

THE RIVAL POWERS

IN

CENTRAL ASIA

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OR

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN ENGLAND  
AND RUSSIA IN THE EAST. TRANS-  
LATED FROM THE GERMAN OF JOSEF  
A POPOWSKI BY ARTHUR BARING BRA-  
T BANT AND EDITED BY CHARLES E. D  
E BLACK LATE IN CHARGE OF THE  
GEOGRAPHICAL BUSINESS OF THE  
INDIA OFFICE

WITH A MAP OF THE NORTH-WESTERN FRONTIER  
OF INDIA SHOWING THE PAMIR REGION  
AND PART OF AFGHANISTAN

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## CONTENTS

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION . . . . .	vi
AUTHOR'S PREFACE . . . . .	I
ENGLAND AND RUSSIA—	
I. RUSSIA'S ADVANCE IN ASIA . . . . .	7
II. RUSSIA ASPIRES TO THE POSSESSION OF INDIA . . . . .	65
III. CAN ENGLAND ARREST RUSSIA'S ADVANCE IN ASIA? . . . . .	79
IV. STRATEGICAL RELATIONS OF THE TWO STATES . . . . .	135
V. ENGLAND'S VALUE TO THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN CO- ALITION.—FINAL CONCLUSIONS . . . . .	204
INDEX . . . . .	225

## EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

IT is more than seventeen years since the issue of Sir Henry Rawlinson's "England and Russia in the East" awoke British public opinion to a livelier sense of the responsibilities and dangers attaching to our tenure of India. At that time it was a far cry from Westminster to Calcutta or Simla, and India was a comparatively unfamiliar topic; its geography and resources were but little known; the network of surveys, topographical, archæological, statistical, and economic, was incomplete; and the literature, official, journalistic, and miscellaneous, had not attained that distinctive character and individual excellence which have since attracted and interested Englishmen. If it were so in the case of Hindostan, public opinion was still less enlightened with regard to its contiguous regions. The most stupendous mountain range and table-land on the face of the earth were indeed known to abut on the northern frontier, and, as history could prove, to have secured practical immunity from invasion in that direction. But this circumstance seems to have lulled us into a mistaken sense of security in respect of the western and north-western frontiers, which were vaguely imagined to be bounded by equally impassable mountains, impracticable deserts, and unconquerable tribes, which would surely repel the intrusion

alike of the invaders or defenders of India. Moreover, this lack of knowledge was generally shared by high and low, and more recently still Englishmen have been authoritatively invited to reassure themselves and dispel their anxiety by mere consideration of the size of the maps of the regions referred to. No doubt the teachings of geography are essential to a comprehension of the Central Asian question, but those of history are scarcely less important, and in both respects Sir Henry Rawlinson's treatise was so exceptionally able, while his conclusions were so striking and convincing, that it is not surprising to find a distinguished Russian professor of international law, F. Martens, calling the famous "Memorandum" a historical document, in regard to the influence it had on the public mind and policy.

The gravity of the Central Asian question has in no sense abated since 1875; nay, it has rather increased, but at the same time it may be said to have entered upon new phases. The conquest of the Turcomans and the construction of the Trans-Caspian railway, while they brought Russia into immediate contact with Afghanistan, roused our country to the necessity of strictly defining the respective national limits from the Heri Rud to the Oxus. Again the recent *imbroglios* on the Pamir have brought to light doubts and differences which similarly can only be settled by mutual agreement and local demarcation. Concurrently with these events there has been a vast development of geographical knowledge during the past decade and a half which has forcibly impressed upon the British mind that India's position is continental rather than peninsular, and that, as such, it is amenable to those exigencies to which continental powers find they are subject.

While, therefore, Herr Popowski's work as a recent expert analysis of the Central Asian question will attract deserved attention, it is probably from the standpoint of a Continental observer that his conclusions will be most attentively scrutinized. In the accompanying translation these views have called for editorial comment in but few instances. At the same time readers will do well to remember that during the two years that have elapsed since the publication of "Antagonismus"<sup>1</sup> much that is noteworthy has happened, and it will be impossible to judge of the soundness and present applicability of the author's contentions without a brief retrospect of the more important events that have passed in the interim.

One of the chief factors in the development of the political situation has been the internal condition of Afghanistan, which, during the past two years, has been undoubtedly very troublous, especially in the little known country inhabited by the Hazaras. The Hazarajat proper covers an area of 18,000 square miles in the heart of Afghanistan, and the Hazaras number about half a million souls, divided into eight clans, seven of which pay tribute amounting to between five and six lakhs of rupees annually to the Amir's treasury. The eighth and remaining section, dwelling west of the road from Khelat-i-Ghilizai to Ghazni, is said by Leech to number some 20,000 men, but as the country has not been explored, very little is known as to its present resources. Uruzghan is said to form an extensive plain in this region, and to have been celebrated from the days of Rustam up to the present

<sup>1</sup> The German title of this book is *Antagonismus der Englischen und Russischen Interessen in Asien. Eine Militär-politische studie.* Vienna. Wilhelm Frick. 1890.

day as a breeding-ground for horses. Valuable lead mines exist in the country, which enable the inhabitants to manufacture and export bullets, though their principal occupation is cattle-grazing. The Hazaras are exceedingly hospitable and friendly to strangers, especially to priests and doctors, and they enjoy a great reputation for powers of divination.

In the summer of 1890 the Amir despatched troops into that portion of the Hazarajat which lies in the Upper Helmand Valley, to enforce his revenue dues; and in the discharge of this mission, which appears to have dragged on through two dreary years, the Afghan soldiery were guilty of excesses and cruelty against the inhabitants, their women and children. This treatment drove the Uruzghan section of the Hazaras into revolt, and the rising subsequently spread through the wild and bleak uplands which form the home of their fellow-tribesmen. It is impossible to arrive at an exact idea of the course of the rebellion from the vague and often biassed rumours which have reached us *via* Cabul or Candahar, but it is clear that the Hazaras offered a desperate resistance, that their cause elicited wide and active sympathy among their brethren; that success was in no way confined to one side or the other; and that the anxieties of the Amir's situation were so serious that, in consequence, he declared himself unable (probably in all good faith) to receive a mission from the Viceroy to discuss the various important questions pending between the two countries. The advent of the winter of 1892-3 appears to have caused a temporary suspension of hostilities, and recently intelligence has been received of the entire pacification of the country, a welcome piece of news that will not improbably conduce to closer relations between Afghanistan and India.



