

He was in danger of being caught between the upper and the nether millstone. How could he refuse such a boon as that offered to one-fourth of his Irish clients—with a distinct foreshadowing, too, of its ultimate extension to the remaining three-fourths, without incurring the ire of those for whose behoof the offer was made? How could he, on the other hand, become a party to the tactics by which the Government is striving to undermine his ascendancy over his supporters by giving to large numbers of them that which is with them the chief object of desire—the land? He extricated himself with consummate skill. He seized, with the quick glance of a master tactician, the weak point in the Government policy,—the fact that it is not only partial, relieving but one-fourth of the dissatisfied tenantry, but that that one-fourth is not made up of those who are in special need of relief. The well-to-do farmers can wait; it is the poorer tenants who are really in distress and need immediate attention. Deal, he says, with the farms under £50 of annual rental. A loan of only £27,000,000 to the landlords of this class will compensate them for a reduction of thirty per cent. on rents, whilst to proceed upon Mr. Balfour's lines about one hundred and sixty-six millions will be needed. "The landlords will gain for the moment, as well as the tenants, the latter of whom will lose nothing, except a position as freeholders which can wait till Ireland controls her own land-tenure." Thus the Government is outbid at a much smaller proposed cost to the treasury; the small landlords are conciliated as well as the tenants; a much larger number, and those of the class most in need of help, are benefited, and Mr. Parnell's opposition to Mr. Balfour's Bill is explained and justified. Of course Mr. Parnell's alternative will fail of adoption, and is for many reasons objectionable to his own supporters, but it exhibits in a clear light, by contrast, the inadequacy of the Government proposal, and it affords Mr. Parnell a good standing ground for his opposition to what seems on its face a very liberal offer to the Irish tenantry.

THE attempt of the Legislature of New York State to substitute electricity for the hangman's rope, as a means of inflicting capital punishment, has resulted in a series of extraordinary complications. In the first instance, a New York lawyer, in the employ, it is believed, of an electric light company, had the question of the constitutionality of the law tried in three courts of the State, and in each court the law was sustained. This tedious process, or rather series of processes, secured the respite of the culprit for a length of time. When it was supposed, however, that the end had been reached, when everything had been made ready for the execution, or "electrocution," if we adopt the newly coined word, and just as the last act in the tragedy was about to be performed, another lawyer came forward with a writ of *habeas corpus*, issued by the Circuit Court of the United States for the State, on the pretence that the law under which Kemmler was sentenced is in conflict with the constitution of the United States. The hearing of the case is to be had on the third Monday of next June; and if the case goes to the Supreme Court of the United States, as now seems most likely to be the fact, then the final decision will not be reached until some time next winter. The question still is whether the State Legislature had the power to provide for capital punishment by electricity, a question which three courts have already, as above said, answered in the affirmative. Should this last effort succeed, and the Federal courts pronounce the law unconstitutional, the legal lights are divided in opinion as to what the effect will be, some holding that not only Kemmler, the original convict, but eight other convicted murderers awaiting execution, as well as all who may be convicted during the intervening period, will go free; others, that the new law stands in the nature of an amendment to its predecessor, and that the invalidation of the electrical law merely results in a substitution of the original. It follows that Kemmler and his fellow-convicts would then be hanged. Here, then, a new field of action would be opened up for the lawyers and the courts. Meanwhile a remarkable side-play is being enacted in the Legislature. The Assembly suddenly, almost without notice or debate, passed, by a vote of seventy-four to twenty-nine, a Bill for the abolition of capital punishment, and sent it up to the Senate, but just as it was passing to the third reading in that body, a Senator succeeded in having it referred to the Judiciary Committee, a movement which will stay its progress for a time, and probably send it over to next session. A curious feature of the whole affair is that the motive of all these strenuous efforts is believed to be, not a humane desire to save the condemned man from a doubtful experiment, but the dislike of one electric company to

have its dynamos used for the purpose of execution, when it has again and again asserted that its instruments are perfectly safe, and that the full charge might be sent through a person without killing him. We strongly suspect, however, that behind all these movements, even behind the law which it is sought to invalidate, is a growing repugnance to the infliction of the death penalty in any form. Strong indications of a similar trend of public sentiment in England have been brought out by the agitation over the recent execution of one of the boys who so deliberately murdered their brutal father, a few months ago.

