

THE RUSSIANS IN THE EAST.

It is a remarkable and romantic fact that the struggle between Russia and England for the control of Asiatic commerce and the supremacy over the Central Asiatic peoples, is going on in the very region whence the Aryan hordes poured forth to populate India and Europe. This struggle has not yet reached the proportions of a warlike collision. But for almost two centuries Russia has been drawing nearer and nearer, by gradual and almost stealthy steps, to the seats of British power in the East; and it does not need an intimacy with the secrets of European cabinets to perceive that such a collision grows more imminent every day.

Whether the Aryans came, as Sir Henry Rawlinson claims, from the vicinity of the region now called Khiva, or, according to learned German authority, from the still mysterious valleys beyond the great Thian Shan range, now ruled over by the usurping Amir of Kashgar, it is certain that Russia and England are contending for the historically primitive home of their common ancestry. The great highways of commerce between Europe and Asia must pass through both Khiva and Kashgar; and the power which is destined to dominate them must acquire undisputed possession of these two states.

In view of what has long been an impending contest, — a contest which seems continually becoming more probable, and one which must almost necessarily involve other European powers besides those immediately interested, — it is worth while to understand clearly the relative positions of Russia and England in the East, and to trace briefly the steps by which the former, from being, a little more than two centuries ago, a comparatively insignificant European power, has extended her frontiers to those of Persia, to Samarkand, and, on the southeast, to within a brief march of the Punjab in North Hindoostan.

Russia began her long career of Asiatic conquest towards the close of the sixteenth century. Theodore I., who was afterwards poisoned, was Czar of Muscovy, which did not become the Russian Empire till more than a century afterwards. Elizabeth was reigning in England, and, far from dreaming of the gorgeous Eastern empire over which her successors were to rule, was engaged in defeating Philip's Armada. The first advance was made in the extreme north. Step by step the territories occupied by the nomad tribes of Siberia were absorbed; then the Cossacks of the Don, settled around the northern shores of the Caspian, were conquered; the Ural Tartars were brought under the rule of the Czar; and colonies were established at Perm and other points eastward and southeastward of Muscovy.

By the close of the seventeenth century the dominion of Russia had stretched completely across the dreary expanses of Siberia, and had included the still more bleak and distant country of Kamtschatka. Peter the Great succeeded to an empire which had become, at least in extent of territory, more Asiatic than European. His sway included the indefinite hordes of Turanian tribes scattered between the rivers Ishim and Irtish and the northern boundaries of Asia. Peter was the most ambitious, the ablest, and the most civilized Czar who had ever sat on the Muscovite throne. He formed vast projects of conquest; which comprehended not only that portion of Asia lying between the Caspian and China, but also Constantinople and modern Turkey. He left it as a legacy to his successors that they should establish the Greek Church in the ancient metropolis of the emperors of the East; and he pointed out the steps by which Russian ascendancy in Asia was to be attained.

Siberia and the northern shores of the Caspian were hers; it remained to ex-

tend her dominions to the more fertile south, to cross the great arid steppes occupied by the Kirghiz hordes, and finally to found Russian seats of commerce on the southern Caspian, the Sea of Aral, and even the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. Such was the vista of enterprise which the injunction of Peter spread before succeeding Czars. It seemed a gigantic undertaking. It must necessarily be the work of generations. The conquests must be made, as that of Siberia had been made, piecemeal. The progress of Russia in the lines set down by Peter has been, indeed, slow, painful, interrupted; but on the whole it has been steadily onward. From the time of Peter to that of Nicholas this progress was scarcely perceptible. Catherine II. and Alexander I. found themselves absorbed in European affairs, and had their hands full in the wars which, at brief intervals in the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth, shook the western continent. The more peaceful era after the final overthrow of Napoleon enabled the Czar to prosecute the long postponed objects of ambition in Asia.

