

INDIA AND HER NEIGHBOURS.

BY

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&c., &c., &c.

WITH

MAPS AND APPENDIX.

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PREFACE.



ALL eyes in the East, as in the West, have long expected the struggle for supremacy between England and Russia. That struggle, if for a season deferred, still appears to be inevitable. >

Every act in the great drama of war between Russia and Turkey has most powerfully affected the nations of Central Asia and agitated our north-west frontier in India. While in our peaceable and well-ordered possessions the call to arms against the Czar has excited the utmost enthusiasm.

The Seikh and the Gourka, the fiercest soldiers in Asia, to whom the din of battle is as the breath of their nostrils, vie in ardour with the Musulman, who burns to avenge the wrongs of the Head of his faith. Even the Hindostanee, forgetting his caste restraints and prejudices, longs to strike a blow for those whose salt he

and his fathers have eaten in contentment and peace.

In Northern India, the Punjaub and the border lands beyond, we have an inexhaustible field for recruiting men of fine physique whose trade is war, and accustomed to arms from childhood.

“There never was put forward a greater fallacy or an error more likely to be mischievous, than, that the Turkish question was of no importance in an Indian point of view.” The grand problem now in course of solution in Turkey must affect in its results, whatever they may be, in the most immediate and powerful manner, our prestige and prosperity in India. Even during the Crimean campaign, the varying fortunes of the field elicited either the apprehension or the applause of the nations of the East, from the shepherd in his solitude to the warrior chief in his stronghold, while thousands of Moolahs prayed Allah to bless the arms of the “Sooltan of Room.”

When the fall of Sebastopol was announced at Dera Ismael Khan, on the Upper Indus, the news was received with the greatest enthusiasm by all classes. The bazaars of the city were brilliantly illuminated, every wealthy shopkeeper displaying from 1,000 to 1,200 lamps.

The native soldiers of India have not only fought the battles of the Empire in Persia, China

and Abyssinia, but the Sepoy of Bengal and Madras crossed bayonets with honour with the French in the Mauritius, while their brethren of Bombay were sent under Sir David Baird to encounter the same gallant enemy in Egypt, by Lord Wellesley, a Governor-General of India whose eagle-eyed and bold conceptions were at the time as much decried and cavilled at by lesser men as now we see decried and maligned the manly and good old English policy of the present Government in upholding the honour of the country and in protecting the rights of nations confirmed by treaties.

The policy of the Empire at this moment is resisted even by those whose experience and knowledge might have taught them that in the gravest crises of our time loyalty to the throne and love of country would be best evinced by a noble forbearance, if not a generous support, to Her Majesty's servants under such momentous circumstances.

It is in vain to say India is not threatened, that the Suez Canal is safe. The canal—glorious work as it is—can be easily injured, or even for a time destroyed. We want an alternative route to India, and, after having ignored for years the warnings of our leading statesmen and soldiers, are we to be told from Vienna that the best

alternative route is not only threatened but that if Russia gets possession of "Batoum, which, in relation to the Upper Euphrates valley forms the first stage from a political, military and commercial point of view down to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf,"* the command of the best route to our Indian possessions would be in the hands of our rival for empire in the East?

It is certain if we decline to connect the Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf, Russia will connect the Black Sea with the Persian Gulf. The nation desires peace, but the strong man must be armed to hold his goods in peace!

Is it too much to say that had the Persian Gulf been united with a port on the Mediterranean by the Euphrates Railway the Russo-Turkish war would not have occurred? When peace is restored, it is to be hoped that our Government will come to an agreement with the Porte as to the Euphrates Railway on the basis recommended by the Select Committee of the House of Commons, presided over by Sir Stafford Northcote in 1872, and for the Euphrates telegraph, terms for which were arranged with Her Majesty's Government in 1857. The Porte however preferred a line through Asia Minor.

I cannot refrain from again calling attention

* *Vienna Correspondent of Times*, 8th May, 1878.

to the opinion of the Austrian War Minister, who, after the battle of Sadowa, re-organised the army and brought it to its present state of efficiency.

So long ago as 1858 Field-Marshal-Lieutenant Baron Kuhn von Kuhnfeld predicted that Russia would in future probably try to satisfy her craving for an open sea-board by operating through Asia.

“She will not,” says this distinguished authority, “reach the shores of the Persian Gulf in one stride, or by means of one great war. But taking advantage of continental complications, when the attention and energy of European States are engaged in contests more nearly concerning them, she will endeavour to reach the Persian Gulf step by step, by annexing separate districts of Armenia. . . .”

“Whatever the commercial value of the Suez Canal to Central Europe, there is no doubt that it is secondary in importance to the Euphrates Railway, which affords the only means of stemming Russian advances in Central Asia, and which directly covers the Suez Canal.’”*

At this moment when great events in Europe are being watched by our distant fellow-subjects in India and by the tribes and nations which

* *Vide* Appendix E. 368.

dwell between us; when the first Mahomedan power in the world is held in the deadly grasp of the Czar; when England, this time not "the unready" is slowly but resolutely putting her native legions in motion, and their dusky brothers in India are hurrying to arms at the call of their common sovereign; at this moment some account of the past and present history of India and Her Neighbours may not be deemed inopportune.

Among the more important considerations presented to the reader of this volume, the following appear to merit special remark—

That England is not only a great Eastern Power, but that she possesses more Mahomedan subjects than the Sultan and the Shah together;—

That the standing armies of the feudatory princes of India number over 300,000 men with more than 5,000 guns;—

And that it is urgent to have improved and additional means of communication between England and India.

In order further to interest the general reader I have made prominent as central figures, the heroes and heroines of Indian history, surrounded by the dramatic incidents of their careers, leaving in shadow the minor actors, and

passing over altogether, or but briefly alluding to, events of secondary importance; giving, in short, a series of word-pictures of the more remarkable characters, occurrences, and places.

I have to thank kind friends for valuable advice and assistance, and to Mr. Edwyn Sandys Dawes I am specially indebted for that which relates to commerce and finance.

W. P. A.

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