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TURCOMAN ATTACK ON THE GRAND RUSSIAN EXPLORING EXPEDITION (*see page* 109).

THE RUSSIANS AT MERV AND HERAT,

AND THEIR

POWER OF INVADING INDIA.

BY

CHARLES MARVIN,

AUTHOR OF "THE DISASTROUS RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE TURCOMANS," "GRODEKOFF'S RIDE TO HERAT," "MERV, THE QUEEN OF THE WORLD," "THE RUSSIAN ADVANCE TOWARDS INDIA," "OUR PUBLIC OFFICES," "THE RUSSIAN RAILWAY TO HERAT AND INDIA," ETC.

"A body of European troops established at Herat, and standing with its front to the south-east, would draw upon it the attention of the whole population of India. In that lies the moral significance of a military occupation of Herat; and it is not without reason that a number of English experts, knowing India well, have expressed their belief that were an enemy to occupy Herat with a powerful force, the English army, without having fired a shot, would consider itself half beaten."—GENERAL SOBOLEFF, 1882.

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1883.

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TO

Sir Algernon Borthwick,

WHOSE EARNEST AND PERSISTENT ADVOCACY
OF A MASTERLY FOREIGN POLICY
HAS EARNED HIM THE ESTEEM AND ADMIRATION OF
ALL PATRIOTICALLY INTERESTED IN THE
SECURITY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLAND'S
EMPIRE IN THE EAST,
THIS WORK
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
BY
THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

When one of the principal feudatory princes of India instructs a London publishing house to purchase for him all the books that have been issued by English and European authors on the Central Asian Question, and to make a special point of acquiring such works as embody the Russian view of the problem, an excuse certainly seems to exist for an Englishman to call the attention of his countrymen to the remarkable changes that have taken place in that question since the annexation of Askabad and the evacuation of Candahar. Among those changes may be mentioned the introduction of the Caucasian factor into the Central Asian Question, the formation of a new base of operations beyond the Caspian infinitely stronger than the Turkestan one, the completion of railway communication between that base and Russia proper, the extraordinary development of the Caspian Marine, the opening up of commercial relations with Merv, the discovery by Lessar of an easy road to Herat, and the surveys of Russia for a railway, needing only a few millions to connect her Empire with India.

In 1878, when Kaufmann assembled his troops on the Bokharan frontier to march upon Cabul and India, he was distant six months from the terminal point of the Russian railway system—Orenburg. Were an advance ordered from Askabad to-morrow, the Russian com-

mander would be only six days distant from the present terminal point of the railway system—Kizil Arvat. The expedition to the frontier of India in 1878 had before it a march of more than 700 miles to Cabul, a broad and rapid river, ill provided with boats, and the stupendous mountain range of the Hindoo Koosh, with passes 15,000 feet high; to say nothing of the difficult highlands and deserts of Bokhara. Between Askabad and Herat to-day the distance is only 388 miles; the highest point to traverse is a hill-crossing 900 feet above the surrounding locality, no river bars the road, no deserts intervene, and no point exists capable of arresting the Russian advance up to the very walls of the "Key of India." Further, by our evacuation of Candahar, we have placed it in Russia's power to occupy Herat whenever she likes, a clear fortnight in advance of ourselves.

The question of the retention of Candahar in 1881, was discussed mainly with reference to the position of Russia in Turkestan; the new movement beyond the Caspian had not sufficiently developed itself, and not enough about it was known to cause English politicians to give adequate attention to what has since become the principal base of operations against India. As shown in this volume, the Turkestan epoch of the Central Asian Question is as much a thing of the past as the Orenburg epoch. The Caspian epoch must be viewed by the light of fresh data, and all opinions expressed during the Turkestan epoch must either be considerably modified, or relegated to the lumber of the past.

In issuing this work my aim has been to furnish the

public with Russian data dealing with the new epoch. Bound by allegiance to no party, I cannot be accused of having any political object in view, and my sympathy for the Russian people is too strong and too well known for the charge to be formulated against me that I desire to agitate and excite England against Russia. In truth, I have done my utmost to be impartial, and to let the Russian facts tell their own story. If that story is what the Quietists term an "alarmist" one, the fault rests with the facts, not with the arranger of them.

A word or two as to how the book came to be written may check the many kind inquiries that have been addressed to me with reference to the completion of "Skobeleff's Siege of Geok Tepé," a work which was to have been issued long ago. Early in 1882 I was engaged translating the materials for the work, when Mr. Joseph Cowen, M.P., broke in upon my labours by asking me to proceed to Russia to discuss the Central Asian Question with the hero of it. I returned with additional materials for the book, and had commenced putting these in order, when the financial newspaper "Money" commissioned me to journey afresh to St. Petersburg to investigate Russian finance. A few days after my arrival, whilst I was one morning at General Grodekoff's, the shocking news was telegraphed from Moscow of the sudden and untimely death of Skobeleff. Proceeding at once to Moscow, I took part in the funeral there, and followed the remains of the dead hero to their final resting-place in the little village church of Spasskoe Selo, in the province of Riazan. The grief I witnessed during this period, on the part of

those who had fought with Skobeleff at Plevna and Geok Tepé—many of the latter well known to me by name in preparing my account of the siege—rendered it impossible, on my return to England, to resume for the moment the task of completing the work. I, therefore, utilized the interval in arranging some of the data that had accumulated on my hands, dealing with the new operations beyond the Caspian, and the result is the volume now before the reader.

Some of the matter appeared during the winter of 1882 in the columns of the "Morning Post," and provoked criticism in the Russian press which I have carefully considered in revising it. For permission to make use of the two small maps illustrating the recent Russian surveys of Lessar and Alikhanoff, I am indebted to the courtesy of the Royal Geographical Society. Respecting the spelling of the geographical names, I have done my best to follow the practice of the Press, except in the case of the region surveyed by Lessar and Alikhanoff, in which that of the Royal Geographical Society has been followed. The illustrations are from the pencil of the explorer Alikhanoff, the talented and prolific Russian artist Karazin, who took part in the grand exploring expedition of 1878, and from the illustrated newspapers "Vsemirnaya Illustratsia" and "Neva." They are, I believe, the first illustrations of Merv and the Turcoman region that have yet appeared in this country.

Plumstead, Kent,
April 1883.

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BOOK I.

General Annenkoff on Russia in Central Asia and England in India.

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THE
RUSSIANS AT MERV AND HERAT.

BOOK I.

GENERAL ANNENKOFF ON RUSSIA IN CENTRAL ASIA AND ENGLAND IN INDIA.

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"As to Russia getting to India, that is a very remote contingency."—JOHN BRIGHT, Peace Conference at Edinburgh, October 12, 1853.

"The probability of our having to struggle for Herat, or to defend India from Candahar, is so remote that its possibility is hardly worth considering."—SIR HENRY NORMAN, Memorandum against the retention of Candahar, September 20, 1880.

"Russia has not as yet succeeded in combining with Persia to make a convenient way from the southern shore of the Caspian to Herat."—MAJOR E. BARING, Memorandum against the retention of Candahar, October 7, 1880.

"I have no fear myself of the territorial extensions of Russia in Asia; no fear of them whatever. I think such fears are only old women's fears."—GLADSTONE, November 27, 1879.

ANYBODY who is at all acquainted with Russia must be aware that it is no easy matter to get at the Russian view of our position in the East. In their conversations with English tourists and travellers, Russians are too courteous to express opinions which they imagine would offend them; while their contributions to political literature are so slight as to be altogether insignificant, compared with the unceasing roll of volumes from the English press. To one book issued by Russian publishers on the Eastern Question, a hundred appear in England; and to every Russian newspaper article, probably a thousand are poured forth in English print. We have no wish to speak discourteously of Russian political literature, but it cannot, or, at any rate, does not produce any works on the Eastern Question that will bear comparison, in the marshalling of fresh facts and the enunciation of matured opinion, with those issued in England. The difficulty a Russian seeker of the English view of the Eastern Question has to combat with, is to read all that is published by the many experts in this country on the subject. The difficulty, on the other hand, an English seeker of the Russian view has to confront is, to find anything in Russian to read.

On this account an English writer, in referring to Russian literature for enlightenment on political matters, has to be thankful for any small mercies vouchsafed him. On the principle that half a loaf is

better than none, he grasps eagerly at a pamphlet where in England he would demand a book; and if the pamphlet differs at all from the common run of Russian productions of that character, which are usually gassy, theoretical, and devoid of data, the circumstance comes upon him as an agreeable surprise. Since the death of Grigorieff, whose extensive knowledge of Central Asia earned him the well-merited appellation of the "Sir Henry Rawlinson of Russia," nothing has appeared in Russia on the Central Asian Question to equal General Annenkoff's "Akhal Tekke Oasis and Roads to India." Much of the data in this dealing with India is obviously out-of-date or erroneous; the opinions are often, on the face of them, crude and unsound; but the brochure, on the whole, fairly represents the prevailing Russian impressions of the relative positions of England and Russia in the East. That the impressions appear in many instances false to the English reader in no wise detracts from the importance of them. If Russia ever attempts to invade India, she will be led into doing so by her own impressions of the feasibility of the enterprise. Any contrary views we ourselves may entertain on the subject will be of no avail.

With these preliminary remarks, we will say a few words about General Annenkoff's career, and then pass on to a translation of his pamphlet on the Central Asian Question.

General Annenkoff was born of wealthy and aristocratic parents five and forty years ago, and after a varied military and administrative career, was entrusted in 1877 with the transport arrangements for invading Turkey. At the close of the war, he was appointed vice-president of the special commission instituted to

report upon the reorganization of Russian railways, and was still actively engaged on this duty when the Government ordered him to the Caspian, to supervise the transport of Skobeleff's expedition, and the construction of the railway from Michailovsk to Kizil Arvat. This railway was entirely his own project; and from what he saw of the Turcoman region during the war, he arrived at the conclusion—and in this he was supported by the engineers employed on the undertaking—that it would be a feasible matter to continue the line to India. He was well aware that, in a very short time, the completion of a link in the Caucasus would give St. Petersburg direct railway communication, *viâ* Odessa, Poti, Baku, and Michailovsk, with Kizil Arvat, in Central Asia, and, in order to enable Russia to tap the overland trade of India, he advocated the extension of his Transcaspian line through Sarakhs, Herat, and Candahar, to the commencement of the Indian railway system at the mouth of the Bolan Pass. Notwithstanding a painful wound he received during a reconnaissance of Geok Tepé, and which necessitated his return home, he persisted in his scheme, and set on foot those surveys of Sarakhs and Herat by Lessar, an engineer of his department, which subsequently provoked such a flutter in England. Annenkoff's views of the feasibility of constructing a railway through Turkmenia and Afghanistan to India were fully borne out by Lessar's painstaking researches, and a careful perusal of the report of the latter compels the belief that the railway can hardly fail to some day become an accomplished fact.

In his "Akhal Tekke. Oasis and Roads to India," Annenkoff gives an account of his scheme, side by side with his opinion of our power in India. Early in

1882 the writer saw him several times at St. Petersburg, and found that besides having a knowledge of England and the English language, derived from several visits to this country, he possessed a more extensive acquaintance with the English literature dealing with India and Central Asia than is probably the case with any other Russian general.

In the accompanying translation of Annenkoff's brochure ("Akhal-Tekinski Oazis i pooti v Indiyou"), condensations have only been made where it was believed the matter would prove uninteresting to the English reader.

* * * *

The recent advances of the Russians in Central Asia *

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* The materials for this sketch were derived from the following works :—

1. "Toorkestanski Kri" (The Country of Turkestan). 3 vols. By Colonel L. F. Kostenko. St. Petersburg. 1880.
2. "Srednyaya Aziya i vodvorenie v nëi rooskoi grajdanstvennosti" (Central Asia, and the Installation in it of Russian Civilisation). By Colonel L. F. Kostenko. St. Petersburg. 1871.
3. "Rossiya i Anglia v borbai za reenka" (Russia and England in the Struggle for Markets). By Captain M. A. Terentyeff. St. Petersburg. 1876.
4. "Indoostan i Anglitchane" (Hindostan and the English). By S. S. Shashkoff. St. Petersburg. 1875.
5. "O pootyakh dlia torgovli Rossie s Azie" (Routes for Russian Commerce with Asia). By Shavroff. St. Petersburg. 1873.
6. "Materiali dlia torgovoi statistiki Toorkestanskago kraya" (Materials for Commercial Statistics of Turkestan). By N. F. Petrovski. St. Petersburg. 1874.
7. "Report of the Committee appointed by the Society for Promoting Russian Industry and Trade, on Routes for Russian Commerce with Asia."
8. "The Turcomans." By General Petroosevitch. Transactions of the Caucasian Branch of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society, No. XI. Tiflis. 1880.
9. "Materiali dlia statistiki Toorkestanskago kraya" (Materials

have attracted the attention of the whole of Europe, and above all of England, in which country of late years have appeared numerous works consecrated to the investigation of Russia's Central Asian possessions in general, and of her movements in the Tekke Oasis in particular.

The unsuccessful Russian expedition of 1879 had hardly come to a close, when in England appeared the very voluminous work by Charles Marvin, entitled "The Disastrous Russian Campaign against the Akhal Tekke Turcomans."

The travels of Vámbéry in Khiva had already, it appears, passed through seven editions.

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for Statistics of Turkestan). By Colonel Maeff. No. I., 1872. No. II., 1873.

10. "Pootishestvie v Kabool i Bookharoo" (Russian Translation of Burnes' Travels into Bokhara). By Lieutenant A. Burnes. 1834.

11. "Russia and England in Central Asia." By Professor Martens. London and St. Petersburg 1880.

12. "Neues aus der Geographie, Kartographe, und Statistik Europa's und seiner Kolonien." Bearbeitet vom Grossen Generalstabe. Berlin. 1879.

13. "Merv and the Man-Stealing Turcomans." By Charles Marvin. London. 1881.

14. "Empire in Asia." By Torrens. London. 1872.

15. "England and Russia in Central Asia." By Boulger. London. 1879.

16. "The Indian Musalmans." By. W. W. Hunter. London. 1872.

17. "L'Inde des Rajahs; Voyage dans l'Inde Centrale." By Louis Rousselet. Paris. 1877.

18. "Turkistan." By Phil Schuyler. London. 1876.

19. "Un débat sur l'Inde au Parlement Anglais." By Montalembert. Brussels. 1858.

20. "Les Routes de l'Inde." By Legrand. Paris. 1880.

21. "Les Anglais et l'Inde." By Valbezen. Paris. 1875.

22. "Indiya pod Angliskim vladitchestvom" (India under English Dominion). By Barton de Pansen. Moscow, 1848.—Annenkoff.

The work by Boulger, "Russia and England in Central Asia," had an undoubted success; all the more important organs of the English press printed extracts from it, and this not a little conduced to its reputation.

Finally, in February 1880, directly after the capture of Geok Tepé, appeared another work by Charles Marvin, "Merv, the Queen of the World" ("Merv—Koroleva vselennoi"), with the aim of acquainting the English public with what is called the Merv Question—a question, in the opinion of the author, of extreme importance to English interests.

In preparing this work, the author availed himself of the latest sources of information, including such Russian ones as Kostenko's "Turkestan," and in particular the articles by General Petroosevitch, who was killed at Geok Tepé. In consequence of this, he describes with sufficient circumstantiality the country of Turkestan (Turkmenia ?), the origin of the Turcomans, their tribal divisions, their military and domestic life, &c. He then refers to the colonization of the Transcaspian steppes, the actual condition and strategical significance of Merv, and in particular dwells upon an exposition of that influence which Russia will acquire in Khorassan after the capture of Merv. According to his opinion, Khorassan, after the seizure of Merv, will inevitably become a Russian province; and Persia, losing all evidences of independence, will leave in the hands of Russia an open highway direct from Astrabad, *viâ* Meshed and Herat, to India.

Although Marvin tries to make his readers believe in his impartiality, his hostility to a Russian occupation of Merv is none the less apparent, and he plainly asks the question what England should do in the matter.

The only mode, in the opinion of Marvin, of extricating England from her dangerous position, is not to allow Russia to occupy Merv. England, ruling Herat and Candahar, and leaving Constantinople to itself, should enter into negotiations with Russia respecting a delimitation of the Central Asian boundary; this latter he considers specially feasible, on the alleged grounds that Russia has bound herself not to extend the Russian frontier in Central Asia.*

In the meanwhile, scarcely anything has been written by ourselves on Central Asia, although the question concerns us quite as much as the English. The Russian public is very little acquainted with the Central Asian Question in general, and the Question of the Tekke Oasis in particular.

Lomakin's failure in 1879, it is true, provoked a certain amount of interest in the Central Asian Question on the part of Russian society, and to a large extent this was shared by the press, which declared that the defeat could not be allowed to pass unavenged; but no one, in reality, recognised the whole of the importance and necessity for the subjugation of an audacious tribe, long the terror of Khorassan, and of the friendly Turcomans and Adaeff Kirghiz wandering between

* This is hardly an accurate summary of my views, as when the book was written Russia had not made any such promise, nor has she done so since. Holding at that period Candahar, and Russia having only just stormed Geok Tepé, it was in our power to choose our own frontier in Central Asia and dictate to Russia, in a friendly way, the limits beyond which we should not allow her to pass. This might have been very advantageously done at that moment. The opportunity was flung away. By retiring from Candahar and allowing Russia to establish herself at Askabad, we deliberately placed it in her power to dictate to *us* what should be the future frontier in Central Asia. We can never now occupy Herat without Russia's consent.—M.

the Aral and the Caspian. Together with this, few were aware of the historical facts associated with this distant region; few knew that Noor Verdi Khan, the dual khan of Akhal and Merv, who died in the spring of 1880, was one of the happiest warriors of the nineteenth century, completely thrashing the Khivans in 1855, the Persians in 1861, and, finally, the Russians in 1879.

Their successes over the Khivans and Persians made the Tekkes the terror of Central Asia. Up to 1880, the Russians had no opportunity of teaching them a lesson; for although, during a series of expeditions conducted by General Lomakin from 1871 to 1879 the Tekkes were repeatedly defeated, they always looked upon the retirement of the Russian forces as a sign of weakness, and, in the end, became so encouraged that in 1879 they beat off an attack on Geok Tepé, with significant losses to the Russian troops, accustomed hitherto to easy victories in Central Asia.

Of course, this defeat could not occur without exercising an influence upon the general position of the Russians in Central Asia, and dispelling a deal of the prestige arising from those easy victories. It is needless and ungracious to seek the person responsible for the Geok Tepé disaster, which was altogether casual. To the assault proceeded the best of our Caucasian regiments, under the command of the bravest of officers, many of whom never returned alive; but, in spite of this, the attack failed. The same troops who had so successfully stormed Kars were checked by the "clay pots" of Geok Tepé. To compare the one attack with the other is almost as absurd as contrasting Napoleon's immortal Italian campaign with Michelson's pursuit of the rebel Pugatcheff.

The splendid troops of the Caucasus failed to overcome Geok Tepé, chiefly for the following reasons. The whole of the preceding Turkish campaign had accustomed our troops to a mode of operations requiring a large force and heavy sacrifices, in order to pass through a murderous fire of breechloaders and artillery. The moment this fire was traversed, and the enemy's entrenchments were attained, the game might be considered as won; since, at least with the Turks, the enemy rarely offered any serious resistance afterwards, or sought to confront the bayonet with the bayonet.

The battle of Geok Tepé of 1879 was of the following character. The Turcomans possessed very few fire-arms, so that their dropping fire was altogether different from the Turks', and it was therefore easy to slip through it. The attack was delivered in dispersed order, that having been the mode of attack necessary during the Turkish war. But tactics which had been successfully applied to the fortified positions in the environs of Kars and Erzeroum failed signally under different circumstances; and the troops, after traversing the fire and arriving in an extended chain before the breastworks of Geok Tepé, were suddenly confronted by the Tekkes, who, instead of retiring, fell upon them in masses, and drove them back. In this manner it may be said that one of the causes of the defeat of the Russian troops at Geok Tepé, was the adoption of tactics rightly applicable to the final period of the Turkish campaign, but wholly out of place in Central Asia; where, on the contrary, it was needful to act in close order, since that mode of fighting alone, by its very appearance, was calculated to strike terror and inspire respect.

The Russians, in their Central Asian possessions, have, to a population of 3,500,000 natives, 45,000 troops, who maintain themselves in the country not by material force, but in the main by that enchantment and that moral force which are contained in discipline and order, allied with manliness. It is only owing to these conditions that the Russians have such an immense pre-eminence in the eyes of the undisciplined hordes of Asiatics.

"It is not terrible," once said a Russian officer who had conquered many Asiatics,* "that we fire from breechloaders and cannon; but it is terrible that a handful of troops should march in companies in close order, daringly and unswervingly, without firing a shot, straight against crowds of warriors consisting of thousands of men."

It is to this enchantment that we may ascribe the brilliant victories of Tchernayeff, Romanovsky, and Kaufmann, who with a few companies overcame ten times that number of the enemy. Instances proving this to be a fact are easily forthcoming.

In 1860, a Russian detachment, consisting of 800 men, completely dispersed a body of Kokandese 20,000 strong.

In 1865, a detachment of the same strength took by storm Tashkent, containing 76,000 people.

In 1866, a detachment comprising fourteen companies, five sotnyas, twenty guns, and eight rocket-stands, or in all 3,000 men, beat at Irdjar a Bokharan force 40,000 strong, attacking the Russians for the first time and confident of victory.

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* Probably Skobeleff.—M.

In 1868, a detachment 3,500 strong, captured at Samarcand what Europeans would have considered an impregnable position, defended by 60,000 Bokharans.

Other instances might be quoted, but the above are sufficient for purposes of illustration. From what I have given, it will be seen that our troops in Asia do not think much of their enemies—the more the merrier, they say, since the greater will be the victory.

"I congratulate you," once said a Russian leader to his men, on their confronting an immensely superior force of the enemy, "I congratulate you that you should be so few and they so many!" Formation, discipline, and the prestige of constant victory—such constitute the strength of Russian troops.

But, once the enchantment of prestige is broken, once a people accustomed to give way before disciplined troops lose this habitude, it becomes indispensable to employ efforts of a very much more powerful character, and to make use of larger military and pecuniary resources, to restore respect.

On this account the defeat of the Russians at Geok Tepé, in 1879, was undoubtedly calculated to weaken the universal belief in Asia in the invincibility of the Russians; the more so, since the heroes of the defeat were those very raiders (*alamanstchiki*) who for years had kept in terror Khorassan, and the whole Transcaspian expanse between the Aral and the Caspian. Moreover, it must not be lost to view that the Tekkes had always exercised great influence over the Turcomans of other tribes, some of whom had partly maintained their independence. The Yomoods, subject to Russia, living on the island of Tcheleken, and wandering near Krasnovodsk and on the outskirts of the Khivan Oasis;

the Salor and Sarik Turcomans, the Djafarbai, Atabai, and Goklan tribes, wandering during the winter between the Atrek and Goorgan, and in summer on Russian territory—all these watched with interest the issue of the struggle between the Tekkes and the Russians, and were ready to take side with the conqueror. If the Tekkes had not been beaten in 1880, if Geok Tepé had not fallen in 1881, no Russian garrison could have remained at Krasnovodsk or Tchikishlar.

Repeatedly during 1879–1880, the Tekkes threatened to take Tchikishlar, and establish there a *toig*, or festival. Early in 1880, Tekme Sardar, with some Tekke horsemen, plundered the Yomoods under the very nose of Krasnovodsk.* The Adaeff Kirghiz, of Mangishlak, were in considerable fear of their safety, and not a caravan could proceed from the Oxus and Aral to the Caspian.

But the Tekkes could not enjoy unlimited success. Our political evil-wishers did not dare, or did not succeed in furnishing the Tekkes with the required number of arms and guns, nor did they either give the tribe military discipline or fortify their *kalas* (forts) for them, in spite of the gasconade on this score of Captain Butler. But with all this, it is beyond doubt that if the Tekke horsemen had been allowed to maintain a state of siege at Krasnovodsk and Tchikishlar, they would soon have shown themselves not only on the Orenburg steppes, but also at Tashkent and Samarcand.

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* A Russian officer told me that Lomakin and the officers of the garrison (he among them) were regaling themselves with champagne, when a Cossack burst in upon the festive party with the news of the raid.—M.

No doubt can exist that in those countries, so newly conquered, they would have found elements of their own sort, and, mounted on their swift and indefatigable chargers, it would have been impossible to have easily dealt with them.*

We had one of two courses open to us to pursue: either to totally evacuate the east coast of the Caspian, and constantly experience fear for the solidarity of the Russian possessions in Central Asia; or to undertake immediately an expedition, however costly, that would beat down the opposition of the Tekkes once for all, and lead to their final subjugation.

The opponents to any expedition against the Tekkes held to the opinion that the Transcaspian region was a barren waste, unfit equally for colonization or pastoral pursuits. This opinion was particularly widespread among those who had taken part in General Lomakin's expedition, and who, as is well known, had only barely advanced to the Oasis, and had mainly operated in the expanse from Michailovsk to Kizil Arvat, and from Tchikishlar to Bami.

This expanse has the appearance of a wilderness, and either has no water at all, or water of very bad quality; but the Tekke Oasis is quite of a different character. The first part of the Oasis, running from Kizil Arvat to Bami, is fruitful and well provided with water, while the second, from Bami to Askabad, and even to the Tejend, surpasses it altogether in richness. This latter portion is covered with fruitful gardens, and

* A Russian officer who had good means of knowing what took place at the councils during the Turcoman War, told me that in November 1880 Kaufmann wrote to Skobeleff to hasten the fall of Geok Tepé, otherwise he could not answer for the maintenance of order in Turkestan.—M.

contains a soil of such fertility that the Turcomans have a saying that "Adam, driven from Eden, never found a finer place for settlement than Akhal."

Undoubtedly, the fertility of the oasis largely depends upon irrigation works, which, it may be said, are encountered at every step, and which cost no little trouble to keep in proper order. As regards water, it exists in abundance in Akhal, as well along the Kuren Dagh as along the Kopet Dagh, and flows in innumerable streams through the settlements of the Tekkes. Moreover, the valleys of the Tchandeer and Sumbar are equally remarkable for their fertility. In this manner, although the strip of land, about 200 versts long (132½ miles), from the Caspian sea to the oasis, may be only a steppe fit for the pasturage of cattle such as belong to the Turcomans, the Tekke oasis beyond, with the valleys of the Tchandeer and Sumbar, is really one of the richest countries in the world, and could easily sustain a million people.

Skobeleff's expedition having accomplished its aim in pacifying Central Asia, it is both timely and indispensable to clear up another point, namely, the question of the relations of England and Russia in Central Asia. In dealing with this, it is impossible not to dwell upon the unanimity characterizing English writers in their references to Russia. They would seem to have only one idea, and to run in one groove; to show, on the one hand, at any cost, to what extent the English have blessed the East with all the fruits of modern civilisation, railways, schools, higher education, and administrative institutions, and administrators taken from the flower of the people; and, on the other hand, to demonstrate with equal energy that the Russians have done nothing for

the people they have subjugated, affirming that they take no steps to enlighten them, that the ways of communication remain in their original frightful condition, that the administration is confided to officials ignorant and incapable—and, in a word, that the condition of the subjugated country is almost unbearable.* In characterizing the relations of the English and Russian administrators with their Asiatic neighbours, they constantly draw parallels between the frankness of English

* These charges are mainly based upon the writings of Schuyler and Burnaby, and candour compels me to state that their allegations have been over and over again supported by statements published in the Russian newspapers themselves. Take the matter of roads, for instance. Annenkoff was away in the Transcaspian region in the latter half of 1880 and the beginning of 1881, or he would no doubt have seen a series of letters on the "Orenburg-Kazala Track" in the "Novoe Vremya," from the pen of a traveller bound for Tashkent, describing the frightful condition of highways in Turkestan. Those highways were so bad in 1880, that the Government had to stop sending the Tashkent mails by the Orenburg road and adopt a long circuitous route through Siberia. Files of the "Golos" and "Novoe Vremya" for 1879–82 will be found to contain abundant evidence from different sources of the decay of Turkestan roads and the rascality of the postmasters. M. D'Ujfalvy, in the winter of 1881, had to travel for forty days on camels between Orenburg and Tashkent, although there should be a horse service the entire distance. In 1881 the "St. Petersburg Vedomosti" bitterly complained of the post taking fifty or sixty days to run between St. Petersburg and Tashkent, instead of eighteen. The "Moscow Gazette" in 1882 spoke of goods being 125 days on the road between Orenburg and Tashkent. A book I myself ordered at Tashkent early in 1881, was six months coming to England. As to the corruption of Turkestan officials, all of Schuyler's minor charges have been supported by fresh disclosures in the Russian press on the subject, while his worst allegations have been altogether surpassed by the disclosure of the cruelty and peculation of the Orenburg officials, which led, in 1881, to the expulsion of Governor-General Kryjanovsky from the Russian service under every species of ignominy. Schuyler's most notorious charge—the Yomood massacre, which Mr. Gladstone strove to palliate in 1876—has been eclipsed by the Lomakin massacre at Geok Tepé in 1879, and the massacre of the Eight Thousand at the same spot by Skobeleff in 1881.—M.

policy and the cunning deceit of Russia, adding thereto that Russia's neighbours have lost all confidence in her and do not believe her at all.

It seems to me that it will not be out of place to explain how, on the one hand, the position of the English in Asia is, in reality, so very firm, their operations so judicious, and their administration so clever; and, on the other, how it is that Russia is so feeble, her operations so unskilful, and her administration so bad. To do this it will, I think, be best to make use of English sources of information, and, above all, to avail myself of the works which have appeared of late in England, dealing not only with the Central Asian Question, but also with the internal administration of the Indian Government.

The English, as well as the Russians, are governed in the East by an uncontrollable tendency to advance, in spite of the most unaffected and positive efforts of both Governments not to move forward; and even in spite of their attempts to suppress the causes leading to the forward movement. Thus, during the whole of the aggressive movements of the East India Company the greater part of the best men in England considered the conquest of India extremely injurious and dangerous to the State. The question was constantly brought up in Parliament, and Fox and Pitt, those great parliamentary rivals, each of them introduced a bill with respect to the policy necessary to be pursued in regard to India.

Time after time assurances were made in the most sanguine manner that no further advance would be made. To what these led is well known. The suzerainty of England was accepted by Nipal and Cashmere, and then

England was led by all-powerful fate into Afghanistan. After the unsuccessful campaign of 1841 the English, it is true, evacuated the greater part of Afghan territory, but none the less Afghanistan is all the same subject to English influence; the English Government constantly interferes in the affairs of the country, and, indeed, cannot do otherwise, since in the Punjab England controls a large Afghan population, and all the passes, and all the hills to the north and north-west of India are peopled by Afghans; besides which, it is beyond dispute that the best and cheapest mode of defence often consists in an advance, and that did not English influence prevail at Cabul, Candahar, and Herat, the Afghan hordes, subject to eternal restlessness, might threaten English authority not only at Shikapore and Peshawur, but also at Lahore, and possibly even at Delhi.

The same tendency to advance is also observable on the part of Russia, the Government of which has also constantly opposed every forward movement in Central Asia, but has also, from some inexplicable cause, had its wishes frustrated. The forward movement commenced so long ago as 1730, when the Kirghiz of the Little Horde, finding nowhere any succour from the raids of the Djungars, the Bashkirs, and the Kazaks, applied to Russia to be accepted as subjects. The frontier line that was then drawn, from the sides of the Ural river and Siberia, was of such a character that bands of nomads freely passed through to the Irtish and the Urals. Measures had to be taken against this by the Government, and from that circumstance arose a series of wars with Khokand and Bokhara, the result of which was the occupation of the extensive territory formed by the

basins of the Syr-Daria, the Tchu, the Ili, and the Zaravshan.

These conquests were so little in accordance with the views of the Russian Government, that on the 31st October (November 12) 1864 an Imperial manifesto was issued with reference to the cessation of any further movement forward. But circumstances demonstrated that Tchemkent and Turkestan, which it had been originally decided not to take, could not be left unoccupied; since, situated as they were on the principal route running from the Central Asian khanates to Russia, they had too obvious a significance as points of defence for the Siberian and Orenburg border-lands. Afterwards it happened that we had to firmly occupy Tashkent, which, in accordance with the communication from the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Governor of Orenburg, February 23 (March 7) 1869, was to have been surrendered, but which was demonstrated to be impossible, since the line from Tchemkent to Aoulie-Ata had no supporting point. Russia's advance forward was a necessity. She was compelled to move onwards, since she had to be very careful in consolidating her frontier line, on account of the moral importance and material resources of the Central Asian khanates.

In this manner in Russia, as well as in England, has been observable one and the same tendency, as well on the part of the people as on that of the Government, not to move forward and not to make conquests; and, in spite of this, both States, by some inscrutable fate, which could never have been anticipated, have constantly moved ahead.*

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* There is, however, one fact which Annenkoff ignores. Throughout the Russian advance in Asia the Russian press has,

This phenomenon is undoubtedly due to some sort of historical necessity, to some sort of law, which is not yet known, but which none the less exists, and occasions the two movements from east to west and from west to east which have been observable among certain races from the earliest times. Thanks to it, England and Russia are yearly, nay, monthly almost, approaching closer to one another in the East, and the question is, What will be the character, or rather the results, of the meeting ?

I am inclined to think that this approximation of empires ought not to lead to any struggle between the two Powers, and that it might take place on the peaceful ground of commerce and industry, and of international intercourse in general. Such a *rapprochement* is not only a possibility, but would even be advantageous to the two Powers. Many consider that a conflict between England and Russia in Central Asia is not only unnecessary, but would inflict positive injury on the two peoples.

So far as Russia is concerned, the assertion may be positively made that she desires a pacific solution of the difficulty in the East. None the less, in order to define the ground on which an agreement between England and Russia is possible, it will not be superfluous to see whether in the first instance everything in India is of the rose-coloured hue painted by English writers, and

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with but few exceptions, always favoured conquests and annexations. In England, on the other hand, as any dispassionate observer of the London and provincial press must acknowledge, the majority of newspaper writers have been against any increase of territory. So, also, while many English authors have deprecated any extension of the English empire, I cannot call to mind a single Russian author who has protested against territorial additions to the Russian empire.—M.

whether, in the second, everything is so black in Russia's Central Asian possessions as many declare it to be. Are there no spots in India, and can we not find a few rays amidst the gloom enwrapping Turkestan?

The sanguinary mutiny in India, and the energetic measures taken to crush it; the hostility which every traveller admits the natives have towards the English; the constant appearance of famines, ravaging whole tracts of country—all these facts are carefully avoided by English writers in their descriptions of the existing relations of England and Russia with their respective possessions.*

And, at the same time, there is no fact less open to doubt, and better supported, than the fact that the blessings of civilisation which the English have carried to the banks of the Indus and Ganges, and which their writers extol so loudly, are exceedingly doubtful ones, and that the development of trade, industries, and ways of communication, and even schools, have not only not assisted the natives in supporting their difficult position, but have even conduced to a desire to emancipate themselves from it.

India is pre-eminently an agricultural country. The tenure of the land and the condition of the agricultural classes thus claim special attention. As regards the former, it is a matter of fact that the old proverb is realised that "The land is ours, but the produce of it is the King's"; and that, with respect to the latter, the attempts of the English to bring about a settlement have

* This is hardly correct, as any Russian will find on referring to the English works on India and Central Asia in the Public Library or the library of the General Staff at St. Petersburg.—M.

been marked with injustice and failure. The land laws press most heavily on the Indian ryot,* while nearly the whole of his substance is swallowed up in taxation.

In Turkestan, on the other hand, the taxation amounts to only 3½ roubles (7s.) a *kibitka*, or 70 copecks (1s. 5d.) each person, counting five persons to each tent, in the case of nomads, and only a rouble, or two shillings a head, on the part of the peasantry; which cannot be regarded as excessive. However great may be the blessings of railroads, higher schools, telegraphs, &c., the natives of India are not likely to be very thankful to the foreigners for them, if at the same time they load them with heavy taxes. The ryot is worse off under English rule than he was under previous rulers.

Shaw, an English writer, has frankly declared that the Mussulman conquerors concerned themselves more about the well-being of the people than the English have

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* As just pointed out, Annenkoff is hardly correct in assuming that English writers cloak these matters. Take, for instance, "British India and its Rulers," published in 1881, from the pen of H. S. Cunningham, one of the judges of the High Court of Calcutta and late member of the Famine Commission. Writing on land tenure he says (page 185): "The grave political and social dangers to which an impoverished, degraded, and rack-rented peasantry give rise, are assuming every year a more menacing aspect, and the controversy has a tendency, as the pressure of the population on the soil increases, to become continually more embittered; *official evidence of the weightiest character, and tendered from the most various quarters, makes it impossible to doubt that the condition of the tenantry in several parts of India is a peril to society and a disgrace to any civilised country.* The lawlessness with which the Behar landlords have been allowed in past times to set at defiance with impunity every legislative safeguard of the tenants' interest, the cruelty with which their illegal exactions have been carried out, the deep and hopeless poverty of the unfortunate classes thus kept at a level only just above starvation point, are facts, which the reports of experienced officials and the admissions of the Bengal Government oblige us, however reluctantly, to accept as proved."—M.

done. The magnificent public works they constructed have been allowed by the English to fall into ruin, while the English themselves, although constructing many new public works, have done but little to recompense India for the ruin of the older ones. The fact of the matter is, the English concern themselves mainly about roads, navigable canals, and other objects of a commercial character; whereas it is such structures as dams, irrigation canals, and reservoirs which are wanted in India, subject as she is to droughts and famines. In 1865–66, in the single province of Orissa alone, a million people died of hunger out of a population of 2,600,000, while in Bengal, in 1870, nearly ten millions died.*

Until the English conquered India the country was famous for its manufactures. These have been almost

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* The assertion about the ten millions dying is evidently taken from Terentyeff's "Russia and England in Central Asia." It may be said of Russian officials generally that they read little and believe much. In a very clever article in the "Quarterly Review," April 1876 (No. 282, page 442), there is a remark very *apropos* of Annenkoff's assertion: "In Colonel Terentyeff's recent work on Central Asia he speaks of England in terms which recall the ravings of the French Jacobins against 'Pitt and Coburg.' England is a 'foul excrescence on the fair form of India,' requiring excision by the knife. The operation was attempted in 1857, but unhappily failed. But it is hoped that, with Russian assistance, it will be more successful next time. The accuracy of this truculent personage may be gauged by the mention of the present Indian Government as the 'East India Company'; and by such statements as that Lord Lawrence was recalled because not sufficiently hostile to Russia; *that ten millions of people died of famine in Bengal in* 1870; and that Captain Napier, in his late journey to Persia, distributed 6,000 English rifles among the Turcomans. All this is, perhaps, beneath notice or criticism, still we are sorry, as well as surprised, to find so much malevolence and ignorance in a colonel on the staff in Turkestan." Yet, as a matter of fact, Terentyeff was better informed about India than the generality of Russians, and Annenkoff shares equally his misconceptions.—M.

smothered by the cheaper manufactures of Manchester and Birmingham. Even the production of shawls, for which India was once celebrated, is yearly growing less. This has been due, be it remarked, not to honest competition, but to the protective measures of the Indian Government. All machinery and appliances introduced into India used to be heavily taxed, while, on the other hand, the English manufacturer received every encouragement from the State to flood the country with his productions. This systematic annihilation of manufactures and industries in India has given over the country to the unconditional control of English capitalists. In buying Indian raw products cheaply, and selling them again in a manufactured form dearly, the English have wrought as much ruin as by their mode of dealing with the land.

In Turkestan, on the other hand, taxation, as has been shown, is extremely light, while, to encourage the nomads to fix themselves to the soil, grants have been made of money, seed, and agricultural implements. As regards commerce and trade, Russian imports have certainly increased since the occupation of Tashkent; but this affords no argument that they have crushed the native industries, being rather, indeed, an evidence of the greater prosperity of the country, since it has been accompanied by an increase of exports and a larger amount of native production. Thus, in 1857, the exports from Central Asia were valued at $5\frac{1}{2}$ million roubles; ten years later, in 1867, they had attained the sum of 10 millions.* But the development of trade

* "V.P.," criticising this in the "Istoretchiski Vestnik," says: "Annenkoff does not point out in these comforting figures that the principal part of the trade belongs to China, and not to

and commerce has not been the primary rôle of Russia—to it must be added the well-being of the country, arising from the order and security to property which she has conferred upon it, and without which industrial improvement is impossible. It is on such points as these that English writers remain silent.

Quite the reverse is the case in regard to their allegations of the corruption of Russian officials and their oppression of the natives in Central Asia. Most of the attacks on this score may be traced to the work published by Mr. Schuyler, formerly American Consul at

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Russia." It will be noted that Annenkoff quotes figures of the period immediately succeeding the fall of Tashkent. But it is a matter of fact that Russian trade in Turkestan has somewhat languished of late years, mainly on account of bad roads and the want of enterprise on the part of Russian merchants, who refuse to go to Tashkent and Samarcand to develop trade, and compel the natives to come to them at Troitsk, Orenburg, and Nijni Novgorod. To revive Russian trade in Central Asia, the subjoined order was issued in 1881. ("Turkestanski Vedomosti," Nov. 24 (o.s.), 1881.) "To maintain a watch to prevent the entry into Turkestan of prohibited goods of English manufacture, and to impose the regulation duties on Indian teas, muslins, and indigo, the following posts have been established. 1. In the Zaravshan district, in the Kishlaks of Tosmatchi and Kara Tepé of the Katta Koorgan district, and Djam in the Samarcand district. 2. In the Amu-Daria district, at the boundary of Ak-Kamish, twenty-five versts from Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk, up the Amu-Daria; and at the boundary of Sari-Kamish, lying on the caravan route from Bokhara, *viâ* Shoorakhan, to Tchimbai. 3. In the Syr-Daria territory: at the Kara-Tiube ferry in the district of Kazala; at the ferries of Karakeez, Baktulen, Ak-Djar, Balakta, Batpaks, Katta-Kool, Perovsky, Koobas, Fort No. 2, Toorsoorlik, Kemisaltchan, and Abla, in the district of Perovsky; at the ferry of Ootch-Kayook in the Turkestan district; at the ferries of Tchinaz, Sharkiya, Tchardar, and Oozoon-Ata, and at the mouth of the river Tcheertcheek, in the Kuramin district. In excess of this, a question has arisen as to the desirability of establishing posts of observation in the Khodjent district also." It should be noted that this measure specially applies to *English* manufactures, not to European ones.—M.

St. Petersburg, a work not devoid of literary merit, but in many respects extremely one-sided.

It is impossible, in referring to this, not to point out several peculiarities of Russian life. Russians have the habit of relating, to the first foreigner they come in contact with, all manner of nonsense and tittle-tattle. Insignificant facts are exaggerated, and personages depreciatingly described, until the story told bears no resemblance to the original. Of course, it is impossible to maintain that there has been no administrative corruption in Turkestan; on the contrary, it certainly did exist, and probably exists there still; but, all the same, it appears in Schuyler's book in a very exaggerated form, and has been served up with those liberal reproaches of Russian administration in Central Asia in which foreigners—and, above all, Englishmen—delight.

Goethe has said that the whole human mind consists in an ability to select and classify facts. This quality is not possessed by Schuyler. Many of his facts are undoubtedly true, but he does not give the proper ring to them. As the Germans say, "the trees prevent him seeing the forest." Schuyler sees everything through a distorted medium, and drops from view all the benefits which Russia has introduced into Central Asia. The only thing that seems to have struck him was the order which the Russians had introduced into the towns. But all that Schuyler says ought not to be accepted as gospel truth, and, therefore, in practice, such blind censure of the entire Russian administration should be treated with a certain amount of reserve.*

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* With reference to Annenkoff's attack on Schuyler, I cannot help confessing that I have always regarded "Turkistan" as the most able and impartial book ever written on the Russian opera-

At any rate, it is impossible to maintain that the English administration in India is distinguished by its immaculate excellence and perfect disinterestedness. At the least, even if we rely only upon English sources, it transpires that English administrators have many, very many, shortcomings.

To assure one's-self of this, one has only to read Torrens's "Empire in Asia," and the matter will become still more obvious if we expose the motives guiding the English Government in its selection of administrators for India. Since the time of Lord Cornwallis, service in India has been used as a means for enriching the younger sons of the English nobility. As a matter of fact, whole crowds of "lacklands" have been sent to India, to receive there life-incomes commensurate with their birth. During the period alone, extending from 1834 to 1852, upwards of 5,284 of these needy scions of noble houses were sent to India, to say nothing of 1,440 others, of less aristocratic

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tions in Central Asia. There are many things in it that must be unpleasant for a Russian to read, but they are attended with a very large and generous admixture of praise, while at the same time Schuyler is equally unsparing in his remarks about English rule and English policy in Asia. It is not to be expected that any Englishman or Russian can be infallibly impartial in discussing each other's operations in the East; but who could be better fitted to be a discriminate judge than an American, not only thoroughly acquainted with Russian and the Turkestan languages, but also a traveller in the region in dispute? It seems to me misplaced patriotism to attempt to smother facts which are paraded on every possible occasion by Russian reformers themselves. There is not a statement in regard to the corruption or oppression exercised by Russian officials in Central Asia, mentioned by Schuyler, which could not be capped by instances, as bad or worse, taken from files of the "Golos," "Novoe Vremya," and other newspapers published since his book appeared. Annenkoff charges Schuyler with an inability to select and classify facts, yet he himself is guilty incessantly throughout his brochure, of the inconsistency of comparing facts appertaining to the Turkestan of to-day, with facts relative to India previous to the Mutiny.—M.

birth. Need we describe the inevitable character of such administrators, arriving in India under such circumstances ? *

Besides which, the general voice of English writers and travellers has been raised against the distant and haughty pride of the English gentlemen arriving to govern India. The lowest functionary in the civil administration, as well as the most insignificant officer in the army, regards the native as a being belonging to a lower order of life, even though the native may be a rajah, tracing back his pedigree to a period when the English aristocracy did not exist.

The English carry to the far East, wherever they may be placed, all their habits and customs, and all those conditions of life to which they have been accustomed. They surround themselves with crowds of servants, and all manner of comforts; and then survey the population they have been called upon to govern, and to whom they are entirely alien, with the utmost disdain.

The peculiar and closely-defined organization into which the natives of India have been compressed from time immemorial, is not only foreign to the Englishman,

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* Annenkoff, when he penned this, was obviously unaware that appointments in the Indian Civil Service are filled by open competition. He would be the first to ridicule the notion of trotting out musty facts of the time of the autocrat Nicholas to describe the Russia of Alexander the Third, yet he is apparently unaware of the incongruity of using the data of a dead generation to describe the India of to-day. He is, however, not the only Russian who believes the Civil Service of India to be the *El dorado* of aristocratic proletariats. The same charge was made in 1880 by the Russian traveller Pashino, who had visited India several times; and during a conversation I had with General Grodekoff in July 1882, the latter spoke of it to me as a defect of our administration of India, and was surprised when he found his impression to be a wrong one.—M.

but is also inimical to him. Caste, in spite of all manner of changes and conquests, is as powerful to-day as ever it was. The members of the higher castes not only regard the English as unclean, but nothing in the world will induce them to eat at their table. It is only the lowest of the low, the *Pariahs*, or outcasts, who will share the bread of their conqueror.

The Russians, in this respect, are very much better off. Of course, the Mussulman population of Central Asia regards us, in most cases, as infidels. It is equally true that in Turkestan are many malcontents, many personages whose position has changed for the worse since the Russian conquest—such as, for instance, ex-administrators, who have lost place and fortune; further, there are many natives who do not approve of the new order of things, and find the relations of conqueror with the conquered galling. But, all the same, there can be no possible doubt that these circumstances are considerably softened by the character of the Russians, their mildness,* their good-nature, and their ability to adapt themselves to the habits and customs of the country in which they dwell.

Besides, the Russians early after their conquest became good friends with the Sarts,† who now maintain excellent relations with them. Further, there is not even the slightest suspicion of disdain on the part of the Russians in their dealings with the conquered. All this, of course, has led to good-feeling, and has prevented many

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* O'Donovan wrote from Astrabad, April 7, 1880: "I myself witnessed last year the not infrequent brutal treatment of natives at the hands of Russian non-commissioned officers and soldiers, who, on the slightest hitch, kicked the Turcomans most unmercifully."—M.

† The settled population of Turkestan.—M.

collisions inevitable between a conquered people and their conquerors.

In India, side by side with a preponderance of Hindoos (four-fifths of the population) the English have to deal with the Mussulmans.

English policy in the East is pre-eminently founded on a special protection of Islam. From the followers of Mahomet are taken most of the sepoys and most of the minor civil functionaries. This is done partly because the English are the successors of the Mussulman conquerors of India, and consider they ought to allow the Mussulmans to share a certain amount of authority with them, and partly because they distrust the Hindoos. It is impossible, however, to maintain that the Mussulmans have always and everywhere faithfully served the interests of Great Britain.

In the mutiny of 1857 most of the participators were Mussulmans. The Wahaabite agitation in North India, and the incessant bloody wars with the Afghan tribes, of which the most memorable was the Sittana Expedition of 1863,* further afford strong reasons for doubting whether the Mussulmans are so faithful and so subservient to the interests of the English as the latter imagine.

From antiquity India has served as an extensive field for the energies of Christian missionaries. At first they enjoyed a certain amount of success, but in time their converts diminished in number, and it is now admitted that Christian proselytism is but little more

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* The Sittana Expedition took place in 1858. Annenkoff evidently means the Umbeyla campaign of 1863, the bloodiest of our frontier wars, during which we lost 238 men killed, and 908 wounded.—M.

THE TRANSCASPIAN RAILWAY—RUSSIAN CHAPEL AT BALLA ISHEM STATION.

than a failure. In excess of being unsuccessful, the Christian propagandism has also had this bad feature, that it has provoked in the native mind a settled belief that the English have an inflexible intention of forcing them away from the faith of their forefathers. In particular, also, must the people be discontented at the fact that, in addition to appointing Christian prelates to India, the English Government makes the Mussulmans and Brahmins contribute to their support. How great this item of expenditure used to be, and how incommensurate it was with other objects, may be gathered from the fact that in 1851 the people of India paid towards the support of the English ecclesiastics £112,425, while the grant towards general education was only £66,993.

The Russians, on the other hand, have acted in a very different manner, and although, it is necessary to say, its rationality cannot in all cases be approved of, still the reasons are altogether different. In their religious relations with the Turkestanis the Russians have comported themselves in a most equable manner, and, so far as is known, not a single missionary has been allowed to appear among them. In the case of the Kirghiz, they have actually done their best to assist the Mussulmans in converting them to the tenets of Mahomet, and at one period constructed a number of *metchets* in the steppe for the nomads to worship at. Of course, this indifferentism cannot be altogether defended on logical grounds, but it has had this effect—it has prevented the natives fearing their conquerors to have any designs on their faith.

History shows that the Mussulmans are liable to frequent outbursts of fanaticism. The appearance of a single holy personage among them, capable of drawing

them after him, is sufficient to ignite the fire of Islam—that religion founded by the sword and violence. Of course, a Mussulman revolt is just as possible in Turkestan as in India, but with this immense difference. In India there are 250 million natives, of whom 40 millions are Mussulmans, controlled by 65,000 English soldiers. In Turkestan there are only 4½ million natives, but to repress them there are 45,000 Russian troops.

In this manner, a Mussulman outbreak would be far less dangerous to Russia than to England*; and, literally speaking, it needs only a leader of the Toussaint L'Ouverture type to rise up among the natives of India for them to engulph their conquerors. The number of English in India is altogether insignificant, since none go there except on administrative or military service.

The English have never made any attempts to colonize India with people of their own race. Even during the remarkable migration of the Irish to America in 1830–40, the idea never occurred to anyone to divert the stream to India. It is difficult to define precisely

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* Yet Lord Lytton said, in his famous minute on Central Asia, of January 7, 1880 ("Afghanistan," 1881, No. 1):—"The contemplation of war with Russia in Central Asia has been forced on me very much. But the more closely I contemplate such a catastrophe the greater is the repugnance with which I regard it—a repugnance amounting almost to horror. In such a war we should probably be successful, for we can meet Russia with far superior forces on the Oxus. But it is the consequences of success we should consider. We should probably stir up a Mahommedan rising among the khanates, and we can realise the horrors of such a rising if we picture to ourselves another Indian mutiny in which the mutineers would be supported by a victorious army." It is difficult not to agree with Annenkoff in thinking the chances of a successful Mussulman rising against Russia in Central Asia very remote. Such a game as Lytton hinted at is one that two can play at, and Russia with better chances of success than ourselves. Had Lytton attentively read Schuyler's "Turkistan," he would hardly have expressed such a view, I believe, in his minute.—M.

the reasons which have operated against any such colonization taking place; but, as in most cases of the kind, they are many and of a varied character. Among them may be included the want of political reliance on the Irish, who have never migrated so extensively in famine years as during periods when they have been set fermenting by hostile political parties in England. Undoubtedly, also, the deadly character of the climate has had some effect, particularly on account of the difficulty of rearing children in India, it being the regular custom for the English to send their children home to be brought up.* At any rate, no serious effort has ever been made to colonize the country, and the English who go to India think only of acquiring the largest amount of money in the shortest possible time, and returning home to enjoy it in their beloved fatherland.

As regards the Russians, it is impossible not to see that in spite of the difficulties attending a State-aided system of colonization after the emancipation of the serfs, Russian colonization has progressed in Central Asia, particularly in the direction of Semipalatinsk, Sergiopol, Kopal, and Vierny. It often happens that colonization in Turkestan is effected in such a manner that the local

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* There are, however, plenty of spots in India fitted for European colonization, as may be seen on a reference to Major-General Newall's excellent work on the subject, "The Highlands of India strategically considered with special reference to their Colonization as Reserve Circles, Military, Industrial, and Sanitary" (Harrison & Sons, London, 1882). Clive, Warren Hastings, Wellington, Munro, Bentinck, Metcalfe, Ellenborough, Dalhousie, Malcolm, Canning, and the Lawrences, not to speak of many others, all favoured the colonization of the Indian highlands with English settlers. Sir George Campbell in his "India as it may be," says: "I would have Government to encourage hill colonization to the utmost, and especially to hold out inducements to its servants to settle in the country."—M.

authorities know nothing about it until some day they discover a settlement where none had before existed.* Besides this, small settlements are found at every fort, and in most towns time-expired soldiers who prefer to settle down to industrial occupations to returning home, are encouraged to do so by the authorities. (A Russian colony of this character has been formed at Tashkent.—M.)

The opinion is sometimes expressed that Russia needs no more territory, that she has more land than souls to people it with. But the fact is overlooked that the more territory a country has at its disposal the richer it is. This fact has been brought out by Gospodin Orbinsky, who demonstrates, in his investigations into the corn trade of America, that in excess of the excellent means of communication, the large expansion of credit, and the employment of the best agricultural appliances, one of the reasons why the Americans are commencing to beat Russia in the European grain market consists

* Cases of this kind are very numerous. Bodies of peasants every year leave the crowded villages of Central Russia for the East, and wander across the Urals till they come to some place or other in Siberia or Turkestan that pleases their fancy. In 1881, a band of such emigrants actually penetrated to Kashgaria, and established a little colony on Chinese soil without exactly knowing where they were, and without their movements being known to the Russian authorities. In a Siberian newspaper, in 1880, an interesting account was given by a frontier official in Kuldja, of the surprise he had experienced in the autumn, in making a journey, by suddenly alighting upon a thatched village, inhabited by a couple of hundred Russians, and surrounded by corn-fields and meadows, where, the previous year, there had been nothing but the silent wilderness. The gradual spreading out of the Russians in the direction of Central Asia is a circumstance to which insufficient attention has been given by English writers. During the spring of 1882, over 10,000 Russian emigrants were conveyed by railway to Orenburg, bound for Central Asia. The movement was purely a spontaneous one, and was neither stimulated nor taken any notice of by the Russian authorities.—M.

in the extensive expanse of virgin soil yearly added to the area under cultivation.* Against this may be urged the fact that America is yearly inundated by fresh arrivals from Europe, while Russia remains without any influx from without; but it must not be overlooked that land is yearly growing dearer in Middle Russia, and that the country bordering on the Black Sea, which a century or so ago was traversed by the herds of the Tartars ruling the Crimea, is to-day covered with populous towns and cultivated fields, and this, too, in spite of the utter lack of ways of communication, since it is only within the last few years that the railroad has penetrated to that region.†

As regards the judicial arrangements in India, nearly all English writers have condemned England for abolishing the native mode of exercising justice, and introducing a legal system which, however suited to the English themselves, is altogether unfit for the East. In Turkestan we have done otherwise. The nomad Kirghiz

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* Professor Orbinsky was sent by the Russian Government to the United States a few years ago to report upon the prospects of American competition in the corn trade, and on his return published a very interesting book on the subject.—M.

† Annenkoff's argument in favour of territorial annexations is so diffusely expressed, that I have had to be somewhat severe in compressing it. Briefly, his view of the subject may be said to be this. To compete with America, Russia must have cheap land, since it is one of the chief elements in cheap production. Land is yearly becoming dearer in Middle Russia, and is causing the population to radiate in the direction of Central Asia. To provide for this growth, Russia is acting judiciously in making large territorial annexations. The same idea will be found expressed by General Petroosevitch in "Merv, the Queen of the World." He considers that the zone of agriculture in Russia, having encroached on the pasture lands of the south to such a degree as to threaten cattle-rearing with extinction, the Government ought to utilize the steppes of Central Asia for pastoral colonization on a large scale.—M.

elect their own *beys*, or magistrates, and the Sarts still continue to be judged by their *kazis*; the only difference being that the latter are elected nowadays. The Russian judicial system is only used in cases where Russians are concerned, or to decide law-suits which the native tribunals are not competent to deal with, and which both parties concerned may be desirous of submitting to Russian judges. In this manner, the Russian judges do not constitute among themselves a court of appeal, but simply act as higher arbitrators.

Respecting the strategical position of the Russians in Turkestan and the English in India, an English author has frankly admitted that the Russians enjoy this great advantage, that although their army in Central Asia is not large, yet it is composed wholly of Russian elements, the natives not being taught, so to say, to fight against themselves. He rightly points out that it would take two months for Orenburg reinforcements to reach the Turkestan district, but he does not accurately gauge the position of the little handful of English troops in India; in particular, on the appearance of a European enemy with a force composed entirely of regular troops.

The sepoys are trained to regard Europeans as a higher race than themselves, and to consider them in military matters invincible. How would they act against a European enemy? Further, the native army used to be of a more personal character, and many regiments still bear the names of the leaders who founded them and carried them through a career of victory. But with the growth of the army, the relations of the English with it have changed, and so far from the natives being encouraged to force their way to the front, they are

repressed by a system which prevents any native officer, however capable, from rising above the rank of captain. Besides this, the native army has no artillery, and is furnished with an inferior rifle. In a word, the native troops are placed in such a position that it is impossible for them not to see that they are not trusted by the Government. An army, as is well known, holds to a series of moral principles—faith in the sovereign and fatherland, the flag that represents the honour and glory of his detachment, love of his detachment and the army --these are the foundations of the moral force of the soldier. The soldier sacredly fulfils what he holds to be his duty; he knows, moreover, his rights; he considers himself the defender of certain principles; and, on the strength of this, regards himself as a person worthy of confidence and respect. But what would be thought of an army in Europe, in which a soldier should be given a gun, and afterwards followed about the streets by two other soldiers to prevent him firing upon peaceful citizens! Yet, such is the position of the native troops in India, who have no artillery confided to them, and who are armed with inferior rifles; in order, obviously, that they may be the more easily crushed, should they break out into revolt. Curious, indeed, must be that army when the very means necessary for conducting warfare are considered endangered when placed in the hands of those who have to use them.

The Russians in Central Asia have organized no native troops. The native horse raised, known as *Djigits*, serve mainly as guides and couriers, and in very rare cases as patrols. There can be no doubt, on general grounds of equity, that this course is irregular, since the natives evade thereby the principal obligation to a state,

the obligation of blood and life—military conscription. But, all the same, it is impossible not to recognise that, in view of the recent conquest of the country, it is better to let military conscription lapse for a while, than to raise up a danger by resorting to it at once. When Turkestan has earned the right to be treated as a member of the Russian family, which it will do some day, military conscription can be introduced, and in this manner the people of Central Asia will be poured into that great grinding machine—the Russian army—in which the seventy-five per cent. of Great and Little Russians have thus far successfully ground up the diverse elements of our border lands.

All the foregoing is sufficient to demonstrate that English writers, in their pictures of the position of England and Russia in Central Asia, have painted the former in colours too light, and the latter in colours too dark. Russia, as has been said, does not desire a conflict; but since the majority of English writers have been mainly guided by the aim to make Russia appear weak and England strong in Central Asia,* it will not be out of place to institute one or two comparisons.

1. The great difficulty Russia has to contend with in Central Asia consists in immense distances, intersected by waterless wastes, which impede the progress of armies. In overcoming this, the camel, however useful for peaceful caravan purposes, has been tried and found utterly wanting.† The experience of Englishmen and Russians

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* As a matter of fact the contrary is the case. Were it true, there would have been no alarm about the Russian advance towards India.—M.

† Annenkoff goes into all the old arguments against the use of camels in warfare, which are too well known and too generally admitted by experts to need reproduction here. Our own expe-

in Asiatic warfare has been identical on this point; the camels have perished in their hands. During the Akhal Tekke Expedition of 1879, as many as 9,600 camels perished out of 10,000; at the close of Skobeleff's Expedition of 1881, only 1,000 remained alive out of 18,000.

Undoubtedly, the construction of the railway from Michailovsk to Kizil Arvat has changed this aspect of affairs by overcoming the two great difficulties in regard to the transport of an army and its stores. The desert already traversed, the rapid construction of the line along the fertile oasis of Akhal will furnish a new and stronger implement of war for Russia in the East.

2. The Russians, as has been already stated, have not trained their Central Asian subjects to fight. This robs them of a certain number of auxiliaries who, under certain circumstances, might be useful; but, on the other hand, it guarantees them against an enemy well armed and drilled in the European fashion, in the event of a general rising. It should be observed, however, that exceptions may be made in favour of those tribes whom there may be reason to trust, and who may be employed with considerable benefit in the rear of the army. Thus, during the Akhal Tekke Expedition of 1881, the Adaeff Kirghiz, who only a short time previous had been in revolt,* served with remarkable fidelity.

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rience in the operations against Candahar proved that, where the country admits of it, it is cheaper in the long run to construct a light railway than to resort to a camel transport, which latter is sure to break down.—M.

* They may be said to have been finally pacified in 1873. Lomakin subsequently formed a battalion or two of them, and trained them as regular soldiers. Skobeleff, however, immediately disbanded them on his arrival at Krasnovodsk in 1880, and converted them into *djigits*, on the ground that it was "impolitic to place the natives on a level with European troops."—M.

The duty of patrolling, and carrying the mails and all manner of official correspondence, was entirely cast upon them. They never flinched from this heavy duty, although they knew the Tekkes gave no quarter; and, in effect, not a few of them perished in the Russian service.

In India there are 200,000 sepoys, excellently drilled, and composed of brave and disciplined men, but who may, in spite of all this, turn their strength and skill, under certain circumstances, against those whom they are called upon to defend. This has been demonstrated already, but it may be added here that the most insignificant circumstance may give rise to a revolt, as in the case of the greased cartridges which brought about the Mutiny in 1857; while the danger of an explosion is all the more intensified by the fact of the people being so densely packed together in India. We are better off in this respect in Turkestan, where the immense distances separating the inhabitants from one another admit only of an insignificant local revolt, having nothing in common with a prepared rising of 250 million souls against the English.

3. Allies might play a very important part in any conflict. It is beyond question that the transition from the position of independent sovereign to that of a feudatory cannot be agreeable either to the Khans of Turkestan or to the formerly powerful princes of India. In this matter it is necessary that Russia should also be on her guard against the possible ingratitude of her allies. But the English are no better off as regards this than ourselves. At any rate, recent events have shown that the Ameer of Cabul ceded a certain small portion of his dominions to the Maharajah of Cashmere,

who gave him in return money to be employed in fighting the English. Yet the Maharajah is considered one of the most faithful allies of England.

4. The excellent network of English railroads in India, constructed extremely rationally from a strategical point of view for the defence of the north-west frontier, would afford the English great assistance in concentrating troops at this or the other threatened point; always providing, however, that a general rising in India did not deprive them of this support. In excess of this, England is mistress of a powerful fleet, and has the mightiest mercantile marine in the world; but here again it is necessary to observe that, even with the use of the Suez Canal, a month and a half is needed to assemble anything like reasonably large reinforcements on the Indian coast.

On the side of Russia nothing similar exists. Her railway system is far from complete,* and the number of steamers and sailing craft in the Caspian is insignificant. None the less, Russia is the better off of the two Powers. The construction of the Transcaspian railway has altogether changed the aspect of affairs existing before it was built. A waterless expanse no longer serves as a barrier to the rapid appearance of reserves in Central Asia—to the oasis of Akhal they can be conveyed by the locomotive, and beyond the terminal point of the railway an army of 100,000 men can march ahead at any time with wheeled transport, requiring no

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* On the 1st of January 1882, there were 15,778 miles of completed railways in the entire Russian Empire. In India there are nearly 10,000 miles. Owing, however, to better construction and more skilful management, the transport power of the Indian lines is greater than that of the collective railways of Russia.—M.

longer the costly and wholly unreliable services of the camel.

As regards transport in the Caspian, it may be pointed out that the rapid development of naphtha at Baku * is causing a yearly increase to the number of steamers and sailing vessels in the Caspian. But, beyond this, in case of necessity, many of the large passenger steamers plying on the lower Volga can, in a very short space of time, be added to the transport resources of the Caspian Sea. In the event of extreme necessity steamers could also be conveyed thither through the canals from the Baltic.

In this manner the aspect of affairs resolves itself into this :—

Russia may be encountered at Herat or beyond Herat, having an army 100,000 strong, composed entirely of Russians, resting upon a railway, and having at its rear the Caucasus and the Volga.

England can place in the field 30,000 or 40,000 excellent English soldiers and 100,000 sepoys. The remainder would be needed to garrison India.

The whole question, consequently, resolves itself into this—to what extent can the English rely upon their Indian troops and Indian allies ?

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* "Baku, which I remembered as quite a small place, has now more than 30,000 inhabitants, and it has, I believe, a great future before it. The unlimited supply of petroleum, which is here found, is a mine of wealth. As soon as railways are made, I believe that Baku will supply the world with petroleum. The price is now only a half-penny per pood of 36 lbs. on the spot, and the supply is practically unlimited. All the steamers on the Caspian already use it as fuel instead of coal, and I believe the use of petroleum as fuel will soon be extended to the railways also. Some locomotive engines already burn petroleum."—Colonel Stewart. Lecture before the Royal Geographical Society on "The Country of the Tekke Turcomans," 1881.—M.

From what has been already said on the matter, it is evidently beyond dispute that the allies are doubtful and the sepoys untrustworthy. The best demonstration of the accuracy of this is afforded by those measures which the English are undertaking, and which their writers recommend so strongly. These measures have the object in view of disarming the remaining feudatory princes of India who still maintain some sort of army, and of increasing the English element among the sepoys —in other words, a further advance in that want of confidence in the Indian native army, which is already observable in all the measures taken concerning it.

There can, however, be no doubt that a conflict in Central Asia would not be a light one for either of the contending parties. It would bring no advantage either to them or to humanity at large. Those victims, those resources, which would be engulphed in the struggle, might be better applied to other purposes. Russia does not desire a conflict. She was compelled to undertake the last Akhal Tekke expedition, which provoked so much talk in England, in order to finally pacify her Central Asian possessions. The Tekkes are subjugated, and there are no longer now on the borders of Russia any tribes able to disturb in any way the security of our Asiatic possessions.* Russia to-day may, therefore, direct the whole of her strength to the opening up of new routes, and to the development of trade and industry in the now completely pacified country beyond the Caspian.

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* If such be the case, no excuse exists for any further extension of Russian power in Central Asia; but Annenkoff apparently does not sufficiently take into account the turbulence of the Merv Tekkes and the tribes of Afghanistan.—M.

The mercantile relations between Europe and the people of Central Asia may be traced back to the earliest times; the highways of commerce between East and West being guarded by various peoples for themselves at every epoch. This phenomenon is easy to understand when one finds it demonstrated by history that, once the road to India maintained a particular direction for a certain time, a remarkable development of wealth took place in the country through which it passed.

We first hear in history of the road to India in investigating the extraordinary development of civilisation on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates, where the magnificent cities of Babylon and Nineveh received Indian wares by caravans, which, traversing Beloochistan and the land of the Chaldeans, penetrated afterwards to Phœnicia. From here the Phœnicians, those hardy navigators, distributed the wares of India throughout the whole of the Mediterranean, as far as the distant shores of Africa and Europe. This road from India to Europe may be regarded as the first.

The second road, along which commerce proceeded from India to Europe, was, so to say, opened up by the shipowners on the Tigris and Euphrates, who not only navigated those two rivers, but, traversing the Persian Gulf, penetrated to the Arabian Sea. And, without doubt, the wonderful wealth of Egypt and its ancient civilisation are explainable by the fact of the high road to India lying along the Arabian Sea, and through the canal which Sesostris cut in order to enable Indian merchandise to pass into the Mediterranean.

The celebrated Indian march of Alexander of Macedon, effected along the Atrek and *viâ* Herat, Cabul, and the Khyber Pass, to the banks of the Indus and beyond,

can be explained by no other political idea than the desire of crushing Persia—that barbarous state, standing with its hordes on the road between Europe and the ancient East. The three years' campaign of Alexander against the nomad tribes dwelling between the Syr Daria and Amu Daria has an altogether different light cast upon it when it is explained, not by the conventional belief in that monarch's love of military glory, but as arising mainly from the indispensability of defending from the raids of the restless horsemen of the desert the great Indian highway—that highway, for the sake of which, at the same time, Alexander caused ships to be constructed and a flotilla built in the Caspian Sea.

The same necessity for protecting the trade route with India explains the colonization of the banks of the Amu Daria and Murghab, and the foundation of the famous Bactriana, which maintained itself in such a flourishing condition so many years.

In the time of the Romans, Indian merchandise passed through the Arabian Sea, and was thence carried *viâ* Alexandria to Rome, which city valued it so much that it yearly fitted out 120 vessels for its conveyance.

Afterwards commences the remarkably flourishing Arab period, during which, at the close of a long struggle, emerges Bagdad, the wealth of which is again explainable by its being situated on the transit road from India, in the same manner that the prosperity of Babylon and Nineveh is explainable.

But the raids of the Turks and Mongols destroyed the flourishing Arab state, and the Indian highway again reverted to Egypt and the Arabian Sea, there to continue as the trade route between India and Europe

until the time of Vasco de Gama. Recently a few historians have attempted to diminish the importance of the services rendered to the world by the Portuguese, affirming that the Arabs penetrated to the Cape of Good Hope before the time of Vasco de Gama. But, at any rate, to the Portuguese belongs the honour of not only opening up the route, but also of establishing the new direction for the flow of Indian wares, thanks to the victories of the celebrated Albuquerque. As a matter of fact, it was necessary to not only open up the route, but also to tear from Semitic hands the transport of Indian wares, and to prevent them and navigators in general from conveying the goods of the East by the route through Egypt. To accomplish this aim it was essential to carry out a series of splendid naval wars, as well in the Persian Gulf as in the Arabian Sea; and to establish there a number of naval stations. This was done by Albuquerque, and it is in this that his merit lies in having established for the Portuguese people a route so fitted to develop wealth amongst them.

Such a form of activity on the part of the Portuguese led them to establish a series of fortified points for the protection of their route. To them belonged the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, with a fort on the island of Socotra. In the Persian Gulf they owned the town of Muscat, the island and Strait of Ormuz, and finally Basra, on the Shat-el-Arab, where the Tigris and Euphrates merge into one river.

The English, in reality, only continued what the great Portuguese had begun, in establishing a series of fortified points along the route to India. Seizing hold of the commerce of India, they made themselves the medium of the commerce between the East and West,

and in this manner gave rise to the wonderful wealth of England. The whole of Europe, which needs cotton, indigo, spices, and other Indian wares, must apply for them at the English docks, which constitute the glory and wealth of England. This has been attained as much by the large development of the fleet and mercantile marine, as by the establishment of a series of naval stations designed for the protection of the merchant shipping. The stations in the Mediterranean —Gibraltar, Malta, and Cyprus—protect the route to Suez. The island of St. Helena, the Cape of Good Hope, and the island of Mauritius protect the Cape route to India. Finally, Perim and Aden render secure navigation in the Arabian Sea.

Aided by these fortified points, at which coaling stations have also been established for the numberless steamers of England plying between the home country and India, England has firmly established her mercantile might. Sometimes murmurs are raised at the cost of all these forts, and stations, and garrisons, but the amazing wealth of England itself is a testimony to the value of them ; and, besides, the proverb of the ancients is not to be forgotten, that, "In order to be happy 'tis essential to be strong."

In this manner, the Portuguese, and after them the English, were the originators of the circuitous route *viâ* the Cape, and Indian wares began to reach Egypt mainly by that highway. None the less, however, there was no cessation of the attempts to return to the older route again. Thus, during the reign of Louis XIV., with its attendant supremacy of the French in the Mediterranean, the celebrated Leibnitz invited that monarch to conquer Egypt, with the object of controlling

the Indian trade. From the number of similar attempts must not be omitted Napoleon's conquest of Egypt; but the project failed, in consequence of the victory by Lord Nelson over the French fleet in Aboukir Bay. This, all the same, did not prevent Napoleon from thinking any further of an Indian campaign, and he entertained a notion of carrying it out, either in alliance with Russia or with Persia. In the former case he intended to have traversed the Danube, the Black Sea and Sea of Azoff, the river Volga, and the Caspian Sea to Astrabad, and thence to have proceeded in the direction of India. In the case of an alliance with Persia (to secure which General Gardanne was sent with a special mission), he meant, in conjunction with Turkey, to have marched through Turkey and Persia to Herat. It is interesting to note that the route beyond this point lay through Candahar to India.

In the foregoing hasty sketch, only the southern highways to India have been described. But, in excess of these, there exist a number of northern routes, by means of which at one time commercial relations were maintained between Russia and India. These are of interest to Russia, on account of a possibility of their resuscitation.

Pliny states that Indian wares from the Upper Indus reached in seven days Bactriana, on a river falling into the Oxus, or Amu Daria; that, *viâ* the Oxus, they proceeded to the Caspian, and thence by the river Kura attained, after five days' journey across dry land, the emporium of Sarapon, finally penetrating the Black Sea. In the beginning of the eighth century, in consequence of the conquest of the Byzantine dominions by the Arabs, this highway was deflected more to the

north. The wares of the East were transported to Constantinople *viâ* the Caspian, up the Volga, down the Don, and then across the Black Sea to the Bosphorus.

About the same time commenced Russia's intercourse with the far East. A Persian writer, living in the ninth century, says: "As for the Russian merchants, they proceed in ships along the Slav river (the Volga) to the gulf of the Khazar capital (the town of Itil at the entrance of the Volga into the Caspian Sea), where the ruler takes a tithe from them. Afterwards they proceed to the Sea of Ojourjal (Aral Sea), to Balkh and Maverannah, and then to Sina (China)." In this manner the Russians in the ninth century had already penetrated to Balkh and Bagdad, and even to China, *viâ* the Volga, the Caspian, and the steppes. It is very probable that along this route proceeded to Russia, Arabian, Indian, Bokharan, Khivan, and Persian merchants, and there is good reason to believe that they conveyed their wares as far up the Volga as Kazan, where the Novgorod merchants took them in charge, and transported them to Novgorod the Great and to Old Ladoga, whence they were distributed among the neighbouring states. Evidence in support of this is forthcoming in the boxes of treasure, containing Arab, Indian, and Bactrian coins, which are constantly being found beneath the ground along the banks of the Volga, having been buried by their owners to escape seizure by robbers, or for other reasons.

Before long the Asiatic merchants got to know that the great Slavonic river would carry them not only to the Slavs, but to the Germans; and that they availed themselves of the route is proved by the fact that similar

boxes, with coins of the same kind, have been found all along the road traversed by the Russians on their way to Germany. The Tartar yoke in course of time broke off this intercourse, together with other mercantile relations also. Only Novgorod and Smolensk could sustain trade with the West, or, more truly speaking, with the Hanse towns. The far East was entirely cut off. People began to forget it, and legends alone remained of the wonderful wealth of Eastern countries. This lasted as long as Russia remained subject to the Mongol yoke. India then again began to allure everybody.

