

CENTRAL ASIA—A MILITARY PROBLEM.

“What man dare, I dare:
 Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear;
 Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
 Shall never tremble.”—МАСВЕТН.

SO much has been said and written during the last few years on the advance of Russia in Central Asia, and of the political and military considerations involved as regards our empire in India, that it may seem almost superfluous to renew the subject; but it is still one of constant discussion, and, having studied the question for years past, my views may perhaps be deemed worthy of some consideration—more especially as the conclusions at which I have arrived do not lead me to attach so much importance to the position of Russia in regard to India as appears to be generally entertained.

Before referring to the advance of Russia, and to her gradual absorption in recent years of the decaying principalities of Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokand, it may be as well to allude for a few moments to what may be called the more ancient history of the question, and to the fears which haunted us in days gone by—fears which still apparently more or less prevail. The first germ of our alarms may perhaps be traced to the apocryphal will of Peter the Great, who is supposed to have foreshadowed some indefinite scheme of conquest of India. It is an unsubstantial ghost, but it occasionally appears even now.

At the very beginning of the century we were under some apprehension of a joint invasion of India by the French, Afghan, and Persian armies, and, with the view of preventing it, entered into a treaty with the Shah at Teheran, in which it was stipulated that, “should an army of the French nation, actuated by design and deceit, attempt to settle, with a view of establishing themselves, on any of the islands or shores of Persia, a conjoint force shall be appointed by

the two high contracting parties to destroy and put an end to the foundation of their treason."

But the French never came.

The next invasion of Hindostan was planned at Tilsit by Alexander and Napoleon, who meditated the junction of a confederate army on the plains of Persia for the purpose. This new peril was, however, checkmated by a second treaty at Teheran in 1809, by which the Shah covenanted "not to permit any European force whatever to pass through Persia, either towards India or towards the ports of that country." Paper treaties sufficed in those days to meet paper invasions.

Subsequently to 1809 a comparative lull supervened: indeed, the subject has always been treated rather spasmodically. As the late Lord Strangford once observed, "we are constantly oscillating between utter neglect and raving panic." In 1837 the fear of a combined attack by Russians, Persians, and Afghans arose. The late Sir John Kaye,* after describing the intrigues of the Afghan Sirdars and the Shah at the time, goes on to say, that "far out in the distance, beyond the mountains of the Hindoo Koosh, there was the shadow of a great northern army, tremendous in its indistinctness, sweeping across the wilds and deserts of Central Asia towards the frontier of Hindostan." This was fifty years ago, and its supposed advance was an anxiety to us during the first Afghan war. That great northern army, as we now know, but as we did not know then, was the feeble column of Peroffski, which left Orenburg to punish the Khan of Khiva, but which perished from famine and pestilence in the snowy wastes of the Barsuk desert, north of the Aral.

In the years gone by, when the power and resources of the Principalities were almost unknown, the very mystery in which they were shrouded naturally increased our apprehensions, more especially as our position in Northern India was not then thoroughly assured. The Punjaub at that time was independent, and our frontier was more or less *en l'air*.

In the present day, however, our line of defence is one of great natural strength; and not only are our resources immensely greater than at the time of the first Afghan war, but we have ample information as to the general characteristics of the Principalities. Sir Henry Rawlinson, writing of the position of Russia in 1847, said: "The old boundary of Russia south of Orenburg abutted on the great Kirghis steppe—a zone of almost uninhabited desert, stretching 2000 miles from west to east, and nearly 1000 from north to south," and which had hitherto acted as a buffer between Russia and the Mahomedan Principalities south of the Aral.†

* "History of the War in Afghanistan": Kaye.

† Parliamentary Paper, "Afghanistan," 1878.

Russia has long since advanced far southward of her boundaries of those days, but it is important to remember that this vast arid steppe, which for years delayed her advance, still remains as a barrier between her forces in Central Asia and the main resources of the empire.

It is not necessary to give an historical account of the gradual advance of Russia southwards, and of her absorption in great measure of the three kingdoms of Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokand. The main outlines are well known; but it is very important to consider the general features and characteristics of the vast area which has been overrun; the condition of the people, and the general want of resources by which it is distinguished. On all these points we now have ample information. The accounts of Rawlinson, Wood, Veniukoff, Baker, Schuyler, McGahan, Boulger, and others, all tell the same story, and describe the region as consisting for the most part of sterile deserts, deficient in food, forage, fuel, and water. Roads, properly so called, do not exist, and the only means of transport are pack animals. It is a wide expanse, but there is little in it; and, except from the Caspian through Merve, there is not a railway in the whole region. There are a certain number of decayed ancient cities here and there, and there are occasional oases of limited fertility; but the general aspect and conditions are as above described.