IMPERIAL INDIA—V.

THE ADVANCE OF RUSSIA.

FOREIGN domination, generally preceded by the cruellest forms of conquest and the most extended rapine, seems to have been the destiny of the Indian Peninsula from the earliest times, the way to the richest and most populous plains of Asia, through the Khyber Pass, having long been a beaten road trodden by many adventurers.

Alexander the Great led the way and after him came Mahmud of Ghuzni in 1001, succeeded four hundred years later by Tamerlane. Then comes the invasion of Baber in 1524, and the establishment of the Mogul Empire, and a couple of hundred years later the incursion of Nadir Shah, the Persian despot. The final fall of the Mogul Empire in the eighteenth century saw the gradual upbuilding of British power in the East, and the contest between France and England for the possession of the territory for which all Asia had striven in the centuries past.

Great Britain is now, after many years of peaceful progress and continued territorial extension, face to face with the problem which proved too great for previous rulers of India, viz., the approach of a hostile power from the North. Heretofore, the conquest of India has been simplified by the internal discord and lack of cohesion, which so universally prevailed, while, at the same time, such invasions, composed as they were of wild hordes of Afghans, Tartars, or Persians, could have been easily resisted had there been a firm and stable government in the Peninsula.

Now, however, England in the East finds herself confronted by an opponent whose slow, merciless advance through Central Asia has crushed all enemies and silenced all opposition by a sort of insidious absorption. Indeed it would seem that from the time when Peter the Great gazed in the direction of the eastern shore of the Caspian and said, "Although these Khirghiz are a roaming and fickle people, their steppe is the key and gate to all the countries of Central Asia," the policy of Russia has been one of determined and ruthless advance.

By the progress from the Caspian to the shores of the Sea of Aral; by the conquest of the Circassians; the rich, fertile and populous district of the Karaitan, with the great cities of Turkestan and Tashkend; the principality of Zarafshan, with the famous city of Samarkand; by the conquest of Khiva, and Bokhara; the subjugation of the intractable Turkomans, and the annexation of Merv and Sarakhs in 1884, the onward march of Russia is vividly illustrated upon the map of Asia.

Impelled by circumstances very different in their nature and exceedingly difficult to overcome, the advance of British power in India has been as marked as that of Russia in Central Asia, and has resulted in acquisitions of far greater value and importance. Whether intentional or not, however—whether carried out with ruthless cruelty or with comparative mildness, the almost inevitable consequences have now to be met, and the two great empires of the east have nothing but what has been termed the "buffer" of Afghanistan to keep their frontiers from meeting. Afghanistan, although nominally independent, is really tributary to England, and its Ameer receives a yearly subsidy of £120,000 to consolidate his authority, and has recently had his frontier delimited by a joint Afghan, British and Russian commission. Abdurrahman is undoubtedly a strong ruler, and has shown himself well disposed towards Great Britain, but after his death it is impossible to predict what will happen. A firm and vigorous hand is required to hold the diverse, mutually hostile, and scattered tribes of Afghanistan in order, and it is to be feared that border troubles and tribal raids would, under a weakened central authority, result in the usual advance on the part of Russia, and the probable seizure of Herat. The latter place is considered the key of India, not so much from its fortifications as because the region all around is like a garden, and affords a basis for the supply of every necessary required by troops in an advance along a comparatively easy route direct to the frontier of India.

Possessed of Herat, and backed by the railway which now runs to Merv, and is being steadily driven on, Russia would not only have a secure and easy base for hostile operations against Hindostan, but would be able in time of peace to carry on her usual system of intrigue in its courts and bazars, perhaps with the same measure of success as she has had in Bulgaria, Servia and Roumelia.

But the whole question of the relations between England and Russia in the East turns upon the point of inquiry, Does Russia really desire India? To answer this interrogation it is necessary to consider a number of apparently extraneous matters.

It has been proven by experience that Russian treaties are merely waste paper, and the general policy of the Empire is well described by Mr. Charles Marvin: "Russia has a frontier line across Asia 5,000 miles in length, no single spot of which can be regarded as permanent. Starting from the Pacific, we find that she hankers for the northern part of Corea; regards as undetermined her boundary with Manchuria and Mongolia; hopes that she will some day have Kashgar; questions the Ameer's right to rule Afghan Turkestan; demands the Gates of Herat; keeps up a great and growing complication with Persia about the Khorassan frontier; treats the Shah more and more every year as a dependent sovereign; discusses having some day a port in the Persian Gulf, and believes she will be the future mistress of Asia Minor."