So far as can be ascertained, the first to attempt to reach India was a Tver trader, named Afanasi Nikitin, at the end of the fifteenth century, but he only reached Khorassan.

Somewhat later, a Genoese, Paolo Centurione, invited the Grand Prince Vasili Ivanovitch to conduct commercial relations with India *viâ* the Caspian Sea, urging the advantage Russia would derive from Indian goods being brought to Astrakhan, and thence *viâ* the Volga and Oka to Moscow, after which they could be conveyed overland to the Dwina, beyond the Dwina to Riga, and by Riga distributed by sea throughout the rest of Europe.

The English also took part in the projects for attaining India *viâ* Russia. Entering into relations with Ivan Vasilivitch, they commenced to convey large quantities of their goods to Russia, having, however, in view not Russia itself, but the convenience of penetrating across her territory to the Eastern states lying near the Caspian Sea. In England a special company was formed, with the aim of opening up the shortest and most convenient road to India and China. Among the many agents it

despatched through Astrakhan to accomplish this aim, the most famous was Anthony Jenkinson. In 1555* he proceeded through Russia to Astrakhan, reached Manguslave (Mangishlak) in the Caspian, and thence made his way to Bokhara. His difficult and dangerous journey proved, however, to be almost useless, since Bokhara was supplied with such a large quantity of goods from Aleppo and Smyrna, that Jenkinson was compelled to sell his wares at a price which brought him in scarcely any profit at all.

The English trading company then decided on entering into direct commercial relations with Persia. With this end in view, it despatched Jenkinson through Russia in 1561. At Moscow the pioneer of commerce joined the Persian ambassador, who was returning home by land. Taking ship at Astrakhan, Jenkinson proceeded to Shabran, and so to Kasvin, then the capital of the Persian sovereign. There he remained a winter, and afterwards returned to Russia.

But England did not stand alone in her attempts to open up relations with the East, *viâ* the Caspian. In 1602 the Roman Emperor Rudolph sent Stephen Kakash on a mission to Persia. He, however, died on the way. In 1635, Prince Frederic of Holstein sent an envoy to Russia and Persia to establish friendly relations with both, and arrange for the passage of Persian silk through Russia. About the same time, the ambassador of King Christian of Sweden presented a project for opening up a more convenient route from the White Sea

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* Or, rather, 1558; see "The Voyage of Master Anthony Jenkinson, made from the citie of Mosco in Russia to the citie of Boghar in Bactria, in the year 1558; written by himselfe to the Merchants of London of the Moscouie Companie" (Hakluyt).—M.

to Astrakhan and the East. Finally, the Dutch, already at that period drawing no little profit from the East India trade, directed their attention to Russia, in the hope of being able to establish easier communication with Eastern countries.

Russia, on her part, made special efforts to establish intercourse with India, independently of the foreigner. Tsar Alexai Michailovitch twice sent envoys to the Great Mogul, but in both instances Abbas II. of Persia turned them back. The thought then struck him to despatch envoys by way of Bokhara, and, in order to investigate the route, Pazookhin was sent in 1669. His journey proved the possibility of attaining India by that route, and in 1675 the Astrakhan Tartar, Usoof Kasimoff, was despatched to the Great Mogul. In 1676 he reached Cabul, where he was stopped and sent back, because he had only a letter and no merchandise. The Great Mogul, on being informed of the arrival of the Russian envoy, expressed the opinion that intercourse with Russia was of no advantage to him, since it was evident that "the Russian Tsar had sent his envoys to the Shah of India for wealth, and for no other reason."

It was only in 1695 that the merchant, Simon Malenki, with Government goods and money, succeeded in reaching Delhi, where he sold his wares, furnished himself with Indian ones, fitted out two ships, and, receiving from the Mogul an elephant as a present to the Russian Tsar, set out home by way of Bender-Abbas, a seaport in the Persian Gulf, opposite the island of Ormuz. Dying on the road, however, at Shemakha, in Transcaucasia, no detailed account of his travels was left behind.

After this, Peter the Great, under the influence of

the marvellous stories of the wealth of India, fitted out two expeditions: one from the side of Siberia, under the leadership of Buckholtz; and the other from Astrakhan, commanded by Prince Bekovitch-Tcherkasski. The first was to proceed to the town of Erketa (Yarkund), famous for its auriferous sands; and the second was to furnish the Khan of Khiva, who had already become a Russian subject, with a Russian guard, and invite the Emir of Bokhara to send to India a caravan with thirty-five merchants; of whom thirteen were to be Russians, with Lieutenant Kojin "in the guise of a trader"; the plan being that they should join the Siberian expedition at Yarkund. But the junction never took place, and the end of the expedition was most disastrous, Bekovitch-Tcherkasski, with nearly the whole of his column, being treacherously slaughtered in Khiva.

In 1750 another attempt was made to send a caravan to India, thanks to the persistency of Nepluieff, at that time Governor of Orenburg. With this end in view, there was even established a Russo-India Company, which fitted out two large caravans for India. But both experiments failed, and the company did not attempt to repeat them any more.

In this manner, in spite of the persistent efforts of Russia, she failed in establishing relations with India. It is true that during the Continental System of Napoleon, according to the celebrated traveller Alexander Burnes, not only Indian, but also English wares found their way through Cabul and Bokhara to Orenburg; but with the alteration of the system everything relapsed into the old groove, and the dearness of transport prevented Indian goods from attaining Orenburg.

It has thus been shown that direct intercourse between Russia and India is possible, although attended with many difficulties. All that has been feasible up to now, has been done to establish commercial relations with the Central Asian khanates. The first caravan was despatched to them in 1753 by the Samara merchant Rukavishnikoff. Afterwards commercial relations were established, thanks to the privileges accorded to the Central Asian merchants, and although interrupted at times, were never long suspended. Here is Burnes's list of the Russian goods reaching Cabul *viâ* Bokhara: pistols, muskets, gunlocks, knives, razors, iron and copper wire, needles, whalebone, spectacles, mirrors, chinaware, writing paper, cloth, velvet, satin, chintz, tea, &c. &c.

The development of our Asiatic commerce is shown by the following table :—

		Imports. Roubles.	Exports. Roubles.
1773—1777	....	214,794	206,136
1793—1797	....	1,547,069	1,579,445
1804—1807	....	2,071,564	987,974
1812—1815	....	4,071,564	3,582,881
1820—1823	....	5,381,155	3,763,611
1824—1827	....	5,759,252	4,389,705
1828—1831	....	6,267,414	5,889,646

In this manner the average imports during the first quinquennial period was 43,000 paper roubles a year, and the exports 41,000. In the course of twenty years the imports had grown to 309,413, and the exports to 315,888 roubles. Afterwards, the trade still further increased, until 1839, *i.e.* up to the unsuccessful Russian expedition, under Perovsky, against Khiva, when

the trade returns, at that time exceeding 15 million roubles, fell at a stroke to 5 millions. Afterwards, a rise again took place, and in 1867 the trade returns amounted to 53,074,000 roubles. It should be remembered, in connection with these facts, that all efforts to establish commercial intercourse with the Central Asian khanates, *viâ* the Caspian and Krasnovodsk, have failed, owing to the depredations of the Tekke Turcomans. These used to be so widespread that they led to a general determination on the part of caravans not to proceed from the Oxus to the Caspian.

From this flying survey of the highways to India, it will have been seen that there are only two existing routes by which Indian goods proceed to Europe, or, rather, to the docks of England—those immense reservoirs of the products of the far East—namely, the Cape route, mainly for sailing-vessels, and the route used by steamers, *viâ* Suez.

1. The Cape route, from Falmouth to Bombay, *viâ* St. Helena, is 10,400 miles long, and occupies a vessel forty-two days.

2. The Suez Canal route, from Falmouth, *viâ* Malta and Alexandria, to Bombay, is 6,000 miles long, and occupies twenty-four days.

The progress which the latter has made since opened for traffic is shown by the following figures :—

Year.	Number of Ships.	Dues levied.
1869	10	49,600 francs
1870	486	5,048,394 ,,
1871	735	8,993,733 ,,
1872	1,082	16,407,591 ,,
1873	1,173	22,775,882 ,,

Year.	Number of Ships.	Dues levied.
1874	1,264	25,218,580 francs.
1875	1,494	28,776,027 ,,
1876	1,457	29,896,025 ,,
1877	1,663	32,554,548 ,, *

However short a road may be, people are always possessed with a desire to find a shorter one. Hence, a number of projects have originated for establishing a still shorter and quicker route to India than that *viâ* Suez. These are as under :—

1. Paris to Calcutta, *viâ* Brindisi, Alexandria, Suez, Aden, and Bombay. Distance, 6,164 miles.

2. Scutari to Bombay, by two rival directions to Alexandretta, then *viâ* Aleppo, the Euphrates valley and Bagdad to Basra, and afterwards by water to Bombay. Distance, 3,380 miles.

3. Paris to Calcutta, *viâ* Orenburg, Tashkent, Balkh, and Peshawur, projected by Lesseps, and overland the whole of the way, instead of being, like the others, partly by land and partly by water. Distance, 5,783 miles.

4. Paris to Sukhur, on the Indus, *viâ* Warsaw, Moscow, Baku, Michailovsk, Kizil Arvat, Sarakhs, Herat, Candahar, and Quetta. Distance, 4,326 miles.

This latter is the shortest and most convenient of the roads running from Europe to India.† With

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* The traffic since 1877 has been as follows :—

Year.	Ships.	Tons.	Francs.
1878	1,593	3,291,535	30,098,229
1879	1,477	3,236,942	29,686,060
1880	2,027	4,344,519	39,840,487
1881	2,727	5,794,401	51,274,352—M.

† To Annenkoff himself must be ascribed the honour of projecting this route.—M.

the conquest of the Akhal Tekkes it has acquired special significance, since by that conquest caravan trade between the Oxus and the Caspian has been rendered secure. It is, further, the shortest route for a railway from the Caspian to the western frontier of India.

Any objection to the route could only be made while the railway was yet unconstructed from Michailovsk to Kizil Arvat. Now that the desert section has been traversed, and the fertile and well-watered oasis of Akhal reached, there cannot be the faintest doubt that a railroad all the way along that route is perfectly feasible.

The route has this signal advantage, that it only traverses eighty-two miles of steppe unfit for human life, whereas the railway projected by Lesseps traversed 477 miles of desert, and the projected Euphrates railway 490 miles of desert. In this manner, it is not only the shortest route, but the most suitable as regards the nature of the country traversed.

When, and in what manner, this important trade-route will be opened up is as yet a matter of uncertainty; but, at any rate, it will prove to be the shortest and most convenient route between Central Europe and India. The moment the railway reaches Kizil Arvat it will be employed in transporting merchandise,* arrangements having already been made for the despatch of caravans to it from the following directions :—

1. Khiva and Bokhara—Goods, mainly cotton, at present proceeding along the Oxus to its mouth, and

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* The line was opened for traffic from Krasnovodsk to Kizil Arvat, September 27th, 1881. Immediately afterwards the goods belonging to a caravan freighted by Konshin, a Moscow merchant, were sent along it to Akhal, whence the greater part was subsequently despatched to Merv.—M.

then, *viâ* the Ust-Urt and Kazala, to Orenburg; but which will take a new route from the Oxus, *viâ* Ortakuya and Igdy, to the railway terminus at Kizil Arvat. The recent march of the Turkestan column with 700 camels, commanded by Colonel Kouropatkin, proved the route to be not only fit for small caravans, such as had previously used it, but for very large ones also.* If there has not been any extensive trade along this route in recent times, the fact has been mainly due to the depredations of the Turcomans. The distance between Khiva and Orenburg is 863 miles, occupying forty-three days to traverse with camels. The monthly hire of a camel carrying 15 poods (about $\frac{1}{4}$ ton) amounts to 25 roubles (£2 10s.) For forty-three days the cost would be more than 35 roubles, or $2\frac{1}{2}$ roubles the pood (5s. per 36 lbs.) On the other hand, the distance from Khiva to Kizil Arvat is 316 miles, and may be traversed in fifteen or sixteen days. Hence the cost of transporting a pood of cotton would not exceed a rouble, or two shillings.

2. The Persian trade-route from Nishapoor to Astrabad can be conveniently diverted from Budjnurd to Kelat, and thence, *viâ* Bami, to Kizil Arvat, in order to replace the 200 miles of camel-road by the use of the railway.

3. The Afghan trade-route, commencing at Candahar, and running through Herat, Sarakhs, Askabad, Bami, to Kizil Arvat, which no doubt existed at one time, but

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* General Annenkoff was at Bami when Kouropatkin arrived from Khiva, and went out into the desert to meet him. In talking over this matter with Annenkoff in February 1882, he expressed himself in enthusiastic terms of the splendid condition in which the Turkestan column arrived. Such feats as Kouropatkin's afford the best practical argument against the writers of the Quietist school, who think the steppes of Central Asia afford a sufficient barrier against any Russian operations against India.—M.

has been blocked, in modern times, by the raids of the Turcomans.

The problem taken in hand by Peter the Great, and for the sake of which he despatched two expeditions to Central Asia, was solved at the close of the reign of Alexander II. The railroad to India has been begun, and if the English, on their side, extend the railway from Candahar to Herat, there to meet the Russian line running through Sarakhs, from Kizil Arvat to Herat, it will be possible in nine days, with a short sea-trip, to proceed from Paris to Sukhur on the Indus. In connection with this, it is impossible not to foresee that the passenger traffic, at present running through the Suez Canal, will be largely diverted to the rival route. The journey to India will then no longer be the exclusive privilege of the few individuals at present using the Suez Canal; and 250 million Hindoos, now restricted by their religion from traversing the sea, will have opened out to them a world of travel, of investigation, and of study. Russia will then be able to receive first-hand Indian products, and, on her part, dispose of her corn to the constantly-starving millions of India.

There can be but very little doubt that the section of the railway to Herat could be constructed by an English company, without any English occupation of Afghanistan. All that is necessary is that order and strong authority should be established in Afghanistan, which might be accomplished by the English by those means which, with the same end in view, have been employed by Russia in regard to Khiva and Bokhara.

In this manner Afghanistan would remain a neutral zone between Russia and England, although undoubtedly, English influence would be predominant, on

account of England already controlling a portion of the Afghan population living in the Punjab and the passes.

There should be hardly any difficulty in making a choice between a conflict, in which torrents of blood and treasure would be expended, and a *rapprochement*, sustained by commerce. "A bad peace is better than a just quarrel." Russia desires a peaceful solution of the Central Asian difficulty : England should be inspired by the same sentiment.

BOOK II.

The Russian General Staff on the Afghan War and English Weakness in India.

BOOK II.

THE RUSSIAN GENERAL STAFF ON THE AFGHAN WAR AND ENGLISH WEAKNESS IN INDIA.

Writing the History of the Afghan War at the Office of the Russian General Staff.—Soboleff's position and career.—Lowness of English prestige in Russia.—Soboleff often confused with Skobeleff.—The difference between the two Generals.—England conquered by Afghanistan.—How Russia helped us out of the Afghan muddle.—Impotence of the army of India.—Counsels us not to take Herat.—Battle of Charasia.—Cruelty of the English cavalry.—Afghans better strategists than the English.—The Russians more humane than the English in Asia.—We are cruel because we feel ourselves weak.—The kindly conquest of the Caucasus compared with the war-terror at Cabul.—Ways of communication with India.—The Caspian route the road of invasion.—Conquerors of India.—"Flight of the English in panic-stricken terror to the cover of the Sherpoor cantonments."—A spark only necessary to set India in flames.—Inability of England to occupy Herat.—The greatest strategical error of the Afghan campaign.—England stands to lose more than Russia by a defeat in Central Asia.—Russia and Shere Ali.—Soboleff on Abdurrahman Khan.—English political residents charged with being poisoners.—The astute and tricky English.—The great Russian exploring expedition.—The Herat Question.—Skobeleff on his July reconnaissance of Geok Tepé.—The real cause of our disasters in Afghanistan.—Advantages enjoyed by Skobeleff over Roberts.—The Tsar and the battle

of Maiwand.—A march from Herat to Candahar easier than a march from Candahar to Herat.—Soboleff on the 66th Regiment.—Russia's great superiority over England in Central Asia.—Causes of the disaster at Maiwand summed up.—The people of India ripe for revolution.—Timidity of Primrose and Phayre.—A conflict between England and Russia inevitable in Central Asia.

"The campaigns of 1878 and 1879 have demonstrated to the Eastern world what Sir Henry Durand foretold in 1867, that the Afghans are not able to offer the least effective resistance to a British force whenever it thinks fit to enter their country. They also show that the Russian interference, so much bruited about as the real danger to India when an Indian difficulty occurs, is an entire delusion. These facts having been so clearly proved, the English army will return to India with a greatly increased sense of their power diffused through Asia."—Sir Erskine Perry, "Memorandum against the retention of Candahar," January 10, 1880.

"In 1868 I wrote of the 'miserable military administration' of Russia, and pointed out that British India alone was stronger, in a military sense, for offensive war, than was the Russian empire at the moment."—Sir Charles Dilke. Speech on the Eastern Question, January 15, 1878.

"Is it possible for anyone to say that we now really dread a Russian invasion of India? Has not our experience during recent operations in Afghanistan, comparatively close to the magnificent resources of India, and the accounts we read of Russian difficulties when operating against undisciplined tribes in Central Asia, dissipated the apprehensions of the most inveterate of Russophobists? Or is it possible to apprehend that Russia is likely to subjugate, or to influence Afghanistan so as to make it a base for operations against India?"—Sir Henry Norman, Memorandum against the retention of Candahar, June 26, 1880.

"Nothing is more difficult to define than a shifting policy, of which the whole system consists in having none, and shaping its course according to events. Far from dominating and directing events, the English Cabinet suffered them. It was in tow. This is, unhappily, now the characteristic of that Government's foreign policy whenever it is in the hands of the Conservatives."—"Diplomatic Study on the Crimean War" (Russian Official Publication). London, 1882. Vol. i., pp. 265–266.

Among the persons interviewed by the writer in March 1882, to ascertain their opinion of the Central Asian Question, was Major-General Soboleff, head of the Asiatic Department of the General Staff.* He and

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* See "The Russian Advance towards India," chap. iv., pp. 61–89, and chap. ii., pp. 188–200.

his subordinates were found busily engaged preparing an account of the Afghan war, and the writer was allowed to carry away the impression that it would prove to be one of those elaborate narratives which Continental Powers, and in particular Germany, are accustomed to issue from their military departments. However, these expectations have not been realized. The work now issued proves to be meagre and incomplete, badly printed on the commonest paper, and furnished with wretched maps. It bears the title of "A Page from the History of the Eastern Question: The Anglo-Afghan Conflict. (A Sketch of the War of 1879–80.) By Major-General L. N. Soboleff, of the General Staff." * The work consists of three volumes of 819 pages, two bound in one, and the third apart; and is divided into five parts, the first three bearing date 1880, the fourth 1881, the fifth 1882, and the title pages of both books 1882. A deal of the matter was originally contributed to the organ of the General Staff, "Rooski Invalide," and a portion of it appeared early in 1880 under the title of "The Anglo-Afghan Conflict." When Soboleff began writing his articles for the "Rooski Invalide," he was only a colonel, and held a subordinate position at the General Staff Office. In 1880 he was made head of the Asiatic Department, and his contributions to the "Invalide" almost directly afterwards ceased. His work shows, however, that his new duties did not divert his attention from Afghan affairs, even if they did not compel him to take greater interest in them. In May 1882 Prince Alexander

* Stranitsa eez istoriee vostotchnago voprosa: Anglo-Afghanskaya rasprya. (Otcherk voinee 1879–80.) L. N. Soboleva. St. Petersburg, 1882.

decided to introduce fresh blood into the higher administration of Bulgaria, and cast his choice upon two young officers of the General Staff, both well known for their activity and zeal in the Slavonic cause, to fill the posts of Minister of War and Minister of the Interior. General Kaulbars was chosen for the former, General Soboleff for the latter. In excess of both sharing the same anti-English views, both also were equipped with a knowledge of Central Asia, both held the same opinions of our power in India, and both were earnest advocates of the settlement of the Eastern Question by the seizure of Constantinople.* The appointment of Soboleff to his new post in Bulgaria naturally brought his "investigation" of the Afghan war to a sudden close, and it is due to this circumstance that the narrative ends with the defeat of General Burrows at Maiwand, and the siege of Candahar.

From several points of view the work is a very important one. It is the only existing Russian history of the Afghan war, and its statements are accepted by the Russian public without suspicion of their unreliability in a large number of instances. If ever Russia attempts to attack us in India, it will be owing to her impressions of our weakness there. She will never be restrained by our own impressions of our strength. In this respect great consequence attaches to Soboleff's work, since throughout he inculcates the opinion that we could not oppose the attack of a European enemy, or count upon the natives to assist us against a foe advancing from the north.

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* Soboleff has succeeded in a few short months in becoming the directing spirit in Bulgaria, and is now vigorously engaged in Russifying the country, a task for which he qualified himself while serving at Sofia in 1878 as assistant to the notorious Prince Tcherkasski.—M.

Although issued from a private printing office, the work can hardly be regarded as a non-official production. It was written at the General Staff Office by a General Staff officer, assisted by officials; much of it was published in the organ of the General Staff; and finally, on the appearance of the work, the General Staff issued a circular recommending it to all military libraries as an excellent and reliable history of the war, and inviting officers to subscribe at the General Staff Office for copies of it. It is, consequently, from this work that the Russian army and the Russian bureaucracy are drawing their impressions of our military and political strength in Asia.

The circumstance of Soboleff being an official of high influence and standing, gives the criticisms expressed a weight which would be altogether lacking in the case of an ordinary Russian writer. As head of the Asiatic Department of the General Staff, his very position implied a better acquaintance with Afghan and Indian affairs than that possessed by any other official in the Russian home service. If his work is an indifferent one judged by our standard of military and political criticism, it must not be forgotten that Russians judge of it by their own standard, not by ours. How low that standard is may be seen from the circumstance of the Russian Government publicly promulgating its approval of such a crude production as Soboleff's version of the Afghan war.

The "Anglo-Afghan Conflict" will be said by many to officially inculcate a belief in our military weakness in India. This may be cavilled at by such casuists as Sir Henry Norman; but whether the view be correct or not, it is certainly an indisputable fact that Soboleff

expresses opinions which have been shared all along by the Russian press, independent as well as official. Our naval and military prestige stands low in Russia. The impotence displayed by the Ottoman and the Russian ironclad fleets during the Turkish war, has excited a contempt of naval armaments in general; while the series of disasters provoked by bad generalship and a jelly-fish policy in Afghanistan, Zululand, and the Transvaal, have over and over again provoked the question on the part of Russian writers—If England fails so regularly in her little wars, what hope is there of any success on her side in a contest with a great military power like Russia? Even our brilliant campaign in Egypt has not restored the prestige impaired by previous disasters. In a series of articles that appeared on the campaign in 1882 in the autumn numbers of the "Voenni Sbornik," the organ of the Ministry of War, our successes were explained away and the defects of our army mainly dwelt upon; and in the end the conclusion was arrived at that, "in spite of all recent reforms, the English army is only powerful enough to protect the possessions of England *in time of peace*."

In the following pages we have set forth the whole of the important opinions expressed by General Soboleff in his work, suppressing the purely narrative portions as unnecessary, and for sake of space indulging in comments of our own as sparingly as possible. The reader will often ask himself, "Is this history? Is this really the genuine opinion of a high Russian official, having in his hands one of the most important threads of Russia's policy in the East?" But, as a matter of fact, Soboleff's "Anglo-Afghan Conflict" is not a history. He himself calls it an "investigation." It is really an accusation.

It is a natural outgrowth of that accusatory policy which the Liberal Opposition vehemently pursued in England against our army throughout the Afghan war.*

* * * * * *

In an introduction dated St. Petersburg, May 11–23, 1882, General Soboleff says: "The great Slavonic question is fatally bound up with the position of England in Southern Asia in general and India in particular. It is no secret to anyone that the gradual extension of Russia's power, directed towards the Black Sea coast and the Bosphorus, is accepted by the English as a menace to their supremacy in Asia. Otherwise there would have been no Crimean war.

"When the stirring events of 1877–78 occurred in the Balkan Peninsula and Asia Minor, the Conservative ministry of Great Britain resolved to take an active part

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* The names of Soboleff and Skobeleff are constantly mixed up in English journalism and literature. I myself have repeatedly had Soboleff replaced by Skobeleff by editors and printers in my press contributions, in spite of every precaution to prevent the error occurring. It is not remarkable, therefore, that persons unacquainted with the existence of Soboleff should be guilty of the mistake of quoting his opinions as those of Skobeleff. Thanks to this confusion of names, Skobeleff has been saddled with many silly and spiteful opinions against England, which he would have been ashamed of expressing. Skobeleff did not like England. "I hate England," said he, energetically, to me on one occasion. But this did not prevent him from invariably criticising her in a broad and gentlemanly spirit. He condemned Roberts's executions at Cabul as bad policy, but he did not refrain in consequence from extolling, with glowing face, the march from Cabul to Candahar. He declared Burrows to be "no general," but he added words which showed how keen could be his sympathy with a brave man who had been beaten in the field. Skobeleff had all the elements of a great statesman, a great soldier, and a great critic. It is hard, therefore, that his reputation should suffer by having ascribed to him the crudities and the harsh and ungenerous opinions of an individual, who, however powerful his position, has, after all, but the soul of a clerk.—M.

in the expected European war. But the period of the Crimean war had vanished, never to return. The English Government wavered, and confined themselves to forwarding a small fleet to Constantinople, and establishing a weak Anglo-Indian brigade on the island of Malta.

"One of the causes of the wavering of England, as has been demonstrated in recent times, was the attitude taken up towards India by the Ameer of Afghanistan, Shere Ali Khan. Openly displaying his preference for Russia, the Ameer compelled the English thereby to keep up the Anglo-Indian army at its full strength. This action of the Ameer led the English to seek in Central Asia the re-establishment of their faded prestige. The war they undertook lasted more than two years. It served as a gauge of the strength of the English in India, and in our investigations the reader will find incontrovertible proofs of England's weakness there. In this struggle success fell to the Afghans, and the English were saved by the Sardar Abdurrahman Khan, the Russian candidate for the Afghan throne. In this was delineated the might of Russia in Central Asia, and the assistance she rendered the English.

"Russia does not seek to subvert English authority in India. That is apparent to everyone who has attentively studied our policy in Asia. In that policy there is no secrecy. Its tendency is clear and recognisable. Russia and England have common interests with regard to the peoples dwelling in that part of the world, and our Government, of course, would prefer to have as a neighbour a State established in the European manner, to a barbarous and warlike monarchy. We permit ourselves to express an opinion that the English

will be compelled, by the force of circumstances, to cast away the suspicions nourished by them with regard to the intentions of Russia in Asia, and recognise the necessity for entering into a solid agreement, advantageous to both parties."

Part I. of the work consists of 147 pages, divided into twelve chapters, beginning with a summary of the Afghan campaign of 1878–79, and closing with "The War Terror" at Cabul; and having as appendices the treaty of Gundamuk and the march-route from Peshawur to Cabul. In a preface General Soboleff says, among other things: "The Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78 lowered the prestige of England in the East. The Russian successes in the Caucasus and Balkan peninsula gave the peoples of Asia to understand that a power existed not only not inferior to Great Britain, but even very considerably stronger than the latter. It is no secret that England took no active part in the Turkish war, because she could not rely on any hopes of success. . . . The East, in the sense understood by the English, is divided into three parts: the right flank—China and Japan; the centre—India and Afghanistan; and the left flank—Persia and Turkey. In all these countries England enjoys immense influence; India she rules, and Afghanistan, Persia, and Turkey she seeks to subject to her authority. India is her largest and best market, and to maintain her control over it she keeps up an army of 200,000 men."

Describing the loss occasioned to our prestige by the Treaty of Berlin, General Soboleff observes that "Turkey was ready to cast off our support; Persia preferred the Russian alliance; Afghanistan turned her eyes towards the north; and in India a muttering was heard to the

effect that it was time to think of casting off the English into the sea. The panic this produced in Calcutta and London provoked the Afghan war."

He then gives an account of the Treaty of Gundamuk, the aim of which he declares to have been to bring the whole of Afghanistan, including Herat and Afghan-Turkestan, under the authority of England. The treaty was scattered to the winds by the murder of Cavagnari, for which we ourselves were to blame; our cruelty towards the Afghan tribes during the war with Shere Ali having provoked the bitterest animosity against us. Commenting on the despatch of reinforcements to India to strengthen the army of revenge, he points out (p. 23) that this circumstance demonstrated the weakness of our military power in India. "For two years the English press had been loudly and with one voice declaring that England's power in India was so solid that her army there could sustain a great war with a European foe, and could place 30,000 troops on the Indian frontier. The English public, unaccustomed to military matters, may have believed this; but experts could never understand why the English newspapers exaggerated the military strength of India. In this instance we see that even in a war with Afghanistan, already weakened by a struggle with England and by internecine strife, such a strain was produced that reinforcements had to be sent from home."

Discussing, in the fourth chapter, the plan of the war, on which subject he is able to throw very little light, since, beyond the order to raid upon Cabul and exact revenge, no plan really existed, he observes with reference to a rumour that General Stewart intended advancing from Candahar to Herat (p. 29): "In our

opinion it would be political folly for the English to bury themselves in the direction of Herat, and more so in the direction of the Oxus. Their attention ought to be given to the maintenance of order in their rich Indian possessions, and in the solidifying of their dominion there. Any danger to their power is not to be feared from the north-west, but from India itself."

The fifth chapter deals with the formation of Roberts's column, and contains no remarks of any interest. Describing in the sixth the position of Afghanistan, he points out (p. 44) that the first revolt against Yakoob Khan came from Badakshan, "as might have been expected," and goes on to say: "At the other extremity of Afghan Turkestan, namely in Maimene, which Shere Ali had only conquered in 1875, the people declared for Bokhara. We may here remark that the begdom of Maimene belonged some time to the Emir of Bokhara, and that the Uzbek population very naturally gravitated to their principal political centre." On p. 46 he says: "There can be hardly a doubt that Afghan Turkestan will detach itself from Cabul, and render itself a self-governing state, or more probably a group of distinct khanates, of which, may be, Maimene will fall to Bokhara. There can be hardly a doubt, also, that the whole of Northern Afghanistan, from the Oxus right up to the Hindoo Koosh, will become included by the force of circumstances within the sphere of the immediate influence of Russia. England herself gave rise to this state of affairs, by force of which Russia will receive in Central Asia a regular "scientific frontier."

Of the battle of Charasia he says, at the end of the seventh chapter (p. 64): "The victory was the natural result of the state of things that day. On the one

hand we see a detachment of troops, 5,000 strong, splendidly armed, excellently disciplined, and led by a talented general and skilled officers ; and on the other a mob of half-disciplined troops, not more than 7,000 in number, without leaders, badly armed, and hardly knowing what discipline meant. The victory of Charasia was attended by important strategical and political results. It gave the English the city of Cabul and the surrounding fruitful valley. The acquisition of this valley enabled the commissariat to complete the scanty supplies the column had brought with it. At the same time, with this victory was attained the principal political aim of the Kurram column—it was now possible to exact revenge for the destruction of Major Cavagnari's mission. The executions which the English exacted for the sake of revenge were, in truth, as we shall see further on, distinguished by their barbarity. They cast a stain upon General Roberts and his companions, and exposed the brutal instincts of the Anglo-Indian troops. They are not to be justified even on the score of military necessity, since they aroused the national passions of the Afghans and, in consequence, placed the force in a dangerous position."

Speaking of the pursuit of the Afghans by General Massey on the 9th of October, the day before the entry of Roberts into Cabul, Soboleff observes (p. 73) : "In chasing the fugitive Afghans the English cavalry showed what the Afghans might expect from their conquerors. Quarter was given to no one ; those taken with arms in their hands were shot. 'Give no quarter'—such was the watchword pronounced by General Roberts. *English interests* demanded cruelty, and those interests, as understood by the English, were higher than all other interests,

even those of humanity. Justice, humanity, mercy to the enemy—all these *pitiful* words sound savagely in the ears of the English when the question concerns what is and what is not to their *advantage*."

Of the fighting in the Shutargardan Pass, the third week in October, he says (p. 83): "In the affair in the pass the *tactical* success was on the side of the Anglo-Indian troops, clearly displaying their superiority in discipline and armament above the Afghans; but the *strategical* success was on the Afghan side. The English were compelled to abandon the sole means of communication with Peshawur, by which alone Roberts might receive reinforcements and stores. This was the first serious defeat experienced by Roberts's column. The Afghans clearly showed that the Charasia fight and the occupation of their capital had not broken their spirit. It is worthy of surprise that the Afghans should have proved themselves better strategists than the English. We have already pointed out that Roberts was guilty of a great error in changing the front of his attack upon Cabul; the Afghans availed themselves of this blunder, and on their side changed their attacking front—they threw themselves upon the south of Cabul, attacked the communications of the English, and compelled them to evacuate the pass."

Closing a description of the junction of the Peshawur force with Roberts's column, occupying the whole of Chapter X., he affirms (p. 99) that the column was "not in a condition to inspire the weak and disorganized people of Afghanistan with either fear or respect." In the following chapter many extracts are given from the malignant articles which the "Daily News," out of pure, or rather impure, spirit of faction, penned against

General Roberts at that period with reference to his treatment of the people of Cabul. On p. 105 he says, respecting Yakoob Khan's treachery: "We do not doubt in the slightest that he was in his heart the enemy of the English." Making him pose as a patriot, he observes further on (p. 108): "The unfortunate Yakoob Khan fell a victim to the insatiable and dangerous policy of the English in Asia. This policy will probably lead to a catastrophe, in which the English will suffer. In the present instance the English Government decided to destroy the powerful Afghan monarchy which it had established . . . because the Afghans had of recent years turned their eyes towards the north." Translating in full Roberts's letter of November 22, 1880, on the influence of Russia at Cabul, he says that he thinks it "worthy of attention." (p. 112) ". . . We should like to believe that what Roberts said of the influence of Russia at Cabul was true, but we very much doubt it, and think that it was put forward to justify the risky policy of the Beaconsfield Cabinet in Afghanistan." He further thinks that "the re-establishment of Yakoob Khan's authority at Cabul, and the proclamation of an amnesty," would have been a wise policy for us to have pursued; "at any rate, Yakoob would have served as an intermediary between the English and the people; which people the English did not understand. But they preferred anarchy, and probably lost their influence for ever in Afghan-Turkestan, and, may be, in Herat also."

The approach of winter, according to Soboleff, found the army "master only of the ground on which it stood; anarchy seethed around it" (p. 113). "The personal character of General Roberts would not allow him to pursue any other course of action than that of

provoking fear in the minds of the natives, and here we cannot but point out the very great difference between our mode of operations in Central Asia and that of the English in Afghanistan. There is not a single case in which we did not free the natives of their taxes, or mitigate them. This, and our respect for their religion, and our humanity to the fallen enemy, with many other things not to be seen on the part of the English, led to the rapid pacification of the region of Central Asia conquered by us. In such cases where we occupied territories which we did not intend to permanently hold, such as the Karshi district in 1868, and the Sharisiabs district in 1870, we refrained altogether from meddling with the internal administration of the country. A brilliant illustration of this is the occupation of Khiva in 1873 by General Kaufmann. It is beyond doubt that previous to that conquest the Khan, Seid Mahomed, was one of the bitterest of our enemies. Khiva was occupied, and the Khan fled to the Turcomans. Recovering after awhile from his fear, and seeing how humanely the Russians were comporting themselves towards the enemy, the Khan appeared before General Kaufmann, and was reinstated in his authority. The result is obvious. The Khan respects and listens to the counsels of the Russian authorities" (which, considering that Russia maintains a garrison of 6,000 troops in close proximity to the Khivan capital, is not remarkable—M.), "while the Russian Government, on its part, respects the authority of the Khan, and refrains from any interference in the internal affairs of the Khanate. Did the English act in the same way towards Yakoob Khan? It is clear they did just the reverse, and this because they felt themselves weak" (p. 118).

The thirteenth chapter is devoted wholly to "The War Terror" at Cabul, largely based upon an article by Frederick Harrison in the "Fortnightly Review," which appeared when all manner of calumnies were in circulation respecting Roberts's operations, and which the "Daily News" and other Opposition newspapers did their utmost to exaggerate. The part which the Liberal press played during this period must ever be regarded with regret by all who are proud of England's good name. Let party politicians and party newspapers indulge in venomous attacks on each other as much as they please, but the army should always be respected. The charges they brought forward day after day have been proved to have been false, but those who formulated those accusations have never had the decency to openly retract them. Having no interest to get at the truth of the matter, it is not surprising that Russian writers should ignore the controversies which the calumnies provoked, and which ultimately exposed the baselessness of them. Thanks to such newspapers as the "Daily News," and to such writers as Mr. Harrison, Russia firmly believes that the English army was guilty of every species of barbarity in Afghanistan, and lays hold of the circumstance as an excuse for her own real and well-attested military excesses.

Adverting to the "harsh general's" acts in "executing the natives, making requisitions by force, destroying and burning villages, mercilessly shooting prisoners, &c." (p. 127), Soboleff devotes several pages to a collaboration of all the lies that were published with reference to the burning alive of Afghan prisoners on the battle-field of Charasia, carefully omitting the refutation afterwards satisfactorily furnished by General Roberts and the

"Daily News" special correspondent with the force.* A long translation follows of Harrison's article, and his opinion that "the English army more frequently occupies itself than any other army in the world with hanging, shooting, or punishing prisoners of war," is printed by Soboleff in italics, and provoked the following remarks (pp. 135-36): "In a war with Asiatics, who only understand the right of Force, it often happens that crushing blows have to be inflicted, not only on troops, but on towns and settlements also. But when a struggle is over, the troops of Russia, observing the sacred duty of military discipline, never allow themselves to ill-treat the fallen enemy. Never, even in the Caucasus, where a long, sanguinary war was waged, did the Russians ever instal cold-blooded, calculating Terror. The Russian officer and soldier are merciful to the enemy; therein lies the secret of our prestige; it is our strength; and with that weapon we shall conquer the English in Asia. Every proper-minded person must revolt against the injustice and the egotism of the Anglo-Indian commanders, but what must have been the thoughts of those against whom those injustices were directed? What must have been the feelings of the Afghans? Unhappily, the Afghans do not enjoy the blessings possessed by civilised peoples. Their voice cannot be heard! Their energetic protests can only take the form of action, and we shall directly see the desperate efforts they made to expel the English from Cabul."

* See "The Afghan War of 1879-80," by Howard Hensman, special correspondent of the "Daily News," pp. 146-47; also p. 169 for a refutation of the charge that villages had been burnt and the people turned out into the snow. Mr. Hensman expresses great indignation at these calumnies, which, it may be noted, were chiefly given prominence to in the leader columns of the very paper he represented.—M.

To retort upon this with citations of the many massacres and brutalities committed by Russian generals in their conquests and "pacifications" is a task too ungracious to bend to here. If indignation be expressed against those who lie in the face of facts, it should be directed in the first place rather against Mr. Frederick Harrison than against General Soboleff.

A translation of the Treaty of Gundamuk, and an account of the road between Cabul and Peshawur, compiled from V. V. Grigorieff's "Kabulistan and Kafiristan," close the first part of Soboleff's work. The second contains seventeen chapters, extending from "The Afghan Victories at Cabul" to "The Junction of General Stewart's Detachment with the Cabul Force;" preceded by a "Sketch of the History of Afghanistan, and the Geography and Statistics of the Country." The latter is a bare narrative of 46 pages, from which we take the following opinions:—

"In the campaign of 1838–42 (p. 165) the English lost more than 30,000 people and 50,000 camels; expending upwards of 100,000,000 roubles. Their rule in India became shaken, the independence of Afghanistan became established, and the Sikh monarchy grew in might. As to the erection of any serious barrier to the forward movement of the Russians in Asia, of which Lord Auckland had dreamed, there could not be any question on that point. That side of the affair had entered the path of history, and the English were compelled to seek fresh measures to strengthen their position in India. *From that time the great Eastern Question entered upon a fresh phase.** The English com-

* The italics throughout are Soboleff's.—M.

menced to seriously think of drawing away the attention of Russia from Central Asia. . . . The Crimean war was brought about by the English to increase their prestige and strengthen their power in India (p. 167). . . . In 1857, England, tugging France behind her, decided upon a war with China. *The Eastern Question, in its broad sense, acquired immense significance, and the English decided to avail themselves of everything, in order once for all to solve that grandiose problem in favour of their interests. Into the rayon of their feverish activity entered Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, and China. Great Britain, as it were, aimed at rendering itself the lord of all those countries.* It is difficult to define what the fulfilment of this extensive programme of the leading naval power might have led to, but the unexpected and terrible mutiny of the sepoys in India in 1857 undoubtedly largely disarranged the plans of the English. The Indian Mutiny was an echo of the Crimean war; it shook the position of the English in India; but military fortune favoured them, and the insurrection was cruelly crushed. The head of the revolt, Nana Sahib, disappeared, and the people of India believe that he lives in Russia; that is, in the state from which the people expect their emancipation" (p. 168).

Speaking of the frontiers of Afghanistan, he says (page 174):—"The frontier adjacent to Chinese Turkestan and Russian Pamir is undetermined and but little known. From the point of the Pamir summit, as far as which Russian topographical surveys have been effected, and whither a Russian detachment has penetrated,*

* Probably General Abramoff's in 1878. This was one of the three that were to have marched with the Afghans upon India. Its movement southward continued for some time after the Treaty

to the extreme inhabited point belonging to Afghanistan is 80 versts (53 miles). This intervening expanse is inhabited by no one, and may be considered as part of the Russian province of Turkestan." His account of the "ways of communication in Afghanistan" (p. 190), contain several remarks of interest. "Afghanistan occupies an extremely important geographical position in the old world. Through it pass land routes joining Europe and India together, *i.e.* binding the common interests of more than 550 million people. Asia Minor, the Caucasus, and Persia are united to India by Afghanistan. The roads passing outside Afghanistan, to the south of it, through Southern Beloochistan, possess, on account of their desert character, no significance whatever. Afghanistan serves to bind Central Asia and Russian Turkestan to India. The road passing between Herat and Candahar is the principal road joining South-west Asia, and through it Europe also, with India. Along its entire length the transport of wheeled vehicles and artillery is possible. The road traverses the most populous part of Afghanistan and Persia, and has abundance of water, transport, and provisions, together with a sufficiency of forage and fuel. From Astrabad, situated at the south-east corner of the Caspian, to the river Indus, the road traverses the following places:—

Meshed	.	.	367	miles.
Herat	.	.	229	,,
Sebzawar	.	.	84	,,
Farrah	.	.	79½	,,

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of Berlin was signed, and provoked sufficient stir on the Indian border to give rise to the report that Abramoff had reached Cabul. For a while, Stolietoff was mistaken in India for Abramoff.—M.

Vashir	. . .	79½ miles
Girishk	. . .	60 ,,
Candahar	. . .	75 ,,
Quetta	. . .	146 ,,
Shikapoor	. . .	207 ,,
Total	. .	1,327 ,,

In this manner from the Caspian Sea to the Indus is a distance of 1,327 miles. Were this route organized, Russian goods, making use of the highway of the Volga and Caspian, might penetrate to Afghanistan and India. By means of this route there might be an interchange of European and Indian wares. At the beginning of the Middle Ages this interchange was effected by means of a route running through the town of Itil, the ruins of which exist near the mouth of the Volga. This route, in consequence of the tumults in Central Asia and the forays of the Turcomans, was long ago closed to commerce. Peter the Great strove to reopen it.

"Another important road, uniting Eastern Europe with India, traverses the Kirghiz steppes to Bokhara, and thence crosses Northern Afghanistan, *viâ* the Hindoo Koosh, to Cabul and Peshawur. The length of it, reckoning from Orenburg, the extremity of the European railway system, to Peshawur is 2,032 miles.

River Syr Daria (Mailebash ferry)	668 miles.
Bokhara	485 ,,
Karshi	94 ,,
Mazar-i-Sherif	215½ ,,
Tashkoorgan	41 ,,
Rooi	99½ ,,
Bamian	105½ ,,

Cabul	130½ miles
Peshawur	193 ,,
Total . . .	2,032 ,,

This route is not to be compared with the other one, as much on account of its length as by reason of its drawbacks. Between Orenburg and Bokhara, for a distance of 1,153 miles, it traverses the Kirghiz steppes, barren and unpopulated wastes. To the south of the Oxus it proceeds to the foot of the Hindoo Koosh, and traverses that colossal range by a pack-road, up which a conveyance can only crawl by the greatest exertion.

"Between these two roads passes another intermediate one, running from Krasnovodsk to Kizil Arvat, Geok Tepé, Askabad, and Herat to India. Its length, reckoning from Michael's Bay, on the Caspian, to the Indus, is as follows:—

Kizil Arvat . . .	147 miles.
Geok Tepé . . .	89½ ,,
Sarakhs . . .	205½ ,,
Herat . . .	179 ,,
Shikapoor . . .	732 ,,
Total . .	1,353 ,,

With the repression of the predatory instincts of the Tekke people, occupying a considerable extent of this route, it has acquired immense importance, since, on the one hand, the English have already constructed a railway from the Indus to Sibi, in the direction of Candahar, for a distance of 139 miles, and, on the other, the Russians have carried a railroad from Michailovsk to Kizil Arvat, 147 miles. With the extension of the former from

Sibi to Candahar, 476 miles will further have been laid, consequently there will then remain in the immediate future only 877 miles of ordinary road between Europe and India, the rest being covered with rails. When the rivalry of England with Russia in Asia comes to a close, the rails may be laid down along this section, and it will be possible then to journey from London to Calcutta in nine days.

"Through Afghanistan have passed all the great conquerors proceeding to India from the shores of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and Caspian, and from the Central Asian khanates. The historical events of ancient times and of the Middle Ages, occurring in Southern Asia, have given rise to a saying among the people that '*No one can be Sovereign of India who is not ruler of Cabul.*' Another saying has it that '*The key of the Asiatic Empire lies in Southern Afghanistan, near Candahar.*' The English regard Herat as the key of India. However difficult it may be to traverse Afghanistan, however high may be the Hindoo Koosh and other ranges of the country, conquerors have always accomplished their aim and penetrated to India. The first conqueror of India, as is well known, was Alexander the Great. After him may be cited Mahmood of Ghuzni, seven times penetrating to India; Tamerlane, issuing from Bokhara, traversing the Hindoo Koosh and Cabul, and entering India by the Khyber Pass; Sultan Baber, of Khokand, by the same route; the son of Sultan Baber, and finally, Nadir Shah of Persia, who reached it *viâ* Herat." Describing the Afghan army, he says (p. 196):—"In the campaign of 1879–80 the Afghan artillery general, the celebrated Mahomet Jan, was able to organize a powerful militia from a few Afghan tribes,

and beat in the open field an extensive body of Anglo-Indian troops, under the command of the brave and talented General Roberts, and compelled him to shut himself up in the entrenchments of Sherpoor."

Having described Afghanistan, Soboleff continues his narrative. "December, 1879, found the English army," he states, "in a most critical position . . . . The name of Roberts had lost all prestige, he had earned the hatred of the people, and the fear he had provoked had disappeared" (p. 197). . . . "We will not describe all the horrors which took place at Cabul and in its vicinity, and which exceeded, according to the London jurist Harrison, the *savagery of Bashi Bazooks*, and refer the reader to the English newspapers, which contain a mass of the most interesting facts; we will only remark that the patience of the Afghans was exhausted, and that all were inspired with a desire for a bloody revenge."

The actions from December 10th to December 13th he claims as victories for the Afghans, and he reads Roberts a long lecture on his contempt for the enemy (p. 205), which, he maintains, was the cause of our defeats. The battle of the Asmai Heights, December 14, he sets down as "another Afghan victory—the English troops were completely put to flight" (p. 209); "the triumph of the Afghans was complete" (p. 211). The despatch of reinforcements from England to India provokes the remark that "the English had to use every effort to gain even a relative success over feeble Afghanistan. We again direct the reader's attention to this circumstance, since it displays in the fullest the outward military strength of the English in Southern Asia. The English believe that their Indian army can

easily place on the borders of India 30,000, and even 50,000 troops, which, in their opinion, is sufficient not only for a struggle with an Asiatic Power, but with any European one thinking of marching upon India. The Afghan war is interesting in this respect, as allowing the possibility of gauging the military position in India. We see that the first defeat in Afghanistan compelled the English to leave India almost without troops" (p. 215–16). Again, "In reviewing General Gough's movement we see facts confirming our doubts of Roberts having more than 5,000 men fit for duty, and we may here remark that a careful study of the two Afghan campaigns has led us to believe that the military organization of the Indian army, and in particular the Intendance Branch, is far from being distinguished by those high qualities which might guarantee the English durable military success."

In Chapter XVI., devoted to an account of "The march of the troops to extricate General Roberts's detachment," he lays great stress on the slowness of the movement, and comments on the little care our columns took to render themselves secure from the sudden onslaughts of the enemy. This, he imagines, proceeded from "too much self-reliance." The Government of India was equally to blame in this respect, and he says (p. 228) that "it ought to have known that there was limit to the military power of the English in India. Beyond its borders, even in a struggle with weakly Afghanistan, it showed itself to be almost impotent. We consider that the English did not accomplish those aims in Central Asia they sought to attain by a successful Afghan war, and we cannot but wonder at those gigantic plans with regard to Herat, Afghan-Turkestan,

and Merv, disclosed by the Conservative Ministry—plans which to carry out would render necessary an increase of upwards of 50,000 troops to the Indian army."

The account of the "Siege of Sherpoor by the Afghans" in Chapter XVII. opens thus: "The series of victories gained by the Afghans around Cabul had compelled, as we have seen, a powerful English force to fly in panic-stricken terror to the cover of the Sherpoor cantonments." "The English," he continues, "affirm that they were surrounded by masses of Afghans, 40,000 in number; but this seems to us to be an exaggeration. We believe, and not without foundation, that the army of Mahomet Jan, together with the Kohistanis, did not exceed 15,000 men." Further on (p. 233) he insists that the "English were overcome by a panic," and that "the English don't like to acknowledge themselves defeated . . . . Thus, on the 14th of December, Roberts was thoroughly defeated by Mahomet Jan, and yet, thanks to a success gained in the morning by a portion of the troops under General Baker, the English were ready to believe in the success of the whole day. Not only is a refusal to acknowledge their defeats a distinctive quality of the English, but they are also given to extreme, and often gross, exaggerations of their successes. 'The affair was brilliant, obstinate, and a bloody one,' they often say, and then go on to add that their losses consisted in only 'one wounded,' and that 'lightly.' 'The advance was desperate, and the position frightful,' they telegraphed regarding the affair on the Shutargardan of October 19, 1879, 'for three days we were surrounded by the Afghans; the enemy poured a fire on the spot where we got our water from.' The Shutargardan affair was elevated almost to the rank of

the defence of Sevastopol or Shipka; the Queen-Empress despatched a special message thanking in warm language the heroes of that 'brilliant affair.' Yet the total loss of the English during those three days of *desperate fighting* consisted only of seven men."

People who live in glass houses should not throw stones. To omit all reference to the proverbial "one Cossack killed," we have only to fall back on an official list of losses in the various great Russian battles in Central Asia to see how easy it is to retort upon General Soboleff.

Losses in Central Asian battles in the open:—*

		Killed.
1860.	Oozoon-Agatch . .	2
1866.	Irdjar	0
1868.	Samarcand . . .	2
1868.	Zeraboolak . . .	0
1868.	Karshi	2
1870.	Koolekalan Heights .	7
1871.	Ketman . . .	2
1871.	Alimtoo	0
1871.	Tchin-tcha Khodzi . .	1
1873.	Tchandeer . . .	4
1875.	Makhram . . .	5
	Total in eleven battles .	25

In one battle alone, Makhram, the Russians killed 20,000 of the enemy, with a loss of only five killed and nine wounded on their side.

There is nothing worthy of notice in Soboleff's

* Taken from Colonel Kostenko's "Turkestanski Kri," St. Petersburg, 1880, vol. iii. p. 289. For other lists see "Merv, the Queen of the World," p. 401.—M.

account of the "siege of Sherpoor," except his opinion (p. 245), that the English cavalry was "afraid of the Afghans; always appeared late on the scene, did not know how to manœuvre, and did not fulfil outpost duties as it ought to have done." On the approach of the relieving force, "the Afghans quietly withdrew" (p. 245) . . . "The English did not follow them, but continued to fire . . . . At last, the Afghans having retired a respectable distance, the English decided to occupy a village lying on the route of march of General Charles Gough. The affair of December 23 came to a close. The English loudly proclaimed it as a brilliant success over the Afghans. We do not regard it as a victory for the English. The fact of the matter was, Mahomet Jan clearly recognised that without artillery he could not take the strong position of Sherpoor. He hoped that a prolonged blockade would compel the English sometime or other to retreat to Jellalabad, or to submit to him. He strongly relied on the Gilzais checking the advance of the Peshawur column, and when this was not realized he recognised that he ought not to waste his men in a fruitless assault, and occupied himself with a quiet withdrawal of his principal force from Cabul. He knew of the approach of the head of the Peshawur column better than Roberts, and hence hastened the quicker to fulfil his cleverly projected plan of retreat. To accomplish this, a false attack on the English position was undertaken; and since the Kohistani route lies to the north, *i.e.* in an opposite direction to the Ghuzni, Maidan, and Logar tribes, he made it the duty of the first to attract the attention of the English to the contrary side of the retreat of the principal part of his army. The English once more let slip a good oppor-

tunity for inflicting a defeat even on a part of the army of Mahomet Jan, and rendered it possible for that clever Afghan general to fulfil one of the most difficult manœuvres in war : to retreat quietly and without loss. We may remark that these conclusions are borne out by the statements of the English themselves. The English only quitted their entrenchments when the Afghans had completely evacuated the environs. In what, then, consisted their victory ? They were delighted at having at last escaped from their humiliating position. We can understand their joy, but we cannot praise their action. On the other hand, the operations of Mahomet Jan are worthy of every praise."

Again, further on (p. 248) : "The English loudly extolled their brilliant defence of Sherpoor, but we are unable to detect a single trait in that defence which merits that designation. The English army shut itself up in a fortress, and did not dare to issue from it. We cannot refrain from contrasting the Sherpoor defence with the defence of Samarcand by our glorious Turkestan troops in the summer of 1868. The external circumstances of both affairs were alike. Sherpoor was invested by the army of Mahomet Jan ; Samarcand was surrounded by the armed militia of Sharisiabs and the populace of the city. Against the English, reckoning the people of Cabul, were 30,000 men (this refers to December 14) ; the same number opposed the garrison of the citadel of Samarcand. Sherpoor was invested for nine days, Samarcand for seven. But the differences between the two consist in this : the Anglo-Indian army at Sherpoor comprised 5,000 sabres and bayonets and 30 guns ; the Russian garrison of Samarcand, 752 sabres and bayonets and 28 guns, of which latter 24

were Bokharan cannon, and only four of them fit for use. The Afghans did not assault Sherpoor; the citadel of Samarcand was subjected to incessant onslaughts. The English made no sorties; the Russian garrison availed itself of every opportunity to slip out, in consequence of which we lost, during the siege, 48 killed and 171 wounded—in all 219 men; the English losing on their part 89 men, of whom 9 were killed. In a word, the powerful garrison of Sherpoor took up a strictly passive defensive position."

Describing in the nineteenth chapter the condition of the Cabul force after the removal of the investment of Sherpoor, General Soboleff repeats (p. 253) his previous opinion that the Afghan war showed India to be incapable of throwing an efficient and powerful army beyond her border, and comes to the conclusion, in italics, that the "*attacking element of the Anglo-Indian army is weak.*" The "Sherpoor catastrophe," he adds, "considerably circumscribed these broad strategical plans which the English, flushed by their October successes, had indulged their fancy with." Further, "in India a crisis arose. *The power of the English had been placed in a very unfavourable light*" (p. 254). . . . "The English know very well that *a spark is only necessary to set in a blaze the inflammable materials which exist in abundance throughout the Peninsula.*"

Quoting a number of extracts from the "Daily News," to prove that the Afghan war had plunged India into deeper poverty, he observes (p. 258): "For more than four years the London and Anglo-Indian press has been inculcating the necessity, day after day, of taking measures on the north-west frontier of India to counteract the Russian forward movement in Central Asia.

Such an alarm, without doubt, has no real basis. The conviction that Russia seeks to swallow up, without limit, territory in Central Asia is founded on a false impression of our operations in that part of Asia. This impression excites the English public to alarm and agitation, and provokes the Ministry to aimless, difficult, and even dangerous conquests. Our prestige in Central Asia is, indeed, powerful, but it derives its force not so much from our material as from our moral superiority. We treat the natives as beings having the same right to exist as ourselves; to the native states, however weak they may be, we comport ourselves without gasconade, and respect their rights. We have no special *Asiatic* policy in Asia; our policy there is founded *on the same principles of international law as in Europe.* In that lies our strength and our superiority over the English. The latter, by force of their innate character, act in a precisely diametrically opposite manner. They love to triumph over the weak, and to make the latter feel their inferiority. The English ought to recognise that the durability of their dominion in India is not threatened by Russian bayonets, but by the ever-spreading moral prestige of the Russian name. So long as the Russians were unknown in Central Asia, the English rested quietly in India, and did what they liked. But, lo! a hundred-tongued rumour began to spread about tidings of the approach of a new European power, humane, merciful, and just, and, therefore, also strong. This rumour flew over the Hindoo Koosh, traversed Afghanistan, and penetrated to India. The English themselves helped to spread the rumour, and, in declaring war against the hapless Shere Ali, showed the people of India that they were in terror of this new power."

General Soboleff describes Herat in the next chapter, preparatory to proving that we had the intention, in 1879, of occupying that place. Comparing the Oxus-Cabul line of advance upon India with the Herat-Candahar line, he dwells on the marked inferiority of the former, and affirms that "whether an army descended to the Oxus from Cabul, or ascended from the Oxus to it, the operation would be of the most difficult and dangerous character" (p. 262). Of Herat, he says: "And, indeed, in all Central Asia, and even, we may say, in all Southern Asia, there is no place more important, from a military point of view, than Herat. Asia Minor, the Caucasus, Persia, Turkestan, and Afghanistan, with Beloochistan and India, are all connected one with the other by this city. Its territory is remarkable for its wealth of corn, the surplus of which is sufficient to support an army 100,000 strong, together with its transport. The transport of such an army, necessarily immense, could be furnished by the local resources. Through Herat runs the sole road traversable by a large army. Between it and lower India no natural obstacles whatever exist. Attaining Candahar, an army marching upon India may advance further by several routes, and force the Gomal, Dera-Gazi-Khan, and Bolan passes, or even the roads lying further to the north, running through the valleys of Khost, Kurram, and Cabul. The southern passes, we may observe, are more convenient than the northern ones for reaching India. The national interests of the people of India long ago appraised the value of Herat. A body of European troops established in that city, and standing with its front to the south-east, would draw upon it the attention of the whole population. In that lies the moral significance of a

military occupation of Herat, and it is not without reason that a number of English experts, knowing India well, have expressed their belief that, were an enemy to occupy Herat with a powerful force, the English army, without having fired a shot, would consider itself half beaten. This belief may appear somewhat exaggerated from an exclusively military point of view, but the English, in discussing the possibility of military operations in Southern Asia in the future, justly refrain from separating the *political* question from them. And this can be understood: the Indian Peninsula is populated with races for the most part hostile to the English dominion."

Mentioning various circumstances to demonstrate that England intended occupying Herat, he says (p. 267): "We have seen that the Afghans beat General Roberts's detachment in several engagements in December 1879, and compelled him to shut himself up in Sherpoor. We called those engagements brilliant victories for the Afghans. And, indeed, those victories had something more than a mere local significance. They fatally influenced the whole course of the Afghan war, and *compelled the English to give up the idea of occupying Herat.*"

Soboleff then describes the operations of the southern column, after the news reached General Sir Donald Stewart of the murder of Cavagnari. For Stewart he expresses a very high opinion, as a "careful and talented general" (p. 281). "The idea of a march to Herat," he asserts, "arose with the English after the battle of Charasia and the occupation of Cabul. The staff of the army had reason to believe that a complete success gained by the Kurram force before the capital of

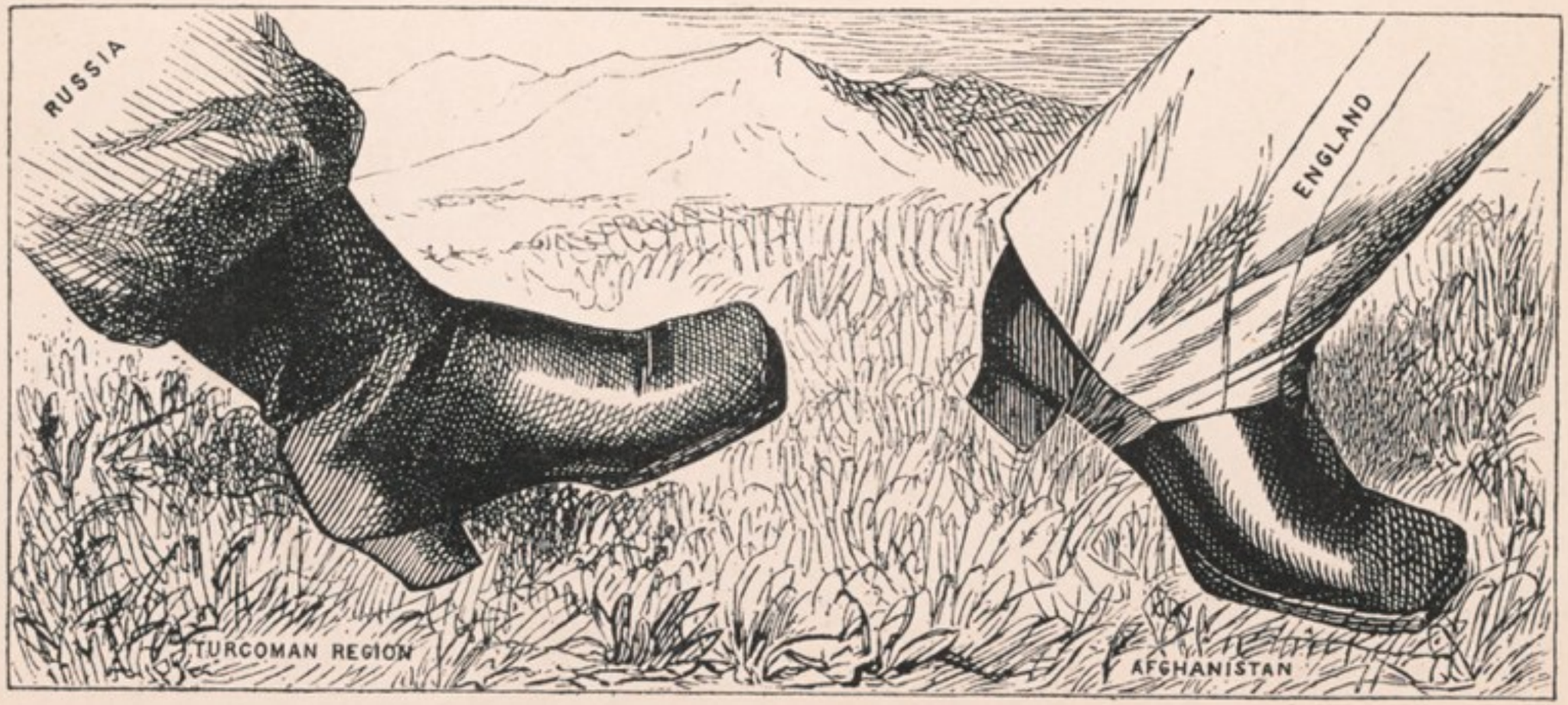
Afghanistan, would serve to pacify the Afghans and cause them to submit to the English demands; but this calculation was not borne out by events" (p. 285). Quoting from the "Central News" telegrams, London correspondence of the "Neue Freie Presse," and the "Civil and Military Gazette of India," to prove that the notion of a march to Herat was entertained by the Government, he clenches his chain of proof with, "The newspaper 'Globe,' the very one that, thanks to the kindly offices of Mr. Marvin, published a secret document during the Berlin Congress, announced that at the end of December 1879 a Cabinet Council deliberated upon the necessity of immediately occupying Herat, *in view of the impending military operations* in Central Asia. Viceroy Lytton, in one of his speeches, plainly declared that he intended despatching an expedition in the spring against Herat" (pp. 286–7).

General Soboleff gives the following as the causes of the collapse of the project for occupying Herat (p. 289): "1. The December events of 1879, which showed how difficult it was to conquer the Afghan militia, and the subsequent fruitless negotiations with the chiefs, extending to March, which showed that satisfactory results could only be gained by the aid of the sword. 2. The failure of the negotiations with Persia for marching simultaneously upon Herat with English and Persian troops, which encountered serious extraneous diplomatic difficulties, and did not lead to the desired result. 3. The appearance of Abdurrahman Khan on the scene, and the possibility of an alliance between him and Ayoub Khan of Herat. 4. The inability of the Candahar force, in its existing condition, to occupy Herat."

To have marched upon Herat without the aid of

"CAUSE AND EFFECT:

RUSSIA ADVANCING UPON AFGHANISTAN, ENGLAND RETIRING FROM IT."



RUSSIAN CARICATURE PUBLISHED DURING THE CONTROVERSY RESPECTING THE EVACUATION OF CANDAHAR

Persia would have required 10,000 infantry, 3,000 cavalry, and 800 artillery, or, in all, 13,800 men. Of this number 7,000 would have been needed to protect the line of advance, twenty-eight days' march long, leaving only 6,800 available for active service at Herat. Upwards of 60,000 camels would have been required for the transport. Granted that these could have been obtained, the force would not have reached Herat in less than fifty or sixty days (*sic.*); it would have had no forage or food; it would have been enfeebled; its experience with the natives would have been the same as at Cabul; and in the end, after a general rising, it would have had to have taken up a defensive position, as in the case of Roberts at Sherpoor. The matter would have been different could the English have sent 20,000 troops to Herat, leaving 15,000 to guard Candahar and the road between it and India. But, in the absence of transport, the despatch of 20,000 men to Herat was an almost impossible task" (p. 291).

Having been compelled to resign the idea of occupying Herat, General Soboleff states that England decided to march the Candahar force to Cabul, *viâ* Ghuzni, and devotes the 24th and 25th chapters to a narrative of the operations connected with that movement. There is very little of this that need be quoted, except the opinion that the gathering of the Afghans at various points indicated that they were altogether unconquered.

Of the battle of Ahmed Kheyl, he says (p. 305):—"The battle of April 19th before Ghuzni may be placed on a level with the Charasia affair, won by General Roberts in 1879 before Cabul. The result of the latter was the occupation of Cabul; of the former, the occupation of Ghuzni, the principal centre of the coalition of

the Afghan tribes hostile to the English. In both affairs the Anglo-Indian troops displayed steadiness and bravery, and their commanders calculation and calmness. Both affairs displayed also one defect of the English troops—their inability to pursue the enemy. Let us add, that neither battle broke down the opposition of the Afghans."

Soboleff does not approve of the retirement of Stewart from Ghuzni. "It was accepted," he says (p. 308), "by the natives as a defeat. Although Stewart marched on to Cabul, still he left Ghuzni behind him without finally dispersing the Afghans and pacifying the country. *In Asia the evacuation of a town once occupied is almost always regarded as a sign of defeat.* The spirited Afghans very well understood that Stewart's detachment, surrounded by the numerous Afghan levies, could not long remain at Ghuzni. He was compelled to retreat, and we allow ourselves to express the conviction that the *march of Stewart upon Ghuzni and Cabul was one of the greatest strategical errors of the English General Staff.*"

His description of the Cabul force during the first three months of 1880 contains nothing of interest, except a note on page 314 with reference to the statement of one of the English officers, that the army was tired of the campaign, "not having the longing for conquest peculiar to Russian officers in Turkestan." "This remark," says Soboleff, "we cannot allow to pass unchallenged. The English have relatively always conducted more wars in Asia than we have. Their wars, indeed, are incessant. They can hardly avoid them. If they did, they would risk losing their *prestige*. It is always useful for the weak to display their skill from time to time."

The arrival of Stewart at Cabul was attended with no results; the country traversed between Candahar and Cabul continued as hostile as ever, and the people of Cabul threatened again to rise against the combined forces and shut them up once more in Sherpoor. General Soboleff cannot tell how the English would have got out of the mess in which they had involved themselves, had not Abdurrahman Khan "suddenly appeared on the scene and saved their honour" (page 357). This opinion closes the second part, and concludes the first volume, to which is attached an appendix, headed "The War Terror," and containing a full translation of the protest raised by the Peace Society against General Roberts in December 1879, when the Opposition newspapers were full of mendacious and unpatriotic charges against our brave army in Afghanistan. General Soboleff follows this with a bitter onslaught, not only against Roberts, but against England in general and the Conservative party in particular. "Wherever the English have interests, the people groan beneath the English yoke" (p. 363). A translation succeeds this outburst of the charges made by Dr. William Russell, the famous Crimean correspondent of the *Times*, against the English army in the Transvaal. General Roberts's reply to the accusations of cruelty brought against his army, Soboleff describes as "naive," and he notes with satisfaction that it was "received with a general laugh of ridicule by the House of Commons. . . . . To the Liberal Party, *i.e.* the section of the British nation having the largest amount of common-sense, it appeared humiliating that the troops should have behaved in such a brigand-like manner in a country where they ought to have placed European civilisation in strong contrast

with Asiatic barbarism" (p. 369). In conclusion, Soboleff charges England with "treating Asiatics as a people of a lower race, while Russia treats them as men," and observes, in italics, that it is not without cause the conviction has grown up among them that "*Russia is immeasurably stronger than England.*"

The third part of "The Anglo-Afghan Conflict" comprises chapters 31–39, and deals mainly with the events in Afghan-Turkestan which led up to the installation of Abdurrahman Khan as Ameer. The first three chapters describe the English position in Afghanistan and the minor events that followed the opening of the negotiations with Abdurrahman. General Soboleff holds that our army was in a most critical condition; it only controlled the area on which it was encamped; its communications were constantly being broken; its supplies were rapidly disappearing; and the whole country was, more or less, in arms against it. The 34th chapter contains a description of Afghan-Turkestan, for the most part based on "Grodekoff's Ride to Herat."*

Soboleff's account of Shere Ali's flight to Mazar-i-Sherif is interesting. "We have already seen" (p. 413) "that Shere Ali, quitting Cabul in the autumn of 1878, and directing his eldest son, Yakoob Khan, to continue the struggle with the English, crossed the Hindoo Koosh, and appeared in Afghan-Turkestan. He intended proceeding to Tashkent, and placing before the Russians the desperate position in which he had been involved by the

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* "Colonel Grodekoff's Ride from Samarcand to Herat, through Balkh and the Uzbek States of Afghan-Turkestan; with his own map of the march route from the Oxus to Herat," by Charles Marvin. W. H. Allen & Co., London, 1880.

English.* He did not wish to struggle with them. He only desired to be left in peace. . . . . He knew very well that an open conflict with them would ruin all his efforts for the development of his country. . . . . He wished to show the world that the war had not been caused by the Afghans, but by the selfishness of the English Government. His belief in the justice of the Afghan cause was so deep, that he openly declared that he intended placing, with the mediation of the Russian Government, the Anglo-Afghan conflict before a conference of the great European Powers. The wretched Afghan did not conceive that the Western European Powers are only willing to resort to conferences, when it seems necessary to them to curb the political growth of the strongest European Power, Russia. He was not aware of that fear of the Russian Government which prevails in the West; he did not know that every step Russia takes to increase her outer might or improve her internal condition excites the bitterest vexation in the West. Shere Ali well knew that the Russian Tsar, the Ak-Padishah, was the mightiest sovereign in the world; that Turkey had been ruined by Russia; that England, together with Turkey, had experienced defeat. It seemed to him, therefore, sufficient to apply to the Russian Government, in order to compel the English to refrain from meddling with the independence of Afghanistan. The journey of Shere Ali to Tashkent did not take place. He wintered in Afghan-Turkestan. His

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* Or rather, by the Russians themselves. Dr. Yavorsky, in his account of the Stolietoff Mission at Cabul, declares frankly that the Russian ambassador induced Shere Ali to fight England, by holding out promises of military assistance on the part of Russia. But for Stolietoff's unscrupulosity there would probably have been no Afghan war.—M.

appearance north of the Hindoo Koosh, and his prolonged stay there, prevented the Uzbeks rising against the Afghans, which they otherwise would have assuredly done."

Shere Ali died in March 1879, and Yakoob Beg succeeded him. Major Cavagnari was appointed councillor to the Ameer, but "the people of Cabul were aroused to anger by his insolence, and on the 3rd of September the Ameer was delivered from him" (p. 415). After the occupation of Cabul "Afghanistan remained without a Sovereign. The brave General Roberts thought he might play the part of Ameer, but he was deeply deceived—the country became a prey to anarchy." Dealing then with the accusation that Russian intrigue showed itself in the flight of Abdurrahman Khan, Soboleff asserts that Russia maintained an honourable neutrality. "Had England followed the advice of those who counselled her to retort upon Russian intrigue by occupying Herat, she would have had to have added permanently 50,000 troops to the Anglo-Indian army, and four millions sterling to the budget. The foreposts of the English troops would have touched the foreposts of the Russian army. On the one hand, on the Oxus, the English would have had as their neighbours the 50,000 troops of the Russian army of Turkestan; and on the west, the advanced guard of the 250,000 troops of the army of the Caucasus. Such an approximation, in view of the sympathy of the natives of India with Russian power in Asia, would have been, to say the least, inconvenient for the English" (p. 417).

"The appearance of Abdurrahman Khan on Afghan territory completely changed the character of the Anglo-Afghan conflict. He showed himself the saviour of the

independence of Afghanistan, and he extricated the English nation from the difficulty in which it had been involved by the misplaced allurements of Lord Beaconsfield. Russia, through the person of Abdurrahman Khan, rendered a great service to Great Britain" (p. 419).

General Soboleff praises the policy pursued by Abdurrahman Khan, in treating the English in a lofty manner and refusing to make any concessions to them. In the 35th chapter he gives a long account of Abdurrahman, whom he personally knew at Samarcand in 1871. Abdurrahman's history of his life is too long to be repeated here, and does not fall within the scope of this work. In the following chapter he describes Abdurrahman's conquest of Afghan-Turkestan, and the development of his plans for driving the English out of Afghanistan. While pursuing his career of conquest, he refused to hold any communication with the English. "By the end of April, 1880, the positions of the English and Abdurrahman Khan had become altogether reversed; the advantages were wholly on the side of the latter. Feeling their impotence to solve the problem of restoring order in Afghan affairs, the English began to arrive at the conviction that it was indispensable to make concessions, however humiliating they might be to their pride" (p. 460).

He then goes on to point out that it was the English who sought first to come to terms with Abdurrahman, not Abdurrahman with the English. In the lengthy negotiations that followed, he holds that Abdurrahman won every point along the line and displayed great diplomatic skill, while the English floundered from one concession to another. Describing his "triumphal entry" into Cabul, he closes the second part with the remark

(p. 486), "that the English Government is indebted to Abdurrahman's intermediation that it retired with honour from Cabul."

Several appendices follow. The first, consecrated to a biographical account of Yakoob Khan, closes with the subjoined words (p. 498):—"Ought we to be surprised at the fate that overtook Yakoob Khan? Not in the slightest. The English Government, in its relations with Asia, from which it is indispensable that the English should derive as many material advantages as possible, acts with unswerving consistency. What was the case with the early conquests is equally the case to-day—the same injustice, the same selfishness. During the last twenty-five years the English have been possessed by an unaccountable fear. The presence of the Russians in the valley of the Oxus has not given a moment's peace to the Anglo-Indian administration. Officers and officials in India free themselves of this fear only when they become oblivious, in that hot climate, under the influence of their accustomed wine and strong liquor. The new feeling, mastering Anglo-Indians, does not allow them to realize thoroughly the whole of the frightful character of their position in Asia. At any rate, it does not serve to change that policy in India, which has been hitherto followed, and which is still being continued by the English Government.