Speaking roughly, the dominions of Russia in Central Asia south of Orenburg may be taken as almost equal in geographical extent to those of our Indian Empire; but there is this striking difference between the two, that whilst the population of India is computed at 250 millions, that of Central Asia, even at the highest computation, is only reckoned at four or five millions, of whom nearly half are nomadic—that is, they wander about, not from choice, but in search of food and pasturage. The extreme scantiness of the population is of itself a rough measure of the general desolation.

It would be foreign to the purpose of this article to enter minutely into the causes of the sterility of the regions of Central Asia—causes which, to a great extent, have produced similar results in the neighbouring countries of Persia, Afghanistan, and Asiatic Turkey, and indeed in many other parts of the world. It is well known that the general destruction of forests, if persistently carried out, will in the course of time reduce any country to a condition of almost absolute barrenness. The rainfall becomes intermittent and gradually diminishes, and when it comes, the ground, having little vegetation or means of absorption, is torn up; the mountains become monuments of rocky desolation, the rivers are variable in their volume and many of them never reach the sea, and the plains result in being mere saline steppes.

All these are specially marked characteristics of the countries just named, and these, combined with misgovernment, are the main causes of their decay, which has been in progress for centuries. It may be possible, by careful forestry and by process of irrigation, gradually to restore to Nature the riches which the hands of men in previous ages have destroyed; but under any circumstances this must be a consummation to be slowly realized, and which in all probability will never be achieved.

It is, however, in their military aspect that these conditions assume so much importance. However sad may be the spectacle of vast regions destroyed in a measure by human agency, and almost depopulated, the strategic condition of the country, viewed as the base of a possible invasion of India, is one which excites an interest of a different and almost of an opposite kind. If we are to assume that the occupation of the Central Asian States by Russia, and the gradual approach of her forces, may become a danger to our position in India, then there is, from a mere military point of view, a consolation in knowing that the scattered forces of Russia are not only at an enormous distance from the main resources of her empire, but are dotted about in a vast region deficient in everything that an army requires for its maintenance and rapid advance. And yet there are people who become nervous when they hear that a few Cossacks are watering their horses in the Murghab, near Merve, and about 900 miles from the Indus. Railways, when they are made, will to some extent give facilities for transport, but they will not produce fertility; and in a miserably peopled region such as that now under consideration they will not commercially pay a farthing in the pound. Long lines of communication add vastly to the difficulties of modern military operations.

The military position of Russia in Central Asia, therefore, is that of a great but distant Power, which during the last fifty years has overrun and taken possession of extended territories belonging to fanatical Mahommedan tribes. The people themselves are, many of them, warlike and hostile; but they are badly armed, have no discipline, training, or leaders, and are not, therefore, in a position to withstand the advance of regular troops. Consequently, Russia is enabled to hold the country with a comparatively small force of scattered detachments, which, however, are supplied under great difficulties from far distant centres, and her troops are practically incapable of concentration. Indeed, the farther they go the weaker they become; the very magnitude of the area is a cause of weakness. This is a condition somewhat precarious in itself, and would certainly not appear to be an alarming one as a basis of attack against our empire, even were India close at hand.

The original line of Russian advance, as already pointed out, was

from the north, with Orenburg as a main basis; but of late years the direction of her progress has been easterly from the Caspian, leaning on Tiflis and the region of the Caucasus. There has been some anxiety amongst many persons owing to this change in the scene of operations on the part of Russia. Sir Henry Rawlinson a few years ago took a very desponding view of the situation. Alluding to the conquest of the Caucasus, he said "it was the turning-point of Russian empire in the East. So long as the mountaineers existed, they formed an effective barrier to the tide of onward conquest; when they were swept away, there was no military or physical obstacle to the continuous march of Russia from the Araxes to the Indus!" He describes this "as the unerring certainty of a law of Nature."

