

tottering throne, and into which, from inaction and the indebtedness of the officers, discontent and Nihilism appear to be beginning to find their way. He is probably also lured by the criminal hope of relieving himself of domestic danger by diverting the mind of the nation from political revolution to foreign war. In this vile calculation he would probably find himself mistaken, as did his precursor in such a policy—the crowned felon of France. The war, especially if it spread, would be likely to call all the revolutionary fires with which Europe is heaving into play, and the end of Russian aggression upon England might be the deliverance of Russia and mankind from the Romanoff. Certainly to the Czar defeat would be political as well as military ruin. It is possible that at the last moment this thought has come between him and war, and accounts for the less bellicose tone of the Russian diplomatists.

WE have never shut our eyes to the fact that the present difficulty is traceable in large measure to the folly of ministers such as Palmerston and Beaconsfield, both of whom wantonly invaded Afghanistan, and to the Anti-Russian delirium of the Jingo Party in England. Without such assistance the military party in Russia would not have been able to excite the national hatred of England which is essential to the accomplishment of their designs. England need not have been the object of attack at all. Not British India has been the real goal of Russian ambition, but the possession of Constantinople and access to an open sea. Had the force of Russian expansion been allowed to find its vent at the Dardanelles, it would not have been driven to the Himalayan passes, nor would the burden of controlling Russian aggrandizement have been laid upon England alone. Yet there can be no shadow of doubt that in the present quarrel Russia is the wrongdoer. The dominant party in her councils has apparently been resolved to force upon England war or humiliation. Mr. Gladstone, it must be owned, is in some respects not the best man to have at the head of the nation at a military crisis. But his character and his known sentiments towards Russia are an assurance to his own nation and to the world at large that he will not go to war so long as there is a chance of preserving peace without a total sacrifice of honour and justice. The object which he has at heart in thus prolonging negotiations at some risk of allowing his unscrupulous adversary to grasp military advantages will no doubt be attained: he will be able, whatever the result, to challenge the verdict of the civilized world. Morality has indeed already spoken clearly as well as impartially by the mouth of the American people, whose sympathy with us is welcome not merely because it is a strong support. No particle of misgiving need alloy the sympathy with which the sons of England will follow in a possible struggle the fortunes of her flag. Never has it been unfurled in a more just or a more inevitable war, if war there should be. The stars in their courses do not fight for the good cause, but the good cause is its own star. To go into war with a light heart is to prove yourself a fool or a villain, but a clear conscience makes a strong heart, as will presently, we trust, be seen, should pacific counsels not prevail.

To what combinations a war might lead in its course, it is impossible to foresee. But at her first entrance into it England would be likely to have no ally except the Afghans. Her natural ally in a war with Russia would be Turkey. It is true the Turk has little reason to love Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Gladstone's supporters; yet if he were left to himself the instinct of self-preservation would be certain to prevail over disagreeable reminiscences. But he is apparently held back by Bismarck, whose malevolence towards England has now become manifest. The amicable Chancellor has probably two motives of policy besides that of personal resentment. He wishes England and Russia to exhaust each other by war: he also wishes the Colonial Empire of England to be ruined, in order that an opening may be made for the Colonial Empire of Germany, that object of his sudden aspirations, though he will hardly brighten the future of German Colonies by making the Anglo-Saxon Colonies their enemies all over the world. Italy is thoroughly friendly, thanks largely to the sympathy shown her by Mr. Gladstone in the days of her adversity; but she is afraid to place herself by the side of England in a position of such peril, and she has now the Mahdi, who is about as much as she can manage, on her hands. From France no generous treatment ever has been received or can be hoped for by England. She went into partnership with England in the Egyptian business, threw her partner overboard at the crisis, and now takes advantage of England's distress to bully the Egyptian Government, after which she will recommence her tirade against perfidious Albion. Besides, she looks to Russia as her possible ally on the day when she shall arm to take her revenge on Germany and recover Alsace-Lorraine. The heart of Austria ought to be with England as the antagonist of Russia's aggrandizement, by which in her Slavonic Provinces she is herself perpetually threatened; and the tone of the Vienna press is in fact much more friendly than that

