

"Aw shall miss thee when thee's gone, lass," said the Lanco-ire girl, turning to her companion whom she had befriended, with a wistful look on her bright, healthy face.

"Yes; and I shall no doubt look back to the quiet hours I have spent with you, Moll," was her reply. "You have been very kind to me, and I hope, if I ever have the chance, I shall not forget to return it."

"Don't ye talk on it, Florence. I've only done to ye as aw'd be done by, and thee's no ca' to speak on't."

"Ah, thou'rt a rare gude un, Moll," said Mrs. Bolton, who had buried her civility to Florence for this night, in consideration of its being her last with them.

"Now, mithor, do na say no more about un. Ye's got all the traps ready, Florence, arn't thee?"

"Yes, thank you, Moll. The boxes are ready packed to send to the hotel directly I leave here in the morning, and my dress is all ready to put on. I am only sorry that you won't come to the wedding, Moll."

"Na, thank'e, lass. Aw'll go to the church and see thee married, but aw'll na go with the grand folks; and aw tak' it very kind on thee, lass, to stay wi' us to the last, and leave here for the church. It shows thou'rt not ashamed on thy poor friends, and it's more nor mony a lass would ha' done."

"I wonder how Frank gets on to-night with his bachelor party? I darsay the fellows with him are pretending to read the funeral service over him."

"More likely they'll be singing and getting drunk," returned Mrs. Bolton. "Thar was some officer chaps coming to the wedding, I heard, and they'll be saartin to be thar."

"Yes, I remember Frank told me so, but I forgot to ask their names."

"Elgh, but aw didn't, though. One war Cap'n Bracket, and ither was Lieutenant Blackie."

"Who?" half shrieked the girl.

The old woman repeated her information in a more emphatic tone, failing to notice the strange pallor which came over the girl's face, or the singular manner in which her hand trembled.

For at that moment, late as was the hour, there was a knock at the front door.

"Aw'll see," returned Moll, straightway going to the door and opening it.

"Good even', lass. Be moye aunt gone to bed?"

It was John Barker, Willie Bolton's cousin, who asked the question, and seeing his aunt in the room, he stepped into it almost uninvited.

"Mither's worsor, aunt, and she's sent me for ye," he said, addressing Mrs. Bolton.

"Elgh, aw'm sorry fur't, but aw canna go to her to-night," was the positive reply.

Florence had taken a candle in her hand and walked into the inner room on the entrance of the visitor.

A few seconds after and Moll followed her.

The young man bent over as thou to whisper to the old woman, saying—

"Elgh, but, nent, she wants to tell thee summut—summut about Willie."

"Aw will na go to night, aw tells ye," was the positive reply.

The next moment there was a gasp, a sob, but so low that it was unheard by the girls in the next room.

A handkerchief, saturated with chloroform, had been pressed upon her mouth and nostrils, and the next instant she lay back in the chair senseless.

Cautiously as a snake in the grass, the man slipped to the front door and opened it, admitting two confederates.

(To be continued.)

## THE ADVANCE OF RUSSIA IN ASIA.

BY CHARLES MORRIS.

Public attention has recently been directed to the movements of Russia in that far-off region known as Central Asia, a land of which we knew next to nothing a few years ago, when Vamberg, at the peril of his life, penetrated to the heart of its mystery, but which is now rising into importance in view of these aggressive movements. For centuries past one object has undeviatingly occupied the attention of the Muscovite race. Since Czar Ivan, early in the sixteenth century, imagined the establishment of a great Tartar kingdom, all the emperors of Russia have made the accomplishment of this object a prominent feature of their military policies.

The eastern limit of their country bordered, throughout the long range of the Ural, on Western Asia, while in the Caspian Sea they possessed a water-way reaching far into the central regions of this continent. But the Asiatic borders of the Caspian are sandy deserts; and long after the conquest of the Tartar kingdoms of Kazan and Astrakhan extended the Russian dominions to the Ural, an unaccountable ignorance of the vast regions beyond those mountains prevailed.

In the year 1580, a Cossack leader of a band of robbers, being outlawed by the government, led his two hundred adventurers across the Ural. After pillaging the Tartars until his band became too much reduced to maintain itself, it occurred to Yermak to return to Moscow, announce his discoveries and make peace with the czar. The robber at once became a hero, and

was given command of an expedition for the conquest of Siberia. Within eighty years from the date of this movement nearly all the Siberian tribes were subdued by Russia.