"Everybody knows that only a fraction of the territory of India was gained by the English by open fighting. The greater part of their annexations came to them by means of various ugly political acts. The confiscation of Oude is an instance of this. The Rajah of Oude entrusted the English with the defence of his possessions against neighbouring enemies. He gave

them his troops and all his wealth. Having received all this, the English decided to destroy his dominion. The Rajah trembled before them, and thanked them on his knees for every wheedling word. The Government of India decided to avail themselves to the fullest of this silly reliance, and, fearing the influence of his capable son, who understood the English, despatched the Rajah and his family to Calcutta, and announced his deposition. Oude was annexed to the Indian dominion, the Rajah's treasure was seized, and the deposed monarch was placed in confinement and granted an insignificant pension. In order to clear its conscience *outwardly*, the English Government replaced Lord Dalhousie by a new Viceroy, but it did not restore the sovereignty of Oude.

"As is well known, Shere Ali was accused of refusing to have an English envoy at Cabul, but the late Ameer knew very well what the residence of such a personage meant. He was well aware that the arrival of envoys, residents, or other political agents, leads to the destruction of native Governments, and in turn to the annexation of their countries to the English dominions. He was aware of the many instances of the most frightful crimes perpetrated by these agents in seeking advantages for their Government. He was well aware that the residents, insolently comporting themselves towards the rajahs, knew how to manipulate matters in such a manner, that the rajahs, at the end of six months or so, died of "*indigestion*"; and that the English doctor, drawing up a certificate of death, usually affirmed that *this or that rajah was a great glutton*. After the death of such a glutton the state became either annexed to the English dominions or fell temporarily under the administration of

the resident, who rendered himself the absolute guardian of the minor son of the dead sovereign. Not long ago, thanks to correspondence from London, a disclosure was made of the fate of the semi-independent state, Mysore. The Rajah of Mysore is a minor, and hence the administration is in the hands of the English. Under their beneficent administration the state has become considerably poorer. During the last three years *a million human beings have died of hunger*. Of the property of the late sovereign, of which an inventory was made in 1868 by Lieutenant-Colonel Elliot, nearly half of the diamonds and other valuable articles have disappeared.

"The political wiles of the English, which they systematically practise in India, are little known to Europe. Europe does not concern herself about India; she is occupied with more important affairs. But India and the neighbouring Asiatic states well know how the renowned might of the English is maintained. Not without cause do they hate them in Southern India, and long for the growth on the Asiatic continent of another strong Power, more moral and more honest."

The second appendix is entitled, "Afghanistan as a Neighbour of India," and contains an account of Sir Henry Rawlinson's article in the "Nineteenth Century," on "The Results of the Afghan War," and the various declarations made by the Beaconsfield Ministry with regard to English policy in Afghanistan. Rawlinson he describes as "one of the leaders of a small circle of individuals, living in London, who consider it their duty on every possible occasion to frighten the public with bogeys, such as the prevalence everywhere of Russian intrigue, and the possibility of a Russian invasion of India" (p. 501).

Referring to the disclosures in the "Civil and Military Gazette of India," of the alleged intention of the English Government in 1878 to have occupied Asia Minor with a powerful force from India, in the event of the Congress of Berlin having failed to secure peace, he comes to the conclusion that England would have made a bolder stand against Russia but for a circumstance that rendered impossible Lytton's plan of a universal Asiatic campaign against Russia—the hostility of Afghanistan. While Shere Ali favoured Russia, England could not move any troops from India. Hence Shere Ali's hostility was the cause of the concessions England made to Russia at Berlin, and it was this circumstance that brought down upon the Ameer the wrath of England afterwards.

The next appendix contains, without comment, a translation of Lord Lytton's despatch of November 18, 1878. This is followed by two excellently compiled march routes, one from Mazar-i-Sherif to Cabul (pp. 530–45), evidently derived from the topographical report of the Stolietoff Embassy, and the other from Mazar-i-Sherif to Herat, compiled from "Grodekoff's Ride to Herat." Finally, there is a translation of Mr. Lepel Griffin's speech to the Sirdars, Khans, and Maliks of Cabul, April 14, 1880.* General Soboleff prints in italics the clause: "*Those people deceive you who preach a jehad, and say the English are the enemies of Islam. In India fifty million Mahomedans enjoy, under the Government of the Queen, greater liberty, happiness, and security than in any country of the world.*" He here interpolates, "The

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* The English version will be found in Howard Hensman's "Afghan War," pp. 369–71.

Afghans well know, better than anyone, better even than the most expert English official, what the *real* position in India is of the Mussulmans, who only strive for their emancipation from an oppressive yoke." He then continues the clause in italics: "*It is the British Government which has many times, by a great expenditure of men and treasure, guarded and preserved the empire of the Sultan of Turkey against his enemies; Government is the friend and protector of Islam, and not its destroyer.*" To this he appends the remark: "The Afghans were altogether ignorant of the pecuniary assistance which the English rendered the Sultan in his war with Russia in 1877–78, and for which they demanded the cession of the island of Cyprus; but they were well aware that the English did not help the Sultan with troops, and knew that the Russians had ruined the empire of the same Sultan, of which the British Government had loudly proclaimed itself the defender. For the dignity of the British race, it would have been better not to have reminded the Afghans of what was untrue, and what was even dangerous, since in this case the preponderance was on the side of Russia, and not on that of the Sultan and English combined" (p. 560).

The fourth part deals with Herat and Candahar, and contains eight chapters and 126 pages. The first is headed, "Russian Intrigues at Herat," and is devoted to the agitation which took place in 1879–80, in consequence of the reports of the presence of Russian officers and Russian spies at Herat. General Soboleff indulges in a bitter onslaught against the newspapers of Vienna and Berlin, whom he accuses of conspiracy to poison the mind of Europe in general, and of England in particular, against Russia. Whole pages are given to a

denunciation of the rumours that circulated at the end of 1879, with reference to Russia's intrigues in Central Asia. He omits, however, to point out that it was Russia herself who was instrumental in giving birth to those reports, by her activity east and west of Herat. On the one hand, she was waging a desperate war with the Turcomans, and marching an army in a direction the destination of which seemed to be Merv; on the other, the valley of the Oxus was literally being overrun by Russian explorers. In the autumn of 1879 a grand exploring expedition, consisting of General Count Rostovtseff and several majors of the General Staff, a number of topographers, naturalists, geologists, and painters, escorted by a strong body of Cossacks, proceeded to the Oxus from Samarcand, and after visiting in parties the sources of the river, made their way down it to Khiva, and thence, *viâ* Samara, home. In the course of their journey to Khiva they were attacked by Tèkke Turcomans, but, after a sharp encounter, succeeded in defeating their assailants. The movements of this exploring party, together with the despatch of reliefs to Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk, in Khiva, by an experimental route *viâ* Bokhara and the Oxus, instead of *viâ* Kazala and the Aral, to say nothing of the subsequent journeys of Colonel Maeff from Samarcand to the Oxus and the naturalist Mushketoff to the Pamir, all conspired to create the impression that Russia was pursuing a very ambiguous policy in Central Asia. General Soboleff would have done better to have explained these operations, instead of attacking journalists in Vienna and Berlin, whose alleged trade in the fabrication of rumours would not be possible a day, if greater publicity prevailed in press-gagged Russia.

Quoting the opinion of an English paper, that the presence of the grand exploring expedition in the valley of the Oxus "would have deep effect on the Afghans of Balkh, Badakshan, and Kunduz," he says (p. 564): "We are far from being inclined to diminish the effect of the Russian name in Central Asia; we are glad that the Russian name should stand so high, and our prestige be so immense in the East. That constitutes the national pride. But we cannot refrain from remarking, that up to now we have not taken a single step—with the exception of the despatch of General Stolietoff to Cabul in 1878, which was compelled by the English themselves—that would show a decision on our part to commence a serious struggle with the English in Central Asia. We clearly recognise that if a struggle is fated to take place, it will be a *frightful* one, and one more frightful for the English than for ourselves; since we have, as a matter of fact, little to lose in Central Asia, while the English, in the event of a defeat, risk the loss of their rich Indian empire."

The next chapter, headed "The Herat Question," contains a series of translated paragraphs and articles from the English and European press, with reference to the alleged project of the Beaconsfield Government, at the end of 1879, to place Herat under the control of Persia. All manner of sources are laid under contribution to prove that such an intention existed, General Soboleff quoting even from the Paris "Globe" and the gossip columns of the "Whitehall Review." Whether the scheme really existed or not, and how far the negotiations with Persia extended, need not be here discussed. Soboleff's contention is undoubtedly sound, that a Power that was unable to rule its own

home provinces properly, was not fit to be entrusted with the control of Herat. He quotes largely from "Grodekoff's Ride" and Petroosevitch's explorations to support this opinion, but he could have sustained it equally well by references to MacGregor's "Khorassan" or O'Donovan's "Merv Oasis." His closing remarks on this point deserve to be remembered: "Russia would interpose no obstacle to a Persian occupation of Herat, if it accorded with Russia's internal position and her attitude towards the Eastern Question. But Russia would never agree to this, if the aim in view were the subjection of Persia and Herat to the *exclusive influence of England.* Russia can only allow England to occupy Herat, when the latter finally casts aside her policy of rivalry with Russia in Central Asia, and makes corresponding concessions in the Eastern Question; not in words, however, but in deeds."

The following chapter, on "The Armed Strength of Herat," contains nothing new on the subject, the matter being mainly derived from English sources. The next, on "The South Afghan State," describes the formation of the feudatory province of Candahar, and closes with the opinion that the question of its retention was solved by the battle of Maiwand. "The indecision of the new government was set at rest by Ayoub Khan. That giddy Afghan aristocrat showed the English, as plainly as two and two make four, that to maintain even a relatively-powerful Anglo-Indian detachment at Candahar is far from being without danger."

General Soboleff narrates in the succeeding chapter the events that took place at Herat between September 1879 and April 1880, and endeavours to prove that Ayoub Khan's position gradually consolidated itself after

Roberts's occupation of Cabul. Describing afterwards the events at Candahar, he charges the military authorities with "deeply deceiving" themselves in believing a march by Ayoub Khan upon Candahar impossible, and prints in italics his opinion that "*the British Government heedlessly despised the Herati enemy*" (p. 639).

Further on, in his summary of the events leading up to the disaster of Maiwand, he says (p. 641) that on the eve of the battle "the ruler of Herat was seeking the English, who were retiring before the superior numbers of the Afghans."

His account of the battle itself is very meagre, being mainly a compilation of English telegrams. There is no comment of a military character, and he does not suspend his narrative at all to indulge in any reflections on the fate of the unhappy troops who fell victims to the lack of English generalship.

In this respect he differs greatly from Skobeleff. "Poor Burrows!" said he, in one of the conversations the writer had with him at St. Petersburg, "Poor Burrows!"—lingering in a pitying tone on the word "poor"—"I could never understand how he came to lose that battle. Do you know, there is a very interesting circumstance in connection with that affair. You remember, in July 1880 I made a reconnaissance of Geok Tepé with a few hundred men, and had some tough fighting on my way back. It was a rash thing to do in the presence of such a powerful force of the enemy as was concentrated at Geok Tepé, and provoked some criticism at home. The late Emperor, however, had full confidence in me, and took no notice of the critics; but when the battle of Maiwand occurred, he significantly

telegraphed to me Burrows's report of the disaster, without a word of comment." *

Soboleff thus indicates what he considers to be the lesson taught by this disaster (p. 646) :—"Once more the English might have assured themselves that their military power in Southern Asia is not remarkable for any particular solidity, and that the defeat of even a single small brigade would involve not only increased efforts on the part of the entire Indian army, but render necessary, also, the despatch of extra troops from England. We direct the serious attention of politicians and military men to the position of the English in Afghanistan in the middle of 1880. The English were waging war with only a part of the Afghan people, having neither a solidly-established administration nor a regular army, and yet, none the less, experienced defeat after defeat, rendering *nil* all their demands, proudly proclaimed to the people. We see a struggle between the *powerful* Indian empire and the broken, numerically weak, but brave Afghan people, and in the end success gradually declaring itself on the side of the latter. The numerous forces of the Anglo-Indian army, led by skilled officers, among whom were many very talented generals, could not conquer a part of a weak neighbouring state, which, in excess, was in a condition of anarchy. There must have been some deep cause underlying this condition of things, and it could not have been in the power of the English to do all they wished to do."

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* This was one of the many interesting anecdotes Skobeleff told me about his operations, which I did not feel justified in repeating at the time in my "Russian Advance towards India." Skobeleff being dead, there can be no indiscretion in mentioning it now.—M.

The "deep cause" lies, as a matter of fact, on the surface. All the troubles and disasters that attended the Afghan war, from the capture of Ali Musjid to the evacuation of Candahar, grew out of the single and simple circumstance that the English Government entered upon the struggle without a policy, and never at any stage arrived at a clear perception of what it meant to do. Had Lord Salisbury and the Conservative statesmen and politicians manifested as much vigour in annexing Candahar, when it was in their power to do so, as they afterwards displayed in protesting against its evacuation, there would have been no Maiwand, and no miserable scuttling out of Afghanistan. Given a clear policy, and the Afghan war might have been waged with one-third the troops, and settled in a few short months.* Of the eighteen millions sterling wasted upon the successive campaigns, eight at the very outside would have sufficed to break down the military power of Shere Ali, and the remaining ten might have been spent upon the construction and defence of a solid railway running direct to Herat. But no sensible politician wastes his time over "might have beens." Suffice it to point out the very great difference that existed between the position of Skobeleff in Transcaspia, and of Roberts and the other English generals in Afghanistan. The latter never had a policy to guide them in their operations, and after each success had to wait until the Government at home made up its mind as to the next move. By the time that the Cabinet discussions in

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* One of the most eminent of the English generals who took part in the Afghan war, expressed to me personally, while preparing this part of the book, a very decided opinion confirmatory of this view.—M.

Downing Street had come to a close, circumstances had altogether changed again in Afghanistan, and there was a fresh campaign to begin anew.*

With Skobeleff the case was altogether different. After his appointment to the command of the Turcoman expedition, he was asked to furnish an estimate as to how much it would cost to conquer Akhal and retire from it, and how much to conquer and annex the country. The difference was so slight, that a decision was at once arrived at by the Russian Government to permanently occupy the Akhal Tekke region, and the limits of the territory to be overrun and annexed were settled before Skobeleff left St. Petersburg. The Government gave him clearly to understand what it wished him to do, and wisely left it to him to select his own means for carrying out its wishes. A clear policy and *carte blanche* — such were the two advantages Skobeleff possessed over Roberts, but in these two advantages really rested everything. It was the absence of these two essentials that rendered the Afghan war such a miserable business from beginning to end.

Soboleff continues: "In the ability of the English to rule an empire of 200,000,000 people, in the talents and military qualities of their generals, and in the bravery of their army, we entertain no doubts whatever; we consider that the English control extensive *defensive* resources in India, but we allow ourselves to express a

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* The disastrous effect of the English generals having to wait over and over again for the arrival of a policy, is clearly shown in the letters which Howard Hensman contributed to the "Daily News" during 1879–80. In his "Afghan War," page 364, he says, in regard to the evacuation of Candahar: "Our policy was misunderstood generally in Afghanistan, where, to this day, it is believed we were too weak to carry out our original plans."—M.

doubt in the fitness of those resources for *active* operations. Neither the internal position of the territory of India, nor the organization of the Anglo-Indian army, is adapted for an active policy. We are deeply convinced of the truth of this reflection. Our survey of the Afghan war only strengthens it."

Whole pages are then devoted to the opinions of the English, Russian, European, and Indian press on the defeat at Maiwand. At the end he remarks (p. 665) that after that disaster "there could be no further question of the English holding any portion of Afghanistan. All that remained to be done was to quit the country with a semblance of honour as quickly as possible, and concentrate again in India."

The final chapter is devoted to "The Army of the Wali at Candahar," in which Soboleff comes to the conclusion that the Wali played into the hands of Abdurrahman Khan, while the English army clamoured to get back to India, "because no fortunes were to be made in Afghanistan." "In general," he says (p. 686), "the English consider themselves a quiet, judicious, and even a cold sort of people. Yet it is wonderful that quite the opposite qualities characterize those who dwell in India. Unfounded fear, extreme fantasy, remarkable incoherence—such are the characteristics of the English in Southern Asia. Their alarm is explainable by the insecurity of their power in India, and the conviction that the ultimate aim of the movement of the Russians in Central Asia is to march upon India. This is sustained by national rumour. The development of fantasy is traceable to a desire to distinguish themselves, and to a feeling of irresponsibility. Arriving only for a relatively short

period, the English seek to get as much gain as they can out of their service in beneficent India. The reader will not be surprised if we point out that after the fall of the Wali, the English began to frame all manner of blind and impossible plans in regard to the future of Candahar. Serious voices were raised in favour of giving over Candahar to Ayoub Khan, and leaving him ruler of the city and Herat. And this was suggested at a time when Ayoub Khan was proclaiming himself the bitter and irreconcileable foe of the English Government!"

The third volume, containing the fifth part, was issued separately in December 1882. It comprises six chapters and 124 pages, consecrated to a description of Ayoub Khan's march from Herat, the battle of Maiwand, the siege of Candahar, and the march of General Phayre to relieve the place. At the end a march-route is given of the country between Candahar and Herat, taken from Malleson's "Herat." The volume is to a certain extent an amplification of the previous information dealing with Maiwand, but contains opinions scattered through it of considerable interest.

Describing the country between Herat and Candahar, he says (p. 692) that, "English policy and English generals had always considered a march from the one place to the other an undertaking of considerable difficulty, demanding extreme care and substantial preparations. Ayoub Khan was considered unfit to accomplish such an undertaking, and hence his advance was heedlessly treated."

The long account he gives of the preparations made by Ayoub Khan, is apparently motived by the desire to prove that an army advancing from Herat to Candahar

would enjoy considerable advantages over an army marching from Candahar to Herat, owing to the larger resources at Herat than at Candahar. In other words, Soboleff tries to prove that what Ayoub Khan easily and successfully accomplished, Russia could do better; while the difficulty England experienced in sending relief to Candahar from India forbids a hope of her being able to occupy Herat without immense exertion. Russia at Herat could descend upon Candahar more easily than England at Candahar could attack Russia at Herat.

The second chapter (XLIX. of the work) describes Maiwand. This is mainly a compilation of the telegrams and official despatches published in the English papers. The narrative is fairly well written, and the tone is less bitter than in the descriptions of previous fights. He does full justice to the 66th Regiment, characterizing its stand at Maiwand as "heroic," and repeatedly referring to the "brave officers," "the hero-officers," and the "plucky soldiers" belonging to it. "The 66th behaved splendidly, and although it could not change the fate of the battle, it showed that a disciplined body of troops dearly sells its life and honour, even when immensely outnumbered" (p. 731). He points out in a previous page (711), that when the rest of the troops retreated, "the higher officers fled in front of them." Later on (p. 756), he charges Burrows with not doing justice to the 66th and the "gallant Colonel Galbraith" in his report.

Chapter L. deals with the causes of the Maiwand disaster. A statement telegraphed from India, that Ayoub Khan's troops were armed with Russian rifles, provokes from him the remark that the "English saw Russia at the bottom of all their Afghan defeats. . . .

Had not a Russian mission been sent to Cabul, there would have been no Afghan war, the English say. They would appear to forget that their hostility towards us up to the Berlin Congress, and during the latter, gave our Government cause, even if it did not impose upon it the obligation, to look for means to occasion England the greatest amount of injury in the event of war. We sought it in Southern Asia, where English authority is not particularly strong, while interests of a colossal magnitude are there concentrated. This was very sensible, and we can only regret that the Russian Embassy was sent to Cabul too late" (p. 737).

Respecting the political conflict of England and Russia in Central Asia, he asserts (p. 738) that in a game of this sort Russia has a better chance of winning than England. "This is our deep conviction, since we are *very poor* in Southern Asia, while the English are *very rich*. If we lose the game, we lose little; if the English lose it, they lose all. In that lies our strength, and hence the future of the English in Southern Asia depends upon their behaviour."

"Neither General Burrows nor General Primrose rose to the occasion at Maiwand," he says (p. 743), "but in this they did not stand alone. None of the Bombay generals, in our opinion, were any better than either of them. . . . It is a question, however, whether even more capable generals could have done much with such undisciplined and poor-spirited troops as the Bombay sepoys proved themselves to be. . . . Only the 66th and the artillery were fit to be called regular troops; the former heroically defended its colours, the latter covered the retreat. Hence we cannot cast unlimited blame on Burrows . . . but he certainly displayed no tactical or

strategical skill, and manifested less capacity for fighting a battle than his Afghan adversary. . . . When the conflict went against him he lost his head; instead of looking after the retreat, he occupied himself with affairs of benevolence (carrying off the wounded), which in well-organized armies is a matter left to the hospital corps."

The principal causes of the defeat at Maiwand Soboleff sums up as under (p. 760):—"1. The heedlessness with which Ayoub Khan's expedition was treated. 2. The thoughtless reliance that the troops of the Wali would fight Ayoub Khan for the sake of British interests. 3. The peremptory orders of the commander-in-chief to seek Ayoub Khan, and attack and disperse his forces. 4. The placing of the commanding generals under the instructions of the political agents. 5. The absence of proper information, which might have been obtained from Meshed, of Ayoub's preparations, strength, and movements. 6. The unpardonable waste of General Phayre's transport resources. 7. The withdrawal of the Bengal troops from Candahar, and the despatch hither of bad Bombay troops. 8. The erroneous reliance on the sympathies of the Durani population of the Candahar district.

"The defeat at Maiwand was a good lesson for the English Government, and showed clearly enough what might be the result of thrusting Anglo-Indian troops against an organized body, even of Afghans. We say nothing of what might have happened had the enemy's forces at Maiwand been European troops."

The next chapter is devoted to the siege of Candahar. Pointing out that we had 60,000 troops in Afghanistan, and yet were compelled after Maiwand to mobolize a

new division of 5,000 more, he calls attention to the inefficiency of the Indian army. "It *may* be in a condition," he says (p. 764), "to defend with success the Indian frontier, but it is altogether unfit, as at present constituted, to wage an offensive war. The Maiwand catastrophe showed that even for defensive purposes the army is not particularly reliable. We have seen that the defeat of an Anglo-Indian brigade upset all the calculations of the Anglo-Indian Government, and led to the demand for immediate reinforcements from England. We have seen, also, that this defeat disadvantageously affected the tranquillity of the rear. If on this occasion no serious agitation took place in India, the simple reason was because the conqueror of the English was a weak Herati prince, from whom the people of India had nothing to expect. We decidedly favour the hypothesis that if there had been a Russian general at Maiwand instead of Ayoub Khan, and the English had been beaten by Russians instead of by Afghans, the defensive power of the Anglo-Indian army would have collapsed; since no doubt whatever can be entertained that in India, where the people nourish a secret hope in their inevitable emancipation by the Russians from the English yoke, a frightful rising would have taken place, which would have required the whole attention of the army to suppress."

General Soboleff expresses a very poor opinion of the defence of Candahar. The troops were demoralized, the commanding officers without capacity. "General Primrose," he says (p. 785), "laboured under the effects of the Maiwand disaster, and did not consider himself fit to undertake anything decisive. Primrose had 6,000 regular troops. At Geok Tepé, in January

1881, a force was gathered of the same strength of Russians. Against this force was matched a powerful fortress and the concentrated strength of the Tekkes. The result is well known. The English troops awaited the Afghan attack in fear, and anxiously looked for help; the Russian troops themselves attacked the Tekkes, and gained one of the most brilliant victories in Central Asia."

General Phayre is severely handled by Soboleff in the last chapter for his slowness in taking steps to relieve Candahar. He adversely criticises him for the wretched condition into which he had allowed his division to fall, and blames him for paying too much attention to the petty tribal attacks along his line of communication. He holds that his timidity and slowness left the English Government no other course than to resort to the desperate expedient of a march from Cabul to Candahar, a march which he admits to have been "brilliantly accomplished by General Roberts" (p. 799). . . . "Roberts achieved what Phayre was expected to have done, and what he might have done had he been a man of greater decision. There can be no comparison between the two generals. Phayre was timid and slow. Roberts decided upon a heroic exploit, and, in spite of difficulties without limit, achieved it" (p. 811).

Commenting on the probability that the rumours of Mussulman disturbances at Kurratchee at this time exercised a deterrent effect on Phayre's movements, he expresses an opinion that our power in India was at a very low ebb then, and closes the volume with the words: "The English have not sufficient troops in India to embark in campaigns outside the border. They were not strong enough to fight even the Afghans. We direct the atten-

tion of our politicians and military men to this, since we are convinced that in a very short space of time, in ten or fifteen years, a collision will inevitably take place in Asia between Russia and Great Britain."

The circumstances likely to lead up to the collision Soboleff promises to describe in a concluding volume, to be devoted to an account of the march of Roberts from Cabul to Candahar, and the evacuation of Afghanistan by the English. Whether this volume will ever appear or not, in consequence of Soboleff's removal to Bulgaria, is a matter on which no information is forthcoming. Even if it does appear, the Russian General Staff can hardly express more clearly than it has already done its conviction of the feasibility of a Russian invasion of India, and the readiness of the people of India to rise on a Russian approach.

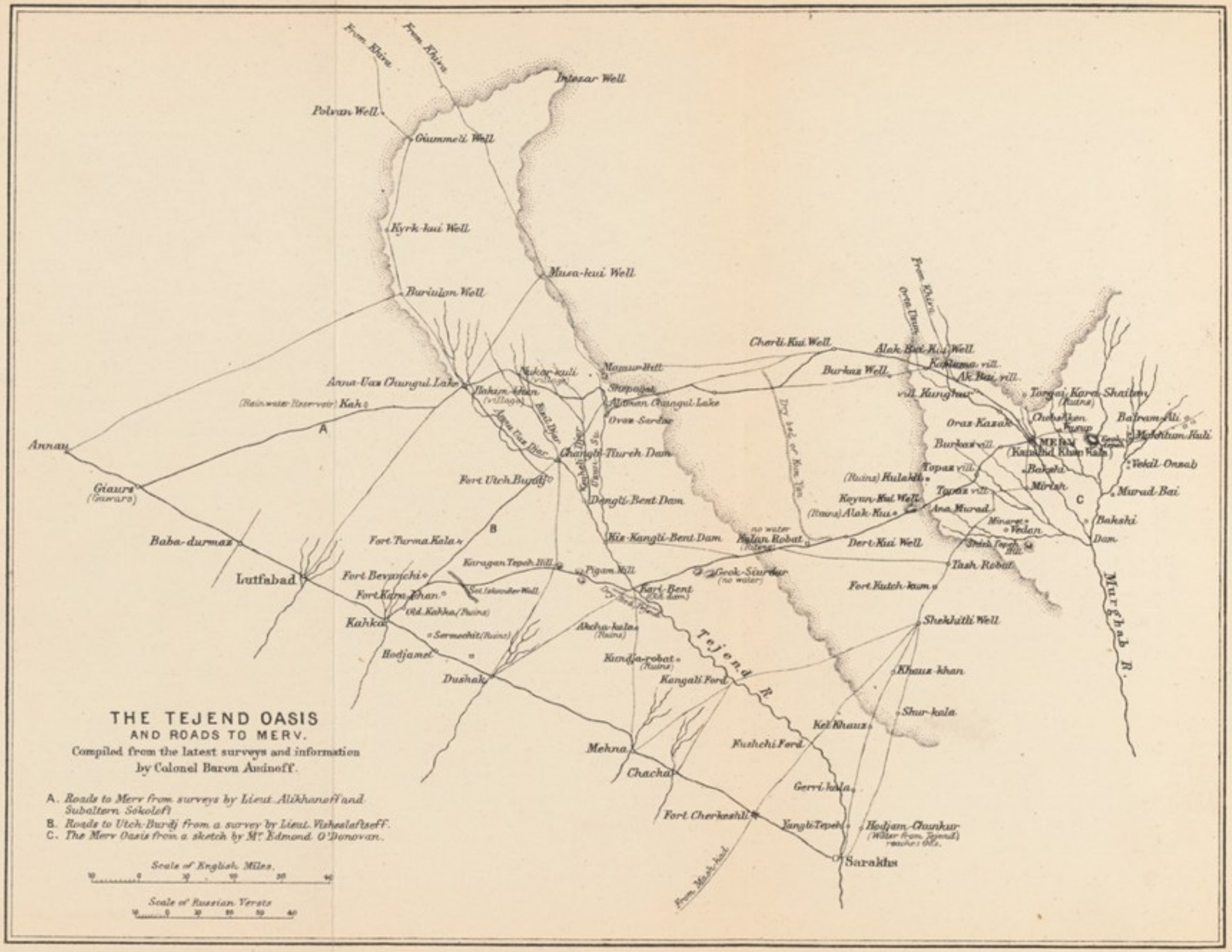
BOOK III.

Russian Pioneers beyond the Caspian.

Chapter I.—Lessar's Journey from Askabad to Sarakhs.

Chapter II.—Disguised Russian Officers at Merv.

Chapter III.—Lessar's Journey from Sarakhs to the Outposts of Herat.


From Khiva
From Khiva
Intezar Well
Polwan Well
Gummeli Well
Kyrk-kui Well
Musa-kui Well
Buriulan Well
Anna-Uas Changui Lake
Nakor-kuli (village)
Mamur-Beli
Shopajak
Akhan Changui Lake
Oran-Serdar
Bent Dyar
Changli-Tureh Dam
Fort Utch Burdi
Dengli-Bent Dam
Annau
Giaurs (ruins)
Baba-durmaz
Lutfabad
Fort Turma Kala
Karagan Tepeh Hill
Pigeon Hill
Fort Bevanichi
Fort Kara Khan
Old Kahka (Ruins)
Kahka
Sarmeshit (Ruins)
Bodjamel
Dushak
Kis-Kangli-Bent Dam
Kangli Ford
Mehna
Chacha
Fort Cherkeshli
Kizil Tepeh
Hodjam-Gaunkur
(Water from Tejend)
Saraklis
From Meshhad
Tejend R.
Murghab R.
Dert-Kui Well
Tash Robat
Fort Kutch-kum
Shekhsitli Well
Khaus-khan
Shur-kala
Kel Khaus
Kushchi Ford
Gerri-kala
Alak Beri-Kui Well
Burkaz Well
Kaplama vill.
Ak Bai vill.
Oras Kazak
Burkaz vill.
Topaz vill.
Keyun-Kui Well
Ana Murad
Bakshi
Dam
Murad-Bai
Vekil-Onnab
Mirlah
Baikhum Kuli
Bairam Ali
Tergai Kara Shaitan (Ruins)
Changli Kui Well
Ochakhan
Pump
MERV
Kaushid Khan Kala
Yangli Tepeh
Ruins
Hulakli
Alak-Kui
Mirage
Vedan
Shish Tepeh Hill
Changli Kui Well
Orta Depe
Dry bed of Kum Tepe
Kaplama vill.
Ak Bai vill.
Kurghan
Tergai Kara Shaitan (Ruins)
Oras Kazak
Ochakhan
Pump
Bairam Ali
Baikhum Kuli
Burkaz vill.
MERV
Kaushid Khan Kala
Topaz vill.
Bakshi
Mirlah
Vekil-Onnab
Murad-Bai
Keyun-Kui Well
Ana Murad
Bakshi
Dam
Mirage
Vedan
Dert-Kui Well
Shish Tepeh Hill
Tash Robat
Fort Kutch-kum
Shekhsitli Well
Khaus-khan
Shur-kala
Kel Khaus
Kushchi Ford
Gerri-kala
Fort Cherkeshli
Yangli Tepeh
Hodjam-Gaunkur
(Water from Tejend)
Saraklis
From Meshhad
Tejend R.
Murghab R.
Kizil-Kangli-Bent Dam
Hulan Robat
(Ruins)
Geok-Sirdar
(no water)
Kari-Bent
Dry bed of Kum Tepe
Ruins
Hulakli
Alak-Kui
Ruins
Kandja-robat
Ruins
Akcha-kala
Ruins
Fort Utch Burdi
Changli-Tureh Dam
Dengli-Bent Dam
Kyrk-kui Well
Musa-kui Well
Buriulan Well
Polwan Well
Intezar Well
Gummeli Well
Anna-Uas Changui Lake
Nakor-kuli
Bakan-Khan
(village)
(Rain-water Reservoir) Kak
Annau
Giaurs
(ruins)
Baba-durmaz
Lutfabad
Fort Turma Kala
Karagan Tepeh Hill
Fort Bevanichi
Fort Kara Khan
Old Kahka (Ruins)
Kahka
Sarmeshit (Ruins)
Bodjamel
Dushak
Kangli Ford
Mehna
Chacha
Fort Cherkeshli
Kizil Tepeh
Hodjam-Gaunkur
(Water from Tejend)
Saraklis
From Meshhad
Tejend R.
Murghab R.
Dert-Kui Well
Tash Robat
Fort Kutch-kum
Shekhsitli Well
Khaus-khan
Shur-kala
Kel Khaus
Kushchi Ford
Gerri-kala
Alak Beri-Kui Well
Burkaz Well
Kaplama vill.
Ak Bai vill.
Oras Kazak
Burkaz vill.
Topaz vill.
Keyun-Kui Well
Ana Murad
Bakshi
Dam
Murad-Bai
Vekil-Onnab
Mirlah
Baikhum Kuli
Bairam Ali
Tergai Kara Shaitan (Ruins)
Changli Kui Well
Ochakhan
Pump
MERV
Kaushid Khan Kala
Yangli Tepeh
Ruins
Hulakli
Alak-Kui
Mirage
Vedan
Shish Tepeh Hill
Changli Kui Well
Orta Depe
Dry bed of Kum Tepe
Kaplama vill.
Ak Bai vill.
Kurghan
Tergai Kara Shaitan (Ruins)
Oras Kazak
Ochakhan
Pump
Bairam Ali
Baikhum Kuli
Burkaz vill.
MERV
Kaushid Khan Kala
Topaz vill.
Bakshi
Mirlah
Vekil-Onnab
Murad-Bai
Keyun-Kui Well
Ana Murad
Bakshi
Dam
Mirage
Vedan
Dert-Kui Well
Shish Tepeh Hill
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Bodjamel
Dushak
Kangli Ford
Mehna
Chacha
Fort Cherkeshli
Kizil Tepeh
Hodjam-Gaunkur
(Water from Tejend)
Saraklis
From Meshhad
Tejend R.
Murghab R.
A
B
C
THE TEJEND OASIS
AND ROADS TO MERV.
Compiled from the latest surveys and information
by Colonel Baron Ausnoff.
A. Roads to Merv from surveys by Lieut. Alikhanoff and Subaltern Sokoleff.
B. Roads to Utch-Burdj from a survey by Lieut. Vakselaftseff.
C. The Merv Oasis from a sketch by Mr. Edmond O'Donovan.
Scale of English Miles.
10 0 10 20 30 40
Scale of Russian Versts
10 0 10 20 30 40

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

LESSAR'S JOURNEY FROM ASKABAD TO SARAKHS.

Impossibility of keeping Russian Pioneers out of the region between Russia and India.—Natural curiosity of Russian Explorers.—Career of Lessar.—His connection with the Transcaspian Railway.—Difference between him and Lieutenant Alikhanoff.—His Letters to the "Moscow Gazette."—Career of Alikhanoff.—The "Arsky" of the "Disastrous Russian Campaign against the Turcomans."—Konshin's Caravan to Merv.—An Account of this Enterprise.—Russian Trade with Akhal and Merv.—Lessar sets out from Askabad.—Impression produced by the Capture of Geok Tepé.—Growth of Askabad.—The Atak.—Its Population, and their Political Views.—Danger of becoming Russian Subjects.—Tekke Migrations.—Quarrels between Persians and Turcomans over the Water-supply.—Country between Askabad and Sarakhs.—Giaurs.—The Russo-Persian Frontier at Baba Durmaz.—Characteristics of Lutfabad.—Kahka.—Turcoman barrows.—Dushak and Chardeh.—Chacha.—The Alieli Turcomans.—The People of the Atak.—Description of Sarakhs.—Return Home of the Expedition *viâ* Meshed.

"With regard to the strategical importance of Sarakhs, I think a glance at the map will show that, in the complications which must arise ere the Russo-Indian Question can be deemed settled, its future is likely to be a stirring one. Placed at the junction of roads from Herat and Meshed, by the Hari Rud and Ab-y-Meshed valleys respectively, and at the best entrance to the province of Khorassan from the north, it cannot fail to exercise a very serious influence on the momentous issue of the above question. This must happen, whether it falls into the hands of the friends of England or into those of her foes. Whether

Russia uses Sarakhs as a base for offensive measures against Herat, or England as a defensive outpost to defeat any such operations, that position will be heard of again; and if my feeble voice can effect a warning ere it is too late, let it here be raised in these words: If England does not use Sarakhs for defence, Russia will use it for offence."—General Sir Charles MacGregor, K.C.B., "Narrative of a Journey through Khorassan in 1875," vol. ii. p. 32.

Far-seeing politicians have long since resigned the hope of establishing moral Chinese walls on both sides of the unabsorbed Central Asian region, to prevent the pioneers of England and of Russia crossing the borders of the two empires and roaming over the country intervening between them. Sooner or later the two empires will touch each other in Asia, and until this is accomplished there will be a succession of such enterprises, as carried Mr. O'Donovan to Merv and Gospodin Lessar to the Afghan outposts of Herat. England's official policy in India is, to prevent Englishmen from wandering about Afghanistan; and if this has been successful hitherto, the circumstance is due less to the wishes and the instructions of the Government than to the fact that Afghanistan is so well known, that no incentive exists to provoke the traveller to cross the Indian border. The case is different with the new Russian province beyond the Caspian. Outside it lies a region more or less unexplored, and which, consequently, cannot but provoke the curiosity of enterprising Russians. To expect Russians to suppress this feeling out of respect for a policy of apathy on the Indian border for which they entertain no esteem, betrays an ignorance of human nature inexcusable in any political writer or statesman. No matter how much England may be offended, Russian pioneering operations may be expected to continue until the Cossack confronts the Sikh. It is useless to protest

and complain. Far better to shape our policy in accordance with the circumstances that cannot but inevitably spring from the position of the two empires in Central Asia and their rival policies in the East.

Since the occupation of Askabad by General Skobeleff in 1881, the name of Gospodin Lessar has been frequently before the public in connection with his explorations in the direction of India. He has been made the subject of many terrifying telegrams from Berlin and Vienna, and of repeated questions in the House of Commons. All manner of ambiguous missions have been assigned to him, and Sir Richard Temple has denounced him at a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society * as a "secret agent of Russia."

As a matter of fact, his operations have hitherto been capable of easy explanation. Gospodin Lessar is a young railway engineer belonging to the department of which General Annenkoff, the Director of Military Transport, is chief. General Annenkoff aspires to rival Lesseps and other great creators of new international highways, by establishing railway communication between Europe and India. In an earlier chapter he has described his project, and although the scheme has been frequently ridiculed by his own countrymen, he has stuck to it with a persistency likely in time to receive its reward.

The section of this railway from the Caspian to Kizil Arvat was opened for traffic in 1881. Immediately afterwards Gospodin Lessar was employed in preparing

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* I do not know why the Society should call him "M. Lessar." He is not a Frenchman, but a thorough Russian, and the rendering of *Mr.* in Russian is *Gospodin*, not *Monsieur*. Better call him Mr. Lessar than M. Lessar.—M.

plans for the extension of the line to Askabad. His surveys having demonstrated the feasibility of the railway to this point, General Annenkoff instructed him to proceed beyond, and report whether the nature of the ground was favourable to its extension to Sarakhs; previous English and Russian explorations having shown the difficulty of running the line across the Kopet Dagh mountains to Meshed. Lessar successfully accomplished his task, and reported that the ground was level nearly all the way from Askabad to Sarakhs.

There then remained unsurveyed but one short section along the projected route to India. So far as the construction of a railway from Sibi to Herat was concerned, Annenkoff had English investigations to refer to, and these demonstrated the feasibility of the undertaking. But of the short section between Herat and Sarakhs no satisfactory engineering information was forthcoming. To obtain this information Lessar was instructed to proceed again to Sarakhs, and approach as close as possible to Herat. This mission he accomplished in a manner which left England little to complain at.

That is, so far as Lessar himself was concerned. Whether the Russian Government acted in accordance with its assurances to respect the region intervening between its borders and India, in despatching him to Afghan territory, is a very different matter. I consider it unnecessary to argue this point, because Russia will never be restrained in her pioneering operations by any regard for the susceptibilities of England. It is useless, therefore, to try and bring public opinion and diplomatic admonition to bear upon her.

Lessar is frank enough in his statements, and I should be the last to designate him a "secret" agent.

The importance of his journey to the outposts of Herat does not lie so much in his violation of Afghan territory, as in the demonstration it has afforded of the facility with which a Russian army can advance upon the "key of India," and the ease with which Russia can extend her railway system to that point. His explorations have given quite a fresh aspect to the Central Asian Question. They have shown that Herat can be so easily occupied by a Russian force, that it is a question whether we may not already regard the "key of India" as lost to us. Russians can penetrate to within a few miles of Herat, without meeting any living obstacle or any natural one to check them. On the other hand, to say nothing of hostile tribes and mountain passes, a fortified Afghan city—Candahar—bars the road between India and Herat.

The secret journey of Lieutenant Alikhanoff and Subaltern Sokoloff to Merv is altogether different from the open and undisguised survey effected by Lessar. It comes under the category of those ambiguous undertakings which were a feature of the late Emperor's reign, and which, judging from Alikhanoff's narrative, would appear to be likely to be continued in his successor's. In his letters, addressed to the Chief of the Staff of the Transcaspian region, Colonel Baron Aminoff, Alikhanoff unfolds a story of Russian frontier intrigue, full of interesting details, and throwing a vivid light upon those manœuvres which have hitherto ever been followed by conquest and annexation. The despatch of a tamed Khivan to Merv to gain over some of the Tekkes to the Russian side; the treachery of the Merv chiefs to one another, and the ease with which they were bought over by the explorers; the clever adoption of

the *rôle* of traders' clerks by the two officers; the strong persuasive measures adopted to induce the Merv Tekkes to agree to commercial relations with Russia—all are features common to the opening scenes of previous Russian annexations in Central Asia, but which have never been so vividly and so unblushingly described as in the present instance. What Russia is doing at Merv to-day, she will some day do at Herat.

How these official letters came to appear in the "Moscow Gazette" is explainable only on the grounds of the intimacy existing between their author and Katkoff, the editor, and the immense personal influence which the latter enjoys under the present *régime*. Alikhanoff formerly held the rank of major in one of the Cossack regiments in the Caucasus, but was cashiered for some offence and sent to serve as a private soldier in the Lazareff-Lomakin expedition against the Akhal Tekke Turcomans in 1879. In this capacity he acted as correspondent of the "Moscow Gazette," and furnished, under the *nom de plume* of "Arsky," a series of letters which were decidedly the best published of the war. He also supplied some excellent sketches to the "Vsemirnaya Illustratsia"—the Russian "Graphic"—signed "A. M. Alikhanoff." *

As to the *rôle* he played during Skobeleff's campaign of 1880–81, no information is forthcoming. He certainly contributed neither letters nor sketches to the Russian press. In the autumn of 1882 a series of letters on Merv suddenly appeared in the "Moscow

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* The letters are largely quoted in "The Disastrous Russian Campaign against the Turcomans." Some of the sketches will appear in the second edition of the work, which will be shortly published by W. H. Allen & Co.

Gazette," and it was then revealed that the Konshin Caravan, which had penetrated to Merv earlier in the year, had had something more than a purely commercial aim, and that, as a matter of fact, Alikhanoff, or as he signed himself, "Alikhanoff-Avarsky," now a lieutenant in the dragoons, had accompanied it thither in disguise, for the purpose of obtaining for the Government a military survey of the direct road running to the oasis from Askabad.

But for that revelation, the public might never have known that two Russian officers had been to Merv. A rumour of their presence at Merv had reached India *viâ* Afghanistan, but the intelligence had been discredited, and had been treated as a *canard* even in Russia itself, where the belief had been general that the caravan was only a commercial one.

Whether the departure of the caravan suggested the surveying, or whether the caravan was purposely fitted out to mask the exploration, is a question difficult to decide. A letter from one Nikoli Kooroff, published in the "Moscow Gazette," would seem to favour the former supposition. Says he, "Gospodin Alikhanoff has made the readers of the 'Moscovskiya Vedomosti' sufficiently familiar with the caravan expedition of N. N. Konshin; but having had nothing to do with the commercial affairs of it, he has been unable to give any particulars of this feature in his letters. As one well acquainted with the matter, I will endeavour to do so. The aim of the caravan was to occupy the markets of Akhal Tekke, Merv, and Khorassan, so as to prevent their falling into the hands of the English. Its mercantile operations commenced shortly after the arrival of the caravan at Askabad (September 18, 1881), trade

being opened on the 27th of the month. The first purchasers were soldiers and Cossacks, who had hitherto been fleeced by the local merchants—Armenians and Jews. Early in November a deputation arrived from Merv with Baba Khan at its head. Gospodin Kosikh, who had charge of the caravan, made his acquaintance, and obtained from him information about Merv. Baba Khan said the bazaar at Merv was a large one, but he could not give him many particulars about the trade of the place, not being a merchant. He approved of Kosikh's idea of visiting Merv with a caravan, and, on leaving, offered to send him an escort to meet and protect him on the way, if he would let him know of his approach beforehand. After this, Merv Tekkes began to visit Askabad more frequently, and Kosikh obtained from them a deal of information about the trade of the oasis. They bought more largely of the caravan than the Akhal Tekkes did, the latter not having recovered from the devastation they had undergone during the conquest of their country. They also seemed to be better acquainted with Russian articles of commerce, having been accustomed to repair to the markets in Bokhara."

It is not at all improbable that Kosikh was prompted to penetrate to Merv with a caravan by the dulness of trade at Askabad. Whether this was the case or not, his undertaking was certainly altogether in accordance with the views of the Russian authorities, who hastened to avail themselves of it to despatch two officers of the garrison in disguise to Merv. The survey was effected not without considerable danger, but the results justified the risk incurred. Russia obtained a military survey of the Merv oasis, and showed how she could reciprocate

the action of those successive English statesmen and administrators, who had gone out of their way to prevent English officers penetrating to Merv, in order to avoid giving umbrage to Russia.

According to the "Moscow Gazette," Konshin is again despatching a caravan to Merv. This time it is freighted with goods to the value of £30,000.

With these preliminary remarks, we will let Lessar describe his first survey.*

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In the middle of September 1881 the Transcaspian military railroad was completed from Michailoff Bay to Kizil Arvat, and although no immediate extension of the line was contemplated, it was nevertheless decided to make preliminary surveys to Askabad and then to Sarakhs, if circumstances would permit. A particular interest attached to that part of the line south-east of Askabad, as the levellings for a railroad would here be associated with the exploration of an almost unknown tract bordering on the new possessions of Russia; on the other hand, both the season of the year and the peaceful state of the steppe were favourable for the work. In pushing reconnaissances beyond the confines of Russian territory it is necessary to travel as lightly as possible, and it becomes very difficult to fit out an expedition with everything necessary to contend with all the privations of the steppe, with its extremes of heat and cold. The best season for work is September and October; the days are then cloudy, the heat is not excessive, and the men

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* Communicated by Lessar himself to the "Golos." An account of the geographical portion appeared in the "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society," New Series, vol. iv., No. 3, pp. 486–98, 1882, and vol. v., No. 1, pp. 1–24, 1883.—M.

do not suffer. In those months rains are of rare occurrence, the streams and wells are short of water, and the pits dug to collect rain-water are nearly dry. Early spring is the rainy season, when the steppe may be crossed in all directions.

It was also most important to take advantage of the tranquil state of the country, so as to avoid the necessity for a large escort with its incidental expenses. The capture of Geok Tepé produced so powerful an impression throughout Central Asia, that even at the present time one may travel very considerable distances from the extreme points of the Russian dominions with a most insignificant force; but it is impossible to say how long this peaceful spirit may prevail, for in the steppe changes are sudden, and it frequently happens that some trifling occurrence rudely dispels the fancied security. For the survey to Sarakhs a covering party of twenty-one men with an officer was assigned; nine Russian labourers and two overseers were hired for the levelling and topographical work. The guide, Ana Geldi Sardar, was a Tekke of Merv, enrolled in the militia at Askabad. He formerly lived at Merv, but having slain his man for some cause or other, he fled, and entered the Russian service. He had the reputation of being a brave man, a celebrated *batyr* or warrior, and a noted leader of *alamans*, or forays; besides being well acquainted with the road.

There were two interpreters: one a Kurd, who had been a prisoner at Merv and spoke the Tekke language fluently; the other a soldier, Tartar by race, and a native of Kazan, the dialect of which closely resembles that spoken by the Tekkes.

No difficulty was experienced in changing Russian

A RUSSIAN RECONNOITRING PARTY EXAMINING A TEKKE TURCOMAN TOMB.

money into Persian krans (worth about 40 copecks). The Persian merchants prize highly Russian bank-notes, and 100-rouble notes are current at Askabad at a premium of two and three per cent. The transport consisted of five camels, one wagon, and a small cart; one camel bore the instruments, two others the tents and effects of the labourers, and the remaining two my tent and baggage. The wagon was intended to carry the men to their work and back to camp in the evening, and for the sick if necessary. The cart followed the surveying party the whole time, bearing the box of instruments and the day's supply of water and food. The Cossacks had, moreover, four baggage horses.

The Cossacks and labourers were provided with French shelter tents (*tentes abris*), while for my own accommodation I took a field-tent, though its weight (7 poods = 252 lbs. English) and elaborate construction were great defects; but having regard to the necessity for plotting and reducing to scale at night the work done during the day, it was indispensable to have a good tent; and nothing better could be obtained on the spot.

I found it most difficult to procure an outfit at Askabad; for necessary articles, such as ropes, casks, water-skins, &c., were not to be purchased there, and had to be obtained at the commissariat stores; whilst such things as could not be obtained at the latter, had to be sought for in the *aouls* or villages, which are generally badly supplied with them. Askabad has been very rapid in its growth; nearly all the soldiers are lodged in barracks, built of clay and unburnt bricks, and roofed with reeds and clay; there are also many old houses. The bazaar occupies a long street, but the shops contain only manufactured articles, Persian and

Tekke wearing apparel and provisions. The trade in brandy and wine is particularly brisk. Everything else comes from Baku and Astrakhan.

The distance from Askabad to Sarakhs is 280 versts (185½ miles). The road runs parallel with the hills the entire distance, at a short distance from them, and is perfectly level. It is only near Annau and Giaurs that a few low sand-hills have to be crossed. The district between Askabad and Sarakhs is known as the Atak, or "The foot of the mountain."*

Formerly the term was applied to the whole line between Kazantchik and Sarakhs, although it was very rarely used. The portion of the oasis from Kazantchik to Giaurs (now occupied by Russia), and peopled by the Tekkes, is called Akhál. The word Atak is altogether unknown to the people of Afghanistan and Persia; the necessity, however, for distinguishing the country occupied by Russia, and that still remaining independent, justifies the adoption of the term, and it is now regularly applied to the oasis between the Russian frontier and Sarakhs.

Giaurs (Gyaoors, or Gawars) is the final populated point of the Akhal Tekke Oasis. Baba-durmaz, lying on the frontier, seventy-one versts (forty-seven miles) from Askabad, is entirely deserted. In the Atak there are only

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* Literally, "Skirt of the mountain"; the same word as Attock on the Indus. It is also written Attek and Atteck. An excellent account of the Atak will be found in General Valentine Baker's "Clouds in the East," which further contains a good illustration of the oasis adjacent to Kalet. There is also a brilliant description in Mr. O'Donovan's more recent work, "The Merv Oasis." Lessar, however, is the only explorer who has effected a survey of the entire Atak, from the Russian frontier to Sarakhs.

two points, Lutfabad and Shilghan, which are occupied by Persian Shiites, subjects of the Shah; the rest are peopled by Turcomans—Kahka and a part of the Kuren Dagh by the Alieli tribe, and the remaining district by Tekkes from Merv. The whole of the population is quite recent. In the middle of the last century, part of Akhal, as far as Durun, was occupied by the Emrali and Kara-dashli tribes; and to the south-east, near Yangi Kala, Geok Tepé, and Askabad, wandered the Alieli Turcomans. At that period the Tekkes transferred their settlements from Mangishlak to Kizil Arvat, a fifty years' struggle ensued between them and the other Turcomans, and in the end, at the commencement of the present century, the Tekkes got the upper hand; the Kara-dashli retiring to Khiva, the Emrali to Mehna and Chacha, the Alieli to Persia—partly to Chinarat and partly to Kyazir (near Nookhoor)—and the remainder to the Kuren and Abiverd.

Fifty-four years ago, Allah-Kuli, Khan of Khiva, beat the Turcomans and carried away the Goklans, Alielis, and Emralis to Khiva. The Tekkes gave him hostages and tribute. After the death of Tedaili Khan, who was killed at Sarakhs in 1855, the Goklans and Alielis returned to their former homes from Khiva. The pressure of the Persians, however, compelled the Alielis to go back again to Khiva; and it was only in 1873, after the capture of Khiva by General Kaufmann, that they removed to the Atak and constructed a new fortress at Kahka.

The immigration of the Tekkes is of quite recent date, the restricted area of cultivable soil and the insufficiency of water compelling the Merv Tekkes to quit their oasis, and settle on the banks of the streams flowing from the

Daman-i-Kuh. In the Atak there is abundance of virgin soil, and plenty of water. The evil is the proximity of the Persian frontier chiefs, the Eelkhanis of Deregez and Kelat, who have plucked up courage since the conquest of the Akhal Tekke tribe, and leave no stone unturned to pay off old grudges against the Atak Tekkes.

The people of the Atak dwell partly in clay structures and partly in *kibitkas*, or tents. On the whole there are comparatively few *kibitkas*. In the settlements stretching from Lutfabad to Kahka there are none whatever, while at Dushak, Mehna, and Chacha their number diminishes every year. Only the more suspicious Merv Tekkes, visiting the Atak at the seed-time and harvest, leave their families at Merv; the majority have settled down in the Atak altogether. Formerly every settlement consisted of a fort or *kala*, inside which were clay dwellings, and outside, tents that could be removed into the fort at any moment. At present all the new structures being erected outside the fort at Chacha are of clay.

The question of water-supply is one that is of primary interest in every country in Central Asia. The Atak is subjected to the same conditions in this respect as Akhal—the water-supply is limited, and the streams are disposed at a great distance from one another. In the Atak there is also this additional disadvantage, that the sources and a considerable portion of the streams lie in the mountains belonging to Persia. The Persians thus have it in their power to injure the Turcomans by cutting off the water from their fields. This is of common occurrence, and it requires many petitions to the Eelkhani to get the water back again. The question is a

very important one, because an insufficiency of water at the proper moment means a loss of the entire harvest. If this difficulty be not satisfactorily solved in a short time, it is not at all unlikely that the people will have to migrate, and the Atak will become a desert.*

My survey was commenced in the beginning of October. From Askabad to Annau, a distance of eight miles and a half, the road is everywhere level, except for 600 yards at the tenth verst, where it passes over low sand-hills. Annau is an old half-ruined fortress on a hill, with an *aoul* or village of 200 felt tents two miles from the fort, which is surrounded by extensive ruins, and stands on the banks of a stream nearer the mountains. The settlement is watered by the Kelte-chinar, flowing from the Ziriku range. Annau is the

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* Russia has secured herself against Persian spitefulness of this description by Article IV. of the Convention of Teheran, December 9th (21st), 1881: "Whereas, as the sources of the River Firuze, as well as of other streams watering the soil of the Transcaspian province contiguous to the Persian frontier, lie within the Persian territory, the Government of His Majesty the Shah engage, on no account whatever, to permit the establishment of fresh settlements along the course of the said streams or rivulets from their sources to the point where they leave Persian territory, and not to extend the area of land at present under cultivation; and under no pretext whatever to turn off the water in larger quantities than is necessary for irrigating the fields now under cultivation within the Persian territory. With a view to the immediate observance and fulfilment of this stipulation, the Government of His Majesty the Shah engage to appoint a sufficient number of competent agents, and to subject any infringer thereof to severe punishment." So far as the newly incorporated territory is concerned, I have seen no Russian complaints against Persia as yet on this score, but correspondents at Askabad have repeatedly dwelt on the losses inflicted on the Turcomans of the Atak by the arbitrary suspension of the water-supply by the Kurdish chiefs governing, in the name of Persia, the region where the streams of the mountain skirt take their rise.—M.

first settlement, proceeding from Michailoff Bay, where there are traces of art. These exist in the ruins of a mosque; many of its towers have fallen, all the walls and arches are cracked, but the elaborate and graceful façade is still perfect. This building, for grandeur of design and elegant proportions, is in striking contrast with anything else met with in the Tekke steppes. As far as Giaurs the Tekkes live mostly in *kibitkas*. Between Bami and Askabad there are ruins of clay homesteads, but in small numbers; more frequent are the tombs built of unburnt brick—ugly, quadrangular buildings, surmounted by domes and plastered over with clay. At Durun and Parau (near Kizil Arvat) there are ruins of small mosques in a bad state of preservation; besides which on the banks of the Usboi (old channel of the Oxus) near Mala kir (? Mulla-kari), Kara-durun and Aidin, parts of the walls of four monumental edifices are standing, but none of these possess any architectural interest. The inhabitants could tell us nothing of the history of the country; the nomads are comparatively new settlers, and apparently take little interest in all that happened before their time. To our question, by whom was the mosque built and when? the inhabitants of Annau, as well as of other places, could give us no information; they only knew the mosque was erected in honour of some saint buried there. His tomb is undecorated, being a mere mound of earth dressed with stone and surrounded by a stone wall, with a small entrance through which one has to crawl on all-fours. Near the mosque on the top of the hill a deep well has been dug to ensure a supply of water in the event of a siege. For half of the distance of twenty versts from Annau to Giaurs the road passes over a smooth, gradual

slope, and at the tenth verst crosses sand-hills, which at this point approach close to the mountains. This is the only place, along the whole line from Askabad to Sarakhs, where any earthworks would have to be made in the construction of a railroad.

There are three fortifications at Giaurs. The higher one is occupied by forty Tekke families,* living in mud hovels within the enclosure; in the central fort are forty of our *djigits*, whilst the lowest of the three is uninhabited and in ruins. The settlement is supplied with a sufficiency of fresh water, flowing from the Ziriku. During the continuance of our work between Askabad and Giaurs we met caravans of Tekkes along the road, returning to Akhal from Merv and the Tejend. These Tekkes fled thither during the war, but when Tekme Sardar visited Merv in July they received from him such assurances respecting their future lot as induced them to return to Akhal after gathering their spring-sown crops. They were in an extremely destitute condition, having lost nearly the whole of their possessions. In many cases one camel sufficed to carry all the property of several families. They could not remain at Merv, and probably Tekme Sardar had little difficulty in persuading them to return to their settlements. The refugees were badly received in the Merv oasis, for the people there are themselves badly off for land and water, and are seeking new places of settlement. The caravans from Merv took the direction of the Tejend, whence they turned into the desert, and joined the high road near Giaurs leading to Askabad.

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* In his first journey to Sarakhs, Lessar computed the number at thirty; in his second, forty families.—M.

This is the usual line of march of the Tekkes; for though the road nearer the mountains is better, it is open to attack from the side of Kelat and Deregez.

The distance from Giaurs to Baba-durmaz is thirty-eight versts (twenty-five miles),* over ground apparently quite level, but actually undulating with very gradual slopes, which form the first ascents to the mountains. Baba-durmaz is supplied with water from a stream flowing from the mountains. It is slightly brackish, though eagerly drunk by men and horses, and it serves to irrigate the small fields near the fortress. On our arrival at Baba-durmaz we found traces of recently-suspended works for the renovation of the half-ruined walls and towers of the fort, consisting of some dozen pieces of timber, unburnt bricks, and straw, littering the ground inside the walls and adjacent fields. The Eelkhani of Budjnurd, Yar Mahomed Khan, planned a restoration of the fortress to show his rights over Baba-durmaz; when information of this reached Teheran, the reconstruction of the fort was forbidden, and the works had to be abandoned. In general, the rulers of the feudatory provinces of Khorassan, when bold enough, are hostile to Russia. They, and they only in Persia, are dissatisfied with the subjugation of the Akhal country and pacification of the steppe. At Teheran the Government is, of course, glad at the successes of Russia, because it is relieved of the trouble of fighting the Tekkes. As to the people, it is unnecessary to speak of them, since there is hardly a village in Khorassan but has some peasants freed from Khivan

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* In his first journey Lessar reckoned the distance thirty-six versts.—M.

or Akhal Tekke bondage by the Russians; and it is only since the capture of Geok Tepé that the people of Khorassan have been able to count upon some degree of safety and tranquillity. Even the Merv Tekkes do not dare to maraud now as formerly. The Eelkhanis, on the other hand, are losers by the new state of affairs; they did not suffer from the Tekke raids—as with Persians so with Tekkes, the plunderers and plundered were distinct classes; the poor of both peoples were the sufferers, whilst *sardars* and *batyrs*, no less than the Eelkhanis, were enriched. This profitable source of income is now stopped, and with it the importance of the Eelkhanis as protectors of the empire, and probably no great time will elapse before the border provinces are placed on a level with the rest of Persia, and the Eelkhanis deprived of their autonomy.*

The road from Baba-durmaz continues over the same kind of country as before, thickly covered, however, with bushes; the ground is so undermined with the holes of animals, that both men and horses break through the surface at every step. Beginning at the tenth verst are mounds, ruins of forts, and watch-towers. Here, as in the Akhal country, towers were till recently indispensable for each field; but now that raids have diminished, the towers are no longer repaired, and are falling into

* The new Russo-Persian frontier runs through the Baba-durmaz valley. Article I. of the Convention of Teheran thus defines its course: "Passing along the Aselm range in a south-easterly direction, it skirts round to the north of the village of Keltechinar and runs to the point where the Ziriku and Kizil Dagh mountains join, extending thence south-eastward along the summits of the Ziriku range till it issues into the valley of the Baba-durmaz stream. It then takes a northerly direction and reaches the oasis at the road from Giaurs to Lutfabad, leaving the fortress of Baba-durmaz to the east."—M.

decay under the wasting influence of the atmosphere, which soon converts these clay erections, unless constantly repaired, into shapeless heaps.

The whole distance from Baba-durmaz to Lutfabad is 22 versts (14½ miles); at the tenth verst (in his second journey the distance is stated at the sixteenth) stands the small fortress of Artik, and beyond it as far as Lutfabad are cultivated fields, but the irrigating dykes are unbridged, and the bridges thrown across the streams in two places are out of repair, thus necessitating a considerable *détour* to avoid them. On the Durungar, at its *débouchure* from Deregez, are four fortresses: Kaleh-mir, Shor-kala, Lutfabad, and Kuren; the two farthest stand on hills, and are seen from a long distance, whilst the others are so densely enclosed by gardens as to be invisible 100 yards off. The inhabitants of Kuren are Alieli Turcomans, whereas Shor-kala, Kaleh-mir and Lutfabad are inhabited by Persians leading sedentary lives. There are no felt tents here, everybody being housed in clay cabins inside the fortress, which is outwardly of the same appearance as those of the Tekkes—a regular square enclosed by a mud wall. Within, on either side of the broad and only street, is a bazaar, from which extend, in various directions, narrow, dirty lanes, frequently opening into one another by gateways. The bazaar, according to the notions of the people of the Atak, is a very wealthy one, and certainly provisions and forage are plentiful; beyond this, the contents of every shop are the same: currants, nuts, several kinds of sweetmeats of very inferior quality, rice, sugar, execrable tea, and Russian writing-paper; in bags suspended on the walls are dye-stuffs for the hair and nails, medicines, amulets for men and horses,

trifles of various kinds, mirrors, small flagons—all very roughly made, and evidently of Persian workmanship. There was a good gunsmith at the bazaar, who mended the broken handle of our measuring tape.

We stayed two days in Lutfabad. By the second day the inhabitants had struck up quite a friendship with the labourers and Cossacks, exchanging visits like old acquaintances; jokes and laughter were the order of the day. The Russians entertained the Persians with tea, and the latter brought all they had for sale: guns, whips, provisions, kettles, sheepskins, &c. Of course the arrival of the Russians caused prices to rise, but nevertheless everything, especially provisions and forage, was much cheaper than at Askabad, which is not supplied by the natives of Lutfabad, in spite of being so near. This was at first explained as arising from the circumstance that the khan forbids the export of produce, in order to prevent the prices rising at home; but afterwards the people were more frank, and confessed the cause of the prohibition to be quite different; the khan prefers that the Russian Armenians should come to Deregez and buy on the spot. The khan waits till the contractor has given the people hand-money, and then places an embargo on the goods. This leads to negotiations, and the matter is eventually settled, but, of course, not without payment. On the other hand, the Persians are wanting in enterprise, because they know that, strive how they may, they will never reap the fruits of their labour. Their aga or khan will infallibly deprive them of their wealth.

The locality between Lutfabad and Kahka for twenty miles is the most fertile and highly cultivated part of the Atak. The whole of the settlements are watered by the

river Rudkhan, or Rudbar, taking its rise in the Allah-Akbar mountains. The river is the richest in the Atak; water is abundant the whole way, and the district forms an oasis by itself. The population is as dense as in the Akhal country between Geok Tepé and Askabad. The fields extend in almost uninterrupted succession; streams and irrigating dykes constantly cross the road. Traffic, however, is much impeded by the want of bridges. North of the highway the whole country is thickly covered with reeds and bushes, and the farther from the mountains, the more luxuriant is the vegetation, up to the very Tejend. The smoke which could be seen in the distance was caused by the burning of reeds and bushes along the river Tejend, to prepare the ground for sowing. From Lutfabad to Kahka there are settlements the whole way; at first in single row, then double, and afterwards in three lines. Altogether, at twenty different points, are some 500 *kibitkas*. Besides the inhabited houses there are numerous ruins of abandoned forts, some directly on the plain, others on mounds of frequent occurrence between Kodja, Askabad, and Sarakhs. These are evidently thrown up by hand, and occupy perfectly level sites, sloping on all sides towards the mound, probably for the reason that earth has been taken from the immediate vicinity to pile over them; they are mostly situated near streams and localities favourable for settlements, whilst they are less frequent between the forts. The opinion of Vambéry, that these mounds or barrows were raised by the Tekkes in modern times over the tombs of famous warriors and *sardars*, is not confirmed; the Tekkes positively deny it; they point to the burial-places of their saints and heroes, of which there are occasionally a number on the summits

of these barrows—the latter, they say, having been raised by unknown men long before their time.* The Tekkes tell of a great general who, very long ago, wishing to leave a record of his numerous host, ordered each soldier to cast a cap-full of earth to form a great mound. This tradition is very widespread among the Tekkes, but to which mound it refers, and to what general, nobody can say. Some of the barrows are circular and others ellipsoidal in form, whilst a few are of more elaborate design. They are from 40 to 45 feet high and upwards, with a diameter frequently of 350 feet, and have steep sides. They remind one of the artificial mounds scattered over the central belt of North America, as described by Nodaillac. In the State of Ohio alone about 10,000 of them have been counted, and excavations have fully explained their purpose, viz. to serve as burial-places of the prehistoric inhabitants of America. It is quite possible that the excavation of the mounds in the Tekke steppes would give like results, and that these barrows are the burial-places of tribes who occupied Central Asia long before the Tekkes, who on their part have turned them to account for their own fortresses and burial-grounds.

A few versts from Lutfabad we were overtaken by an emissary of the elder of that village, with a prohibition on behalf of the Eelkhani of Deregez, Allayar Khan, to continue work on Persian territory. This elder, during the whole of our residence at Lutfabad, tried to throw every obstacle in our way. It is probable that the Eelkhani knew nothing of the prohibition; in any case

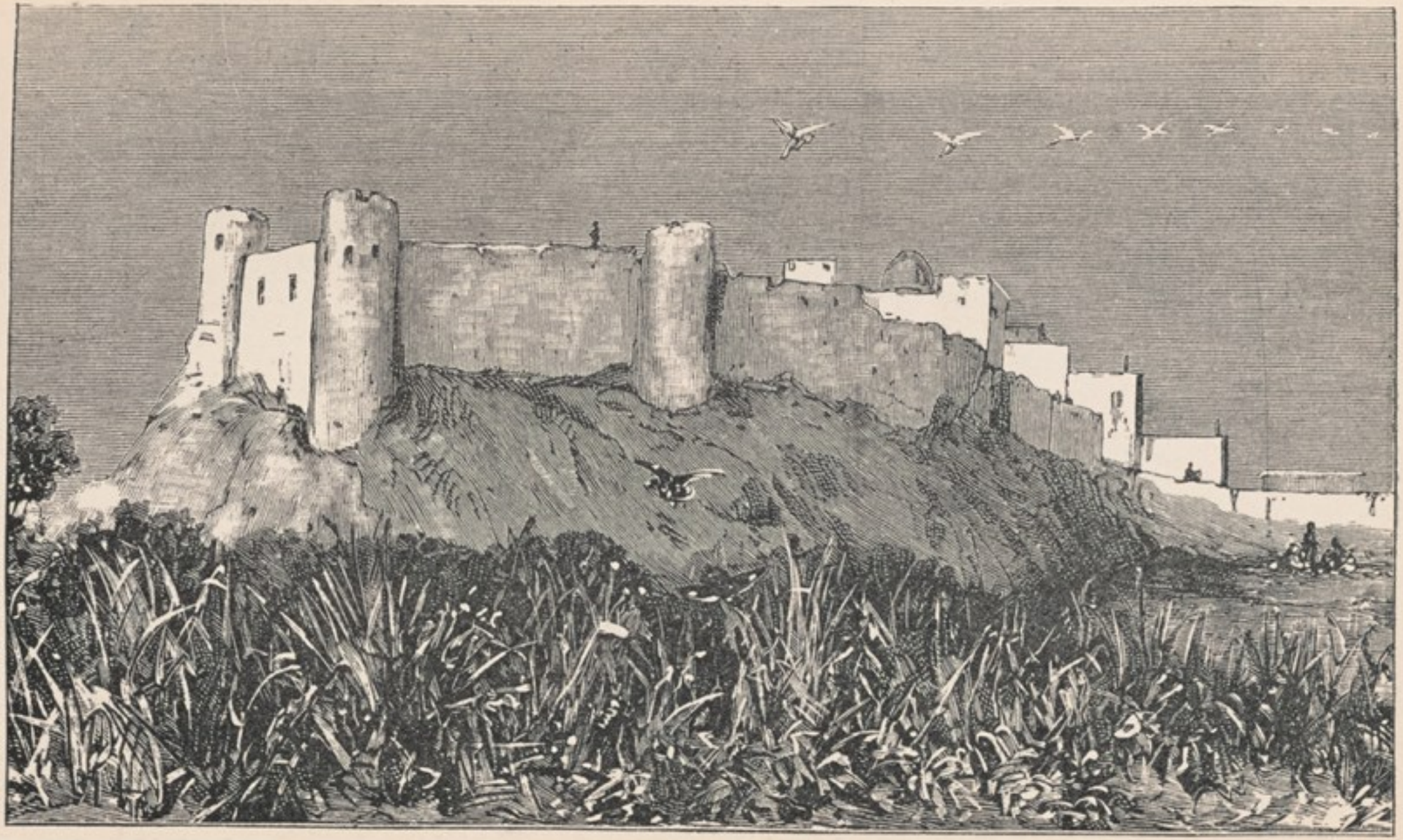
* An account of these mounds is given in "Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society," New Series, vol. iii., No. 3, pp. 158 and 166.—M.

it did not interfere with our work, for the right of Persia to the Atak is a doubtful point, and, moreover, the Persian Government itself did not oppose the Russian scientific explorations either in the Atak or along the border provinces of Khorassan.

Between Lutfabad and Kahka we frequently met people, and ploughing operations were in full progress; in many places with horses, whereas in Akhal camels only are used for this purpose. Sportsmen, too, were numerous, and game abundant, pheasants and prairie hens constantly springing from the bushes. The Tekkes did not avoid us, but entered into conversation and brought presents of what they shot. At Hodja Kala the whole male population came to look at us; nearly all sitting down and gazing silently at our camp, while a few spoke with our guides and interpreters. Towards evening we bade them all withdraw, and not approach during the night, for fear of misunderstandings, which they obeyed.

From Hodja Kala the ruins of Peshtak or Abiverd are visible, and had the appearance of a confused mass; but on approaching more closely we saw that they covered a wide extent of ground, and were indeed the ruins of a whole town, though the buildings were of the usual construction and in no way remarkable.

From Peshtak to Kahka low scanty bushes are here and there seen by the roadside. Kahka, 28 versts (18½ miles) from Lutfabad, is watered by the Laine and Artchinyan, which on entering the Kelat defile combine into one river and flow to Kahka. During the existence of the town of Abiverd the Rudkhan and the Laine supplied that place with water. The Artchinyan in those days flowed to Fort Kara-Khan, now in ruins.



THE ATOK—CHILGEN KALA, ON THE ROAD TO KAHKA.

THE TRANSCASPIAN RAILWAY—CONSTRUCTING THE LINE ACROSS THE DESERT.

A TEKKE TOMB, NEAR ARTCHMAN.

A FIELD TOWER IN THE AKHAL TEKKE OASIS.

On leaving the mountains and approaching the Tejend we again entered impenetrable jungle and cane-brake, swarming with wild boar, pheasants, and game of all kinds, the pursuit of which forms one of the principal occupations of the inhabitants of Mehna.

The road to Chacha passes several mounds and two forts, intersecting a line of abandoned *kanats*, or irrigating dykes. Chacha is a small fortress, of which only a few ruins remain. Here live about thirty families of Tekkes, occupied in agriculture. Most of the fields were sown with cotton. The Chacha flows between steep banks, and is fourteen feet wide and two or three feet deep. Like the Dushak and Mehna, it also fails to reach the Tejend even at flood time. The best road from Sarakhs to Kelat crosses the Chacha and Karateken. That from Meshed to Kelat *viâ* Allah Akbar is impassable for vehicles, which have therefore to go round by way of Sarakhs and Karateken. From Chacha to Sarakhs the distance by road is fifty-five versts (33 miles) over level ground. Twenty and a half versts from Chacha is a *gauz*, or artificial rain-water reservoir, called Rabat-Abdoola-Khan, now so covered with sand-drift as to be nearly level with the banks; near it is a small mound formed by the ruins of a caravanserai that once stood here. Half-way, *i.e.* at the twenty-eighth verst, our route crossed that from Merv to Meshed, which passes near Mount Khan-giren. From the thirtieth to the thirty-sixth verst the ground is covered with low hummocks of sandy argillaceous soil about seven feet high. This locality goes by the name of Cherkezli; the bushes here are rarely taller than a man, and nowhere particularly thick. Our progress

Like most of the settlements, Kahka consists of a new inhabited fortress and old deserted ruins. The inhabitants upon every successive disaster that befalls their town never restore their former dwellings, but build a new fortress. Old Kahka stands on a low natural hill. On another height rising from its centre is an impregnable citadel, the whole showing the ravages of time, but still preserving an imposing appearance. New Kahka is the largest settlement along the line, and contains as many as 600 houses, though the elders boasted there were 1,500. The population is composed of Alieli Turcomans, who fled thither from Khiva after its capture by our troops. The new fort has already been built five years ; the old one was upwards of a hundred years old when the Alielis migrated to these parts from Khiva. Inside the fort the main street is occupied by a bazaar, with nearly the same objects disposed for sale as at Lutfabad. This street divides the town into two parts, each of which is under its own elder; that of the first half is Said Nazar Yuzbashi, a most skilful man, able to keep friends with everybody, and equally faithful to Persia and Russia. The Alielis regard him as the representative of Persia, and he is extremely popular among them. The elder of the second part of the city is Yun Begi Yuzbashi, who received us in the presence of a great crowd, and assured us of his readiness to serve such distinguished travellers. Afterwards, at a private interview, he openly declared his fealty to Russia. Yun Begi and his followers stated, without any reserve, that on migrating to the borders of Persia they were obliged to pay tithes, but now that the Russians had arrived they were very glad, and hoped to be relieved from the Persian authorities.