Although we are without precise data as to these events in the more remote parts of Afghanistan, we do not lack information respecting the capital and its ruler. Of late, in particular, Abdurrahman has shown a growing appreciation of some of the benefits of Western civilization, and has appointed a Calcutta firm, Messrs. Walsh, Lovett, and Co., as his agents. Two members of the firm (Messrs. C. W. Walsh and F. A. Martin) have visited Cabul at Abdurrahman's invitation, and found him very friendly. The Amir expressed himself well satisfied with the machinery supplied for his workshops, and with the admirable manner in which the European employés had set it up. Minting, cartridge-making, cannon-founding, and barrel-rifing machinery are in full swing, and there are also machines for making swords, boots, weaving, saw-mills, and flour-mills, affording altogether employment for about 2,500 Afghan workmen and fifty natives of India. Messrs. Walsh and Martin say that nothing could have been more warmly loyal than the Amir's public expressions of his friendly feelings towards the British Government. He also professed his extreme desire to increase trade with India. It would be easy to reply that these amiable expressions have not always borne fruit, as, for example, in the petition of the tea-planters in the North-West for a reduction of tea duties in Afghanistan, and in similar appeals in respect of the trade which enters Candahar by way of the Sind-Pishin railway. We must, however, beware of judging the despotic ruler of a half-savage Eastern race by too exacting a standard, and allowance must be made for the lack of roads and bridges, and the want of organization among the officials. In the meantime it is interesting to learn that the British Mahommedan agent at Cabul is treated

more favourably than his predecessors, and lives in a style not unbefitting our representative. He rides about in Cabul on a richly caparisoned horse, with a dozen orderlies, all conspicuous by the silver-mounted harness of their steeds. He is noted for his generosity, a trait likely to appeal to the full to the impressionable Oriental. An English doctor is in charge of the dispensaries, and, in spite of some recent departures, there are still several English engineers and skilled artisans in Cabul, engaged under the Amir's personal auspices. Mr. Clemens is superintendent of the Amir's stud; mining operations have been instituted under the direction of Mr. A. Collins, mining engineer, and Mr. Pyne, who is the *doyen* of the little English colony in Cabul, and has been there eight years, is in charge of the workshops. Next year it is anticipated that the Amir will start a paper mill, and later on he purposes to engage a professional wine maker from Europe to try his hand at the Cabul grapes. Lastly, but not leastly, it is reported that Abdurrahman contemplates laying down an experimental railway, thirteen miles in length, for the purpose of deporting the refuse of the city of Cabul and bringing back marble for building purposes. Mr. Pyne has given us, in the pages of *The Civil and Military Gazette*, an interesting personal sketch of the Amir. Mr. Pyne has no doubt in his own mind of the Amir's entire fidelity to the British alliance, and that the visit which Abdurrahman contemplated paying to England would have had an immense effect in expanding his Highness's ideas on the subject of railways and the resources of civilization generally. The latter pays keen attention to business details, but nevertheless it is not an unknown circumstance in Cabul (any more than in certain more highly organized States nearer home)

for documents to be issued at times, bearing the seal of the ruler, of whose contents or existence the latter is ignorant. Mr. Pyne thinks a meeting, say at Peshawar, between the Viceroy and the Amir, would do much to clear up any possible source of misunderstanding, and cement the friendship between the two nations.

There is no reason, so far as can be judged by an outside observer, to impute undue favouritism or optimism to these reflections. Considering the very imperfect and irregular means of diplomatic communication between the Amir and the Indian Government, and the endless troubles which have arisen and must necessarily arise, at one time with Russia, at another with Kafirstan, Chitral, Bajaur, or other neighbouring states and tribes possessing varying shades of independence, or with our own frontier officials, it is surprising that more ground for estrangement does not crop up between the two nations.

One of these frontier difficulties concerned Umra Khan of Chandawul, in Bajaur, a chief possessing considerable force of character and resolution, and owning supremacy in a fine, extensive, and populous valley of a pastoral character, a little way north of the Khyber Pass. Bajaur is not subject to the Cabul Government, and has only paid tribute when forced to do so, so it is easily conceivable that the relations between the two States were not of the most cordial nature. Hostilities between the Amir and Umra Khan appear to have been on the point of breaking out in 1888, and at the beginning of last year (1892) Umra Khan ousted the young Khan of Asmar, an important village on the banks of the Kunar, a little to the north-west of Bajaur. The sister of the Khan was betrothed to the son of the Amir, who thereupon deputed his

general, Gholam Haidar Khan, to lead troops against Asmar, which was captured shortly afterwards. Thereupon the Amir and his general conceived the idea of carrying their conquests further east and annexing Bajaur itself, but this project could in no way be sanctioned by the Government of India, who forthwith conveyed a warning to the Amir, as well as to Gholam Haidar, informing them in unmistakable terms that no interference with Bajaur could be permitted. These movements on the part of the Amir, coupled with the activity of some of his emissaries in Waziristan and near the Gamul Pass, appear to have conveyed the impression that his Highness was bent on a wholesale forward policy, with the object of bringing under control the independent States between Afghanistan and the British frontier. His reply, too, about Bajaur is said to have been touched in a tone the reverse of submissive; but, so far as can be seen, there are no signs of any further aggressive projects, or of any disposition to oppose the wishes of the Indian Government.

Northward of Bajaur the British frontier officials have been confronted with more serious difficulties. Our isolated post at Gilgit has often been menaced by neighbouring mountain tribes, while its proximity to Russian territory invests it with obvious importance. Towards the close of 1891 the British Government determined to improve the road thither as well as the route running northward as far as Chalt on the confines of Hunza-Nagar. This latter proceeding was resented by the Hunza-Nagar tribesmen, who had long maintained a defiant attitude, and hostilities ensued. The brilliant capture of Nilt and Miyan which followed are too recent to need recapitulation; suffice it to say that they fully bore up the reputation of our soldiers for

daring and resource, and that in a few weeks the Hunza chief was in full flight, and the secluded refuge of these notorious man-stealers and brigands was at our mercy. The British Government, however, magnanimously abstained from punishing the Hunza-Nagaris who had borne arms against us, and a native ruler, the half-brother of the deposed chief, was formally installed as *Thum*, or Rajah, in the presence of a Chinese envoy from Kashgar, who had been invited to witness the ceremony. This event, from a military and political point of view, was very important, for it established our supremacy in a difficult and quasi-independent region whither the Russian explorer Grombtchevsky had penetrated by the comparatively easy Kilik Pass across the Muztagh range in 1888. Grombtchevsky's reception by the Thum was friendly, a circumstance of some significance when we remember that that of our own envoy, Sir William Lockhart, was of a very different character; in fact, he and his companion, Colonel Woodthorpe, were in some personal danger during their sojourn there. It can hardly be supposed, therefore, that the submission of the country to our arms in 1891-2 was pleasing to the Russians, and our successful *coup* was soon to be answered by a counter-move on the Pamirs.