This imaginary invasion of India, by an army starting from the Caucasus as a general base, involves issues military, political, and financial, and a short consideration will prove the idea to be of a very fanciful character. From Tiflis to the Indus is over two thousand miles, and this wonderful expedition would have to be conducted through poor and difficult countries from beginning to end. At the very outset political complications might arise were the country of the Caucasus much denuded of troops. If we are to judge by the events of the war in 1878, a great deal might happen in the Armenian highlands as soon as the Russian forces had started to invade an empire in another part of the world; and at the very outset the line of communication to the Caspian would be open to attack in flank and rear. Then, again, the neutrality, if not the actual support, both of Persia and Afghanistan must be secured, otherwise the line of march, extending for hundreds of miles and gradually growing weaker, would be harassed and cut. As the expedition must be accompanied by siege trains and munitions, &c., transport would be found a great difficulty, especially as, from absence of roads, pack animals would chiefly be required for a considerable part of the journey. From our own experience, we know that Afghanistan, owing to its mountains, deserts, defiles, and general deficiency of resources is a most difficult country to penetrate and to hold. Persia, as a theatre of operations, is in some senses worse. As General Baker, in his "Clouds in the East," pointed out, "The whole eastern centre of Persia is a vast salt plain, uncultivated and uninhabited, and which, from its want of water, can only be passed by small caravans of camels on a few roads, where brackish wells exist, and even then with great difficulty."

Large depôts and fortified positions would be essential all along the route, so that a Russian army of invasion, by the time it reached the Indus, supposing it ever got there, would have shrunk to very small dimensions, and yet would then be only at the real commence-

ment of its enterprise. A modern army on the march, especially when it extends to 2000 miles, does not gather strength and volume like a snow-ball. Then there are other matters to be considered. Are we to assume that England would have no allies and no power of initiation? and that her generals and soldiers are so devoid of courage and enterprise, and are made of such poor stuff, that they would be incapable of striking a blow at those enfeebled battalions as they emerged from the mountain passes and debouched on the desert plains of Scinde?

The late Lord Beaconsfield happily summed up the situation in a few words in 1878. He said: "Her Majesty's Government are by no means apprehensive of an invasion of India by our north-western frontier. The base of operations of any possible foe is so remote, the communications are so difficult, the aspect of the country is so forbidding, that we do not believe, under these circumstances, an invasion of our north-western frontier is practicable."

Notwithstanding the exaggerated language which is so often used in regard to Russia's supposed designs, still the advance of her troops from the south of the Caspian and the construction of a railway along the foot of the mountains, which form the northern boundary of Persia, are points worthy of careful consideration. They may not be an ultimate source of danger to ourselves, but to some extent they alter previous conditions, and have rendered it necessary not only to reconsider the relative positions of Russia and England in the East, but also to define, with more precision than heretofore, the north-western boundaries of the intervening kingdom of Afghanistan. The country from the Caspian towards Merve, which has recently fallen into the hands of Russia, is the home of the Tekke-Turcomans; it is a narrow but in some parts a cultivated tract, watered by small streams, which, flowing from the Persian mountains, are ultimately lost by absorption in the great desert to the north.

Some years ago (about 1872-73), as the Russian troops were gradually approaching the confines of Afghanistan, the situation formed the subject of much correspondence between Earl Granville, then Foreign Minister, and Prince Gortchakoff. It was not that the forces of either Power were at that time on the ground, nor indeed had the country been visited or surveyed by either; but as Russia was becoming predominant in the Principalities, and as, on the other hand, Afghanistan was admitted to be within the sphere of our influence, the two Governments deemed it desirable to define as far as possible the Afghan boundaries,* and to prevent raids by the neighbouring tribes on either side.

The negotiations at that time embraced the whole line of frontier,

* Parliamentary Papers, "Central Asia," c. 2164, 1878, pp. 39-40, 69; and c. 2188, p. 108. Also c. 699, 1873, pp. 14 and 15.

including Badakshan* and Wakkan to the north-east; also the northern boundary along the Amu Daria to Khoja-Saleh; and finally, from the latter in a south-westerly direction towards the Heri-Rud. The general object of these arrangements was in the interests of peace; and it is to be noticed that, in the discussions on the subject, the Russian Government in each case finally accepted the proposals of Lord Granville as to the provinces or districts to be included in Afghan territory. It must be understood that whilst Russia claimed † independence of action as regards the Principalities, which are indeed hundreds of miles away from our Indian Empire, and with which we have therefore no direct concern, she fully accepted the principle that Afghanistan was beyond the sphere of her influence, and within that of ours. ‡

The difference in the present day as compared to the past is, that whereas our ally, the Ameer of Cabul, formerly had merely a set of lawless, turbulent neighbours along his frontier, he now finds himself in the presence of, and in contact with, the outposts of a great though distant power. This has not only altered to some extent the position of the Afghan ruler, but it also becomes incumbent on us to consider how far it touches our interests, or may ultimately affect our empire in India. This is really the question to be solved. It is one of some importance, but it does not follow that it is necessarily one of danger.