From this not very creditable beginning arose the long career of Muscovite conquest in Asia. The Cossacks, conquered by Russia about the middle of the fifteenth century, have ever since served as her military pioneers, and have been indispensable in this Asiatic movement. This hardy race overran Northern Asia with remarkable rapidity, and in 1639 stood on the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk, having in about fifty years taken possession of the whole vast width of Siberia, and established many thriving settlements. Spreading southward, they discovered the Amoor River, that magnificent stream which traverses the western half of Siberia, and opens a grand water-way to the Pacific.

Here they had no longer the barbarous Tartars to deal with, but infringing upon the borders of the great Chinese empire, through whose northern limit this river ran. In their daring depredations upon the Chinese villages they suffered a signal defeat, followed by a treaty which secured China from molestation for two hundred years.

But in these two centuries China had been going down and Russia up the hill of progress; and when the next aggressive movement was made, in 1654, the result was in strange contrast to the futile efforts of the seventeenth century. A strong fleet sailed down the river, built forts and quietly took possession of the whole north bank. A treaty with China followed, which wrested from the latter kingdom this acquisition, together with an important province on the Pacific to the south of the river. The northern half of the island of Saghalien was seized, and in 1801 an important island in the Straits of Corea was annexed. A year or two ago Russia drove out the Japanese garrisons from the southern half of Saghalien, and coolly possessed herself of the whole island. These forcible acquisitions have given her a very important coast-line on the Pacific, and she will have a controlling voice in the future of that region.

The Russian influence is being gradually extended more and more southward into the Chinese empire, and at any moment her astute politicians may discover that her natural boundary-line lies somewhere in the heart of Chinese Tartary. For years she has been preparing for such a discovery.

While thus possessing herself of the vast extent of Siberia, with all its great wealth of metals, minerals, fur-bearing animals, timber, etc., together with the fertile soil of the south, so prolific in agricultural products, she has been no less active in other directions. South of Western Siberia lies the immense region possessed by the Kirgheez nomads, a mighty desert, yet with oases and mountain valleys that give subsistence to a considerable population, and to vast herds of cattle, sheep and horses, the property of these wandering tribes. The Muscovite plan of conquest embraced this region, and for years Russia has been quietly extending her influence over the inhabitants, till now her authority is almost supreme. By cajolement of the simple-minded natives, by purchase, by forcible seizure, by cunningly adding their dissensions and establishing agents among them so as to take advantage of every opportunity of aggrandizement, and by severely punishing every aggression on an established fort or settlement, this authority of Russia has been extended, till the whole vast desert region has been devoured by the hungry Russian empire. Every acquisition has been secured by a line of forts, successively abandoned as the boundary stretched southward, while important towns, such as Kopal and Vernole, arose in the region left behind by the onward sweep of aggression.

Michele, in his "Overland Route," tells us: "The Cossacks at the Russian stations make raids on their own account on the Kirgheez, and subject them to rough treatment. An outbreak occurs which it requires a military force to subdue. An expedition for this purpose is sent every year to the Kirgheez steppe. The Russian outposts are pushed farther and farther south, more disturbances occur, and so the front is year by year extended, on pretence of keeping peace. This has been the system pursued by the Russian government in all its aggressions in Asia."

This movement, however, is but a means to an end. South of these steppes lie the settled regions of Central Asia, the thickly populated kingdoms of Toorkistan, on which Russia has had for centuries a covetous eye. This region, too, is in great measure a desert, its nomad inhabitants being more warlike than the Kirgheez. It includes, however, three great oases, with several smaller ones, in which the soil is of the highest fertility. Each oasis has its distinct government, forming the Khanates of Khiva, Bokhara and Kokan, which have been ruled with the most absolute tyranny. Their principal cities—Khiva, Bokhara and Samarcand—which appear vast in the mirage of Oriental extravagance, and the latter of which has a reputation reaching far into antiquity, are described by Vamberg as chiefly mud-built towns, far below the Persian cities in character, while these latter are immeasurably below the grade of a European city. Through this region run the two great rivers of Central Asia—the Syr-Daria, which empties into the Sea of Aral, and the Amoo-Daria, which traverses Khiva and Bokhara, and has its mouth in the Caspian.

