

**THE INVINCIBLE ALLIANCE
AND OTHER
ESSAYS, POLITICAL,
SOCIAL, AND LITERARY**

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The invincible alliance and other essays, political, social, and literary by Francis Grierson

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FRANCIS GRIERSON

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FRANCIS GRIERSON



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THE INVINCIBLE ALLIANCE

THE INVINCIBLE ALLIANCE

I

IN the progress of a people there are two elements which constitute what may be called their destiny — material force and spiritual power. Experienced politicians frequently foresee commercial events with striking accuracy, because they reason from a visible cause to a direct and logical result; but the material eye, no matter how keen, fails to penetrate the world of spiritual will, where the elements at work are invisible and silent, and out of which grave events often occur without any warning whatever. It is this that lends a sort of blind meaning to the word Fate.

Physical needs precede intellectual necessity, and from the physical arise the humane, the philosophic, and the intuitive; and just as soon as a nation ceases to display a sustained and sober energy it begins to lose on the side of the spiritual aspirations of Will and Intellect. India attained intellectual power after she had risen to a certain plane of material development. She rose to philo-



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sophic heights, but in the ascent she forgot the needs of the material. India was caught in a metaphysical slumber, and was conquered; and China, after producing her philosophers and law-makers, lapsed into a long and peaceful lethargy.

"Place your ear to the bosom of the earth and you will feel the living throb of the universe," says the Celtic seer, Lamennais. And similarly, if you sit perfectly still in a room in some isolated palace, you will feel the present gradually fading into oblivion, and out of the strange silence visions of coming events will mingle in a sort of whispering gallery of portents and impressions, until it seems possible to sense the destiny of empires.

I have not forgotten the impressions created by my sojourn at Gatschina. The old Marshal of the Palace, Prince Bariatinsky, one of the heroes of Sevastopol, escorted me through the immense structure. Arriving at a small iron bed in one of the most interesting rooms he crossed himself, bent his knee to the floor, and remarked: "This is the bed of my late beloved master, Nicolas I." I stopped, and while looking with surprise at the hard, uncomfortable-looking couch, the Prince coolly remarked: "He had his