The territorial rights of England, Afghanistan, Russia and China were a matter of considerable uncertainty in this direction. The Russian view<sup>1</sup> that since the annexation of Khokand in 1878 the Pamir question has remained open, ignores the arrangement of 1873 (which virtually recognized the Upper Oxus as the northern boundary of Afghanistan) and may be consequently dismissed as untenable. At the same time it is rather

<sup>1</sup> Set forth in the *Turkestan Gazette* of the 20th September. See the *London Times* of the 20th October, 1892.

movements are rigidly controlled from head-quarters. But the radical difference in the practice of the two countries must be steadfastly borne in mind if we are to form a clear and dispassionate judgment on the probable future of the Central Asian question.

There was but little surprise, therefore, when news arrived in July, 1892, that a Russian detachment of a still stronger character had appeared at Aktash, on the eastern Pamir. This turned out to be a considerable force, composed of infantry, Cossacks, and artillery, and reinforced before starting by numerous volunteers, including scientific men. The expedition left New Marghilan on June 14th, and after overcoming great physical obstacles arrived at Aktash, but on hearing of the presence of a large body of Afghans at Somatash on the Alichur Pamir, Colonel Yanoff and his men proceeded thither. As might be expected, a collision between Russians and Afghans promptly ensued, in which nine Afghans were killed and two wounded. The Russian loss is said to have been one killed and two wounded. The Tzar again expressed his annoyance at Colonel Yanoff's proceedings, but the Indian Government, with a judicious appreciation of the danger of the situation, promptly ordered a substantial reinforcement of the Gilgit garrison. The latter step was, however, of a purely defensive character, and in any case was too late to exercise any influence over the movements of the Russians, who, after "demonstrating" in three separate detachments, viz., in the Alichur Valley, so as to overawe Shignan, at Langar-kisht, by the foot of the Hindu-Kush range, and near Tash-kurghan and the Taghdumbash Pamir in the east, returned to Marghilan on the 3rd October. Detached pickets, amounting in all to about 165 men, were left at various selected points

in the Pamirs, and these troops appear to have passed the winter of 1892-3 in this quasi-Arctic region with no serious hurt. Indeed it is obvious from this and from the rapidity of Colonel Yanoff's movements that the difficulties attending the transport, supplies and organization of a force, including Cossacks and artillery, in these elevated regions have been practically and successfully overcome. The strategic importance of this, in connection with the defence of India, can hardly be overrated.

In the meantime an event occurred on the southern side of the Hindu Kush which indirectly will, no doubt, conduce to the increased security of our frontier. In August last Aman-ul-Mulk, the old Mehtar of Chitral, died. Since the British occupation of Gilgit and the activity displayed by recent Russian reconnoitring expeditions in the valley of the Upper Oxus, Chitral has become a post of military importance, commanding as it does a group of passes leading across what has been aptly termed the physical bulwark of India on the north-west. Through Chitral also there runs a road from Jelalabad, which the Amir has been desirous of opening up as a trade route with his province of Badakhshan. This project of the Amir, however, excited great uneasiness in Chitral, and the aid of the paramount Power was invoked to protect the independence of the State. The death of the Mehtar thus found our frontier officials on the alert, but for the nonce the succession was effected tranquilly. Afzul-ul-Mulk, the younger son, took possession of the arsenal and treasury, and was accepted as ruler by the inhabitants, while the elder brother, Nizam-ul-Mulk, Governor of Yassin, fled and took refuge with our officers at Gilgit. Afzul's reign, however, was of short duration. His uncle, Sher Afzul

Khan, a refugee in Badakhshan, collected some hundred Chitrali slaves and a handful of Afghans, crossed the Do Rahah (Dora) Pass, and having captured two small forts, surprised Chitral, and made himself master of the capital, Afzul being shot while attempting to escape. This violent usurpation incensed the Nizam-ul-Mulk at Gilgit, and mustering a strong body of followers, he promptly marched through Yassin and Mastuj, the inhabitants of which rose in his favour, and entered Chitral without opposition, the usurping uncle taking refuge in flight and not daring even to face the vengeance of his victim's brother. Since the Nizam-ul-Mulk's accession he bids fair to become a better ruler than was originally anticipated. He has entered into communications with the authorities at Gilgit with the view to the permanent location of a British officer, as representative at his court, in lieu of the native agent hitherto accredited there, and Dr. Robertson is expected to take up the duties as Resident. Dr. Robertson's great experience of frontier politics in Gilgit and Hunza, as well as his recent adventurous journey through Kafirstan, mark him out as possessed of unique qualifications for this important post.

Viewing, therefore, the general course of events during the past three years, we see that while Russia has strengthened her communications from Sarakhs to Zulfikar, and at various other points along the Afghan border, her main activity has been displayed on the Pamirs and on the northern slopes of the Hindu Kush, where the uncertainty attaching to the exact interpretation of the international arrangement of 1872-3 has supplied a more or less ostensible excuse for aggression. A proposal for a mixed commission to demarcate the region in dispute has indeed been mooted, and is under-



stood to be favourably viewed by both the great Powers, but until we are assured of the Amir's agreement, any such delimitation will lack one of the most vital guarantees for its due observance. It is a matter of congratulation that in Hunza-Nagar and Chitral our position is stronger than it was; but after all it is Afghanistan itself that forms the key of the situation, and a frank personal interview between its ruler and that of India becomes more urgent as time goes on, and the unsettled condition of things affords temptation to a fresh Russian expedition to take the field. Such an interview will do more than anything else to enable England and Russia to arrive at some final adjustment of the still outstanding difficulties of the Central Asian question.

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A few words are necessary respecting the map which accompanies the present volume. While the western part is based on the last official British map of Afghanistan, in which were incorporated the extensive surveys and reconnaissances executed during the Afghan boundary commission, care has been taken to embody numerous detached and recent surveys of importance, wherever these enter into the area of delimitation. This is particularly the case along the line of the Hindu Kush, where geographical research has been so especially busy during the last few years. The northern part is taken from the last Russian official map of Turkestan, the information in which, so far as it relates to extra-British territory, is, of course, far superior to our own data. Mr. J. Bolton, of Mr. Stanford's geographical establishment, has spared no pains in the collection and harmonization of materials, and on the whole, it is

hoped that it will be found to be the best map hitherto published of the region under discussion.