The arrival of Russian troops at Merve, and in that neighbourhood, in fact rendered it necessary to lay down with precision what had heretofore, owing to want of local knowledge, been loosely defined. The arrangements of 1872-73 spoke of certain districts (Andkhai, Saripul, Maimeneh, &c.), which were to be considered Afghan, § and alluded to the country to the north as being chiefly desert; but the actual boundary-line was not, and could not at that time, in the absence of personal visit or survey, be critically drawn. It was taken as running south-westerly from Khoja-Saleh, on the Amu Darin, towards the Heri-Rud. ||

It is not my intention to recapitulate the details of the Penjdeh dispute in 1885, and of the serious complications to which that collision between the Russian and Afghan outposts at one time threatened to lead. My object is rather to describe the general military position of Russia than to renew discussions regarding one small portion of a then dubious boundary. The importance of the question was much exaggerated at the time by violent language in the press on both sides. It was evidently one for diplomatic arrangement, and not

* C. 2164, 1878, pp. 36-37; and c. 699, 1873, pp. 1, 6, 7, 14-15.

† "Central Asia," No. 1, 1884, pp. 7, 8, 14.

‡ C. 2164, pp. 5, 7, 69, 106; "Afghanistan," 1878, pp. 105, 107, 108; "Central Asia," No. 1, 1884, pp. 5, 6, and 92.

§ C. 699, p. 2.

|| "Central Asia," No. 1, 1884, p. 84; and "Central Asia," No. 2, 1885, p. 77.

for war, and has found its solution in the proceedings of the Boundary Commissioners, which have just been completed at St. Petersburg. The details are contained in the papers recently laid before Parliament.* The Marquis of Salisbury, in his speech at the Mansion House on the 10th of August last, happily described the situation as follows: "I value the settlement for this reason, not that I attach much importance to the square miles of desert-land with which we have been dealing, and which probably, after ten generations of mankind, will not yield the slightest value to any human being; but the settlement indicates on both sides that spirit which in the two Governments is consistent with continued peace. There is abundant room for both Governments, if they would only think so."

A careful consideration of the position of Russia in Central Asia does not therefore present itself as at all favourable to the attack of a great empire like India, even if that empire were close at hand. It is possible that in course of time Russia may to some extent consolidate her power in these impoverished lands, and improve her resources; but the general condition of the country is much against it. Russia may or may not have the will and intention of attacking us in India, but she does not appear to possess the power, or to be likely to obtain it, which is a far more important and reassuring consideration.†

Between the newly acquired territories of Russia in Central Asia and our possessions in India lies the country of Afghanistan. In a geographical and indeed in every sense, it seems laid out, as it were, as a natural defence for an empire. Throughout its northerly provinces stretches the great snow-capped range of the Hindoo Koosh, running from east to west—a line of mountains with few practicable passes, and even these are closed in winter. The lowest of these passes, in the neighbourhood of Cabul, is about 12,000 feet above the sea. A correspondent in the *Geographical Magazine* in 1878 wrote: "The spurs of this mountain chain run out on both sides into the basins of the Oxus and Cabul rivers. Its peaks . . . in all probability rise throughout to the region of perpetual snow, and the loftiest attain some 20,000 or 21,000 feet in height. This mighty range has formed in all times the chief barrier between the plains of Hindostan and their invaders from the north-west." But this is not all. It is not merely the line of the Hindoo Koosh itself which stands out as a great barrier. The whole of the southern portion of Afghanistan is traversed by successive ridges from the main chain, which, running down in a south-westerly direction, form a succession of natural defences across the only line of advance.

* "Central Asia," No. 1, 1887, c. 5114.

† The above remarks were written before the appearance of an able article in the *Nineteenth Century* for October, by Sir West Ridgeway; and I am glad to find that my views, both as to the position of Russia and the new frontier, are fully confirmed by so experienced an authority.

