

THE VICE-ROYALTY OF POLAND

AND THE

GRAND DUKE CONSTANTINE.

(Translated from the *AMI DE LA RELIGION* of the 5th June.)

The last despatches which reach us from the North of Europe announce the nomination of the Grand Duke Constantine, brother of Alexander II., as Viceroy of Poland, or at least as Lieutenant of the Emperor at Warsaw.

The news is grave; and the *Times*, which first published it, has considered it sufficiently important to give it the honours of an extraordinary edition. From the columns of the *Times*, it has spread throughout the journals of the Continent; and telegrams from St. Petersburg and Warsaw confirm it fully.

What is the bearing of this nomination of a Viceroy at Warsaw on the actual state of European affairs, and the situation of Poland in particular? That is a question which it is impossible to answer in the absence of more precise information than that of private telegrams. We desire only to make known the impression that the news of which we speak has produced, on its first promulgation, upon the political world.

Every one has had the presentiment that it was the prelude of very serious events. What events? That is the question.

The friends of Russia, official and officious, have been full of affectionate confidence in the generosity and future liberalism of the Czar, and already they are preparing to be indignant against the Poles, if the Poles are not made happy by the sole circumstance of the arrival of a Grand Duke.

These predetermined admirers, let us hasten to say, constitute only the least possible minority; and they enjoy among political men that sort of consideration which is given at the theatre to the compact and disciplined troop who applaud extravagantly the moment the curtain is raised, and even before the performance begins.

Minds inclined to doubt, and prone to *pessimism*—whether because of the spectacle of contemporaneous events, whether because of a memory too retentive as to the constant policy of Russia,—these minds are far from sharing so confiding an enthusiasm, or of associating themselves with these songs of laudation. They have the obstinacy to remember that in the wars which he had to sustain against France in the time of the first Emperor, the Czar tried to gain the Poles by apparent concessions, and promises of every description, only in order, after the danger was past, or the triumph obtained, to take back the concessions and to forget the promises: and they ask themselves whether, under circumstances very different, and almost opposite, Alexander II. be not about to take up on this very point the traditions of Alexander I.

Present circumstances, and certain suppositions which have been made the subject of conversation for some time past in diplomatic saloons, furnish, unhappily, to the *pessimists*, very specious arguments. It is worth while to let them speak for themselves a little. This is pretty nearly how they express themselves:—

"There is serious question," say they, "of an alliance, more or less close, between France and Russia, and of a combined action of these two powers against Turkey. Well, then, if such reports have any foundation, the nomination of the Grand Duke Constantine, as Viceroy of Poland, is nothing more on the part of the Russians, than a profoundly skilful manœuvre intended to attain, by one and the same blow, three different results, all three equally important. People want to know what it is that the Grand Duke of Russia is going to do at Warsaw. He goes there to consolidate the French alliance, to appease the momentary agitation of Poland during the war against Turkey, and to paralyse as much as possible and to watch over the hostile movements of Austria."

"A few instants' reflection are sufficient for the conviction that such is the triple end that the Russian Government proposes to itself by this reversal of its ostensible policy, which is nothing at the bottom but the continuation of its real policy."

"The Cabinet of St. Petersburg knows perfectly well that one of the most serious obstacles to the French alliance is the present situation of Poland. As long as the *regime* of persecutions and massacres continues at Warsaw, an alliance, pure and simple, between the French Government and the Russian Government can only be received in France with immense unpopularity, and in Russia with immense distrust."

"Here, it will justly be considered as a complete abandonment of Poland, and a complicity with its executioners,—

as the abandonment of justice and of just men for a miserable material interest; and it will be considered deplorable in every respect. It will be, moreover, a cowardice, a negation of that traditional honour of our country which the Emperor Napoleon III. so well understood when he uttered these magnificent words:—'The cause of France is wherever there is a just cause to defend.'

"In Russia, nobody will believe in the solidity of such an alliance. The solidarity of France and Poland is, in some sort, an essential fact that no diplomatic convention can destroy; and the Russians are profoundly penetrated with this truth. They understand well that, under present circumstances—that is to say, without modification, if not real, at least apparent, in the *regime* in Poland—an alliance with them would be too monstrous, and as to us, too much against nature on the part of France, to have any chance of lasting, and not to be exposed to be broken to pieces at the first shock; and they will never believe, let us proclaim it, to our honour, in the sincerity of the French nation crying 'God speed' to the slaughterers who go from St. Petersburg or Moscow to Warsaw. They have also the sentiment that such an alliance can never be intimate, nor cordial, nor safe, as long as France is not satisfied, whether by realities or by deceptive appearances, as to this question of Poland. The sending of a Grand Duke to Warsaw, with vague promises of a constitution, has for its end to furnish these necessary appearances; and to give to the French Government a pretext, more or less plausible, for abandoning the question of Poland and presenting it to the public sentiment as pretty nearly settled. To resume all in one word:—The Grand Duke Constantine, followed by his cortege of promises, is going to the capital of Poland, in order to disengage, at least in form, the honour of France, in view of the alliance that it is desired to conclude. We shall see presently whether the semi-official papers will be willing to be caught by these tactics."

