

with the congratulations of the Emperor on the accession of the present Ministry: particularly of Lord Aberdeen, "with whom he had been acquainted for nearly forty years, and for whom he entertained equal regard and esteem." The Emperor wished that a good understanding should exist between England and Russia. "When we are agreed, I am quite without anxiety as to the West of Europe; it is immaterial what the others may think or do. As to Turkey, that is another question; that country is in a critical state, and may give us all a great deal of trouble." Sir H. Seymour pressed for some additional assurances on this point:—

"The Emperor's words and manner, although still very kind, showed that his Majesty had no intention of speaking to me of the demonstration which he is about to make in the South. He said, however, at first with a little hesitation, but, as he proceeded, in an open and unhesitating manner—"The affairs of Turkey are in a very disorganized condition; the country itself seems to be falling to pieces (*menace ruine*); the fall will be a great misfortune, and it is very important that England & Russia should come to a perfectly good understanding upon these affairs, and that neither should take any decisive step of which the other is not apprised."

"I observed in a few words, that I rejoiced to hear that his Imperial Majesty held this language; that this was certainly the view I took of the manner in which the Turkish question was to be treated.

"*'Tenez,'* the Emperor said, as if proceeding with his remark, *'tenez; nous avons sur les bras un homme malade—un homme gravement malade; ce sera, je vous le dis franchement, un grand malheur si, un de ces jours, il devait nous échapper, surtout avant que toutes les dispositions nécessaires fussent ne prises. Mais enfin ce n'est point le moment de vous parler de cela.'*

"It was clear that the Emperor did not intend to prolong the conversation. I therefore said, *'Votre Majesté est si gracieuse qu'elle me permettra de lui faire encore une observation. Votre Majesté dit que l'homme est malade; c'est bien vrai, mais votre Majesté daignera m'excuser si je lui fais observer, que c'est a l'homme genereux et fort de menager l'homme malade et foible.'*

"The Emperor then took leave of me in a manner which conveyed the impression of my having, at least, not given offence, and again expressed his intention of sending for me on some future day."

On the 23rd of January the Emperor was more explicit.

"I found his Majesty alone; he received me with great kindness saying, that I had appeared desirous to speak to him upon Eastern affairs; that, on his side, there was no indisposition to do so, but that he must begin at a remote period.

"*'You know,'* his Majesty said, *'the dreams and plans in which the Empress Catherine was in the habit of indulging; these were handed down to our time; but while I inherited immense territorial possessions, I did not inherit those visions, those intentions, if you like to call them so. On the contrary, my country is so vast, so happily circumstanced in every way, that it would be unreasonable in me to desire more territory or more*

power than I possess; on the contrary, I am the first to tell you that our great, perhaps our only danger, is that which would arise from an extension given to an empire already too large.

"Close to us lies Turkey, and, in our present condition, nothing better can be desired for our interests; the times have gone by when we had anything to fear from the fanatical spirit or the military enterprise of the Turks, and yet the country is strong enough, or has hitherto been strong enough to preserve its independence, and to ensure respectful treatment from other countries.

"Well, in that empire there are several millions of Christians whose interests I am called upon to watch over (*surveiller*), while the right of doing so is secured to me by treaty. I may truly say that I make a moderate and sparing use of my right, and I will freely confess that it is one which is attended with obligations occasionally very inconvenient; but I cannot recede from the discharge of a distinct duty. Our religion, as established in this country, came to us from the East, and there are feelings, as well as obligations, which never must be lost sight of.

"Now, Turkey, in the condition which I have described, has by degrees fallen into such a state of decrepitude, that as I told you the other night eager as we all are for the prolonged existence of the man (and that I am as desirous as you can be for the continuance of his life, I beg you to believe), he may suddenly die upon our hands (*nous rester sur le bras*); we cannot resuscitate what is dead; if the Turkish empire falls, it falls to rise no more; and I put it to you, therefore, whether it is not better to be provided before, hand for a contingency, than to incur the chaos, confusion, and the certainty of a European war, all of which must attend the catastrophe if it should occur unexpectedly, and before some ulterior system has been sketched? This is the point to which I am desirous that you should call the attention of your Government."

"Sir," I replied, "your Majesty is so frank with me that I am sure you will have the goodness to permit me to speak with the same openness. I would then observe that, deplorable as is the condition of Turkey, it is a country which has been plunged in difficulties supposed by many to be insurmountable. With regard to contingent arrangements, Her Majesty's Government, as your Majesty is well aware, objects, as a general rule, to taking engagements upon possible eventualities, and would, perhaps, be particularly disinclined to doing so in this instance. If I may be allowed to say so, a great disinclination might be expected in England to disposing by anticipation of the succession of an old friend and ally."

"The rule is a good one," the Emperor replied, "good at all times, especially in times of uncertainty and change, like the present; still it is of the greatest importance that we should understand one another, and not allow events to take us by surprise:

"The conversation passed to the events of the day, when the Emperor briefly recapitulated his claims upon the Holy Places—claims recognised by the firman of last February, and confirmed by a sanction to which His Majesty said he at-