The relations of Persia with the Atak country are most peculiar. The Tekkes, badly off for water and land, are looking out for new ground, and are settling on the streams that water the Atak after rising in the Allah Akbar. As soon as the Akhal territory submitted, the Persians grew bolder, and insisted upon being paid tribute by the Tekkes, who had no choice but to yield, and purchase by this concession immunity from attacks and robbery by the Eelkhanis. However, this tribute-money is by no means a proof of a good title to the Atak, since the Persians dare not show their noses in the Tekke country for fear of being sold into slavery. At Kahka the news of an approaching *alaman*, or raid, of the Merv Tekkes was confirmed, and the whole settlement was on the *qui vive;* the cattle at night being driven inside the enclosure, and all the roads watched. Under these circumstances we had to alter our *modus operandi*. As far as Giaurs we had worked without the precaution of being guarded; between Giaurs and Kahka five Cossacks accompanied the labourers, while the remainder escorted the baggage by the shortest cut from place to place, and then waited the arrival of the labourers at night. But from Kahka onwards, to guard against a surprise, we all marched together, the Cossacks never being more than a mile or a mile and a half from the working party, so as always to keep it in sight. This was, of course, heavy work for the escort; but, considering the smallness of the force and the alarming rumours current, it would have been rash for us to have separated.

Beyond Kahka we had to travel through a part very little known, and, as yet, unmapped. At first the road crosses a low spur of the mountains by easy gradients;

after this, three mounds are seen, and in their midst the abandoned fort of Kara Khan, owned by one of the khans of Merv of that name. This fort is marked on the Russian 20-verst map as being along the Sarakhs road, but it actually stands several versts to the north of the road. The map is for the most part inaccurate here, being founded on hearsay information; particularly as regards the direction of the road from Kahka to Sarakhs, which is represented on it as due east, the actual compass bearing being 55°, or south-east.

Nineteen versts from Kahka is the setttement of Hodja-med, inhabited by twenty Tekke families; its fortifications are in ruins, and the water having ceased to flow within half a verst of it, the natives have moved nearer the mountains, where they employ themselves with agriculture. Hodja-med lies low, and is invisible from a distance. A mile from it are the ruins of Sermechit, on a high mound, to be seen a long way off. The 21-verst stretch from Hodja-med to Dushak is absolutely level and open, Dushak being seen nearly the whole way. The ground is completely undermined by animals. To the south of Kahka are numerous large burrows of porcupines, and their quills litter all parts of the road. Two versts from Hodja-med the road passes close to a mound, and at the twelfth verst the ruins of a fort.

Dushak and Chardeh are made up of four forts placed close together; three to the south of the road on a smooth slope, and the fourth to the north of it on a high mound. Here we found only twelve Tekke families, the rest only appear at seed and harvest time. The fort stands on a stream—the Chardeh—which rises in the mountains of Kelat, and pours an impetuous torrent

over a gravelly bed about fourteen feet wide and two or three feet deep; the banks are also about fourteen feet high, but shelving. It is easily crossed. In the rainy season the river leaves its channel, though in the highest flood time it does not penetrate as far as the Tejend. Besides Chardeh-Tepe, on which stands the above-mentioned fort, there are several large mounds near Dushak, on one of which is buried a saint, after whom the mound takes its name, Magali-Ajidar-Tepe.

The people of Dushak are less dependent on the Persians than any others in the Atak, since the river Chardeh flows through a narrow defile, where it is almost impossible to increase the area under cultivation or carry off the waters.

From Dushak to the ruins of Mehna, forty versts (stated as forty-four in Lessar's second journey), there is not a single rivulet or well, and a ravine situate about half-way contains water only after heavy rains. The nearest rivulet is eighteen versts south of the road, in the mountains. The ground is level throughout, and absolutely destitute of vegetation. The first cultivated fields are met with five versts from the ruins of Mehna, and extend the same distance beyond that place. The ruins of old Mehna occupy a considerable extent, and consist of the remains of various dwellings, a cemetery, and mosque; the latter may be seen half-way from Dushak. The new fortresses of Mehna and Emrali have a numerous population, the first about 100, and the second 150 houses. The Mehna rivulet is about the same size as that of Dushak. From the Mehna ruins to the new forts the road runs nearly due south, and then again turns south-east to Fort Chacha, over ground similar to the preceding for fifteen versts.

became slow here, entirely owing to the narrowness of the track, for the ground was compact and suitable for travelling. On leaving the hummocky country we saw no more bushes and rank grass, a prickly thorn instead covering the surface. Thirteen versts from Sarakhs the large mound of Kendekli stands to the right of the road.

Altogether, between the Russian frontier at Babadurmaz and the Persian fortress of Sarakhs (not including Lutfabad and Shilghan, inhabited by Persians), dwell 7,000 Alieli and Tekke Turcomans, computing the number at 1,400 *kibitkas* and five persons to each one of them. This figure varies from day to day, since it is only at Kuren and Kahka that the population can be regarded as at all settled. Elsewhere it has been increasing since the pacification of the country. Any extended growth of the people, however, is not to be expected, since, in spite of the fertility of the soil, the restricted supply of water must in time fix a limit to the migration of Tekkes thither from the Tejend and Merv.

The population of the Atak is entirely engaged in agriculture, producing wheat, barley, and clover. Cotton is only found at Chacha. Throughout the country immense numbers of sweet melons and water melons are raised on manure heaps. This fruit is the staple food of the population in summer. Orchards and gardens exist only between Lutfabad and Kahka; from Kahka to Sarakhs there are no trees whatever. On the whole, the poverty of the people is very great. It is obvious that it is not the rich people who migrate from Merv, and during the first year of their migration the new-comers are very badly off. Those who recently

arrived brought only seed for sowing, trusting to purchase the rest in Kelat. The Persians, however, exacted exorbitant prices, and did their utmost to prevent them coming to Kelat to purchase corn. Last spring it was impossible to find forage even for a few horses at Chacha, Mehna, and Dushak. The excellent harvest of the present year, however, has greatly improved the condition of the country.

It is easy to understand that, under these circumstances, any hope of commerce with the Atak is not to be thought of. The wants of the Turcomans are in general few, and owing to their poverty they cannot afford to buy even what is indispensable for them. The bazaars at Lutfabad and Kahka are amply sufficient for the wants of the whole of the Atak.

Sarakhs is a large fortress,* garrisoned by a battalion (700 men) of Persian infantry; within the enclosure are cultivated land and gardens.

The environs of Sarakhs were the continual scene of the exploits of the Merv Tekkes, and the Persians dared not show themselves outside the fortifications. When the commandant rides out five or six versts from the fort, he takes an escort of at least fifty horsemen. The defences of the place consist of high thick walls and a

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* For a plan and complete description of Sarakhs, see "A Journey through Khorassan in 1875" (W. H. Allen & Co., London, 1879), by Sir Charles MacGregor, Quartermaster-General of India. Full justice has never been done, either by the public or the press, or (but this is nothing new) by the Government, to the public and patriotic spirit which led this officer, when a colonel of the Bengal Staff Corps, to undertake, at his own cost and risk, a military survey of Khorassan and the north-west frontier of Afghanistan. Recent events have rendered this survey of priceless value.—M.

deep ditch. Of course the Tekkes have never attempted to take Sarakhs; there is no object in doing that, for the garrison is not in the slightest degree formidable to them, and has never yet rescued a caravan pillaged within sight of the walls. The soldiers are so fearful of the Tekkes, that on the watch-towers, of which there are twenty-four in number, they light fires for fear of being left in the dark. There are six guns, but all of antiquated pattern, upwards of forty years old, and out of order; the gunners are ignorant of their use, and never practise firing, nor has there been an instance since the date of the erection of the fort of their having been let off.

The channel of the Tejend at Sarakhs, or the Sarakhs-Daria, is dry most of the year; it is a quarter to three-quarters of a verst wide, and even more in places. At our crossing-place, marks of where the water had been were visible on all sides, but actual water only makes its appearance at Sarakhs after unusually heavy rains, or when the snow melts in the mountains. At such times the water flows down the lower Tejend, north of Sarakhs, and fills artificially-constructed lakes, made by means of dams, in order to collect water for irrigating purposes, and enable the Merv Tekkes, who nomadise to this place, to cultivate their land. Sarakhs derives its water-supply, in the first place, from wells inside the fortress at a depth of twenty feet, which is also the depth at which water is obtained on the other side of the Tejend; so that, supposing it were necessary, in making the railroad, to circumvent the Persian fortress of Sarakhs, want of water would be no obstacle. In the second place, it draws it from a canal, fourteen versts long, led from parts of the Tejend which always

contain water; for this purpose dams have been built sixteen versts from Daulatabad to divert water into the dyke, by which means it reaches Kalehnau and Sarakhs.

The levels taken for the railroad have served also for the general topographical survey of the ground from the Caspian inland, and have especially demonstrated the absence of any general rise along the whole distance surveyed. At Aidin many points are below the level of the Caspian; and the whole tract from the sea to these wells cannot by any means be identified as a river channel, but proves to be a desiccated gulf of the sea, the part nearest the shore being covered with sand-drift, whence the land gradually rises to the level of the surrounding country. This is caused by the filling of the lower parts by a disintegration of the Great and Lesser Balkans. From Aidin the line runs along the slope of the mountains, ascending or descending as it approaches or recedes from them. But there is no general rise from the Caspian. Judging from the nature of the ground, it is very probable that when levelling operations come to be made from the Tekke oasis to Khiva and Bokhara, it will be found that in the midst of the sandy steppes intervening between these countries there will be many tracts below the present level of the Caspian; for instance, the Sara-Kamish basin. Our levelling further proved that it was impossible for the Murghab and Tejend to flow into the Oxus, as some even now suppose to have been the case; and, moreover, we found that these rivers had an independent course to the Caspian when this sea was nearer them. Further levellings, combined with geological researches, will explain the meaning of the hollows met with in

various parts of the steppe, and at the present time supposed to be old river-beds.

The expedition returned to Askabad *viâ* Ak-darband, Meshed, Allah Akbar Pass, and Mahomedabad. There are two routes from Sarakhs to Meshed. The first and most frequented crosses the Muzderan mountains, and is comparatively secure. This road has been widened, but is difficult for carts. The other follows the Hari-rud and Keshef-rud, and has not been widened, but might easily be made practicable for wheeled traffic, as there are no great heights close to the river. At present it is available for pack trains, but slight alterations would convert it into an admirable carriage-road.

This road is at present rarely used, owing to the danger of travelling along it; only at Daulatabad and Ak-darband are Persian garrisons of ten men stationed, but, of course, they do not make the road secure, and are themselves afraid to venture outside the fort. All the way from Sarakhs to Shadichah there is not a single village. Traces of irrigation-works, deserted fields, mills, and cisterns, are plentiful; but nobody ventures to live there, because this used to be the line of march taken by the Tekkes in their marauding excursions into Persia, and they often reached Meshed by this way. On the summits of the highest hills may be seen the ruins of towers, which were once useful in watching the bands of Tekkes that slipped through the side valleys and so reached Meshed. These towers were provisioned every two or three months, and the duty of the watchmen consisted in signalling from tower to tower the movements of the robbers. This watch on the roads is now discontinued, owing to the diminution of the forays; particularly since the fall of Geok Tepé. "The Russian

Emperor," say the Persians, "has said that we shall not be robbed." At Bakhbagi, between Sarakhs and Shadichah, thirty families of Salors, refugees from Merv, have lately settled. They were so poor that the Persian Government had to supply them with bread, and of course they have nothing to fear from the robbers; whilst the Persians are glad to receive any settlers on their borders.

From Shadichah to Meshed the settlements become more and more numerous; both sides of the road are cultivated as far as the eye can see; innumerable canals and *kanats* supply the fields with water from the mountains. The country is rich and fertile, though at present the inhabitants raise only crops of breadstuffs—wheat, barley, &c. This is owing to the want of means of communication. There is next to no trade, and wants are very limited, on account of the difficulty of supplying them. But a brisk trade is springing up with Askabad, though it is prevented from developing rapidly owing to the want of a good road across the mountains dividing Khorassan from the Atak. The pass over this range is at present impracticable for wheeled traffic for twenty versts from the village of Towarik, *viâ* Derbendi, to Ak-dasha, and even horses and pack-camels can with difficulty make their way across it; the transport being mostly accomplished by mules and donkeys. Under these circumstances a large trade cannot be maintained. The road might be made serviceable, for with the exception of these twenty versts, it is a good one. From Meshed to Towarik the ground is level, and the country favourable for travel. Here it would only be necessary to widen the bridges across the irrigating dykes, which are all adapted for pack

animals; the fords not being in every instance practicable. From Ak-dasha to Askabad, *viâ* Nouhandan and Kalta-chinar, the road might be easily made thoroughly serviceable.

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DISGUISED RUSSIAN OFFICERS AT MERV.

1.—LIEUTENANT ALIKHANOFF. 2.—GOSPODIN KOSIKH. 3.—SUBALTERN SOKOLOFF.
4.—AK MURAD SARDAR AND THE ESCORT.

CHAPTER II.

DISGUISED RUSSIAN OFFICERS AT MERV.

Disguised Russian officers at Merv.—The secret Russian mission to Merv.—Lieutenant Alikhanoff and Subaltern Sokoloff set out from Askabad with Konshin's caravan, bound for Merv. —Quarrel with the camel-drivers.—Robbers in the desert.— Persia and the refractory Alielis.—Persian subjects applying for Russian suzerainty.—Arrival at the Kari Bent dam of the river Tejend.—Description of the desert and Tejend oasis.— Relations with the natives.—Arrival at Merv.—How the Russions were smuggled into the place.—An exciting night ride across the Merv oasis.—Sensational adventures.—The next morning.—The people wake to find Russians in their midst. —Attitude of the chiefs.—Russian account of Merv.—The Russians before the Merv chiefs.—Threatening the Mervis.— A discussion between traitors and spies.—Fears of the Russians of being murdered.—Plots against the caravan.—Secret survey of the fortress.—Oasis of Merv described.—The tribes, the chiefs, and home and foreign politics.—A visit to the Bazaar. —"Down with the Russians!"—An exciting moment.—The Mervis suspect the existence of wolves in sheep's clothing.— Departure from Merv in a panic.—Further exploration of the oasis.—Opening of relations between Merv and Russia.—The colonization of the Tejend oasis.—A Russian cavalry column on Persian territory.—A tiger haunt.—Arrival home.

"Sir Richard Cross, speaking of Russia, told the House of Commons, with mimetic gestures, that she was 'creeping, creeping, creeping.'"—DUKE OF ARGYLL, "The Eastern Question," vol. ii. p. 291.

"The remark which Vitkievitch, the Czar's agent at Cabul, made to Sir A. Burnes forty years ago, still holds good: 'It is not the custom of Russia to publish to the world the results of her researches in foreign countries'" (*sic.*).—"The Russian Empire," by JOHN GEDDIE, 1882, p. 495.

LESSAR returned to Askabad from his survey of the country from that point to Sarakhs and Meshed, in December 1881. He then proceeded to St. Petersburg. About the same time the Governor of the Transcaspian territory, General Röhrberg, also left Askabad for the Russian capital, to prepare, in co-operation with the Government, a scheme for the administration of the newly-annexed region. During his absence the discharge of his duties devolved upon Colonel Baron Aminoff, described by General Venukoff as "un des officiers d'état major Russe des plus compétents dans les questions géographiques concernant l'Asie Centrale." Whether General Röhrberg was aware at all, either before leaving Askabad or after his arrival at St. Petersburg, of the arrangements for despatching two Russian officers in disguise to Merv, is a point on which no light can be thrown. If Colonel Aminoff did it entirely on his own responsibility, and without the cognizance of the authorities at St. Petersburg, it would not be the first case of the kind on the part of a zealous Russian frontier official. On the other hand, the fact of telegraphic communication existing between Askabad and Tiflis and St. Petersburg, and the circumstance that the officials at the former place are, in consequence, under the direct guidance of the higher authorities, might be brought forward to favour the supposition that the secret mission was well known to the Russian Government; and was set on foot to obtain for itself a survey of Merv, in anticipation of probable raids on

Russian subjects in the future rendering necessary a military expedition against the Merv Turcomans.

The following are the letters in which Lieutenant Alikhanoff describes his secret and hazardous journey. The sketches of Merv are by him also.

* * * * *

To Colonel Baron Aminoff.

Kahka, February 20, 1882.

Yesterday, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, we arrived at Kahka. As the country between Askabad and this place has been fully described by Gospodin Lessar, I will confine myself to an account of a few incidents that occurred on the way.

At Giaurs we overtook the caravan, and were extremely mortified to be told by the Merv camel-drivers that they would not go on to Kahka and Kari Bent for anything. "The distance is great," they said, "and the river Tejend is not to be forded at this time of the year."

We began to argue the matter, but it was of no use. They would not accept even the offers of increased salary we made them. At last we had to resort to energetic measures. We told them that if they did not go on we would bind them hand and foot and send them back to Askabad, and proceed to Merv with the camels ourselves. The Turcomans submitted to this, and we went on ahead.

The following day, when we approached Lutfabad, we were met by a Persian official from Mahomedabad, accompanied by several horsemen. In reply to his questions we said the caravan was a Russian one, that the merchant was Severin Beg, from Moscow; that his clerks were myself, Maksood, from Kazan, and the other (Sokoloff),

Platon Aga, from Tiflis; finally, that we were all bound for the holy city of Meshed.

This little deception was resorted to, in order that reports of our journey might not reach Merv in advance of ourselves.

Writing all this down on paper, and inviting us to stop on the way at Mahomedabad, the official rode off to give his report to Allayar Khan, the Governor of Deregez, who was then two miles off with a large force of cavalry, collecting the taxes. In this country these are only to be gathered in by a display of military force.

During our night-halt at Lutfabad we were informed that the Akhal Tekke Turcoman, Kara Sem, of Kiptchak, living at present at Mahomedabad, and once serving as a Russian djigit, had applied to Allayar Khan for permission to undertake a foray, and that the Khan had not only agreed to this, but had lent him thirty of his horsemen.

A little before dawn the following day we set out from Lutfabad, of course taking the road in the opposite direction to Meshed. When we got near Main Kala forty horsemen emerged from the gate of the fort, armed for the most part with double-barrelled guns. This force was no other than Kara Sem and his raiding party. Making ready for eventualities, we pushed on. The sight of our Berdans and revolvers was quite enough for Kara Sem. The robber-chief wheeled to the north, and, with his followers, was soon lost to view.

Later on, when near Merv, we learnt the result of his foray. Falling upon the Tekke Turcoman flocks on the banks of the Tejend, Kara Sem carried off 400 sheep. On his way home, however, the Turcomans of Dushak fell upon his party and robbed them of their booty.

Proceeding past the picturesque ruins of Peshtak,

or Abiverd, where, in the capacity of groom to a khan, the famous Nadir Shah passed his youth, we sent ahead a djigit with your letter to the Alieli elder, Said Nazar Yuzbashi. In less than an hour thirty horsemen arrived from Kahka to meet us. They consisted of the most influential people of Kahka, and gave us a hearty welcome. The rest of the population turned out into the streets and outside the fort to receive us. We halted for the night at a clay dwelling belonging to Said Nazar himself, outside which a guard was set consisting of four of his relations.

Kahka is a dirty robber's den, composed of 1,100 clay cabins tightly packed inside a clay rampart. It is intersected by two or three straight streets, exceedingly narrow and filthy. The people are all dressed in dirty robes.

The evening of the 19th of February we spent in the society of Said Nazar and fifteen of the leading Alielis. Their conversation was largely about politics, during the discussion of which they declared themselves the true subjects of the Ak-Padishah, or White Tsar, and refused to hear anything about the Persians.

Being aware of this mood of the Alielis, the Persian authorities recently invited Said Nazar, Anna Doordi Kethkhood, and eight other delegates to Meshed, where they were offered 12,000 Toomans if the whole of the people migrated thither from Kahka. The delegates refused to accede to the request, and are now in fear lest the Persians should resort to arms to compel them to comply with their wishes. In this case they have decided, at all events, to fight, and openly told me their intentions. They were frank in expressing their delight when we assured them that their fears were unfounded, and that the Persians would not be allowed to do this.

They are evidently devoted to Russia. This was shown by a circumstance occurring a few hours before our arrival. Receiving from Askabad an order to return all the property belonging to Major Tekme Sardar, plundered ten days ago by nine Alielis while on its way from Merv to Akhal, the Yuzbashi Said Nazar announced this to the people, and immediately prepared to carry it into effect; in the course of which he seriously wounded with a sabre one of the Turcomans who refused to obey him. We saw the Beurma folk from whom the property of Tekme Sardar had been taken, and they were perfectly satisfied with Said Nazar's measures for restoring it. I may remark that the Yuzbashi is a very clever fellow, and thoroughly knows how to adapt himself to the circumstances by which he is surrounded.*

We set out to-morrow morning. Said Nazar has willingly given us an escort, and has written to the same effect to the khans at Tejend. With reference to our march-route, we know thus far of only one. To cross the Tejend at Kari Bent is impossible, they say, just now. Hence we shall make a circuit and march along the river bank to Bent, where there is a bridge. I do not complain at this, as it will enable us to become better acquainted with the river.

Thus far the comedy has been played in the most talented manner. Lots of notes have been made and

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* Considering that the people of Kahka are Persian subjects, the fact that Russia should give orders to them direct, instead of applying to Teheran for redress, significantly displays the character of Persian rule in that region. Such high-handed action of the Russian frontier officials is calculated to act as a solvent upon the Shah's authority in the Khorassan border-lands, and prepare the country for annexation.—M.

sketches taken. All the party are in good health and spirits. The chief of our Feradjis, Ak Murad Sardar, is a most incapable man. I am sorry I did not take Kul Batyr, who enjoys immense influence among the Merv Tekkes. I will write to you from the Tejend.

Allow me to express my best wishes, and to assure you that everything will be done to crown our mission with success.

P.S.—In consequence of the pressing wishes of all the Alielis, I transmit their convincing, and at the same time curious, petition, that the Russian military commander will place at Kahka a Russian garrison, no matter how small it may be.

The dam of Kari Bent, on the river Tejend.

Feb. 24, 1882.

We reached the Tejend last night at nine o'clock. The camels have already commenced this morning crossing the river, and when they are all the other side we shall proceed ahead again. I am thus compelled to cut short my account of this portion of our journey.

Your warning, that attempts would be made at Kahka to dissuade us from making use of the direct road to Kari Bent, was fully borne out. Said Nazar, and all to whom we spoke on the subject, dilated on the folly of proceeding to Merv by a road so long abandoned, adding that the route would be extremely dangerous for us. In order to avoid wounding the susceptibilities of the Yuzbashi by disregarding his counsel, we pretended to appear satisfied with it, while holding fast to our intention to pursue a road of such interest to us.

We set out from Kahka by the much-praised road to Alaman Chungul, proceeding along it several miles, and

then, turning to the right near Bevanchi, traversed salines for nine miles and issued on the Kari Bent road, on which we had two night-halts. The whole of this road, fifty-three miles, is waterless in the fullest sense of the term. There is not even an old abandoned well along it. Dry canals and abandoned clay structures show, however, that the waste was once very different from what it is to-day.

The last of the more southerly canals, the immense Torly Yab, lies seventeen miles from Kahka; the first irrigation canal extending from the Tejend is met thirteen miles from that river; consequently there is an interval of nearly twenty-three miles without water.

The change in the character of the country seems to have occurred only thirteen years since. The attacks of the people of the Persian province of Deregez at that period upon the settlements here, became then so insupportable that the Turcomans migrated from it to Merv. The locality became a desert. Now, however, that circumstances have changed again, it is altogether possible that the desert may be converted afresh into a fruitful country, for through it lies the best road to Merv.

Sands are met with at two places on the way. The first are situated at Duguz Kum, not far from Kahka, and the second at Kurdannan Kum, near the middle of the wilderness. Their united lengths amount to a little over five miles, of which only the two and a half miles composing the Kurdannan sands are difficult for vehicular traffic. The remaining forty-eight miles of country consist of a plain of hard clay, intersected at places by salines, and provided at every step with abundance of fuel and forage.

Not far from Torly Yab the road cuts through an interesting historical wall, about three yards thick and high. This is known to the Turcomans and Persians as the Set Iskander or Set Sudar, that is, Alexander's Wall, or the Border Wall. They say it once stretched from the Caspian to Herat, and had a number of watch-towers in its course. It was intended to keep back the northern barbarians, and serve as a border-line between Irania and Turania. It stretches to-day from Giaurs to far beyond Sarakhs, for several hundred miles.

The nearer we approached the Tejend, the more numerous became the evidences of recent settlements: ruins of field-towers, grave-yards, fortified enclosures, and, in particular, canals. The latter run sometimes in continuous rows, a few paces from each other, and are thirty or forty feet wide and twenty or thirty feet deep. But everywhere the silence of death prevails, and they are overgrown with saksaoul.*

Traversing a network of these canals, we emerged upon the old bed of the Tejend river, across which lies a dam 340 paces long and 21 feet high and broad. This is Kari Bent. Alongside the head of it rears the immense kala or fortress of Oran Khan, and a little beyond is the old enclosure of the fortress of Kara Oglan Yuzbegi. A short distance further on is a series of terraces down which trickle the expiring waters of the river. This is a new branch of the Tejend, formed since the abandonment of the place. If a new dam were constructed here—and, according to the Turcomans, who are skilled in such matters, it could be done by a thousand labourers in a month—it would drive the water

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* *Haloxylon ammodendron.*—M.

again along the old canals, and give life to the whole locality. The soil of the Tejend oasis is famous for fertility far and wide.

The river Tejend is not very large at the present moment. Its width is fifty-six feet, and its depth at the ford a yard and a half. Elsewhere it is a little deeper. During the period of high water, *i.e.* from the end of April to the beginning of June, its depth increases to forty-two feet, with a width of from 80 to 450 paces. At this period there are inundations, during which the water, overflowing the canals, often forms a lake extending twenty or thirty miles from the river-bank. Later on, during the summer heats, the river ceases to flow, and the water shrinks into a larger or smaller lake. This contains no fish whatever. To-day there were twenty-eight degrees of heat Réaumer in the sun. In the summer the heat is intense, and the myriads of mosquitoes sting even camels to death.

In consequence of your letter, which we despatched from the first night-halt, Khodja Kuli Khan and Ovez Sardar came to Kari Bent to meet us. These pillars of the Tejend oasis are far from being Said Nazars. They dissembled if ever they expressed their devotion to Russia.

This displayed itself by their at once charging Ak Murad, as a Mervi,* with treason in showing us the

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* "By what name ought we to call the Tekkes of Merv?" asked the "Broad Arrow," September 17th, 1881. "Mr. O'Donovan calls them 'Mervli' in his latest telegrams, but formerly he used to call them 'Mervites.' This is the name that Burnes gave them fifty years ago, but it smacks too much of the Scripture to become very popular. Vámbéry uses it once or twice, and, we believe, Colonel Baker also. Another writer calls them 'Mervins,' and the other day the 'Globe' coined a fresh word—'Mervians.' Captain Butler, who writes Merv as 'Marv,' would

Kari Bent road, and by their efforts to persuade us to turn off to Alaman Chungul. Receiving our refusal on this score, they declared they would not give us an escort; and on the empty pretext that they were busy, that the sowing of the crops gave them no spare time, they refused to follow our caravan.

After six hours' interminable negotiations, we at length succeeded in detaching that Goliath and arch-scoundrel, Ovez Sardar, and inducing him to be our guide, by the promise of a regular pile of gold. Khodja Kuli stuck to his colours, but hoping to get some reward, or rather believing we should never return, offered us his services on our journey back to Askabad. We thanked him for this, and gave him some tea and loaves of sugar.

Thus we are bound for Merv with ten djigits.

In conclusion, I cannot find words to sufficiently praise the services and the devotion of the Alielis. There is no deception about them. Said Nazar Yuz-bashi gave us ten picked horsemen, under the control of those splendid fellows, Aga Murad and Shah Nazar, who accompanied us in the gaudy khalats (robes of honour) given them at Askabad. They wanted to accompany us

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by this rule make the people 'Marvians' or 'Marvins.' This, curiously enough, is the name of the principal English writer on the Turcomans—Mr. Charles Marvin—in whose book, 'Merv, the Queen of the World,' we find that the Russians call the people of Merv 'Mervtsi.' Were there not an English family name of Mervin, or Marvin, either of them would probably be chosen as the designation; but as it is, there are objections against its use, although, perhaps, not more so than in the other instances. Cannot someone coin a fresh term altogether that will give a pithy cognomen to the people of Merv sufficiently popular to put a stop to the variations we have noted above?" It is a question whether a better one than "Mervi" could be devised.—M.

further, but Khodja Kuli Khan and Ovez Sardar, in consequence of the old blood feuds existing between the Mervis and the Alielis, refused to assent to this, declaring that not a single Alieli should put his foot on the other side of the Tejend.

Kaooshoot (Kaushid) Khan Kala,* Merv.

February 27, evening.

The end of our journey was reached this morning at 4 o'clock, not having swerved in any way from the direction ordered, in spite of all manner of obstacles. Thus we are now at Merv. Before, however, describing that interesting point, let me give a short account of our journey from the Tejend.

Quitting Kari Bent at mid-day on the 24th instant, we halted for the night twice on the way, and traversed during the interval ninety miles, of which fifty miles were accomplished on the final day of our journey. Three parts of the way from the starting point is remarkable for the immense quantity of fuel abounding. In this respect it could fulfil the requirements of three Napoleonic armies, no matter where they might halt. Saksaoul and rosemary exist everywhere, forming between the ruins of Kulan Robat and the wells of Dert Kui a perfect jungle. Immense quantities of wild fowl are met with. The caravan guides killed hares with their sticks, while the djigits shot boars and golden pheasants with their Berdans. The final quarter of the road passes

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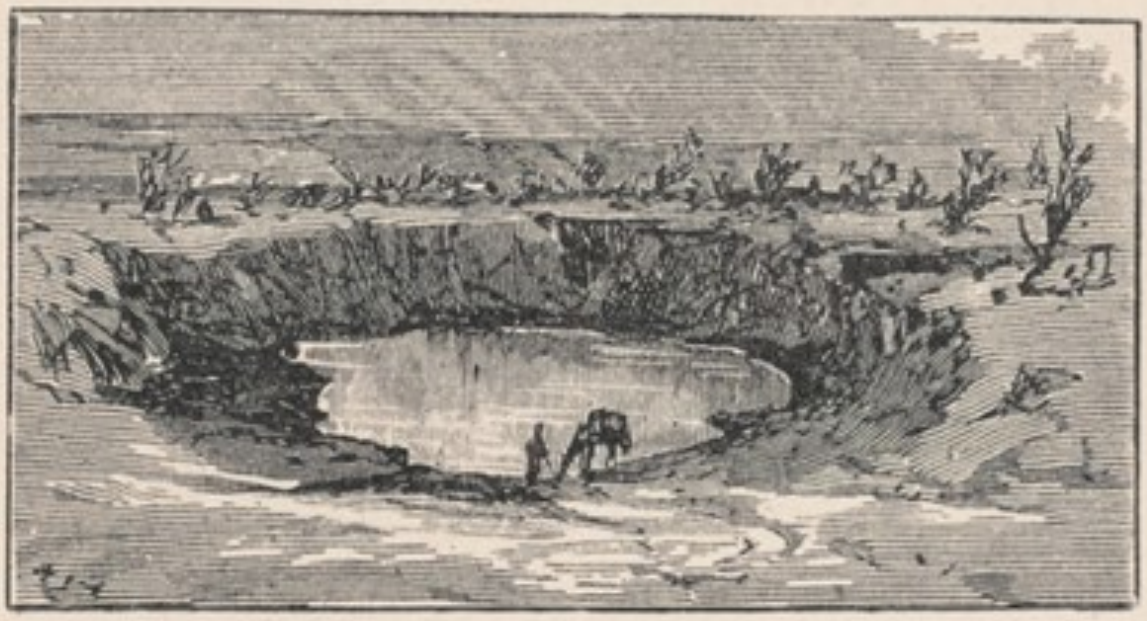
* Colonel Stewart writes this "Kala Kaushed Khan"; O'Donovan, "Koushid Khan Kala." It is a fortress called after the celebrated Tekke chief, whose name has always been spelt by the Russians Kooshoot or Kaooshoot.—M.

KULAN ROBAT



LAKE ALAMAN TCHUNGUL.

BABA DURMAZ

over the oasis itself, where the whole of the timber has been cut down.

The sandy portions of the surface, hardly distinguishable from the clayey parts, are pretty often met with, but they rarely have an extent of more than a mile. Shifting sand-hills are scarce, and only in one place attain a height of twenty feet. Altogether, the sands extend about sixteen miles; the rest is a clayey plain with but very few salines. *Takeers*, or bald patches of clay, are common, but nowhere extend in succession more than three-quarters of a mile.

As far as the oasis very little water is obtainable. Wells exist only in two places—at Dert Kui and Koyun Kui; at both spots of so bad a quality as to be undrinkable even in the form of tea. Ten or a dozen years ago, however, the country seems to have been altogether different. Old irrigation canals extend from the Tejend to the ruins of Geok-Siurdar, fifteen miles; and from the Murghab, the river of the Merv oasis, to the ruins of Kulan Robat, fifty miles. To-day these canals are dried up, partly from the causes explained in my last letter, partly from tribal feuds and the fear of forays—in a word, owing to the anarchy and the unsettled character of the country. The section of twenty-five miles between the two points was and is completely devoid of water. On the 25th, however, we did not suffer in any way from this circumstance, as rain, snow, and hail fell incessantly day and night, turning the *takeers* into immense lakes, which we were compelled to ford. The hardness of these *takeers* is such, that even after a good foot of water had been standing a day in them they were not in the least softened. The horses and camels did not stick to the surface at all; their hoofs

penetrating less than half an inch in depth. In this respect the *takeers* are quite different from the salines, which become marshes immediately after a slight fall of rain.

Covered with mud and wet to the bone, we were regular martyrs on the 25th ; but the impressions of that day were altogether obscured by what awaited us on the 26th, during the final stage to Merv.

The letter to the Khans of Merv we had sent on ahead by Fazil Beg,* while still at the Tejend, but it was not delivered at the address till our arrival. This was due to the action of the Karavanbashi Koshed Bey, with whom we were to stop at Merv, and who thought it better that the people should not know of our coming until we had actually arrived.

Koshed Bey sent five of his *entourage* to meet us, and these came up with the caravan about forty miles from Merv. Journeying on with them to the wells of Koyun-Kui, we meant to have passed the night there, having traversed twenty-four miles that day, and Merv being twenty-six miles ahead. The Mervis, however, after a long discussion with Ovez Sardar, offered us two alternatives—either to change our route and make a circuit of the entire aoul (encampment) of the Otamish tribe, which was said to be hostile to us—the tribe occupying the half of the oasis to the south of the Murghab—or to at once go on again and traverse the aoul by night. We adopted the latter course, and immediately started.

The cultivated fields of the Otamish, and the irrigation canals intersecting them, commenced two miles from

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* A clever Khivan who had long lived in Russia and had been at Merv.—Alikhanoff.

ON THE ROAD TO MERV—CROSSING A TAKEER AFTER A FALL OF RAIN.

the wells of Koyun Kui. Traversing them, we arrived at 11 o'clock at night at the first camp of Topaz; the moon at the time shining so brightly that we could even count the number of tents.

Our fellow travellers grew silent. They hardly allowed themselves to whisper. They hurried on to get clear as quickly as possible of the robbers' nest, the watch-dogs of which loudly barked a warning on our approach. We traversed it, however, in safety, and also another. The tents seemed to rise at every step like black mushrooms.

The *aouls*, or *obas*, consist of two or three hundred tightly-packed tents, without any clay dwellings among them, and are situate a mile or two from one another. The entire country between them is covered with crops. There is no road whatever, only paths. Such are the characteristics of the environs of Merv.

The nearer we got to the centre, the more numerous clay structures became. Low walls enclosing gardens, melon-beds, and fields, formed, together with the canals, quite a net-work. Amidst such surroundings we had already ridden for more than an hour, penetrating one *oba* after another, when the Mervis and Ovez Sardar requested us to separate ourselves from the caravan and proceed with them ahead.

"The Otamish," said they, "will not fall upon the caravan, because the people accompanying it are the same as themselves—Tekkes. The case will be quite different, however, if they chance to see you."

Thoroughly worn out with fatigue, we were allured by the prospect of an early rest—they said it was only half an hour's ride to Merv—and the three of us set off with one of the Mervis, of whom the number had

increased to eight on the way. Our djigits were in despair at our departure. They had the gravest fears for our safety.

The aouls stretched along one after another as before. We traversed a complete labyrinth of irregular canals, muddy roads, and inundated fields. Tents and walls, and fields and canals, succeeded each other in rapid succession. After a while the moon disappeared and we pushed on in the darkness, while watch-dogs bayed on every side.

We rode for an hour; for another; for a third, amidst this environment. To all our questions as to when we should reach our destination we only received a laconic "Quickly—quickly," from the Mervis. In the meanwhile it seemed to us that we were being led over and over again through the same localities. This circumstance excited our suspicions, and these were further strengthened by the conduct of the Mervis. They whispered to each other, they disappeared in the aouls and summoned people, to whom they whispered something in secret, after which there was a stir in the aoul.

"These scoundrels are up to some game or other," said one of us, drawing his revolver, "get ready for any emergency. Remain cool and keep your pluck up. I, for one, will answer that that Goliath, Ovez Sardar, falls before my fire."

"The sooner we know what the game is, the better," said another, "I shall empty my revolver among the blackguards, and then put an end to myself."

The third heard all this, and rode on in silence.

Suddenly we saw opening before our feet a broad silver band—this was the Murghab, the river of Merv. Still

as alarmed as before, we traversed a narrow rickety bridge, sixty paces long, and emerged on the north-east side, amidst gardens and clay structures, reminding us of the Khivan oasis.

After a while we came to the interminably long and wonderful walls of the fortress of Merv. This is a gigantic structure, compared with which the fortress of Geok Tepé is, in dimensions, but a mere bagatelle. I shall endeavour to become more closely acquainted with it anon.

Traversing this fortress, we found ourselves riding on the other side amidst the same surroundings as before. It was half-past three in the morning when our fellow-travellers, with ourselves behind them, turned off the road and entered a spacious yard, with several clay cabins at the side. In the darkness the massive structures had an ugly appearance, and appeared to us to be a sort of trap.

"We have arrived. Dismount," said Ovez Sardar, in a low tone, stopping alongside me. His eyes had an ominous look in them, and his voice excited suspicion.

"What place is this?" I demanded.

"Mekhman-jai Komek Bey — The guest-house of Komek Bey," he replied.

"Where is Fazil Beg, then? Summon him hither."

"He is probably asleep," replied Ovez, ordering some one to bring our Khivan to us.

In a few minutes several dark figures made their appearance.

"Fazil Beg, is that you?"

"It is I," he replied in Russian, but in a tone of voice that still further alarmed me.

"Are you a prisoner?"

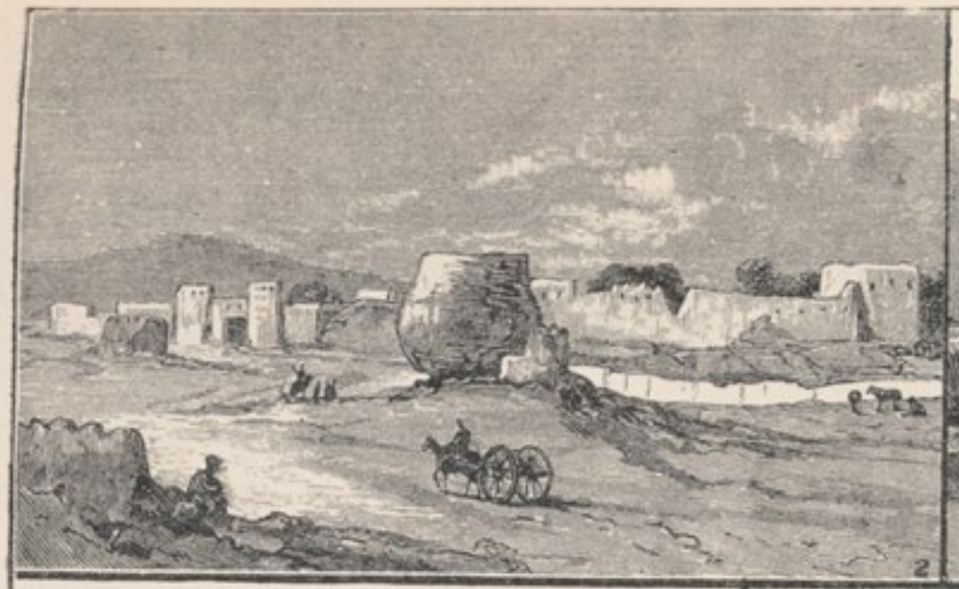
"Prisoner? No. Why should I be a prisoner?"

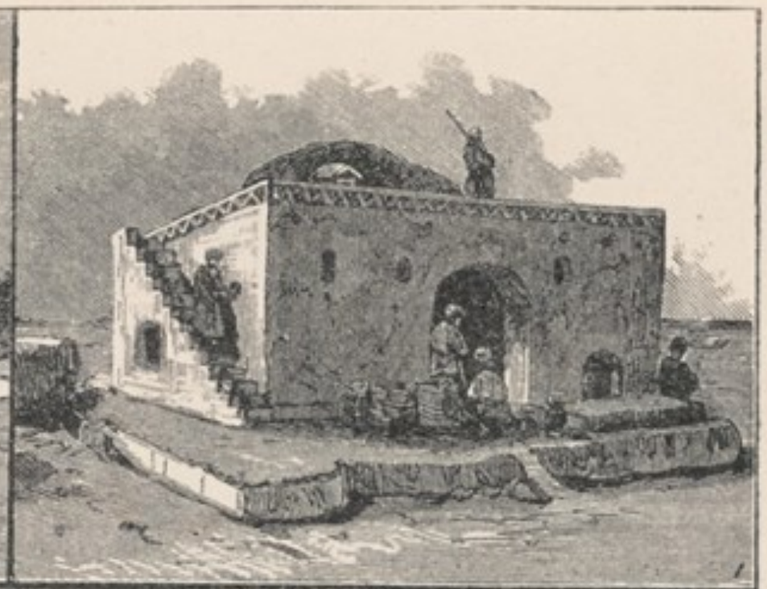
In the course of a few minutes we were led into one of the kibitkas, in the centre of which a wood fire was smouldering. Around this the master and several Tekkes were laying down carpets and felts. Ovez and several of his associates entered with us, and disposed themselves around the fire as fresh and as vigorous as if they had only ridden a verst or two. These Merv Tekkes are wonderfully strong.

They began to make tea for us, but we were beyond anything of that kind. The moment we threw ourselves down on the soft carpets we fell asleep there and then like dead men, and slept in the dark kibitka till late in the morning, when we were awakened by the arrival of the caravan and djigits.

This morning the receptions commenced. The first to appear was Kara Khan, then Atadjan, the cousin of Mehtem Kuli Khan. I will write to you about Merv when I know more of the place. The question of the relative convenience of the route traversed by us I will also leave open till we compare it on our return journey with the Alaman Chungul road. In consequence of the fatigue we feel, I will write no more on this occasion. We are all well.

P.S.—It is with great satisfaction that I withdraw all I said about Ak Murad Sardar. This trusty fellow showed himself to be remarkably well acquainted with the country. He seemed to know every bush on the way, and his manliness was equal to every occasion. And no wonder, for he was a robber in the country traversed, from a boy of thirteen until he was thirty-five.





1.—RESIDENCE OF THE RUSSIAN CARAVAN AT MERV. 2.—LUTFABAD. 3.—RIVER TEJEND AT KARI BENT.
4.—BRIDGE ACROSS THE MURGHAB AT MERV.

Merv, March 3, 1882. 2 a.m.

Just a few lines respecting the first few days of our arrival at Merv. Soon after we got here we were not over-pleased to find that the reason why we were brought to Merv by night, by the people sent by Komek Bey, was not because of the attitude of the Otamish, but on account of the fears they themselves had of what they might experience at the hands of their fellow-countrymen for assisting the Russians. During the first day all these Turcomans disappeared; some beforehand even on the night of our arrival, in company with Ovez Sardar, after receiving excellent presents from us.

In the meanwhile, the letter despatched to the Khans had been left at their respective addresses, and reliable information had reached us as to how they had been received. The Otamish, who had been so unjustly slandered, read the letter at an assembly of more than 200 representatives of the tribe, and, in spite of their distance from us, they were the first to send to express to us the assurance of their friendship.

"We are delighted at your arrival," they said. "We shall be still more pleased if both peoples agree on this point. You are the guests of our nation. Dwell among us as long as you like, and do what you like freely."

The same language was secretly conveyed to us by Mehtem (Makdum) Kuli Khan, who, in addition, said that he would like to visit Askabad, only he feared the treatment he might receive at Russia's hands for having led the defence of Geok Tepé.

Quite different, however, was the attitude of Kara

Kuli Khan. He threatened his cousin, Komek Bey, that he would pull down his house about his ears for harbouring the Russians. He also prohibited the local Jews—twenty-six families, some of whom are engaged in the distillation of *vodky*—from entering into commercial relations with us. All this was plain enough; but it is interesting to point out the cause of the Khan's hostility. The fact of the matter is, a report had got abroad that our caravan packs were full of magnificent presents to be distributed. This was all the more natural since O'Donovan, in winning over the Mervis to the side of England, had literally sown the oasis with gold watches and valuable gifts.* Believing this rumour, and taking us for envoys, Kara Kuli thought that Komek Bey would get the lion's share of gifts in return for his hospitality, which share he desired for himself, being a very avaricious person. Hence he meant by his attitude to get us to place ourselves under his protection, which would have been a shame to the amiable Komek Bey—a man exceedingly well-disposed towards us—besides being inconvenient to ourselves.

Two days after our arrival we learnt that the khans and elders of the entire nation of Merv intended meeting together, to discuss the question as to the policy to be pursued towards the Russian caravan. This assembly took place yesterday afternoon, in one of the tents standing in Komek Bey's yard. Before discussing the proceedings and results of this assembly, it will not be

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* The belief that O'Donovan acted as a secret agent on behalf of the English Government is deeply rooted in the Russian mind, and it is difficult to disabuse people of it. His "Merv Oasis" shows that he certainly was lavish with his gifts. This, and the fact of his representing a paper supporting the Government, are quite sufficient to convict him in Russian estimation.—M.

out of place to give an account of the existing state of affairs at Merv, the more so since they have only been established within the last fortnight.

The history of Merv is a very interesting one, particularly its dozen or so transfers from one master to another: now the possession of Khivans, then of Bokharans, and afterwards of various Turcoman tribes.* The last possessors were the Sariks, who were driven from it in 1857 by the Tekkes, arriving from Sarakhs under the control of Kaushoot (Kaushid) Khan. The latter was simply selected as chief for this particular foray; but, in order to more thoroughly conquer the oasis, his authority was extended until it became without limit, and gave him the power of life and death over the tribesmen. Among other things, he established for his support a body of 2,000 disciplined Nookers,† who received regular pay. Kaushid Khan died in 1877, and the Mervis invited from Akhal, Noor Verdi Khan to succeed him. Noor Verdi was far from possessing the iron will of his predecessor, in spite of his immense popularity. The guard was disbanded by him, and the full exercise of the will of the Khan became a more and more established institution. After the death of Noor Verdi, early in 1880, the title of Khan, with a tincture of his authority, and that not over all the tribes, was given in succession to Kadjar Khan and Baba Khan, the latter the son of Kaushid. But neither of them being fitted for their place, they each in succession became

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* An account of the history of Merv, from all the available English and Russian sources, will be found in "Merv, the Queen of the World," Messrs. W. H. Allen & Co., London, 1881.—M.

† Mr. O'Donovan calls them Naukers.—M.

in a few months the victims of popular disorder, and were overthrown. For several months after Baba Khan, anarchy reigned in the oasis. Early in 1881, the Mervis again decided to revert to the time of Kaushid Khan, and elect a chief with a body-guard, but could not arrive at any agreement on the point. The matter finally ended by each clan choosing its own representative—the Vekeels, Makdum Kuli Khan, son of Noor Verdi, in November 1881; the Begs, Kara Kuli Khan; and the Bakshis and Satchmaz—that is the Otomash—Maily Khan. The selection of the latter two took place only a fortnight before our arrival. In the hands of this triumvirate rests, if not the fate of Merv, at least the nominal control of it. Each chief has his kethkhood or councillor, and a hundred paid nookers.

The assembly of khans and elders, to which I have already referred, was composed of fifteen persons, almost equally representing the different clans. Receiving an invitation to appear before them, we—that is to say, Kosikh and I—passed through an immense crowd of sight-seers outside the *kibitka*, and entered it.

Properly speaking, we were received by the assembly of Mervis almost as criminals. No one moved at our approach; no one broke the deadly silence. All sat as immovable as statues.

Before breaking this deadly silence, let me introduce you slightly to the triumvirate. The young man of twenty-seven, clever and sympathetic, reminding one in manner and exterior of Madraim Khan of Khiva, is Makdum (Mehtem) Kuli Khan, Skobeleff's opponent at Geok Tepé. He is dressed in an ordinary khalat,

and sits in a place of honour. Next to him is an energetic man of forty, with a Chinese physiognomy—Kara Kuli Khan, famous as a foray leader along every road leading from Merv. The third is a clownish lad of twenty, though not such a fool as he looks—Maily Khan, educated in Bokhara, acquainted with Persian literature, and elected Khan on account of being the son and nephew of men who were in their time Khans of the Otamish clan, and were greatly beloved. The rest of the persons need not be described, except the Kethkhood Sari Batyr, a clever and energetic man of forty-five, acting as councillor to Maily Khan.

Entering the *kibitka*, Kosikh, extending to every one his hands, which were shaken very unwillingly, sat down, as befits a rich Russian merchant, side by side with Makdum Kuli. I, as interpreter, sat on a felt at the entrance. The silence continued. Waiting some time for some one to speak, I decided to break it myself. I therefore commenced with something like the following harangue:—

"From the letters you have received, you doubtless know the aim of our journey. My master, Severin Beg, is a rich Russian merchant. He enjoys the greatest respect of our authorities; and hence, before his departure, was with the *Shtab*"* (as they call you here), "who is at present controlling the country in the absence of General Röhrberg. The *Shtab* instructed my master to give his *salaam* to the people of Merv. . . . Deciding to establish commercial intercourse with you, Severin Beg has come here to find out, on the spot, whether he can buy and sell in your markets.

* Russian for "Staff." Colonel Aminoff was Chief of the Staff of the Transcaspian army.—M.

The Russian Government fully sympathises with this action, since it anticipates from it mutual advantages, so desirable for the friendly and peaceful relations of neighbours. . . . Thus, the sole object of our journey here is trade, and we should like to know what your views are upon this point, and how you mean to regard it."

Another prolonged silence ensued, broken at last by an old man, who said:

"Commerce is a good thing. . . . But we fear to draw upon us the responsibilities which will arise if any attack is made upon you by those bad men who exist among us, as everywhere. Go back to Askabad to negotiate with our delegates. Fix our relations, and when both peoples are united, trade as much as you like," &c. of an equally evasive character.

"I tell you we are traders," I rejoined. "It is not our affair to join or disunite peoples. For that, apply to the Russian Government; send it your envoys if you like. As regards us, there is nothing undetermined in our relations. The Russians are at peace with you. The Askabad bazaar is filled with traders from Merv. We did not see, therefore, any reason why we should not come here, and hence resolved to come. . . . Give us a decided answer. Will you let us unpack, and commence trade, or do you demand our return? But mind, I warn you beforehand that your action will be viewed in its proper light by General Röhrberg, if you close to Russians alone that route which is freely made use of by the rest of our neighbours—Bokharans, Afghans, Persians, and Khivans. Just think what your relations will be with a powerful neighbour, if the authorities at Askabad reply to your conduct by

refusing to allow a single Mervi to put his foot on Russian soil? Who will be the loser then?"

Again a profound silence.

"Make a reply," said at last the Elder Korpe, who is regarded as the most intimate councillor of Kara Kuli Khan. "Why do you hold your tongues?"

Makdum Kuli thereupon broke silence by explaining the full character of my warning. Sari Batyr agreed with him in what he said, and added several observations on the advantages of trade. By degrees the others joined in the discussion; but, all the same, I failed in getting a decided answer to my enquiry. The talk revolved mainly round the request that we should go back to Askabad in company with some delegates.

"We don't value the trade of Merv so much as all that," I said at last. "We are not disposed to waste our time running backwards and forwards. If we go back this time without selling our goods, you won't see our faces any more. I should like you to tell me whether you assemble and debate every time a caravan arrives, or only do this to the Russians?"

"No, we would not assemble thus," replied the Elder Korpe. "If anybody were to fall upon the caravan of any other country, if they were to rob it before my nose, I would not even wink my eyes. We are not afraid of them. But we don't want anything to happen to you, the merchants of the great Padishah."

"The people are ready to obey us," added Kara Kulu Khan; "we have no doubts on that score. But there are not a few *Kaltamans* in the oasis—robbers from whom we ourselves are not safe. They might fall on your packs and on yourselves."

"If we do not meet with any hostility on the part of the people," I replied, "we will answer for the rest. Our arms and our *djigits* will keep the *Kaltamans* in order."

Again a profound silence. Makdum Kuli exchanged significant glances with his neighbours.

"I have said all I have to say," I continued. "We will now await your answer. If it be the same as before, we shall prepare for the journey back to Askabad."

I felt confident that the previous answer would not be repeated.

"You are inclined to think," observed at last Makdum Kuli to the rest, "that we are agreed on everything."

"Answer for everybody. There 's nothing to think about," returned Sari Batyr, directing a glance that meant more than words.

"What's your name?" suddenly said Makdum, turning direct to me.

"Maksood," I replied.

"Maksood," he continued, fixing his eyes attentively upon me, "what are you?"

"Clerk to the Saoudegar sitting alongside you."

"Then tell the Saoudegar that we are only influenced by fears for his safety. Otherwise we have nothing against him, and he may stay here for ever if he likes."

"God forbid!" I answered. "It will be quite enough for us to stop here two or three market-days, to see what your trade is."

"In that case, here is our answer," said Makdum Kuli. "Let him remain here two or three market-days, and afterwards return to Askabad with our envoys to negotiate."

"Your answer is a good one," I replied.

"Good or bad, it is our answer," exclaimed the Khan decisively, to the apparent satisfaction of everybody.

This farce was, if you like, indispensable. Reports had been circulating among the people respecting the sympathetic relations of Makdum Kuli with the first Russians appearing at Merv, and he had actually the previous day secretly informed us that he should express certain things at the assembly for the sake of keeping up appearances.*

Satisfied with what had taken place, we quitted the tent, with frightful pains in our legs from having had to squat two hours in the Tekke fashion. I, of course, only tell you what was spoken on that occasion; other important particulars I will give you when a more convenient opportunity occurs.

The assembly dispersed. Two hours later Kara Kuli sent one of his associates to Komek Bey, to tell him to praise him before us. Later on, a whole deputation arrived from the Beg clan, with Allah Kuli Khan at their head, to declare that they would overthrow Kara Kuli if he continued hostile to us. . . . We are successfully learning all about the country.

Merv, March 4, 1882.

We received your letter yesterday. It is unnecessary to say that it was a treat for us, cut off as we are

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* But after all, which was the greater farce: Makdum Kuli and the khans parading a false discussion before the people of Merv, or Alikhanoff, the Russian officer and gentleman, ostentatiously playing the humble and menial *rôle* of clerk to a yard-measuring trader?—M.

from the civilised world. The Alieli who brought it is in great fear, and wants to get away again while he has a whole skin. Not to waste such a good opportunity, I hasten to add a few more lines to those already written.

We have commenced business operations. We are working hard with the yard-measure, but this, of course, does not help the affair. In spite of their semi-savage condition, the Tekkes, in common with all Turcomans, are full of penetration, and are not to be got to believe by such means that we are traders. At any rate, they will not hear of any difference between traders and political agents.

This explains the attitude of the khans and sardars towards us during the last two days. They keep coming to us one after another, including even those persons who a few days ago regarded us as wolves, and loudly demanded that we should be driven away from Merv. Maily Khan had hardly got home from the assembly when he sent us a letter by one of his councillors. In this the chief of the Otamish clan excused himself for not having, on account of his youth, said anything during the meeting of the khans. Together with all his people he regarded us as the dear guests of Merv, and was ready to fulfil any of our "orders."

"Rely," said he at the close of his letter, "rely upon all that Nazar says to you, as if it were said to you by myself."

Nazar thereupon whispered to us as a great secret, that the young khan was engaged forming at present a band of nookers to put down all foraying, and that when he had completed his plans he should be at the complete disposition of the Russian authorities.

To this we replied that it was no affair of ours; that we were traders, and arriving here only for purposes of trade, and that in such matters it was better he should address himself to Askabad, where we believed they would be favourably attended to.

After Maily Khan's plenipotentiary came Makdum Kuli's. He desires to go to Askabad, but is afraid. He asked our intercession on his behalf, and informed us he was preparing a feast for us.

To Makdum we made the same reply as in the other case.

A complete change has come over Kara Kuli Khan. This chameleon invited us last night to supper. We refused, under the pretext that we were busy. To-day he invited us to dinner.

Kosikh and I thereupon went with revolvers inside our khalats, in case anything occurred, since we are warned on every side not to trust too much to the old foray leader. Around his clay house are 150 tents belonging to nookers, and an old Persian gun. Half of his reception room is strewn with bullock's skins, the other half with dirty blankets.

Hardly had we taken our seats with eight kethkhoods, when interrogations commenced, lasting a couple of hours.

What was our aim? What was the condition of the Mussulmans in Russia? How had the war ended with the Sultan? With whom was the Ak Padishah now fighting? What was the cause of the conquest of Akhal? Would the Russians advance upon Merv? Such were some of the questions put to me by the Mervis.

To the last question I replied that the people of

Akhal compelled the Russians to make war upon them, and that the Russian troops would advance to Merv also if the people did not establish order and tranquillity among themselves.

The avaricious Kara Kuli still cannot bear that Komek Bey should get all the benefit of entertaining us. He has been doing all he can with his kethkhoods to induce us to move to his house, alleging that unless we placed ourselves under the protection of his nookers he could not hold himself responsible for our safety.

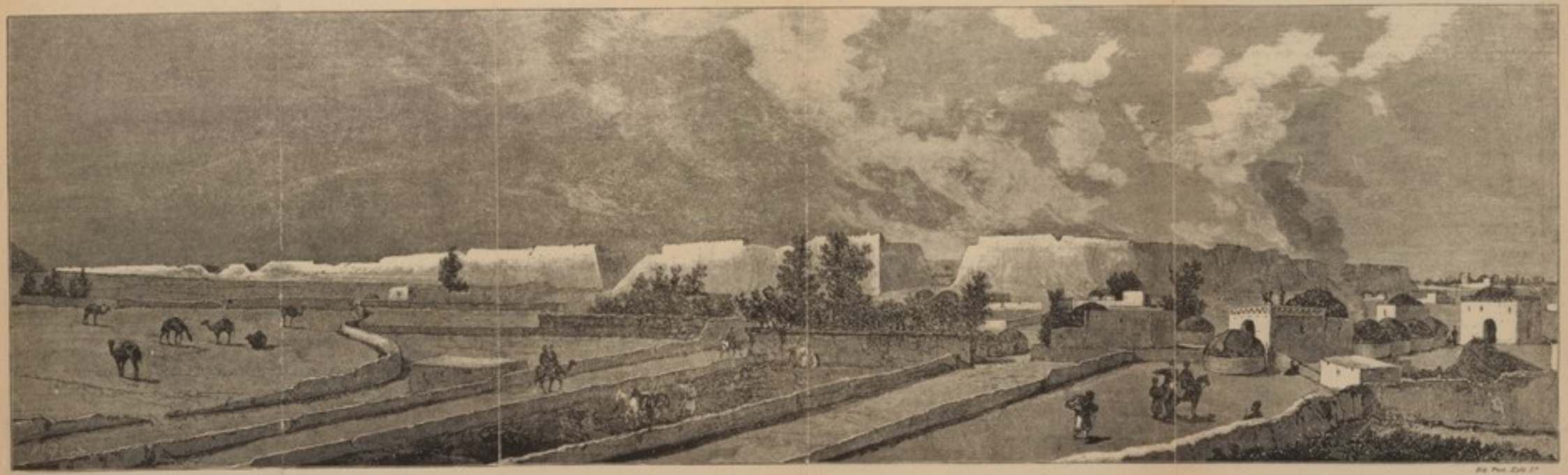
Demonstrating to the khan that such a removal would be a gross violation of Turcoman hospitality, I gave him to understand that no one should touch our wares so long as we remained alive.

"You won't have to answer before us if we die," I told him, "You will have to explain before the Russian guns."

When we left Kara Kuli's house he said to us, "Trade freely, and dwell among us as long as you like. Make use of my nookers, and send them with letters to Askabad."

We did not avail ourselves, of course, of this offer, but it was very pleasant to hear such language from a man whose people two days ago persuaded our djigits to quit our resting place under the false pretext of watering their horses, and thus afforded an opportunity for easily putting an end to the "dear guests of the entire nation of Merv."

I must not omit to say a word or two about a very remarkable Merv female, Gyoul-Djamal, the widow of Noor Verdi Khan, who rules Makdum Kuli, and exercises greater influence over the Vekeel clan than Makdum himself. It is at her instigation that Makdum wants



GENERAL VIEW OF THE NORTHERN FRONT OF THE FORTRESS OF MERV (MAUNSSID MHAN KALA).

to go to Askabad, but is afraid, as he considers himself as having been our greatest foe at Geok Tepé. She also sent yesterday an intimate friend to exchange civilities, and to express her intention of despatching her little boy, Yusuf Khan, to Askabad, if there be not enough manliness left among the other members of the family to send any other representative thither.

This morning at daybreak, in the disguise of a Tekke, and unknown even to our own djigits, I proceeded alone with Ak Murad to the Murghab, to water the horses and closely examine the fortress of Merv and its artillery. The former is in a sorry condition, in spite of its magnitude ; the latter is not worth thinking about. After the fall of Khiva in 1873, a rumour penetrated here that the Russians meant to march upon Merv. Kaushid Khan thereupon collected 25,000 labourers, and proceeded to construct a fortress on the banks of the Murghab. After working day and night twenty days, the news of the return home of the Russians caused the work to be discontinued. In 1880, during the siege of Geok Tepé, the 25,000 Tekkes again resumed the task, and worked for three weeks, until intelligence arrived that the Russians did not intend to march upon Merv. In this manner the fortress has remained unfinished.

In form it is like an isosceles triangle, and is only separated from the Murghab by the market-square. The walls extend $7\frac{1}{4}$ versts (about 5 miles). Their profile is frightful. The earthwork is nearly 80 feet in height from the foundations, and bears a parapet 35 feet high. There is no ditch, but both inside and out there is a broad, though not deep, excavation, formed by

digging away the earth for the wall. In all there are eight gates.

Inside the enclosure is pitched the aoul of Anna Murad Chepek, consisting of 300 kibitkas, and near it, along the south-western side, extend three parallel canals. Alongside the aoul lie on the earth, without carriages of any kind, the thirty guns of various calibres, and the two mortars captured after the destruction of the Persian army of Sultan Murad Mirza in 1860. The rest of the interior of the enclosure, which bears the title of New Merv, or Kaushid Kala, is under cultivation. Other particulars I will give you on my return.

The beautiful ruins of ancient Merv lie thirty miles from here, along the Bokharan road, on the very edge of the oasis. Some idea of the grandeur of this once magnificent city may be formed from a tradition current here, that once upon a time a chandler came home one night and beat his shopman because the latter had sold only 7,000 candles in the course of the evening. I shall try and visit these ruins.

Merv, March 16, 1882.

I have not written to you now for a fortnight; awaiting all the while the return of our messenger, who in all probability has perished, unless you have detained him at Askabad. In spite of this, I have crammed my memorandum-book with a frightful number of notes, and do not know where to select matter from for this letter, all the data being more or less interesting. I will give you a few details of the geography and statistics of the country in which we are dwelling, although the account will be very short, the period of our stay rapidly drawing to a close.

THE NORTHERN GATE OF MERV

In the first place the Merv oasis is not a natural oasis, as it appears to be on first inspection from the surrounding wilderness. The soil and the vegetation are exactly the same throughout the entire expanse stretching to the north from the Atak right up to the borders of Bokhara and Afghanistan. The whole of this expanse, excluding, of course, the sandy patches, which also exist in the Merv oasis itself, might be made to have the same aspect as Merv by simply running through it a sufficient number of irrigation canals from the Atak, the Tejend, the Murghab, and the Oxus. Such canals, in an abandoned form, are met with everywhere, and at one period watered the whole of the country, now a waste.

Even with its artificial irrigation and settled population, the Merv oasis is far from being as well cultivated as, for instance, the oasis of Khiva. The abundance of water in the Oxus at Khiva does not account for this, since there is plenty of water in the Merv oasis. The fact of the matter is, the Tekke Turcomans do not know how to put three bricks on one another; they are not such skilful gardeners; they are awkward in handling tools, and, more than anything else, they are far from being so industrious as the Khivans.

Like the Khivan oasis, that of Merv consists of a clayey plain, intersected here and there by sands. In length and breadth it is about forty miles, and its area, therefore, is about 1,600 square miles. The river Murghab divides this expanse into almost two equal parts, north-east and south-west. At the entrance of the river into the oasis is constructed the immense dam of Kaushid Khan, which diverts the water equally among the two sections of the oasis by means of two main canals: the Otamish and Tokhtamish. The small

remainder of the water left flows along the natural channel of the river.

Each of these two canals distributes water throughout forty-eight leading arteries (four more are now being constructed), which in their turn feed hundreds of irrigation canals, thus covering almost equally the entire expanse of the oasis with a network of water. The whole of the land between the canals is surrounded by clay walls, and covered with crops of wheat, *djevena* or sorgo, sesame, rice, cotton, and barley. Many gardens produce a marvellous number of water-melons and sweet melons, and here and there orchards and vineyards are found.

Amidst such conditions dwell the semi-settled population of Merv, occupying *aouls* or *obas*, consisting each of groups of 200 or 300 kibitkas. For the most part, three or four kibitkas form smaller groups pitched alongside their own portion of land. Here their owners train against the walls of their field-towers, or their clay cabins, the apricot or the mulberry tree. Such are the features of the landscape at Merv.

The Mervis purposely exaggerate their numbers. They try to make everybody believe that they comprise 100,000 kibitkas, and themselves are persuaded that this figure is only 20,000 too high. Particularly interesting myself in this question, I have collected information which gives me the right to estimate the population at 46,000 kibitkas, or 230,000 souls. Of this number 36,000 kibitkas belong exclusively to the Tekkes whom Kaushid Khan brought with him from Sarakhs to conquer the present oasis. As conquerors they exercise authority over the whole of the land and canals. The remaining 10,000 kibitkas consist of casual arrivals

from the Akhal tribe, the Sariks, the Salors, the Ersaris, the Atas, the Mahteems, the Yomoods, the Midjioors, the Khodjas, the Shikhs, and, lastly, twenty-six Jewish families. All these, except the Jews, hire land and water from the sovereign tribe. The Jews occupy the position of pariahs, and, as everywhere, concern themselves only with trade.

As you are well aware, the Merv Tekkes consist of four principal clans, the Sitchmaz, the Bakshi, the Vekeel, and the Beg. The first two form the Otamish half, and occupy the south-west portion of the oasis; the latter two, the Tokhtamish, dwelling upon the remainder. These clans are further subdivided into twenty-six branches, each with its own name, and dwelling in separate communities.

The principal occupation of the people is agriculture and cattle-rearing; if we omit foraying, which, until recently, was the chief pursuit of the Merv Tekkes. A few artisans are to be found, such as smiths, boot-makers, saddlers, and silver workers, but they are all of them inferior tradesmen. This cannot be said of the women, who are famous, far and wide, for their embroidery and carpets.

I was very pleasantly struck when I found that hospitality was regarded as a sacred duty by the Merv Tekkes, and that I could rely upon it. Any guest, no matter his creed or nationality, may rely upon immunity from danger for himself and his belongings directly he is beneath the roof of the first hovel he meets on the way. But, apart from this and their wonderful bravery, there is no other sympathetic trait in the people.

It is unnecessary to point out that until recently

everybody lived by robbing and stealing. The Merv Tekkes bitterly regret the wane of the alaman, or foray, and, on that account, look upon the neighbourhood of the Russians as a savage dog regards his muzzle. They are inhumanly cruel. One has only to look at the Persian slaves here to assure himself of this. These unfortunates were taken prisoners after the destruction of the Persian army in 1860, and since then, a period of twenty-two years, have languished in chains in the vain hope of being some day ransomed.

At Merv there are several hundreds of these poor wretches, for the most part broken-down old men, who are in despair of ever being liberated. Thick and heavy chains, about three-quarters of a yard in length, confine their legs together, and barely allow them to move half a foot at the time. One of these slaves came to us, thus fettered, a very clever and sympathetic old man, who bore the name of Pasha Khan, and had once been a colonel in the Persian service; his own brother, Abdul Ali Khan, being a full general and commander of the artillery of the unlucky army of Sultan Murad Mirza. We offered 300 roubles to the Khivan, who undertook to steal away this unfortunate. The poor fellow dilated on the ingratitude of his Government, and shed tears when he saw the portrait of our Tsar.

Besides being cruel, the Merv Tekkes never keep a promise or an oath if it suits their purpose to break it. Neither relationship nor friendship keeps them from pilfering and stealing. When the khans and the kethkhoods—the *élite* of the population—paid us visits, the first warning of Komek Bey commonly was, that we should not let them rest too heavily against us. "In that respect," said he, "they are all bad alike, rich and

poor, young and old—all will carry off whatever they can lay their hands on; such is the greed of the people."

In excess of this, they are liars and gluttons. They love sweets more than children do. No matter how much sugar and how many biscuits are served up with the tea, whatever is left over is carried off to the visitor's pocket without any ceremony. They are frightfully envious; they have no notion of decency or shame; and, finally, among all the Turcomans there is not a people so unattractive in every respect, morally, as the Tekkes of Merv.

Let me add to this, that the license of individual will is carried to an extreme, and gives rise to dangers not only in the oasis, but everywhere around it. Eternal quarrels exist between the branches of the various clans, and there is an utter absence of any organization to keep a check upon disorder. Free caravan intercourse and regular trade with the oasis will not be possible until Merv rests at the foot of Akhal.* I have just spoken of foraying as having diminished. This is true, since the arena of the former raids has been largely restricted of late, and the alamans can no longer assume the huge proportions they used to do in times gone by, when Akhal was unconquered. Still, all the same, small raids continue to be conducted against the people of the Atak, and close to our frontier.

Shortly after our arrival here we saw forty raiders ride off in the direction of Khiva. Another band has just brought in a lot of plunder from the Sariks. And a few days ago two Persians were dragged in, who had

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* In plainer words, at the foot of Russia.—M.

been captured near the Russian outpost of Giaurs. The fact of the matter is, that however much the khans may desire to put down raiding, they are unable to eradicate an evil inbred in the people. They are only tolerated so long as they openly or secretly conform to the people's wishes, and are overthrown the moment they go against them. I have reason to believe that the influence of these khans is almost nil. There are persons of influence here, but they are not khans. They are fanatic Eeshans or ecclesiastics.

The oasis of Merv is considerably richer than that of Akhal Tekke. The population owns 242 flocks, or about 160,000 head of sheep, and 26 herds of camels, or 7,800 animals. These figures are tolerably accurate, because the Turcomans know the number of flocks and herds of each clan, and as nearly as possible the number of animals. They themselves reckon, on an average, one horse to every four kibitkas, a donkey to every two, and a head of horned cattle to every one; on this basis there should be 11,500 horses, 23,000 donkeys, and 46,000 head of cattle.

With respect to agriculture, I am only able, at present, to give the following details:—Two-thirds of the population sow on an average a *tchooval* (250 lbs.) of wheat to every tent. Wheat yields twenty-fold, and sorgo 200–300-fold. Of the latter, however, only one-third of the population sow seed at the rate of 36 lbs. per kibitka; the remainder only sow about three pounds. Throughout the entire oasis it would hardly be possible to obtain more than 36,000 lbs. of this grain; the same also with rice. The Mervis use an immense quantity of sesame oil with their food, but half of the seed from which it is expressed is brought from the

MERV—MEDRESSÉ IN THE AOUL OF KAUSHID KHAN.

Tejend and the Atak. The oil-cake is used for feeding camels.

Silk is only slightly cultivated. Cotton is exported to the extent of 100 camel-loads, or 54,000 lbs., but I am told that the quantity could be greater were there a demand for it. Water-melons and sweet melons serve as food for the poorer part of the population two-thirds of the year. A large area of ground is applied to their cultivation, and they grow splendidly here. Sometimes, however, the oasis swarms with frightful numbers of red beetles, called *kekene*, which, like locusts, destroy the entire melon crop. This was the case in 1881. There is also a disease called *sheere*, common to melons, which causes the plant to wither.

Grapes, peaches, and apricots are the sole fruit obtainable at Merv, except the *tootoo*, or mulberry.

In conclusion, let me say a few words about our visit to the bazaar at Merv, which nearly cost us our lives. There are no regular shops at Merv. Those who wish to buy and those who wish to sell assemble twice a week, on Tuesdays and Saturdays, in the market-square between the fortress and the Murghab. Merv becomes quite lively on these days: all the roads leading to the bazaar swarm with riders and pedestrians. On such occasions camels and donkeys usually carry two persons apiece. Seven or eight thousand people assemble in the market-square, without a single woman among them, and all the animals are left tied to the walls of the fortress.

The entire crowd—some with ready-made shoes or clothes, others with wicker-baskets or copper or wooden vessels, others again with female ornaments, with falcons, with cattle, &c.—circulate round about several

roofless enclosures, inside which traders expose, on the naked ground, Moscow chintzes, Persian sugar, opium, green tea, dried melons, tobacco, Bokharan samovars, cotton, &c. But, with the exception of a few carpets and covers, there is nothing original or valuable for sale.

We, that is to say, Kosikh and I, rode into this crowd in Tekke costume, accompanied by six djigits and preceded by ten foot-captains, furnished by Kara Kuli, and having huge staves in their hands. The bazaar was at its height, and at the outset we attracted no attention. After a while, however, the cry of *Ooroos* (Russians) was raised in the crowd, and grew louder and more frequent the further we advanced. In this manner we rode through the bazaar, and turned to come back.

By this time the swarm of inquisitives began to close round us on every side, pushing and pressing one another. Suddenly, without any warning, the crowd fell upon us with cries of "Voor, Voor! Down with them! down with them!"

The moment was a critical one. We grasped our revolvers. But the staves of the foot-captains cleared a path for us, and the crowd fell back. We then rode quietly round the rest of the bazaar without any further interruption, for the aim of those who had raised the cry had been accomplished. They had taken advantage of the tumult to lay their hands on everything they could.

The prices at the bazaar were as follows:—A *batman*, or 32 *seeree* (70 lbs.) of wheat costs a Merv *kran*, or eightpence. In the autumn it is to be had still cheaper than this. Rice costs nearly four shillings the *batman*;

sorgo a *kran*, or eightpence; barley a *tenghe*, or fivepence; and cotton four *tenghes*, or one shilling and eightpence, the *batman*.

Business is dull with the caravan. We sell such trifles as combs, sweetmeats, mirrors, &c.; but our principal article, cotton material, lies on our hands, because it is striped after the Bokharan fashion, which, however, does not prevail at Merv. The people here are very fond of red, which was not thought of when the caravan was fitted out.

The khans still keep coming to see us. The only difference is, that Kara Kuli pays his visits secretly, by night, while the more candid Maily Khan comes openly in the daytime. With them come all manner of personages, who put all manner of questions. The unexpected character of some of these almost at times takes me unawares, but I have succeeded thus far in evading them.

Thus, a day or two ago, Kara Kuli, after joking a bit, suddenly demanded: "Where will the Russians go to first, to Meshed, to Sarakhs, or to Merv?"

"A trader does not know such things," I replied, "but at the present moment we believe the Russians are not assembling to go anywhere."

"How is that so?" rejoined the Khan, "when only three months ago your Yer-Oltchan (surveyor) went to Sarakhs and drove in stakes all the way along the road?"

