

ing news. As for France, she maintained a calm attitude, and in the press simply tried to refute the German accusations which resulted only in strengthening the weak Goblet Ministry, so that it became impossible to dismiss General Boulanger because the *Post* demanded it. As for Russia, the threatening language against France served Katkoff to turn the scale in his own favour, and eventually to overcome the Czar's disinclination to enter into a compact with the Republic.

After repeated conferences with M. Flourens there appeared in the *Brussels Nord* a letter from St. Petersburg, written at the Foreign Office, and sketching a new programme of Russian policy. If unfortunately war should break out between France and Germany, Russia would not assume the same position as in 1870; she would not probably make common cause with France, but she could not afford to let her be crushed, and thus herself be left alone with the all-powerful Germany. That is to say, if war between France and Germany break out, Russia will not march with the former against the latter, but will concentrate such an army on the German frontier as would oblige that Government to divide its forces. This is the beginning and end of the Russo-German friendship; no illusion on this point is any longer entertained at Berlin.

I do not, however, regard this change as unfavourable. I believe even that it will conduce to the preservation of peace. Russia will not make common cause with France in the field; she will only prevent her army from being utterly crushed; she will concentrate a force on the German frontier; and Germany, being occupied with her own affairs, Russia will direct her whole force against Constantinople. She sees that Germany will not abandon Austria, and will no longer therefore depend on Germany's benevolence, but will force England to let her have free play in the East; which object can only be achieved by a Franco-German war. It appears pretty certain that this change of front on the part of Russia will contribute to strengthen the alliance between Germany, Austria, and Italy, and it offers besides a plausible pretext for Slavonian inactivity. The Czar will not give up one jot of his Bulgarian programme, yet he hesitates to enforce it by a decisive action which might provoke war, and still hopes that the hated regency may be overthrown by some internal insurrectionary movement; he has, moreover, become so stout that he can only with difficulty maintain himself on horseback for any length of time, and a Czar who cannot march at the head of his troops would be a novelty. He may also know that his army is far from being as formidable as it appears on paper, for if it has increased in numbers its quality has been lowered, and its discipline thoroughly loosened by insufficient pay and bad food.

An *illuminato* like Katkoff may write as if Russia was invincible; practical men know better. Her victories, achieved over Asiatic nomads, prove as little for a great war as their successes in Algeria proved for the French army.

The danger of war naturally leads to the German elections, which took place amidst the clatter of armaments. Prince Bismarck and Count Moltke declared that the final rejection of the Army Bill meant war. The passing of the Septennate Bill will certainly make the French more inclined to pause before attacking Germany; and it will enable the Empire to defend itself all the better if assailed, but it will do nothing to check the increase of French armaments, and will do very little to remove the real causes of danger to the peace of Europe still prevailing in the East. For the moment, the Septennate does not even increase the fighting strength of the German army; it appears to be clear, therefore, that there were other reasons which prompted the Government to make the Septennate their cry for the elections. The Chancellor's aim has long been to get rid of a Reichstag, the hostile majority of which constantly thwarted his designs, and he only sought a favourable opportunity to proceed to new elections.

The weeks preceding the elections were a period of agitation such as Germany had never seen before. Every influence was brought to bear. The electors were assured in the most solemn manner, by their Chancellor, that if a majority unfavourable to the Septennate was returned war would be inevitable, an assurance which carried immense weight, and told in favour of the Government; it was different, however, with another factor from which Prince Bismarck expected much, and which proved barren, viz., the interference of the Pope in the elections. On January 3rd the late Cardinal Jacobini addressed a letter to the Nuncio at Munich, advising the Centre party to vote for the Septennate; the essence of the letter being confided to the chiefs of the party, they replied that it was impossible for them to comply with the demand, but if the Holy Father were of opinion that a dissolution of the party would serve the interests of the Church, all its members would be ready to resign their seats. Placed before this alternative, the Pope recoiled. Notwithstanding another letter from Cardinal Jacobini, and the mild exhortations of a few bishops, nearly the whole of the Catholic electorate voted for the Centre candidates, and the party has returned to the Reichstag in its old strength, having scarcely lost a seat.

The consequences of the Pope's interference have been positively detrimental to the authority of the Holy See. He has deeply offended the Centre party, but has failed to make it yield. They respectfully decline to comply with his wishes, and assert their independence in political matters, thus refuting the former accusations of their adversaries that they were mere tools, and obeyed the summons of a foreign priest in German affairs.

The real motive, apart from social and financial views, which prompted Prince Bismarck to obtain by every means in his power a large majority, was a high one. The Emperor is ninety, and everything the Chancellor does is calculated for a new reign. For that event he wants to have all the aces in his hand, and be able to lean upon a majority which may be said to represent the country.