Toorkistan is the headquarters of Islamism, its inhabitants displaying a fanaticism and a fierce intolerance which make the life of an European not worth an hour's purchase throughout the whole region. Vamberg, in his travels in this country, was in constant danger, though he had spent years in perfecting himself in the

language and in the habits of a dervish, and though he travelled in all the rags and discomfort of the most bigoted fanatic. No portion of the earth making the least claim to civilization can equal this in ignorance and fanaticism. Their Islamism is of the most rabid cast, and so intolerant that they endure the members of the opposing sect of the Mohammedans, to which the Persians belong only as slaves. The fierce Toorkoman tribes of the desert diversify their pastoral labors by piratical excursions on the Caspian and by raids into Persia, whence they annually bring large numbers of captives, to be sold into slavery in the neighboring oases.

This exclusiveness, which has rendered the khanates to the present day almost *terra incognita*, has kept their inhabitants in ignorance of the world of outside barbarians. They imagine that the mantle of strength and intelligence, which in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries rendered this region the richest and most enlightened in the East, and its cities centres of Islamic learning, has descended upon their shoulders, and they despise the exterior infidels accordingly. The Turkish invasion of Europe, and the dismay into which it threw all Christendom, remains to them a thing of yesterday, and very entertaining extravagant ideas as to the power and influence of the Sublime Porte. To their ignorant fancy Europe still bends in cringing submission to the Turk, and they imagine that a bare promise of assistance from the Sultan would drive the invader in terror from the holy soil of Toorkistan. They depend also on two other powerful aids against aggression. One of these, and the most effective in our eyes, is the extensive deserts surrounding their territory. The other, which in their view is far more efficacious, is the large number of Moslem saints buried in their soil. They seem to imagine that the bones of the saintly dead will rise against aggressor and form a spectral cordon utterly impassable to infidel feet.

The aggressive movement of Russia in this direction dates back to 1602. In this year the Cossacks took the city of Khiva, but were attacked and defeated in their return across the desert. Again, in 1703, during the reign of Peter the Great, the khan of Khiva placed his dominions under Russian rule. But since the commencement of the present century a change in the ruling dynasty has destroyed the friendly disposition of the Khivans, and they have become bitterly hostile.

It was not until 1836 that the modern advance really began. In that year a post on the eastern shore of the Caspian was seized and a fort built, while several armed steamers were placed upon this sea for the purpose of suppressing the Toorkoman pirates. In 1839 war broke out with Khiva, and a Russian expedition was sent into the latter country. It proved unsuccessful, except in frightening the khan into the release of some four hundred Russian prisoners whom he held.

But the most available avenue of advance into this region was its rivers, the desert proving a dangerous obstacle to land expeditions. The most favorable of these in position—the Amoo-Daria—is full of shifting sand-banks, and its waters are drawn off to such an extent by the irrigating canals of agriculturists that it is not safely navigable. The Syr-Daria is navigable for a long distance, and forms the only safe route to Kokan through the wide desert that intervenes.

Russia made her first hostile appearance on the Sea of Aral in 1847, building a fort at the mouth of the Syr. This excited the hostility of the Khivans, and several attacks occurred. Steamers were accordingly brought in sections, from Sweden, and put together upon the Syr. These advanced up the river, in connection with a land expedition, which marched through the fertile belt along its shores. Several conflicts occurred with the Kokanians. The latter had built a strong fort about six hundred miles up the river, which was used as a base for incursions upon the Kirgheez.

For two years the Russians sought to take this stronghold, and finally carried it by assault. This was a severe blow to Kokan, who attacked with a force of 13,000 men the Russian garrison of 1,000, but was defeated by a sortie of the latter.

Year after year the movement up this river continued, till finally, in 1864, the important town of Tashkend was seized, and in 1866 a large portion of the khanate was occupied. This aggression excited the hostility of Bokhara, whose forces had in 1862 conquered Kokan. The emir proclaimed a holy war against the infidels, religious emissaries were sent throughout the country, and "Death to the invader" was everywhere preached. By such means a powerful force was soon raised, and the Russians defeated, the latter having marched into Bokhara for the purpose of liberating Colonel Struve, the imprisoned Russian ambassador.

But while the emir was exulting over his success, his foes were completing their conquest of Kokan. In May, 1868, decolored by an eastern movement of the Russian forces, the emir again proclaimed a holy war, and marched against the Russian garrisons. The troops of the czar rapidly returned, entered Bokhara, defeated the forces of the emir, and took possession of the city of Samarcand. Thus was the foot of the infidel at length planted upon the very heart of unadulterated Mohammedanism, in a city the date of whose origin reaches back beyond the birth of history, and the story of whose first capture is one of those remote legends which have floated down to us from pre-historic ages.