Stated in detail, the principal maps used in its construction are the following :—

On the British side, the sheets of the Indian Atlas, on the scale of 4 miles to 1 inch ; the Trans-frontier maps of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, on the scale of 16 miles to 1 inch ; the map of Hundes and Mohyul by Messrs. Ryall and Kinney, the Pundits, &c., on the scale of 8 miles to the inch ; the map of Astor and Gilgit, by Lieut.-Colonel Tanner, scale 4 miles to the inch ; map of the Upper Oxus Valley, by Mr. Hennessey, scale 12 miles to 1 inch ; part of Hazara and adjacent independent territory, by Capt. Wahab, R.E., scale 2 miles to 1 inch ; Dr. Leitner's map of Dardistan, 1877, scale 16 miles to the inch ; the above-mentioned map of Afghanistan, in four sheets, by Major Gore, R.E., scale 24 miles to the inch ; and Major Holdich's boundary map of North-Western Afghanistan, scale 4 miles to 1 inch.

On the Russian side, the Russian Staff map of Central Asia, scale 10 versts to 1 inch ; and map of the Amu Daria, by A. Bolchev, scale 30 versts to the inch.

The following are the chief sketches and route surveys from which the intervening territory has been compiled :—

Map of Central Asia in Supplementary Papers of the Royal Geographical Society, 1884, illustrating Mr. Delmar Morgan's paper ; map of Chinese Turkistan, illustrating Mr. Carey's paper in the *Proceedings* of the R.G.S., December 1887, and Supplementary Papers, 1890 ; map illustrating Captain Younghusband's paper in the *Proceedings* of the R.G.S. for April, 1892 ; map of M. Dauvergne's explorations in the Bulletin of the Paris Geographical Society and Bogdanovitch's map of the Pamirs in the *Proceedings* of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society, reduced and connected with the results of the work of M. Dauvergne and other explorers by Mr. H. Sharbau, of the Royal Geographical Society.

CHARLES E. D. BLACK.

# INDEX

# INDEX

---

- Abd-ul-Khair, 34  
 Abdur Rahman Khan, x, xi, 109 ;  
     A. as Amir of Afghanistan,  
     130  
 Aberdeen, Earl of, 93  
 Abkasia, 21  
 Abramov, General, 47  
 Adrianople, Treaty of, 21, 76  
 Afghans, Collision between A. and  
     Russians, 130 ; A. in Indian  
     Army, 183  
 Afghan-Turkestan, 85  
 Afghan Boundary Commission, 52  
     53, 91 ; A. boundary on the  
     north, xv, 127 ; Joint Commis-  
     sion arranged, 128, 131  
 Afghanistan, 84 ; war with A., 86 ;  
     A. and Bokhara, 109, 114, 116 ;  
     A. as a strong and friendly  
     power, 114, 115 ; as beyond  
     Russian influence, 117, 124 ;  
     British war of 1878 against,  
     126 ; ceases to be an independ-  
     ent State, 126 ; Ishak Khan's  
     revolt in A., 1888, 131 ; oppor-  
     tunity for fresh risings, 131 ;  
     routes through A. to the Indus,  
     174 ; British pledges towards  
     A., 189  
 Ahmed Khan Abdalli, 112  
 Akhal Tekkehs, 51  
 Aktash, xviii  
 Alabama, The, 18, 163
- Alaska occupied by Russia, 17 ;  
     ceded to the United States, 18  
 Alexander the Great, 176, 178, 181  
 Alexander I. (of Russia), 20, 71,  
     72  
 Alexander II., 72, 106, 136  
 Alexander III., 72, 164  
 Alexander Bay, 32  
 Alexandrovsk Fort, 40  
 Algerians, 99  
 Ali Musjid, 125  
 Alichur Pamir, xvi  
 Alsace-Lorraine, 205, 221  
 Aman-ul-Mulk, xix  
 Ametkul, leader of the Kipchaks,  
     43  
 Amu-daria, *see* Oxus  
 Amur territory acquired from China,  
     13, 160  
 Andkhui, 41, 109, 118, 177  
 Anglo-Indian army, 182 ; its mobil-  
     isation, 185, 187  
 Anglo-Russian war of the future  
     inevitable, 78  
 Aralsk, 45  
 Araxes, River, 108  
 Argyll, Duke of, 103, 104  
 Army, British regular, 140, 144 ;  
     officers of, 147  
 Artillery, Field, in England, 149  
 Asmar, xiii, xiv  
 Asterabad, 71, 72, 96, 136  
 Astrakhan, 7, 30, 213

- Atek, Russian influence in, 133,  
 Atrek, 123, 124  
 Attock, 174  
 Auckland, Lord, 114  
 Aulie-Ata, 45  
 Australia, Possibility of A. being  
 attacked by Russia, 163  
 Austria, Attitude of and policy  
 during Crimean war, 94; con-  
 flicting interests of A. and  
 Russia, 4  
 Avaria, 24
- Baber, Sultan, 177, 178, 180  
 Badakhshan, 53, 118  
 Bajaur, xiii  
 Baker, Sir T. D., 189  
 Baktria, 176, 178  
 Baku, 19  
 Balkh, 41, 109, 118, 131, 132, 174,  
 176, 177  
 Baltic, The, 159  
 Baluchis, 183  
 Baroghil Pass, xvi, 175  
 Bariatynski, Prince, 27, 72, 136  
 Bash-Kadiklar, Battle of, 26  
 Batoum acquired by Russia, 22, 76;  
 160, 217  
 Bashkirs, 30, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58,  
 59, 60, 61  
 Batyr Shah, 59  
 Bebutov, General, 26  
 Bekovitch, Prince, 32, 33, 70  
 Belgium, Neutrality of, 207, 208,  
 209  
 Bereshaven, 165  
 Berlin, Congress of, 125; 155  
 Bey Mahomed, 62  
 Bibikov, General, 2  
 Bismarck, Prince, 206  
 Black Sea, 159, 205  
 Blaramberg, General, 44  
 Boghdanovitch, General, 44  
 Bukhara, Khan of, 32, 42; at war  
 with Kokand, 42, 43; at war  
 with Khiva, 43; Amir of  
 B. defeated at Irjar, 46;  
 Amir of B. beheads Stoddart  
 and Conolly, 84; Amir of B.  
 defeated by Russia, 107; 109,  
 123, 124  
 Dolan Pass, 179, 181  
 Bonaparte, Napoleon, invited by  
 Paul I. to join in campaign  
 against India, 71; proposes  
 fresh campaign to Alexander  
 I., 71; his Egyptian expedi-  
 tion, 79  
 Bosai-i-Gumbaz, xvi  
 Brassey, Lord, 150  
 Britain, Great, *see* England  
 British officers sent to Persia, 81,  
 83; B. treaty with Persia, 81;  
 B. interests, 208, 210, 212  
*Broad Arrow*, The, 137, 144, 147,  
 162  
 Buda-Pesth, 155  
 Bukeian horde of Kirghiz, 36  
 Bukéef, Sultan, 36  
 Bulgaria, 205  
 Baile, Sir Redvers, 147  
 Beeruta, 64  
 Burzila jai, xvi  
 Butakov's survey of Sea of Aral, 40
- Cabel, xi, xii, 110, 115, 174, 176,  
 177, 180, 202  
 Calmucks, The, 34; their Mongo-  
 lian extraction, 35; their hostil-  
 ities with the Kirghiz; 36; 64  
 Camp followers in Indian army,  
 184  
 Candahar, 110, 174, 179, 180, 181,  
 202  
 Caspian Sea, 213  
 Catherine II., Empress, 19  
 Caucasus described as the greatest  
 fortress in the world, 22; war  
 begins, 22; C. conquered, 27;  
 its present population, 29;