Afghanistan is like Switzerland, but its mountains are higher, its defiles more difficult, its resources more scanty, and it has no roads properly so called. As old Dost-Mahomed once said to the late Lord Lawrence: "My country is a land of stones." So that an enemy approaching from the north-west can only advance by one route: that is by skirting and turning, as it were, the successive ridges where they sink into the southern deserts. The Afghans are excessively poor, but brave, hardy, and fanatical. They hate all intruders, but especially Russians, as the bitter enemies of their faith.

In discussing projects of invasion of India, it is, however, often argued that, because in ancient days successful incursions have repeatedly been made from the north-west, there seems nothing to prevent a repetition of the process in our own time. Because Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Nadir Shah, and many others were able to penetrate India, at the head of barbarous hordes, in the centuries gone by, therefore Russia may now achieve a similar result. But the conditions are essentially altered. In former days such expeditions required no great amount of previous preparations. The invaders were not encumbered with trains of artillery, munitions, food, and stores. They descended into the plains with few supplies, and spread over the country like a flight of locusts, pillaging and creating desolation as they went; caring little for lines of communication or bases of supply. In those days there was no central government in India, and many of the provincial rulers were as foreign to the inhabitants generally, and as cruel and hateful, as the invaders themselves; so that the country fell an easy prey to the successive wild incursions of the warlike mountain hordes. Not only is all this changed, but the very appliances of modern warfare, whilst they augment the difficulties of invasion, tell equally in favour of defence, especially under the conditions above described.

It now becomes time to consider the military position of our empire in India; and here we are met at once by conditions the very opposite of those prevailing in Central Asia. Whilst Russia has been engaged for many years past in the almost futile effort of establishing her power amongst the remains of decaying principalities, and of introducing modern civilization in regions where almost every element of prosperity is deficient, we have also consolidated our empire in the East. Order now reigns in India in place of anarchy; the government of the law has replaced that of the sword, and provinces formerly almost depopulated by depredation and misrule have become fertile and prosperous. Life is safe, and religion and property respected. The value of land has increased, great commercial cities have arisen, and trade flourishes.* Good civil government is causing contentment to the people, and in developing the resources of the

* "What England has done for India." Hunter. 1879.

country gives vast additional strength to our military power. In addition to the British troops we maintain highly efficient armies recruited from the many martial races under our rule, and are able to increase them almost at will. At the same time, the improved means of communication, by a system of railways carried right up to our frontiers, enable us to concentrate our forces, supplies, and munitions with comparative ease. It may seem almost unnecessary to dwell upon facts so well known; but, judging from much of what we now hear and read, the enormous latent strength we possess in India does not appear to be fully appreciated. The Earl of Northbrook, formerly Viceroy of India, in an admirable address delivered at Birmingham some time ago, truly said: "They might rely upon it, that as long as India was governed well, as long as its revenues were husbanded and the supplies applied to the development of its magnificent resources, as long as its princes were loyal, and its armies were true, and its people contented, they might laugh at the prophecies of danger from without."

What I am anxious to emphasize is, that whilst we hold a central position of great concentration and power, that of Russia is necessarily much the opposite; so that, even were the two empires in contact, the danger would not be on our side. We are the great military and naval power in the East, and Russia is the weak one; and there is nothing in the present aspect and condition of affairs likely to cause any important alteration in these respects. But the two empires are not in contact. The most advanced Cossack outpost on the Murghab is upwards of 900 miles from the Indus; so that, far as the Russians have already advanced, and far removed as their outposts are from the bases of supply, they have still a whole continent of very difficult country to traverse before they will even be in sight of our frontier river, and of the plains of India.

If the views which I have advanced on this important question are sound, then the broad outlines of our policy are clear. Afghanistan stands as a great outwork, just beyond the border of the Indian Empire. Our policy, therefore, should be to conciliate and support the Ameer and his people, and to assist them in improving the great natural defensive strength of their country. To foster their nationality and to maintain a government, strong, friendly, and independent, should be our constant aim. By independence it is not intended to use the expression in an absolute and unconditional sense: that is no longer possible. In all that relates to internal government and to the management of their domestic and tribal concerns, we should leave them alone, but their foreign policy should be one with ours. The country is extremely poor and thinly inhabited; but the people are hardy and brave, and although suspicious, and in some respects disunited, they have one common feeling of hatred of foreign dominion.