The furious Mohammedans vigorously sought to retake this holy city, driving the Russians into the citadel, where they were closely besieged

for eight days. They were relieved, however, and the emir driven from the city. In July, 1868, a treaty of peace was made, whose terms were highly advantageous to the Russians. Samarcand was ceded to them, along with three other stations, shrewdly chosen to give them military control of the country. Other important advantages were gained, the long policy of seclusion being ended, and fixed rules of commercial intercourse established. During the five years which have since elapsed the Muscovite power has been more and more strengthened in this quarter, till the two khanates are now virtually provinces of the great Russian empire.

While these events were transpiring, Khiva, the most westerly of these kingdoms, lay unmolested. Its occupation, however, was an established part of the programme, and this portion of the military game is now being played. Russia is preparing a force which will be irresistible by the barbarous troops of the khan, and within another year all Central Asia will be but an outlying province of that mighty, growing empire which now embraces the whole of Northern Asia and of Eastern Europe.

But this last movement has excited opposition in another quarter. England has long viewed uneasily these aggressive movements, which brought an ambitious power within striking distance of her Indian possessions. It is not the open acts, but the secret intentions, of the czar that she fears, and her late protest is called for by reasons not visible on the surface.

For what we have detailed is but the apparent flow of the Russian stream into Asia. Beneath this military wave lies a strong current of diplomacy which the astute Muscovite has been for years industriously forwarding, and a vital change in the habits and modes of thought of the Asiatics which the leaven of civilization is producing. She is not content with the work of the sword. The school and the newspaper, settled government and security to life and property, accompany her progress. The conquests of the Cossack are rapidly succeeded by the advance of the farmer, with his family and stock. Every fort becomes the centre of a thriving colony, and all the advantages of civilized life are laid open to the grasp of the wondering barbarians. Russia has gone into Asia to stay, and she is taking a course which will rapidly converting her late foes into quiet and contented subjects.

In a political point of view, Russia is becoming the central figure in Asiatic affairs. She has impressed the value of her friendship on all the nations, and by the aid of gold, diplomacy and all the tricks of policy has gained a footing with her influence much farther south than her sword has gone. The Russians, in spite of their fair complexion, are more than half Asiatic, and know how to meet the Oriental on his own ground. No plain-dealing suffices here. Craft must be encountered with craft, policy with policy, patience with patience. Time is seemingly a matter of indifference in their calculations. Each works for the weak point of the other, and will spend hours over a matter which a blunt European would cut through with a word. Hence it is that the Englishman is at such a disadvantage. The Russians understand not his bluntness, nor his intricacy of diplomatic intrigue, and they prefer to be cheated diplomatically than served directly.

The Russian diplomat has all the suavity of his Asiatic congeners. He can glide through their closest nets of policy without displaying an angle of his body. He conforms to their customs, and allows them to delay and prevaricate to their hearts' content. But a point once gained, he is unyielding. He is an adept at bribery, has emissaries everywhere—in, in fact, at home in Asia, and is too fully imbued with the Oriental spirit for European patience. As Michele says, "You must beat about the bush with the Russians. You must flatter them and humbug them. You must talk about everything but the thing. If you want to buy a horse, you must pretend you want to buy a cow, and so work gradually round to the point in view." This well illustrates the character of Asiatic diplomacy, and shows how the astute Russian has made his way with the half-barbarous Orientals.

The Briton in India pursues a strikingly different course. There is no assimilation between him and his subjects. His conviction of superiority induces an arrogance which the natives bitterly resent. He is not only overbearing toward them, but worse yet, he fails to appreciate the hereditary difference between them and himself, and constantly offends their prejudices and interferes with their local customs. The submission of India to England is greatly the result of fear, and lacks that feeling of interest and citizenship which the Russian implants in the minds of his new subjects.

No one can predict the result of these movements. Within ten years Russia has absorbed Central Asia. In Lower Asia her influence is becoming preponderant. Persia has been bought over, and is ready to become her tool. Afghanistan is treacherous to the English and a friend to the Russian. Secret agents of the court of St. Petersburg are supposed to be constantly on hand in these countries, taking advantage of every opportunity to advance the Muscovite interests.

The Cossack advance is within fifteen days' march of India, and England has reason to be alarmed at the approach of this ominous cloud of war. In the event of a war between the two powers at home, how long would the mountain barriers of Northern India protect her soil? Were the Cossack troops strengthened by a powerful force of Afghan and Tartar recruits—warlike races for whom the Sepoys are no match—and strengthened by Mohammedan defection in