Something had, however, been done, between 1750 and 1830, to prepare the way for future operations. A glance at the map of Central Asia will reveal that between the frontiers of Siberia and Turkistan, there lie vast expanses of steppe and desert, broken but rarely by rivers and mountain ranges, and divided, towards the west, by the Sea of Aral and a long, narrow range approaching it from the north. This desert waste is no less than two thousand miles long and one thousand wide. It has always been occupied by fierce Kirghiz nomads: on the western side by the Kirghiz of the "Little Horde," and on the east (between Siberia and Khokand) by the Kirghiz of the "Great Horde." It was Russia's task to conquer and obtain unhampered passage across these immense deserts. It was no less an obstacle than this which lay between her and the fruitful promised lands watered by the Jaxartes and the Oxus. The process by which Russia has finally obtained

the mastery of that great region was the same as that employed in Siberia. She began by establishing a line of military posts within easy distance of her frontiers. Then she sent emissaries among the tribes just beyond, who persuaded them to cease from their wandering ways, and under Russian protection and alliance to settle down in permanent villages. A time would always come when these nearest tribes, threatened by their savage neighbors on the other side, appealed to Russia to defend them; and before they knew it, they were not only defended, but quietly included within the Eastern dominions of the Czar. Then a further line of military stations would be established, and the contiguous tribes would come, first under Russian protection, and speedily, at a moment when resistance would have been sheer folly, under Russian government. By these means, which required time, but were certain in their operation so long as the strength and treasure of Russia held out, she had reduced, by 1830, the Kirghizes of the Little Horde to vassalage. All this was, moreover, so cleverly done as to attach to Russia the real respect and hearty allegiance of the Kirghiz tribes; and this has been an advantage of the utmost importance in the pursuit of her designs farther south.

To bring into clear view the position of Russia in Central Asia forty years ago—since which period her advance has been far more rapid, effective, and alarming to England than had previously been the case—it is necessary to narrate briefly her relations with the great Khanate of Khiva.

Khiva, or Khwarizm, finds its limits between the Caspian on the west, the Sea of Aral and the desert of Ust-Urt on the north, the Oxus or Amu River on the east, and Persia and Cabul on the south. It has been the scene of innumerable wars, incursions, revolutions; conquered and reconquered by rival and turbulent tribes; the prize contended for by great chieftains, now of the Buddhist and now of the Mohammedan faith, from Timour Tamerlane to Kahim Khan; his-

toric ground, where Alexander's legions are said to have trod; and it is now the necessary *entrepôt* between Asia and Europe, which must be held by the power which assumes to control the inter-continental commerce of the future. For a while during the last century, Khiva was governed by Kirghiz rulers, friendly to Russian progress; but early in the present century the Uzbegs, a tribe bitterly and even cruelly hostile to Russia, drove out the Kirghiz "legates," and established over their four tribes princes of their own race, and an Uzbeg Khan over the whole country.

Russia saw the inestimable advantage of getting control of Khiva, at the very beginning of her career of Asiatic conquest. Peter the Great tried to subjugate it as long ago as 1717. The country was inaccessible from the side of the Ural, for then the Kirghiz Horde interposed an impenetrable barrier. Peter commissioned one of his generals, Prince Bekovitch, to conquer Khiva. Bekovitch set out from the northeastern shores of the Caspian at the head of six thousand men, and after a painful march of nearly three months reached the Khivan oasis. "He repulsed," says an account by a Russian author, "the attacks of the Khivans for three days, but was then deluded into accepting their overtures, and allowed his famished troops to be distributed in small parties among the villages, where hospitality was promised to them. Their defense was impossible, and they were nearly all murdered, a few only escaping to tell the tale, and a few lingering on in captivity." Bekovitch himself was flayed alive, and a drum-head was made of his skin; and so utterly disastrous was the issue of the expedition, that "to be swallowed up like Bekovitch" is to this day a familiar Russian saying.

The Czars made no further serious attempt to conquer Khiva from that time until 1839; but on several occasions in the eighteenth century its rulers offered allegiance to the Russian crown; and this fact, indeed, has always since constituted one of the Czar's claims to Khivan sovereignty. In 1839, the celebrated expe-