- strategical importance of, 91 ;  
 C. during Crimean war, 91, 96,  
 136 ; 159, 205, 212, 213, 214 ;  
 sketch of a campaign in the  
 C., 216 ; the C. as a theatre  
 of war, 218
- Central Asia, Trade in, 37 ; Russian  
 literature on, 73 ; Russian and  
 English policies in, contrasted,  
 86 ; the only place where a  
 duel between Russia and  
 England can have result, 165 ;  
 C. A. merely a stepping-town  
 to India, 168 ; routes from, to  
 the Indus, 174
- Chalt, xiv
- Chamberlain, General Sir Neville,  
 125
- Chandawul, xiii
- Charjui ceded to Russia, 47
- Chechénia, 27
- Chelyabinsk, 30, 38
- Chemkent, 46, 105
- Chikishlar, 47, 48
- Chinaz, 46
- Chingiz Khan, 34, 68, 178, 179
- Chitral, xvi, xix, 175, 176, 179,  
 194, 195, 202
- Choroshkin, Colonel, 8, 10, 12
- Chotiali Pass, 179
- Chrulov, General, 73
- Churchill, Lord R., 189, 201
- Chrzanovski, General, 93
- Cimbría*, The, cruiser, 164
- Circassians, removal of C. south of  
 Kuban, 13 ; their struggle  
 against the Russians, 23 ; they  
 emigrate from the Caucasus,  
 28 ; 97, 98, 108
- Cucheval-Clarigny, M., 196
- Clarendon, Lord, 92, 117
- Constantinople, Russia's advance  
 on, 1 ; R.'s desire for, 68, 205
- Cossacks, First appearance of, 7 ;  
 they develop into an army,  
 8 ; the Border-C. submit to  
 the Muscovite Government, 9 ;  
 Don-Cossacks dispersed by  
 John the Terrible, 9 ; encircle  
 Muscovite empire on S. and  
 S.E., 10 ; independence put  
 down by Peter the Great, 10 ;  
 hordes and lines organised  
 by Government, 10 ; their  
 functions, 11, 14 ; rising and  
 forced transmigrations, 12 ;  
 their present hordes, 13 ;  
 numbers and military strength,  
 14 ; popularity of "Cossack-  
 dom," 16 ; 33, 38
- Cotton, Mr. H. J. S., 199
- Crimean war, Causes of, 88 ; 92, 93
- Cronstadt, 158
- Cruisers for British Navy, 164
- Daghestan, 21, 24, 25
- Davidson, Lieut., xvi, xvii
- Delhi, Capture of, by Nadir Shah,  
 112
- Dera Ghazi Khan, 179, 181, 194
- Dera Ismail Khan, 179, 181
- Derhend, 19
- Dhuleep Singh, Maharajah, 201
- Dilke, Sir Charles, 141, 147, 156,  
 161, 209
- Dir (on Indian N. W. frontier), 176
- "Divide et Impera" practised by  
 Russia in Central Asia, 63
- Don-Cossacks, *see* Cossacks
- Dondoukov-Korsakov, Prince, 130
- Dora Pass, 175
- Dost Mahomed, Amir of Afghanis-  
 tan, 86, 109, 115
- Dufferin, Earl, 130
- Durassier, "Aide Memoire de l'Offi-  
 cier de Marine," 150
- Ellis, Mr. Henry, 82
- Elsass, *see* Alsace

- England, conflicting interests of  
 E. and Russia, 3, 4; her alarm  
 at Russian progress in the  
 sixties, 51; her power to  
 arrest Russia's advance, 79;  
 E. sends military officers to  
 Persia, 81, 83; first Afghan  
 war, 86; massacre of the garrisons,  
 86; E.'s policy towards  
 Central Asia contrasted with  
 that of Russia, 86; E.'s inability  
 to protect Persia, 89; E.'s  
 influence in Central Asia *nil*,  
 90; policy of excessive moderation  
 during Crimean war, 93,  
 94; E.'s failure to grasp military  
 problems, 99; military  
 questions in E., 101; public  
 opinion in E. on Central Asian  
 question, 103; E. sends Sir  
 Neville Chamberlain on a mission  
 to Cabul, 125; war declared  
 against Amir, 126; relations  
 in 1885 with Russia become  
 strained, 129; preparations  
 for war, 129; E.'s land  
 forces, 140-149; her naval  
 forces, 149; her power to attack  
 Russia by sea, 158, 159; E.'s  
 fleet in Chinese waters, 162; her  
 mercantile marine, 163; construction  
 of cruisers for navy,  
 165; E.'s value for the Central  
 European Coalition, 204-222
- Erivan, 83
- Fadéev, 29  
 Fadiev, General, 96  
 Faizbad, 175, 177  
 Ferghana, 178  
 Fergusson, Sir James, 207  
 France, her attitude in event of  
 European war, 205, 206  
 Fraser, Baillie, 87, 88  
 Freitag, General, 26  
 Gagarin, Prince, 31  
 Gamul Pass, xiv, 179, 180, 181  
 Gaudamak, Treaty of, 126  
 Gardanne, General, 72, 80  
 Gazi, Mahomed, 24  
 Geok-Tepe captured, 49, 51, 126  
 George XIII., King of Prussia, 20  
 Germans in Russia, 2, 3, 66; G.  
 Ocean, 204; the German Emperor,  
 207; Germany and the  
 neutrality of Belgium, 209  
 Ghilzai rising, 85, 131, 169, 190  
 Gholam Haidar Khan, xiii  
 Gilgit, xiv, 175, 104  
 Gladstone, Mr., 103  
 Goltz, Freiherr v. d., 215  
 Gorst, Sir J., 190  
 Gortchakov, Prince, 105, 106, 107,  
 117, 118, 127  
 Gounib, 27  
 Great Britain, *see* England  
 Grombtschersky, xv  
 Grusia, 20; incorporated in Russia,  
 20  
 Gulistan, Treaty of, 21, 81  
 Guriev founded by Cossacks, 31  
 Gurkhas, 183  
 Gwâyi Hâri Pass, 179, 180
- Hamley, General Sir E. B., 172,  
 193  
 Hamzai Beg, 24  
 Hartmann, Herr, 4, 206  
 Haymerle, General A. R. von, 118,  
 175, 177  
 Hazaras, ix, x  
 Hazrat Imam, 174, 177  
 Heidelberg, 117  
 Helmand River, 181  
 Heraclius, King of Græcia, 20  
 Herat, 72; attacked by Persians,  
 85, 86; 110, 112; its value to  
 Russia, 113; 132, 170, 174,  
 176, 180, 181, 206  
 Hari Rud, River, viii, 131

