic army, admirably appointed, armed with breech-loaders and numbering 100 battalions, 36 batteries, and 20 squadron of horse, besides engineers, pioneers, and Cossacks, the Russian force is sufficient to defy all the efforts of Great Britain to protect and uphold the Central Asian States! The same journal considers that Russia only awaits any false steps that may be taken by the English Government, and it asserts that the British military forces are utterly insufficient to stop the advance of Russia. This may be true as to military preparations, but it is simply absurd when referring to "any false steps which may be taken by the English Government," and in speaking of "our forces being utterly insufficient to stop the advance of Russia." Let the reader take the disputed line in his mind's eye, and the line of troops and supplies required to reach it from the Russian side, and then remember that there are sufficient native troops in India in our pay backed by a railway system which would take them to any given point, and he will realize at once that we are not without the means of resisting Russian aggression in Central Asia. Our Indian railway system would enable us to send the troops "fresh and eager for the fray" to the very points assailed, while the Russians would have to march through a country rich in nothing but sand, and the further they marched the thinner would their line become. Under all the circumstances of the case, then there is little fear of the action of Russia in Central Asia weakening our position in the East. As we said before, it may suit politicians and place hunters to hold contrary views, but manufacturers, and the Cottonocracy generally, know that they are only talking bunkum.

She correspondence between our Government and Russia respecting Central Asia has since been published, and fully bears out what we have here stated. The aim of both governments is professedly to put an end to the internecine strife between Afghanistan and the neighbouring Khanates. With this object Afghanistan is to be the neutral line. At the outset of the negotiations Russia was indisposed, though she did not absolutely insist upon the suggestion, to recognize the rights claimed by the Ameer of Cabul over Badakshan and Wakhan to include those two countries within the limits of Afghanistan. Lord Granville pointed out that if Badakshan and Wakhan—justly deemed to be part of the Ameer's territories—were constituted into an independent state, the Ameer might be tempted to assert his claim by arms; that perhaps in that case Bokhara might seek an opportunity of acquiring districts too weak of themselves to resist the Afghan state, and that thus the peace of Central Asia would be disturbed, and occasion given for questions between Great Britain and Russia "which it is on every account so desirable to

avoid." To this Russia replied: "The divergence which existed in our views was with regard to the frontier assigned to the dominions of Shere Ali. The English Cabinet includes within them Badakshan and Wakhan, which, according to our views enjoyed a certain independence considering the difficulty experienced in establishing the facts in all their details in those distant parts, considering the greater facilities which the British Government possesses for collecting precise data, and above all, considering our wish to give to this question of detail greater importance than is due to it, we do not refuse to accept the line of boundary laid down by England."

However much we may be amused by the dexterity of the Muscovite jugglers, remarks the *London Post*, it is well to let them know that we are not duped by it. Count Schouvaloff's triumphant return from an apparently fruitless mission is a testimony against us easy to be deciphered by those who have eyes to see. There is no time for halting between two opinions. Our present policy lies in four words—"No agreement with Russia." While the sovereign of Kashara and Bokhara are signing treaties with the Czar in the belief that he is our ally—while millions of our Indian subjects are looking up to Russia as the greatest power on earth, and explaining the firing at a Delhi review as "a battle between the English and the Russians"—is it a time to stake our national honor and the safety of our Eastern Empire upon the moderation of the Government that invaded Wallachi in 1853, and the honesty of the Cabinet which tore the treaty of Paris in 1870? One more chance is now offered to us—a chance which may never occur again. Now, or never, is the time to re-establish our prestige in the eyes of Europe, to efface the stigma of Geneva and Berlin, to settle the question of Central Asia, once and forever, in the only way possible to Englishmen, according to the dictates, not of red tape and official sealingwax, but of courage, common sense, and the honor of the British nation.

In an exhaustive article in an influential Berlin paper of February 2, weighing the relative strength of Russia and England in Central Asia, it is said that by the recent transformation of the Russian army formerly employed in the Caucasus into an Asiatic army, admirably appointed, armed with breech-loaders, and numbering one hundred battalions, 36 batteries, and twenty squadron of horse, besides engineers, pioneers, and Cossacks, the Russian force is sufficient to defy all the efforts of great Britain to protect and uphold the Central Asian States. The same journal considers that Russia only awaits any false step that may be taken by the English Government and it asserts that the British military forces are utterly insufficient to stop the advance of Russia. The *Post of Berlin*, in its issue of February 3, says that in well-informed circles at St. Petersburg the assurances given by Count Schouvaloff in London are not fully endorsed. The eventual conditions to be imposed on Khiva are dependent upon the amount of resistance that may be encountered, and the sacrifices it may entail upon Russia. A permanent occupation of the country is certainly not contemplated, but probably a military cordon would be established unless the Russian Government should be provoked into the adoption of more decided measures. The *Peter-Loyd* is astonished that England should awaken to anxiety on such a stale question as that of Khiva. So long ago as 1557, it informs us,