It is said, however, by many who realize clearly enough the aggressive character of Russia's policy, that her desire to reach the frontier of India is dictated not by the idea of conquest, but from a wish to use the threat of invasion as a factor to enable her to obtain possession of Constantinople. The argument is inconsistent, because England's main reason for keeping Russia out of Constantinople, or France out of Egypt, is to prevent those countries from being utilized as valuable bases for attack against India. Russian possession of Turkey would mean that she would become, in a certain sense, the head of the Mussulman world—and there are 50,000,000 Mohammedans in India—would obtain possession of the undeveloped wealth and trade of Asia Minor, and perhaps of Persia and form a power so great as to menace the peace of the world. General Skobeloff, it is well-known, had drawn up before his death a plan for the invasion of India and had always looked forward to one day participating in such an attack. General Skobeloff wrote to the "Russ" a few years ago in the same strain, while General Tchernayeff wrote in 1864, "The mysterious veil which has hitherto covered the conquest of India, a conquest looked upon until now as fabulous, is beginning to lift itself before my eyes." And this was written while the deserts, mountains and hostile tribes of Central Asia were as yet unconquered.

It may, I think, be taken for granted that in the event of war breaking out between Great Britain and Russia, and it was very near in 1878, and again in 1886—when the Gladstone Government expended £11,000,000 in preparation—an invasion of India will be attempted, either in the form of a raid or of a deliberate attempt at conquest.

The nature of the invasion would depend entirely upon the loyalty of the population, and upon the amount of influence which Russia would previously have been able to obtain over them.

Russia has many advantages over England in this struggle for empire, and the first one is the fact that she is able to assimilate the populations which she conquers, and to make as good use of them after a few years as though they had been native born Russians. England on the other hand colonizes and civilises, but does not absorb. Then, on one side, is the despotic form of the Russian Government, which enables the Czar to carry out his wishes without impediment; to prepare for war and to mass his troops at the Caspian and arrange for an onslaught upon his enemies in almost perfect secrecy, while on the other hand the British Ministry, hampered on every side by financial necessities, undue publicity and Parliamentary opposition, is utterly unable to carry on a war in the manner which would be most successful.

Then again, Russia has been perfecting her communications until she can to-day without undue exertion or any fear of interruption throw an army from Odessa into the interior of Asia in six days. Besides all this we must remember that in Eastern eyes "prestige" is everything, and that Russia has never yet failed in any of her Asiatic adventures. Respect is there synonymous with terror, and the latter is the general feeling which Russia inspires. When we add to this the fact that the "White Czar" is supposed to be following in the footsteps of the mighty conquerors of Hindostan in the past and that Great Britain by her "scuttle" from Candahar and her mismanaged Afghan campaigns has done much to mar her own reputation, it will be easily seen that Russia has advantages which are by no means inconsiderable. We would undoubtedly have to face a large army, recruited at every stage by wild and turbulent tribes, only too glad of an opportunity to raid once more the wealth of historic India, while our opponents would depend upon a great uprising in the country itself to assist them. This is borne out by the statements of Generals Skobeloff, Kauffman, Annenkoff, Petrusevitch and many others. General Gradekoff in a memoir of Skobeloff, states that at the time of his raid upon Geok Tepe, "in order to raise Russia's prestige in Central Asia and depress that of England, he sent native agents into the bazars to spread abroad the report that it was the White Czar who had compelled England to evacuate Afghanistan."

We thus see what would have to be faced in the event of Russia obtaining a hold upon a place so useful for purposes of intrigue as Herat would be. So far I have endeavoured to place Russian advantages in the contest which is supposed to be almost a future certainty before my readers, and it now becomes my much more pleasant duty to exhibit the other side of the shield.

Great Britain has, it is true, but few soldiers in India: nevertheless it may be doubted whether Russia could plant an army upon the borders of the Empire, even with all its railway facilities, any quicker than steamships, the Canadian Pacific Railway and British wealth could land troops at Calcutta. In the event of war there can be little doubt that volunteers by the thousands from Canada, and from