Kara Kuli referred to Gospodin Lessar's journey. I had, in consequence, to give a whole lecture on the blessings of commerce, the influence of railroads on its development, and the necessity for making surveys beforehand along the country to be traversed by them. I

demonstrated that the Yer-Oltchan was not a military official, and that his work was only associated with the commercial advantages of Russia.*

Allah only knows what effect my assurances had on the suspicious Turcoman chief, but he could not restrain himself from saying, spitefully,—

"How comes it that a mere trader knows all these things?"

"We pick them up at school, and in Russia the schools are open to everybody."

The Oba of Ovez Sardar, on the Tejend.

March 22, 1882.

We were better treated at Merv than we expected, but, none the less, I tell you candidly that we were never an hour free from fears of some catastrophe. The Mervis are altogether unreliable.

For instance, the khans and elders would pass the time with us, expressing their friendliness, and inviting us to visit them; and then, directly they were gone, somebody would come, and, swearing he was speaking the truth, would whisper in our ears, "Depart, in the

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* This was not a very accurate demonstration. General Annenkoff is the chief of the Military Transport of Russia and controller of the military railway battalion, which latter built the Transcaspian railway in 1880, and, during 1882, constructed a strategical line, 89½ miles long, through the Pinsk marshes, from Pinsk to Jabinka, a point near the fortress of Brest-Litovsk. Lessar is a subordinate of Annenkoff's, and can hardly by any means be regarded as a civilian. Besides, the Transcaspian railway is a military one, not a commercial undertaking, and any extension of it towards Sarakhs will inevitably be due more to military and political considerations than to any "association with the commercial advantages of Russia," as Alikhanoff puts it.—M.

name of God, while you have a whole skin. There 's a plot against you to shoot you ! ''

During the last few days, even our djigits joined in with these warnings, among them being several who had previously expressed every confidence in our safety. Under the influence of these rumours and beliefs, Kosikh hastened to dispose of his wares, and sold on credit what remained to Komek Bey. After this there was nothing left to be done but to come away, which we accordingly did. Having informed Kara Kuli of the time of our departure, he offered us ten nookers to escort us through the oasis, which we accepted, and rode away in company of these and several Mervis with whom we had become friends during our stay.

On the eve of our departure the khans and elders held a meeting and drew up a collective note, addressed to Askabad, and sent this with us, together with delegates of all the clans. They were very loath for us to leave. Maily Khan, in particular, begged us to be his guest for a fortnight at least. I wanted very much to accede to this request, but . . . . none the less, we had to leave. This was a great pity, because I am persuaded there was no occasion for it.

Thus we quitted Merv at mid-day on the 17th January, along the Khivan road, from which we turned off at the second march. Forty horsemen accompanied us, among them Komek Bey, and yesterday evening we arrived at the bed of the Tejend, near Lake Alaman Chungul.

The distance between the two points is 144 versts (95 miles). The road is a most repulsive one, and is not to be compared with the Kari Bent route to Merv. The sands occupy an aggregate length of 85 versts

(56 miles). The river Murghab flows in the direction of the road ; sometimes near it, and sometimes away from it, till it gradually disappears in a trickle. Its water is mainly spent among the canals, which are traversed every minute on the way through the oasis. At twenty-six miles from Merv we crossed its bed, which has here the form of a deep canal cut through the shifting sands of Allah Kum. The water had altogether disappeared by this time, and we were told that in the summer it only flows thirteen miles from Merv. At the twenty-first mile we passed the final watercourse.

After this, throughout the remaining seventy-four miles to Lake Alaman Chungul, only two wells were encountered—Alak-Kui and Cherli Kui, both containing little water, and the latter brackish.

Ancient waterless canals are met further on than this. The final one, Kum Yan, traverses the road fifty-three miles from Merv. The following thirty-one miles—after which commences the Tejend oasis, intersected by water-channels from that river—has, apparently, always been a waterless waste, since there are no traces of any canals whatever. It is, indeed, a fearful desert, where only a clayey patch here and there breaks the monotony of continuous mighty sands. In the bed of the Tejend, as well as in the channels running north of it, we found no traces of water. It is only ten and a half miles from Lake Alaman Chungul that it is first observed, since a dam, recently constructed at that distance from the lake, diverts the water into the canals higher up.

Alaman Chungul, or the Lake of the Foray, is situated in a deep basin in the bed of the Tejend, and alongside it runs the road from Giaurs to Merv. It has a circum-

ference of 236 paces, with a constant depth of ten feet. The water is somewhat saline, but may be drunk, particularly at this spot. To this short account of the road must be added, that it enters a jungle on the very edge of the oasis, and for the remaining seventy versts or so traverses a wooded country. The wood, of course, is of a desert character, consisting of saksaoul, rosemary, and so forth, but it affords abundance of fuel at every step. On the way we passed several aouls, consisting of twenty or thirty kibitkas, but not further than twenty-six miles from Merv. Their owners camp alongside pools of rain-water, which are frequently met with, and shift from one spot to another as they dry up.

Arriving at the Tejend, we rode up to the aoul of our old friend the Goliath, Ovez Sardar, to his great vexation, since this man, who has been trying to pose as one of the most important personages in the Tejend oasis, did not wish his poverty to be exposed to us. His aoul consists only of three kibitkas and a few dozen wretched reed huts, situated on the sands alongside a sorry well.

To-day we rest here.

On the way, we heard of the movement of a cavalry column, which, we were told, had been sent from Askabad in the direction of the Tejend, in consequence of the circulation of a report that we had perished. The column is to-day at Kahka,* and I have informed its commander that we are proceeding safely direct to Giaurs. The Tekkes of the Tejend, naturally imagining a main body to be at the back of the column, are in a state of great excitement. We hear of nothing but their loyalty.

* That is, on Persian territory. No report of its movements seems to have reached Europe.—M.

Ovez Sardar himself is as meek as a lamb, although it has not prevented him from trying to persuade us to proceed to Kahka, wishing to keep us ignorant of the other road. But on this occasion we dispensed with any discussion, and told him to mind his own business.

The contents of the letter conveyed by the Merv deputation run something like this :—"Up to this time anarchy has reigned among us. We are now trying to put down forays and render the passage of caravans safe. Wishing to live in peace, we send you our delegates, who have full power to add verbally to this letter." The whole affair, of course, consists in this addition, and it is sufficiently curious . . . .

We set out home to-morrow morning.

Giaurs, March 27.

Our geographical knowledge of the country was so limited that we were involuntarily astounded when, in crossing over to the left bank of the Tejend, we saw stretching before us an extensive oasis. It would appear that the Tejend oasis is almost larger than the one at Merv. Marching in a south-westerly direction, we rode eight miles to Lake Alaman Chungul, and for nearly thirty-three miles from that point the whole of this expanse, composing only the width of the oasis, was intersected with canals, was covered in places with wood, and contained many traces of recent crops alongside ruins of clay dwellings and castles. The length of the oasis along the Tejend is greater than the breadth, but is trenched upon in places by sands As a matter of fact, fifteen years ago upwards of 20,000 families of Merv Tekkes dwelt in the oasis. The raids of the Persians, however, rendered further existence impossible then,

TYPES OF WOMEN AT MERV.

and the whole population migrated to Merv in 1859. The consequence was the dam fell into ruins, the canals dried up, and the oasis became a wilderness.

After the fall of Geok Tepé the raids of the Persians became no longer possible, and the Tekkes again began to migrate from Merv to the Tejend. At present about six canals have been embanked, and from these issue a thousand irrigation channels. The population consists of 3,600 *kibitkas*, dispersed in groups of twos or threes over the country. The aouls are mainly situated upon sand-hills, the clayey flats round about them being covered with crops. The people of the Tejend do not exaggerate the fertility of the soil. Wheat, barley, sorgo, and melons grow splendidly, but there are no gardens whatever.

Judging from the many old channels encountered by us, the Tejend occasionally changes its course. There are five within a distance of forty miles—the Tejend Kala, the Kegheli-Djar, the Kizil-Djar, and two called the Anna Uaz Djar. The latter are the present beds, along which it courses whenever it breaks down the Djankutaran dam, but the largest, the Kegheli Djar, is considered the oldest. We saw it for a distance of fourteen miles and a half, its sharply-cut banks separated 120 paces from one another and sometimes even more. The bottom was covered with saksaoul.

After quitting the Tejend oasis we entered upon what is called the Anna Uaz Tokai. This is nothing more than a vast sea of reeds, interspersed with sandy islands. The road winds through this for a distance of fourteen and a half miles, but to the north it extends forty or fifty miles, and the river Tejend disappears in it.

The Turcomans are accustomed to avoid the Anna

Uaz Tokai, on account of its containing numbers of tigers. Caravans and horsemen always hurry through it, and pedestrians never traverse it except in a body and with weapons ready.

We had hardly entered the reeds when the fresh traces of a tiger met our eyes. The Tekkes told us many stories of these wild beasts, of which one may be related here.

Three months ago while a caravan was proceeding from Merv to Deregez through the swamp, two men on foot fell out to have a smoke by the way-side and wait for an exhausted donkey that was lagging behind. The caravan encamped within a short distance of them, and the men not making their appearance a search party was sent after a while to look for them. There, near the resting spot, they found the disfigured body of one of the men, with their two weapons, and the traces of a tiger alongside them. After searching a long time for the other they set fire to the reeds, and at length found, on a bare patch of ground a mile from the road, several bones and some silver ornaments which had been in the pocket of the other man. The Turcomans tell me these tigers are three-quarters of a yard high and about two yards long. They sometimes penetrate even to the oasis of Merv.

After the Tokai we came to the Anna Uaz Djar, in the bed of which, close to one another, are the three lakes of Anna Uaz Chungul, a miniature copy of Alaman Chungul. The water was so muddy here that we did not attempt to taste it.

The remainder of the road to Giaurs contains nothing of interest. The first half consists of sands with bushes, intersected by larger or smaller *takeers*. The second is

a hard clayey plain with a little wood and camel's thorn here and there. Throughout the distance of seventy-four miles there is not a single well, compelling us, in consequence, to have recourse to rain pools. On the way we several times passed herds of boars, which were not in the least frightened of us, and plenty of hares, affording fine sport for the Tekkes and their falcons.

The entire distance from Alaman Chungul to Giaurs is 115 miles. The final day of our journey we marched fifty miles, our supplies being exhausted and neither ourselves nor our horses having anything to eat.

To-morrow we arrive at Askabad.

A. Alikhanoff-Avarsky.

CHAPTER III.

LESSAR'S JOURNEY FROM SARAKHS TO THE OUTPOSTS OF HERAT.

The object of Lessar's journey to Afghanistan.—Vital political questions connected with the Hari Rud and the region between Sarakhs and Herat.—Who owns the No-man's-land of the Hari Rud valley?—The Afghan side of the river the best for the Russian advance towards India.—Important discoveries made by Lessar, revolutionising the Central Asian Question.—His account of the growth of Russia's prestige on the Perso-Afghan frontier.—Return of the Tekkes to Akhal.—Departure of Lessar from Askabad.—Changes at Sarakhs.—New settlements on the Hari Rud.—The Hari Rud described.—The Sariks and the Mervis.—Itinerary of the road to Herat.—The Sarakhs road the best for the railway.—Arrival in Afghanistan.—Startling the Afghans at Kusan.—Suggestion to murder the Afghan escort.—Ghurian.—An envoy from Herat.—The Herat valley.—Journey to Meshed; thence to Sarakhs.—Persian operations on the Turcoman frontier.—The Salors.—Troubles in the Atak.—Paper by Sir Henry Rawlinson on Lessar's survey.—His views of the railway to India.—General Venukoff, Sir Bartle Frere, Sir Richard Temple, and Lord Aberdare on the new phase of the Russo-Indian Question.

"There is one point, indeed, the pivot of the whole Eastern Question, which must never be lost sight of—*we cannot afford to expose Herat to the risk of being taken by a Russian coup de main.*"—Sir Henry Rawlinson, "England and Russia in the East," p. 344.

"Russia in possession of Herat would have a gripe on the throat of India. She would indeed, in virtue of the position, command the military resources both of Persia and Afghanistan, and would thus oblige us at once to increase our frontier army by at least 20,000 fresh British troops."—*Ibid.*, p. 362.

"We cannot allow Russia to acquire predominance, or even co-equal influence with ourselves in Afghanistan."—DUKE OF ARGYLL, "The Eastern Question," vol. ii., p. 498.

"I repeat, that we cannot allow Russian influence to be established in Afghanistan."—*Ibid.*, p. 514.

IN the Spring of 1882 Gospodin Lessar returned a second time to the Transcaspian region, to continue his surveys of the country lying between the Russian and Indian frontiers. His first journey had demonstrated that Annenkoff's Russo-Indian railway project was feasible as far as Sarakhs. The next point to be determined was, whether the line could be easily laid between Sarakhs and Herat, a matter of about 200 miles. Both these points are situated on the river Hari Rud, which is regarded by English statesmen as the boundary of Persia and Afghanistan. Theoretically, a line running from Sarakhs to Herat would have to pass either through Persian or Afghan territory. But, as a matter of fact, the country on the east side of the river, for most of the distance between Sarakhs and Herat is a sort of no-man's land, desolated by the ravages of the Merv and Sarik Turcomans, who render impossible the existence of Persian or Afghan settlements in the region, and are themselves too weak to occupy it; since by so doing they would draw upon their heads the counter attacks of the Persian and the Herat tribesmen. This condition of things invites the most careful attention of English statesmen, for it is folly to expect the Russian advance to be arrested by boundary lines which exist only on paper. Rightly or wrongly, the region between Sarakhs and Herat, on the Afghan

side of the Hari Rud, is regarded by the Turcomans as their territory, and it is obvious that Russia, in conquering them or establishing a protectorate over them, will acquire those pretensions and skilfully employ them to her advantage.

Up to the fall of Geok Tepé, in 1881, the Persians were unable to govern the greater part of the territory extending to the Hari Rud. It was left unprotected for the Turcomans to roam over and ravage, and Sarakhs, the most outlying point, was simply a small oasis of Persian rule in a desert of disorder. The conquest of the Akhal Tekkes changed the state of affairs in a moment. What may be called the flank raids of the Turcomans on the province of Khorassan came to an end entirely, while the direct attacks of the Merv Tekkes were suspended in consequence of the fears of the latter, on the one hand, of provoking a Russian advance, and their desire, on the other, of securing Persian help against the invader. This suspension of raids into Khorassan was promptly taken advantage of by Persia to reassert her authority over the whole of the country extending up to the Hari Rud. By so doing she rendered a Russian advance upon Herat from Sarakhs, along the western bank of the Hari Rud, impossible except with her consent or in open violation of her territory.

This action caused Russia to turn her attention to the eastern side of the Hari Rud, over which she considered Persia had no right to claim jurisdiction. The railway might be made from Askabad to Sarakhs, through the Atak, without seriously affecting Persian interests, although if it were continued through that fortress and along the western bank of the Hari Rud it would virtually sever Sarakhs—a highly valued strategical point—from

Persia. Russia thought this might be avoided by turning the corner at Sarakhs in such a manner that the line ran a few miles north of the town, on alleged Turcoman territory, and afterwards along the eastern or Afghan bank of the Hari Rud. Such a line would be just as short and just as convenient as the one on the western side of the river, while it would prevent any complications arising with Persia. Of course, Russia was aware England would claim this territory east of the Hari Rud as an integral portion of Afghanistan, but she knew how difficult it was for such pretensions to be maintained in the face of the fact of the Afghans making no effort to govern it, or keep the Turcomans from terrorizing over the length and breadth of it.

The adoption of this route involved fresh exploration. Respecting the country lying between Sarakhs and Herat, on the Persian side of the Hari Rud, abundant information was forthcoming,* but the ground on the Afghan side was more or less *terra incognita*. Lessar was accordingly despatched by the Russian Government to explore it.

The survey was attended with a very important discovery, one, indeed, altogether changing the aspect of the Central Asian Question. The great colossal mountain barrier which geographers had placed between Sarakhs and Herat, on the Afghan side of the Hari Rud, was proved by it to be all moonshine. Having no data to guide them, map-makers had theoretically extended the lofty parts of the huge Paropamisus ridge right up to the Hari Rud, the stream that washes Herat and

* To quote no other sources, General Sir Charles MacGregor had made a thorough survey of it in 1875. General Annenkoff equipped Lessar with his "Journey through Khorassan," and the enterprising Russian explorer found it of great value to him in his surveys on the Persian side of the Hari Rud.—M.

after running 200 miles courses past Sarakhs in the direction of the Turcoman desert. It was assumed that the Russians, in advancing from Sarakhs to Herat, would have to cross this mountain range by some such difficult pass as that which General Grodekoff encountered in making his way from the Oxus to Herat in 1878. It was held that if Russia moved up close to Sarakhs, and occupied the region lying between it and Merv, Sarakhs would block the way to Herat up one side of the Hari Rud, and the great Paropamisus ridge the other. The Paropamisus thus came to be regarded by many as an effectual barrier to a sudden rush upon Herat, and English statesmen were encouraged to persevere in the fatal policy of masterly inactivity in Afghanistan, which commenced afresh with the evacuation of Candahar. Suddenly, however, this barrier has been blown down by half a dozen lines in the *Golos* newspaper. Those lines record, in Lessar's graphic words, his discovery, that in the place of mountains 5,000 or 10,000 feet high, exist only some hills, a little more than twice the height of St. Paul's Cathedral. Instead of a frightful pass, a gash through perpendicular cliffs, with cloud-topped rocky heights rearing above the road, and an awful abyss yawning below, imagined by certain political geographers, there is, in reality, a very convenient crossing, which any tyro of a civil engineer could plane and smooth for the passage of a railway, and which a gang of pioneers would render in a few days as fit for vehicular traffic as Shooter's Hill.

Lessar further found that all the way from Sarakhs to the Afghan outposts, sixty miles west of Herat, the country is open and uninhabited, and presents no obstacle whatever to a Russian advance; while between

Askabad and Sarakhs the Turcomans dwelling along the skirt—the Atak—of the Persian border, although nominally subject to the Shah, are in antagonism to him, and have repeatedly begged to be allowed to pass under the suzerainty of Russia. In this manner there is a level way, with the exception of a hill-crossing 900 feet high, the whole distance from the Russian outposts to Herat, a matter of some 350 miles, and in this expanse nothing whatever exists to check the encroachments of Russia. Considering that the Russians at Askabad are 200 miles nearer Herat than the English at Quetta, and that the latter have between them and Herat a hostile Afghan city—Candahar—and a mountain region swarming with hostile hill tribes, it is flying in the face of common sense to assume and assert that the "key of India" is safe from seizure. For all practical purposes, indeed, the key is now in the keeping of Russia.

Lessar prefaces his account of his journey from Sarakhs to the outposts of Herat, by a few interesting remarks on the change that had come over the character of the Turcoman country since his previous survey. They are of deep interest.

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Although only four months had elapsed since my November journey through the Atak and Khorassan, there had been many changes, both in the relations between the Russians and the Akhal Tekkes,* and in the intercourse between the former and the unconquered Turcoman tribes. The storming of Geok Tepé in

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* The Russians have coined a new word for the Tekkes of Akhal—"Akhaltsi," which has been generally adopted. An English effort, on the other hand, to secure them the cognomen of Akhals has apparently failed.—M.

January 1881 was the last operation of war in the Transcaspian region. After that there could be no more talk of resistance in Akhal. A large proportion of the population, however, that had fled to the Tejend and Merv, could not, in spite of the offer of complete amnesty to those who returned, make up their minds to go back to Akhal, being imbued with Asiatic notions of the fate of the conquered, and having fears of what would await them if they accepted our terms.

A profound impression was produced on the minds of the Tekkes by the return of Tekme Sardar, the leader of the defence of Geok Tepé, to Askabad. The gracious reception accorded him at St. Petersburg, and the high distinctions conferred on the Sardar, allayed the fears of the most suspicious; and when he proceeded to Merv, the stories of what he had seen of the might and majesty of Russia considerably cooled the ardour of those who were inclined to continue the struggle. The inhabitants of Akhal, relying on his assurances that all was forgotten, and that the amnesty was complete, decided on reaping the harvests they had sown at Merv and alongside the Tejend, and then to return to their original settlements. The attitude of the Merv Tekkes towards their cousins had no small share in bringing about this decision. They were very unwilling to receive refugees when they themselves were compelled, by a growing deficiency of land and water, to seek fresh settlements elsewhere.

The return movement commenced in September 1881, and served as a signal for the entire pacification of the country. The occasional cases of robbery on the Persian frontier, as well as on the roads to Khiva and Bokhara, completely ceased.

The Merv Tekkes inhabiting the Atak had never seen a Frenghi before my first journey through the country in November 1881, and although they treated me in a friendly manner, still they manifested the reserve which is common to Asiatics on their first acquaintance with Europeans. After that they made themselves acquainted with the Russians, appearing oftener and oftener at Askabad, at first from motives of curiosity, and then for purposes of trade. Merv and the Tejend had before this sent deputations to express their goodwill to Russia, in testimony of which the Tekkes released the Russian gunner Kidaeff, who had been taken prisoner after the Khivan campaign, and returned property taken from an Akhal caravan in August, whilst proceeding homewards from Khiva.

In February 1882 the caravan of the Russian merchant Konshin penetrated even to Merv. By that time the country had become so quiet that no escort whatever was needed for the journey from Askabad to Sarakhs. All that was required was two or three followers, which are indispensable to every traveller as a protection against chance thieves. The people of the Atak not only received their Russian guests with distinction, but constantly endeavoured to enter their service. I availed myself of this circumstance to secure an escort in the Atak for the protection of our party along the Hari Rud and the country of the Sarik Turcomans (*i.e.*, between Sarakhs and Herat, the Sariks not having come into contact with the Russians yet, and being less to be depended on than the Tekkes). In the present condition of the country there is not much fear of a Russian traveller being molested in that region. Still, a good escort is indispensable, since in

every tribe small bands of robbers are to be found; and in a region where the tribes are intermixed, and are situated some distance from Russian territory, it would be difficult to discover the evil-doers, and the robbers might rely on having a greater chance of escaping unpunished than those in the Atak.

The task of furnishing me with an escort was undertaken by the elders of Kahka. They bound themselves to provide twenty Alieli Turcomans, mounted on good horses, at the rate of forty roubles (£4) a month, the men being left to furnish their own food, and forage for their horses. Berdan rifles, from Askabad, were given to ten of the men; the rest were armed with their own Asiatic muskets. In excess of these shooting arms, each man carried a whole arsenal of weapons, consisting of two or three old pistols, a sword, and a knife.

I set out from Askabad in the evening of the 28th of April, 1882, and five days later arrived at Sarakhs, making a halt at Kahka for the escort, which, in spite of the promises of the headman there, was not ready on my arrival. To preserve the strength of the horses I allowed the Alieli Turcomans to push on to Sarakhs by night, and in the manner that suited them best. I myself rode at a trot an ordinary, but very powerful, Kabardin horse. Turcoman horses cannot trot; they either go at a foot pace, or else at a gallop. Consequently, riding at a trot after me would have been too fatiguing for them.

The distance from Askabad to Sarakhs is 280 versts (185½ miles), and is safe the whole way. Last year the inhabitants, in journeying from one settlement to another, used to ride along the hills, or in parties of armed horsemen, for mutual protection. On this occa-

sion I constantly met along the road solitary and unarmed people on donkeys, and even some on foot. As stated in my previous account of the country, the road runs parallel with the hills the entire stretch, at a short distance from them, and is level the whole of the way.

Beyond Sarakhs lay before me a journey of five or six marches, through an unpopulated region. It was necessary, therefore, to thoroughly equip myself for it; and for this purpose I made a halt at Sarakhs. No little change had come over the appearance of the fortress since the previous autumn. The Merv Tekkes had suspended their raids, not only against the Russian dominions, but also against Persian Khorassan. The country was now perfectly safe. Persians could journey to Meshed along the Muzderan road, in parties of twos and threes, without any escort. Even the octogenarian commandant at Sarakhs, the Sertip Abas Rai Khan, who had formerly been unable to show himself outside the walls with less than fifty horsemen, could safely go about with ten.

The Sertip received me as an old friend, and cordially exchanged civilities. It was with great difficulty that I persuaded him to allow the Alielis to purchase from the inhabitants food and forage for the journey. The Sertip strongly wished me to take both gratis. I was compelled to take forage for my own horses from his magazines, and the whole time I was at Sarakhs he treated my escort and myself as guests.

While the escort were equipping themselves I concerned myself with inquiries about the route. Although my guide, Ana Geldi Sardar, thoroughly knew the road, having taken part in many forays against Northern Afghanistan and Khorassan, and although there were

several of the Alielis who had journeyed along the Hari Rud, still I did not consider it advisable to rely wholly upon them. The very idea of travelling in the country between the rivers Murghab and Hari Rud filled them with horror. With the audacious mendacity common to all Turcomans, they endeavoured to make me believe that there was no ford across the Hari Rud at Sarakhs, and no road beyond. On the other hand, they warmly and with one voice praised the road along the western or Persian bank of the Hari Rud; the attraction of that route for the Alielis arising from its immunity from danger.

But the Tekkes lie so badly, and with such *naïveté*, that anyone slightly acquainted with them can easily detect them in their falsehoods. The information gathered by myself from other sources led me to believe that the best route from Sarakhs to the south lay between the Murghab and Hari Rud, and by no means in Persia. Of the existence of a ford at Sarakhs I had learned still earlier from some traders journeying from Merv to Askabad, and hence on setting out on the morning of the 5th of May I ordered the guide, placed at my disposition by the Sertip to show me the ford, to proceed to the eastern bank of the Hari Rud.

I noticed increased evidences of life in the vicinity of Sarakhs on this occasion. Along both sides of the Hari Rud, around the fortress, are disposed settlements of Mervis, who have received permission from the Persian Government to occupy lands there. For these lands, and the right to draw water from the Hari Rud, they pay the Sertip one-tenth of their produce.

In advance of reaching Sarakhs the Hari Rud splits, at Daulatabad, into several branches, and spreads so much

over the country in places that when the dry season commences, which is usually the case in July or August, the river falls short of Sarakhs. Eleven miles above Sarakhs is a dam, driving the water into deep canals (*areeks*), which conduct it not only to Sarakhs, but seven or eight miles to the north. Three main canals take their rise at this dam: one on the Persian side, and the other two on the east bank of the river. All three run in a direction almost parallel with the river. The canal on the western bank has always furnished Sarakhs and Kale-e-Nau with water. The two others have only been established during the present year by the Mervis settling down alongside them and the ruins of Old Sarakhs. They, however, had an existence long ago, before even the construction of the Persian fortress at Sarakhs, and when the Mervis originally dwelt there; one of them belonged to the Otamish and the other to the Tokhtamish tribe. These canals only run to Old Sarakhs, but there was a time when they extended still further to the north-west, to Askabad itself.*

Up to the Russian occupation of Geok Tepé the Persians dared not lay claim to the country east of the Hari Rud. Even to the west of the river the country was not occupied further than thirty miles from Meshed. Circumstances have now altogether changed, and the Persians commence to farm round about Old Sarakhs, taking advantage of the inability of the Salor Turcomans, to whom the locality belongs, to assert their right to it. This part of the country is one of the richest along the Hari Rud, from Kusan downwards. From Kusan the

* They might be renewed again, in which case the Russian railway from Askabad to Sarakhs might run along their banks. It has been recently telegraphed that Russia contemplates doing this.—M.

valley is adapted for cultivation only as far as Pesh-robat. After this the river runs through a gorge, between the ridges of two lofty mountains, where there are very few intervals of valley capable of extended irrigation. It is only from Pul-i-khatun, on the Persian bank, and from Hassan Kala on the eastern ($10\frac{2}{3}$ miles to the south of Sarakhs), that settlements are at all possible on a large scale.

The river Hari Rud flows for the greater part of the way from Kusan to Pul-i-khatun along a single channel, from 100 to 140 feet wide; flood water lasts from the end of January to the middle of March. During this period the fords are dangerous to cross, on account of the swiftness of the current. In the second half of April, however, plenty of fords may be found, with a depth of only four feet. On the approach of summer the water rapidly diminishes in volume, and in June and July the river may be everywhere forded, except where the banks are steep. In September, MacGregor, in fording the river between Kusan and Kafir Kaleh, when the water was three feet deep, failed almost to detect any current at all.

Along the whole of the valley the hill-sides are clothed to a great extent with pistachio trees. Mulberry trees are occasionally encountered, and in the lower parts willows, reeds, and bushes grow so thickly together, that it is difficult to force a passage through them, not only on horseback but also on foot. Forage in plenty exists everywhere, and is of good quality. The river water, though muddy, is agreeable to the taste, and wholesome to drink.

At Sarakhs the people allege the volume of water in the Hari Rud to have been once greater than it is now.

No basis exists for such a belief, however. Burnes, who traversed Sarakhs in 1832, in the month of September, found the bed of the Hari Rud quite dry, and so insignificant did it seem, that he took it for the bed of a distinct river, the Tejend, affirming it to rise in the neighbouring sand-hills, and denying its connection with the Herat river.

The continuation of the Hari Rud to the north and north-west of Sarakhs is known under the name of the Tejend. There is only a current in this portion of the river when the water is at its full; the river is then very deep, and impassable in many places. O'Donovan crossed it in February, a little to the north of Kangali Guzar, swimming. Lieutenant Alikhanoff and Cornet Sokoloff, of the Cossacks, proceeding early in the year with Konshin's caravan to Merv, crossed the Tejend at the Kari Bent dam; the river being there, at the end of February, 72 feet wide and $5\frac{1}{2}$ deep. The river is often deeper still at that spot, and for five or six weeks in the year caravans can only cross it at Alaman Chungul, which is not attained by the river itself, but by a channel running from it. The river only overflows and inundates the locality when the dams break, which the Afghans have constructed a little above Herat to irrigate the Afghan section of the Hari Rud valley.

In summer there is no current in the Tejend, and in places the stream entirely dries up. It consists then of a series of long lakes, fed, according to the local inhabitants, by springs, and may-be by underground continuations of the rivulets Chacha, Mehna, and Dushak, which disappear in the desert marshes ten or twelve miles before reaching the dry bed of the Tejend. This view is founded on the circumstance that the water in the lakes is

always cold, and never dries up in the very warmest summers, which would hardly fail to be the case if the lakes were mere accumulations of spring water in deep cavities of the bed of the Tejend.

The settlements of the Tekkes, camping on the Tejend, are grouped to the north of Kari Bent, in the direction of Alaman Chungul. The remainder of the names noted on our maps signify crossings. There are no inhabitants at any of them whatever.

The country between the Murghab and the Hari Rud was until recently altogether unknown. Along the Murghab, to the south of Merv, extend the settlements of the Sariks: Yulutan, Panjdeh, and Bala-Murghab. Still further south, on the slopes of the Paropamisus, dwell the Jemshidis and Teimuris. To the west of the Murghab, as far as the Hari Rud, there is not a single populated point—all the forts along the Kushk are abandoned and in ruins. The road from Merv to Herat running along this river, has been described by the English travellers Abbott and Shakspeare, traversing it in 1840 and 1841.

With respect to the country lying between the Kushk and the Hari Rud no information was forthcoming. No European traveller had yet explored the region, and the people of the neighbouring countries only knew of it from the reports of the raider-chiefs, who had traversed it in effecting their forays.

The Sariks of Yulutan are unable to carry on open warfare with the Tekkes of Merv, on account of their close proximity to them. The Sariks of Panjdeh and Bala-Murghab, on the other hand, constantly rob the people of Merv. This treatment the Mervis pay back in the same coin, and both tribes raid against the settle-

ments of northern Afghanistan and Khorassan. The course of the raids being always along the route described above, no one has dared to settle along it; hence all the forts along the Kushk and the Hari Rud, as well as the works on the road, have been abandoned. No caravans or travellers risk showing themselves there, for fear of meeting either the Sariks or the Mervis on their raiding trips to Afghanistan and Persia.

At the present moment the forays of the Mervis are the work only of distinct bands of robbers; and the Sariks are the only tribe openly pursuing border raids. The Alielis accompanying me were extremely frightened of falling in with any large party of plunderers. They had accounts both with the Sariks and the Mervis. Ana Geldi Sardar, the guide from Merv, had received at different times three sabre gashes from the Sariks, and admitted that he had not accepted them without payment in return. The whole of the Alielis frankly declared that their sole hope of safety rested in the fact that nobody dared to meddle with a Russian now.

How we should have fared at the hands of the Sariks we had no opportunity of telling, for we did not meet a single party of them on the way. Our encounters with the Mervis and Afghans fully confirmed the views of the Alielis. On the first occasion, ten miles from Sarakhs, a regular skirmish nearly arose from a misunderstanding. I had ridden away from the survey-party to have a look at the country at the side, and at this juncture some people appeared, who were afterwards found to be Merv Tekkes settled near Sarakhs, proceeding to clear out Merv canals. The Alielis lost their head at once. They began galloping about in search of me. The Merv Tekkes thereupon took us for Sariks, and prepared to

defend themselves. At last, Ana Geldi Sardar risked going forwards, and in the end the affair was satisfactorily settled.

To escape similar occurrences in the future, I gave orders that on meeting any bands of Turcomans the escort were to stand still while the guide and I rode forward. The Mervis, on observing us, usually sprang at once on their horses and galloped off to the nearest rising-ground to defend themselves. The sight afterwards, however, of a person in an unknown costume approaching their ambuscade, without any escort, used to reassure the hiders, and on learning that I was a Russian, they would begin a parley, during which the signal would be given for the Alielis to come up. Compliments would then be exchanged, the pipe passed round, and afterwards we would disperse in the most amicable manner.

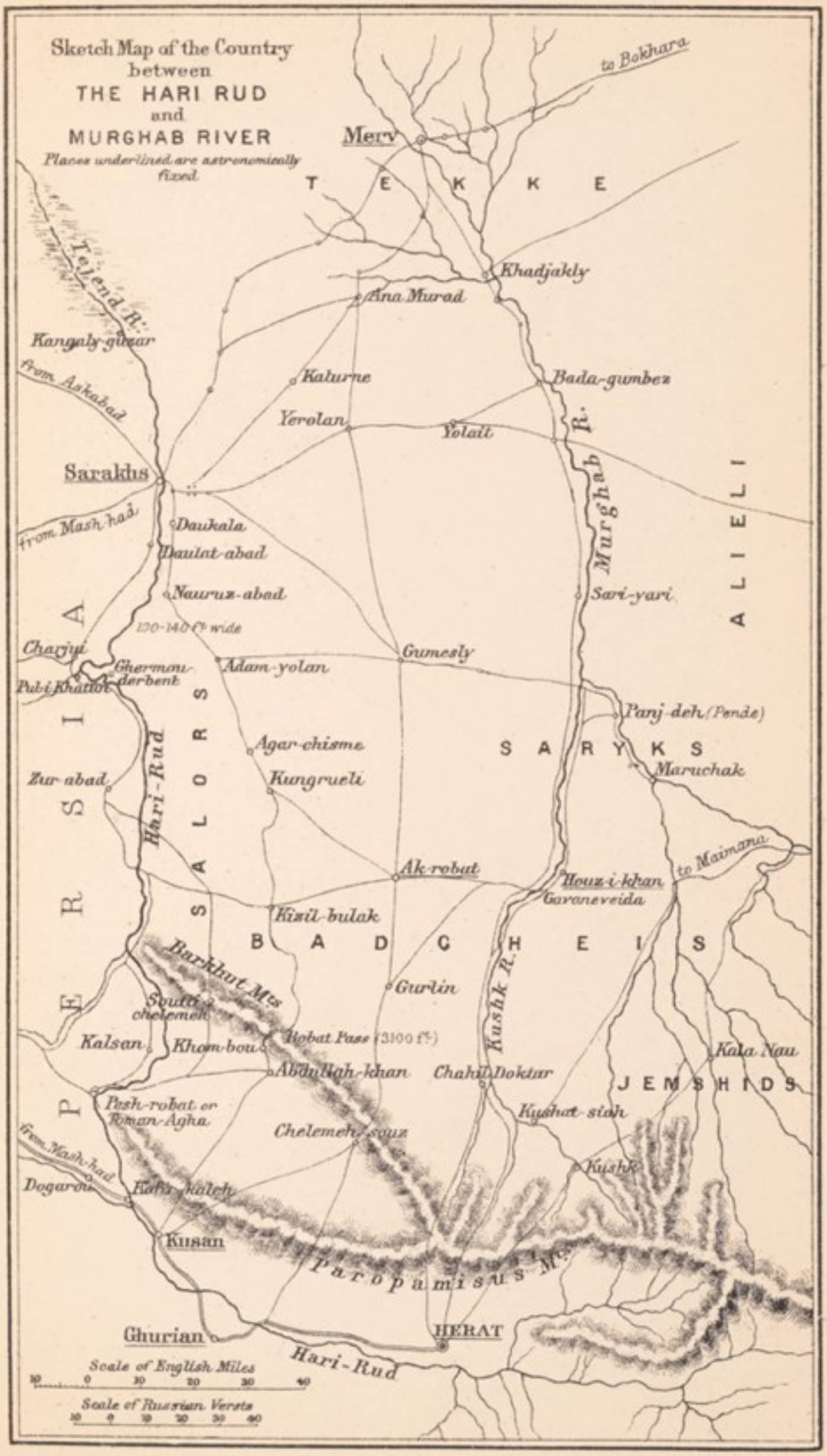
Afghans we only encountered near Kusan. They were considerably braver than the Merv Tekkes. They never fled on our approach; but, seeing two of us riding forth towards them, would despatch two or three of their own party for explanations. The Tekkes admit that the Afghans are braver than they are. They never attempt to attack armed Afghans, except when superiority of numbers is on their side, and, as a rule, seek to fall upon solitary and unarmed individuals.

From Sarakhs (the foremost Persian stronghold in the direction of Merv) to Kusan (the first of the Afghan settlements lying along the road to Herat) is a matter of 218 versts, or 144½ miles. The journey is effected in five marches.

Leaving Sarakhs the road runs at first in a south-easterly direction, and, approaching within a thousand

Sketch Map of the Country
between
THE HARI RUD
and
MURGHAB RIVER

Places underlined are astronomically fixed.



yards of the fortress of Old Sarakhs, turns sharply to the south. At 600 yards or so from the Persian fortress we crossed the Hari Rud, at a ford which is a very convenient one. The river flows along four branches, in only one of which does the water reach the horse's belly; apart from this the banks are low, and the beds flat and gravelly, without holes, stones, or impediments of any kind. Before our arrival the water had fallen a little. Occasionally there is no ford at all at Sarakhs, but this state of affairs rarely continues for more than two or three days together. Right against the ford the Merv Tekkes, with the consent of the Persian Government, are constructing on the eastern side a fort, which is called Popish-Pelwan-Kala. Two miles from this fort the road traverses the irrigation canals and the fields of the new settlements. As far as the ruins of Dau Kala, the road runs along the large canals issuing from Daulatabad, previously described. The country the whole way is perfectly level; the soil is sandy clay, and the sandy desert depicted on the map nowhere exists.

Fourteen versts, or 9¼ miles, from Sarakhs is Dau Kala. This is a small ruined fortress. The road here leaves the canal to the right, and crossing a plain five versts (3⅓ miles) to Hassan Kala, afterwards traverses a range of gently sloping hills as far as the Persian fortress of Nauruzabad, which latter is on the western bank. In the course of this stretch the descents are easy to the Hari Rud, the ground is clayey, and vehicular traffic is feasible without any improvement to the road. Opposite Nauruzabad the Persian road again approaches the river on lower ground, and 2½ miles to the south passes by the ruins of Tekke Nauruzabad, distant 15 miles from

Dau Kala. Both these points are deserted by their inhabitants, owing to Turcoman forays.

For 6⅔ miles to the south, that is, nearly as far as the hill of Shir Tepé, the road runs along the Hari Rud; afterwards inclining to the south-east, it leaves the river on the right, and does not approach it any more till it reaches Kusan. From this turning to the ruins of the robat at the entrance to the defile across the Barkhut mountains (about thirty-three miles from Kusan), the general character of the road is the same. It partly traverses level ground, partly undulations. The elevations are never anywhere important, and the soil for the most part consists of sandy clay. Steep ascents and descents are rare, in spite of which the only road existing up to now has been a bridle-track, which often crosses hills when a slight detour would avoid them. Vehicular traffic would necessitate in places a change in the route, and here and there a little levelling; but the surface is easy to work, and the alterations could be effected with very little labour. Abundance of excellent forage is found everywhere; and the hill-sides are often clothed with pistachio trees.

At the nineteeth mile from Nauruzabad the road runs past a ruined *kareez* (underground irrigation canal), at some of the openings of which water may still be found. According to the guides, the bitter taste of the water is due to its having been standing some time, although even when the *kareez* was well kept its water was never very good, being, however, sufficiently fit to drink. Two large salines were at the same time observed to the west of the road, not far from the locality.

The wells of Adam-Yölan, 41 versts (27 miles) from

Nauruzabad, are two in number, and lie in an elliptical cavity between hills. On our arrival we found the water perfectly pure, although the wells had not been cleaned out for some time. The Merv Tekkes there said that in hot summers it is slightly brackish, but this is probably quite as much due to stagnation as to any saline characteristics of the soil. The wells are about ten feet deep to the water and fourteen to the bottom. The guides said that no water was drawn from them. Formerly there were more wells, but all except two are now filled up with sand. Round about them is splendid forage for horses.

Agar Chisme, $8\frac{1}{3}$ miles from Adam Yölan, is a spring with beautiful fresh water. Five hundred yards higher up the valley is a second, at present obstructed. Round about all the way along the valley is any amount of forage.

The ruins of the robat of Kungrueli are situated $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Adam Yölan. The wells there give a quantity of water at the depth of seventeen feet. The water is somewhat saline, but it would be fit for use if the wells were properly kept. The largeness of the robat, now in ruins, proves this. From Kungrueli two roads run in the direction of Afghanistan; one to Kizil Bulak and Khombôu, which we availed ourselves of, and the other to Ak-robat, respecting which details will be given anon. The road from Kungrueli to Kizil Bulak runs, for the most part. across level ground.

Kizil Bulak, $39\frac{1}{2}$ versts (26 miles) from Kungrueli, is a rich spring with fresh water, lying nearly 500 yards to the side of the road, in a defile leading to the Hari Rud; the sides of the defile are of red sandstone, hence the name of the locality. At the twentieth verst the

river traverses the Shar Yab rivulet, the water of which is so salt that the horses refused to drink it. From the bank of the stream the road runs five versts over a level country to the ruins of a robat, situated at the foot of the pass that leads across the Barkhut mountains. Here, on the very bank of the Shar Yab, is a small spring of fresh water.

The ascent to the pass across the Barkhut mountains is not a difficult undertaking. Vehicular traffic would be feasible even with slight alterations to the existing road. Of course, for a broad wagon road some cuttings would have to be made across the spurs, but the labour would be, after all, very trifling. The mountains are of sandstone. The road follows through a defile the river Shar Yab, which is thickly covered with reeds. The stream commences in a bog, about 500 yards wide at places, near the summit of the pass. The height of the pass is 3,100 feet above the level of the sea, and about 900 feet above the surrounding country. The descent to the Kusan side is easier and more convenient than the ascent from Sarakhs, and is quite fit, even in its present condition, for wagon traffic. About half-way down, where it becomes already a regular road, lies Khombôu, a spring of fresh water, 36 versts (24 miles) from Kizil Bulak. A mile and a quarter further on, at the end of the stream flowing from the spring, are the ruins of the robat of Abdullah Khan. From Khombôu an easy descent continues for four miles, after which the road divides, one going in the direction of Pesh-robat, on the western bank of the Hari Rud, and the other to Kusan; both over completely level ground.

Kusan, 45½ versts (30 miles) from Khombôu, is the first Afghan settlement on the Hari Rud, on the road

from Meshed to Afghanistan. From Kusan to Herat the road has been described by many travellers, Russian as well as English ; it runs along the northern bank of the Hari Rud, and is level the entire distance.

On comparing the road I traversed with others, respecting which I obtained information from every quarter, it is certainly the best between Sarakhs and Kusan, and consequently between Askabad and Herat. The road to Herat from the Caspian Sea *viâ* Meshed, traversing for the most part a populated country, well provided with water, offers great convenience for travelling on a large scale, but its defect is the necessity for passing over several mountain ridges, to construct roads across which for vehicular traffic, to say nothing of a railway, would involve heavy labour. Still worse in this respect is the road running from Askabad to Herat *viâ* Meshed. To get from Akhal and the Atak to Khorassan, it is necessary to cross the crest of the Daman-i-Kuh range. The Garmab Pass, between Geok Tepé and Budjnurd, is regarded as the easiest of all ; but the construction of a railway across it would involve immense labour, hardly to be compensated for by the fact of the route running through Khorassan instead of the Atak. If the quick construction of the railway be a necessity, there can be no diversity of opinion that the Sarakhs route is by far the best of all.

The road from Sarakhs to Herat along the Persian bank of the Hari Rud, will be described further on. It is well supplied with water, but the passages across the mountains intersecting it would involve incomparably more labour than the road *viâ* Khombôu.

The entire length of the road from Askabad to Herat, *viâ* Sarakhs and the east bank of the Hari Rud, is

585 versts (388 miles). The construction of a railway along this route for the first 200 miles would involve no labour whatever, and this would be the case also with the final 90 miles. The intermediate section of 100 miles is exactly of the same character as the country through which our Russian railways usually run—flat in some places, slightly undulating in others.* The hill crossings would be of the easiest description. There would be engineering works, of course, but if rapid construction were essential, sharp inclines could be made that would not delay the rest of the line. This could not be said of any other route.

The road *viâ* Khombôu is the most convenient of all for vehicular traffic, but in excess of it there are several other roads, also traversing the locality between the Hari Rud and Murghab from the north to the south, and joined one with the other by connecting tracks. Hearsay information was gathered about these during our journey. The most interesting of all is the road from Merv to Herat. This turns off at the ruins of the robat at Kungrueli, and runs to Ak-robat, a locality with plenty of fresh water, which may be obtained by digging wells anywhere over a large expanse at a depth of seven feet. Afterwards the road proceeds through Gurlin and Cheshmeh-sebz (Chelemeh-souz), two abundant springs of fresh water. The pass over the Barkhut mountains at Cheshmeh-sebz, judging from the description given, is similar to that at Khombôu. Beyond the pass a road runs to Kusan across a level country, and another to

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* The reader is probably aware that Russia, on account of the level character of its surface, is regarded by engineers as one of the easist countries in the world for the construction of railways. —M.

Shakivan through undulating tracts. The road from Merv to Ak-robat runs at first along the river Murghab, then along the Kushk to Chemen-i-Bid,* where it turns off and runs past the spring of Islim Cheshmeh to Ak-robat. This route entirely avoids the Paropamisus range at the sources of the Kushk, the pass across which has caused the road from Merv to Herat to be regarded as unfit for wheeled traffic. The entire length of this road from Merv to Herat is about 380 versts (252 miles).

In arranging the plan of my expedition I had not intended visiting Afghanistan at all, but fate determined otherwise. From Khombôu, the straight road to Persia runs to the ruins of Pesh-robat (Toman-Agha), near which are two or three fords across the Hari Rud, offering no obstacle to crossing in May if one has a guide. None of our people, however, were acquainted with the fords, and hence the only thing to be done was to go on to Kusan, take a guide there, and proceed to Persia by the main highway running from Herat to Meshed.

We approached Kusan at 9 o'clock in the morning. Leaving the Alielis riding slowly at a distance of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the fortress, I pushed on ahead with two interpreters.

I may here mention that in Khorassan and Afghanistan everybody speaks Persian, and there are very few indeed who understand the Tartar dialect, with which one may get on very well with the people of western

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* This part of the road has been described by Shakespear and Abbott as fit for travelling. It is well provided with water, runs the whole time along a river, and contains plenty of forage. —L.

Persia and the Turcomans. Russo-Persian interpreters are difficult to find at Askabad; hence recourse has to be had to two interpreters, one to translate from Russian into Turki and the other from Turki into Persian. It is unnecessary to say that this mode of double translation is extremely fatiguing, and acts to the highest degree as a barrier to conversation.

There are many ruins at Kusan, but the recent pacification of Central Asia, consequent on the fall of Akhal, has produced effects even here; ruined houses are being rebuilt, and many fields are being cultivated afresh, not only near the fort, but at a great distance from it.

When we neared the fort the guard at the gate met us without any enmity, but with a very perplexed air. They were particularly astonished at the road by which we had come—a road that at present is closed to the Afghans.

A message was sent to warn the governor of the fort, Ata Mahmed Khan, of our arrival, while we remained parleying with the soldiers of the guard. One of them wished us good day in Russian—he had been sold by the Tekkes at Khiva, and released by the Russians in 1873; after which he had served them for a little while, and then returned home.

The Khan came out to meet us at the gate and invited us to his quarters. Traversing several narrow streets between fields and gardens, we reached a two-storey building in the midst of a beautiful garden, in which was a pond supplied with water brought by a canal from the Hari Rud. There being plenty of water the vegetation had a vigorous look.

The Khan invited us warmly to partake of some refreshments, and began to boast before his suite that

he had seen many Frenghis at Cabul and knew their ways. As a proof of this, he gave orders that when the cooks roasted the chickens they were not to cut them into small pieces, as is the custom in Afghanistan, but were to divide them in halves, after the Frenghi fashion.

When tea was served up a score or so of persons assembled in the room, and discussed with the Khan the purport of my visit. Europeans, and, above all, Russians, drop into Kusan so rarely*—only once in several years—that this circumstance, and the road by which I had come, rendered my arrival a very unusual event. Some of the persons present guardedly said that the Governor of Herat, Kunduz Khan, might be offended if not advised of our arrival; others, that to detain a Russian would be to involve the Khan in displeasure.

The Khan debated a long time what he should do. At last the first opinion prevailed with him, and he asked me to share his hospitality for two or three days, until he could send a letter to and receive a reply from Herat.

I did not mind staying a few days in the Herat valley, but I objected to passing the time at Kusan. I therefore told Ata Mahmed that if permission was necessary for the passage from Kusan to Kafir Kaleh, I should go on and wait for it at Ghurian. The Khan was delighted at the idea of shifting the responsibility on to his superior's shoulders, and at once nominated as my guide his assistant (naib) and three horsemen.

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* General Grodekoff was the last European and Russian who visited Kusan. He passed through it in 1878.—M.

When I issued from the fort with the Khan I found my Alielis, who had been waiting outside for me all the while, in a great state of perplexity and alarm. I had been away from them over two hours, and this leading them to think that foul play had befallen me, had filled them with fear, well knowing what their own fate would be in that case. Their alarm all the more increased when I gave orders to mount and proceed to Ghurian. The fact of only four Afghans accompanying us had no calming effect on them; it rather brought out the Turcoman in their nature. Through their interpreter they asked me permission to avail themselves of a favourable opportunity to murder the Afghans and flee. "Better try our luck," they said, "than resign ouselves alive to them; the border is not far distant, and once beyond it the Afghans would never think of pursuing us."

I ordered the interpreter, in reply, to tell them to cease talking such nonsense. I pointed out that we were in an organized country and not among thieves, as hitherto; and that there was nothing whatever to fear. But all my arguments were in vain. The enmity which the Tekke Turcomans have provoked everywhere among their neighbours was well known to these men. They knew they had a better chance of mercy among the Sariks than in Persia or Afghanistan. Their belief in my sacredness as a Russian began to diminish. Still, it was the sole hope on which they rested their security, and, spurring their wearied horses along, they did their utmost to keep as close to me as possible.

The road from Kusan to Ghurian strikes off from the Herat highway near the fort, and runs along irrigation

canals extending from the Hari Rud. At the eighth mile, it crosses a bridge to Tirpool. This bridge, constructed by Yar Mahmed Khan, is 120 paces or 280 feet long. The river flows at Tirpool along a single channel through a broad valley; even at the highest flood it never overflows the bridge. The structure is of brick, with stone facings to the piers to resist the ice, which in severe winters is thick enough to support horsemen. When the water is high the Herat-Meshed road runs through Tirpool instead of Kusan, and thence along the river bank to Kafir Kaleh. From Tirpool there is also a road to Khaf. The mountains have to be crossed immediately opposite the bridge; the Hari Rud runs close to the southern heights there, and the road thence to Ghurian, as well as to Kafir Kaleh, winds in the form of a narrow track, containing many declivities. In consequence of this it is usual in low water seasons to ford the river instead of passing over the bridge, and to proceed along the level road. Six and a half miles from Tirpool the valley of the Hari Rud broadens out; rich meadows extend along its banks, and furnish forage for immense herds of horses. According to the Afghans there are over 40,000 there. They constitute one of the principal articles of export from the Herat valley to Persia. They are not large, and are of an ordinary breed, but are strong and hardy. In excess of horses the inhabitants possess a deal of cattle.

Ghurian is one march distant from Herat, the length being forty-five versts, or thirty miles. The valley widens further still in this direction, and becomes more fruitful. At a little above Herat a dam is constructed across the Hari Rud, which diverts the water into canals and

distributes it all over the valley, undoubtedly the richest in all Central Asia to the south of the Oxus. The principal products of the valley to-day are asafœtida, saffron, pistachio nuts, all manner of fruit, splendid varieties of grapes, wheat, barley, and clover. Woods, however, and even bushes are rarely met with in the valley, and the mountain-tops are perfectly bare. All the villages have fine orchards, but the only fuel used is furze, brought from afar.

On the road we met only wandering shepherds, the villages being all in ruins and abandoned by their inhabitants, in consequence of the Turcoman forays. We were shown a village which had been plundered the previous November by the Merv Tekkes. At that period I was surveying the route for the railway from Askabad to Sarakhs. The report that 3,000 horsemen had set out from Merv on a foray in an unknown direction, filled then the people of the Atak with consternation. Riding south by various roads, the Merv Tekkes plundered all the villages lying between Shebesh and Shakivan. The raid was so sudden that no pursuit of the robbers could be made, and they retired carrying away with them a deal of cattle and many prisoners. This was the last *alaman* of the Mervis. Since then Sarik raiders have appeared at times, but only in small parties.

I stopped a couple of days at Ghurian. The Khan did all he could to please me, but I expressed the whole time my dissatisfaction at being detained for sake of a mere formality—for permission, not to journey in Afghanistan, but merely to cross a river close to an Afghan fort. I asked him jokingly how the Afghan traders in Samarcand would get on if, whenever anyone arrived

fresh from Afghanistan, we were to send to ask permission of the Yarim Padishah.*

The stories I told him of how the Russians freely journeyed in Persia, and the Persians in Russia, were not at all to the taste of the Afghans. The Khan endeavoured to explain the necessity for the existing state of things.

"Russia," said he, "is a big country, and has nothing to fear, but with us a single man may do us injury, hence our law is such that the higher authorities have to know who is journeying about. And besides, fate having led hither a man from such a distant state as Russia, we are bound to receive him and dispense hospitality. Are we not men," he asked, in an offended tone, "that we may not dispense hospitality. What have we done that you should have wished to pass our door without resting a bit? You are not our prisoner, but our guest. The whole land is at your disposal—ask for what you wish."†

The Khan refused to allow the people to sell us anything, and ordered the money to be refunded we had given to an Afghan on the road for bread for our party. The whole time I was at Ghurian he sent me and my Alielis everything we wanted.

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* Yarim Padishah, or "Half King," the title by which the Governor-General of Turkestan is known throughout Central Asia. —Lessar.

† The Khan might fairly have retorted on Lessar, if he had been better acquainted with Russia, by asking him whether the Russian authorities themselves allowed ambiguous strangers to cross the Russian frontier unexpectedly, unprovided with a passport, without placing a check on their movements. The European who would ride into a Russian frontier town as Lessar rode into Kusan, would speedily make the acquaintance of policemen and Cossacks.—M.

For myself a huge tent was pitched, and somebody or other kept constantly visiting it to ask if I did not want anything.

In the evening of the second day, Nizam Eddin Khan, assistant and principal councillor to the Governor Sardar Kunduz Khan, arrived from Herat with a large suite. This personage, better known as Akhund Zadeh (the priest's son), is regarded at Herat as a very clever and intelligent man, and was specially sent to ascertain my mission. He brought with him as presents, sweetmeats, tea, and sugar.

Our conversation commenced with compliments, after which he asked me whether I was satisfied with Afghanistan. I thanked him for the hospitality I had enjoyed, and expressed my regret that I should have disturbed, in any way, a person whose time and attention were engrossed in the affairs of the administration of the country. "Don't let that concern you," replied Akhund Zadeh; "a guest from such a great empire as Russia is a dear guest. The whole country is at your disposal. Ask for what you like, and it shall be given you."

At last the interchange of civilities came to an end, and Akhund Zadeh said he would have a chat with me alone. Dismissing his suite, whilst I on my part sent off my men, he disclosed to me the diplomatic part of his mission—the Governor of Herat had sent him to know what I wanted, and what my aim was; the numerous Afghans visiting Samarcand were always well treated, but it was so rare that they had a Russian as a guest.

I was sorry that all this cleverness and cunning of Akhund Zadeh should have been thrown away. "Journeying from Askabad," I said, "I had no intention of visiting Afghanistan, but the necessity for

obtaining a guide to cross over into Persia led me to Kusan, and the fulfilment of the formalities imposed on foreigners in Afghanistan, to Ghurian. I should like to have been the guest of the Governor at Herat, but circumstances would not allow me to do this. It is indispensable that I should go from Ghurian to Khaf, to which place I should be glad if he would give me guides."

"The whole country is yours," replied Akhund Zadeh. "Ask for what you like, and it shall be given you." He thereupon gave instructions for a convoy to be got ready to escort me to the Persian frontier; and when I objected to this, he ordered that two guides should be at my disposal the following morning.

At last, when it grew dark, Akhund Zadeh withdrew, on the plea of the length of the journey, expressing all manner of compliments as he took leave of me. The orders he gave about his wishes on my behalf being carried into effect, showed the local officials the estimation in which I was held at Herat, and they were afterwards profuse in their efforts to please me. They persisted in sitting with me, to prevent my being melancholy, and, in spite of my hints that I wished to be alone to have a good rest before my journey, they did not leave me till nine at night. In bidding me good-bye, they took from me a statement, to send on to Herat, that I was satisfied with my reception. It would be interesting to know what they thought of this document, for I refused to set my seal to a certificate in Persian presented to me, and wrote out the whole of the statement in Russian.

We set out from Ghurian at daybreak on the 12th of May. The road runs at first through rich pasture land,

where there are many large flocks of sheep and herds of horses. We soon got on rising ground, and began to cross a mountain spur, which a road for vehicular traffic could easily avoid. The highest point of the pass above the surrounding country is about 315 feet. In the broad valley lying beyond were numerous traces of Tekke forays, in the shape of ruined settlements and robats. Thanks to these scoundrels, the valley is deserted right up to the walls of Herat itself.

The locality, on the whole, is not particularly well-supplied with water. Near the middle of the road runs a small stream from the northern mountain spurs, called the Shur-aou; there is only a current in this stream after heavy rains, and when we visited it the bed contained simply a series of ponds, filled with slightly brackish water. At three-quarters of a mile from Shur-aou, the guide showed me the Perso-Afghan frontier, which, however, was traced on the maps considerably further to the east. The guide said that formerly, before the country was abandoned by its inhabitants, Shur-aou was an Afghan settlement.

To the north of the road by which we came stretches the valley of Bakharz. Right and left of the road are a number of artificial hills, such as are common in the Atak. They were constructed, according to the Afghans, by the order of the Nadir Shah, to build forts or beacon towers upon.

Kerat possesses special significance to-day as the supporting point for the protection of the Persian frontier from the forays of the Merv Tekkes and Sariks. It is situated where the high road from Khaf to Ghurian issues from the mountains, and from that place pickets are sent to the remaining mountain passes. In this

manner the main highway from Khaf to Meshed is completely protected from robber bands.

From Kerat the road runs for four miles along a branch of the Ser-i-Chesme rivulet, and then crosses the Derdevai rivulet, both of little importance, Kerat receiving its water-supply from kareez-canals. Beyond, the road crosses over to the western side of the Kerat mountains, and descends to the Shishôu spring, where there is a small meadow, with excellent forage. A few days before our arrival the Sariks captured six inhabitants proceeding with camels to Herat. In consequence of this a general panic was prevailing. Seeing our Alielis journeying on asses with packs, the Persians abandoned their camels and goods, and fled to the hills. In vain the Persian guide with us rode to one of the heights and strove to reassure them. The fugitives refused to show themselves.

From Shishôu the road descends to a valley in the direction of Khaf, which is visible from a distance of ten miles. Before reaching the town it is traversed by two rivulets, running south. There is scarcely any fuel the whole distance from Ghurian to Khaf. It is with the greatest difficulty that any can be obtained to cook dinner or tea. There is also very little forage for the horses after quitting the splendid pasture lands of the Herat valley.

Khaf consists of several fortifications, built one near the other. It is necessary to pass through three gates to get to the bazaar. We found the caravanserai in the bazaar almost empty, and there was hardly a soul in the place. The shops are distributed along the fortifications in the midst of beautiful gardens, opium fields, and orchards. The chief articles of commerce

are local and Persian, with a few Russian and English goods.

Khaf serves as the residence of Colonel Stewart, the English agent at Herat. After the unhappy fate of Cavagnari, it was decided not to maintain English agents in the provinces committed to their charge, on account of the fanaticism of the Afghans, but at some spot close to them. Stewart, in the disguise of an Armenian horse-dealer, penetrated to Deregez during the Tekke Expedition of 1880-81, and followed the operations of Skobeleff's army. At the present moment Khaf serves as the head-quarters of the Colonel. The greater part of his time is spent in travelling up and down the Persian and Afghan frontiers, and in making surveys. This spring he visited Kerat and Kafir Kaleh, and penetrated to Mohsinabad and Pesh-robat. Afterwards he fitted out several expeditions to Merv, all of which were unsuccessful, and then travelled to the south of Persia.*

* It is extremely doubtful that Colonel Stewart has made an attempt to reach Merv, as the despatch of a recognised English political agent there would be altogether against the policy pursued by the present Government and their predecessors in office. I am, indeed, assured on high authority that Lessar's statement is wrong. Whether it would be sound policy to establish political relations with the Mervis is a matter on which much may be argued on both sides, but there can be hardly any diversity of opinion, I take it, that Colonel Stewart would be more usefully employed at Sarakhs than at Khaf. At any rate we ought to have a representative of some sort at Sarakhs. An interesting account of the journey, in disguise, of Colonel Stewart, of the 5th Punjab Infantry, along the Perso-Turcoman frontier in 1881, will be found in a lecture he delivered before the Geographical Society, published in the "Proceedings," September 1881. Stewart has recently returned to England, and it is stated that he will not be sent back to Khaf. It is to be hoped that in this case some other representative will be appointed. It is a matter of imperative necessity that we should have a political agent in Khorassan. A mere native news-writer at Meshed is of no use. —M.

The road from Khaf runs to Turbat-i-Haidari in a north-westerly direction, along a broad valley, on the eastern side of which mountains are visible the whole way. On the west they become diminutive hills, and very often nothing at all is to be seen on the horizon. On the plain the road traverses an excellent gravelly surface. All the ravines with steep sides are provided with bridges, over which lightly-laden wagons can pass.

As on the Russian, so also on the English maps, many of the settlements existing along the road to Meshed are omitted. This is probably due to the fact that since the pacification of the country—the Sariks do not dare to show themselves now—new villages have sprung up. The vegetation is everywhere very rich, but the restricted supply of water sets a bound to the increase of population.

All the villages lying along the road have the appearance of dark-green spots of gardens in the midst of light-green fields of wheat, barley, clover, &c. The rest of the valley, when there is no water, is a waste. Forage is not to be had the whole way to Meshed, and it is only the khans who keep any horses. Villages may be traversed in succession without seeing a single horse. All travelling is done on donkeys; and this applies not only to ordinary travellers, such as pilgrims on the road to Meshed, but to merchandise and to women also. Camels are rarely seen, and then only in large caravans, journeying from afar; the rocky character of the country between Turbat and Meshed being ill adapted for camel transport. Fruit trees are found in every village, but there are no forests. In consequence of this there is a particular kind of architecture in this part of Persia, in which no wood

whatever is used in the construction of houses; buildings being sub-divided into small compartments by rows of pillars, which support small arches. Robats for travellers are constantly met with; they are either placed alongside springs or ponds. Sometimes they are situated near villages, and sometimes away from them, but always outside the forts. Like all Asiatic structures they easily fall into ruins. No money is paid for lodging at these robats, which are usually established by charitable persons for the general welfare of mankind.

The deficiency of wood is one of the principal drawbacks to travelling on this road. It is not to be had for love nor money. Bushes are also scarce, and it is difficult at times to get even furze, which serves almost exclusively as the fuel of the country, and which is often transported from a great distance to the villages.

At a small watch-tower at Hikdabad the road quits the valley for low hills, after crossing which Turbat-i-Haidari is visible. Gardens surround the fort for several miles. We were more than an hour traversing them. They are supplied with water from springs and underground canals.

Turbat-i-Haidari is one of the largest towns in this part of Persia. Inside the walls is a splendid brick bazaar, in the shape of the letter T, with broad avenues, along which we were able to ride three abreast without discommoding the people on either side of us. The principal articles for sale here are the same as at Meshed: saddlery, tea, French sugar, lamps, iron and glass ware, and jewellery; besides which business is done in meat, corn, vegetables, meal, &c.

Beyond Turbat commences the mountainous part of

the road, which continues right up to Meshed. Three passes have to be crossed, more than 6,500 feet above the level of the sea. The road is a very difficult one, with sharp gradients; and the worst part is the section nearest to Meshed—from Kafir Kaleh almost as far as Turukh. Plenty of water exists, but no timber, fuel, or forage. The nearer one gets to Meshed, the more frequently caravans, with merchandise and bands of pilgrims, are overtaken, proceeding to the sacred city. The golden cupola above the tomb of the Imam Riza is visible from the hills ten miles from Meshed.

I arranged to stop a couple of days at Meshed, preparing for the remainder of my journey. Thanks to the hospitality and kindness of the Russian commercial agent in that city, Gospodin Nasirbegoff, I had no difficulty in fitting out my party; and the halt at Meshed was converted into an agreeable rest. I found rumours of my visit to Ghurian had already reached Meshed, but in a very exaggerated form. It was represented that I had been taken prisoner by the Khan of Ghurian, and afterwards released by the orders of the authorities at Herat. In addition to this, it was stated that I had been forbidden to return to Herat, and this report, reaching Teheran, was transmitted thence to the Russian and English papers.

On the eve of my departure, the Governor-General, or Wali, of Khorassan, Prince Rukhnud Dowleh, the brother of the Shah, set out from Meshed to make an inspection of the East Persian frontier, and to construct forts at Kaushid Kala, Old Sarakhs, and along the line of the Tejend. By these means the Khorassan authorities are seizing land never belonging to them on the east bank of the Hari Rud—land well adapted for

colonization and cultivation—and trust to extend their influence over the Tekkes of Merv, as well as among those settling along the Hari Rud. The Mervis, hemmed in by Russia, have already ceased to be terrible to the Persians, and now try to conciliate the latter; hoping, by placing themselves under the fictitious protection of a weak power like Persia, to be allowed to do what they please.

There was a stray report in circulation that the intercourse between the Mervis and the Persians was being carried on by English agents, one of whom, it was said, was to accompany Prince Rukhnud on his journey. To escort the Prince, an expedition was formed, composed of 1,200 infantry, 1,200 cavalry, and 4 guns; together with a suite and 3,000 followers, and transport for 5,000 men. The march-route of the Wali lay along the Kara Su (Keshef Rud) to Pul-i-Khatun, and thence to Sarakhs. The expedition occasioned great excitement at Meshed, particularly on account of the requisition for camels and asses for the transport. Many caravans waited several marches to the rear of Meshed for the Prince to depart, to avoid risking the loss of their camels by the requisition; the receipt of hire-money for the animals seized being as doubtful as the restitution of them at the close of the expedition.

Meshed was left behind for Turbat-i-Sheikh-Jam on the 21st of May, our object being to attain the Hari Rud river and march along its western bank to Sarakhs. There are several roads from Meshed to Turbat. On the English maps is shown the nearest one to the mountains. It was traced when the main highway between Meshed and Herat was subject to constant forays by the Merv and Sarik Turcomans. On the

Russian maps a road is shown considerably lower down, but it also traverses many difficult mountain spurs, and is very inconvenient. At present, owing to the complete security of the highway, traffic, following a third road, proceeds along the bottom of the valley, through Ferimun, Katty Shemshir, the ruins of Kheir-abad, and Lenkar. Not to speak of the superior character of the road, its length has been shortened by seven or eight miles by the change of route.

Compared with the road from Meshed to Khaf the road runs through an unpopulated and deserted country. Traces are still visible here of Turcoman forays; for although the raids have ceased, the country has hardly yet succeeded in recovering from the devastation they inflicted.

The road is level for the most part. Only in places, and particularly between Hussein-abad and Ferimun, for four miles, are there any hills and ravines in crossing the water-divide between the Kara Su and the Jam. There would be no difficulty whatever in making a railway along this route. Beyond Ferimun the country is again quite flat. Water exists in abundance, and there are settlements at all points except at Hussein-abad, Kheir-abad (ruins), Hauz-Sefid, and Abas-abad. At Kheir-abad and Abas-abad the kareez-canals have fallen into ruins since those forts were abandoned by the inhabitants, through the Tekke forays. At Hauz Sefid there is still a cistern of water, although the building over it is in ruins. The inhabitants of the country are Persians, except at Lenkar, where the people are Salor Turcomans, who settled there thirty years ago, and who speak a mixed dialect of Turki and Persian.

It was to Turbat-i-Sheikh-Jam that Ayoub Khan fled

after the capture of Herat by the present Governor, Sardar Kunduz Khan. At the instance of the British Mission he was invited to transfer himself to Teheran, which he assented to; but his family, and the greater part of his adherents, still remain at Turbat. I met many of them. They were very persistent in begging me to give them some work to do, and I had a great trouble in getting rid of them.

Along the road, directly it was known I was a Russian, the people began at once to talk about the Russian prisoner at Herat. The more inquisitive asked whether I was not the prisoner in question, and when I frankly replied in the affirmative they interrogated me all the more, believing, with the suspiciousness of Orientals accustomed to lying, that I was purposely deceiving them.

To defend the road and pursue robber bands, there are two outlying pickets stationed: one of 400 militia horse at Bujgun, and another of 100 at Mohsinabad. The latter is a settlement of 300 houses, $3\frac{1}{3}$ miles from the road, abundantly supplied with water from underground canals. The Mohsinabad Su, a tributary stream of the Hari Rud, which we see on our maps, is known locally as the Ravas. In reality it is not a river, but a simple ravine, containing water only after heavy rains, and never maintaining a current for any length of time. In general, the maps of this locality are not to be relied upon. The maps show numerous rivers and their affluents, giving rise to the impression that the basin of the Hari Rud is abundantly supplied with water; but, as a matter of fact, they are only dry ravines. In all, there are only two rivers: the Kara Su and the Jam. The continuous current of the Jam

commences only at the ruins of Kheir-abad; it has no affluents. The Taïbad Su does not attain the Hari Rud, and disperses all its waters in irrigating Taibad. In general, this locality, in common with the whole of Khorassan, is rather poorly than richly supplied with water.

From Mohsinabad I proceeded to Kareez. The road is quite level; the greater number of the settlements are in ruins, and the robats are destroyed. The inhabitants have only just commenced to return. The robat of Dogarou, on the Afghan border, is in no better condition than the rest.

From Dogarou are clearly discernible the fort and robat of Kafir Kaleh, to which latter point a picket of five men is sent daily from Kusan to guard the ford. At night they return to Kusan.

Leaving Dogarou we turned to the north-east, and rode in the same direction to the river Hari Rud at Pesh-robat (Toman-Agha), a hospice constructed, according to the Khan of Mohsinabad, by the daughter of Tamerlane. This is confirmed by an inscription on the grey-stone façade of the robat. At Pesh-robat the road touches the Hari Rud; both banks being densely covered with reeds, bushes, and trees, rendering a passage through them, even on foot, in many places impossible.

Three roads run from Dogarou to Zur-abad. One crosses the river, turning away into the interior of the country to avoid the mountains through which the Hari Rud has cut its way, and joins it again not far from Zur-abad. The principal drawback to this route is the necessity for crossing the river twice, which is not always possible throughout the year. It also runs through defiles which, according to hearsay, are not

easy travelling. The second route, the shortest of all, and the one which I adopted, cannot properly be called a road, being in places not even a bridle-track. Finally, the third—the longest, but the best—runs *viâ* Turbat-i-Sheikh-Jam and Lenkar to Zur-abad. It contains only one mountain-crossing.

The second route proceeds from Pesh-robat along the bank of the Hari Rud to Kalsan Kala. Afterwards it turns to the west, and crosses the river Jam two miles from where the latter flows into the Hari Rud. From this point the ground is hilly. Passing the ruins of Kaleh-i-Melou, where there is a stream of fresh water, the road $5\frac{1}{3}$ miles beyond enters the mountains. Beyond here the track runs through narrow ravines, climbs high passes, and descends into deep valleys. There is really no road whatever, and often no traces of one. Even riding on horseback is difficult, and the construction of a road for vehicular traffic would involve immense labour. There is plenty of water; a stream is found in almost every defile; and the forage is magnificent. The hill-sides are clothed with trees, and near the rivulet Gelebet there is quite a dense forest.

We emerged from the mountains nine miles from the Salor Turcoman settlements, and passed by several lines of abandoned kareezes; then along an abundant stream, which is conducted to the fields at Zur-abad.

Zur-abad has recently become a place of some importance. Thither, with the permission of the Persian Government, have migrated and settled 2,000 Salor families. In the seventh decade of the present century these Turcomans dwelt at Old Sarakhs. There the Merv Tekkes fell upon them, carried off their cattle, and compelled the greater part of the tribe to remove

to the Merv oasis. No land was assigned to them there, and they either occupied themselves in cattle-rearing or worked for the Tekkes. During Skobeleff's expedition in 1880–81 there were 4,000 Salor kibitkas at Merv; the rest were distributed in the following manner:—1,000 were encamped among the Sariks along the Murghab, 400 at Charjui, 200 near Maimene, and 100 at Pul-i-Salar, near Herat.

Acting on the advice of Tekme Sardar last summer, the Mervis decided to no longer detain the Salors, and allowed them to return to their old settlements. Accordingly 2,000 made their appearance at Sarakhs, but the land is so good there that there are always plenty of people anxious to occupy it; and the Persian authorities, having different aims in view, assigned Zur-abad for the tribe to settle upon, in order that they might form a cordon along the Hari Rud against the Merv Tekke and Sarik forays.

The Salors are the weakest of the Turcoman tribes. Without protection they could not possibly hold their own, having been completely ruined when carried away from Old Sarakhs, and lacking even corn to sow. The refusal of the Persians to give them any would have reduced them to extremities; and hence they were compelled to go to the locality assigned to them, although they disliked Zur-abad very much. In the mountains there is plenty of water, but the streams course along narrow defiles, and have no lands fit for tillage alongside them. The cultivable plain at Zur-abad itself is neither large nor well provided with water, and the construction of underground canals to it from the Hari Rud would occasion too much labour.

However, the Salors have occupied the country from

Pul-i-Khatun to Zur-abad, and from thence all the lands south along the river bank fit for cultivation. There is hardly enough land for the whole of the settlers, and in the meanwhile the remaining 2,000 Salor families at Merv are anxious to join them. The headman at Zur-abad even went beyond this, and spoke of the necessity for collecting all the Salor Turcomans in one spot.

The principal settlement of the Salors is on a low hill near the old fortifications of Zur-abad. The Persians intend constructing a new fort there.

The Salors received me hospitably, and with the warmest expressions of devotion and thanks to Russia. Their emancipation from the Merv Tekkes, at whose hands they had fared so badly, they ascribed exclusively to the conquest of Akhal, and to the advice of Tekme Sardar. This, however, did not prevent them charging me three times the proper price for everything I had.

Two roads run from Zur-abad to Pul-i-Khatun. The first and shortest crosses the mountains; the second passes over the river to the eastern side, *viâ* Ghermau Derbent, returns to the Persian bank, and joins again the first. The mountain road to Dehna Derbent is inconvenient and difficult; it is almost of the same description as the one from Kaleh-i-Melou to Zur-abad. Near Dehna Derbent the road descends to the Hari Rud, and runs along its bank to Sarakhs itself; here, from the eastern side of the river, the hills continue almost as far as Pul-i-Khatun; on the Persian bank they stretch away from the river, and the road only traverses at places spurs of them. Formerly the road from Sarakhs to Pul-i-Khatun traversed Daulat-abad and Charjui away from the river, over hilly and

difficult ground. This arose from the disturbed condition of the country, and with its pacification it has almost entirely ceased to be used.