dition of General Perovski took place. England herself was forced to acknowledge that this expedition was a justifiable one. For many years the Uzbegs had made a practice of obstructing and robbing the Russian caravans, making sudden attacks upon the outposts, imprisoning, torturing, and often murdering merchants who were peaceably going their ways of trade, endeavoring to incite the Kirghizes north of them to insurrection against Russian rule, and returning insulting responses to demands for reparation. Thus the Czar's dignity and his aggressive interest coincided in impelling him to undertake the subjugation of the Khivan Uzbegs. His design was hastened by the English expedition into Afghanistan; for now it was clear that Central Asia was to be the battleground of Russian and English interests in the Orient. Perovski set out from the shores of the Caspian on the 29th of November, 1839. His force comprised five thousand men, ten thousand camels of burden, and twenty-two field-guns. Of his army, two thousand were cavalry. It was with a force and armament so small that Russia hoped to conquer a country with a fixed population of half a million, and having tributary tribes numbering as many more. One feature of this, as of all the Russian expeditions in the East, is worthy of note and of praise. The preparations for it were ample. Money was not spared to make every appointment complete. The ten thousand camels carried plenty of warm clothing for every soldier, six months' rations for each man, and even many comforts for the protracted camp life expected in the deserts.

But Perovski, like Bekovitch before him, was doomed to failure. In more than two months he had advanced only four hundred miles, less than half-way from the Caspian to the oasis; and here, in the midst of the bleak desert, finding that one fifth of his army and four fifths of his camels had succumbed to the bitter hardships of winter, and to various diseases, the general resolved to retrace his steps. The retreat was a masterly one, and Perovski was received by Nich-

olas with almost as much honor as if he had returned a conqueror. His enterprise, indeed, had not been wholly fruitless. His troops had at least one engagement with the Khivans, which so deeply impressed them with Russian prowess that the Khan, fearing another expedition, released the Russian prisoners in his hands, prohibited his subjects from reducing Russians to slavery, and received the Czar's envoys with effusive demonstrations of respect.

Between Perovski's expedition in 1839, and that which, under General Kauffmann, in the winter of 1873 finally reduced Khiva to Russian vassalage, the advance of Russia in other parts of Central Asia was rapid, and well calculated to arouse the fears of England. A comparison of her outposts held in 1839 with those acquired since, down to the present time, clearly indicates how energetic has been the pursuit of her long-cherished ambition during the past forty years. At the former period, the bold and historic frontiers of the Caucasus were still independent of Russian rule; and Russia was forced to keep an army of one hundred thousand men to defend her territory from the depredations of the Caucasian tribes. There were no railways, and Russia but timidly navigated the extreme northern waters of the Caspian with two small steamers. She had just acquired the island of Ashurada, then only a sandbank, now one of her most important strongholds in the Caspian. The frontiers of Russia across the continent from west to east found their southern limit in a line of forts and outposts drawn from the Ural River to the ancient Tartar city of Sempalatinsk, on the Irtysh, in the southeast corner of Siberia. Thus, forty years ago, Russia was, at the nearest point, fully one thousand miles from the giant range of the Hindu Kush, which separates British India from Turkistan.

Now a line of railway connects St. Petersburg and Moscow with the Black Sea, and within the past two years a railway has been completed between a convenient point on the Black Sea and the Caspian, passing below the spurs of

the Caucasus range. Several hundred steamers are constantly afloat on the Volga, and for the past ten years Russia has maintained a war flotilla of from fifty to eighty vessels on the Caspian. On the distant and desert-bound Sea of Aral itself, there is quite a formidable Russian war fleet, which, since the acquisition of Khiva and the water-roads of the Jaxartes and the Oxus, has been considerably increased. Russian naval stations have been established from time to time on the Persian coast of the Caspian, so that the dominions of the Shah would be completely at the mercy of Russia, were it not for the guaranteed protection afforded to him by England. The same may be said of the dominions of the Amir Shere Ali of Cabul and Afghanistan. Russian troops to-day confront the boundary of Cabul on the right bank of the Oxus; and probably the only motive which restrains them from advancing to the conquest of that rich and fertile land, which would open to them the southern seas, is the declaration of England that the passage of the Oxus by Russian troops would be regarded by her as a declaration of war.

