

THE EASTERN WAR CLOUD.

to join the Government of the country. They invite Leo XIII. to apply that Vaticanism to the Alsations and the Italians who hold aloof from Emperor William and King Humbert. The Orleanists forget that arrangements are possible with heaven, and that principles change with times. France intends to hold on to her republic; the rôles of saviours of society, whether called providential pretenders, kings or Cæsars, are played out.

Not content with having cholera in a very tragical form at Hamburg, M. Blumenthal intends mounting "Cholera" as an actuality for the Berlin stage. When the plague has completely departed, the French play writers, who are mindful of the "unities," will handle the idea. It is calculated that 162 guaranteed cures exist for cholera, one moiety being the antithesis of the other. No more volunteers are required for anti-choleraic experiments. The fee solicited varied from 5 to 20 francs a day, board included. At St. Denis, a suburb of 50,000 inhabitants, all work people, the atmosphere is observed to be full of vertical columns of flies, that wave from side to side like the tail of a kite. The village, though not a model of cleanliness, has but little cholera. The inhabitants are more interested in the new fashion of the civil baptism of babies—no more extraordinary than the civil marriage of their parents limited to music and political stumping.

France is more occupied with the failing supply of babies than with their baptism. There are at present 1,300,000 foreigners resident in France, of whom two-fifths are Belgians. The English and Russians muster 12,000 each. It is proposed to tap the Belgian stratum by an easy form of naturalization, and secure an addition at once of 40,000 to cover the deficit in the population. Pastor Stocker, tired of baiting the Jews, is occupied with his plan for Teutonizing Alsace more rapidly. He would endow every Alsatian boy and girl with a lump sum of money if they married orthodox Germans.

Parisians have reason to be displeased at M. Pasteur sending journalist Stanhope to drink Elbe water to catch the cholera, when that of their own Seine was so qualified to attain the same end. M. Ritter intends to remove the reproach from the river. For the sum of 400,000,000 frs., less by one third what is required to achieve the Panama Canal, he will tap the Swiss lake Neuchâtel at a depth of seventeen fathoms, and convey an unlimited supply of excellent drinking water across France to Paris and on to Rouen. And this water will have such a fall that it can be utilized as a motive power; the water would reach the heights of Mendon. The cost would be 4 centimes per cubic metre to Paris, and selling it at 10 centimes the cubic metre, being one-half the present water rates, a good profit would be realized. He would also tap Lake Lemane, or that of Geneva, to supply Lyons, the valley of the Rhone, and Marseilles with potable water. In this case the cost would be 425,000,000 frs., more tunnel work having to be executed. The length of pipe to be laid down from Neuchâtel to Paris would be 300 miles, a mere flea bite for modern engineers.

The French Parliament will open soon. It will be an important one and the last prior to the general elections. The revision of the new tariff will be the earliest nut to crack. Unless Ministers be allowed a free hand to negotiate below the minimum rates, no reciprocal treaties can be effected. At Fourmies, in the north of France, the wool-spinning interest is being killed by over-protection, and the importation of raw materials for industry is rapidly declining.

Apropos of M. Delouche's big telescope that will enable the moon to be examined as if only at a distance of forty inches, Voltaire wrote a little story, "Micromégas." The latter was an inhabitant of the star, Sirius, and was twenty miles in stature, and young, though 450 years of age. Having written a treatise on the reproduction of fleas in canaries, he was deemed heretical and exiled for 800 years. Having now plenty of time on his hands, he visited the neighbouring planets, and, making the acquaintance of the Permanent Secretary of the Academy of Saturn, they agreed to visit the earth. Arrived, they could hardly perceive the Mediterranean or Atlantic, though stooping to do so. Unable to perceive any people they concluded the planet to be uninhabited. On reaching the Baltic, by means of a magnifying glass, they remarked a ship full of philosophers—Micromégas placed all on his thumb nail—who had come to study the solar circle. His first idea was to crush the atomies, the imperceptible insects, when the animalcules were engaged discussing, that the planets Sirius and Saturn were not inhabited, and that the sun and the stars were solely created for man, as the master and king of the universe. These *infiniment petits* embodied pride for the amusement of the *infiniment grand*.

A hint for critics: M. Sarcey, the famous theatrical critic, announces this week that he is "Balaam's ass." Dogberry also, in a spirit of ill-humour, desired to be written down a relative of that quadruped. Z.

CAN there be any greater dotage in the world than for one to guide and direct his course by the sound of a bell and not by his own judgment?—*Rabelais*.