- Hindu Kush Mts., described by Russians as the natural boundary of India, 132, 170; 175, 177, 178, 180
- Hong Kong, 163
- Hunza-Nagar, xiv, xv
- Ilek, River, 38
- Ili river, Russians establish themselves on the, 37
- Ilovasiki, 68
- Imeretia, 19, 20, 21
- India, Khiva regarded as stepping-stone towards, 38; conquest of I., desired by Central Asian nations, 69; Peter the Great's designs on, 70; Napoleon Bonaparte's schemes against India, 71; projected invasion of, by Prince Bariatynski, 72; Russian plans of campaigns against, 73; Bonaparte and Paul I.'s designs on, 80; smouldering discontent in I., 87; general question of invasion of I., 110; anti-British classes in, 110, 111; Russia's advance towards I. likened to siege tactics, 111; Bariatynski's plan of campaign against I., 136; I. and her continental position, 137; probable strength of an invading army, 172; routes into I. from Central Asia, 174; British forces available for defence of N.W. frontier, 181, 188; Indian Native States' armies, 187; N.W. frontier of I., 191; Great Britain's work in I., 196; commerce and industry in I., 197; her loyalty to England, 198; not a homogeneous State, 198; plurality of races, 199; the natives of I. fear the Russians, 200.
- Indus, River, 108, 181
- Irtish, River, 32
- Ishak Khan, 131, 169
- Issik-Kul, Lake, 105, 136
- Italy and European coalition, 204
- Ivan the Terrible, 7, 9, 17, 30
- Jamshidis, 44
- Jany-Kurhan fort, 45
- Japan-sea, Russia's fleet in the, 162
- Jelalabad, 176
- Jennak, The Cossack hetman, 17
- Jermolov, General, 22, 25
- Jizak, 46
- Jones, Sir Harford, 80
- Juchakov, 79
- Julek fort, 45
- Kadi Mulla Mahomed, The, 23
- Kafiristan, 176
- Kahwak Pass, 176, 178
- Kajar Khan, 50
- Kaluga, 27
- Karamzin, 68
- Karkaralinsk, 34
- Kars acquired by Russia, 22, 76; 217
- Karan, River, 133
- Kasan, 7, 30
- Kashgar, 41
- Kashmir, 110, 175, 176, 201
- Kastek, 45
- Katkov's saying "The 20th Century belongs to Russia," 3
- Kaufmann, General, takes Kokand, 125; his secret treaty with Sher Ali, 132
- Kelat, 72
- Kerki ceded to Russia, 47
- Khanates in Central Asia and their mutability, 41
- Khiva, Khan of, defeats Netchai and Shamaj, 31; K., Khán of, defeats Prince Bekovitch, 33; K. the chief obstacle to



- development of Central Asian trade, 38 ; Perovski's expedition against K., 39 ; K. at war with Bokhara, 43 ; with Yomut Turcomans, 44 ; K., campaign of 1873 against, 47 ; K., Prince Bekovitch's expedition to, 70, 84, 118 ; K., expedition against and annexation of, 119
- Khodayar, Khan of Kokand, 47
- Khoja Saleh, 118, 127, 174
- Khojend, 106
- Khora Bhort Pass, xvii
- Khorasan, Russian influence in, 133
- Khotan, 41
- Kholm, 41, 109, 177
- Khyber Pass, 126, 178, 179, 180
- Kila Kum, 175
- Kilif, 177
- Kilik Pass, xv
- Kipchaks, 42, 43
- Kirghiz, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37 ; order established in K. desert, 40 ; K. war against the Bashkirs, 59, 61 ; K. desert, 97
- Kisil-Takir, 48
- Kitab taken by Abramov, 47
- Knorring, 20
- Kokand, Russia brought into contact with, 41, 42 ; K. incorporated with Russia, 48 ; 84, 105, 106, 125
- Kokcha, River, 53, 118, 119, 175
- Komarov, General, 49, 50, 91, 128, 130
- Kos-Aral fort, 40, 45
- Kos-Kurban fort, Capture of, 44
- Kostomarov, 65
- Kotlarevski, General, defeats Abbas Mirza, 21
- Kovalevski, 20
- Kozin, Lieut., 70
- Krasnovodsk, 32, 47, 123, 124, 125
- Kuchuk-Kaimaraji, Treaty of, 20, 21
- Kudriavcev, Governor of Kasan, 56
- Kuhn, Baron, 74
- Kulja incorporated with Russia, 47 ; portion of its territory restored to China, 47
- Kunduz, 109, 118, 177
- Kura, River, 217
- Kuropatkin, General, 77
- Kurram, 126
- Kushk, Collision between Russians and Afghans on the, 52, 129, 198
- Langar Kisht, xviii
- Lawrence, Lord, his policy of "masterly inactivity," 114
- Lessar, M., 128
- Lenkoran, 21
- Littledale, Mr., xvi
- Lockhart, Sir W., xv
- Loftus, Lord Augustus, 120
- Lough Swilly, 165
- Lomakin, General, in Trans-Caspian, 48 ; defeated by the Tekkehs, 49, 125
- Lumley, Mr., British Chargé d'Affaires at St. Petersburg, 106
- Lumsden, Sir P., 52, 91, 128
- Makhdum Kuli Khan, 49
- Madras army, 183
- Magazine fire, 143
- Mahmud of Ghazni, 179
- Mahomed Aga Khan, Shah of Persia, 20
- Mahomed Guri, 179, 181
- Mahomedan races, 98, 99
- Mahrattas, Ahmed Khan Abdalli's campaign against, 112
- Maimana, 109, 118, 131, 132
- Malcolm, General, 79
- Mangshiak Peninsula, 32
- Martens, F., viii, 108, 119