of the German. But with her rickety and nervous frame Austria shrinks from all bold action and, at the opening stage of a conflict at all events, no assistance could be expected at her hands. The Afghan tribes are brave, and likely to make a good stand against the Russians, if they will make a stand at all; but they are uncivilized, passionate, fickle, uncertain in all their actions, nor have they any centralized or regular government to answer for their conduct to an ally. Fortunately, the present Ameer appears to be a man whose personal force makes up for the lack of constitutional power. Should the day go hard with England, however, all the nations which are menaced immediately or remotely by Russian aggression may begin to see the danger of allowing her to succumb.

It is on the Indian Empire that the stress of a conflict, on the side of England, would fall. In fact the war would be one between the British and the Russian Empires in Asia. The disposition of the princes and people of India is therefore of the most vital importance, and would be most severely tried. Of late English agitators have been scattering alarms of native disaffection, which it is their own desire to see fulfilled. More respectable expressions of misgiving have been heard from some who have no incendiary purpose, and who speak with the authority of experience; but as yet not a symptom of disaffection has appeared. On the contrary a wonderful alacrity has been shown in tendering support to the supreme power. Offers of assistance in men and money are coming in from the native States, and not only from Hindoos but from Mahometans, whose sentiments towards the rule by which their own dominion was supplanted have always been regarded with much suspicion. The Maharajah of Nepaul is ready at once to send to the front fifteen thousand picked Ghorkas, to be entirely under British command. The tone of the native press also is described as that of a loyal opposition in times of public danger, merging complaints and differences of opinion in loyalty to the common cause. There are, no doubt, beneath the surface of Hindoo sentiment, mysterious depths which the most experienced have hardly fathomed; but at present all appearances are perfectly fair. The interest of the native princes is clear. They enjoy a tenure of their principalities and everything pertaining to them infinitely more secure than they enjoyed in the days of turbulence and violence, of predatory conquest, dynastic revolution and murderous conspiracy, which preceded the advent of British rule. In the Mutiny they were true to England almost without exception, though the troops of some of them joined the Mutineers. Neither they nor their people could possibly look forward to any improvement of their condition under Russian sway, while it is certain that the interval would be one of universal confusion, devastation and suffering. Bribery, if it can reach them, may shake the fidelity of individuals; but by no general motive of policy can they be led to invite or welcome the invader. The dominion of the Russian would not be less foreign than that of the Englishman, and it certainly would not be more civilizing or more just, nor would the native press acquire a larger measure of freedom. Perhaps war between Russia and British India, if it came, might show the world a spectacle which it has never seen before—that of two hundred millions of subject people loyal to the government of the conqueror.

THE hope of peace, however, is not yet extinct: on the contrary it has somewhat revived. Just as the storm seemed about to burst the cloud has once more lifted. The bell had rung for the vast drama of blood and havoc which the eyes of an expectant world were strained to see; but the curtain does not rise. We have pointed all along to the fact that there was no necessity for a war. There was nothing in dispute which could not be perfectly well settled without the arbitration of the sword. It was not as when Frederic and Maria Theresa both claimed Silesia, or when Germany was bent on a union which France determined to prevent. The temper of the disputants, or of one of them, was the only obstacle to a settlement. The military party in Russia wanted war, and the question was whether the Czar from fear of losing his popularity with the army would yield to their criminal desire. It appeared at one time certain that he would. But having been brought face to face with the consequences of his meditated act he may perhaps have begun to recoil. England, by the vigour of her preparations for war, has scattered to the winds the notions which some of her own journalists had propagated with regard to the disrepute of her navy. Her people have shown their spirit. India has proved herself loyal, and the chances of exciting disaffection in Ireland had been shown, since the Prince's visit, to be far less than had been supposed. The Chancellor, De Giers, is evidently on the side of peace: a foreigner by extraction and a passionless man of business he does not share military or national passions, but studies coolly the practical interest of the Empire; and no doubt he is well aware that a general disturbance in Europe would stimulate the forces of revolution. Though overborne in council by the