Perhaps the most interesting and significant of all the operations of Russia in Central Asia were those by which she has become virtually dominant over the great Khanates of Bukhara and Khokand. Bukhara has always been the chief centre, *dépôt*, and market of Central Asian trade; and as such has long been coveted by both Russia and England. From the time when, but a generation after Mohammed's death, a Moslem army overran the country, conquering both the Tartar nomads scattered over its wastes and the more civilized Iranese followers of Zoroaster in the settled districts, Bukhara has been almost constantly the battle-ground of Oriental religions, races, and fierce rival ambitions. When settled under Mohammedan rule, which sought its chief military support not from the primitive Tajiks, fire-worshippers, but from the Mongol Buddhists, Bukhara about the ninth century reached a high degree of power and even splendor. "It was not only the

seat," says a historian, "of a magnificent empire, but the centre of liberal cultivation and learning." Then came the ruthless Jengis Khan, with his Tartar hordes, overrunning Turkistan from the Indus to the Mesopotamian mountains; and soon succeeding this warrior, a still greater warrior appeared on the same theatre in the person of Timour Tamerlane, who built up a vast and powerful empire, and who lies entombed at Samarkand, the second of Bukharan cities. The descendants of these two chiefs long disputed the sovereignty of the southern Turkistanee states; but finally the grand viziers gained possession of the power, as the mayors of the palace had done in France. The last prince of Bukhara who claimed a descent from Jengis Khan was deposed by his vizier in 1784; and the grandson of that vizier is the present reigning Amir of Bukhara.

In the contention between Russia and England for the control of Bukhara, Russia had the start, and has pursued her advantage with sleepless pertinacity. While Khiva on the one side, and Khokand on the other, have always bitterly resisted Russian influence and progress, Bukhara, jealous of the ascendancy which England has acquired in neighboring Cabul, has rather encouraged Russian projects, with the result of finding herself at last reduced to a state of virtual dependence upon that power. Russia began her designs upon Bukhara by endeavoring to establish diplomatic relations and commercial treaties with the Amir. Missions were exchanged between the two courts as long ago as the middle of the last century; but the results were not large, and at the proper moment Russia entered upon the project of bringing Bukhara within her military control. In order to reach Bukhara, however, it was necessary first to subdue the large, formidable, and warlike Khanate of Khokand, lying between Bukhara and the Kara Tagh range, and occupying the banks of the Jaxartes down to where it flows into the Sea of Aral. Khokand was long ruled by the descendants of Timour; then it became for a while a dependency of Bukhara;

then, under another descendant of Timour, it regained, about a century ago, its independence. The Khans of Khokand extended their dominions by frequent conquests, until they came into collision, in the lower valley of the Jaxartes, with the Khivans and the Kirghiz hordes; and it was their attack upon the latter, who enjoyed the protection of Russia, which gave this power the excuse and opportunity to assume an aggressive warfare on Khokand.

It was about forty years ago, four or five years before the ill-fated Perovski expedition against Khiva, that the Russians established their first military post on the Jaxartes. This river flows into the northern arm of the Sea of Aral, as the Oxus does into its southern arm; and this step was the first of the series by which Russia advanced her frontier line from Orenburg and Semipalatinsk to the wide semicircle stretching from Fort Kopal around the foot of the great southern ranges to the Sea of Aral. At Aralsk, near the mouth of the Jaxartes, she built a fort, and soon after, a second fort, some sixty miles distant, farther up the Jaxartes, at Kazaly. The Russians were now in a position to defend their vassals, the Kirghiz nomads, from the constant forays of the Khokandis. These latter had, as their extreme northern post, Fort Ak Masjid, on the Jaxartes, three hundred miles distant from Aralsk. This fort was commanded by Yakub Beg, one of the most remarkable figures in modern Oriental history. Yakub, a foreign adventurer, probably of Caucasian origin, had taken service under the Khan of Khokand, and by the exhibition of rare military capacity had risen to the command of what was the most important outpost of the Khan's recently acquired dominions. It is the same Yakub Beg who now reigns, with Draco-like severity and with the sternest and most impartial justice, over the great kingdom of Kashgar, which he himself has created by conquest.

It was in 1852 that the Russians made their first attack upon Yakub, then commanding the Khokandi fort Ak Masjid; but he repulsed them with heavy loss.