- Maurice, Colonel, 147, 156, 157, 206, 215
- McNeill, Sir John, 87, 88
- Medemin-Khan of Khiva, 43
- Menchikov, Prince, 66
- Mertvi Bay, 212, 213
- Merv, Capture of, by Khivans, 43; submits to Russian authority, 50; 121, 124, 126, 174
- Meshed, Russian Consul at, 133
- Metcheraks; 59, 63
- Michni Pass, 126
- Military operations, Question as to open discussion of, 157; m. experts in England and the Government, 100
- Militia, British, 143
- Mingrelia, 20, 21
- Miurids, The, 23
- Miyan, xiv
- Mobilisation in Russia, 139; in England, 146
- Moltke, Field Marshal von, 221
- Moscow, Grand Duchy of, shakes off the Mongolian yoke, 7; 153, 155
- Mouraviev, Count, 13
- Mula Pass, 181
- Mulla Mahomed, founder of Miuridism, 23
- Murghab River, 131.
- Muzaffar Edin, Amir of Bokhara, 43
- Muzzle-loading cannon, 148
- Nachitchevan, 83
- Nadir Shah, 180, 181
- Napoleon Bonaparte's Grand Army, 153; his designs against India, 71 (*see also under Bonaparte*)
- Napoleon III., 93
- Nasr-Ullah, Khan of Bokhara, 42; beheads Stoddart and Conolly, 84
- Native army in India, 182, 185
- Native States, Indian armies of, 187
- Naval forces, British and Russian, 149
- Nepliuiev, Governor-General, 59
- Netchai takes Urgenj but defeated by Khivans, 31
- Neutral zone suggested by Lord Beaconsfield, 52; Question of, 117, 123, 127
- Neva, The, 159
- New Hebrides, 206
- Nicholas I., 72
- Nicolaievsk, 160
- Nilt, xiv
- Nizam-ul-Mulk, xix
- Northcote, Sir Stafford, 107
- Novgorod, 167
- Novo-Alexandrovsk, 38
- Nuksan Pass, 176
- Nuski fort, 47
- Obrutchev, General, 39
- Odessa, 160
- Omer Pasha lands force at Sukhum Kale, 28, 96
- Omsk, Governor-General of, placed over Kirghiz, 37
- Orenburg, O. line of Cossacks, 33; Governor-General of O. placed over Kirghiz; 36, 37, 136
- Orlov-Denissov, Prince, 71 (note)
- Orsk, 34
- Ouseley, Sir Gore, 82
- Oxus river, viii, xv, Old channel of, 32, 53; 109; O. proposed as dividing line in Central Asia, 117; accepted by Russia, 118; 175
- Pacific, Russia's opportunity in the, 162
- Palmerston, Lord, his views on Russian policy, 92, 93, 136
- Pamir plateau, viii, xv, 174, 176
- Panjdeh, 129, 131, 174
- Paszkévitch, General, 21, 25
- Paul I. and his plan of campaign against India, 71

- Perovski, Count, and his Khivan expedition, 38, 39, 44
- Persia cedes some of her northern provinces to Russia, 19; her wars, treaties, and boundary with Russia, 21; and her policy towards Russia, 51; Perso-Russian boundary agreed upon, 51; Russia's policy towards P., 74; P. provinces ceded to Russia, 80; Sir Harford Jones's treaty with, 81; Treaty of Gulistan with Russia, 81; Sir Gore Ouseley's treaty with P., 82; P. concludes Treaty of Turkmanchai with Russia, 83; P. advances on Herat, 85, 86; her fear of Russia, 89, 90; British policy towards P., 114; P. guaranteed by Great Britain, 210
- Perovski fort, 45
- Peshawar, 110, 174, 176, 178, 202
- Peter the Great leads an army against Persia. 19; sends Buchholz into Central Asia, 31; his expeditions to Central Asia, 33; his attempt to reach India, 70
- Petro-Alexandrofski, 47
- Peiwar Pass, 180
- Pir Mahomed, 179, 181
- Fishpek (Kokandi fort) captured, 45
- Pishin, 126, 179
- Pobiedonostseff's national theory, 3
- Poland, 155
- Poles, *The*, 97, 98
- Polish insurrection quelled, 2
- Porosio, The*, 88
- Potemkin, Prince, 19
- Poti, 21
- Pratt, *The*, 129
- Purganber, 60
- Pyna, *Mrs.*, 21
- Quetta, 117, 181, 191, 193, 202
- Raimsk, Fort, afterwards Fort Arelch, 40
- Rawal Pindi, Durbar at, 130
- Rawlinson, General Sir H., 94, 97, 91; on Crimean War, 94, 95; 99, 103; his Central Asian "Memorandum," vii, viii, 107 *et seq.*, 170
- Regimental organisation in England, 149
- Rion, River, 217
- Ripon, Lord, his popularity in India, 199
- Roberts, Lord, 78, 103
- Robertson, Dr., C.L.E., xx
- Rohrberg, General, organises Trans-Caspian territory, 49
- Rozanowski, General, 46
- Rosen, General, 24, 25
- Roshan, xv, 53
- Roumania, 205
- Russell, Lord John, 106
- Russian Foreign Office, 103
- Russo-Afghan frontier, 51, 52, 53
- Russo-Persian frontier, 51, 152
- Russia, her expansiveness, 1; her contempt for Western Europe, 2; war between R. and Austria in Europe and R. and England in Asia a mere question of time, 3; R.'s treatment of conquered nations, 4; her interests conflict with those of England and Austria, 4; sections in R. annexed, 16; occupies Alaska, 17; cedes it to the United States, 18; her advance towards Southern Asia, 18; acquires Persian provinces, 19; advances against Persia, 19; incorporates Crimea, 20; Persia recommences war against R., 21; comes into direct contact with Turkey in Asia, 21; begins to wage war

against the Caucasian tribes, 22; conquers Caucasus, 27; her policy towards the Circassians, 28; further advance in Central Asia, 30; founds towns in Bashkir country, 30; her trade in Central Asia, 37; advance in Kirghiz desert, 37; has "no limits" in the East, 40; at war with Kokand, 44. Ak-Masjed taken, 44; advances further in Central Asia, 46; concludes peace with Kokand, 46; her progress east of Caspian Sea, 50; crushes the Bashkirs, 57, 58; her position in Central Asia, 65; people of Great R. contrasted with Ruthenians and Slavonic races, 65; idea of universal empire, 67; her policy towards Persia, 74; her greater activity on Balkan Peninsula and in Central Asia, 76; her war against India a mere question of time, 78; Treaty of Gulistan with Persia, 81; policy towards Central Asian countries contrasted with that of England, 86; R. and Caucasus during Crimean war, 96; R.'s forces in the Caucasus, 98; declares her limit of Central Asian progress attained, 106; defeats Amir of Bokhara, 107; her influence in India, 110; her Central Asian advances likened to siege tactics, 111; her progress has justified Sir H. Rawlinson's prediction, 113; proximity to Afghanistan, 116; regards Afghanistan as beyond her influence, 117, 118; her assurances regarding Khiva, 119, 120; issues Memo-