THE IRISH IN AMERICA.

THE *Times*, commenting on a letter addressed to it by Mr. Goldwin Smith, on the action of "American and Canadian Politicians on the Crimes Bill," says:—

Mr. Goldwin Smith fully confirms the views we have already expressed as to the meaning and value of the resolutions in favour of Home Rule which delight Mr. Gladstone. He fills in the indictment against the Irish immigrants with the vigour that comes of local knowledge and local suffering, and every one who has conversed with Americans, Canadians, or colonists who do not happen for the moment to be playing the political game will recognise in his remarks the attitude invariably assumed towards the Irish element. The English and Scotch immigrant, says Mr. Smith, goes out to a farm and follows the bent of his character, which is to mind his own business and be a quiet citizen. The Irish immigrants congregate in the towns and follow the bent of their character, which is to "cabal, agitate, and conspire." In short, as he observes by way of summing-up, "it is because the Irishman is the worst of citizens that the United States and Canada is becoming politically an Irish Republic." Here we venture to think that Mr. Goldwin Smith takes an unduly pessimist view. The quiet and law-abiding citizens of the States and of Canada will stand a great deal for the sake of peace. Americans put up with a great deal which they do not like, by the aid of a certain capacity for taking a humorous view which they possess in much larger measure than ourselves. But a point exists at which they consider the joke has gone quite far enough, and when that point is reached they stamp out the nuisance with a degree of energy which is found very surprising and disconcerting by the people who thought they were having things all their own way. We may be wrong, but we strongly suspect that the Irish will be summarily put back into their proper place long before either Canada or the States become an Irish Republic.

THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN.

THE persistent reports of tribal disturbance in Afghanistan, and of the growing difficulties by which the Ameer is surrounded, gives particular interest to the following account, condensed from *The Times*, of the actual situation in a country so closely identified with England's political action in Asia.

The revolt of certain sections of the great Ghilzai tribe is a fact that cannot be explained away, and it is one also with which the Ameer has to deal at once. No one is better aware of this than Abdurrahman himself, and the preparations upon which he has been for some time engaged are of a character to show that he is resolved to employ all his strength in crushing those who have set his authority at naught.

The insurrectionary movement among the Ghilzais began last autumn, and before Christmas set in the Ameer's best general, Gholam Hyder Charki, obtained several successes sufficient to insure the safety of the road to Candahar throughout the winter. The dissatisfaction of these tribesmen arose from the firm resolve of the Ameer to exact taxes from them, and to render them completely subservient to his orders.

Abdurrahman has endeavoured to make himself a king, indeed as well as in name, of Afghanistan, and in this he has naturally encountered the animosity and opposition of lawless tribes which only tolerate the authority of their own chiefs, because they require neither taxes nor forbearance towards the rest of the country outside the narrow limits of the clan. The task of attaining this position of undisputed supremacy is beset with peculiar difficulty in Afghanistan, and the Ameer has now aroused an amount of opposition on the part of the Ghilzais, which, if he had been a less energetic and determined ruler, he need never have incurred; he believes, however, that he possesses a force sufficient to vanquish the antagonists who oppose him. He has an excellent army, well drilled and armed, and despite all statements to the contrary, well and regularly paid. He also possesses an efficient artillery which gives him an immense advantage over any and all his enemies, singly or collectively. His lieutenants, too, are all men personally attached to his fortunes, and Abdurrahman's fall would mean their ruin. The Ameer, although alive to the gravity of the situation, shows no signs of nervousness, and he has taken adequate measures, so far as can be judged, to obtain success. Neither directly nor indirectly has he asked for the aid or support of the Indian Government, and he evidently thinks he has sufficient men, money, and arms to put down this rising without the help of the Viceroy.

The situation outside Afghanistan is of course much affected by that within its limits. The unsettled state of the country itself is a strong temptation to Russia not to hasten over the final settlement of the boundary of Abdurrahman's dominions, until she sees whether Abdurrahman will survive the present crisis. No suggestions of a compromise have yet been made, and all the attention of the Commission has been given to the examination of maps and documents; the basis of such an agreement has not yet been suggested, and only the triumph of the Ameer will suffice for its discovery. Impatient as England may well feel to record the close of a negotiation about a strip of frontier which began nearly three years ago, the wish is not likely to be realised at present. She has therefore a very direct interest in hoping that the Ameer will speedily give some evidence of his prowess; for an unequivocal success over the Ghilzais will both hasten and simplify the course of the negotiations about the boundary of Afghanistan on the Oxus.