In the following year Perovski — the same who had vainly marched against Khiva — led a force of seventeen hundred men against Yakub, and this time, after a most obstinately fought siege and series of battles, Fort Ak Masjid fell. At almost the same time Russian forces descended from Semipalatinsk on the extreme northeast, and established Forts Kopal, Iliisk, and Vernöë. Thus were acquired the two horns of that vast semicircle by which the Russian frontier has been pushed, within twenty years, a thousand miles nearer India and the sea. The progress of the Russians was stayed by the disastrous war of the Crimea, but gradually the Russian lines, from Ak Masjid on the one side and Kopal on the other, drew near each other along the river banks and mountain bases. In 1857 they had established a station at Suzek, at the foot of the Kara Tagh range; two years later they had reached Kastek, and had narrowed the gap on the other side by erecting a fort at Julek. Finally, by 1864, the Russians had completed their possession of the great semicircular frontier, had brought the neighboring nomads into a not unwilling vassalage, and had contracted the Khokand Khanate to less than half of its ancient dimensions. The capture of Hazrat Sultan, a flourishing town lying between the Jaxartes and the Kara Tagh Mountains, and of Chamkand, south of it, soon followed. The next object of assault was the large city of Tashkent, which is said to spread over an area of ten miles by five, with very high walls, and fortifications as formidable as Uzbeg science could make them. The first attack upon Tashkent was repulsed with heavy loss to the assailants. The Khokandis swarmed northward, and the Russian occupation of Hazrat Sultan was for a while threatened. Reinforcements enabled the Russian general once more to assume the offensive, early in 1865, but not until the Amir of Bukhara had hastened to the assistance of the Khan of Khokand, probably with the real object of getting possession of the beleaguered Khanate for himself. General Cherniayeff laid siege to Tashkent, with its two

hundred thousand inhabitants, with a force of about two thousand men. The resistance of the Khokandis was obstinate, but the Russians succeeded first in cutting off the water supply, and then in defeating the valiant Khokandi general, Alim Kul, in a sortie; Alim himself falling in the battle, and thus leaving Khokand without a single leader of courage and conspicuous ability. The supply of food, as well as of water, was now cut off from the doomed city, which capitulated after a siege of six weeks.

The capture and occupation of Tashkent may be said to have given the Russians final and well nigh complete control of the great Khanate of Khokand. They established there not only a large garrison, but a commercial emporium and a civil government; and at the present moment a Russian governor and council, and Russian courts and police, are settled there. It is the centre of all their military operations, and from thence they are able to dictate to the Khan at Khokand, and to protect the upper valley of the Jaxartes.

A new and unexpected foe now confronted the Russian conquerors. This was Musaffar-ud-din, Amir of the powerful state of Bukhara, of which we have before spoken as the chief seat of Central Asian trade. This prince demanded that Tashkent should be evacuated; and when he found that remonstrance was useless, he marched against that city with forty thousand soldiers. The Russian general Romanovski advanced to meet him with a force of about three thousand, and finding him intrenched some miles south of the Jaxartes, gave him battle. "The Bukharan artillery," says a narrator, "was numerous and heavy, but fired over the heads of the Russians, while the Russian shells and rockets filled their camp with carnage and confusion." The result was that Musaffar soon retreated in disorder, leaving his treasure, arms, and camp equipage behind him. In consequence of this victory the Russians were able to occupy the strongly-fortified and commercial city of Khojand, and a little later to advance into that beautiful, fertile, and historic valley of Samarkand,

where Timour Tamerlane rested from his conquests, died, and still lies entombed.

Such have been the features and acquisitions of Russian progress in the valley of the Jaxartes down to the present time. Khokand and Samarkand are virtually subject to the dominion of the Czar. Bukhara, if still nominally independent, has lost some portion of its eastern territory, and is held in awe by the Russian troops; while Russian diplomatic agents have the predominating influence at the Amir's court.