THE every-day cares and duties, which men call drudgery, are the weights and counterpoises of the clock of time, giving its pendulum a true vibration and its hands a regular motion; and when they cease to hang upon its wheels, the pendulum no longer swings, the hands no longer move, the clock stands still.—*Longfellow*.

RUSSIA, when internal troubles arise, almost invariably causes a diversion by making a move upon the chess board which may be regarded as a menace towards a friendly power.

At one time it is by massing troops upon the Austrian frontier, at another by a concentration of Poland contiguous to Germany; but her favourite game is to stir up an uneasy feeling in Great Britain by some move, which may be taken as an advance towards India, which country many Russians fully believe she is destined to rule when the British Empire goes to pieces.

England could have annexed Afghanistan upon several occasions, but her statesmen wisely foresaw that to do so would eventually place them in direct contact with the most irritating and aggressive power in Europe and Asia, and she preferred rather to leave it a dependent country to act as a buffer between India and Russia. For that purpose, since 1873, England has subsidized the existing Amir and entered into an agreement with him, by which he is to refer to the India Government in case of an attack upon his country, while the British Government undertake to assist him with money and arms. Moreover, an English political officer was, by this agreement, to reside in Kabul and virtually control the Amir's foreign policy.

The present ruler was placed upon the throne by the British Government and materially assisted with money and arms until he was able to collect the controlling reins in his hands, and he now receives an annual subsidy. In 1880 he frankly placed his position before the Indian Government in a letter which the Blue Book of 1881 quotes as saying to them, "that as long as your Empire and that of Russia exist, my countrymen, the tribes of Afghanistan, should live quietly in ease and peace; that these two states should find us true and faithful, and that we should rest at peace between them; for my tribesmen are unable to struggle with Empires, and are ruined by want of commerce and we hope of your friendship, that sympathizing with, and assisting the people of, Afghanistan, you will place them under the honourable protection of the two Powers."

To this the British Government replied that "with regard to the position of the ruler of Kabul to foreign Powers, since the British Government admit no right of interference by foreign Powers in Afghanistan, and since both Russia and Persia are pledged to abstain from all political interference with Afghanistan affairs, it is plain that the Kabul ruler can have no political relations with any foreign Power except the English; and if any such foreign Power should attempt to interfere in Afghanistan, and if such interference should lead to unprovoked aggression on the Kabul ruler, then the British Government will be prepared to aid him, if necessary, to repel it, provided that he follows the advice of the British Government in regard to his external relations." Such then is the present position of Great Britain towards Afghanistan, and it can easily be seen what annoyance and anxiety may be caused by a power like Russia.

To understand the position thoroughly, it must be also borne in mind that Kashmir, the north-west border State of the Empire governed in India, touches the south side of the great Pamir water-shed, whilst the north-east side of this table-land adjoins Russian territory. The "Roof of the World," as the Pamir table-land is called, is supposed to be neutral land, over which neither England nor Russia exercise rights; but only last year when two English officers penetrated this district upon a walking tour, they found it in the occupation of a troop of Cossacks, whose officer seized the Englishmen and sent them back to India. Although this Russian officer was publicly censured, and apologies made for his act, he was privately decorated and promoted, leaving little doubt that he was acting under secret instructions from Petersburg. If Russia regards her promises so lightly in this instance, what reliance can be placed upon her promise of non-interference in Afghanistan?

With the Pamir in possession of Russia, the route through Chitral and Gilgit and by the Nuksan Pass to Kashmir is open to them, and although large bodies of troops could not move at one time by these mountain routes, sufficient numbers could be passed forward to make a serious diversion upon that flank of the attack. That this is possible is shown by the recent successful British expedition to Gilgit. The frontier to the south of Gilgit is occupied by offshoots of the Pathan tribe which have been brought under direct influence of the Indian Government by firmness and the use of occasional force to punish marauders, and by liberal treatment of peaceful and well-behaved chiefs of the clans. It is most probable that this course, which has proved so successful with the other border tribes, will be followed in the case of Gilgit and that the severe lesson lately taught them will be followed by judicious reconciliations, so that in case of an attempt upon this part of the frontier by Russia, the British would have a friendly population to deal with, and their enemies the contrary.

The frontier of India southward has an almost impassable range of mountains guarding the valley on the right bank of the Indus, until you come to that important strategic point "Peshawar," which is situated about 150 miles east of Kabul and is halfway between the junction of the Kabul and Panikora Rivers and their junction with the Indus. Between Peshawar and Sukkur, 450 miles south on the Indus, lies the famous strategic frontier of which we heard so much in Lord Beaconsfield's time. This has

been strengthened by railways and the occupation of Quetta 200 miles north-west of Sukkur in the direct line towards Kandahar, from which place Quetta is only about 120 miles distant. The railroad has also been pushed on to Khwaja-Amran, about sixty miles east of Kandahar. This is a very important matter as will presently be seen, for Kandahar is only 300 miles from Herat across the fertile valleys of the Helmand, and Herat is the key of the whole position.