randum of 1875 on Central Asia, 122; entire freedom of action adopted in the two countries, 124; takes Kokand, 125; sends mission to Cabul, 125; renews her activity in Trans-Caspia and takes Merv, 126; annexes Old Sarakhs, 127; agrees to a joint Afghan boundary commission, 128; relations in 1885 with England become strained, 129; preparations for war, 130; R.'s influence in Khorasan, 133; strategical relations with England, 135; her land forces, 138; naval forces, 149; offensive tactics might be largely adopted against R., 153; scene of the future war, 155; her merchant fleet, 158; powers of defence against naval attack, 158, 159; fleet in the Japan Sea, 162; purchase of cruisers, 164; position in Central Asia, 166; reasons for fighting in the Crimea in 1854, 167; her aspirations in the Balkan peninsula, 209; position in Asia, 211; her position if deprived of the Caucasus, 212, 213

Rustan, ix

Safed Koh Mountains, 179

Salisbury, Lord, and his views on the Central Asian question, 76; on civil government, 99, 101

Samarkand, 46, 137, 169, 213

Sar-i-Pul, 109

Sarakhs, 127, 174, 180

Sarakhs, Old, annexed by Russia, 51, 126

Sarhadd, 175, 202

Schuchkov, 68

Schouvalov, Count, 119

- "Schwerlinie," 152  
 Sebastopol, 160, 161  
 Secrecy in military discussions, Expediency of, questioned, 156  
 Serfdom abolished in Russia, 16  
 Sergieev, Governor of Ufa, 56  
 Seryn, Chief of the Calmucks, 35  
 "Scythian" warfare, 154  
 Shah Sujah, 86  
 Shamaj, 31  
 Shamil, 24, 95, 99, 136  
 Shar taken by Abramov, 47  
 Sheshenko, 4  
 Sher Ali, 109, his treaty with General Kaufmann, 132  
 Shibir Khan, 177  
 Shignan, xv, 53, 132  
 Shikarpur, 180, 181  
 Shuturgardan Pass, 180  
 Siahposhes, 176  
 Siberia, Cossack conquest of, 17  
 Sibi, 126  
 Sikhs, 183  
 Sir Daria, and Siberian lines connected, 45; 104, 105, 106  
 Skobelev, General, and his expedition against the Tekkehs, 49, 73, 126, 193  
 Sobolev, General, 73, 132, 170, 171, 175, 178, 201  
 Sogdiana, 178  
 Soldier's Pocket-book for Field Service, 102  
 Somatash, xviii  
 Staff Corps, Indian, 183  
 Stanitza, A, compared to a plant, 17  
*State of California, The*, cruiser, 164  
 Stavropol colonised, 15, 19  
 Stechapov, 68  
 Stewart, Sir Herbert, 147  
 Stolietov, General, 125  
 St. Petersburg, 159, 205  
 Suez Canal, 208, 210  
 Sukhum Kale, 28, 96  
 Suliman Mountains, 179, 180, 194  
 Swat valley, 176  
 Tal, 179  
 Tal Pass, 178  
 Tajmar, 56  
 Tamerlane, 34, 68  
 Taras Shefchenko, 4  
 Tartars in the Crimea, 8; Kasan T., 54  
 Tartary, Gulf of, 163  
 Tashkend, 46, 106, 136  
 Tashkurghan, xviii  
 Tcherniaiev, General, 45, 46  
 Tejend oasis, 50  
 Teheran, Treaty of, 82  
 Tekkeh Turcomans, 48, 49, 124  
 Temple, Sir R., 110, 190  
 Tetelev, the Tartar, 70  
 Terek River, 7, 19  
 Thyshenhausen, 73  
 Tiflis, 217  
 Timur the Tartar, 176, 178, 179, 180  
 Tokmak (Kokandi fort) captured, 45  
 Transbaikal Cossacks, 13  
 Trans-Caspian military government constituted, 48  
 Trans-Caspian railway, viii, 109, 173, 212  
 Turcoman desert, 48, 97  
 Turcomans, The, 51, 64, 125, 132  
 Turkestan Khanates, 32; Russian T., 46; its economic value, 77; 109, 118  
 Turkey, wrested by Russia in 1829 and 1878, 76, 214; her military resources, 215  
 Turkey in Asia, 208, 210  
 Turkmanichai, Treaty of, 21, 74, 83  
 Uguz Khan, 175

- "Ultima Thule," Von Haymerle's, 175  
 Umra Khan, xiii  
 Unkiar Skelessi, Treaty of, 88  
 Ural Province, head-quarters of, 31  
 Uratiube, capture of, 42; 46  
 Urquhart, David, 87, 88  
 Urussov, Prince, 57  
 Uruzghan, ix  
 Uzbeks, 64; U. Governments will soon cease to exist, 109; U. Khanates powerless against Russia, 114, 136  
  
 Vambéry, Professor, 92, 132  
 Varna, 205  
 Vereno, 27  
 Veliaminov, General, 22, 25  
 Veniukov, Colonel, 61, 63  
 Vernoe fort, 45  
 Vienna, 155  
 Vierovkin, Colonel, 45  
 Vitkevitch's mission to Cabul, 86  
 Vladivostock, 156, 160, 161  
 Vladykin, 15, 16, 29  
 Volga, Races settled on the, 61  
 Volunteers, British, 141  
 Volunteers, Indian, 187  
 Volynski, Artemius, 70  
 Vorontzof, Prince, 26, 27  
 Vrevsky, General, xvi  
  
 Wakhan, 53, 118  
 Walsh, Lovett & Co., xi  
 Waziristan, xiv  
 Wellesley, Marquis, 79  
 Wolseley, Viscount, 100, 101, 102, 147  
 Woodthorpe, Col., C.B., xv  
  
 Yakub Beg, xvi, 42  
 Yanopp, Col., xvi, xvii, xviii  
 Yarkand, 31, 41  
 Yassin, 195, 202  
 Yate, Lieut., 91, 92, 133, 171, 184  
 Yeomanry, British, 142  
  
 Yomut Turcomans, 43; their country annexed by Russia, 48, 51  
 Younghusband, Capt., xvi  
  
 Zaleski's opinion of Russian influence, 54  
 Zamoiski, General, 93  
 Zelenoi, General, 128  
 Zimmermann, Colonel, 45  
 Zizianov, Prince, 20; his murder, 21  
 Zubov, Count, 20  
 Zulfikar, 131  
 Zviernigolovskoia Stanitz, 33