

**RUSSIA AND ENGLAND:
THEIR STRENGTH AND
WEAKNESS**

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Russia and England: Their Strength and Weakness by John Reynell Morell

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BY

JOHN REYNELL MORELL.

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PREFACE.

THE facts and reflections presented in the following work are dictated neither by rancour nor by the bitterness of disappointed hope; but result entirely from the strong and unbiassed convictions of the author and his honest love of country, of liberty, and of truth. Whatever accusations he may have levelled against men in office must be understood as applying exclusively to their public character, nor does the blame which appears to attach to some members of the Cabinet involve all their colleagues, many of whom are among the brightest ornaments of the aristocracy and senate of this country. In the magnitude of the questions involved in the present contest the dignity of history requires us to drop all personal considerations and to judge men and things by a higher standard than temporary and local interests. Above all, it is incumbent on us to rise above all party and class interests and considerations. If the following pages present a departure from this rule, it must be attributed to the infirmity of human nature and not to the intentions of the author, who is guided alone by his concern for the welfare of his country and the peace of the world.

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RUSSIA AND ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

RUSSIA'S WEAKNESS, ENGLAND'S STRENGTH.

IN every contest, from a single combat to the conflict of empires, it is the main object of opponents to find out each other's weak point. Every belligerent power has, like Achilles, its heel, its vulnerable place. An intuition into this fact was the secret of Napoleon's conquests. But, unfettered by the cumbersome machinery of constitutional government, this great captain was able to carry out his intuitions with the speed of lightning and to follow them up with the impetus of the whirlwind. Hence rapidity was the chief instrument of his success, and time, as Alison repeats in every page of his memorable history, *is every thing in war*. Here we have one great cause of Russia's strength and England's weakness, on which we purpose to dilate at a future opportunity. At present we are engaged with Russia's weakness, which must, as a necessary conclusion, be England's strength.

England is at war with Russia, an empire of colossal size, immense resources, boundless ambition, and unscrupulous diplomacy. It would be worse than idle to conceal the formidable nature of the struggle, though it is more than doubtful if the British Government has not been guilty of criminal delay in

protracting negotiations and deferring an appeal to arms. With the secret documents of Russian diplomacy in our hands from the days of Ivan and Bathory to those of Nicholas and Sir Hamilton Seymour, a doubt regarding the honest intentions and honourable character of its rulers and people would be high treason. But whatever our judgment of the past follies or crimes of the Aberdeen cabinet, it is the duty of this country to watch carefully lest they be repeated or aggravated. Let us explain our meaning: This country has immense resources in men and money; every opponent has some weak point, and time is everything in war. Lastly, the common sense of this country has decided that a free expenditure of treasure, and, if necessary, of blood at the outset, is the best economy. We repeat that it is the duty of England to see that these maxims be instantly adopted and vigorously carried out by the present ministry.

Approaching more closely the special object of these pages, let us endeavour to ascertain Russia's weakness, for that must evidently be our strength. A few years ago it would not have been necessary to write a page to prove the weak point of Russia. A large wound was rankling patent, obvious in her breast; but the misapprehensions of British diplomacy acted as a salve: the wound was cicatrized—Poland fell, and the Council of Three in Downing Street had it all their own way. An old proverb says a stitch in time saves nine, and we are now paying and suffering for the blunders or treachery, or both, of an Aberdeen Ministry playing into the hands of Russia, and omitting to make that stitch.

But it is idle to turn to the past, save as a warning for the future. Let us face the present and prepare for the future, so as to prevent a repetition of the same crimes for which we are now suffering a national and a just retribution. Russia has now a weak point which would be a tower of strength to England if we had an honest as well as an able man at the helm. Nay, if Britain could find a Cincinnatus and install him dictator for one year, with discretionary power, Russia would be

humbled in the dust. But even this unprecedented measure is unnecessary, for if our senate contained a majority of common sense we should have a man of honour and of sense as premier, and England would dictate any terms to Russia.

The limits of this work, the value of time, and the importance of the subject, make it impossible for the author to give here a detailed account of the process that would effect this. All he wishes or hopes to do at present is, to direct attention to a matter of vital importance to the welfare of this country and the liberties of the world.

In the far East, between two dark and stormy seas, there towers aloft an Alpine range, for ages the home and bulwark of liberty, and the cradle of a race of Tells. A rugged region, remarkable for the asperity of its climate and the poverty of its people; but the theatre of imperishable glory, and the parent of undying heroism. This range is the Caucasus—this population is the Circassians.

For many years an object of deep interest to the author; he had in early youth learned to admire the beauties of its scenery and value the gallantry of its clans. He had long familiarized himself with its natural and moral features, and had understood that it was the principal barrier against Russian aggression in the East. Thus far his views coincided with those of many others of his countrymen, but within a recent date, and especially since the commencement of the Eastern Question, his eyes have been opened, and he has seen that nothing but crime in the ministry at home can prevent the triumph of Turkey and England, and the prostration of Russia in 1854.

The chief elements of success in war are three in number: 1, enthusiasm; 2, valour and energy; 3, discipline. It is probable that no nations on record have ever matched the Circassians in the first two elements, but they want the third. Hence some spiritless German writers infer that they can effect nothing in the plains. To this we reply, send a body of British infantry and artillery to the Caucasus, and the war is yours. The Circassian

cavalry are avowedly the finest light horse in the world, and they could send forth 100,000 to 200,000 of these men, inured to hardships and abstinence, and first-rate shots. Armed with Minié rifles what could stand them? New Tscherkask and the towns of the Don Cossacks are groaning with riches, the spoil of Western Europe, and the Volga could float a fleet of transports into the heart of Russia to accompany the army and supply it with provisions. Napoleon's and Charles X.'s invasions failed for want of provisions. The burning of Moscow did not save Russia, and water carriage within a few versts of Moscow settles her doom. I repeat my appeal: send an army and a man of decision and experience to the Caucasus with discretionary power, and build some steamers on the Caspian, and the day is yours. No force that ever appeared in the field could equal a host of Circassian cavalry supported by British infantry and artillery, and those Germans who argue that the Circassians can do nothing in the plains forget the first maxim of war, that a formidable cavalry is most formidable in a plain country. It is the deliberate opinion of the writer of these pages, founded on the experience of those most intimately acquainted with the Caucasian mountaineers, that such an army could conquer the world, *à fortiori* Russia; nor need the plan be delayed a day. If our patriotic aristocracy and merchants will come forward with their yachts and steamers, the Don is open to us flowing into the sea of Azof and navigable within a very short distance of the Volga. Thus the difficulty of provisions vanishes, and this is the great difficulty in Russian campaigns. Secondly, all the Circassian tribes speak Tartar and understand Turkish. Take enough English, Turkish, and other interpreters with you, and concert your measures at once with the chiefs. I copy the statements of Bell and Longworth when I assert that for twenty years since Urquhart's visit they have expected and longed for such a force and plan. We have said that time is everything in war, and a heavy blow the best economy. We therefore pronounce it a distinct and certain evidence of high treason i-