Afghanistan is not a kingdom in our usual acceptance of the word. It is nothing but a vast wild highland country, cut up by numerous mountain ranges running, as a rule, north and south, occasionally broken by a cross range from east to west such as the "Safed Koh" (or the White Mountains) which lie east of Kabul in the direction of Jalalabad and Peshawar, and like the Koh-i-baba west of Kabul lying towards Herat and in which range the Hari-Rud rises and flows due west until it is some fifty miles beyond Herat, where it turns north and forms the boundary between Afghanistan and Persia for some sixty or seventy miles to Zulfikar, the Russian frontier town in Turkestan, which place however is barely 100 miles from Herat by the direct road.

The whole of these districts are occupied by various feudal tribes under their separate chieftains, and even the great tribes are split up into innumerable clans under their own "Lairds." The kingdom of Afghanistan, or more properly speaking "of Kabul," the country of the Duranis tribes, lies really between Jalalabad (halfway between Kabul and Peshawar) on the east, and the sources of the Helmand River about the same distance to the west, and Ghazni on the south; or a territory lying within a circle of about 300 miles circumference. South of Ghazni are the Ghilzai tribes which the English have cause to remember at Maiwand. North and east are the Pathans and Yusufzais, whilst the valley of the Helmand belongs to the Hazaras, amongst whom late telegrams would indicate a rebellion has been fomented by Russia, and who differ entirely from the rest of the Afghans as they are really Turkomans just as are the tribes on the northern frontier along the banks of the Oxus. These tribes are continually raiding one another, and it is their internal feuds that has enabled the former rulers of Kabul to assert a suzerainty over their country. But it will be readily understood that such a state of things is a constant source of danger, and that nothing is easier than for the agents of a crafty and powerful neighbour like Russia to stir up these tribal wars and then to advance with the nominal Christian intention of bringing peace into the country—but really to establish a further post in advance as a depot on the road to India. Such appears to have been the move foreshadowed in the telegraphic news of late.

So long as Russia remains on the borders of the Oxus, England has nothing to fear in India, for even should Russia advance and capture Herat, as she could easily do from her advanced army posts, only one hundred miles away, before England could reach there from Quetta or Peshawar, England could still occupy Kabul and Kandahar with the 140,000 men comprising the two full army corps always kept efficient in India, and before Russia could reach these places. The English outposts are 350 miles from Herat, so that she would have no chance of reaching there before Russia, unless the railways are continued from Khwaja-Amran through Kandahar and from Peshawar to Kabul, as it is universally agreed by Anglo-Indians should be done. Strange to say, however, although the ruling race at Kabul are apparently most desirous of maintaining Great Britain's friendship and protection, they show the greatest antipathy to permitting these necessary railroads to be built.

It is unlikely that Russia could muster more than 50,000 men on the borders of Turkestan for an advance upon India, even though she strained all her resources, owing to the great difficulties in transport, and even if she could, it is doubtful whether an army of that size could advance from Herat upon Kandahar and Kabul where the roads through the mountains are suitable for wheeled transport, when it is a fact that according to British experience a transport service must accompany the army with at least four transport animals to every five men, and their whole supplies must be carried with them from north of the Oxus.

Should a Russian army make a sudden raid upon and capture Herat, which has been fortified under direction of English officers and could be made a very strong fortress in the hands of a European power, it would then have two roads open for an advance upon India. The Southern route is by the valley of the Helmand to Kandahar through Khwaja-Amran, Quetta to Sukkur upon the Indus. Here they would have what is called the Indian Desert in their front, which they would have to cross in order to attack Bombay. This seems an insurmountable obstacle considering that their base on the Oxus would be 450 miles in their rear, as they could draw no supplies to speak of from the country through which they passed, and even the resources of the Helmand valleys would not suffice to carry them very far.

The northern and really only practical route appears to be up the valley of the Hari-Rud through Kabul, Jalalabad and Peshawar, towards Delhi and the populous and wealthy portion of India. And when the difficulties of transport are remembered, which would have to be overcome for an army of a size calculated to make much impression upon the Indian forces, and when it is remembered that they must not only be strong enough to sweep the defences of Peshawar out of their way, but that they