Pul-i-Khatun, or the Woman's Bridge, is so called on account of a woman having once, according to the Tekkes, constructed a bridge across the Hari Rud at this spot. Four arches still remain intact; the fifth and centre one is in ruins, destroyed by Medhly Khan during his expedition against Merv. The bridge is 175 feet long. Near it the Kara Su or Keshif Rud flows into the Hari Rud The width of the river here is about forty feet; the depth is altogether insignificant, not reaching higher than the horse's knee. The ford, however, is an extremely awkward one, owing to the big stones forming the bed of the river.

We halted for the night near the camp of Prince Rukhnud Dowleh. While I had, with forced marches, ridden to Dogarou and Pul-i-Khatun, the Prince had succeeded in reaching the Kara Su, a distance of about eighty miles. He himself and the expeditionary chiefs and officials rode in carriages; the suite on horseback. The entire camp was of a luxurious character. While on the road, the whole of the troops, except the artillery, marched very irregularly, the transport covered a length of seven miles. Only the personages of the Prince's *entourage* were well dressed, the rest were in rags. The troops were badly armed, their weapons were obsolete, and only a few of the officers possessed breechloaders.

The following day, May 30th, overtaking the Persian detachment at Nauruzabad, I arrived at Sarakhs, where I found great preparations being made for their reception, and people being assembled to assist in the projected defensive works.

During the whole of my journey from Sarakhs to Askabad, I was compelled to listen to the complaints of the people of the Atak, respecting their grievous position. The Persians systematically deprive them of their water-supply at the very moment they most need it, and the people, not daring to support their rights by force of arms, have, in consequence, only two alternatives—either to become Persian subjects, and pay tribute to the border Eelkhanis, or else throw up their settlements and return to the Tejend or to Merv, notwithstanding that this implies total ruin to them.

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On the 27th of November 1882, a translation of Lessar's account of his journey to the outposts of Herat was read before a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society. At the close Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson read a paper on the subject, which, by the courtesy of the eminent author, and with the sanction of the council, I am able to insert in this volume, together with the discussion that followed thereon, and the maps which were prepared by the Society to illustrate Lessar's surveys. The political opinions expressed by Sir Henry Rawlinson, Sir Bartle Frere, and Sir Richard Temple, are of the highest interest.

Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson read the following notes on Lessar's explorations :—

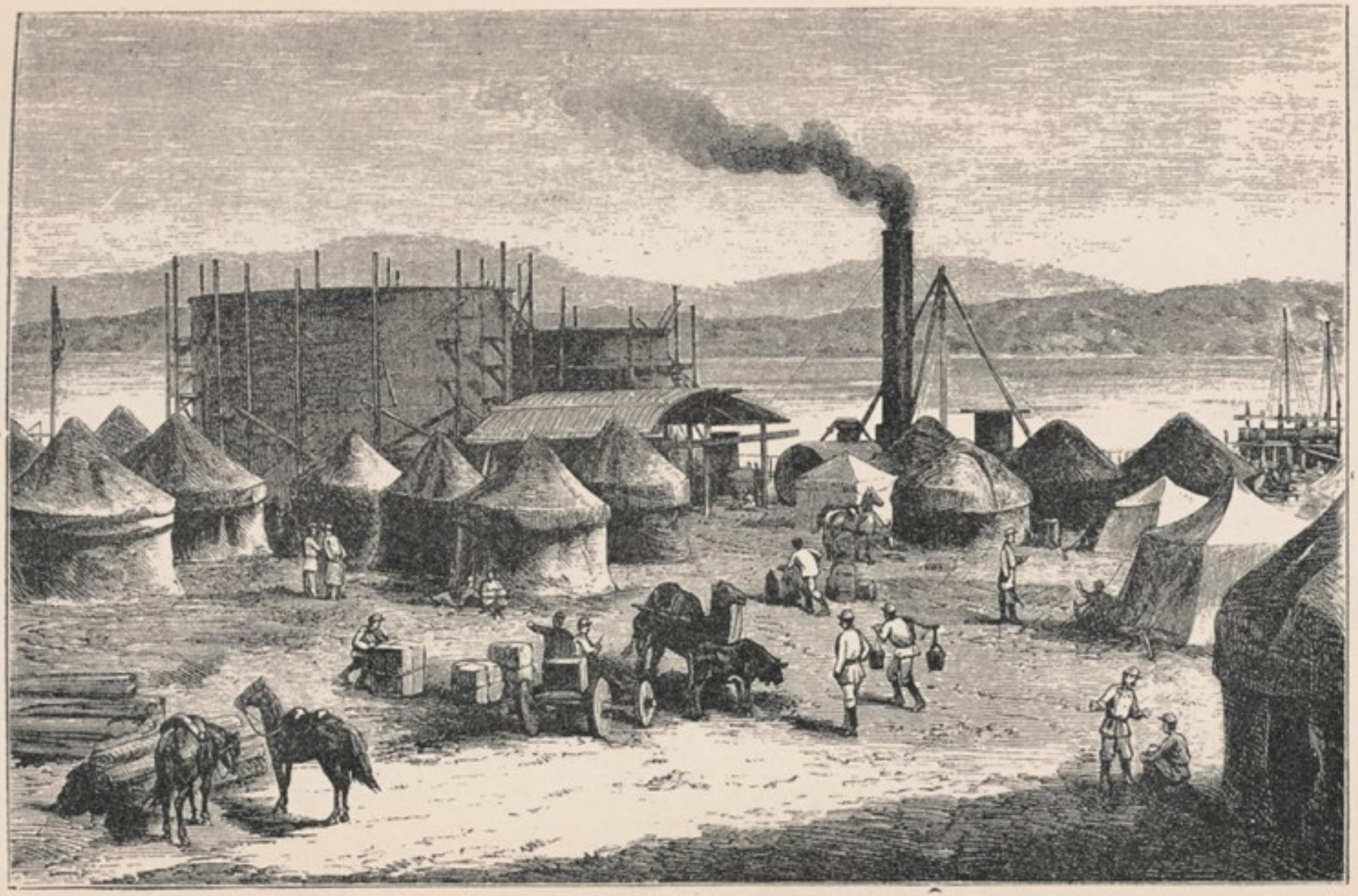
M. Lessar's report of his journey from Askabad to Herat is a very interesting document, and the unpretentious way in which it is drawn up enhances its value in the eyes of geographers. M. Lessar has now supplied the missing link in the trace of the direct line of communication between Russia and India, dissipating the

fallacies which have hitherto obscured the subject, and giving us for the first time a true contour sketch of the face of the country. Over and over again in this hall, and at other public meetings, have I heard florid allusions to the "pathless deserts" and the "inaccessible mountain ranges" which nature has built up as a barrier against all approach to India from the north and north-west. Only in the last number of the *Nineteenth Century* I read from the pen of one of our most accomplished political writers, and in deprecation of the notion of any possible advance of the Russian power towards India: "It is one thing to be brought into collision with barbarous tribes, to subdue and to annex them; it is another to cross a great mountain chain for the purpose of invading the territory of a civilised power." Now this "great mountain chain," which, according to the optimist school, is to serve as a palladium for India, turns out, on the showing of M. Lessar, to be a mere paltry line of sandstone hills, not 1,000 feet in height, which could be crossed by a carriage road in a couple of hours, and which would crumble before the touch of a Russian railway engineer. If M. Lessar had done nothing more than explode the Paropamisus bugbear, which assumed that the mountains north of Cabul, 20,000 feet in height, were prolonged at the same elevation to the westward, he would have rendered us an important national service; but he has done much more. He has traced with the eye of an engineering geographer the line of the Russian advance, in the past and in the future, from the Caspian to Askabad, from Askabad to Sarakhs, and from Sarakhs to Herat, and he has shown that, as far as physical difficulties are concerned, there is no reason why, at any time and

within the limitation of a few months, a continuous railway should not be built from the Caspian to the western Afghan capital; to which I may add that if that work were once executed, a week would suffice for the transport of merchandise (and if merchandise, why not troops and stores ?) from the Caucasus head-quarters to Herat.

But I will now follow M. Lessar more into detail. He dwells but little on the earlier section of the Russian line, having exhausted that subject in his earlier reports. It is now well known that a line of rails had been laid down from the Bay of Michailovsk, near the old mouth of the Oxus, on the eastern shore of the Caspian, to Bami, at the opening of the Akhál oasis, and that a tramway is being constructed from Bami to Askabad. To connect Michailovsk with Krasnovodsk, where alone there is anchorage in deep water adequate to the requirements of a great Asiatic terminus, a branch line of some fifty or sixty miles will have to be constructed, making the total length of the line from the Caspian to the Russian head-quarters in Akhál about 380 miles, which is a little under my former estimate. It is considered by the Russian officers that a mistake has been made in selecting Askabad for the head-quarters site rather than Geok Tepé, which is situated at the point where the Khorassan-Khiva road, running north and south, crosses the Akhál-Merv road running east and west, and which is also surrounded by a richer and better watered country. Askabad, indeed, at present is very indifferently supplied both with water and provisions, and until relieved by a tramway or railway from the westward, will always be in difficulties.

The second section of the contemplated Russian line—



THE TRANSCASPIAN RAILWAY—THE RAILWAY CAMP AT MICHAILOVSK.

that stretching from Askabad to Sarakhs—is described in some detail in M. Lessar's report, and merits our close attention. From the descriptions of previous travellers, and especially from the reports of Major Napier, who personally inspected a considerable stretch of the Atak region, we were already sufficiently acquainted with its general character. We knew that the range, at the foot of which stretched the high road from Kizil Robat (Arvat) to Askabad, running nearly west and east, trended to the south after passing Deregez, and gradually diminished in height and boldness. We knew also that the slopes of the range facing the desert retained the name of Atak (Attok), or "the skirt," and were sparsely inhabited by Turcoman colonists, who paid the *zakkát*, or "tithe" to the chiefs of the over-hanging Persian hills for the privilege of using the water that descended from them for the cultivation of their fields. In discussing the probable advance of Russia along this line, on the occasion of Mr. O'Donovan's paper on Merv being read at our evening meeting on March 27th of this year, I assumed, as I had every reason to assume, that the Persian nationality of this Atak district was undisputed, and that it could not therefore be traversed by a Russian railroad, except under the authority of some special arrangement with the Shah. As a matter of history, it was notorious that the slopes in question, from Akhál to Sarakhs, had always been an integral portion of the province of Khorassan. Nissa, Abiverd, and Mehna, all lying in this Atak region, had all been provincial capitals, ranking with Nishapúr and Tús, under every Persian dynasty down to comparatively modern times; and although the Akháls in the course of the present generation had forcibly possessed

themselves of the western portion of the Atak, no such disturbance of frontier had taken place east of Deregez, nor, as far as I was aware, had it ever been contemplated. I was thus not a little disconcerted at finding that M. Lessar, speaking no doubt with a knowledge of the views of the Russian Government, professed to regard the nationality of the Atak as an open question, and even suggested that the Persian mountain chiefs were oppressing the Tekké agriculturists by interfering with their water-supply, rather than that the Turcomans were squatting upon Persian lands and infringing upon Persian rights. According, indeed, to present appearances, there is likely to be a repetition in an amended form of the old fable of the wolf and the lamb. The wolf desires a right of way through the fold, and the flocks, therefore, at present in possession will be declared to have no right to the lands.

But apart from all consideration of political questions, M. Lessar's report contains a vast amount of valuable information relating to statistics and geography. His remarks on the lower course of the Tejend go far to confirm the view which I have already ventilated on more than one occasion before this Society, that there was in very early times a large lake to the north of Sarakhs, which was fed by the Tejend, the Murgháb, the Persian streams from Kelát and Abiverd, and especially by the southern arm of the Oxus, then known by the name of the Aces or Ochus (modern *Ogoez*). This lake, which, like the lake of Seistan, fluctuated according to the influx from the rivers between a large open expanse of water and a mere reedy morass, was, according to my views, known to the ancients as the "Aria Palus," from which there was a waterway to the

Caspian.* When the southern stream of the Oxus, the principal feeder of the Aria Palus, was diverted to the northward the lake of course dried up, but the pools and lagoons which now occur along the course of the Tejend, together with the hard alluvial soil which is everywhere found a few feet below the drifting sand, are ample evidence of its former existence, and it is hardly extravagant to speculate that in the not very remote future, under skilful Russian engineering, those colossal irrigation works may be restored, the report of which excited the admiration of Herodotus and caused Pliny to describe the plain below Abiverd, as "fertilitatis inclitæ locus."† Another valuable notice, furnished by M. Lessar, and which is entirely new, refers to the name of Arakaj, applied to the country by the Persian inhabitants in lieu of the Turkish "Attok," or skirt. This is a real etymological discovery, for Arakaj, by retrenching the *j*, which is the usual dialectic termination of the old eastern Persian names, becomes Araka, or Araga, a name that nearly represents the Ragau of Isidore, joined with Abiverd, and further shows us that Raga, still used by the Afghans for "the skirt of a hill,"‡ really had that meaning in the old Persian language. §

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* The Aria Palus of Ptolemy has hitherto been usually identified with the Lake of Seistan, but it must be observed that the river Αρειας (or Hari-rúd), coming from the Paropamisus, is made to flow northward into it; and that, Ammianus adds, "unde naviganti ad Caspium mare quingenta stadia numerantur et mille." The distance to the Caspian may be too short, but the direction certainly points to the Tejend swamp.

† Nat. Hist., vol. vi. p. 16.

‡ I state this on the authority of Raverty, "Afghan Papers," p. 74.

§ The discovery that Raga, or Arga, is a genuine old Persian word for "the skirt of a hill" leads to many important explanations. It supplies a meaning for the old Median capital of

Another etymological correction which I must offer whilst on this subject, refers to a statement in Colonel Stewart's paper of last year, which was allowed to pass at the time through inadvertence, and which has since, I fear, exposed us to the ridicule of our Russian critics. Colonel Stewart, it may be remembered, alluded to the many traces of Christian worship in Khorassan, and based his argument on the frequent occurrence of the word *Kiliseh*, "a church" (*i.e.* εκκλησια) in the modern nomenclature of the province. Having occasion lately to consult his paper in connection with M. Lessar's report, I was struck with this statement, and referred to the names quoted in support of it, when I at once perceived that he had confounded *Kilisch*, "a church," with the colloquial Turkish *Kelesi*, "his fort," where the suffix of the third person is added to *Keleh*, "a fort," to individualise the name:—Khoja Kelesi, meaning merely "Khoja, his fort"; Khara Khan Kelesi, "Khara Khan, his fort," and so on. In one instance, that of Tepeh Kalísa at Julfán, in Deregez, Colonel Stewart may have been right in suspecting the remains of a Christian church, but in all his other examples he is on a false scent.

But M. Lessar's chief attention has been bestowed on the third section of the proposed Russian line between

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Rhages (Arhagi of Strabo, p. 512), lying on the skirts of Elburz and joining Damghan, also derived from *Daman*, "a skirt." It further explains the Ragh of Badakhshan lying on the skirts of the Darwáz range, and possibly also the Arghassán (for Arghastán) of Afghanistan; and, finally, it suggests that the Ragha of the Vendidad, the twelfth place created by Ormazd, may be identified with the *Daman*, or skirts of the Suleiman range, associated as the name is in the Zend geographical list with Varena, or *Bannú* (Falani of the Chinese), and with "the Seven Rivers" or the Punjab.

Sarakhs and Herat; and here his explorations have the merit not only of scientific accuracy, but of absolute novelty, for no European traveller has previously passed through this district of Badgheis, along the line of the Hari-rúd; nor is there any notice to be found in the Arab geographers of a high road of commerce having ever followed this particular direction. Badgheis, which comprises the entire region between the Murgháb and the Hari-rúd as far as the confines of the desert, has been always celebrated in the East for its sylvan character. The Pehlevi Bundehesh says "it is full of timber and full of trees," and the geographers specify among its products the poplar and plane and pistachio trees; but this description probably refers to the eastern portion of the province where it joined Baghshúr and Gharshistán on the upper Murgháb. When first invaded by the Arabs at the end of the seventh century of Christ, Badgheis was still held by the Hiyátheleh or White Huns, the Tokhari of an earlier age, who were themselves descended from the Hioung-nu, and were the progenitors of the Ghúzor Turcomans.* It contained

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* The chief argument in favour of a continuity of succession from the Hioung-nu to the Turcomans, consists in the identity of the royal title used by this great Turkish tribe in its various changes of name and habitat. The *Chen-yu*, or *Jen-yu*, of the Hioung-nu is thus constantly mentioned by the Chinese in the first century before Christ. The debris of this tribe, called by the Chinese *Tu-lo-ho* (*i.e.* Tokhari), afterwards occupied Tokharistán, and the Kharlukh chief of that district, who fought with the Arabs in A.D. 119, is thus named by Ibn Athir, *Jenuyeh* (vol. v. p. 148), while Biruni has left on record that in his time the same title (misread by Sachau as *Hanuta*) was borne by the chief of the Ghuz-Turks, whom we know to be the same as the modern Turcomans.—"Chronology," p. 109.

Yacút says distinctly that Badgheis had been the *Dar-el-Mulk*, or seat of government, of the Hiyátheleh, who moved there from Tokharistán; and it is probable that the Bundehesh alludes to

two cities, Baún and Bamyín, which were probably on the Kushk river, or some of the smaller affluents of the Murghâb, as they were visited by the geographer Yacút on his passage from Herat to Merv; but all traces of them, as well as of the towns of Kulwin and Bagh-shúr,* captured by Jenghiz Khan, seem to have now vanished.

I have stated that there never was a high road through Badgheis along the line of the Hari-rúd. The immediate banks of the river were impracticable, and the north-western portion of the district away from the river was but poorly supplied with water. In describing, indeed, the cross-line which led from Sarakhs to Balkh, *viâ* Merv-er-rúd, Hamdullah expressly says that there was no running water for four stages, or about 100 miles, the robáts which had been erected for travellers along the route, and which faced the northern desert, being supplied by wells and cisterns.† The line throughout Badgheis further to the east, which connected Merv and Herat, and followed the affluents of the Murghâb, was far better supplied. That line, however, which was traversed and described by Abbott and

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this early settlement of Turks on the Upper Murghâb, in describing *Bakyir* (or *Bakeser* according to De Perron), the modern *Bagshúr*, as the stronghold of Afrasiab. See "Sacred Books of the East," vol. v. p. 38.

* The Bundehesh, in noticing this district, says that "in the days of Yim a myriad towns and cities were erected on its pleasant and prosperous territory."

† The names of these robáts intervening between Sarakhs and Merv-er-rúd on the Murghâb were—

	Fars.
Robát Ja'aferi	9
Mil-i-Omari	7
Robát-i-Abu Ma'ima . . .	7
Diz Hindu or Kasari . . .	7

Mokadassi gives the same route with slight variations.

Shakespeare in 1840–41, is outside of the present inquiry.

M. Lessar's route may be thus briefly described. Crossing the Hari-rúd at Sarakhs he follows the river more or less closely for thirty miles. He then makes a detour into the interior to the east, through a country entirely devoid of inhabitants, but with occasional wells and karezes, for 77½ miles, to the foot of the Barkhut Pass, by which the great Paropamisus range, here dwindled to insignificant hills 900 feet above the plain, is crossed. The ascent and descent of the pass do not measure more than a few miles, and the total remaining distance, from the robát north of the range to Kusán, the first permanent Afghan settlement, on the Hari-rúd and near the opening of the Herat plain, is only 37½ miles. At this point all difficulties cease, and a carriage and four may be driven from Kusán to our outpost of Chaman at the Khojak Pass, north of Pishin.

A word, however, may now properly be said as to the territorial dependency of Badgheis. Although this tract, from Kusán as far north as the Turcoman desert, is at present entirely uninhabited, owing to the continuous raids of the Tekkes, the Sariks, and the Salors for the last twenty years, yet there can be no doubt that the whole of Badgheis is distinctly Afghan territory. The Persian frontier is demarcated by the line of the Hari-rúd. The Turcomans have no pretension to any land beyond the confines of the desert. It follows, therefore, that M. Lessar's route from Sarakhs to Kusán, and so on to Ghurián, was exclusively on Afghan soil, and that if a railway were to be constructed along the same line, it would thus, unless there were some specific convention

to the contrary, be subject throughout to the jurisdiction of the Government of Herat.

When M. Lessar arrived at Kusán the main object, no doubt, of his journey was accomplished; but he seems to have had supplementary instructions to examine the western or Persian bank of the Hari-rúd, as well as the eastern or Afghan bank of the river, and he proceeded accordingly to Mash-had (Meshed), *viâ* Khaf and Turbat-i-Haidari for that purpose. This line of country, together with his return route from Mash-had as far as Turbat-i-Sheikh-Jám has been so frequently travelled over and described by previous explorers, that M. Lessar's report conveys no novel information of interest; but between Turbat-i-Sheikh-Jám and the Hari-rúd he is again on new ground. He examined the general course of the river from Kafir Kaleh and Pesh-Robát to the south, as far as Zúrabád and Pul-i-Khatún, where the Meshed river falls in, to the north, finding his way through the hills by mere foot-tracks and mountain paths, and the result of his reconnaissance being that there is no possibility of constructing a direct road for wheeled carriages, either along, or anywhere near, the river between Kusán and Pul-i-Khatún; either a detour must be made to the east into Badgheis to avoid the river gorges, or a still greater detour must be made to the west by Kehriz, Sheikh-Jám, Lenkar, and Zúrabád. M. Lessar recurs, therefore, to his trace from Sarakhs by the Barkhut Pass to Kusán, as the natural and only possible line for a railway leading along the Atak from the present Russian frontier at Baba-Durmaz, by Sarakhs, to Herat; and on the general question, accordingly, of this line, I will now venture, in conclusion, to make a few remarks, taking advantage of the

late ruling of our Chairman who said that, provided party politics were eschewed, he saw no objection to observations or discussions of a more general character.

No one will question, then, but that the extension of the Russian arms to the east of the Caspian during the last twenty years has been of immense benefit to the country; the substitution, indeed, of Russian rule for that of the Khirghiz, the Uzbegs, and the Turcomans throughout a large portion of Central Asia has been an unmixed blessing to humanity. The execrable slave trade, with all its concomitant horrors, has been abolished; brigandage has been suppressed, and Mahommedan fanataicism and cruelty have been generally mitigated and controlled. Commerce, at the same time, has been rendered more secure; local arts and manufactures have been encouraged, and the wants of the inhabitants have been everywhere more seriously regarded than is usual under Asiatic rulers. But although this picture is cheerful and reassuring, it does not by any means satisfy me that it is desirable to extend the sphere of Russia's beneficent action towards India, or that it is our duty, with a view to such a consummation, to assist and encourage M. Lessar's projected railway to Herat. Of course we are here merely discussing the question of principle. Practically it would seem to be premature to enter upon the discussion at all, for we are not within what is called measurable distance of the actual railway.

The mere finding the money for such an undertaking would be a difficulty of the first magnitude. Then, again, complications would certainly arise with the Persian and Afghan Governments if it were seriously proposed to run a foreign railway through their respective

territories; and finally, the formal opposition of Great Britain would have to be encountered; for whichever party might be in power at the time, I cannot believe that in the present state of our relations in the East, the nation could ever be brought to look with indifference, still less with complacency, on a measure which, if successful, would destroy our prestige throughout Central Asia, and would further impair that feeling of rest and security within our own frontiers which is essential to the well-being of India, dependent as such well-being notoriously is on the peaceable development of the industrial and productive resources of the country.

It is quite possible, as in the case of the Suez Canal, that if India and Europe were connected by a continuous railway, even though that railway led through Russian territory, Great Britain, as the largest producing power in the world, would sooner or later obtain a lion's share of the traffic; but this result would not touch the question whether a mere increased facility of transporting merchandise and passengers had not been purchased at too heavy a political risk. It must be remembered that under such circumstances we should lose our boasted advantage of having no frontiers, and should be obliged to hold India in a constant state of preparedness for war. In fact, the conditions of our tenure of the country would be entirely altered, not necessarily to our ultimate disadvantage, but still subject for the time being to uncertainties and liabilities with which no Government would willingly be hampered.

While, therefore, I humbly venture to congratulate Russia on the distinguished part which she has already played, and is probably destined to play in the future, in the civilisation of Central Asia, I cannot avoid recalling

to mind with much satisfaction the political principle which she has so often avowed, and still I believe avows, that Afghanistan (including, of course, the district of Badgheis) is beyond the scope of her influence and action; and finally, in thanking M. Lessar for his valuable report, and in expressing my admiration for the skill and daring with which he has executed the duties confided to him, I beg to be also permitted to say that I trust his project of a railway from Askabad *viâ* Sarakhs, may *not* be realised, or at any rate not until we have already constructed a railway to the same point from Sibi, *viâ* Quetta and Candahar.

On the termination of the paper and Sir H. Rawlinson's remarks,

The President said a letter had just been received from General Venukoff, the greatest living authority on the Geography and Ethnology of Central Asia. It was the intention of General Venukoff to have been present at the meeting, and to have taken part in the discussion; but, unfortunately, he had been prevented by illness. His letter was as follows :—

"Messieurs,—Le sujet de vos discussions d'aujourd'hui m'intéresse beaucoup. Mais je vous prie de ne pas attendre de ma part d'autres informations ou renseignements que purement géographiques : les questions politiques sont hors de mes préoccupations. Voici donc la copie de la carte, non-publiée encore, de l'oasis du Tejend et des routes qui traversent ce pays pour aboutir à Merv. Cette carte est dressée par M. Aminoff, un des officiers d'état-major Russe des plus compétents dans les questions géographiques concernant l'Asie Centrale. Si vous voulez la reproduire dans vos excellents 'Pro-

ceedings,' je n'aurai qu'à la remettre aux mains de M. le Secrétaire de la Société ; si non, je la publierai à Paris. Maintenant je dirai deux mots sur les travaux astronomiques, aussi non-publiés, de M. Gladycheff, un géodésien distingué, qui, à ce qu'il paraît, a visité Merv et la partie septentrionale du pays entre le Héri-roud et le Mourghâb. Nous lui devons les co-ordonnées astronomiques de Merv, de Ak-robat et de Haouz-i-khan. Il s'est aussi occupé des travaux topographiques ; mais je ne connais pas encore leurs résultats. Vouz voyez donc, Messieurs, que les pionniers russes dans l'Asie Centrale ne manquent pas de suivre l'exemple donné par leurs collégues britanniques et de marcher à leur rencontre. J'espère que cette recontre aura lieu, un beau jour, dans les ramifications de l'Hindoukouch, où les anciens rivaux se tendront amicalement la main au nom de la civilisation et *des intérêts communs*. Je sais bien, Messieurs, que les traditions ou, pour dire plus franchement, les préjugés nationnaux, peuvent trouver mon opinion trop optimiste, irréalisable, même peu désirable ; mais je suis sûr que le moment n'est pas loin où les agents politiques et commerciaux de la Russie et de l'Angleterre se recontreront sur les bords du Héri-roud et dans la partie nord de l'Afghanistan. Cet opinion est le résultat de mes recherches géographiques et ethnographiques pendant plus de vingt-cinq ans. Vous trouverez les motifs de cette conviction sincère dans l'ouvrage que j'ai l'honneur de vous présenter ('La Russie et l'Orient).—On disait souvent que la Russie menace votre magnifique empire des Indes ; j'espère que désormais on ne le dira plus. La Russia ne veut et ne peut vous menacer, Messieurs, et cela est tellement vrai qu'en 1872 les représentants russes à Téhéran ne

s'occupaient point des terres qui s'étendent au nord du Khorassan, et ne savaient pas bien quelle est la rivière la plus septentrionale de ces deux : l'Attrek ou la Gurghène ? En 1874, la chancellerie diplomatique de St Pétersbourg ignorait aussi quel était l'état politique du Maïméněh : était-il indépendant ou vassal de l'émir de Kaboul ou de celui de Boukhara ? Les envahisseurs, les conquêrants n'agissent jamais de la sorte. . . Et de nos jours, le ministère des affaires étrangères de Russie, —à ce qu'il paraît,—ne savaient rien sur les explorations de MM. Lessar, Gladycheff, Alikhanoff, Sokoloff, Vychéslavtzeff, avant de lire les articles des journaux sur leur voyages intéressants. Est-ce le procédé des Napoléons, des Césars ou même des Moïses ?—Soyez donc sûrs : la politique du gouvernement russe (si je la comprends bien) ne vous menace pas du tout. On a cherché, par tâtonnements, la frontière naturelle des possessions russes dans les steppes Asiatiques et on l'a trouvée déjà dans la plupart des cas : cette frontière naturelle passe à plusieurs centaines de milles au nord-ouest de l'Inde.—Craignez-vous la concurrence commerciale des Russes aux marchés Asiatiques ? Eh bien, lisez le No. 310 de la *Gazette de Moscou* que ja'i l'honneur de mettre à votre disposition : vous y trouverez les raisons suffisantes pour calmer vos appréhensions.—M. Venukoff."

Sir Bartle Frere said that Sir Henry Rawlinson had for the last twenty years been telling his countrymen what now, for the first time, had been shown by actual exploration in the paper before the Society. Sir Henry had foreseen it, partly from his own observation, and partly from his habit of always listening to those who had personal experience in that region. There was not

a single fact which had been laid before them that evening that could not be found in Sir Henry's earliest remarks on the subject. It was a very striking thing that those points which, twenty years ago, were matters of doubtful inquiry for geographers, and could not be settled by the personal evidence of any European, had now become simply matters of topography in a country of which the geographical features were well ascertained. Railway surveys had now taken the place of geographical inferences. Whether Russians or Englishmen were talking on the subject, they were always looking forward to a time when the advance guards of the railway surveyors of the two nations would meet somewhere about that great chain of mountains which, as Sir Henry had told them, had now dwindled down to elevations of 900 feet. The Russians were doing their best to push forward their work of survey in the direction of Herat; but what was England doing? Since Sir Richard Temple pressed forward his railway in the neighbourhood of the Bolan Pass, what had England accomplished in the same direction? It seemed to him that whether Englishmen were able, as some optimists were, to throw to the winds any fear of aggressive action on the part of Russia, or whether they merely looked to the development of commerce, it behoved them to push forward their railway surveys towards the same points as the Russians, and, probably, the sooner the English railway engineers met the Russians, the further off would be the day when the military engineers would come into contact with one another.

Sir Henry Norman, after expressing his regret that Colonel Stewart and Sir Charles Macgregor were not

present, said he did not entertain the dread which Sir Henry Rawlinson and Sir Bartle Frere entertained with regard to the advance of Russia. So far from desiring to push forward and meet the Russians in some unknown place, he, as a soldier, preferred to keep a secure base. He was quite sure that the meeting would not come in his time. He would rather that it should occur at a point where England would be able to bring all the immense resources of India into play, instead of pushing forward to Sarakhs or Herat, 600 miles beyond the frontier, by making railways that would cost an enormous sum of money, and never produce a penny of profit. He could not approve of that being done to meet some imaginary danger which our successors in the government of India would be perfectly able to encounter when the time came.*

Sir Richard Temple said that he felt considerable embarrassment in addressing the meeting from a

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* A quotation from a recent work will enable the reader to appraise Sir Henry Norman's views at their proper value. It is a matter of fact that the commissariat of the Indian army altogether collapsed during the Afghan war. Our successes were dimmed and our disasters heightened by the breakdown of that branch of the service. How far Sir Henry Norman was responsible for this is observable from the following:—"The Commissary-General, Colonel Willes, had represented to General Sir Henry Norman, when military member of the Council, that the commissariat department was in every respect organised on a limited peace scale, quite unequal to the task of meeting the requirements of war. These are the Commissary-General's own words: 'Shortly before Sir H. Norman left India, I personally explained to him how unsatisfactory I considered the department, owing to the very limited means at my disposal for its efficiency, not only in establishments but in transport. He pointed out how necessary economy was; but I represented that if war broke out —which I, as well as everybody else in India, foresaw must occur in a few years on the frontier—there would be great difficulty regarding transport, &c., owing to the limited resources available,

consciousness that all this talk about geography and topography would be the merest sham if it were not for the deep political interests which underlay the discussion. He was precluded from saying what was at the bottom of his mind, in regard to these matters, because he could not do so without breaking the fundamental rules of the Society, which did not allow open discussion of political topics. Though they were bound to give every credit to Russia for all the great work she was doing, they must remember that nations as well as individuals acted from mixed motives. He would not have thought it worth while to mention this, were it not that so many of his countrymen, while bending their gaze upon the blessings which Russia was directly or indirectly conferring upon humanity, seemed to blind themselves to the political dangers which might menace their own empire. He had confidence enough in British administration and British influence to believe that whatever seriously lowered British prestige, or diminished British power in Asia, could not be for the good of humanity. He fully admitted that the evils of Turcoman slavery upon the Persian frontier were quite as great as those which Sir Henry Rawlinson had described. Nothing could exceed the horrors which the Turcomans had been practising, and if Wilberforce or Clarkson had been living at the present time, no more touching theme could ever have inspired their eloquence than the slavery

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and the extreme difficulty I invariably experienced in obtaining the most limited establishments when asked for. He, Sir Henry Norman, replied (I use his own words), "*Wait* till war does break out, and then see how we will shell out the money; you will have everything you want then." I remarked, "It will be too late," and my words have come only too true.'"—"The Eastern Menace," by Colonel Arthur Cary, p. 281.—M.

upon the Persian frontier. He was grieved that England had not borne its share in upholding the flag of freedom in that quarter, but, sooner than that the work should not be done at all, for the sake of God and humanity, they must rejoice that it was done by Russia. But having accomplished that work, Russia, under conventions or state correspondence having the force of international agreements, was bound to stop at the frontier of Afghanistan. Inside the Afghan frontier there were none of those evils which existed on the border-land of the Persians and the Turcomans. Afghans were never carried into slavery, they were always able to take care of themselves, and therefore Russia had no right to cross the border. He entirely concurred with what had just fallen from Sir Henry Rawlinson. There were great difficulties in carrying railways into Afghanistan. In the first place they were prevented from doing so by international arrangements. Secondly, there were very great physical difficulties; for although the line of the Paropamisus at the Russian end of the line was very low, the line of the flanking mountains of Beluchistan at the English end was extremely difficult, and although information had recently been obtained as to the practicability of a railway through that part of the country, still that information showed that the cost of such an undertaking would be large. He quite agreed with Sir Henry Norman that our successors would be able to meet the difficulty, but at the same time, although we had a right to make a railway as far as Pishin on the frontier of southern Afghanistan, it would probably be more expensive than those railways which had been referred to in the paper.

The President said that M. Lessar's paper had been

read, not on account of its political bearing, but for the interesting geographical facts it contained relating to the region between the Kushk and the Hari-rúd. As President of the Society he felt himself very much of a cosmopolitan. Sir Henry Rawlinson had made many wise and generous observations on the subject, but for the first time in history Sir Henry had described the Turcoman as a lamb, altogether ignorant of the fate that awaited it from the Russian wolf:

> Pleased to the last he crops the flowery food,
> And licks the hand just raised to shed his blood.

It had been suggested that by raising opposition on the part of Persia and Afghanistan it might be possible to prevent a railway going to Herat. It was not for him to say whether a railway through so wild and barbarous a country, among such people, ought in the interests of humanity to be stopped. There were occasions when we should rise above our position as mere Englishmen, and look at the general interests of mankind, and ask whether the barbarous state of those countries, inhabited by one of the most truculent races on the face of the globe, ought to be allowed to continue, in order to avert some possible danger from the British Empire. As President of the Society, as an Englishman, and as a man, he protested loudly against a doctrine which he thought was opposed to the real principles of humanity. It was the duty of the President of the Society to prevent the discussions taking too political a form, at the same time it was not desirable that he should exclude all reference to those political considerations which gave to geography one of its principal interests, any more than he should exclude

reference to the commercial bearings of recent discoveries, or to ethnological facts. But all observations on such points should be kept in strict subordination to the primary interest of geographical science.

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A few months after Lessar's return from Afghanistan, he set out again from Askabad on a survey of the Turcoman region, and arrived at Merv on the 7th of September 1882. The chiefs received him with the greatest cordiality. Proceeding south afterwards, he made his way to Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk, in Khiva, and returned to the Akhal Tekke oasis by a short cut across the desert, arriving at Askabad on the 7th of October 1882. He states that he was everywhere well received, and he found in all parts of the desert perfect tranquillity prevailing—small caravans, with one or two men accompanying them, being able to traverse the country in safety. Occasional attacks had been made on caravans by Sarik and Merv Turcomans, but such instances were very few, and were probably due to the criminal element of the tribes, which, under any administration, would find means to indulge in crime.

BOOK IV.

The Russians beyond the Caspian.

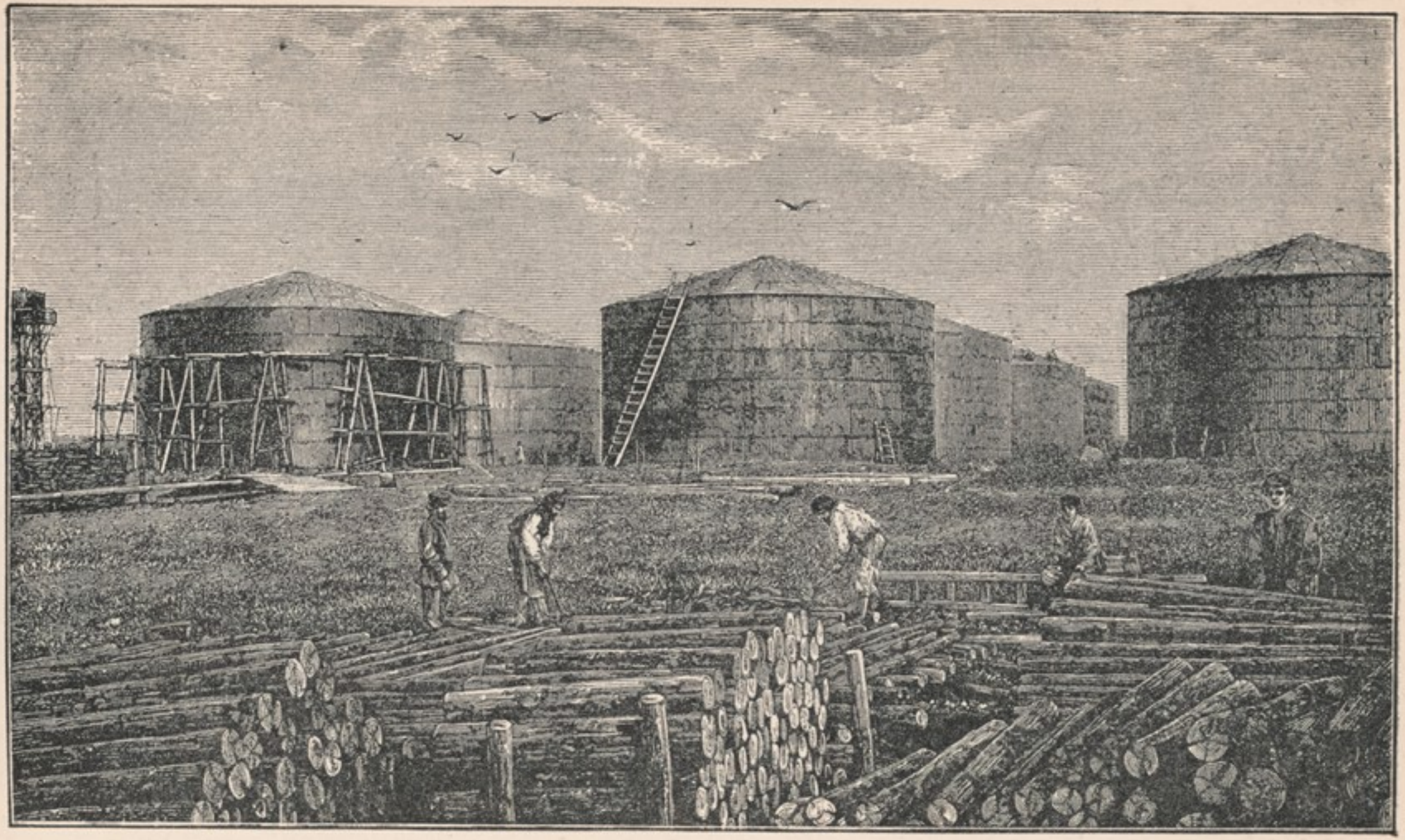
Chapter I.—The Political Bearings of Baku Oil.

Chapter II.—Rapid Growth of Russia's Naval Power in the Caspian.

Chapter III.—The Decay of Ashoorada and the growing grasp on Gez.

Chapter IV.—The Russian Railway to Herat and India.

Chapter V.—Russian Generals on the Invasion of India.



PETROLEUM RESERVOIRS AT TSARITZIN

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

THE POLITICAL BEARINGS OF BAKU OIL.

The amazing development of the petroleum region in Cis-Caspian Asia.—Oil-burning locomotives and steamers.—An oil pipe, 560 miles long, across the Caucasus.—Possibilities of Baku petroleum production.—Naphtha, where found in Russia.—Richness of the Caspian deposits.—A hill of oil worth £35,000,000 sterling.—History of the petroleum industry in Russia.—The monopoly period.—Value of oil-producing lands in the Caucasus. — Enormous cost of transport.—Description of Baku before Ludwig Nobel revolutionised the oil industry.—Formation of the company of Nobel Brothers.—Capital sunk in the enterprise; wonderful results.—Statistics of the Russian oil trade.—An inventor wanted to utilize the waste products.—Baku to-day; its sixty miles of pipes and twenty-five piers.—Trade with Persia.—Conveyance of oil in cars across the Caucasus to the European market.—The pipe schemes.—Oil inflating Batoum.—French interest in the oil trade.—Project to send Baku oil to India.—Extraordinary richness of the oil region.—Smallness of area developed.—O'Donovan's account of Baku.—Probability that Baku will supply with fuel and light the railroads of Persia and Central Asia, and the cities of Khorassan and Afghanistan.—Baku oil in the bazaars of India.

"Baku contains nothing of interest."—"A Journey through the Caucasus and Persia," by AUGUSTUS MOUNSEY, F.R.G.S., Second Secretary to Her Majesty's Embassy at Vienna, p. 329, 1872.

"Thanks to the enormous deposits of petroleum at Baku, Russia could light all the world, lubricate all the world, and paint all the world; she has the cheapest illuminating oil, the cheapest and best lubricating oil, and she will some day have the cheapest paint."—Lecture by LUDWIG NOBEL, St. Petersburg, October 27th, 1882.

ALTOGETHER unnoticed by Europe, an enormous development has taken place of the petroleum trade of Russia during the last few years.* Thanks to the establishment of a vast system of transport by Ludwig Nobel, the Baku oil king, Russia has been able not only to expel American kerosine almost entirely from her own market, where it had long enjoyed a monopoly, but also to prepare to drive it out of the Mediterranean. In 1872, the production of petroleum in Baku amounted to 212,000 barrels; in 1881, the production exceeded 4,000,000 barrels, or over 160,000,000 gallons. All the steamers on the Caspian now burn oil for fuel; the locomotives on the Transcaspian railway, and on the Transcaucasian railway, are heated by oil; and the Russian Government is endeavouring to promote throughout the Caucasus the use of oil-stoves for domestic purposes, instead of the wood-stoves common to Russia.

The development of the Baku oil region has led to the addition of quite a fleet of new steamers to the Russian Marine in the Caspian, the rolling stock of the South

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* The information in this chapter is the result of notes taken by the author during a visit to the Moscow National Exhibition of 1882, together with matter extracted from a mass of Russian newspaper cuttings on the subject, extending over a period of several years. The author has also availed himself of an excellent report furnished by Vice-Consul Peacock, at Batoum, the accuracy of whose statements and statistics he has been able to confirm, by comparing them with Russian official returns and the letters of Russian newspaper correspondents on the spot.—M.

Russian lines has been increased by over a thousand tank-cars to convey the oil into the interior of Russia, and plans are being mooted for constructing a pipe, 560 miles long, across the Caucasus from Baku to Batoum, to enable the liquid to be pumped from the wells of the Caspian littoral into Black Sea steamers, specially constructed to convey it in huge cisterns to the markets of Europe. Commercially, the extension of the Russian petroleum trade is of great interest to England, since the oil is an excellent heating agent, and its producers entertain hopes of expelling Newcastle coal from the Black Sea and Mediterranean, as well as American kerosine. Politically, the matter is of still greater importance to the British public, because the formation of a huge and prosperous industrial province on the shores of the Caspian strengthens Russian power in a quarter whence she can menace the independence of Persia, one of our best markets in the East, the security of Asia Minor, through which our overland railway to India will some day run, and, finally, our supremacy in India itself—the best and easiest road to our Asiatic empire running from the Caspian, through Herat and Candahar, to the Indus. "The potential productiveness of the Baku oil region is incomparably superior to that of Pennsylvania," declared Professor Mendelaieff, the eminent Russian scientist, a short time ago, after a visit to the Caspian.* "Comparing the results achieved in the two countries on one side, and the average depth

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* "The Petroleum Industry in Pennsylvania and in the Caucasus" ("Neftyanaya promeeshlennost v Pennsylvanie e na Kavkazai"), St. Petersburg, 1882. Professor Mendelaieff was awarded the Davey medal for scientific research by the Royal Society, 1882.—M.

and total number of wells on the other, it may be justly stated that the natural petroleum riches of Baku, as far as our knowledge goes, have no parallel in the world." Such is the opinion expressed by Mr. Peacock, our vice-consul at Batoum, in a consular trade report published in 1882.

Petroleum, or naphtha (*neft*) as the Russians term it, exists in many parts of the Russian Empire. It abounds in a number of places in the middle course of the Volga, large deposits have been discovered in the Kouban region, close to the sea of Azoff, and natural petroleum wells may be met sporadically scattered over the whole of the Caucasus. Recently, extensive deposits have been found in various parts of Turkestan, particularly in Ferghana, where government attempts have been made to work them. Petroleum, however, exists in its greatest abundance on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Baku, the principal locality, may be said to be one vast expanse of petroleum; in that region, the crust of the earth needs only pricking for gas and oil to flow forth. There is good reason for believing that the Caspian itself rests upon oil strata between Baku and Krasnovodsk, as the petroleum deposits are found in equal abundance on the eastern and western sides of the sea, and in the shallow water between the two points above mentioned naphtha gas flows up to the top of the surface, and may easily be ignited.* The island of

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* "Soon after sunset the Governor of Baku put his barge at my disposal, and I was rowed out of the harbour to a small bay about a mile to the south, where the smooth surface of the sea was rippled by several eddies like diminutive whirlpools. A lighted wisp of straw, of which we had a supply in the boat, was cast into each eddy, and at once ignited the petroleum or naphtha, which, after rising through fourteen feet of salt water burnt as

Tcheleken, near Krasnovodsk, has been famous for ages as a veritable island of oil. Inland of Krasnovodsk some 100 miles or so, has been recently discovered, in the newly incorporated Turcoman territory, an enormous hill of petroleum and ozokerit, known as "The Naphtha Hill." According to an official estimate, the value of the deposits in this spot, concentrated in a very small area, exceeds £35,000,000 sterling.

But it is chiefly with Baku that we propose to deal. Peter the Great acquired the province by conquest from Persia in 1723, and, foreseeing the advantage Russia would some day derive from its immense resources, gave special instructions for extracting the oil and exporting it up the Volga to Russia. In 1735, the Empress Anne Yoannovna ceded the country to Persia again, but Russia recovered it in 1806, and converted the Khanate into a Crown domain in 1813. From this period is usually reckoned the rise of the petroleum trade, although for a long period the production was limited to the local wants and a small export to Persia. In the archives at Tiflis are the drawings of an apparatus invented in 1823 by the Russian peasant, Panin Vasilieff Dubinin, for refining the petroleum, showing that kerosine was thought of in the Caspian long before its use became general in more civilised parts of the world.

From 1813 to 1872 the extraction of petroleum was a monopoly, farmed out to a merchant named Meerzoeff,

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brilliantly as a cauldron of tar. From one eddy we rowed to another and fired the sea in a dozen places. The effect of this union of two such opposite elements—a union which, were there no wind, would never be dissolved—was strikingly beautiful and strange, especially as, on the night in question, there was not a breath of air to disturb its duration."—"A Journey through the Caucasus and Persia," p. 331.

who possessed only one oil-works, and charged a heavy price for the article. During the period from 1832 to 1850, the average production was a million gallons of crude petroleum a year. From 1850 to 1863, the production was about 2,500,000 gallons a year. In 1859 occurred a memorable event in the oil trade. Captain Drake, in driving an artesian well in Pennsylvania, accidentally "struck oil," and gave rise in America to the system of boring for petroleum. Meerzoeff made no attempt to avail himself of this discovery, and, although Baku had a larger and cheaper supply than Pennsylvania, America soon secured the monopoly, not only of the markets of Europe, but of Russia also.

In 1862 the production in Russia of crude petroleum was 2,000,000 gallons; in the same year the output of America exceeded 100,000,000 gallons, or fifty times that of Russia.

The spectacle of the United States flooding Russia with kerosine, and blighting the tallow trade, one of the staples of the country, was not viewed with much satisfaction by the Government, and, after giving the monopoly system every chance, the authorities finally abolished it in 1872.

An estimate then made of the extent of the Baku petroleum region, computed the total area at upwards of 1,200 square miles, or eight times the size of the Isle of Wight. A large proportion of the area belonged to the Crown; of this, 270 acres of the most valuable petroleum land were granted to a number of high officials as a token of imperial favour. General Lazareff, who so successfully stormed Kars in 1878, received among other rewards ten acres of petroleum ground, estimated as being worth several thousand pounds. Of the

remaining land, some was sold outright, and the rest reserved for leasehold purposes. The former comprised 680 *desiatines*, or 1,836 acres, and was sold by public auction to different parties for the sum of 2,980,307 roubles, or above £300,000 at the rate of exchange in 1872. For some of the plots as much as £3,500 an acre was paid. The yearly rent fixed for the leased lands was 10 roubles the *desiatine*, or about 7s. 6d. per acre. Some of the lands were supposed to be almost worthless at the time, but the contrary has since proved to be the case, and they now form a subject of wild speculation among numerous needy leaseholders, which is very detrimental to legitimate business.

During the period of fifty-nine years' monopoly, from 1813 to 1872, the petroleum had been chiefly extracted from shallow pits. The moment the industry was thrown open to free competition, however, drilling commenced, and in the first year of the new operations, 1873, the production rose from 212,000 barrels to half a million. In 1874 the output reached 620,000 barrels, and in 1875 upwards of 850,000 barrels.

A new problem now presented itself to the Russian public. The well-borers of Baku could bring plenty of oil to the surface, but they could not convey it cheaply to the markets. The Russians have a proverb that "Beyond the sea a chicken may be bought for a farthing, but it costs a pound to bring it home." This saying was well illustrated in the case of Baku oil: it cost little or nothing to bring it to the surface, but by the time it had been conveyed to the interior of Russia the enormous transport charges had so much enhanced the price of it, that it could not possibly compete with the cheaper article brought across the Atlantic from America.

The mode of dealing with the oil in those days was as follows:—The petroleum, on being "struck," was allowed to flow into open reservoirs, in which men stood up to their knees in the liquid, and ladled it into carts. The oil was then conveyed a distance of eight or nine miles to the refineries, situated in the "black town" of Baku, close to the water-side, and, after being converted into kerosine, was placed in barrels (manufactured at such a heavy cost on the Volga, that it was often cheaper to use the American article), and transported by steamer to the shallows at the mouth of the Volga. There the barrels were transferred to other steamers, of smaller draught, and conveyed up the river to Tsaritzin. At this point they were placed in carts and carried to the railway station, whence they were despatched to various parts of Russia at exorbitant rates. In 1875 Mr. Arthur Arnold, M.P., paid a visit to Baku, and in the account of his travels * he gives an interesting description of the oil industry, just before the revolution was effected in the trade by Mr. Nobel, to which we shall presently refer. "All day long," he says, "petroleum rolls into Baku in carts of the most curious pattern imaginable. A Neapolitan single-horse, two-wheeled carriage for fifteen people, is unique, but it is commonplace in comparison with an oil-cart of Baku. Few men would have the courage to import a Baku oil-cart, and drive it, even for a very high wager, through Regent Street or Pall Mall. Where is the man who would dare to pose himself there, perched and caged in a little railed cart, big enough to hold one barrel of

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* "Through Persia by Caravan," London, 1877, vol. i. pp. 128–31.

petroleum, and lifted so high on wheels seven feet in diameter, that another huge tub can be slung beneath the axle, the whole thing being painted with all the colours of the rainbow and creaking loudly as it is drawn by a diminutive horse, the back of which is hardly up to a level with the axle? Yet the *exploiteurs* say that already they pay collectively not much less than £100,000 a year for the cartage of oil in carriages of this sort. They were eager to show us the oil wells, and hopeful, as they are much in want of capital, that we should send them some meek and moneyed Englishmen. We set out to visit these mines of liquid wealth in a dust-storm, with horses so active that we might suppose they too were fed with naphtha. In the outskirts of Baku, where we saw a scorpion for the first time, the country is all dust and desolation—a desert in which every one with an original turn of mind may make his own road. For two or three miles along the shore of the bay, the many buildings in which the petroleum is refined by itself as fuel, pour forth dense smoke, and at eight miles from the town are the springs. The average depth at which the oil is touched seems to be about 150 feet. The wells are for the most part nine inches to a foot in diameter. From the first well we visited, a small steam-engine, with most primitive gear, was lifting about 450,000 pounds' weight of petroleum a day. The oil is of a greenish colour, and, as it is drawn from the earth, is emptied into a square pit dug in the surface soil, from whence men take it in buckets and pour it into skins or barrels, the charge at the wells being at the rate of 1½d. per fifty pounds' weight of oil. At the works of the Kalafy Company, an Armenian concern, when their well was first opened, the petroleum

burst up in a fountain nine feet in diameter, a part of which rose forty feet in the air. At all the wells, the oil is now raised in circular tubes about nine feet long, and as many inches in diameter, with a valve at the lower end which opens on touching the ground and closes when the tube is lifted. This cylinder is lowered empty and raised again when filled with oil in less than two minutes. A man pulls the full tube towards a tub, into which its contents are poured, and through a hole in the tub the oil runs into the pit, from which the skins and barrels are filled. We are assured that the Baku petroleum is of better quality than the oil of Pennsylvania, and that it is less dangerous, because its flashing point of temperature is from thirty to forty degrees higher than that of the American product."

At that period, 1875, there was an engineering establishment on the bank of the river Neva, belonging to "Nobel Brothers," Swedes by origin, who had been brought to Russia by their father when boys. One of these, Ludwig Nobel, conceived the idea of organizing a thorough system of transport on a large scale, which should convey the oil from the place of production direct almost to the consumer. In lieu of the carts, he proposed carrying the oil, by means of pipes, from iron reservoirs at the wells to iron reservoirs at the refineries. Instead of barrelling the refined fluid, he suggested it should be pumped into "floating cisterns," or steamers supplied with tanks, which should convey it direct to Tsaritzin; and that, on reaching this point, it should be pumped into reservoirs, and thence into tank-cars, and in this manner transported by railway to its destination. On paper the scheme looked feasible

enough, but when he sought to put it into practice he found himself confronted by obstacles all the way along the line. The oil producers, in the first place, refused to co-operate in any shape or form, or even to lay down the piping from the wells to the sea coast. The Caucasus and Mercury Company refused to fit their steamers with tanks, or to allow him to do so, and the Griaze-Tsaritzin Railway Company declined to add any tank-cars to their rolling stock, although tempted by a very substantial guarantee.

There was nothing to be done, therefore, but let the matter drop, unless he took the entire scheme into his own hands. He decided upon the latter course, in spite of the onerous character of the undertaking. To thoroughly carry out his project required a capital of 10,000,000 roubles, or, at the rate of exchange prevalent at the time, upwards of £1,380,000 sterling. The cost of the sea-going steamers was estimated at £27,500 apiece; of the river steamers, £13,750; of the iron reservoirs at the wells, refineries, and railway termini, £700 to £1,400; and the tank-cars or travelling railway cisterns, £200 apiece.

Disregarding the doubts expressed concerning his sanity, and the jeers and the sneers cast at him on all sides, Ludwig Nobel courageously set to work to carry out this gigantic scheme. Unlike most promoters of enterprises in Russia, he was encouraged by no subsidy from the State, nor did he seek in any way to protect his costly operations by means of a concession. Subscribing a deal of the money himself, and obtaining the rest of the funds needed to make a start from capitalists, who co-operated with him afterwards in forming the joint-stock concern, "The Petroleum Producing Com-

pany of the Brothers Nobel,"* he ordered in Russia a score of steamers for the Volga, another score in Sweden for the Caspian, and several hundred tank-cars from various foreign and native firms. Several years were spent in establishing the organization, but not a moment was wasted in bringing into use each portion of the scheme as soon as it was complete; and at the present moment the organization is in full working order and monopolizes the greater part of the transport, although the whole of Ludwig Nobel's plans are still far from being realized. The principal point, however, has already been attained. The organization is an acknowledged success, and all the old fears of failure have been scattered to the winds. The very men who openly expressed their disdain of the "lunatic Nobel," and did their utmost to thwart him, are now either lauding him to the skies, or else clamouring against him for having the "monopoly" of the transport trade, and rendering himself allegedly thereby a millionaire at others' expense.

Nobel Brothers now control nearly a dozen sea-going oil-carrying steamers in the Caspian, and thirty or so on the river Volga. They further charter thirty newly constructed oil-carrying steam schooners to convey their own naphtha refuse across the Caspian to the Volga, the Persian ports, and other points. At Baku as

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* The paid-up capital of the company amounts to 8,000,000 roubles. The sum of 1,000,000 roubles was paid away as a dividend in 1881. I may here take the opportunity of mentioning that I know nothing of Nobel personally. My account of his achievements is derived from a variety of sources, private as well as public, and is, I believe, an impartial record of what he has done.—M.

well as at Tsaritzin they possess enormous reservoirs; on the railways they run 1,400 oil-cars; and at St. Petersburg and many other places they own large railway stations specially constructed for the reception and distribution of oil.

Of the 60,000,000 gallons of kerosine annually distilled from petroleum at Baku, 20,000,000, or one-third, are produced by Nobel Brothers at their immense refinery, and transported in their own steamers and tank-cars to the Russian markets. Nearly the whole of the export oil trade of Baku is in their hands, and they have even commenced to retaliate upon the United States by forwarding consignments of lubricating oil to the markets of America. In 1873 nearly 80 per cent. of the kerosine used in Russia was imported from the United States; the quantity last year was under 12 per cent. To a certain extent this result has been secured by the abolition in 1877 of an excise duty, which the Russian Government had very absurdly imposed on home-refined petroleum when it abolished the monopoly in 1872. The American article has, further, all along been handicapped by a duty of 55 copecks metallic per pood, or between 3d. and 4d. per gallon.

The effect of the establishment of a cheap and expeditious system of transport on the oil production of Baku is observable from the following statistics of the growth of the industry:—

Production of Crude Petroleum.

1875	850,000	barrels	or	34,000,000	gallons.
1876	1,400,000	,,	,,	56,000,000	,,
1877	2,000,000	,,	,,	80,000,000	,,
1878	2,500,000	,,	,,	100,000,000	,,

1879 1880 1881	From 3,000,000 barrels to 4,000,000 yearly,	or	From 120,000,000 gallons to 160,000,000 gallons.
1882	5,000,000 barrels	or	200,000,000 ,,

Besides this, enormous quantities have been wasted at the mouth of the wells for want of adequate means of tankage and transport.

In Pennsylvania the production in 1862 was 20,000,000 poods, or 100,000,000 gallons. In 1881 the production was 290,000,000 poods, or 1,450,000,000 gallons, being in the latter year nine times the Russian output of oil. But Russia could all along have produced more had she, like America, possessed abundant means of transport. "Baku could easily, and without effort, produce 1,500,000,000 gallons of petroleum a year," said Nobel, in a lecture a short time ago, "but it is perfectly useless for her to do so if she cannot convey it cheaply to the market." For years past Baku has wasted quite as much petroleum as she has sent away.

In 1873, when drilling for oil first commenced at Baku, seventeen wells were sunk. The total number now exceeds 375, and new ones are being added at the rate of sixty or seventy a year. In 1879, when there were 300 wells in existence, it was estimated that the amount expended in drilling them had been 9,000,000 roubles, or £900,000. The average cost of drilling a well is 3,000 roubles. The average depth of borings is 350 feet; the deepest well, 637 feet, with a diameter of from 10 to 14 inches. The number of unproductive wells from natural causes is comparatively small; but a great many wells are abandoned for want of means or skill to continue the boring, or still more frequently on account of the extremely low price of crude pretroleum.

Flowing wells yielding from 2,000 to 4,000 barrels * daily, and pumping wells yielding from 300 to 600 barrels daily, are of common occurrence. Sometimes wells are sunk yielding 10,000 barrels a day.

In consequence of this abundance of crude petroleum, the price, which in the old monopoly days of 1872 stood at 45 copecks a pood, or about 8s. per barrel, has fallen now to 2 copecks a pood, or about 4d. per barrel of 40 gallons. As a result of this state of things immense quantities of petroleum are wasting on the surface for want of a buyer.

The stagnation in the disposal of the stocks of naphtha is likely to continue for some time, in spite of the refineries that are springing up everywhere at Baku, at Lenkoran, at Batoum, and even at Warsaw and Marseilles, to utilize the raw product. At present there are 195 refineries, with nearly 500 stills, in operation at Baku. These are capable of turning out 300,000 gallons of refined petroleum *per diem*. In 1881, upwards of 58,000,000 gallons of kerosine were exported from Baku, or about one-fifth of the quantity exported the same year from Pennsylvania (7,184,917 barrels).

From 1870 to 1879 the price of kerosine at Baku fluctuated between 60 copecks and 4 roubles † per pood, or between 3d. and 1s. 8d. per gallon. The violent fluctuations of this period had their counterpart in America, where the price of kerosine varied from 10d. to 1d. per gallon. It is now occasionally sold below the average cost of production; kerosine having been

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* A barrel contains eight poods or forty gallons of oil; five gallons make a pood.—M.

† 100 copecks make a rouble = 2s.—M.

recently sold and delivered at Baku (March 1883) for a penny a gallon.

According to Ludwig Nobel, the price of kerosine, delivered at the railway at Tsaritzin, is 70 copecks the pood. To compete decisively with America its price at that point must be still further lowered by 25 copecks the pood. At the Great Fair at Nijni Novgorod in 1882 Baku kerosine fetched from 1 rouble 10 copecks to 1 rouble 20 copecks the pood.* In other words, Baku petroleum refiners charged a penny a gallon for their kerosine delivered at Baku, and sixpence delivered at Nijni Novgorod; the extra fivepence per gallon in the latter instance entirely representing the heavy cost of transport thither.

Crude petroleum, selling at 2 copecks the pood at Baku in 1882, fetched 28 copecks the pood at the Great Fair; the carriage thither enhancing its cost fourteen times. The same was the case with petroleum refuse.

The ordinary gravity of Baku kerosine is 0·819, fire test 30° C. The gravity of crude petroleum varies from 0·780 to 0·890. In the average it yields 33 per cent. of kerosine. In this respect it is inferior to American petroleum, which yields 70 per cent. of kerosine.

On the other hand, it produces lubricating oil which has no superior in the world. Last year Nobel Brothers exported 1,000,000 gallons of this article, some of it going across the Atlantic to America.

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* The retail prices in St. Petersburg at the time were: American kerosine, best sort, 3 roubles a pood; second sort, 2 roubles 80 copecks; and Russian kerosine from 2 roubles to 1 rouble 70 copecks the pood; or 1s. 3d. to 1s. 1d. the gallon for the former, and 10d. to 8d. for the latter.—M.

Gas is obtainable in unlimited quantities, and has lately been utilized by Nobel Brothers, who have the concession for forty-nine years for lighting Baku with it, and have already established 2,000 lights.

There is very little doubt that it will in time occupy a very important place in the economy of industrial operations. The refuse is used to heat the furnaces of the steamers of the Caspian marine and the locomotives on the railways east and west of the sea. The Caucasian Government has done its utmost to induce the population of the Caucasus to use the refuse in preference to wood, so as to save the forests of the country, which were being cut down at an alarming rate. A stove for burning naphtha refuse in houses, invented by Major Rotcheff, has been adopted in most of the Government buildings in Daghestan. Twenty-five or thirty poods of refuse are reckoned to produce as much heat as a cubic fathom of wood, or 100 poods of coal.

No demand at all exists for benzine, which, in consequence, is barbarously destroyed. A product between kerosine and lubricating oil is also thrown away in immense quantities for want of a suitable lamp to burn it. Aniline dyes and indigo are now being made from naphtha, and a large field exists in Baku for the manufacture of paint. Should an invention now being tested at Baku for making candles out of kerosine be practicable, a fresh avenue will be opened up for the Russian petroleum industry. According to recent advices the invention has proved a complete success. Nobel Brothers are also stated to have been equally fortunate in their experiments with the Ditmar process for solidifying oil; some thousands of tons of solid oil being now prepared for export abroad.

The total quantities of the different petroleum products exported from Baku by sea, since 1879, have been as follow :—

	Barrels.	Poods.
In 1879 . .	1,702,200	13,617,600
1880 . .	1,918,700	15,349,600
1881 . .	2,946,000	23,568,000

Of these quantities the amount transported by Nobel Brothers has been as under :—

	Poods.
In 1879 . . .	5,585,324
1880 . . .	9,407,882
1881 . . .	14,833,697

The greater part of the transport trade is thus practically in their hands, and this will be still more the case when all the steamers arrive at Baku they have ordered at Stockholm. Since Ludwig Nobel revolutionised the trade a railway line, ten miles long, with tank-cars, has been constructed to connect Balakhane, the principal group of wells, with Baku; the wells, refineries, and piers have been connected by sixty miles of pipes; several hundred sailing vessels have been specially built to convey the oil; and the Baku harbour has been furnished with twenty-five piers, of which some have been fitted with pipes and pumps to enable tank-steamers to be loaded at the rate of 100 tons an hour. In the one item alone of transport of the oil from the wells to the refineries, the cost of carriage has been reduced from 9 copecks to 2 copecks the pood.

The success of Ludwig Nobel has caused other enterprising capitalists to turn their eyes to Baku, and the monopoly which the firm now possesses will not remain long uncontested. A new transport company was

formed at Moscow in October 1882, and 2,000,000 roubles (£200,000) of capital realized in a few days, for establishing an oil-carrying flotilla on the Volga and conveying petroleum and kerosine in tank-cars to Batoum. The company proposes exporting 12,000,000 poods, or 60,000,000 gallons, of oil products annually from Baku.

The chief drawback to the Russian home trade is the circumstance that, although Baku oil is now transported along every line of railway, and even finds its way from the Volga to the Neva in barges by means of the Tikhvin canal system, the transport has to be suspended for nearly six months out of the twelve, owing to the freezing of the Volga. This circumstance has led the Baku manufacturers to seek markets for their produce elsewhere, to avoid wasting the winter months. One of these markets is Persia, which takes annually :—

	Poods.	Gallons.
Crude Petroleum .	14,492	72,460
Petroleum refuse .	7,990	39,950
Kerosine . . .	8,636	43,180

But this is a very insignificant trade compared with that which Baku trusts to establish, by means of the new Baku-Batoum railway, with the interior of the Caucasus, with the Russian ports of the Black Sea, and finally with the world at large. Before the construction of the Transcaucasian railway, the cost of despatching oil from Baku to Tiflis amounted to 120 copecks the pood. Now the line is completed, the company is bound to convey it thither for 10 or 12 copecks, and to Poti or Batoum for 20 copecks, the rate fixed by the Government being $\frac{1}{4\frac{1}{5}}$ of a copeck per pood per verst. The result of this will be, that Baku

will drive the American oil out of the Caucasian market with ease, even if she still has to struggle a bit in the Black Sea and Mediterranean.

A great drawback to the conveyance of oil across the Caucasus in railway tank-cars, arises from the fact that the railway cannot carry at the utmost more than 8,000,000 poods, or 40,000,000 gallons annually, owing to various causes; among them being the heavy gradients in the forty miles' section between the Michailovsky and Kvirilsky stations on the Tiflis-Batoum line, where the railway has to traverse the Suram Pass at a height of 3,500 feet above the level of the sea, or 2,000 feet above the two points above mentioned.

The locomotives used on the Transcaucasian railway are estimated to be able to convey at a time twenty-two tank-cars, containing 66,000 gallons of oil. On reaching the Michailovsky station, however, the train has to be uncoupled, and only six cars taken over the pass at the time, unless several locomotives are used. According to Gospodin Poletika, an authority on the matter, the transport of an oil-train the 847 versts from Baku to Batoum brings in the Transcaucasian Railway Company, at the rate of $\frac{1}{45}$ copeck per pood per verst, and $1\frac{1}{8}$ copeck per pood for loading and unloading, about 2,640 roubles; while the cost to the company itself of the trains going full and returning empty, reckoning the normal rate on all Russian lines of 1 rouble 90 copecks per verst for the train, is 3,218 roubles. In this manner, if the company is forced to carry the oil at the rate fixed by the Government, it will lose nearly 600 roubles, or £60 per train. As the Government has guaranteed the interest of the railway, it will be compelled to alter this to protect itself from the enor-

mous loss that would otherwise accrue, and thus a modification of the rates is considered inevitable.

This enhancement of the cost of conveyance by rail, together with the very limited quantity which it is estimated the company will be able to carry, has led to the revival of several previously-abandoned schemes for conveying the oil from Baku to the Black Sea, across the Caucasus, in pipes. One of these schemes was fully drawn up by an American capitalist, Mr. H. W. C. Tweedle, in 1878, but fell through from various causes: one being the stipulation that the Government should grant him a concession of a verst of land in blocks, on both sides of the pipe, the whole way from the Caspian to the Black Sea. While surveying the Caucasus in connection with this project, Mr. Tweddle heard of the existence of oil in the Taman peninsula, in the Sea of Azoff, belonging to the Don Cossacks. Proceeding thither, he found abundance of excellent oil, and remained on the spot until October 1882, developing it on behalf of a powerful French company. A quarrel then took place between him and the directors over the despatch of 400,000 gallons of crude petroleum in the steamer "Alfred" to London, and a large sum of money was given him to resign his connection with the concern.

Whether he will again take up his project for running a pipe across the Caucasus remains to be seen. Recently, however, a counter project has been mooted for establishing oil-pipes all the way from Baku to Batoum alongside the railway. An advantage of this scheme would be that no concession of lands along the route would be needed, and it is claimed that the engineering work would be less arduous and costly than in the plan

drawn up by Mr. Tweddle. Its total cost would probably be one million and three-quarters sterling. The adoption of a pipe scheme, of some kind or other, is regarded in Russia as inevitable, in view of the demand that already exists for Baku oil in the Black Sea and Mediterranean. I may remark, in connection with this, that at the Moscow Exhibition last year I saw a complete set of designs for conveying oil in pipes all the way from Baku, across the Caucasus and Cis-Caucasian steppes and up the Volga, to Tsaritzin. I have not seen, however, any recent proposals made for carrying this grandiose project into effect.

Early in 1882, a commission was appointed by the Russian Government for the purpose of formulating regulations with regard to the establishment of refineries, depôts, &c. at Batoum. Of this commission Vice-Consul Peacock reports: "The primary point was that of determining the most suitable locality for the said works. The town lands are not to be employed for it, and it has been proposed to appropriate for this purpose a tract of land outside the town occupying an area of 700 acres, its average distance from this port being about two miles; it touches the railway line, and is sufficiently supplied with water from two streamlets. It was suggested to ask the Imperial Government for an extension of the boundary line of the free port to this tract of land; but the majority, including, without exception, the Baku members, were against it, on the ground that it would be unjust that the refiners at this place should enjoy an undutiable market for building materials, machinery, &c., whilst those at Baku were to be taxed with heavy duties. The discussion, however, was carried on rather for the sake of argument, as none of the

practical operators and sober-minded capitalists believe it probable that refineries ever will be built here, maintaining that reservoirs and depôts connected by pipes with the harbour is all that might safely be organized under present circumstances."

So far, however, from the latter impression being correct, an extensive refinery has recently been established at Batoum, fitted up with the best machinery obtainable in England; and others are projected by Russian capitalists.

The tendency of French speculators to engage in the Caucasian oil trade is likely to have an important effect on the development of the industry. A French company is now engaged boring for oil in a number of new districts along the Baku-Tiflis line. M. Freycinet, brother of the late Minister for Foreign Affairs, has a large stake in the company working the deposits in the Taman peninsula. A third company, with a very extensive capital, has recently erected refineries at Marseilles for extracting kerosine from Baku petroleum. Once means are provided for conveying the petroleum cheaply and in unlimited quantities from Baku to Batoum, there is every probability that the task of transporting it thence in properly-constructed cistern-steamers to the European market will be taken in hand by the capitalists of France. Only quite recently arrangements were made by some Odessa merchants and a French shipping firm for establishing a regular service of steamers, nine in number, between the ports of the Black Sea and Marseilles; and this might be easily developed into some such oil-conveying organization as Ludwig Nobel has founded on the Volga. Already three cistern-steamers run with Baku oil between Poti

and the Black Sea ports, and some thousands of barrels have been conveyed to Trebizond and Constantinople. Nobel Brothers have also shown that their enterprise is keeping pace with events, by despatching an agent to India to arrange for a through service of oil between Baku and Bombay. In this manner a great future unquestionably lies before the petroleum trade of Baku. Remarkable as has been its development during the last few years, it is still altogether in its infancy. The total area of the Baku petroleum region is 1,200 square miles. Of this, not more than half a dozen square miles have been developed.

"All around Baku," writes Mr. O'Donovan, in his graphic account of his adventures east and west of the Caspian,* "all around Baku the ground is sodden with natural issues of naphtha. In some places the earth is converted into a natural asphalte, hard during the cold weather, but into which the foot sinks a couple of inches at midday in summer. Add to this that, owing to the scarcity of water, the streets are moistened with coarse, black, residual naphtha, a treacly fluid which remains after the distillation of the raw petroleum, and termed *astatki* in Russia. It effectually lays the dust during fifteen days. After this period, a thick brown dust lies four or five inches deep in the roadway, over which the numerous *phäetons*, or street carriages, glide so softly and noiselessly that the foot passenger is frequently in danger of being run over. When a north or west wind arises, the air is thick with impalpable marly earth, combined with bitumen. The least glow of sunshine

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* "The Merv Oasis," vol. i. pp. 32–37. London, 1882.

fixes this indelibly in one's clothes. No amount of brushing or washing can remove it. Perhaps I cannot here do better than enter on a short description of the sources of mineral oil lying around Baku, which well merits the title of the 'Oil City' of the East.

