

bridge the Oxus and to invade the Balkh, and easy also either to "rush" Herat or to besiege and take it, the troubles of Russia in Afghanistan after the first success would be stupendous. All such writers have assumed that we should not be fools enough to take the gigantic transport difficulties upon ourselves, and to incur the suspicions of the Afghans by marching an organised army across the Afghan desert, but that we should raise difficulties for Russia in other parts of the world, attack her (if we had an alliance) in those of her dominions which in the future may be most open to attack from the Pacific, and supply the Afghans with every military necessity of which they might stand in need.

The policy of the officers directing the Indian army has not always been one of conspicuous wisdom in regard to this subject, but Lord Kitchener's has been even less Indian, and more coloured by the ideas of Berlin than has usually been the case. It is clear from the despatches of the Government of India, especially from their great pronouncement signed by the Viceroy in Council, with every name attached, save Lord Kitchener's, that the Indian Government understand what their Commanders-in-Chief have not always recognised, namely, that the mode of defence against Russia is that presented in Mr. Balfour's speech, now reprinted in the pamphlet "Imperial Defence" (Longmans).

We are now threatened by the alarmists with a new Russian railway to the Afghan frontier, in addition to the single line which at present runs from Merv to the frontier in the neighbourhood of Herat. This new line, which it will take, I believe, a long time to make, and which will probably have to wait for a return, if ever, of a more settled state of things in Russia, will reach the Oxus in the direction of Balkh. To march a strong regular force over the main chain of the Hindu Kush to the Balkh Province of Afghan-Turkestan is beyond the power of the British Empire or of mortal man. Any resistance to eventual, and as I think highly improbable, Russian operations in Afghan-Turkestan must be Afghan or irregular. Where the great