These are the materials we have to work with ; and although there are great difficulties, and although the policy indicated must necessarily be of slow growth, it is one which, if steadily pursued, is sure of ultimate success. The shadow of our power already falls far away over the Afghan mountains, and the tribes even of distant and secluded valleys are beginning to look upon us, if not yet as friends, still no longer as enemies. Many of the men of the frontier tribes serve in the ranks of our native regiments, and when they retire with pensions to their villages carry with them a friendly feeling for their British comrades and for British rule. Frontier raids, formerly so frequent and so savage, are becoming rare, and are more matters of police than of military expeditions. Commerce is increasing, and we are gradually gaining the confidence of these brave and hardy races. The country for centuries past has been a prey to disorder ; but the knowledge that we are supporting the ruler of Cabul and assisting him with money, arms, and munitions, is having the desired effect.

Holding strongly these views, and having advocated them for many years, I was never able to concur in the policy which led to the late Afghan war of 1878-9. It will be remembered that we entered on that campaign in search of a so-called scientific frontier*—a fantastic idea, which has long since been abandoned even by its original advocates.†

Another declared object at the outset was the separation of the province of Candahar from that of Cabul, and its establishment as an independent principality.‡ Subsequently, when the scientific frontier scheme broke down, the policy changed, and the retention of Candahar for ourselves became the favoured proposal.§ Finally, the district of Herat, the most distant and in some respects the most valuable part of Afghanistan, was intended to have been handed over to Persia.||

In short, the inevitable result of the war of 1878-79, had the original projects been carried out, would have been to disintegrate Afghanistan. As it was, the campaign naturally alienated the population ; it cost us twenty millions sterling ; and, although we had about 60,000 men actually engaged or on the frontier, we hardly held more than the ground on which we stood. All this is now a matter of history, but its lesson should not be forgotten. Happily, different views now prevail, and by reverting to the old conciliatory policy of the late Lord Lawrence we shall gradually reap our reward by increased security of our empire on its only assailable point.

* Parliamentary Paper, "Afghanistan," No. 2, 1881, pp. 6, 9, 11.

† "Afghanistan," No. 1, 1881, pp. 9, 15, 25, 37, 41 ; also from p. 55 to p. 87. See also Sir H. Norman, *Fortnightly Review*, January 1879.

‡ Parliamentary Paper, "Afghanistan," No. 1, 1881, pp. 7, 14, 19, 92 ; and "Afghanistan," No. 7, 1879, pp. 26, 29, 35.

§ "Afghanistan," No. 1, 1881, pp. 62, 64.

|| "Afghanistan," No. 1, 1881, pp. 6 and 33.

It may no doubt be necessary in some future day that we should enter Afghanistan again with our armies ; but in that case we should do so in co-operation with the ruler and people, and the whole difference lies in the fact, that it would be with their consent and in pursuit of a common object.

It is often said that war with Russia is inevitable sooner or later. As Lord Derby once remarked : " Of the two he preferred it later." But in my opinion there is no real cause for war between Russia and England in that part of the world. Our paths and our interests lie far apart. There is ample room for both.

Should war, however, unhappily arise, the difficulties and the chief causes for anxiety would not be on our side. In the first place we are predominant at sea, which is a material consideration in considering the defence of our Indian Empire. Indeed, in such a crisis it would be interesting to speculate as to how many Russian vessels, either war or mercantile, would be on the high seas a few weeks after a declaration of war.

Taking, however, the question in its purely military aspect, I have endeavoured throughout to show that Russia is weak, and scattered over a barren continent amidst hostile races and far from her resources. On the other hand, we are strong and concentrated ; strong in the prosperity, contentment, and loyalty of the princes and races of India ; strong in finance, resources, and supplies ; safe by land and sea, and with a power of rapid expansion and advance which is altogether denied to Russia. It is not necessary to detail the routes by which, in the event of war, our columns could advance, or the countries in which they could act—we have a wide and ample choice ; nor is it necessary to indicate the allies by whom we should be supported. It would no longer be a mere discussion as to Penjdeh, or Khoja-Saleh, or Merve. The armed hosts of England and of her allies would ere long be in direct march for the heart of Central Asia, and the power of Russia in that part of the world would speedily crumble away.

JOHN ADYE,
General.