"The shores of Baku bay, north of the town, bend towards the east; and some five or six miles distant are the petroleum, or, as they are termed, the naphtha springs of Balakhané and Sulakhané, the former fifteen, the latter eighteen versts from the town. The surrounding district is almost entirely destitute of vegetation, and in its midst are some black-looking brick buildings, interspersed with those curious wooden structures which I have mentioned in describing the approaches to Baku, twenty feet high, and resembling Continental windmills or gigantic sentry-boxes. These latter are the pump or well houses covering the borings for oil, and in which the crude liquid is brought to the surface. The odour of petroleum pervades the entire locality, and the ground is black with waste liquid and natural infiltrations. Boring for naphtha is conducted much in the same manner as that for coal. An iron bit, gouge-shaped, is fitted to a boring bar eight or ten feet in length, which is successively fitted to other lengths as the depth of the piercing increases. This depth varies from fifty to 150 yards, this difference existing even at very short horizontal distances, sometimes of not over forty yards. Layers of sand and rock have to be pierced. It is in the sand that often the greatest difficulties are to be met with. A loose boulder will meet the boring tool, and, displacing itself, leave the passage free. But when the rods are withdrawn to

allow the introduction of the tubes which form the lining of the well, the boulder falls back to its place, and baffles all attempts to continue the orifice. This boulder difficulty is the great terror of those commencing to bore. Sometimes, after a lengthened discharge of light carburetted hydrogen, the naphtha rises to the surface, and even flows over abundantly, occasionally springing fountain-like into the air to a height of eight or ten feet for hours at a time, as in the case of the artesian well. In such cases, the ground around the boring is often flooded to a depth of six inches with the mineral oil, which, to avoid the danger of a conflagration, has to be let off by channels constructed so as to lead out to seaward. Under ordinary circumstances, it has to be drawn up from a considerable depth. The boring is generally ten, or at most eighteen, inches in diameter. A long bucket, or rather a tube, stopped at the bottom, and fifteen feet in length, is lowered into the well, and drawn up full of crude petroleum—fifty gallons at a time. This, which is a blue-pink transparent liquid, is poured into a rudely-constructed plank-lined trough at the door of the well-house, whence it flows by an equally rude channel to the distillery. The distillation is conducted at a temperature commencing with 140 degrees—much lower, I am told, than the first boiling point of that from Pennsylvania. When no more oil comes over at this heat, the result is withdrawn, and the temperature increased by ten degrees. This second result is also laid aside, and, the heat being again increased, a third distillation is carried on until no further easily-evaporated liquid remains. This last is the best quality of petroleum for lamps. That which preceded it is the second quality; and the first, or highly volatile liquid, is either thrown

away, or mixed with the best and second-best as an adulteration. The thick dark-brown treacly fluid remaining after distillation is termed *astatki*,* and is that used for the irrigation of the streets. The distilled petroleum, if used in lamps, would quickly clog the wick with a carbonaceous deposit. With a view to obviating this, previous to being offered for sale it is placed in a reservoir, within which revolves a large paddle-wheel. Sulphuric acid is at first added, and, after being allowed to settle, the clear top liquor is drawn off, and similarly treated with caustic potash. After this, it is ready for sale. Up to the present, the residues, after the acid and potash treatments, have not been utilised. I have no doubt that valuable products will ultimately be derived from them. With the *astatki*, or remnant after the first distillation, the case is different. For years past this has been the only fuel used on board the war-ships and mercantile steamers of the Caspian. At Baku its price is only nominal, vast quantities being poured into the sea for lack of stowing space or demand. It is used in cooking apparatus, and for the production of gas for lighting purposes. In the latter case it is allowed to trickle slowly into retorts raised to a dull-red heat, pure gas with little graphite being the result. Weight for weight, this waste product gives four times as great a volume of gas as ordinary coal. By distillation at a high temperature, and treatment with an alkaline substance, a product is obtained which is used as a substitute for oil in greasing

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* *Astatki* is the ordinary Russian word for refuse or dregs; *neftiani astatki*, or petroleum refuse, is the more correct expression.—M.

machinery. The island of Tcheleken, not far from Krasnovodsk, teems with the precious liquid. The seaward cliffs are black with its streams flowing idly into the sea; and a natural paraffin, or 'mineral wax,' is found abundantly in the island, and in the low hills a hundred versts east of Krasnovodsk. All round Baku the ground is full of naphtha. In hundreds of places it exhales from the ground, and burns freely when a light is applied. Only a couple of months before my visit its volatile products produced a remarkable effect a few miles south of Baku. A large cliff fronting the sea was tumbled over as by an earthquake shock, and, as I saw myself, huge boulders and weighty ship's boilers were thrown a hundred yards. In some places I have seen fifty or sixty furnaces of burning lime, the flame used being solely that of the carburetted hydrogen issuing naturally from fissures in the earth."

All manner of possibilities are gathered about busy Baku. The oil industry has already galvanized the Caucasus, and is laying the foundations of Russia's commercial power in the Caspian. The petroleum region lies midway on the great natural transit route between the East and West. It affords fuel for the Caspian steamers, fuel for the Caucasian railroads, fuel for the steamers in the Black Sea. From its ample store, inexhaustible supplies are obtainable for the railways that will some day radiate over the treeless plains of Persia, Armenia, and Central Asia. If ever the Transcaspian railway be extended to India, it will be the Cis- and Trans-Caspian petroleum deposits that will supply fuel for the locomotives, fuel for the Russian towns and forts *en route*, and fuel for the fuel-starved inhabitants of Khorassan and Afghanistan. Baku oil will warm the

chilly stone houses of the Afghans; it will illuminate the cities of Herat, Candahar, Ghuzni, and Cabul; and, conveyed to India in tank-cars or cistern-steamers, it will become a commodity in the bazaars of Delhi and Allahabad, Calcutta and Madras.

CHAPTER II.

RAPID GROWTH OF RUSSIA'S NAVAL POWER IN THE CASPIAN.

A lesson lost on Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P.—Swedish steamers on the Neva, bound for Baku.—Effect of Baku oil on the development of Russia's Asiatic communications.—The "Masterly Inactivity" party and the "unforeseen circumstances" that are always upsetting their calculations.——The Caspian marine of to-day.—Vessels composing the Caspian fleet.—The Caucasus and Mercury Company.—Decadence of the gun-boat fleet.—Steamers rising in the Caspian like mushrooms.—The Nobel oil-fleet.—Twelve steamers, 250 feet long, ready to convey troops across the Caspian.—Conveyance of 6,000 soldiers at a trip.—Transport for 12,000 troops ready.—Minor steamboat companies.—Seven thousand vessels entering and clearing Baku in a season.—Growth of the schooner fleet.—Sustained development of the Caspian shipping.—Its bearing on the question of the feasibility of a Russian invasion of India.—Disappearance of Skobeleff's "want-of-transport" obstacle to such an enterprise.—Russia every day becoming better equipped for a conflict in Central Asia.

"I will suppose that Russia has completed those improvements in her communications which we know she persistently contemplates . . . that she has made a convenient way from the southern shore of the Caspian to Herat. . . . We may be assured that the invading army of India, such as we cannot afford to despise, will be no improvised force, no barbarous horde, but truly formidable in numbers, organization, and leadership."—Lecture by Sir Edward Hamley at the United Service Institution.

"Not only does Sir Edward Hamley not represent the actual condition of affairs, but he represents a state of things which could not possibly be brought about except after a long lapse of time, during which we should have ample

opportunity of deciding on our course of action. . . . Russia cannot certainly be said to have completed 'those improvements in her communications' which she, without doubt, contemplates."—Comment on Sir Edward Hamley's lecture by Major E. BARING, "Memorandum against the Retention of Candahar," October 7th, 1880.

MR. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN, M.P., during his sojourn at St. Petersburg, in the autumn of 1882, can hardly have failed seeing while taking his walks along the Neva quay, near the British Embassy, two or three large steamers of peculiar construction lying in the river; and in his journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow, it is very improbable that his fellow-travellers omitted to point out to him a new side-station, with a number of oil-trucks at the platform, two or three miles distant from the Russian capital. The connection between those casual steamers and oil-trucks and the Central Asian Question may seem very remote, and yet before we have finished unfolding our facts the reader will see what lessons both contained for the President of the Board of Trade, although for want of an elucidator they were probably lost upon him. These vessels, 250 feet long, lying in the stream, were Swedish steamers bound for the Caspian Sea; the oil-trucks contained petroleum brought from it. All unnoticed by Russian and English writers, and not referred to even by Russian official statisticians, Russia has acquired within the last three years a powerful mercantile marine in the Caspian, and in this surprisingly short time, without any assistance or impulse on the part of the Government itself, one of the problems connected with a Russian invasion of India has been definitely solved.

The cause of this development is oil, as already pointed out. The opening up of Russia's petroleum resources is rendering her the great industrial power of the Caspian

region. It is equipping her for a conflict with England on the confines of India. It is dwarfing Persia into a Khanate. Thanks to the cheap and abundant oil-fuel of Baku, Russia has been encouraged to join the Caspian and the Black Sea by a railway, and to project a line from Transcaspia to India. Whether that line be ever constructed or not—about the feasibility of the undertaking there can be no two opinions—Baku will always be able to point with pride to the fact that she has spontaneously given Russia a fleet of transports, altogether transcending the Government Caspian marine, and completely throwing into the shade that Aral Flotilla which has provoked in its time so much uneasiness on the part of English statesmen and strategists.

The establishment of this transport fleet is one of those "unforeseen circumstances" which are upsetting the theories of the Quietist school, and even leaving behind the pessimist predictions of the alarmist party of Central Asian writers in this country. The literature of the Central Asian Question may be searched in vain for any idea ten years ago that Russia would place Herat under her strategic control by spanning the Caucasus with a railway, and running on the line on the opposite side of the Caspian to her Turcoman outposts. In the same manner it was never foreseen that without any effort upon the part of the Government itself* Russia would

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* When Skobeleff completed his campaign against Geok Tepé in 1881, the Russian Government seriously thought of adding three troop-transports, each to convey 1,000 men at a trip, to the Caspian fleet, and designs were prepared for this purpose. But the rapid arrival of the large oil-steamers afterwards exposed the unnecessary character of such a measure, and it was quietly shelved.—M.

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CASPIAN SHIPPING AT BAKU.

become suddenly provided with a fleet of steamers, capable of ferrying the largest army across the Caspian to Central Asia.

The Caspian marine to-day consists of the Government gunboat flotilla, the State-aided fleet of the Caucasus and Mercury Company, and the steamers of private shipping companies and proprietors of the Baku oil-wells. The former is in a very dilapidated condition, consisting largely of vessels constructed between 1850 and 1870, and consequently rapidly becoming obsolete. Three are gunboats—the "Tiulin," "Saikeera," and "Peestchal"; of which the "Tiulin," constructed in 1860, and having a tonnage of 206 tons, a draught of 6 feet, and engines of 40 horse-power, will give an idea of the class. Then follow four armed steamers—the "Nasr-Eddin-Shah," the "Baku," the "Araxes," and "Tchikishlar"; the first being of 537 tons, 160 horse-power, 7 feet draught, and carrying seven small guns. The "Nasr-Eddin-Shah" was built twenty-seven years ago, the "Tchikishlar" was purchased from the Caucasus and Mercury Company in 1880. The rest of the fleet is made up of the transports "Krasnovodsk" and "Geok Tepé" (added last year in place of two vessels broken up), the transport "Aïst," the screw-schooners "Lotsman" and "Tchaika," and the steam-barges "Bweestree," "Provorni," "Neerok," "Baklan," and "Gagara," together with a few sailing barges and cutters. The *personnel* consists of 71 officers and 700 men. Of these not more than two-thirds are at any time employed afloat; the naval programme for 1883 providing for the employment of 8 officers and 200 men on board the gunboat "Saikeera" and the barges "Bweestree" and "Neerok," at the Astrabad station; 25 officers and 200 men

on board the steamers "Nasr-Eddin-Shah," "Baku," "Geok Tepé," "Krasnovodsk," and the barge "Provorni" at Baku; and 8 officers and 58 men on board cutters conducting hydrographical surveys.

As an armed flotilla the Russian Caspian Fleet is altogether insignificant; but Russia, now she has crushed the Turcoman pirates, has really no need of gunboats on an inland sea, on which Persia is not allowed to maintain war-vessels or forts, and which no European Power is likely to ever attempt to invade. Russia can do England and Persia such little harm with her Caspian gunboat flotilla, that it is difficult to understand why such an outcry was raised against it years ago. This fact is recognised by Russia herself, for she has allowed the gunboats to disappear one by one from the fleet, and has made no attempt to replace them. What England has to fear, is not the armed power of the Caspian marine, but its power of transport. This has long been known to Russia. Years before she occupied Krasnovodsk and began the present forward movement towards India from the eastern shore of the Caspian, she set on foot the subsidised Caucasus and Mercury Company for the purpose of creating a transport flotilla. When the series of campaigns for crushing the Turcomans commenced in 1871, it was this company which provided transports for conveying the troops from the Caucasus to Krasnovodsk. Year after year the company's fleet grew, until in 1880 it had practically superseded the Caspian gunboat flotilla. To-day it consists of 19 steamers, of 20,000 tons collective displacement, with a cargo capacity of 327,800 poods, or upwards of 5,600 tons, propelled by engines of 4,000 nominal horse-power. The capital of the company is 4,500,000 roubles, or £450,000; it

receives a subsidy of £34,900 a year; its original shares of 250 roubles have a market value of 450 roubles, and it has paid a dividend for several years of 14 per cent. The mission of the company is now, probably, pretty nearly at an end. The regular gunboat fleet served a useful purpose in the conquest of the Caucasus and the expulsion of Persia from the Caspian; this accomplished, the need for its armaments disappeared, and it at once began to decay. When the subjugation of the Turcomans commenced the Government wanted transport, not guns; the fleet at once displayed its incapacity in this respect, and was pushed aside by the Caucasus and Mercury Company. For eleven years this company has rendered important services; but, like most State-protected concerns, it has not cultivated the good-will of the public, and now that the necessity for yearly transporting large numbers of troops and quantities of stores to the East Caspian coast has greatly diminished with the pacification of the Turcomans, it finds itself face to face with a competition which, if not so severe as it will inevitably some day be, is only so because the demand for transport has for the moment outstripped the supply. Russian speculators reckon that a Caspian sailing-schooner, costing £1,000 or £1,500, pays for itself in three years, while a steamer, costing from £7,000 to £10,000 in Sweden, has been known to cover all its expenses in two seasons in transporting oil. Thanks to this condition of things, steamers have appeared on the Caspian like mushrooms since 1879, and within three years over twenty large ones have been added to the mercantile marine. During this period no Russian report has been published of the growth of the Caspian shipping, nor has any English

Consul in the Caucasus given the matter his attention. The facts we furnish are taken from files of Russian newspapers, and, being admittedly incomplete, underestimate rather than exaggerate the growth of Russia's transport power in the Caspian Sea.

Foremost on the list stands the name of the oil-kings, Nobel Brothers, who arranged two years ago for the construction of twelve large steamers in Sweden, and still earlier for twenty smaller ones on the Volga. Most of the latter have already been placed on the line of oil transit between the springs of Baku and the railway depôt at Tsaritzin, where immense reservoirs exist. Of the former, nine are already at work on the Caspian, and the remaining three will arrive at Baku from Stockholm in the course of the present year. We have not a complete list of the names of the vessels, but eight of the completed steamers bear the titles of "Mahomet," "Tatarin," "Bramah," "Spinoza," "Darwin," "Talmud," "Koran," and "Calmuck." The dimensions of the "Spinoza" will give some idea of the class of steamer composing the fleet. The vessel is of steel, 245 feet long, 27¾ feet broad, and when laden has a draught of 11 feet. The engines are of 120 nominal horse-power, steaming at 10 knots. The oil bunkers hold liquid fuel (naphtha residue) for six days, and the two huge cisterns intended for the conveyance of oil are calculated to carry about 750 tons' weight of oil each trip.

Some of the other vessels vary slightly from these dimensions. The "Koran" and "Talmud" are each 252½ feet long and 28½ feet broad, and carry passengers as well as oil. Being too large to traverse the canal system between the Neva and Volga entire, these

steamers were constructed so as to allow of being cut amidships; on reaching the Ladoga they were divided into two pieces, and the open extremities filled with iron bulkheads, and in this manner were floated through the fifty-four canal locks to the Volga, where, at the mouth, at Astrakhan, they were put together again and sent to the Caspian. Their boilers are heated by petroleum refuse instead of coal, a system which effects an enormous saving of expense and labour, the heating apparatus being as thoroughly under control as a gas jet, and requiring but one man to manipulate it. The apparatus consists of two tubes, about 1 inch in diameter, terminating at the same point in a small oblong box. The petroleum refuse trickles through one tube, and, on emerging, is blown into spray by a jet of steam passing through the other. When ignited, the spray forms a great sheet of flame, which is projected into the hollow of the boiler. The system has the immense advantage of requiring no stoking, no ashes being produced; and by turning down the flame to the required degree the steam can always be kept up to the pressure needed for immediate starting, without the tedious and more or less wasteful process of banking the fires.

The Caspian can be crossed from Baku to Krasnovodsk (for the Transcaspian railway, Askabad, Sarakhs, and Herat), or to Resht, for Teheran, in less than twenty-four hours by these steamers. The journey from Baku to the Bay of Astrabad, for Meshed and Herat, can be accomplished in about thirty-six. Considering that these steamers can easily carry 500 troops apiece, the entire fleet of twelve afford transport for 6,000 troops at a trip. In fair weather this number might, at a pinch, be doubled. In this manner Russia has had

placed at her diposal, by the enterprise of a single firm, transport power surpassing not only that of the Caspian fleet, but of that fleet and of the flotilla of the Caucasus and Mercury Company combined; this too, without any help or instigation on the part of the Russian Government.

But this is not all. Other companies are placing powerful steamers on the Caspian as well as the association directed by Ludwig Nobel. In the summer of 1882 one of these companies despatched to the Caspian the first of a series, called the "Merv," constructed at Chrichton's works, at Abo, in Finland. The "Merv" is the same kind of vessel as the "Spinoza," but somewhat smaller, being 216 feet long, 28 feet broad, and 9 deep; possessing engines of 220 nominal horse-power, steaming at 9 knots; and having cabin accommodation for forty passengers as well as cistern-holds for oil. Shortly after its arrival at Baku it was followed by another steamer for a different firm, the Kokereff Company. This was the "Surakhani," built by Chrichton and Co. of steel, 200 feet long, 28 feet broad, 9 feet deep, steaming at 10½ knots, carrying 500 tons of oil at a trip, and costing to construct £15,000.

While the Finnish and Swedish shipbuilders have thus been sending steamer after steamer to the Caspian, the shipbuilders on the Volga have not been idle. The Drujina Steamboat Company have recently placed on the Caspian a new steamer, the "Sheksna," constructed at Jooravieff's works at Rybinsk; a vessel 215 feet long, 32 feet broad, and 14 feet deep, with engines of 75 nominal horse-power, steaming at 8 knots, and carrying over 500 tons of oil in cisterns and 25 tons in casks. These large steamers, ranging from 215 feet to 250 feet in length,

are not adapted for carrying cargoes up the Volga, owing to the 9-foot shallows at the mouth; hence a number of second-class steamers, about 150 feet in length, have been constructed for that purpose. A specimen of these is the "Pirogoff," recently arriving on the Volga from Sweden, and intended for Nobel Brothers. This vessel is 145 feet long and 26 feet broad, has 8 feet draught, carries engines of 60 nominal horse-power, and can convey 160 tons of oil at a trip. The proprietors of the "Merv" have a similar class of vessel, 154 feet long, 8½ feet deep, and steaming at 8½ knots an hour. The Lebed Steamship Company, an unsubsidised rival of the Caucasus Company, owning nine steamers on the Caspian, and paying a dividend of 12½ per cent. per annum, have also had built in Sweden a vessel of this class 150 feet long, costing £18,000. Klebnikoff, a merchant of Astrakhan, has, at the same time, recently imported from Finland a steamer of nearly the same size, 144 feet long, but with a draught of only 2½ feet. Another merchant, Zayadoff, has had built at Abo a steamer 150 feet long, 28 broad, and 8½ deep, with engines of 340 indicated horse-power, capable of steaming at 8 knots; the cargo capacity exceeding 500 tons.

In excess of these second-class steamers there is a third description, ranging in length from 60 feet to 120 feet, of which at least twenty have been added to the shipping of the Lower Volga since 1876, to carry oil from the big steamers to the railway depots up the river. These three types of steamers are engaged entirely in the oil trade, and have nothing to do with the regular passenger and cargo service on the Volga and Caspian, in which 700 steamers are employed. A number of these latter are of the American saloon

description; the latest, the "Field-Marshal Suvaroff," added in the autumn of 1882, being 280 feet long and 63 feet broad, with engines by John Elder and Co., of Glasgow, and lighted throughout by sixty Edison electric lamps.

According to the local correspondent of the "Moscow Gazette," the rapid growth of shipping at Baku is one of the marvels of the Caucasus. Its progress has out-raced the most sanguine expectations of experts. Writing in November 1882, he said that upwards of 7,000 vessels had entered and cleared Baku since the opening of navigation on the Volga. According to him, the entire marine of the Caspian now exceeds 1,500 vessels, of which the larger proportion belong to the port of Baku.

Of course these 1,500 vessels consist largely of coasting craft and sailing schooners, but every year sees the supersession of many of the latter by schooner-rigged steamers. Writing again from Baku, November 22, 1882, the local correspondent of the "Moscow Gazette" expressed a fear that freights would fall if new schooners continued to arrive in such numbers as during that year, "twenty-five having arrived within the last few days." One of them, the "Kostroma," belonging to the Caspian Company, was described as being the largest steamer-schooner yet placed on the Caspian, being able to convey a cargo of 1,200 tons.

At the present moment orders are being executed at the Motala works in Sweden, the Chrichton works in Finland, the Kama-Votka works on the Kama, and at other places, for forty steel steamers, all to be delivered at Baku before the close of the present year. Such an expansion of shipping is extraordinary, not only when compared

with other Russian seas, where the mercantile marine either does not exist at all or is in a state of stagnation, but even when contrasted with the development of European shipping. And this expansion is not ephemeral, but apparently rests on a substantial basis. Up to 1872 the extraction of oil in the Caucasus was a monopoly; afterwards, when the industry was thrown open, capitalists began to flock in, and since then the trade has advanced by leaps and bounds. What effect the opening of the railway from Baku to the Black Sea will have upon the industry remains to be seen; but, at any rate, the Russian trade that will now flow across the Caucasus to Persia will increase the demand for cargo steamers in the Caspian and add to Russia's power in that sea. And this development of Russia's naval power at a point least expected, and by circumstances altogether unforeseen, is a fact that conveys a lesson to those who are inclined to despise Russia's ability to disturb our power in India. In discussing this subject General Skobeleff based the difficulty of the undertaking upon one point—want of transport. But he spoke of the present, not of the future. Russia is expanding and growing stronger on the rim of her empire every day. In 1878 it took a month for troops to march from Baku to Tiflis to assist in the Turkish war; the journey is now done in sixteen hours. In 1879 General Lazareff experienced great difficulty in ferrying his troops across the Caspian from Baku to Tchikishlar, for the Turcoman war; the oil fleet added since can now collectively convey 10,000 men across the sea at a trip. In 1881, when the Transcaspian railway to Kizil Arvat was opened, oil for the locomotives had to be brought from Baku; deposits to the value of

£35,000,000 have since been unexpectedly discovered on the spot and connected with the railway by a branch line. In the same year the English Government believed, when it evacuated Candahar, that mountain barriers intervened between Askabad and Herat; Lessar's surveys have since demonstrated the existence of a level road, broken only by easy hills at one spot 900 feet high. With such warnings staring us in the face is it too much to anticipate, that as Russia approaches closer to India similar discoveries and similar unforeseen developments will render her better able to menace our supremacy there, and more determined to make India the arena for the solution of the Eastern Question?

KRASNOVODSK.

CHAPTER III.

THE DECAY OF ASHOORADA, AND THE GROWING GRASP ON GEZ.

Ashoorada being washed away.—Its water-supply already gone.—Historical account of its seizure.—Putiatin's mission to Teheran.—The Shah recognises the annexation.—The conquest of the Caspian Turcomans.—How Russia effected a lodgment at Bunder Gez.—Description of Ashoorada.—Hardly the Aden of the Caspian Sea.—Prevalence of fever there.—Visited by numerous English travellers.—The richness of the country sloping down to Astrabad Bay.—Foolish policy of the Persian Government.—Consul Lovett on the resources of the coveted country.—The new movement against India.—Significance of the seizure of Krasnovodsk.—Russian arguments in favour of occupying Gez.—Other points open to seizure.—Importance of Gez to England.—Another market menaced by Russia.—Designs against England's trade with Persia and Central Asia.—Unpatriotic character of English manufacturers and merchants.—The seizure of Gez means the amputation of Khorassan from Persia.—Imperative necessity for English vigilance.—Persia oblivious to her own interests.—Another base for Russian operations against India.

"The Candahar line is the only line by which an organized Russian army could reach Cabul. It is also the direct route to India. The true base for this movement is the Caucasus and the Caspian."—General Sir Frederick Haines, "Minute in Favour of the Retention of Candahar," November 25th, 1880.

"Whenever the Russians march upon Herat we must certainly occupy Can-

dahar, unless we intend to give up India, or allow it to be taken from us."—LORD WOLSELEY, "Memorandum against the Retention of Candahar," November 20th, 1880.

"If the Russians in Central Asia are a reality, if they have possessed themselves of Bokhara, Samarcand, and Tashkent; if they are about to occupy Merv, of which they make no secret; if they have an easy road to Herat, which is a fact well known; and a fortress there before them in a fertile country, held by a people without unity and without leaders,—who that regards the course of Russian progress can doubt that, if we are timid, apathetic, or consenting, a few years will see them in possession of a fortress, which, in their hands, will be rendered impregnable, and will command the road to India with a facility for aggression which may be measured by Ayoub Khan's rapid march to Candahar."—LORD NAPIER OF MAGDALA, "Note in Favour of the Retention of Candahar," October 12th, 1880.

THE Tiflis newspaper "Caspian" is responsible for a statement which is sufficiently probable to merit the attention of the British Government. "Rear-Admiral Svinkin," it says, "the commandant of the dockyard at Baku, has set out in the gunboat 'Baku' for the naval station of Ashoorada, in Astrabad Bay, which, it is understood, is about to be transferred to the river Kara Su, on the Persian frontier." In other words, if this be true, Russia contemplates transferring her southernmost naval station from the island of Ashoorada to a point on the Persian mainland within a couple of hours' easy ride of the important Persian city and strategical centre of Astrabad. Had the news appeared in a St. Petersburg newspaper, it might have been treated as a passing rumour; but the Tiflis press is conducted under conditions which render the dissemination of false intelligence extremely difficult. At the Russian capital, daily newspapers like the "Golos" and "Novoe Vremya" are only examined by the Censor after publication; in the provinces, and particularly at Tiflis, every item is scrutinised before it appears, and no administrative intelligence of the character of the above

is supposed to be passed by the examining officials unless it possesses a basis of truth. In this instance, the announcement of the "Caspian" is supported by statements which have several times appeared in Tiflis and Baku newspapers since 1880, with reference to the transfer of the Russian naval station from the island to the mainland. The island, as a matter of fact, is rapidly disappearing, owing to the inroads of the sea. It has already lost its only supply of water, and has to obtain it in barrels from the Persian coast, at a cost of 3s. 6d. a barrel.* Russia has, consequently, to face the prospect of being washed out of the bay of Astrabad, and away from that portion of the Caspian altogether, if she does not shift the post to the Persian shore.

It might have been thought that after the recent successful pacification of the Turcomans, and the friendly settlement of a border line with Persia from the mouth of the Atrek to the Tekke sands, 140 miles west of Sarakhs, Russia would have been disposed to have let things remain quiet in this portion of Asia for a time. But Russia has always attached great political importance to her naval station at Ashoorada, and one can easily understand her strong disinclination to quit a bay she has treated as her own for more than forty years. Ashoorada has never as yet realized the great expectations that were formed of its aggressive capabilities when Russia seized it from Persia by a *coup de main* in 1841, but events have been working round in its favour of late years, and we think we can successfully demonstrate the reasons that would influence the Russian Government to brave England's displeasure by occupying

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* "Baku Isvestie," January 1883.

a point close to Astrabad, rather than lose all control over the bay.

In 1796, the year that the Empress Catherine the Great breathed her last, the little island of Sara, lying off the border town of Lenkoran, was selected on account of its fine harbour and its proximity to Persia, as the southernmost Russian naval station in the Caspian Sea. In subsequent years the settlement was enlarged and strengthened, but the climate proving deadly, a decision was arrived at in the reign of the Tsar Nicholas to seek another and more powerful *point d'appui* off the Persian coast. War between Russia and Persia, long threatening, broke out in 1826, and at its successful conclusion, two years later, Prince Paskievitch exacted, as one of the terms of the famous Treaty of Turkmantchi, that the Shah should give up all right to maintain vessels of war in the Caspian. This treaty was astutely interpreted by Russia as extending her frontier to the very shores of the Persian coast of the Caspian, as giving her dominion over every drop of water in the sea—even over the land-locked bay of Astrabad, and she early began to look about for a convenient point to establish a border post upon it. Ashoorada, an extension of the peninsula forming the bay of Astrabad, and as much a part of Persia as the Island of Sheppey is a portion of Kent, was pointed out by Russian strategists as well adapted for this purpose. It had a fine harbour, it dominated the Persian coast, and it was totally unoccupied except by a few Yomood Turcoman pirates. Orders were therefore despatched to the Admiral at Sara to send a ship to establish a post there, and, after some preliminary visits in 1837 and 1838, the war-brig

"Araxes" sailed into Astrabad Bay one fine morning in 1841, and took possession of the island.

The act created a great outcry at Teheran. To allay the Shah's apprehensions, Captain Putiatin was sent to the Persian capital from St. Petersburg, and having given some unsatisfactory assurances, proceeded to Ashoorada. With his arrival there in 1842 dates the definite occupation of the island.

The reason assigned by Russia for the occupation of the place was the necessity for putting down piracy in the Caspian. By the Treaty of Turkmantchi she alleged she had become responsible for the security and proper police supervision of the sea. To acquit herself satisfactorily of that responsibility, it was indispensable to establish a naval police-station on the southern coast. In this manner, having stripped Persia of the right of maintaining gunboats on the Caspian to put down piracy along her coast, Russia proceeded to strip her of her finest harbour, on the plea that it was her duty to do what she would not let Persia do herself.

The seizure of the island did not pass unnoticed in England. Our Minister, Sir John McNeill, reported the matter home in 1842, and in 1849 England applied to Russia to withdraw, but in vain. In 1854 Persia demanded officially that the island should be evacuated, but was told compliance with such a demand was impossible, although Russia admitted that Ashoorada was undoubtedly Persian territory. From time to time afterwards Persia protested against the continued occupation of the place; but Russia was in possession of the island, and it would have needed an amount of military strength of which Persia was incapable to have ousted her from it. At last, in 1866, the Shah in one of his journeys

paid a visit to the island, and by recognising the Russian flag there gave practical expression to his abdication of Persia's claim to the place.

The hero of this successful seizure, we may mention, was Count Medem, the Russian envoy at Teheran in 1840. As a Russian writer, Gunaropulo, expressed it in some reminiscences of Ashoorada in the "Cronstadt Vestnik" a short time ago, "He found it necessary, in order to exercise strongly his influence upon the policy and acts of Persia, to have some powerful *point d'appui*, than which a better than the island of Ashoorada could not be found." It is well to remember this when the plea is put forth that Russia annexed Ashoorada solely and expressly for the disinterested purpose of suppressing piracy in the Caspian Sea.

The Russian fleet in the Caspian in those days consisted of wooden vessels. Captain Putiatin was the first to dispel the notion that steamboats were unfitted for the Caspian. After making a preliminary cruise or two in a steamer sent him from the Neva, he appeared one day off the mouth of the Atrek, where was situated the village of Hassan Kuli, the head-quarters of the Caspian pirates. Manning his boats, he ran ashore with fifty or sixty seamen, and burnt all the pirate luggers on the strand, the 1,500 people inhabiting the 300 kibitkas of the settlement making no resistance whatever. The Turcomans, who had never seen a steamboat before, were paralysed by its appearance. They thought it was driven by the Devil, and when Putiatin, whom they dubbed Daria-Beg, or "The Water Chief," demanded a hostage, they gave up at once their leader, Yak Mahmed, and possibly thought to see neither again. Yak Mahmed, however, was not carried off to

Inferno, but to Ashoorada, where he was entrusted with the mundane duty of issuing passes to Turcoman boats visiting the Persian coast. Every time a Turcoman lugger entered Astrabad Bay it had to repair first to Ashoorada and present its pass, which was retained as a sort of paper hostage until its return. When it came back the lugger gave up a ticket it had received for the pass, got in return the pass again, and was allowed to proceed to the Turcoman coast without further impediment. All vessels found voyaging in the Caspian without a pass—for which a yearly payment of eight, ten, or fifteen ducats had to be made—were either heavily fined or scuttled. Further, to discourage the Turcomans carrying arms, luggers entering Astrabad Bay had to deposit their weapons at Ashoorada until their return, paying a small fee for their safe keeping. The Turcomans rebelled strongly against these regulations at the outset, but they were the weaker, and were compelled in course of time to submit.

As soon as piracy began to diminish, Persia's demands for a retrocession of Ashoorada increased in tone. It became necessary for Russia to show some cause for the retention of the naval station, and a pretext was easily fabricated. Count Medem wrote to the Minister of Finance to grant a few subsidies to Russian merchants to encourage them to visit Astrabad. The suggestion was carried out in 1845 by granting pecuniary assistance to the Moscow firm of Elizaroff, Baranoff, Rakizoff & Co., whose agents proceeded in a vessel the next year to Astrabad Bay, and built a Russian factory at Gez. Count Medem then turned round to the Persian Ministers, and coolly told them Russia could not retire from the bay, as there

were Russian lives at Gez, whose safety it was her duty to watch over from the vantage post of Ashoorada.

Persia being thus silenced for a time, the Russians proceeded to extend and improve their settlement on the island. Barracks were constructed, a dockyard established, and a number of magazines filled with stores from Astrakhan and Baku. These operations were varied with fights with the Turcomans, who, by this time, had got over their fear of the "Daria Beg," and even made attacks on the Russian settlement on the islands. Such a one, in 1850—when forty pirate boats entered the bay—resulted in the capture of several Russians with a number of women and children, and inspired such fear of the Turcomans that it was not until 1852 that the Russians undertook a counter-expedition against the pirates. Hassan Kuli was then burnt to the ground, and twenty-eight luggers destroyed. After this the Turcomans remained quiet some years. In 1862 the Caucasus and Mercury Steam Boat Company was established to run steamers between the Caspian ports, touching at Ashoorada once a week or oftener. Five years later Astrakhan ceased to be the head-quarters of the Caspian Fleet, which were removed to Baku (to which the Sara naval establishment had been transferred in 1848); and advantage was taken of this circumstance to send one or two extra vessels to Ashoorada, together with a number of workmen. In the same year Prince Alexis, the Tsar's son, paid a visit to the island, and in 1870 the Grand Duke Constantine, High Admiral of the Fleet.

The island thus seized, settled, and honoured with two Imperial visits, is not a large one. In reality it consists of two islands, Great and Little Ashoorada, but

there is only a passage between the lesser island and the head of the Mian Kaleh, or Potemkin peninsula. In length the larger island measures half a mile or so, and has a breadth of 300 yards. The distance between the mainland and the islands is about four miles. When first occupied by the Russians the surface consisted only of sand and morass; the earth and trees were brought from Potemkin Peninsula, and plantations formed of palm trees, pomegranates, oleanders and cactuses. Only trees or shrubs with surface roots thrive well; as two feet below the culturable surface sand is met with, and a foot or two lower, water. Even with this extra layer of earth the height of Ashoorada above the sea has been only raised to four feet, and to a traveller approaching the place from Astrabad the island looks as though a few inches more of water would completely submerge it. When the wind blows from the west and raises the water, the sandy extremity to the east, and the marshes to the north, are covered by the waves, while the western side suffers from attrition. This wearing away on the western side is cutting it off from the peninsula, and dissolving the island by degrees into a sandy shoal. When the place was occupied in 1842, the commandant's house was built in the middle of the island, nearer the east than the west. Since then the waves have advanced half a mile, swallowing up yearly houses, gardens, and bogs; and to-day the commandant's house stands on the very shore of the western extremity, and suffers every autumn from inundations. From being a mile long the island has been reduced to half that length, and the safety of the dwellers on the remaining portion imperilled. To embank the island would involve an immense outlay, even if it were possible, which is

doubtful; besides, the island is only valuable on account of its harbour, and as this is disappearing also the Russians have no inducement to cling to the fever-stricken spot. Sir Henry Rawlinson once described Ashoorada as destined perhaps to become the Aden of the Caspian,* but this was a misapplication of metaphor. Aden derives all its value from itself, as a permanent fort guarding a permanent highway. Ashoorada, on the other hand, has never been regarded as valuable on its own account, but as a stepping-stone to better things. Captain Putiatin was quite right when he declared, in 1841, that Russia only meant to temporarily occupy the island—in the sense that she meant to quit it some day for the more valuable Persian mainland.

The settlement of Ashoorada is very pretty, consisting of a number of thatched houses, wooden barracks for 300 seamen, and a church. The water round the island is shoal and green in colour, but there is good accommodation for the half-a-dozen war-vessels that usually lie in the roadstead. The climate is almost tropical; the glass in summer rising to forty degrees Réaumer, and even in the winter—the pleasantest time of the year—never sinking below twenty-five. The drawbacks to the place are the deadly monotony of the settlement, the fever from the jungles on the mainland, and the incredible swarms of mosquitoes. Occasionally the fever assumes the character of an epidemic; as, for instance, in 1860, when two-thirds of the seamen fell ill with a atal malady carrying numbers of them off within forty-eight hours of the appearance of the symptoms. While the epidemic lasted, the patrols rarely went out to row

* "England and Russia in the East," p. 137.

about the bay without returning with some of the sailors on board the boat dead or dying. Captain Prince Ookhtimsky, the commander, lost in a few days his wife, his mother-in-law, and all his children.

General Valentine Baker, who visited the island in 1873, compared the climate with that of the Gold Coast*:—"In the sickly season almost everyone suffers, and a large proportion die; but we were told that the card-playing went on uninterruptedly, a small saucer of quinine being set on the card-table for use as occasion may require."

Besides Valentine Baker, the island has been visited by a number of travellers since Arminius Vámbéry passed the place in a Turcoman lugger in 1863, bound on his perilous secret journey across the desert to Khiva in the rags of a dervish. Captain Marsh touched at Ashoorada in 1872 on his journey through Herat to India, General Sir Charles MacGregor examined it on his way home from Sarakhs and Herat in 1875, and during the winter of 1880 Mr. O'Donovan was several times there. Both Baker and MacGregor, each of them eminent strategists, and animated with the keenest apprehensions of allowing Russia to approach too close to India, speak in terms of contempt of Ashoorada itself —"a mere sand-bank,"* says Baker; "its importance a good deal exaggerated,"† observes MacGregor. Exaggerated in the sense of alarmists having concen-

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* "Clouds in the East," p. 61.

† "When I got there I was sorry I had taken the trouble to come, as there was absolutely nothing to see. Two or three pretty little houses, a church, and some rickety barracks, with a few trees, all looking as if a few inches more water would submerge the whole island. I must say that the Russians who have to live there are not to be envied. The importance of the place has

trated on the island attention which ought to have been distributed over the mainland.

Russia never meant to make an Aden of the place. What she had in view in 1837 was to possess herself of the bay, and then of the Elburz region. This was accomplished, so far as the water in the bay was concerned, when she occupied the island, but the land surrounding the bay still remained Persian territory. And so long as that land continued to be the property of Persia, Russia could hardly regard herself as sole mistress of the bay.

On the mainland opposite Ashoorada lies Gez,* the port of Astrabad. It is connected with the city by a villainous road, thirty miles in length, running through a dense jungle of sycamore, plane, and box-wood trees, the former two being of gigantic proportions. These grow so closely together, and the undergrowth of thorn-bushes and creepers is so dense, that it is impossible to penetrate the forest, which contains tigers, leopards, lynxes, wolves, and boars, a few yards from the track. Astrabad has water communication with the bay by means of its own dirty little stream—the Astai Su, which trickles into the Kara Su, and so makes its way to the sea. Being unnavigable, Bunder Gez serves as the city port. Its modern aspect is not a dignified one. The Russian factory disappeared years ago, after serving its purpose of clenching Medem's hold upon

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been a good deal exaggerated, for the Persian Government are so supine, that even if the Russians were not here now, nothing would be done to prevent their taking it whenever they liked." —"A Journey through Khorassan," vol. ii. p. 172.

* Also Bunder Gez. The village of Gez lies inland some miles from the bay, and the proper appellation for the port is Bunder Gez. The prefix, however, is generally omitted.—M.

Ashoorada; and in its place are only a few straggling rows of wooden shanties, and a rickety wooden jetty about a hundred yards long. The Persian Government, warned by experience, does its best to discourage Russian trade by refusing to allow any stone, brick, or other substantial dwellings to be built at Gez. It also discourages any attempt to improve the road running to Astrabad, and has repeatedly given a refusal to Yussoff, one of the local Armenian merchants, to construct a stone jetty at his own expense. Such a policy of "masterly inactivity," however, defeats its own purpose. The Persian element is kept down and made to stagnate by the orders of the Teheran officials, while Russia on the other hand encourages her subjects to extend her influence everywhere. At Gez a Russian gunboat always lies off the jetty, the merchants are nearly all Russian subjects, and at Astrabad the Persian governor wears Russian decorations, and draws a Russian pay.

The resources of the country, sloping down from the Elburz range to the bay, are immense. Forests of timber of great value cover the wilder parts of the country, and where spaces have been cleared the fertile soil grows readily cotton, tobacco, corn, and rice. The hills inland are well adapted for the cultivation of tea, and the sugar-cane thrives wherever it is planted. All that is needed is a good administration to make the Astrabad district the most prosperous and progressive province in Central Asia. Were it annexed to Russia, it would be the richest province of the Russian empire.*

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* Writing in March 1882, Consul Lovett of Astrabad said:—"The soil is so productive that subsistence even on the produce of a tiny piece of land is practicable with very little labour or expense. The consequence of this bountifulness of nature is that

From the moment the Russians occupied Ashoorada, they began to gaze covetously across the bay at Gez. They would have seized the place in 1841, but they feared the grossness of the robbery would excite England and Persia to warlike reprisals. None the less, they pursued their plans for acquiring the coast. We have seen how a factory was established at Gez to give Russia a show of right to the retention of Ashoorada. We have seen how the power of the littoral Turcomans was broken by the destruction of their settlements and

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there are a number of very poor emigrants that settle here from distant parts of Persia, Afghanistan, and our Indian border, such as the Kurram valley. They are attracted by the temperate climate, the fertility of the soil, the abundance of fuel to be had for the cutting, and the presence of wide breadths of virgin and ownerless land. The greater part of the province, except the pasture lands of Shahkuh and Sava, is probably for nine-tenths of its surface covered with forest. The trees are mostly deciduous. I have counted forty different kinds of trees, but I am not able to identify them all. Amongst them there are oaks, beeches, elms, walnut-trees, planes, sycamores, ash, yew, box, juniper, &c. Pine, fir, and cedar exist, I am told, in the dense forests of Tinderesk and on the slopes of the Goklan hills to the east. The Turcoman steppe, lying north of Astrabad, is as far as the Atrek a prairie of exceeding fertility, wheat reproducing itself more than a hundredfold without artificial irrigation or any trouble beyond sowing. The chief agricultural products are wheat, barley, and rice. In the gardens and orchards of Astrabad are to be found vines, fig-trees, orange-trees, pomegranate and lemon trees, melons, pumpkins, marrows, lettuce, aubergines, &c. Tobacco, used for manufacturing cigarettes, is also grown here on a small scale. While Astrakhan and the northern part of the Caspian are visited with the rigours of a South Baltic climate in winter, the weather at Astrabad is like that of Madeira at the same time of the year. Tigers are plentiful in the forest, but do not attack men. I measured a specimen lately, ten feet eight inches from the tip of the nose to the end of the tail. Leopards, lynxes, jackals, and bears abound, together with several species of deer, mountain sheep and goats, and plenty of pheasants, woodcock, snipe and duck."—"Consular Trade Reports," No. 36 (1882), part xiii. pp. 1066–74.

luggers. Persia having been successfully defied, and the Turcomans thoroughly harried, a new course of policy was adopted. During the Crimean War, repeated efforts were made at Teheran to obtain the cession from Persia of territory on the mainland; while a more conciliatory line of action was pursued towards the Turcomans. In neither case were the Russians successful. Persia refused to cede an inch of soil, and the Turcomans showed that they were only to be kept from piracy by the persistent employment of punitive measures.

After this there was a lull at Ashoorada. For ten years the place was neglected; while on the west of the Caspian the Russians conquered stronghold after stronghold belonging to the Caucasian tribes, and far away on the east swallowed up the Mussulman khanates of Central Asia. The end of the decade saw the Russians supreme in the Caucasus and Turkestan, and with the Caspian naval and military base advanced from Astrakhan to Baku. The time had arrived to decide what was to be done with Ashoorada.

In 1867, Russia made one more attempt to obtain possession of Gez, but was forestalled in her preparations by Persia. She then became convinced, after having wasted a quarter of a century in fruitless efforts, that in the face of Persia's opposition and precautionary measures, and England's determination to uphold the Shah in his resistance to any seizure of Astrabad, that an advance upon India through Astrabad, Shahrood and Meshed was not to be made from the island of Ashoorada. The Persian position was too strong to be attacked at the front: it must be taken in the flank. Russia thereupon suddenly took in hand that new

movement along the East Caspian coast, which has already in fourteen years given her greater strategical and commercial advantages in Central Asia than all the conquests of Tchernayeff and Kaufmann in Turkestan.

That movement was initiated in 1869 by the sudden descent of Colonel Stolietoff upon Krasnovodsk, and the erection of a fort there. At that period the southernmost fortified point occupied by Russia along the east coast of the Caspian was Fort Alexandrovsky, established by Perovsky in 1834, which had been left in a neglected condition after the seizure of Ashoorada. South of this there was no good harbour for 300 miles, until Krasnovodsk Bay was reached. This circumstance, and the fact of its affording a good base for operations across the desert against Khiva and Merv, determined its annexation. When Persia protested, Russia declared that the Atrek was the boundary of the two countries, to which Persia made no retort. The natives of the eastern coast, however, were less quiescent. The following year the Kirghiz revolted and besieged Fort Alexandrovsky, and shortly afterwards the Turcomans attacked the post the Russians had established at Michailovsk, on the opposite side of Krasnovodsk Bay. In both cases the enemy were beaten off, and Stolietoff advanced into the interior and blew down the walls of the Turcoman fort of Kizil Arvat. Continuing his march then in a southerly direction, he established a small fort at Tchikishlar, at the mouth of the Atrek. The southern movement then ceased. In two short years Russia had seized the whole of the eastern coast from Fort Alexandrovsky, 600 miles from Astrabad, to within a few hours' ride of that city, and had established on the mainland a fort

almost as close to it as Ashoorada. The outcry raised in Persia and England against these operations checked for a moment any further extension of territory south, and the insidious conquest of the country inland then commenced. This was suspended for a time during the Khivan Expedition of 1873, but it recommenced directly afterwards, and one after another, year after year, those reconnoitrings of the Atrek valley and Kopet Dagh range took place, which ultimately resulted in the recent incorporation of the entire oasis of Akhal, to a point 200 miles closer to Herat than our foremost outpost at Quetta.

While this inland movement east was in progress, the Russian officials on the coast constantly behaved in a high-handed manner to Persian subjects in the Astrabad district; crossing the river Atrek and seizing camels and supplies the other side, and treating the Goorgan, a river lying between the Atrek and Astrabad, as the frontier. In 1881, to put an end to this unsatisfactory state of things, Persia concluded a treaty with Russia, by which the Atrek was mutually accepted as the boundary river. This relinquishment of previous pretensions to territory south of the stream was considered strange at the time, especially when taken in conjunction with the roving character of the local Turcomans, who dwell one part of the year north of the Atrek and one part south, and the knowledge the Russian Government already then possessed of the rapid disappearance of Ashoorada.

It was felt by many that the treaty could only be of a temporary character, and that in course of time fresh Russian restlessness would manifest itself east of the Caspian. If the report about Admiral Svinkin be

correct, we have an indication of the form the restlessness may be expected to assume in the early future.

Arguing the matter from a Russian standpoint, Russia cannot dispense with a naval station in the vicinity of the Bay of Astrabad. The territory south of Krasnovodsk requires to be kept in order by the presence of a naval force, and there are no good harbours between Krasnovodsk and the Persian bay. Tchikishlar, the next point to Krasnovodsk, is an open roadstead, a very bad one, and having no cultivable soil or good drinking-water within a radius of many miles. The mouth of the Atrek, which comes next, is a mere morass. Afterwards follows the navigable Goorgan, belonging to Persia, which might be used at a pinch, but which, flowing into the Caspian just outside the Bay of Astrabad is exposed to winds and currents which render it inferior to the Kara Su river, a few miles to the south. This rises a short distance north-east of Astrabad, and, joining in its course the shallow stream draining the Persian city, flows into the bay alongside Bunder Gez. For all practical purposes, a Russian occupation of Bunder Gez means the annexation of Astrabad.

Gez is thus the best substitute for Ashoorada. Of course, if Russia chose to retire altogether from Astrabad Bay, she could establish at the mouth of the river Goorgan outside a naval station of sufficient size to enable her to keep the Turcomans in check. The Goorgan reaches the sea by a wide, deep, well-defined channel, and, excepting in the very dry season, is navigable for tolerably large launches to a distance of forty or fifty miles from its mouth. At Gomuche Tepé, where it enters the Caspian, the river is from fifty to

sixty yards wide and twenty feet deep in the centre. Owing to the extreme flatness of the plain and the inconsiderable fall of the river bed, the current is sluggish—often scarcely perceptible. Large coasting vessels are able to land their cargoes direct at Gomuche Tepé without the intermediation of boats and luggers, as at Tchikishlar. According to Arthur Conolly, "nothing can exceed the richness of the land through which the Goorgan flows. About three miles breadth, on either side, is cultivated with the finest wheat and barley; the ground is turned up with a wooden share, to which is yoked a horse, bullock, or camel, and it is said to give an increase of from 70 to 100 per cent." * When O'Donovan visited the region in 1880, he found the plain between the Goorgan and Atrek "thickly studded with populous Turcoman villages, owning immense herds of cattle." The hills contained "considerable numbers of wild oxen," and the river banks were covered with "countless swarms of wild fowl." Gomuche Tepé itself consists of 1,000 Turcoman kibitkas, or tents, and a few brick dwellings constructed by Armenian traders. The population of the place is about 5,000 souls, who have the administration of the settlement entirely in their own hands, and only pay a small annual tribute to Persia. The drawback to the post is the prevalence of malaria, owing to the swamps in the neighbourhood. In this respect, however, it is no worse off than Ashoorada.

Piracy has so completely died out in the Caspian, and since the fall of Geok Tepé the Russians have been held in such dread by the Turcomans, that all

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* "A Journey to the North of India," vol. i. p. 43.

need of extensive naval armaments on the eastern coast may be said to have disappeared. From Baku, the dockyard of the Caspian, the Turcoman coast can be reached in a day by the slowest gunboat; and little more is really needed to keep the Turcomans in order than the patrolling of a few small police-launches. As it is, the Russian naval armament at Ashoorada is very insignificant, the official naval programme for 1883 providing only for the maintenance of a gunboat and two barges, with eight officers and 200 men, on the "Astrabad station." This force could be accommodated at Gomuche Tepé quite as well as at Gez. Russia, however, would never content herself with the former if she could wheedle or extort from Persia the latter; while it is very doubtful whether the Shah would resign either without a struggle or a bribe. Gomuche Tepé is within a mile or two as close to Astrabad as Gez, and the city could be occupied from either point by an expeditionary force in the course of a summer's day.

Russia's argument may be expected to be, that having maintained a naval station in the Bay of Astrabad upwards of forty years, she is entitled, in the event of being driven by the sea from Ashoorada, to establish herself on some other point in the bay. If it be said that she unjustly seized the island, and has therefore no claim upon Persia for territorial compensation, Russia may retort that Persia, by recognising her occupation of Ashoorada in 1866, admitted the right on the part of Russia to always maintain a naval station in the bay. But it is really useless to discuss the diplomatic aspect of the question. Russia is the stronger, and Persia the weaker Power. Of recent years, the Shah has turned his back on England and done everything to

manifest his liking for Russia. A concession, therefore, in return for some favour, is far more likely than a conflict.

But if Persia is blind to her interests, the English people ought not to be indifferent to the fate of Astrabad. Whenever Russia attempts another military demonstration against India, Astrabad will no doubt be heard of as a Caspian base of operations. We do not say *the* base, because the extent to which it will be employed will depend upon the amount of development the Krasnovodsk route to India has in the meantime undergone. But Astrabad has always figured prominently in military plans for invading India from the Caspian, and until the opening up of the Krasnovodsk route in recent times it was, indeed, the sole starting-point recommended by strategists. Hence the military importance of a Russian occupation of Gez.

But there are other considerations in excess of the foregoing, which ought not to be lost to view. Gez is the Caspian outlet of the trade of Central Asia. The products of "Golden Khorassan," and to a great extent of Khiva, Bokhara, and Afghanistan, converge upon the port of Astrabad, and are thence forwarded *viâ* the Caucasus to Europe. The latest official information published* exhibits the following as the trade of Gez for the year ending 22nd March 1881 :—

Exports.		*Imports.*	
Silk	£40,000	Sugar . . .	£1,800
Inferior silk . .	2,800	Unrefined . .	670
Cotton . . .	4,000	Tea	1,200

* "Consular Trade Reports," No. 36, 1882, part xiii. pp. 1066–74. Report by Consul Lovett on the trade and commerce of the province of Astrabad for the year 1881.

Exports.		*Imports.*	
Wool	£4,000	Inferior tea .	£12,000
Furs and skins .	21,200	Piece-goods .	256,000
Dry fruits . .	8,000	Iron	3,600
Lead	3,500	Copper . . .	1,950
Rice	180	Steel . . .	1,500
Corn, &c. . .	200	Cast iron utensils . . .	800
Miscellaneous .	2,400	Crockery and hardware .	7,520
		Brass utensils .	600
Total . .	£86,280	Total . .	£287,640

Thus the total amount of trade passing through Gez during a period when a war was raging between Russia and the Turcomans on the Khorassan frontier, and when England was still disquieting Central Asia by the presence of her troops at Candahar and Cabul, was £373,920 sterling. When Major Lovett penned his report in March 1882, he was able to state that trade was "rapidly increasing," owing undoubtedly to the conquest of those pests of the caravan trade, the Tekke Turcomans, and the settlement of affairs in Afghanistan.

"Regarding these tables," says the Consul, "I am informed that the trade in piece-goods, comprising cotton fabrics of the cheapest kind, and broadcloths at expensive prices, is steadily increasing, owing to the demand for these commodities in Khorassan, chiefly at Meshed, from whence they are exported to Herat, and even further east. Increased facilities for transport that will be afforded on the completion of the through

Caucasus line, will still further develop this branch of trade. The Turcomans have not yet taken to European fabrics, but we may expect them to do so in a few years. We may also anticipate that when the advantages of a safe and quick route are realized, articles of our own special manufacture will be supplied to Western and North-western Afghanistan through means of Russian traders; but after a time our manufactures will hardly be able to compete, under disadvantages of transit dues, &c., against the cheaper and, perhaps, better adapted productions of Russian industry. I dare say that in a few years the transport of goods from Liverpool to Herat, or, perhaps, even Cabul, *viâ* the Caucasus, will compete very sharply with the trade in goods sent *viâ* Bombay, Candahar, or Peshawur."

That is, of course, providing Russia allows English goods to traverse the Caucasus in transit. A strong feeling, however, prevails in Russia that the Government should seize upon the trade of Persia and Central Asia by prohibiting European goods from passing in transit along the new railway from the Black Sea to the Caspian. The advocates of this hostile measure against English commerce in Central Asia, consisting of nearly all the leading manufacturers in Russia, have a powerful exponent of their views in the person of Privy Councillor Katkoff, the editor of the "Moscow Gazette." It would not do to count too much on their views not being realized in the immediate future.

Russia's war with English commerce is a war in which our rival gives us no quarter. Each Russian advance in Asia is marked by the exclusion of English wares from another market, and by fresh efforts to lay hold of the avenues of trade lying beyond. Yet, curiously enough,

it is precisely the commercial classes in England which have always manifested the greatest indifference to the Central Asian Question. We cannot name a single manufacturer or merchant who has displayed any public interest in the subject, or who has shared with politicians and soldiers the task of keeping the country informed of the nature of Russia's operations in the East. One does not expect books or pamphlets from persons immersed in trade; but they have money, which, after all, is the vital element in any agitation. It does not speak much for the patriotism of English manufacturers and merchants that they should have never spent a penny in the defence of interests, the importance of which is admitted on all sides; and on which soldiers like General Valentine Baker, Colonel Burnaby, and General Sir Charles MacGregor, have lavished thousands of pounds in conducting arduous, dangerous, and unrewarded explorations.

England's commercial interests in Central Asia are something more than a shadow. The trade between India and Central Asia amounts to £2,310,000 a year.* Across the Caucasus nearly a million's worth of English wares find their way to Persia and Central Asia annually. In 1880 the direct exports from the United Kingdom to Persia amounted to £234,963. English manufacturers and merchants, therefore, have no excuse for their indifference to the encroachments of Russia in Central Asia. The trade is still an important one, in spite of so many markets having been swallowed up by the Cossack during the last twenty-five years.

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* Twenty-three lakhs of rupees.—"Annual Report of the Financial Commissioners of the Punjab," 1883. See also Sir William Andrew's excellent work, "India and her Neighbours."—M.

"In Astrabad," says Consul Lovett, "there are about 100 stalls in the bazaars where English piece-goods are displayed. These goods are chiefly exported to this province from Constantinople, and bear the labels of Manchester houses." Once Russia obtains possession of Astrabad, the place will no longer serve as a market for English manufactures. Aided by the prohibitive Russian tariff, Moscow will immediately expel Manchester from the bazaars of Astrabad.

As to the political effects of an occupation of Gez, there can be hardly a doubt that such a step would be the forerunner of the amputation of Khorassan from Persia. A glance at the map will show that Khorassan is only joined to Persia by a narrow isthmus, dominated by Astrabad. The new Russian frontier from the mouth of the Atrek to Astrabad, the border lands of Afghanistan, and the Great Salt Desert of Persia, compress Khorassan into the shape of a shoulder of mutton, of which Astrabad is disposed at the knuckle end. When Russia occupies Merv, and dominates the Hari Rud, her Cossack frontier posts will run three parts round it. "South of Khorassan the border is formed by the Great Salt Desert, severing the province from the rest of Persia. Across this vast waste communication is almost impossible. The intercourse between Khorassan and the Persian capital is maintained by two roads, running through the narrow fertile gullet between the Caspian at Astrabad and the desert at Sharood, through the knuckle-end of the shoulder of mutton, as it were. This connecting link between Meshed and Teheran—the other, *viâ* Khaf, along the Afghan frontier, and round the southern side of the desert to the capital, does not deserve mention—is so fragile, that it can never under Russian pressure be

permanently maintained. The prospective frontier of Russia, after the conquest of Merv, will pass three parts round Khorassan, and press against the province for 1,000 miles. It already extends round it for nearly half that distance. The pressure of Persia, on the other hand, will always be confined to the eighty miles intervening between Astrabad and Shahrood, and will, moreover, owing to the intermediate Elburz range, suffer from that fatal weakness that ever attends division. Khorassan alone can never resist such an unequal strain. The enormous pressure of Russia will break off the province from Persia at the neck."*

Hence England has a vital interest in the question of transferring the Russian naval station from Ashoorada to the port of Astrabad. Such a transfer means the ultimate annexation of Astrabad itself, the severance of Khorassan from Persia, and the absorption of the whole of the fertile region lying between the Caspian and Herat. The removal would give Russia, in place of a wasting sandbank, the principal port in the Caspian Sea, the main outlet of Central Asian trade, and an excellent basis for a military demonstration against India. It is useless to rely exclusively upon Persia's appreciation of her own interests to prevent Russia seizing Gez. Persia is administered by imbeciles. She is not to be trusted to keep from Russia the first of the four great cities—Astrabad, Meshed, Herat, and Candahar—which lie along the historical high road of invasion of India.

We owe it to the far-seeing statesmanship of the Earl of Beaconsfield that an English Consulate should have

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* See "Merv, the Queen of the World," p. 355, where the idea is illustrated by a map.

been established at Astrabad, to watch over England's interests east of the Caspian. With an experienced official like Major Beresford Lovett on the spot to maintain guard over Gez, there ought to be no possibility of any sudden usurpation of Persia's rights, such as marked the seizure of Ashoorada in 1841, and Krasnovodsk in 1869. Downing Street and Astrabad are in telegraphic communication with each other, and with St. Petersburg and Teheran. Consular vigilance at Astrabad, diplomatic admonitions at Teheran, and clear and unmistakable declarations of English policy at St. Petersburg—such are the barriers England can interpose between Russia and the coveted port of Gez. If they fail to exercise any effect, then the only thing to be done is to make sure of England's territorial rights to every nook and corner of Afghanistan.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RUSSIAN RAILWAY TO HERAT AND INDIA.

Through railway communication between St. Petersburg and the Perso-Turcoman frontier.—Unexpected appearance of the locomotive in the Transcaspian region.—Discussion of Asiatic railway projects in Russia in 1880.—Decision to complete the Transcaucasian line.—The railway to Teheran.—How the notion of a railway to India first occurred to Russia.—Skobeleff and Annenkoff.—Kizil Arvat, not Bami, the terminal point of the Transcaspian railway.—Russian survey of a line to Askabad, then to Sarakhs, and afterwards to Herat.—Project for a railway to Khiva; surveys for this, and estimated cost.—The Herat railway the railway of the immediate future.—Approximate cost of the line; cost of the entire railway from Kizil Arvat to India.—The financial obstacle the least of all barriers.—The El Dorado Russia seeks.—Advantages of a Russo-Indian railway.—Imperative necessity for the construction of the Euphrates Valley railway.—Remarkable political results of the Transcaspian line.—The English railway to India.—Englishmen should rally round the Euphrates scheme.

"With such soldiers as you are I shall never have any doubt of victory. Before you will fall not only such towns as Tashkent, but even the most powerful strongholds in Asia."—GENERAL TCHERNAYEFF to the troops at Tashkent, October 23rd, 1882.

"I am bound to say that Russian influence in Persia is daily becoming stronger, and that of England weaker. I wish Englishmen devoted themselves to the development of trade in Persia with equal assiduity to that manifested by the Russians, who work hard and spend largely in opening up a market for

their goods and manufactures." COLONEL C. STEWART, English Political Agent at Khaf, Meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, January 15th, 1883.

"Any interference with the natural independence of Afghanistan would be regarded by Her Majesty's Government as a very grave matter, requiring their most careful and serious consideration, and as one which might involve serious danger to the peace of India. I think, if such an interference occurred, to put the matter mildly, it is highly probable that this country would interfere."—LORD DERBY, May 8th, 1874.

THE completion of the Transcaucasian railway, from Batoum on the Black Sea to Baku on the Caspian, and the opening up thereby of direct railway communication between St. Petersburg and Kizil Arvat, is a circumstance worthy of the most careful consideration, as much on account of the actual establishment of rapid intercourse between the heart of Russia and the outposts of Central Asia, as by reason of the possibility of a further extension of the Transcaspian line, in the first place to Herat, and afterwards to India.

Up to 1880 there seemed no probability of any early extension of the Russian railway system in the direction of our Eastern Empire. Various projects existed for running on the Orenburg line to Tashkent; but, however much General Kaufmann might have been in favour of the scheme, the Home Government could not but recognise the enormous outlay that would be involved by the construction and maintenance of a railway across many hundred miles of unpopulated and unproductive desert, and hence naturally shrank from such a costly undertaking. The attention of the Government, indeed, at the time was given mainly to the question of linking Turkestan to Russia by a longer and more roundabout process; plans being discussed for constructing first the great Siberian railway, and afterwards, in about ten years' time, running from it a branch line south to Tashkent. The vast distances to be traversed, however,

before this alternative scheme could be carried out, provoked equal dissatisfaction, and in the end both projects were temporarily shelved.

The Russian Government then turned its attention from Siberia and Turkestan to the Caucasus. To this region the railway system extended as far as Vladikavkaz, where its further progress had been checked by the engineering difficulties connected with the passage of the line across the Caucasian range. The connection of Vladikavkaz with Tiflis, according to the engineer Stratkovsky, involved the construction of a line 122 miles long to one of the stations on the Poti-Tiflis railway, requiring a number of second-class tunnels and one first-class one five miles long. Under no circumstances could the line be finished in less than twelve years, and the estimated cost reached £30,000 a mile for some of the sections. Such a long and costly undertaking was as inimical to the views of the Government as the Turkestan and Siberian projects. What Russia wanted was to establish rapid communication with the East in as little time as possible, and without unduly straining her finances; in order that her ability to bring her resources to bear upon East or West with equal facility might strengthen her policy in Europe and enhance her power in Asia. None of these three railway extensions harmonised with this desire.

The Caspian and Black Sea railway afterwards came in turn under discussion. This line was of the highest strategical importance, and half of it, from Poti to Tiflis, was already constructed. By the completion of the remainder, the cost of which would be comparatively light, railway communication would be established between the Black Sea and the Caspian, and between

St. Petersburg and the Persian ports of Resht and Astrabad. It would enable Russia to deflect the army of the Caucasus from the Tiflis centre to the Caspian, Persia, and Central Asia on the one hand, and would permit of the Caspian garrisons co-operating with those of the Black Sea against Europe on the other. Further, by running a branch line to Batoum, it would enable Russia to pour the resources of the Volga into Transcaucasia and direct them from Batoum or Tiflis upon Kars, by means of the splendid macadamized military roads which had already been constructed from those two points to the Turkish frontier. In excess of these military considerations there were others of a mercantile character, which had great weight with the Government—the completion of the line would give Russia the control of the overland trade between Persia and Europe, and open up a short way to the markets of Central Asia; and these were capped by the highly important political aim of securing predominant influence at Teheran by the establishment of direct railway communication between St. Petersburg and Teheran. If the Poti-Tiflis line were extended to Baku, there would then remain only a link of 219 miles, from Resht to Teheran, untraversed by the locomotive and steamboat, between the Russian and Persian capitals. As a French syndicate was already negotiating for a concession of this line, there was every probability of this remaining gap closing over in the course of a few years.*

The principal disadvantage of the line was that it would probably fail to pay working expenses, let alone

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* It is stated that the construction of the line has already commenced.—M.

earn a dividend, and that it would add seriously to the drag on Russian finance already occasioned by the deficits of the Poti-Tiflis railway. Such a consideration would have probably been fatal to the scheme, had it been discussed by an English Cabinet Council. The Euphrates Valley Railway project, for instance, has far greater elements of financial success than the Transcaucasian scheme, and is of far greater strategical importance ; yet government after government in England has refused to give it any support. In Russia, however, things are managed in a different manner. Although the accumulated deficits of the Poti-Tiflis section amounted to two millions sterling,* it was decided to extend the line to Baku.

Funds for the construction of the railway were advanced by the Imperial Government, and the contract of a group of Russian capitalists being accepted, the line was commenced at once. The work of construction attracted very little attention in Europe, and it was not until Annenkoff's scheme of a railway to India provoked discussion in England that any notice was taken of the new enterprise. The line from Baku to Tiflis was completed in the autumn of 1882, and by October goods and passengers were passing between the Caspian and Poti. The section from Poti to Batoum was not finished, however, until the beginning of the present year. According to the statement issued by the Russian

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* The deficit on the Transcaucasian railway which the Government has to make good for the year 1882 is 4,080,000 roubles, or £408,000 sterling ; on the Orenburg line the amount is £41,606. The total of the deficits of the railways of Russia for 1882 exceeded £15,000,000 sterling, all of which has to be made good by the Government.—M.

Government on the 19th October 1882, the cost of the entire Transcaucasian railway has been £8,904,200 sterling. The Minister of Finance, Professor Bungé, endeavoured to float a 3 per cent. loan, at 55, on the exchanges of Europe, to cover the advances made for the construction of the railway, but was everywhere unsuccessful. It may be noted that the Transcaucasian railroad cost about as much as the projected Euphrates Valley railway.

There is every reason to believe that the Russian Government, in sanctioning the completion of the Transcaucasian railway in 1879, had not the remotest intention of constructing an extension beyond the Caspian in the direction of Askabad and Herat. It aimed rather at striking south of Tiflis to the Persian city of Tabreez, and during 1880 railway engineers were busily engaged surveying the country to Djulfa, on the Persian frontier, a point 284 miles from Tiflis, 85 from Tabreez, and 459 from Teheran. There was also a talk of a railway to Kars.

The notion of a Transcaspian railway did not crop up until after Lomakin's defeat at Geok Tepé in September 1879. But for that defeat, it is doubtful whether it would have ever been constructed at all. The disaster at Geok Tepé shook the power of Russia in Central Asia, and rendered a campaign of revenge unavoidable. The principal difficulty of the second expedition consisted in the extreme scarcity east of the Caspian of transport animals, to convey the stores of the army across the band of desert lying between the coast and the oasis of Akhal. To overcome this, a service of traction engines and fourgons was projected by General Petroosevitch, and later on the construction of a tramway between

Tchikishlar and the edge of the Tekke oasis was mooted; but neither scheme received much encouragement at St. Petersburg, and disappeared the moment Skobeleff decided against Tchikishlar as a base.

In proceeding to the Caspian to assume the command of the Turcoman expedition, Skobeleff took with him General Annenkoff, the Controller of Russian Military Transport. Directly Krasnovodsk was selected for the base of operations, Annenkoff suggested the construction of a railway from the Caspian coast, at Michailovsk, to the Tekke oasis, at Kizil Arvat. The Government had 100 miles of line lying idle at Bender, which had been purchased and stored in 1878, in anticipation of a continuance of the war in the Balkan peninsula; and Annenkoff urged that this *materiél* should be shifted to the Caspian and employed in the construction of the railway.

The Russian Government agreed to this proposition, although Skobeleff gave it a very lukewarm support. In many influential circles in St. Petersburg, indeed, it was openly ridiculed, but none the less Annenkoff worked with a will, in spite of the disparaging criticism of experts. Some of these asserted that the first sandstorm would bury the line. But experience proved that sand could blow off as well as blow on the line; and the traffic has never yet been interfered with by the shifting sands, notwithstanding the numerous storms that have tested the matter. The croakers then said that the periodical inundations of the Transcaspian coast would wash away the line, but Annenkoff built his embankments so strongly and protected them so well, that one of the severest inundations that took place in 1881 failed to injure it at all. Perhaps it was these

dangers that induced Annenkoff to build the railway more substantially than had been originally intended. At any rate, it early threw off its character of a "temporary military railway," and developed into a five-foot broad-gauge line, as substantially and as strongly built as any in Russia. If it did not render material assistance to Skobeleff's expedition, it justified its construction immediately afterwards by powerfully increasing Russia's influence in Central Asia.

As to when the idea of extending the line to India first presented itself to the Russians, is a point on which no precise information is forthcoming. It probably originally occurred to Annenkoff while supervising the construction of the line in Transcaspia. At any rate, very shortly after his return from Geok Tepé in 1881, where he had been wounded during one of the reconnaissances of the fortress, he penned the article on "Roads to India" which appears in the first part of this work, and which he issued afterwards in a pamphlet form, accompanied by a map of the projected route. The scheme did not attract much notice in Russia at first, and it was not until the English press had prominently discussed it and forced it upon the attention of Parliament, that Russia began to realize the vast political importance of the project.*

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* The writer may claim credit for having been mainly instrumental in giving this prominence to the scheme, and for having insisted on its importance in spite of the doubts and the ridicule expressed by many newspapers, Russian as well as English. For a considerable period even the Central Asian party in England ignored Annenkoff's idea, and it was not until November 27, 1882, that Sir Henry Rawlinson, Sir Richard Temple, and other experts gave sufficient prominence to it to attract the attention of the public at large.—M.

Annenkoff's article appeared before his railway was finished, and when doubts existed whether it would survive the campaign. With the fall of Geok Tepé and the occupation of Askabad, the *raison d'être* for the railway seemed to have disappeared. The Russian Government, however, did not follow the example of the English authorities in regard to the Candahar railway, and allow it to fall away in ruin the moment the military operations were at an end. It steadily continued the construction of the line, and carried it on in due course to the terminus fixed upon—Kizil Arvat. When this was accomplished and traffic opened throughout, Annenkoff may be said to have won the approval of the Russian Government for his Indian scheme. Had the desert section of the line never been constructed, it is seriously open to question whether Russia would have taken in hand Annenkoff's larger project—at any rate, not for the present. But when the desert was traversed, and the country beyond found to be flat and fertile, and easily covered by a railway, the notion of threatening our influence in the East by extending the line to within hitting distance of Herat, could not but prove irresistibly tempting to a Government which has always been singularly open to the reception of great ideas.

Russia then began to realize that the Transcaspian railway was something more than a mere military line, beginning and ending nowhere, and intended only for the local transport of troops. It was seen that once the railway from Batoum to Baku was completed, the Michailovsk-Kizil-Arvat line would naturally fall into its place as a logical extension of the Russian railway system, and that it would prove a better route to Turkestan than the road from Orenburg to Tashkent,

in the event of the long-projected Central Asian railroad ever being carried into effect. People began to recognise the credit due to Annenkoff for having given a solid character to a railway, which the Russian Government itself had originally intended to be only of a temporary character, and which such a far-seeing and clever man as Skobeleff had treated with very inadequate justice.

Already, before the completion of the line, Annenkoff had sent engineers to survey the country from Kizil Arvat to Askabad. When this survey demonstrated the feasibility of a railway extension to Askabad, he sent on the surveyors to Sarakhs, and finally to within a short distance of Herat. But for the excitement provoked in England by Lessar's movements, there is very little doubt the survey would have been continued to India itself. As it is, the survey of this remaining section has only been postponed until the alarm provoked in England by the railway scheme has died away.

While these surveys were in progress an additional one was undertaken in the direction of Khiva. This may be looked upon as a sop to the Turkestan officials, who were offended at the vista of good things that was being opened up before the rival functionaries of the Caucasus. Turkestan had been fed for years with hopes of one day being joined to Russia by a railway. The projected railway to Sarakhs and India left her altogether out in the cold. This was not agreeable to such founders of Turkestan as Tchernayeff and others, and, in consequence of the pressure they brought to bear upon the Government, Lieutenant Bweestrjinsky was despatched to Transcaspia early in 1882 to effect a survey for a line from Kizil Arvat to Khiva; the idea being to continue the communication thence by steamer up the Oxus, and

perhaps lay down another line of metals through Bokhara to Tashkent.

Bweestrjinsky took the route from Kizil Arvat to the wells of Deenar, Igdy, and Balla Ishem, thence along the lines of Skobeleff and Gloukhovsky's explorations to Ortakuyu, Nefiskuli, Oraz Gyuma, Kizil Takeer, and Iliali, to Khiva. The country was of a desert character throughout, ill-provided with water, possessing no fuel, and requiring at places considerable levellings and excavations. The total distance was 475 versts (315 miles), and the estimated cost of the line was 16,000,000 roubles, or, at the current rate of exchange, £1,600,000, the calculation being based on the estimates of the Transcaspian railway.

A railway from Kizil Arvat to Khiva would possess little of the political and military importance accruing to a line from Kizil Arvat to Herat. It would materially strengthen Russia's power in Central Asia, but it would not be by any means such a menace to India as a line even to Sarakhs. It would only become significant in the event of Russia annexing Bokhara and shifting the capital of Turkestan from Tashkent to Karshi, Bokhara, or some other point nearer the Oxus. In that case, the development that would take place of Russia's power in the valley of the Oxus would act fatally on Afghan influence north of the Hindoo Koosh. Afghan-Turkestan would fall completely under Russian control.

But even this advantage is small compared with the gain which Russia would derive from pressing on the locomotive to Herat, instead of in the direction of Khiva; and as the former project is more likely to be carried into effect than the latter, we need not dip deeper into Lieutenant Bweestrjinsky's data of his

railway, and merely bear it in mind as a possible future Russian railway extension in Central Asia. We are personally of opinion that a railway to the Oxus *viâ* Merv stands a better chance of being carried out than one *viâ* Khiva. The surveys of Alikhanoff and Lessar have shown conclusively that with a little management of the irrigation system of Turkmenia, the Akhal, the Tejend, and the Merv oases might be joined together, in which case the railway would only have the 150 miles of desert to traverse intervening between Merv and Tchardjui on the Oxus. This might be reduced to less than 100 miles by manipulating the irrigation system of the Murghab.

The Herat railway, however, stands the best chance of being adopted, and is fraught with military and political results of such a widespread nature, that, compared with it, the Merv and Khivan railways sink into insignificance. Russia is fully aware of the strategical value of the line, and is beginning to realize the immense gain to be derived from the expenditure of a few more millions upon the plains of Central Asia.

The Transcaspian railway, from Michailovsk to Kizil Arvat, is 217 versts or 144 miles long, and cost £4,500 a mile, or £648,000 altogether, to construct.