To capture Khiva was a task that still remained after Khokand had fallen. The valley of the Oxus was quite as necessary to Russian projects as that of the Jaxartes, and Khiva once captured and held, the doom of Bukhara would apparently be sealed beyond doubt. The third and successful Russian expedition against Khiva is fresh in the memory of all readers. It was undertaken in the winter of 1872-73. It was commanded by General Kauffmann, and consisted of four columns, starting from different points and converging on the desert capital. Two of these columns—one of them accompanied by the commander-in-chief—proceeded eastward across the desert from two points on the Caspian, the most northerly following very nearly in the line taken by Perovski in 1839. The other two columns proceeded southward from the eastern and western banks of the Sea of Aral. In all there were but four thousand men; and Khiva contained at least half a million inhabitants. Russia staked her whole prestige in Central Asia on the issue of this undertaking. If a third failure to capture Khiva occurred, there was no doubt that a general uprising against Russian rule would take place in the valley of the Jaxartes. Success would go far towards finally establishing Russian supremacy throughout Turkistan. So admirable were Kauffmann's plans that the four columns reached the walls of the Uzbek capital within a few days of each other, that commanded by the general himself being first on the spot. A short and sharp struggle ensued; the fiery young Khan defended his chief city with pluck

and courage, but his utmost efforts were vain. He capitulated and became the prisoner of Russia; and the city of Khiva was occupied by Kauffmann's troops.

England was thoroughly alarmed by the Khivan expedition, and yet more so when Khiva fell. She demanded of Russia that when the Khan had been punished for imprisoning Russians, and the safety of Russian caravans crossing the desert had been secured, Khiva should be evacuated. Assurances to this effect were given by a special envoy of the Czar sent to London. Two years have passed, and the promise has not been kept. A Russian garrison still holds Khiva, and Russian war ships have been put, within two or three months, on the Oxus. By the destruction of the dams which shut the Oxus to navigation, there is now free passage for the Russian flotilla for hundreds of miles southward, even to within forty or fifty miles of the city of Bukhara itself; while navigation on the Jaxartes is possible to within the same distance of Samarkand on the other side. The Russian stations on the Caspian, the two great rivers, and the Sea of Aral now sustain each other in a great cordon of military, naval, and river bases; and Russian power makes itself directly felt on the frontiers of Persia, Bukhara, and Kashgar.

The two latter states alone intervene to obstruct the complete control of Turkistan, east and west, and the great highroads of Oriental commerce of which Central Asia is the seat, by the Czar. The next conquest will be Bukhara, already overshadowed from the Oxus and Samarkand. Then the Russians must reckon with the greatest of modern Central Asian warriors and rulers, Yakub Beg, the usurping Amir of Kashgar. Successful in this, Russian power in the East will at last have brought itself face to face with the British in India. It is not probable that Russia has a definite purpose of attacking the vast and gorgeous empire so well founded by Clive and consolidated by Warren Hastings, Ellenborough, Dalhousie, and Canning; but it is openly asserted at St. Petersburg that, by confronting India, Russia will have a

check upon England in the East, and that, by thus tying the hands of her traditional rival, she will be able unmo-
lested to undertake that march upon Con-

stantinople which was the dream of Peter the Great, and the failure to accomplish which broke the heart of the austere and haughty Nicholas.

George M. Towle.

ON RE-READING TENNYSON'S PRINCESS.

IF at this moment in his distant isle
And home, shut in by trees and ivied walls,
Where, hidden like the fountains of the Nile,
He dreams among his palms and waterfalls—
If there he knew how one beneath the pines
Of transatlantic lands to him unknown,
Followed with glowing throb the poet's lines
From page to page o'er all the waves of tone,
And read with stirring pulse and moistened eyes,
And fancy in delighted tumult caught
'Mid fairy splendors, visionary skies,
And wild Æolian melodies of thought,—
Should then this stranger tell him all he felt,
In speech or letter burdened with his praise,
Think you that proud sequestered soul would melt
To answer from behind his British bays?
Nay, might he not his gates more closely bar
Against the intrusion, as of one who sought
With alien touch to unsphere the poet's star,
And dwarf with diagrams his orbèd thought?

So have I whistled to a woodland thrush
That charmed the silence of a forest green.
Sudden the liquid cadence ceased to gush:
Deep in the leafy gloom he hid unseen.
And so the poet sings; nor can unmask,
With gloss of random talk, his sacred runes.
Hope not the English nightingale will task
His tongue beneath the old unbidden tunes,
Nor seek to snare the aroma of the rose
That fills the garden with its mystic scents;
Nor, when the enchanted stream of music flows,
Press a prose-comment from the instruments.
Enough that one who prompts the melody
Of younger bards, and lords it in their style,
Should sing unanswered, where alone and free
He dreams amid his fountains of the Nile.

Christopher P. Cranch.