"If, nevertheless, it is true, as is pretended, that the alliance of which we speak has for its object a war against Turkey, it is for Russia a matter of precaution to seek to assure herself of the tranquillity of Poland, no longer by means of innumerable legions of Cossacks, which will be wanted elsewhere, but by deceptions and promises, which cost nothing, and may produce much. After the war the promises will be withdrawn, and the Cossacks will be brought back."

"Always supposing the existence of these plans—of invasion against Turkey—it is equally manifest that Austria which is ready to sacrifice Galicia to preserve herself from a greater evil than that loss, and to make use of Poland as an ally and as an advanced guard—would see such a combination completely shipwrecked, if the Russians should succeed, either in contenting the Poles, or in making them believe very firmly in the proximate realisation of their hopes—a realisation which should prevent infallibly all hostility from their side."

"Thus"—it is always the *pessimists* who speak—"it is in vain that the nomination of the Grand Duke Constantine to the Vice-Royalty of Poland is given forth as a fundamental modification of the mournful situation of that unhappy country. The Grand Duke is going merely to occupy at Warsaw a position which is at once diplomatic as regards France, strategic as regards Turkey and Austria; and absolutely nothing whatever as regards Poland. As to Europe, she would deceive herself very much if she saw therein a symptom of approaching tranquillity and peace. It is, on the contrary, a symptom of war. Russia prepares war in speaking of peace; and bundles of arms are hidden beneath these heaps of olive branches."

Such are the ideas of certain statesmen of high standing, whom we could name if we thought proper; and this very morning, in support of their views, they have desired us to take notice of the singular coincidence between two telegraphic despatches, one from St. Petersburg, the other from Trieste, both dated "3rd June." St. Petersburg said:—"The nomination of the Grand Duke Constantine, as Viceroy of Poland, is confirmed; and he is on his way to Warsaw." Trieste said:—"At Constantinople, there are fears of complications on the side of Russia."

HENRI LASSERE.

(Issued by the Newcastle Foreign Affairs Association.)



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“In Russia, nobody will believe in the solidity of such an alliance. The solidity of France and Poland is in some sort an essential fact that no diplomatic convention can do away with; and the Russians are profoundly penetrated with this truth. They understand well that under present circumstances—that is to say, without modification, if not real, at least apparent, in the regime in Poland—an alliance with them would be too monstrous, and as to us, too much against nature on the part of France, to have any chance of lasting, and not to be exposed to be broken to pieces at the first shock; and they will never believe, let us proclaim it to our honour, in the sincerity of the French nation crying, ‘God speed to War!’—that the Emperor St. Petersburg or Moscow to Warsaw, and the Emperor St. Petersburg or Moscow to Warsaw, will have also the sentiment that such an alliance can never be intimate, not cordial, not as long as France is not satisfied, whether by realities or by deceptive appearances, as to this question of Poland. The sending of a Grand Duke to Warsaw, with vague promises of a constitution, has for its end to furnish these necessary appearances; and to give to the Government a pretext, more or less plausible, for abandoning the question of Poland and presenting it to the public sentiment as pretty nearly settled. To remain all in one word:—The Grand Duke Constantine, followed by his cortege of promises, is going to the capital of Poland, in order to disguise, at least in form, the honour of France, in view of the alliance that it is desired to conclude. We shall see presently whether the semi-official papers will be willing to be caught by these tactics.”

“If, nevertheless, it is true, as is pretended, that the alliance of which we speak has for its object a war against Turkey, it is for Russia a matter of precaution to seek to assure herself of the tranquillity of Poland, no longer by means of numerous and distant legations of Cossacks, which will be wanted elsewhere, but by decisions and promises, which cost nothing, and may prove much. After the war the promises will be withdrawn, and the Cossacks will be brought back.”

“Always supposing the existence of these plans—of invasion against Turkey—it is equally manifest that Austria, which is ready to sacrifice Galicia to preserve herself from a greater evil than that loss, and to make use of Poland as an ally, and as an advanced guard—would see with a combination completely shipwrecked, if the Russians should succeed, either in contenting the Poles, or in making them believe very truly in the prompt restoration of their hopes—a realisation which should prevent intelligibly all hostility from their side.”

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These predestinated admirers, let us enjoy to say, constitute only the least possible minority; and they enjoy among political men that sort of conviction which is given at the theatre to the comical and discoloured troop who appear extravagantly the moment the curtain is raised, and even before the performance begins.

Minds inclined to doubt, and prone to pessimism—whether because of the spectacle of contemporary events, whether because of a memory too retentive as to the constant policy of Russia—these minds are far from sharing so confident an enthusiasm, or of associating themselves with these songs of liberation. They have the obstinacy to remember that in the wars which he had to sustain against France in the time of the first Emperor, the Czar tried to gain the Poles by apparent concessions, and promises of every description, only to order, after the danger was past, or the triumph obtained, to take back the concessions and to forget the promises; and they ask themselves, whether, under circumstances very different, and almost opposite, Alexander II. be not about to take up on this very point the traditions of Alexander I.

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