The terminal point of the line is sometimes said to be Bami, forty miles beyond Kizil Arvat; but this is a mistake, as any reference to a 40-copeck Russian railway time-table book will show. The error has arisen from the circumstance that the line throughout its advance across the Transcaspian steppe was preceded by a Decauville railway, which, in the absence of animal transport, and on account of the scarcity of labour, was able to render immense assistance to the engineers. This railway was sixty-five miles long, with a gauge of

only 20 inches, and was worked by miniature 2½-ton petroleum-heated locomotives, which looked like toys alongside the 23-ton locomotives running on the permanent 5-foot gauge railway. Ever preceded by the Decauville railway, by the time the regular line reached Kizil Arvat, the former had penetrated to Bami. There it would have probably remained for a time, but for the discovery of immense deposits of naphtha and ozokerit at the celebrated Naphtha Hill, sixteen and a half miles south-west of the Tageer wells, and fifty-three from the railway. These deposits, valued at thirty-five millions sterling, lie spread over an area of a few square miles. Up to the time of their discovery the petroleum residue, used as a fuel by the locomotives, had been brought from the island of Tcheleken or from Baku, on the opposite side of the Caspian; but in consequence of this valuable find, the nimble little Decauville railway was picked up and relaid as a branch extension from the regular railway to the Naphtha Hill, in which form it renders invaluable service to-day in conveying fuel for the use of the large locomotives. In this manner railway communication east of the Caspian was shortened to Kizil Arvat, to which point trains run daily from Michailovsk, the fare being 8s. 8d. second class, and 4s. 4d. third for the entire journey of 144 miles. No first-class carriages exist on the line, except one or two for the use of the Governor of the Transcaspian region and the higher officials of his staff. The manager of the line is Prince Khilkoff, a man who has had a remarkable career. Having been expelled from the St. Petersburg University on account of his turbulence, he went to America, learnt his trade as a mechanic, worked some time as locomotive driver on the

Pacific Railway, returned to Russia, rose from an humble capacity to the post of traffic manager on the Koursk-Moscow Railway, and finally was selected by Annenkoff as controller of the Transcaspian line. On account of his energy he is known among his friends as the "Yankee-Russian," and is reckoned one of the best railway managers in Russia.

Owing to various circumstances, the cost of the Transcaspian railway was greater than would be the case with any section of the extensions to Herat, excluding the small stretch at Khombôu. If we deal with each stage of the undertaking in succession, we think we shall be able to arrive at a fairly approximate estimate of the cost of connecting Herat with the Russian railway system.

From Kizil Arvat to Askabad, the distance by road is 220 versts, or 146 miles, which might be shortened to about 135 by avoiding the sinuosities of the present route. The ground is level the whole of the way, and traverses no stream of any magnitude. Annenkoff told the writer last year that he thought this section could be easily covered by a railway at a cost of £4,000 per mile. The outlay on the first extension would thus be £540,000.

The second stage extends from Askabad to Sarakhs, a distance of 280 versts, or 185½ miles. According to Lessar, the country between these two points is equally level, and presents no obstacle to a railway whatever. Calculating its cost at the same rate as the first section, a total of £742,000 is attained, or, together with the Kizil Arvat extension, £1,282,000.

The third stage would extend from Sarakhs to Herat, a distance of 305 versts, or 202½ miles. Half of this,

according to Lessar, would be country similar to the preceding sections; the remaining half identical with that of Russia—that is to say, easy to traverse, but less easy than the rest of the ground, owing to undulations. If we reckon £5,000 a mile for the 100 miles of line traversing the more undulating section, and £4,000 a mile for the remainder, we shall probably arrive at a fair estimate of the outlay; the cost of the incomparably more difficult Sibi-Sukhur section of the Candahar railway having been only £5,000 a mile. The final extension to Herat would thus occasion an expenditure of £910,000.

In this manner the total cost of extending the Transcaspian railway to Herat would be as follows:—

	Miles.	Cost per Mile.	Total.
1. Kizil Arvat to Askabad	135	£4,000	£540,000
2. Askabad to Sarakhs .	185½	£4,000	£742,000
3. Sarakhs to Herat .	102½	£4,000	£910,000
	100	£5,000	
Total length and cost	523 miles		£2,192,000

We consequently see that the extension of the Russian railway system to the "Key of India" would cost but very little over two millions sterling, or less than a quarter of the sum expended on the recently completed Transcaucasian railway. Russia could accomplish this without straining her finances in the slightest, by simply leaving off building ironclads for three or four years. Considering the vast sums already expended on the conquest of Central Asia, and on the construction of strategical railways, the disbursement of a couple of millions is such a trifling financial consideration, that

the conviction is irresistibly forced upon the mind that sooner or later the Russian locomotive will be puffing into Herat.

If Lessar's surveys have demonstrated that not a single engineering obstacle exists against the extension of the Transcaspian railway to Herat, they have also conclusively proved the absence of any political barrier, save that of the opposition of England. Russia can extend the line to Sarakhs without seriously infringing Persian territory. She can turn the corner there, and run the line along the east bank of the Hari Rud, without interfering with either Persian or Afghan settlements, until she reaches Kusan, the first Afghan outpost, a little more than sixty miles from Herat. It has been said that a barrier might be raised to the Russian advance by giving prominence to the vague suzerain rights of Persia over the Atak; but the most superficial reading of Lessar's narrative, and a survey of the recent relations between Russia and Persia, should be sufficient to drive home the conviction that this obstacle is a mere cobweb which Russian diplomacy would dispel with a puff.

The only real difficulty attending the extension of the railway to Herat is the excitement and alarm the measure would undoubtedly provoke in England. As, however, the aim of the railway would be to coerce us in Europe by frightening us in Asia, this is a consideration which cannot be expected to have much weight with Russia. Violent outbursts of public opinion against Russia have never yet succeeded in exercising a restraining effect upon her advances in the East, and the political history of the last twenty years is rich with instances of the impotence of mere diplomatic expostulations and protests.

Thanks to the evacuation of Candahar we stand in this position in regard to the Key of India: that though we may protest, we cannot enforce compliance with our wishes. Had we retained Candahar we could have held over Russia's head the threat of occupying Herat, in the event of the railway being pushed menacingly in that direction. That power is gone from us for ever. The Gladstone Government flung it heedlessly away, together with all other fruits of the eighteen millions sterling invested in the Afghan war. The threat to occupy Herat is a weapon which is now in Russia's hands. Before a single Sepoy could arrive before Herat to defend it, Russia, thanks to the Transcaspian railway and her new position on the Perso-Turcoman frontier, could be mistress of the place an entire fortnight, any fraction of which period would be sufficient for her troops to put the fortress in a condition to resist an English siege; while, at the same time, Russia could pour reinforcements into Herat from the Caucasus a clear month in advance of English succour arriving on the scene from this country. In this manner, Herat is already more within the control of Russia than within the control of England; and each mile further the Transcaspian railway advances, the more the Key of India passes under her influence.

Of course, the Russian authorities do not trumpet abroad the military and political advantages they are aware they would derive from the construction of the Herat railway. It would arouse the hostility of England to the scheme if they were to be so impolitic as this. Their support to the project is based upon the "commercial advantages" to be obtained by the construction of the line; advantages arising not merely from the

tapping of the commerce of Central Asia, but from the acquisition of the overland trade with India. This is the El Dorado that the promoter of the Russo-Indian railway, General Annenkoff, holds before his countrymen in his *brochure*, "The Akhal Tekke Oasis and Roads to India." The overland trade of India, he says, has always enormously enriched the countries through which it has passed. It is within the power of Russia to tap it. If she constructs her section to Herat, England, he believes, will readily extend her Indian system to the same point from the mouth of the Bolan Pass, a distance of 599 miles. From Sibi to Candahar plans already exist of a railway the late Administration meant to have constructed had it remained in power. From Candahar to Herat the country, although mountainous in parts, is infinitely easier to traverse with a railway than the section from Sibi to Candahar. Consequently, there exists no natural obstacle to prevent the construction of the 1,122 miles of railway necessary to join the Indian railway system at Sibi with the Russian railway system at Kizil Arvat. Such a junction would establish direct railway communication, not only between St. Petersburg and Calcutta, but also between London and the capital of India. And there is this to be said on behalf of Annenkoff's scheme: the railway would be a real overland railway. There would be only three short breaks of sea—from Dover to Calais, from Sebastopol to Poti, and from Baku to Michailovsk, each only of a few hours' duration, the whole of the way; and in this respect it would surpass the Euphrates scheme, with its sea voyage to Alexandretta on the one hand, and from the Persian Gulf to India on the other. Such a superiority seems to General Annenkoff so

marked that he is sanguine enough to believe England would readily support his scheme, and run on her Indian railway system to Herat to join the Russian line. In a recent conversation ("Russian Advance towards India," p. 171) he even expressed a belief England would use the railway to send her reliefs to India. "I strongly think so," he said on that occasion. "I do not speak officially, but I think no difficulty would arise. At any rate, the line could be used by officers and merchants, the journey from England to India only occupying nine days."

We cannot say we share his views as to the willingness of England to send troops to India through Russia, or the readiness of Russia to allow them to pass through her territory; but there is very little doubt that if the line were constructed it would attract a very large amount of the passenger traffic that now passes through the Suez Canal. This point, however, need not be discussed, because Russia, in projecting the extension of the Transcaspian railway to India, is not influenced in the slightest by considerations of pounds, shillings, and pence, and it would, therefore, be simply throwing time away to argue what the probable traffic would be. All Russian and English experts of note are agreed that the possession of Herat by Russia would imperil our hold upon India, and render an occupation of Constantinople feasible. By spending two millions sterling to extend the Transcaspian railway to Herat, Russia would virtually annex the Key of India, and enable her statesmen to keep Calcutta and Constantinople in a perpetual flutter.

Herat converted into the easternmost terminus of the Russian railway system, only 599 miles would remain to

be covered by metals to join the line with the head of the Indian system at Sibi. At £5,000 a mile—the estimated cost of the Candahar railway—the outlay would be under £3,000,000 sterling; and even if every allowance be made for unexpected engineering obstacles, the country not having yet been surveyed by railway engineers as in the case of the Russian section, the total would not exceed £4,000,000 sterling. In this manner, to connect Europe and India by railway, would not cost much more than £6,000,000 sterling, and might be achieved for even less.

	Miles.	£
Kizil Arvat to Herat . . .	523	2,192,000
Sibi to Herat (extreme estimate) .	599	4,000,000
Total length and cost .	1,122	6,192,000

To join India and Europe by railway would cost, therefore, less than the sum Russia has already spent (£8,904,200) on the Transcaucasian railway, to connect merely the Black Sea and the Caspian.

Viewing the matter from a Russian standpoint, it is easy to understand the favour with which Annenkoff's scheme is now regarded in many quarters. The overland trade of the East has always been coveted by the nations of Europe, and one can consequently well imagine a needy Power like Russia longing to be enriched by it; and when to this consideration we add the benefits of a military and political character that would attend the realization of Annenkoff's scheme, we can hardly wonder at the Russian Government daring to ruffle the susceptibilities of England by sending Lessar, the railway engineer, to survey Afghanistan close up to Herat.

We have shown that England cannot prevent Russia extending the Transcaspian railway to Herat by threatening to occupy the place, and we believe we have clearly demonstrated the strong probability of its extension thither in the course of the next few years. What policy England would pursue in the event of Russia persisting in the scheme, is a matter which ought to engage at once the attention of English statesmen, and not be postponed until no time is left for proper deliberation. If it would be essential for England to occupy Herat, in spite of Russia's threat to anticipate us in any such measure, it might be sound policy to anticipate both threat and action by clearly giving Russia timely notice of what we should unhesitatingly do in the event of the extension of the railway beyond a certain point. War might be prevented by a plain diplomatic declaration to regard any extension of the railway beyond Askabad or Sarakhs as a menace, both to the independence of Herat and the security of our power in the Indian peninsula.

We cannot hope things to remain indefinitely as they are in Central Asia. We may consistently stick to a policy of masterly inactivity, but we cannot expect Russia to do the same, because she does not believe in such a policy, and has more to gain from an aggressive one. The extension of the Russian railway system to the Perso-Turcoman region upsets all the old calculations respecting our policy in the East. The entire subject must be discussed afresh. If Russia makes up her mind to promote the construction of a railway to India, for the purpose of enabling her troops to reach Herat from Odessa in four or five days, and India in six or seven, it is obvious that our sole and exclusive

dependence upon the Suez Canal must come to an end. We must establish quicker means of communication as an auxiliary to the Suez route. It would never do to rely exclusively upon a route occupying nearly a month to convey reliefs to India, when Russia had it in her power to deposit troops alongside our Indian frontier in six or seven days. We may prevent Russia extending her railway right into India, but if she chooses to make the line to Herat we can hardly stop her, except by occupying Herat beforehand, which it is improbable she would now allow us to do, or by a declaration of war, to which desperate measure the nation probably would not consent. There is, in short, in our opinion, only one course open to us—to construct a railway through Asia Minor from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, with the ultimate object of extending it through Beloochistan to India. If Russia has a railway to India, we must have a railway to India. If we do not construct our railway now, we must see that no one touches the region through which the line will some day have to pass. The only region through which our railway can pass is Asia Minor. That region must be kept clear from Russian influences of every kind, and hence, no matter how hostile may be the attitude of Russia to our settlement of Egyptian affairs, the Government must make no concession which will in any way imperil the security of our future highway to India.

"Do what we can* we cannot quicken steamboat

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* Introduction to "The Euphrates Valley Route to India in connection with the Central Asian and Egyptian Questions." A lecture delivered at the National Club, June 16, 1882, by Sir William Andrew, C.I.E.; London, W. H. Allen & Co., 1882.

communication with India beyond a certain point, or diminish the journey to Kurrachee for troops much under twenty-seven days, while every mile of railway constructed by Russia on her confines brings her closer to India. While we have been relying for years past exclusively upon the single link of the Suez Canal, Russia has been doing her utmost to open up a whole series of lines converging upon Persia and Afghanistan, so as to stop the trade of Central Asia with India, and to gain for herself preponderance on the border of that country. And there is this to be said of these Russian communications, that with one exception they are absolutely secure from attack, whereas a few dynamite explosions judiciously effected along the course of the Suez Canal would effectually rob us of our main communication with India. Should Russia by a sudden movement block the end of the Bosphorus with torpedoes, the whole of her communications with Central Asia and Asia Minor would be secured from attack, while nothing we could do would so far guarantee the safety of the Suez Canal as to render it unnecessary for England to adopt an auxiliary line of communication. Dynamite can be so easily transported, and our recent campaigns have taught us so cruelly our national deficiencies in vigilance, that an enterprising, crafty, and wholly unscrupulous, torpedo-using Power, such as Russia proved herself to be in the Danube in 1877, would experience little difficulty in destroying the Suez Canal. Kaufmann's march towards India in 1878, and the secret and sudden despatch of Cronstadt seamen to America to man a series of cruisers against us, prove that in contending with Russia we have to deal with a Power as fertile in expedients for

injuring us, as she is ruthless in carrying them into effect.*

"On two grounds, therefore—the possibility of the Suez Canal being destroyed, and the rapid communications which Russia is establishing with Central Asia, with the ultimate view of extending them to India—the opening up of a second and shorter route to our Eastern Empire has become an imperative necessity. We have seen that, in the event of a war, the Russian communications with Central Asia would be self-enclosed. With the exception of the one link from Sebastopol to Poti, they would be secure from hostile attack, and would be entirely in their own hands. In the case of the Suez Canal, however, apart from the possibility of destruction, we have to face the fact that France, to say nothing of other European Powers, entertains such views of her interests in Egypt, that a coalition to seize it might not be improbable, and that under any contingencies

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* During the discussion on this subject at a lecture on "Communication with India under possible Contingencies," delivered by Major-General Sir Frederick J. Goldsmid, K.C.S.I., C.B., in 1878, Mr. Haddon, formerly chief engineer at Aleppo to the Turkish Government, said: "With reference to the Suez Canal, I saw a letter in the 'Times' a week ago, signed by MacKillop Pasha, in which he states that he has provided such powerful dredging machines, in the event of a steamer or vessel being sunk in the canal, that he could cut a fresh channel in a week. There is one very bad place I may mention, near Ismailia, where such an operation would be out of the question; it is a rock cutting—the Suez canal is not all sand by any means. This cutting is something like seventy feet deep, and it is, in addition, situated on a very sharp curve. Now, if any political accident happened to a vessel in the Suez Canal, it is quite certain that it would occur at this point; so that the route to India by the Suez Canal might be perfectly blocked at any moment and in the simplest manner possible. The Egyptian railway would not mend the matter, for there would be no reserve shipping at Suez."—M.

our control over the Canal would not be of that undivided and exclusive character marking Russia's control over her communications. On the other hand, if England, in alliance with Turkey, opened up the Euphrates Valley Railway, she would be, for all practical purposes, undisputed mistress of the new route; she would be troubled by no European claim to control, and would possess at both ends means of securing the line against attack, both the termini being upon the open sea."

The Transcaspian railway is only three years old. The Euphrates Valley scheme has been under discussion more than a quarter of a century. At several periods there have been excellent prospects of the matter being taken seriously in hand by the Government, but every time obstacles of various kinds, mainly political, have arisen to prevent its adoption. Perhaps, however, the worst obstacle of all the Euphrates scheme has had to contend with has been the multiplicity of rival projects, which have confused English statesmen, and impeded them in arriving at a definite decision as to the right policy to pursue. It would appear, from an impartial examination of the controversy, that the aim of many of the eminent men interested in the question of a railway to India has been, not to patriotically co-operate in the furtherance of any single scheme, but to trot out a fresh one of their own, and to do their utmost to prevent the realization of rival projects. Without in any way wishing to deal too severely with unrestrained discussion, we cannot but affirm that if there had been loyal co-operation on the part of English projectors, instead of acrimonious self-assertion and egotism, the overland railroad from the Mediterranean to the Persian

Gulf would have probably been in mature working order to-day. While English experts have been squabbling in the newspapers and on the platform, Russia has quietly, without any discussion at all, taken the wind out of everyone's sails. Even Annenkoff, proud as he is of his scheme, was ready to admit, up to the recent discoveries of Lessar, that his route was not perhaps the best that might have been adopted;* but any scheme, no matter how great its drawbacks may be, that has elements of success, and is swiftly and thoroughly worked out, is better than the best of projects tossed helplessly hither and thither on a sea of endless discussion. Had it been left to experts to decide which was the best port for communication between England and the United States, Liverpool would probably have never been chosen; and, for that matter, the question would very likely not have been settled yet. However, Liverpool got the start, and soon made up for deficiencies; while Bristol, with all its superior advantages, was left altogether behind in the race. In the same manner, the Transcaspian railway has got the start; and it must make many Englishmen of note blush that they did not patriotically rally round the Euphrates scheme years ago, and carry it out before Russia secured her present menacing position at the gates of Herat.

Reviewing the career of the agitation for the Euphrates Valley railway, it seems to us to have been smothered too much with aristocratic patronage: innumerable

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* Until Lessar discovered the easy level road from Askabad to Herat, the route *viâ* Astrabad and Meshed was considered the best for a railway to India.—M.

Lords, M.P.'s, K.C.B.'s, K.C.S.I.'s, and general officers of greater or lesser fame, have ardently recommended the scheme, but they have done nothing to carry it out. The Euphrates Committee, in its impotence, reminds us of the Patriotic Association, which started in 1881 with half a *Times* column of titled personages "to uphold the interests of the British empire," but died of inanition after giving birth to an indigo-coloured six-penny pamphlet.

Discarding all minor collateral projects, the English schemes for shortening the distance to India may be represented by two: the Euphrates Valley project, connecting the Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf; and the Asia Minor railway, starting from Constantinople in the direction of India. Among the rival routes to these two schemes, several began their course from the Black Sea, but they had the fatal objection that the Euxine stood every chance of some day becoming a Russian lake, which would render them useless as a means of unassailable communication between England and India. This is an objection which attends also the Asia Minor railway project, through Constantinople to India; for, with the probability yearly growing less of England always being able to keep that city out of Russia's hands, or beyond her influence, he would be a bold statesman who would propose that this country should subsidise railway communication with India through the Balkan peninsula.

This defect is becoming generally recognised by English experts nowadays, and however probable it may be that Europe and India will be connected in the distant future by a railway running through Constantinople, the line will never be regarded by England

as a means of communication available in time of war. The English railway to India will be the one that will start from the Mediterranean opposite Cyprus, and run to the Persian Gulf, thence to be continued in due course to India. Two routes have their advocates in this direction—the Tigris and the Euphrates, and each have rival starting points. But the weight of authority and prestige is with the Euphrates scheme, and, in some form or other, it will no doubt some day be carried out.

We have demonstrated that the cost of connecting the Russian and Indian railway systems, by extending the Transcaspian railway from Kizil Arvat to Sibi, a distance of 1,122 miles, would be £6,192,000 sterling. The Euphrates Valley railway from Alexandretta, on the Mediterranean, to Grain, on the Persian Gulf, would be 920 miles long; and in the substantial form advocated by Sir William Andrew, would involve an expenditure of eight millions sterling.

The Russian scheme would connect Europe and India at a stroke. This would not be the case with the Euphrates project, which only shortens the distance between England and India. But, as we have said, if Russia has a railway to India, we must have a railway; and if we cannot have a perfect line, we must make the best of what we can get.

When the Russian scheme is completed, there will be railway communication between St. Petersburg and Calcutta, broken only by the thirty-six hours' sea run from Sebastopol to Poti, and by the twenty-four hours' run from Baku to Krasnovodsk. The only assailable points along the line will be the short stretch across the Black Sea, and the section closest to India.

England, on the other hand, cannot unfortunately establish similar overland communication between London and Calcutta. In time of war, the short cut across the Continent followed by our mails would be closed to our reinforcements. Our troops would have to be conveyed by sea round to the Mediterranean, and thence to Kurratchee *viâ* the Suez Canal; or else deposited half way at some point opposite Cyprus, and thence conveyed by means of an overland railway to the Persian Gulf, to be there shipped again and carried on to India. If it be affirmed that the reinforcements would be exposed to a flank attack from the Russians at Kars in passing along the Euphrates Valley, it may with equal truth be pointed out that this is a defect that applies equally to the transport of troops by sea to India. When Russia completes her land communications with India they will be self-enclosed and unassailable. Our sea communications, on the other hand, will always be open to attack every inch of the way by the cruisers of the enemy.

But, admitting the flank weakness of the railway between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf, what we have to solve is this: that Russia, sooner or later, will force on India a railway enabling her to throw troops against our outposts in less than a week, or, if we treat the Caucasus as the base, in less than five days; while England, clinging to the Suez route, cannot, under any circumstances, hope to land troops at Kurratchee in less than three weeks. What, therefore, shall be done to quicken our communications with India? The Euphrates Valley railway would shorten the distance by about 1,000 miles, and reduce the journey by several days. If anything happened to the

Suez Canal—and in these dynamite times a spy, on a dark night, might cut our communications with India at a stroke—the line would render priceless assistance in the forwarding of stores and reinforcements to the East. If the railway would be exposed to a similar danger, the damage could be more readily repaired. But there is another point connected with the Euphrates Valley railway which must not be overlooked. The construction of the line is but part of a more general scheme for running a railway through Southern Persia and Beloochistan to Candahar and India. Such a railway would shorten the distance to a still more appreciable extent. But it would render still greater assistance in one other respect. If Russia ever occupies Herat by a *coup de main*—and now that this is an easy exploit the Key of India cannot be considered safe from sudden seizure—the English would at once have to make a fresh advance upon Candahar. This is admitted by all experts. It is not improbable, indeed, that England may not beforehand re-occupy the city, in view of Russia's advances upon Herat. In either case the connection of Candahar with the Mediterranean, opposite Cyprus, by a railway, would be a matter of the highest strategical importance. On the one hand, English troops would proceed along the Euphrates railway to Candahar, and on the other Indian troops would advance to join them by a railway running to the same point from the Bolan.

The adoption of two measures is urgently needed, in view of the menacing extension of the Russian railway system towards India : the construction of the Euphrates Valley railway ought to be encouraged by a Government guarantee, and steps should be taken to carry out the old project for running on the Indian railway system to

Candahar. There has been quite enough useless discussion over the former measure. Let there now be action. Let Government and public support be freely and patriotically accorded to Sir William Andrew, who, for over twenty-five years, has urged the merits of the scheme upon the country, and has been supported by some of our ablest Oriental statesmen. Admitting the existence of defects in it, as must be the case with all enterprises, any railway serving as an auxiliary route to India and shortening the journey thither, is better than none at all.

As for the Sibi-Candahar railway, its construction is absolutely essential if a stand is ever to be made at that point against a Russian force located at Herat, with a railway at its back inflating its strength from the Caucasus. To propose meeting the emergency by scraping a little smoother the caravan road from Sibi to Quetta, is an insult to the common-sense of the English people, and betrays an ignorance of the bearings of the situation, which Parliament and the public ought not to tolerate for a moment. England's Imperial interests ought not to be sacrificed to the desire of the Gladstone Cabinet to appear consistent. Let the negative policy that has prevailed up to now be modified, on the ground that fresh factors have been introduced into the Central Asian problem since the evacuation of Candahar. If the Conservative Party takes that patriotic interest in India its leaders declare it does, it should promote by applauding, rather than check by deriding, any such reversal of policy.

THE TRANSCASPIAN RAILWAY.

Length—144 Miles.

Fares. 2nd Class. Copecks.	Fares. 3rd Class. Copecks.	Station.	Time of Departure. A.M.
		Michailovskaya. . .	7.0
0.44	0.22	Moolla-Kari . . .	8.08
0.70	0.35	Kootol	8.44
1.14	0.57	Balla-Ishem . . .	10.57
1.72	0.86	Aidin	12.02
2.02	1.01	Pereval	12.43
2.34	1.17	Akhtcha-Kuima . .	1.37
2.94	1.47	Kazandjik . . .	3.49
3.28	1.64	Oozoon-Su . . .	4.35
3.74	1.87	Ooshak	5.45
4.32	2.16	Kizil-Arvat, *arrives* . .	6.55
		Kizil-Arvat . . .	9.20
0.58	0.29	Ooshak	10.45
1.04	0.52	Oozoon-Su . . .	11.45
1.38	0.69	Kazandjik . . .	1.26
1.98	0.99	Akhtcha-Kuima . .	2.53
2.30	1.15	Pereval	3.37
2.60	1.30	Aidin	4.28
3.18	1.59	Balla-Ishem . . .	6.38
3.62	1.81	Kootol	7.36
3.88	1.94	Moolla-Kari . . .	8.22
4.32	2.16	Michailovskaya, *arrives* .	9.15

The journey from the Caspian to Kizil Arvat thus occupies about twelve hours.

The working expenses amount to 590,000 roubles a year.

CHAPTER V.

RUSSIAN GENERALS ON THE INVASION OF INDIA.

The Central Asian Question continually changing.—The problem altogether different to-day from what it was when England evacuated Candahar.—Curious silence of English military men on the question of the invasion of India.—Changes in Russia's position; the Orenburg base, the Turkestan base, and the Caspian base.—Features of each epoch.—Russia better able now to invade India than in 1878; immense advantages acquired in the interval.—Denial of the Russian Government that it has ever sought to attack us in India.—Kaufmann's projected expedition.—Letter from Skobeleff urging an attack on India.—What Kaufmann's plans were.—Audacity in sending Pashino to India.—Letter by Kaufmann describing his expedition against India.—The Tsar decides to acquire a better base than the Turkestan one.—Conquest of Akhal.—Skobeleff's opinion of its significance.—His conversation with the Author on a Russian invasion of India.—Important memorandum penned by Skobeleff shortly before his death.—Views of Soboleff and of Tchernayeff.—Russian views of English rule in India.—Honesty of Grodekoff.—Error to regard him as an astute man.—General Skobeleff's opinions examined.—Russian criticism of them.—Russia's conditions of peace impossible for England to accept.—The three great obstacles to a Russian invasion which have disappeared since 1881.—The present position of England and Russia in Asia discussed.—If ever Russia and England engage in war, India will inevitably be attacked.

"We are not at all afraid of your military power; what we fear is that your advance towards our Indian frontier will afford facilities for intrigue with the native princes."—LORD CLARENDON to Prince Gortschakoff.

GENERAL RÖHRBERG, GOVERNOR OF THE TRANSCASPIAN TERRITORY.

"Count Simonitch, being lame from a wound, drove his carriage from Teheran to Herat, and could drive it to Candahar; and the Shah's army has now for nearly seven months subsisted almost exclusively on the supplies of the country immediately around Herat and Ghurian, leaving the still more productive districts of Sebzewar and Ferrah untouched. In short, I can vouch from personal observation that there is absolutely no impediment to the march of an army to Herat, and that, from all the information I have received, the country between that city and Candahar not only presents no difficulty, but affords remarkable facilities for the passage of armies. There is, therefore, my Lord, no security for India in the nature of the country through which an army would have to pass to invade it from this side. On the contrary, the whole line is peculiarly favourable for such an enterprise; and I am the more anxious to state this opinion clearly, because it is at variance with my previous belief, and with statements which I may have previously hazarded, relying on more imperfect information."—Letter from SIR JOHN MCNEILL to Lord Palmerston, Meshed, June 25th, 1838.

THE Central Asian Question is continually changing. Fresh factors are constantly being introduced, which upset the most careful calculations and falsify the most positive predictions of the past. An opinion is no sooner expressed, a policy no sooner promulgated, than events hasten to shatter the one and modify the other. Two epochs of the Central Asian problem have already run their course; a third is now progressing. The controversies and views of the first epoch, extending up to the Crimean War, were rendered obsolete by the conquest of Turkestan; and, in like manner, the discussions evoked and views expressed during the subjugation of the Kirghiz steppes and the khanates of Bokhara, Khiva, and Khokand, are being rendered obsolete by the movement that is now developing itself east of the Caspian. On this account, nothing is more absurd than to quote against the possibility of Russia invading India, opinions expressed by eminent men when the Asiatic frontier ran past Orenburg; or, again, when the most advanced post was Samarcand. The conquest and occupation of Akhal, and the discovery of an easy level route running from

Astrabad to Herat, have altogether changed the conditions of the problem. The new base beyond the Caspian is as immense an improvement upon the Turkestan base as the latter was upon that of Orenburg.

It is a regrettable circumstance that some of our staff officers, with leisure on their hands, have not applied themselves to the elucidation of the problem, whether a Russian invasion of India is really feasible or not from the new base beyond the Caspian. Many Russian generals have expressed their opinion on the subject since the Central Asian Question entered upon its present phase, by the Russian occupation of Askabad on the one hand and the English evacuation of Candahar on the other; but, so far as we are aware, not a single English officer has given a reply to their arguments. The problem should not be a difficult one to solve one way or the other. A Russian invasion of India either is or is not feasible. The subject could be dispassionately discussed from a military point of view, without offensively imputing to Russia any present desire to turn us out of our Eastern Empire.

The Russian position in Central Asia is continually improving. There was a time when it took Russian troops three or four months to get from the home provinces to Orenburg—the Russian base for any operations against India up to the Crimean War. Beyond Orenburg lay deserts and khanates as yet unconquered, interposing a most difficult barrier between the Cossack outposts and Afghanistan. An invasion of India in the reign of the autocrat Nicholas would have been such a stupendous undertaking, that it is only possible to account for the alarm expressed during the

epoch of the first Afghan war, on the grounds that our position was still insecure in the peninsula, and that the slow and roundabout voyage to India *viâ* the Cape, together with the absence of telegraphic communication, rendered it difficult for reinforcements to arrive on the north-west frontier from England in less than a year. Russia showed her sense of the difficulty of the task by making no attempt to disturb us in India during the Crimean War.

When the Russo-Turkish conflict broke out in 1876, the relative positions of the two powers in Asia had undergone considerable change. A railway ran from St. Petersburg to Orenburg, and the journey thither of troops from the home provinces, instead of occupying several months, was now but a matter of a couple of days. The Russian base against India had shifted in the interval from Orenburg to Tashkent—the barrier of the unconquered tribes and khanates had been planed away. Still, the despatch of troops from Orenburg to Tashkent could not be accomplished in less than four or five months; and even when Bokhara was traversed the colossal range of the Hindoo Koosh interposed a barrier, which in England was regarded by many as an insuperable obstacle to the passage of a modern European army. On the other hand, the communications between England and India had improved to a degree which threw the Russian improvements altogether into the shade. Thanks to the opening of the Suez Canal, troops could be sent from Portsmouth to India in less than a month.

During the Crimean War Russia made no attempt to attack us in India. During the Russo-Turkish War she fitted out three columns in Turkestan to advance to the

Indian frontier, and despatched an envoy to Cabul to secure the co-operation of the Ameer of Afghanistan in the descent upon our dominions. There is a significant difference between the two epochs.

Since the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish struggle, Russia's position has again changed in Central Asia. The offensive base has been shifted from Turkestan to Transcaspia, from Samarcand to Askabad. Instead of a stretch of desert, four months' march broad, intervening between the terminal point of the railway system and the Central Asian base, the locomotive has been carried close up to the new outposts in Central Asia. Direct railway communication now exists between St. Petersburg and Kizil Arvat, and troops can be despatched from Odessa to Askabad—the Russian Quetta—in less than a fortnight. When the railway is extended from Kizil Arvat to Askabad, the journey will be again shortened to half the time. Thus, then, Russia's position in Central Asia has so far improved, that whereas in 1878 she could not have sent troops from Moscow to Samarcand in much less than six months, she will be able very shortly to send them to Askabad in six days.

On the other hand our communications with India have not been quickened in the slightest in the interval, and, indeed, are unsusceptible of any further improvement so long as they are exclusively confined to the sea. It is only by the construction of the Euphrates Valley railway that we can shorten the journey at all between England and India, and that course the Government have hitherto refused to adopt. We cannot, we repeat, improve our sea-communications with India; on the other hand, there is no limit to the improvement which

Russia can effect in her land-communications with Central Asia.

When General Kaufmann assembled his troops on the Bokharan frontier in 1878, he was distant six months from the terminal point of the Russian railway system—Orenburg. Were an advance ordered from Askabad to-morrow, the Russian commander would be only six days distant from the terminal point of the railway system—Kizil Arvat. In the face of this it is impossible to deny that in the interval Russia's position has immensely improved in Central Asia.

Further than this, no barrier exists to-day between General Röhrberg and Herat such as existed in 1878 between Kaufmann and Cabul. When he set out from Samarcand in June, he had before him a march of more than 700 miles, a broad and rapid river, ill-provided with boats, and the stupendous mountain range of the Hindoo Koosh, to say nothing of such minor obstacles as the highlands and deserts of Bokhara. Between Askabad and Herat there is no great river to cross, no difficult mountain range to traverse, no hills except a few insignificant ones near the journey's end, and fewer expanses of uncultivated soil than in the Bokharan khanate. Finally, the distance from Askabad to Herat, by Lessars's route, is only 388 miles.

As a matter of fact, Russia, by shifting her base from Turkestan to Transcaspia, and by linking it with her railway system, has practically made herself mistress of the destinies of Herat. She could occupy it with troops from the Caucasus in a fortnight less time than we could from India, and with troops from Odessa in six weeks less time than we could hope to do with troops from England.

In 1878 Herat was regarded as safe from a Russian *coup de main*. The barrier of the Turcoman tribes intervened between the Caspian and the Key of India. The barrier has now melted away, and a Russian occupation will inevitably follow the next outbreak of war between the two countries. Thanks to our retirement from Candahar, we cannot prevent this. We have to face the fact that next time we quarrel with Russia it will be within the province of our rival to occupy Herat in less time than Kaufmann would have needed in 1878 to reach the river Oxus, let alone Cabul. Thus, everyway, Russia's power of offence in Central Asia has immensely improved since the signature of the Treaty of Berlin. Our statesmen must recognise this, and base their policy not upon data collected and opinions expressed during the Orenburg and Turkestan epochs, but upon the new facts of the new epoch, which as yet has hardly been treated by English experts at all.

A few months ago the semi-official "Journal de St. Pétersbourg," in replying to some articles which had been appearing in the "Morning Post" on the fresh phases of the Central Asian Question, denied that Russia had ever entertained the idea of attacking us in India, or would in the future ever attempt to disturb us there. Such a declaration might have passed uncontested a few years ago, when Liberal and Radical writers were wont to ridicule the notion of a Russian invasion of India, but it cannot stand the test of facts to-day. We know that Russia, badly posted as she was in Central Asia in 1878, prepared for a military descent upon India; and this fact cannot but warn us of the possibility of further attempts in the future, especially as her position has so far improved since, that the

temptation to attack must prove almost irresistible on a rupture between the two Powers.

Kaufmann's expedition of 1878 has never been described, and on account of that reason, perhaps, has failed to provoke that attention which it otherwise would have done in this country. Russia's reticence on the subject is probably due to the circumstance that the move was a bad one on her part, since she showed her hand in Central Asia without gaining anything by it. As a rule, full accounts appear in the "Voenni Sbornik" of her military operations the moment they come to a close. Skobeleff's Turcoman campaign, for instance, has been described to an extent which is positively embarrassing to the historian. Kaufmann's operations in 1878, on the contrary, have never been described at all. It is only by chance letters and allusions in the Russian press that we are able to form any idea of the aims and operations of the Governor-General of Turkestan at that epoch. One of these facts is a letter addressed by General Skobeleff to General Kaufmann on a demonstration against India, which subsequently developed into the march of the three columns in the direction of it in 1878. Another is a letter by Kaufmann himself on the same expedition, addressed to General Bogdanovitch, the Russian historian of the Crimean war. The latter saw light in the "Moscow Gazette" early in 1882; the former has only been recently published in the "Novoe Vremya," embodied in a series of reminiscences of Skobeleff, which, it is no secret in journalistic circles in Russia, emanate from the pen of Captain Masloff, the author of the brilliant little book, "The Conquest of Akhal Tekke" (Zavoevanie Akhal Teke), and a bosom friend of the gifted Russian general. Skobeleff's

letter was written at ten o'clock at night on the 8th of March, 1877, at Fort Kazala—that dreary, isolated, snow-beleaguered post near the shore of the desolate Aral, where he had halted for a few hours on his way to St. Petersburg to take part in the Turkish war. He had just come straight from Ferghana, the new Russian province on the northern slope of the conglomeration of mountains, south of which lie the plains of India; and, with the experiences of the journey still fresh upon him, he commences the letter by giving a graphic account of the frightful roads of Central Asia, which, he observes, "if known to Dante would have served as an additional horror to hell." From the tone of the letter and Masloff's comments, it is clear that the closest and most unaffected friendship existed between Skobeleff and Kaufmann. Repeating Moltke's opinion, expressed half a century ago, that Russia would find it difficult to obtain decisive results in European Turkey without a powerful Black Sea Fleet, and the opinion of Field-Marshal Varshavsky in 1829 that a campaign in Asiatic Turkey could only be of value if waged against the Euphrates and Tigris trade-routes, Skobeleff goes on to describe it as his belief that England will support, directly or indirectly, Turkey, and finally says: "Would it not be better to make use of our new powerful strategical position in Central Asia, our better acquaintance than before with the routes and means, in the extended sense of the term, in Asia, in order to strike at our real enemy a deadly blow in the event (doubtful) of the evident signs of our determination to operate against the line of operations most sensitive for the English, failing to cause them to entirely give way to us? . . . . . the risk of the undertaking consists in

that — mais enfin, Excellence, Paris vaut bien une messe." The hiatus, due to Captain Masloff's discretion, leaves us ignorant of what Skobeleff's plan was for striking a deadly blow at us in India, but it is obvious from the extract preceding it that he considered the enterprise feasible.

A few weeks later Russia declared war against Turkey, and Kaufmann began at once to prepare for a campaign in Central Asia. One of his first acts was to despatch a mission to Bokhara, headed by the diplomate, Gospodin Weinberg, to prepare the Emir for eventualities. Native messengers were then despatched to Cabul. While the diplomatic web was spinning, Kaufmann busied himself in concentrating troops and purchasing supplies.

An attempt has been made in England, though, significantly enough, never in Russia, to excuse Kaufmann's preparations on the grounds that they were purely defensive; that he never meant to move out of the limits of Turkestan. But this contention is based on fancies, not on facts. An officer attached to the column that advanced to the Bokharan border furnished the Russian "Graphic" ("Vsemirnaya Illustratsia") with some sketches of the expedition, and these he headed, "The Russian Expedition to the Frontier of India."

General Soboleff, the head of the Asiatic Department of the Russian General Staff, when questioned on the subject in March 1882 ("The Russian Advance Towards India," page 16), said: "We had prepared for a march against India. At Djam, on the Bokharan frontier, we had assembled a force, and we meant to advance with 20,000 troops. In Siberia we had a reserve of 50,000 troops ready, and there were many more in their rear.

The line of advance would have depended upon circumstances, probably through Bokhara to Cabul."

Doctor Yavorsky again, physician to the Stolietoff Embassy at Cabul, strengthens our contention beyond possibility of refutation by the opening words to his admirable work on "The Journey of the Russian Mission to Afghanistan."* He commences his first volume thus:—"In May 1878 there was a greater stir in society at Tashkent than at any previous period. Preparations were being made for an expedition to India. An order had been issued for the formation of three detachments of Turkestan troops to set out in a very short time for the southern frontier. All that was warlike in Turkestan woke up, as it were, from a long sleep, shook itself and began to fiddle . . . the officers had a jovial appearance, as if they had all had presents made them . . . everywhere expressions of delight could be heard at the impending march. . . 'Now we 're off to India, to drive the English out of it.'"

While Kaufmann was assembling his troops in

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* Published at St. Petersburg in 1882. Yavorsky, who is by no means an Anglophile, denounces the incapacity of Stolietoff and his folly in urging Shere Ali to fight England when there was no chance of Russia backing him up. But for Stolietoff's urgent pressure and promises, Yavorsky says Shere Ali would have never embarked on a war against England. It is interesting to note that Yavorsky shares with most other Russians the belief that we oppress the people of India, and that they are ready to throw us off on the approach of a stronger power. It will be from this fatal belief that Russia will inevitably attempt some day, if we oppose her in Europe, to subvert, by intrigue from within and attack from without, our rule in India. Yavorsky is such an agreeably honest writer, and he is so refreshingly candid in the expression of his views, that it is impossible to charge him with wilfully distorting his picture of our position in our Eastern Empire, based in places on the views of the Afghans.—M.

Turkestan, and the Emir Mozaffar Eddin (coerced by the Russian envoy Weinberg) was collecting food to feed them in their passage through Bokhara, the Russian army in Europe was traversing the Balkans, and finally settled down within a few hours' distance of Constantinople. Here Russia found herself face to face with England, and it was while negotiations for peace were in progress that the council of war was held in the Russian camp with reference to an attack upon India, which resulted in the despatch of Colonel Grodekoff and Colonel Stolietoff to Tashkent, and the ex-political Gospodin Pashino to India. Stolietoff, as is well known, made his way to Cabul, Grodekoff to Herat, and a third officer, Colonel Matvaeff, of the Turkestan army, to Balkh and Badakshan. In this manner Russia placed officers in each of the three principal approaches to India from Turkestan. Pashino was also to have penetrated to Cabul from India, and was to have assisted Stolietoff with that knowledge of Afghan politics he had acquired while serving two years as interpreter to Abdurrahman Khan. He was, however, stopped at Peshawur by the English officials, and sent back to Russia. This act provoked a great outcry at the time, Pashino representing himself, and being represented, as a "private traveller." It was only after Skobeleff's death that the public became aware, through a letter addressed by Pashino to one of the St. Petersburg newspapers, that he was despatched to Cabul from the Russian camp at the instigation of General Skobeleff. The audacity of the proceeding, in attempting to send an emissary to Cabul through India at a moment when Russia and England were on the verge of war, almost takes away one's breath. Little wonder that more innocent

Russian travellers should be regarded with suspicion in India.*

Of the three columns formed in Turkestan, the main and central one marched from Samarcand to Djam, with the intention of taking the direct route to Cabul; the second, under General Abramoff, ascended the Alai from Ferghana in the direction of Cashmere; and the third, commanded by General Grotengelm, advanced from Khiva to Tchardjui, the Oxus ferry leading to Merv, where it operated in harmony with a fourth column, controlled by Lomakin, which set out from the Caspian and penetrated to the Turcoman dales adjoining Kizil Arvat.

Things were in this condition when, on the 15th July 1878, two days after the signature of the Treaty of Berlin, Kaufmann wrote to General Bogdanovitch as follows:—"At present, by the will of the Emperor, I have assembled an army of dimensions as yet unseen in Central Asia, and in quality fit to encounter any troops in the world. Of course, a march to India with these means is not to be thought of, but if on the other side—*i.e.* Afghanistan—help is forthcoming, we may do a great deal, and above all set simmering such a porridge that the bull-dogs will not shake themselves

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* An account of Pashino's career is given in "Grodekoff's Ride to Herat," p. 213. After his return from India he proceeded to Livadia, where the Emperor Alexander II. was staying; and thence to Tiflis. Subsequently he turned up at St. Petersburg, and contributed a few articles to the press. He appears to have been one of those men who make the worst of their opportunities, and quarrel with their patrons and benefactors. When I was in St. Petersburg in July 1882, he was in hospital suffering from the effects of having been run over by a droshky, and was in a condition of extreme destitution. If he has recovered he has probably sunk deeper still in poverty. There is hardly any likelihood of his appearing again in the arena of Asiatic politics —M.

clear of." In other words, Kaufmann confesses he meant to do what Lord Dalhousie had many years previous expressively predicted Russia would some day attempt—*i.e.* "shake the frontier of India." Such a "shaking" he probably thought would rattle down our supremacy in India and deliver Russia from England's opposition in Europe. Unfortunately for Kaufmann, peace was concluded in Europe, and he had the mortification of knowing that he had exposed Russia's hand in Central Asia without winning anything by it. Up to 1878 it was a frequent and favourite assertion with the Russophil party that Russia had no intention whatever of attacking or disturbing us in India. Kaufmann's expedition exposed the falsity of such a view, and made it a new point in England's policy that she should be always prepared for the future against any attempt to "shake the Indian frontier." At the same time the expedition was not without its uses for Russia. It taught her the difficulty of a march upon India *viâ* the Hindoo Koosh and Cabul, and instigated those operations against the Tekke Turcomans, which in a short time were destined to hand over the road to Herat to her control, and place at the disposition of the larger army of the Caucasus the easier route to India *viâ* Sarakhs, Herat, and Candahar. In 1879 upwards of 25,000 troops were assembled on the East Caspian coast to occupy and annex Akhal, and although from a variety of causes the Lazareff-Lomakin campaign failed, Skobeleff signally retrieved the honour of Russia at Geok Tepé in 1881. Referring to that event a year later, at the memorable Geok Tepé banquet, he said, "The late Emperor fully realized the immense importance of a place of arms at the gates of Herat and

Afghanistan at a given period in history." This has been secured by occupying Askabad and constructing there fortified barracks for 4,000 men. As to the effect of this act on Persia, Skobeleff was able to say that, "Never since the time of Mahomed Shah's march to Herat, coupled with the memorable services of Count Simonitch, has the influence of the Russian Minister at Teheran been more predominant. In one word, the spell of the Russian standard is powerful far away to the east, even beyond the conquered region, and this will doubtless be confirmed by the engineers who have just returned from Sarakhs." This view of the power of Russia's prestige was fully confirmed by Lessar a few days later, and since then the spectacle has been witnessed of a Russian officer—Lessar—being able to ride to the outposts of Herat with a few Turcoman servants, and be hospitably treated by the Afghans, while no Englishman dare penetrate to Candahar, let alone to Herat, although Afghanistan is supposed to be within the sphere of our influence.

Shortly after making this speech, General Skobeleff honoured the writer with several conversations, during which he was extremely frank and good-humoured, and manifested no disinclination whatever to answer the questions put to him. Said he (Russian Advance Towards India, p. 103):—"I do not understand military men in England writing in the 'Army and Navy Gazette,' which I take in and read, of a Russian invasion of India. I do not think it would be feasible. I should not like to be commander of such an expedition. The difficulties would be enormous. To subjugate Akhal we had only 5,000 men and needed 20,000 camels. To get that transport we had to send to

Orenburg, to Khiva, and to Mangishlak for camels. The trouble was enormous. To invade India we should need 150,000 troops; 60,000 to enter India with, and 90,000 to guard the communications. If 5,000 men needed 20,000 camels, what would 150,000 need? And where could we get the transport? We should require vast supplies, for Afghanistan is a poor country, and could not feed 60,000 men." On my remarking that Russia might annex beforehand fertile Khorassan—the granary of the East, and render it a second Caucasus, Skobeleff denied that Russia would ever annex that province; and this leading me to mention that General Soboleff, of the General Staff, had expressed a conviction a few days earlier that Russia could march an army to India if she chose, Skobeleff rejoined, "That was diplomacy; of course, it is possible—all things are possible to a good general; but I should not like to undertake the task, and I do not think Russia would. Of course, if you enraged Russia, if, by your policy, you excited her, if you made her wild—that is the word—we might attempt it, even in spite of all the difficulties. For my part, I could only make a demonstration against India; but I would fight you at Herat." He said this with great animation, but very good humouredly. "Do you know I was very much interested during your war whether you would occupy Herat or not? It would have been a mistake if you had done so. It would be difficult to march an army from the Caspian to Herat to fight you there, but we should be tempted to do it in the event of a war." *

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* On the occasion of my second visit to Russia in 1882, Captain Masloff told me, while proceeding in the funeral train with the remains of the deceased general to Riazan, that Skobeleff had

Yet about the same time these reassuring words were being uttered, Skobeleff penned a memorandum on the Eastern Question, which, with his other private papers, he confided to Katkoff shortly before his death, and from which the editor of the "Moscow Gazette" selected and published in July, 1882, the following extract:—

"The political and military ideas which must, in the future, form the basis of our policy are those by which I have been guided, remembering, as I have done, the solemn words the late Emperor addressed to me before starting for the Tekke Expedition. To my mind the Central Asian Question is perfectly clear and simple. If it does not enable us in a comparatively short time to take seriously in hand the Eastern Question itself, why the Asiatic fleece is not worth the tanning. I venture to think that sooner or later Russian statesmen will recognise the fact that Russia must have the Bosphorus."

Here, then, we have a repetition in 1882 of the view Skobeleff had expressed in 1877, that Russia ought to seek to settle the Eastern Question in Europe by striking a fatal blow at us in Asia. Even in his calming utterances to the writer, we find him expressing this opinion by asserting that if England made Russia "wild," Russia would retaliate by trying to invade India. It is obvious that if we went to war with Russia we should be sure to make her "wild"; and hence we see Skobeleff admitting that the next time we engage

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expressed himself in terms of high commendation of the accuracy of my report of the conversation. He, Masloff, added that he himself shared all the opinions on Central Asia expressed by General Skobeleff.—M.

in hostilities with Russia we shall have to provide against an attempt to unsettle us in India, or, as Dalhousie put it, to "shake its frontier." This is a remarkable advance in Central Asian politics. Ten years ago a Russian demonstration against India was only a possibility in politics. It is now a certainty.

Other Russian generals with whom the writer conversed on the subject went further than General Skobeleff. At the General Staff Office a group of officers gathered round as the writer discussed the matter with General Soboleff, and one of them exclaimed that India was too far off to be invaded; upon which Soboleff struck in, "No, no, Mikhail Efimovitch, let us be accurate. We could invade India, but we don't want to. But let us admit we could invade it, though." This opinion, it will be seen, was altogether in harmony with the views which we have extracted from Soboleff's account of the Afghan war, published since the interview.

General Tchernayeff was equally outspoken, "I do not think the invasion of India impracticable. The question is no new one. It was discussed so long ago as in the reign of the Emperor Paul, and was afterwards revived at the Tilsit interview of Napoleon and Alexander I., when an arrangement was made to send an army of 35,000 men, *viâ* Persia and Herat, to India. At the present time our more accurate knowledge of the country lying between Russia and India, and the position which we have taken up in Central Asia, give us reasons for regarding as a practical possibility what was once considered as a fantastic undertaking. Russia has no intention or desire of invading India; but if you ask if an invasion is possible or not, I must answer in the

affirmative, although I admit the task would not be an easy one."

General Annenkoff did not consider any good to be derived from discussing a purely theoretical question, but it will be gathered from his article on Central Asia and India that his estimate of our power in the East is not a high one. His belief that we oppress and exploit the natives, and that our supremacy exists on the weakest foundations, is shared by most Russians. It was the sincere belief of General Petroosevitch, the late Governor of the Transcaspian region, who was killed at Geok Tepé; and Pashino has over and over again expressed it in his writings on India. With scarcely an exception it is also the belief of the Russian press, and we cannot remember anything to the contrary appearing in the newspapers of Russia since we began to read them ten years ago. Only in November 1882 the brilliant and justly esteemed Russian author, Evgenié Markoff, contributed two articles to the "Novoe Vremya," in which our rule in India was painted in the blackest of colours. If relatively well-informed men like Markoff, Pashino, Annenkoff, Petroosevitch, Soboleff, and Yavorsky, entertain the belief that the natives of India hate us and are ready to rise the moment a succouring European Power appears, is it remarkable that the generality of Russian officers should hold still wilder views (if they are wilder) of our military stability in India? We are not desirous of provoking undue alarm on this score, or of imputing to Russian officers a raging ambition to drive us out of the Indian peninsula. We merely record what is the prevailing impression in Russia regarding our rule in India—an impression which is entertained by many Russians whose feelings

towards England are of the warmest character. That we Englishmen know the impression to be a wrong one does not in any way tend to improve the situation. The great danger of the impression is—and this must never be forgotten—that Russia, lured on by the hope of seeing 250,000,000 people rise against us, may make light of those difficulties attending a march upon India which both General Skobeleff and his closest friend and fellow fighter, General Grodekoff, so earnestly insisted upon.

That Skobeleff purposely exaggerated those difficulties in order to blind the English public, is an opinion which no one personally acquainted with him would hold for a moment. Skobeleff was never a man of guile. In the midst of his reassurances on the subject, he exclaimed impetuously—"I hate England." General Grodekoff's honesty is equally beyond suspicion. The writer saw him many times on the occasion of his second visit to Russia in 1882, and accompanied him to Riazan, where he was the chief mourner at Skobeleff's burial. Throughout this intercourse he never varied in expressing the convictions recorded in "The Russian Advance." It would be difficult for anyone to know Grodekoff long without acquiring for him the highest esteem. He is a quiet unassuming officer, worth a hundred of the glittering generals who adorn the Imperial pageants at St. Petersburg. The writer always found him ready to explain fully Russia's operations in Central Asia, and when the conversation turned upon the history of Skobeleff's siege of Geok Tepé he was writing, he unhesitatingly showed plans of the Russian forts and fortresses in the Turcoman region, and maps of secret surveys, which would have made the

eyes of the officers of our Intelligence Department glisten.*

But Skobeleff is dead, and there is reason to believe that Grodekoff's influence on the course of Russian policy is not very extensive. Skobeleff's main argument against the feasibility of an invasion was based upon the difficulty of transport, but this is a difficulty that is daily wearing away. When he waged his war against the Turcomans in 1880–81 it took nearly a month for troops for the expedition to march from Tiflis to the Caspian. The journey can now be done between sunrise and sunset. When he ferried his troops across the Caspian he had to contend with a restricted marine. To-day there is sufficient steam transport to convey the largest army across the Caspian. The Transcaspian railway was not finished till long after the fall of Geok Tepé, and rendered only slight assistance to the expedition. It is now in full working order, and is likely to be still further extended. Finally, Skobeleff imagined a difficult road to intervene between Askabad and Herat. Lessar has since discovered that it is one of the easiest in Asia.

The construction placed upon Skobeleff's words by a fair and sympathetic writer in the "Golos"† is not

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* A short time ago I came across a second-hand copy of "Grodekoff's Ride to Herat," with passages pencilled on almost every page, and a number of notes on the fly-leaves headed "Plan of the work," "aim to prove" so-and-so "page —," "ditto" so-and-so, "page —," and so on. The book had evidently been in the hands of some conscientious reviewer, who had accredited Grodekoff with all manner of wiles and aims. As a matter of fact Grodekoff wrote a few feuilleton articles for the "Novoe Vremya," having no aim and scarcely any cohesion whatever, and his opinions obtained their prominence mainly by the mode they were set forth in the translation.—M.

† Eighteen-column feuilleton review of "The Russian Advance towards India."—"Golos," Nov. 21—Dec. 3, 1882.

without interest in this matter. After affirming that Skobeleff evidently desired to reassure the Russophobe party in England, he says: "The ill-feeling and suspicion existing between Russia and England in regard to the Central Asian Question may cease in the event of Russia being convinced of the impossibility of invading India, and of England deciding not to step beyond her present Indian possessions. Michael Skobeleff, with remarkable truthfulness, expressed this view, and quite correctly added that there could be only any talk at all of a march of Russian troops on India in the event of the policy of England rendering Russia beside herself; in which case the Russian people would be capable of accomplishing anything, in spite of superhuman obstacles. But if even Skobeleff had no desire to be leader of such an expedition, who among our military men would consider himself capable of bringing such an undertaking to a successful close? However, people *à coeur leger* are just as numerous in Russia as they were in France before the war of 1870."

So long as we do not offend Russia, then, we need have no fear of an attack upon India. If we offend her—and the interests of the two empires are so conflicting that we can hardly hope to avoid giving her offence in the future—we shall have to expect a demonstration against our Eastern Empire. Let us admit that this demonstration narrowed itself to a seizure of Herat by a *coup de main*, and the establishment of a powerful entrenched garrison there. No one has ever contested the feasibility of this exploit, and the growth of events renders it every day more practicable. Let us also suppose that England contented herself with taking up a strong defensive position on the present Indo-Afghan

frontier, and made no effort to advance against the Russians at Herat; and finally, that the military operations on both sides of Central Asia ended for the moment in this manner—What would be the result of such a state of things?

Russia having seized Herat to compel us to concede to her demands in Europe, how could we effectively retaliate upon her? We could not rely upon the Afghans worrying her out of it; because, whereas the communications of any English army advancing to Cabul or Herat run through country infested with hostile Afghan tribes, the Russian line would traverse a region populated by non-Afghan and Afghan-hating peoples, who would aid rather than molest the invader. We should either have to give way to her demands or resign Herat, or ourselves advance a force to attack her there, an undertaking which no English statesman can possibly contemplate with equanimity. If we allowed her to remain at Herat we should have to maintain permanently an additional force of 50,000 troops in India. Why incur the possibility of such a stupendous danger when a few timely precautions might prevent all chance of their occurring?

We have no wish to diminish the weight of Russia's assurances. No Russian is more disgusted than we are at the reckless cries raised against her by certain Russophobists in this country. It is such alarmists whose incessant wolf-cry provokes the indifference of the public to the Russian advances when they actually occur. But, valuable as assurances are, and however much we may prize them, we cannot forget the teaching of history that once a conflict of aims commences, all assurances on both sides are scattered to the winds. Statesmen and diplomates keep on expressing assurances

to one another down to a declaration of war, and start afresh again the moment they meet at a congress or conference.

Already, before Russia had established herself thoroughly on the Perso-Afghan frontier, the practicability of marching a force from her outposts to India, contested in the case of Turkestan by experts, because never achieved, had been demonstrated beyond all cavil so far as concerned the Caspian. The road from the Caspian to India consists of three stages. The first, from Astrabad to Herat, was traversed in 1837 by a force of 40,000 Persian troops with 60 guns, comprising 18 and 24-pounders. The second, from Herat to Candahar, was traversed in 1880 by Ayoub Khan with 30,000 men and 30 guns. The third, from Candahar to India, has been repeatedly traversed by English armies, weighted with siege artillery. In this manner it has been proved that no natural obstacle exists to prevent an army marching from the Caspian to India by the Meshed road, and since 1881 Lessar has discovered a still easier route of invasion from Askabad.

Up to 1881 three artificial obstacles to a march from the Caspian to India were generally admitted by politicians. I. The possibility that Persia might refuse to countenance the march of Russian troops through her territory from Astrabad to Herat. II. The fact that the Akhal Tekkes being unconquered prevented Russia from using the alternative road *viâ* Krasnovodsk and Askabad. III. The circumstance that if the Meshed road were used Russia would have the hostile Turcomans all the way along her left flank to Herat, and the belief that even if the Krasnovodsk road were rendered available as far as Askabad by the conquest of the Akhal Tekkes,

Russia would still have to violate Persian territory in order to reach Herat, in which case the first obstacle would operate against her.

These obstacles must now be classed among the many barriers that have passed away in Central Asia during the last few years. Russia's position is so strong in the Transcaspian region, and the geographical character of Khorassan is such, that a detachment of two or three thousand Russian troops located at Astrabad and Shahrood would sever all communication between Persia proper and the Shah's territory east of the Caspian; Persia's hostility would be rendered a matter of nought. Between Khorassan and Persia proper very little love exists, and such a measure could be adopted without any fear of driving the pacific and well-disposed Khorassanis into revolt against the invaders. Thus, even with Persia hostile, Russia would be able to secure the high road from Astrabad to Meshed and Herat, and utilize it to the fullest without fear of molestation; her flank on the one hand protected by the garrisons stretching from Krasnovodsk to Askabad, and on the other by the great salt desert of Persia. No general could wish for a safer line of advance than this.

But of late years, and particularly since the conquest of Transcaspia, Persia has done everything to display her friendship for Russia. Our influence at Teheran today is *nil*. Our Minister there is only the exponent of an ever-veering policy, or, better speaking, no policy at all; while the Russian Minister speaks with the shadow of a quarter of a million men looming behind him. Under no circumstance is it to be expected that Persia will oppose a Russian utilization of the Khorassan road, merely for the sake of a Power for whom she has no

particular admiration or respect, and whose alliance would be dear at any price; since England could never adequately defend Teheran against a Russian attack. The Russians, thanks to the new Transcaucasian railway, could be in Teheran before a succouring force could quit our English ports, and could seize all the northern strategical points of the country before that force could land on the Persian coast. Any hope, therefore, that Persia would oppose the temporary occupation of Khorassan must be dismissed.

The second obstacle has disappeared with the conquest of the Akhal Tekkes; a subjugation effected with such vigour and determination, that the remnants of the tribe have no spirit left to be susceptible of revolt against their conquerors. In the event of a conflict the Akhal Tekkes would undoubtedly render faithful assistance as auxiliary horse; and in the meanwhile, by cultivating afresh on a large scale, with the aid of Russian seed and Russian implements, the fertile oasis stretching along the foot of the Kopet Dagh, they are laying the basis of an extensive food-supply for any army operating in the direction of Herat.

In a conversation the writer had with General Skobeleff, the latter expressed a very decided opinion that Sir Henry Rawlinson had laid too much stress on Persia's ability to assist or oppose any Russian expedition operating beyond the Caspian. He gave the writer to understand that Russia did not value much the co-operation of Persia, and that, on the other hand, she made light of her opposition. This opinion is not without its bearing upon the third enumerated obstacle. It has been held in some quarters in this country that Russia could not advance upon Merv or Herat from

Askabad without violating Persian territory, and that, therefore, if we secured Persia's opposition at Teheran, Russia would either have to traverse the desert to get to Merv, or else incur Persia's enmity by forcing her frontier. Such a view was based upon limited acquaintance with the condition of things in the Transcaspian region. The statements of Lessar and Alikhanoff show plainly enough that Russia, in marching to Merv *viâ* the Atak, or to Herat *viâ* the Atak, Old Sarakhs, and the east bank of the Hari Rud, would nowhere violate to any appreciable extent Persian territory, but would simply traverse settlements over which Persia's control is of the most nominal description, and whose inhabitants are loyally disposed towards Russia. Any probability of active opposition on the part of the Persian authorities in Khorassan against Russia is out of the question. It would never, at the utmost, go beyond the impotent form of a protest. Russia experienced no difficulty whatever during the last Turcoman war in purchasing Persia's support.

Equally a thing of the past is the reliance on the opposition of the Merv Tekkes. The terrific blow Skobeleff struck at the independent Turcomans at Geok Tepé has driven out of the Tekke breast all desire to cross swords with the Urus. If Russia despatched an expedition against Merv, the Tekkes might make a stand to defend their oasis, but that they would oppose any Russian advance upon Herat *viâ* Sarakhs is a very doubtful matter. If they did, Mr. O'Donovan has shown that a small Russian detachment sent from Sarakhs to the undefended point, where the Murghab artificially splits into the irrigation channels that water Merv, could easily seize the key of the oasis. Without water

the Merv oasis would shrivel up in a few days into a desert, and the inhabitants would have no alternative between capitulation and annihilation.

Of the two, the establishment of friendly relations between Askabad and Merv is to be expected rather than otherwise. Askabad is becoming the export market of Merv, and the more extensive the commercial relations between the Russians and the Tekkes, the less chance will there be of a conflict. But while Russia is plainly making every effort to subject Merv to her influence, she does not attempt at all to disguise her contempt of the Turcoman barrier. A hostile Merv on her flank in a march upon Herat no longer excites apprehensions in her breast. The offensive and defensive strength of the Merv Tekkes has been gauged, and has been found to be very considerably less than it was believed to be, both by Russian and English experts, a few years ago. Moreover, the possibility of raising the Turcomans against the Russians, a weapon the Indian Government is asserted to have confidently counted upon during its war preparations in 1877–78, is no longer an available factor in our favour. The might of the Akhal Tekkes has vanished. Russia has established such a barrier between Merv and the outer world, that it would be almost impossible for English officers with arms and money to make their way to the oasis and raise the Merv Tekkes against her. England can no longer hope, as she could in 1878, to bring down the Turcoman tribes on the Russian flank.

Since that memorable year, when at one moment a conflict between the two rival empires in the East seemed inevitable, Russia has improved her position in Central Asia to an extent that must be startling to

those who have not watched the rapid unfolding of events in that region. The base of any operations against India has been changed altogether by shifting it from Turkestan to Transcaspia. This base is over 300 miles closer to Herat than Samarcand was in 1878 to Cabul. Between it and Herat exists only one frail barrier—an easy hill-crossing, 900 feet above the surrounding locality—as compared with the broad and rapid river Oxus and the frightful passes of the Hindoo Koosh, 10,000 to 15,000 feet high, which intervened in 1878 between Kaufmann's main column and Cabul. Askabad is situated only six days' distance from the terminal point of the Russian railway system, whereas in 1878 Samarcand was distant six months from the locomotives of Orenburg. The entire Turkestan army did not exceed 50,000 men, and reinforcements could not reach it for half a year. On the other hand, the new base is situated only a few days' distance from the army of the Caucasus, 150,000 strong on a peace footing, and is further in close proximity to the parent army of Russia proper.

Up to 1878 Russia could only operate with her Turkestan army against India. She can now operate with the Caucasian army as well. She had only one offensive base; she has now two. Barriers of many kinds existed beyond the Caspian to prevent an advance from that quarter, and no general had demonstrated practically the feasibility of conducting a European army from Herat to Candahar. Ayoob Khan's march in 1880 dissipated any doubt on this score, and we now know that every inch of the road from the Caspian to India is traversable by a modern army. In 1878 it was believed that the Astrabad-Meshed road was the only

available route to Herat. Lessar has since discovered a better one. Russia has thus two roads of invasion to Herat at her disposal instead of one, and one of them she can traverse without disturbing the interests of Persia.

How great has been the change wrought within the last few years, may be gathered by merely a hasty glance at the Blue Book issued in the spring of 1881 on the retention of Candahar. That book contains the views of our most eminent generals and experts on the rival positions of England and Russia in Central Asia. In less than two years the march of events has turned it into lumber. Its opinions, except in a few isolated and partial instances, apply only to a past condition of things. They are valueless as a guide for the future. They deal almost entirely with the Russians in Turkestan. But it is the Russians on the Perso-Afghan frontier who excite apprehensions to-day.

Continental critics detect in our statesmen and generals one great defect—a lack of imagination. We will not stop to discuss the accuracy of this charge on this occasion, but we cannot help pointing out that a better proof in support of it could not be found than in the Blue Book above-mentioned. The changes in the Russian position in Central Asia which we have sketched, were in many instances either already accomplished or were so distinctly foreshadowed, that any statesman or general with a little imagination could have detected their impending consummation. Yet there is hardly one of the new factors of the Central Asian Question referred to in that obsolete collection of notes and memoranda.

As for England's position in Central Asia, nobody can seriously pretend that it has improved in the interval

to any degree proportionate with the march of events on the Russian side of that region.

The Afghan war is not one that England can regard, as a whole, with pride or pleasure, nor has it secured either the friendship or the respect of the Afghans. It is very much open to question, indeed, whether our prestige has not suffered by it in Central Asia. For our disasters in Afghanistan, the veering and vacillating Asiatic policy of the Beaconsfield Cabinet appears mainly to blame; but while admitting this, the candid reader cannot contest the fact that by throwing away Candahar, the Gladstone Cabinet abandoned the Key of India to Russia. So long as we held Candahar, we retained a certain control over Herat; we could have occupied it, at any rate, as soon as Russia could. Now, however, our outposts are so far away that Russia can enforce a protest or prohibition against our occupying Herat, by putting a garrison in the place a fortnight in advance of ourselves.

In pointing out these changes we have no desire to excite feeling against Russia, or to charge her with immediate designs upon India. We are willing to deal with her assurances in the most generous spirit. We are ready to make every concession to her legitimate interests. But we cannot overlook the fact that Russia has aims in the East, which clash violently with our interests all the way across the Asiatic continent. Of the two, we prefer to support the interests of our own country, to giving sentimental encouragement to the aggressive tendencies of certain powerful cliques in Russia. Two things are clear to us. We know that no Englishman ever proposes that we should attack Russia in Asia, or that we should in any way meddle with her

Imperial dominions. On the other hand, it is impossible for anyone to dispute that there is a constant talk in the Russian press of a Russian attack upon India.

The conditions of peace held out by Russia to England are conditions that England can never accept. The Russian press demands that we should remain quiescent within our present Indian limits, and leave off opposing the Russian advances in Central Asia. Russia's friendship is to be purchased by allowing her not only to annex all the unabsorbed territory up to the Afghan frontier, but also portions, and even the whole, of Afghanistan, if it suits her purpose to do so. Such an offer is monstrous. England will never entertain it for a moment. Russia must understand that Afghanistan is as much ours as Bokhara is hers. She has been told plainly by our eminent men, by a Gladstone Cabinet as well as by a Beaconsfield one, by such opposite authorities as Sir Henry Rawlinson and the Duke of Argyll, that Afghanistan must not be meddled with. Russia must conform her policy to that declaration. She has no legitimate interests in Afghanistan, and has earned herself no right to interfere at all with the affairs of that country. If we resent, therefore, any attempt on her part to secure influence at Herat or Cabul, the blame rests on her own head, not on ours.

Whether Russia would suspend her advance towards India if we withdrew our opposition to her seizure of the Balkan peninsula and Asia Minor, is a point on which much may be argued, without arriving at any satisfactory result. We ourselves do not think the sacrifice would avail. With the discovery of the easy road to Herat, the opening up of an overland trade with India has become a Russian interest of the first importance. Even

if Russia held Constantinople, the hope of securing the overland Indian trade for herself would lure her on to Herat and Candahar. The very financial embarrassments that afflict her now—and which many hold to be a guarantee against fresh advances—are, in reality, calculated to spur her on to India, in order to obtain a basis for putting an end to the ruinous Eastern Question on the one hand, and enrich herself with the overland trade of the East on the other.

England cannot resign Constantinople to Russia, and still less Asia Minor, through which she will some day require to run a railway to India. She must, therefore, be on her guard against an attempt to solve the Eastern Question in Central Asia. Russia has made no effort to conceal her belief that India is England's most vulnerable point. If some of her generals think an invasion of India difficult, they all consider a mutiny easy. We must, therefore, be prepared for the diversion at our rear proposed by General Soboloff, as well as the "demonstration" which Skobeleff admitted Russia would make, in the event of a war, against the frontier. Above all, our statesmen must never cease to bear in mind that whereas when the affairs of fallen Turkey came under diplomatic discussion in 1878, the danger of a Russian demonstration against India was regarded as only remote, the position in Central Asia has since so far changed that Russia will never again engage in hostilities with England about the Eastern Question, without making it her principal, perhaps her sole, effort to strike at us in India.

APPENDICES.

I.—Russian Cruisers and English Communications with India.

II.—The Rival Turkestan and Caucasian Movements towards India.

III.—English Exploration of Merv.

I.

RUSSIAN CRUISERS AND ENGLISH COMMUNICATIONS WITH INDIA.

Evil of the Berlin Treaty for Russia.—Her misfortune in having shown the two cards she means to play in the event of a conflict with England.—The historian Ilovisky on the Russian navy.—Origin of the Russian fleet.—Share of English officers in its development.—The fleet in the time of Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, and Nicholas.—Russia's decadence as a naval power.—Causes.—Russia likely to have a petroleum-heated fleet in the Black Sea.—Russian ironclads to-day.—Their impotence during the Turkish war.—Admiral Lesovsky's scheme for a cruiser fleet.—Secret despatch of seamen to America.—How exposed by the "Globe."—Account of the operations of the Russian expedition to America.—Cruiser enthusiasm in Russia.—Naval demonstration against China.—List of Russian cruisers.—England recovers her cruiser superiority.—Russia beaten as a naval power by Germany.—Growth of Germany and decay of Russia in the Baltic.—Russia's cruiser resources.—A Russo-French alliance, and its bearing upon cruiser operations against our communications with India.—The American expedition of 1878 might be repeated opposite the English coast.

"Privateering had always been one of the dangers most feared by the English in their wars, on account of the enormous extent of their trade in all the seas of the world. . . . A plan had been drawn up at the Admiralty. It consisted in buying ships at San Francisco, and having them fitted out with the available crews which we had in Kamschatka and in Japan. Our minister at Washington told us of many similar vessels already equipped for privateering. It was enough, by the rules of international law, that two-thirds of the crews should be Russians; the remainder could easily have been made up in America. . . . So soon as we set the example it was probable that a certain number of American privateers would have been armed at their own risk and peril, attracted by the chance of considerable profits. This might easily be made a

terrible weapon against English trade. At bottom, it was the only weapon at our disposal against the naval superiority which England so rigorously exerted against us."—"Diplomatic Study on the Crimean War" (Russian Official Publication): London, 1882, vol. ii. pp. 76–77.

THE amicable settlement, however partial and temporary it may have been, of the Eastern Question at Berlin in 1878, was in one sense a misfortune for Russia. Anticipating a war with England she had played two cards, each unexpected and unforeseen by her adversary; the success of which to a large extent depended upon the shock they should give to England's sense of security, and to the chances they enjoyed of taking her unawares. One of these was the despatch of an expedition from Turkestan to India, the other the despatch of a body of seamen to man cruisers purchased in America. Never anticipating that a land-locked power like Russia would resort to a system of cruiser warfare, and misled by the false impressions—a stronger term might justly be employed—Sir Edward Reed, M.P., had created of Russia's strength as an ironclad power, the English Government had prepared for the expected conflict by building whole squadrons of armour-plated vessels, while leaving the cruiser branch entirely neglected. How cleverly Russia availed herself of this weak point is described in the following narrative, which is purposely prefaced by an account of her decadence as a naval power, to show that for another decade at least, we need entertain no fear of her, so far as regular fighting at sea is concerned, although we must be always ready for cruiser activity, directed against our mercantile marine and colonies. The subject properly forms part of the Central Asian Question, because Russia, in attacking India, would advance overland, where our fleet could not get at her, while our own sea-communications with India must ever be exposed the whole distance to the onslaught of an enemy's cruisers. That enemy need not necessarily be Russia single-handed. Our interests in Africa clash so violently with the aims of France and Italy that, on the principle that "it is the unexpected that always happens," our statesmen should never assume a combination of Russia and France, or Russia and Italy to be impossible. In either of which case there would be a fine field for the display of unscrupulous cruiser activity.

In November 1881, when a talk was occasioned by the refusal of the Nicholas Railway to convey a 70-ton naval gun from the Government Oboukhoff steel-works at St. Petersburg to the Exhibition at Moscow, the celebrated Russian historian, Ilovisky, thus wrote to the "St. Petersburg Viedomosti":—"I am aston-

ished at the question having ever occurred at all of transporting such a gun to Moscow and exhibiting it there. What is it? A work of art? Is it meant to ever go off? I hope not at the Exhibition. I well remember what a grand display there was of such naval appurtenances by the Russian Admiralty at the Moscow Exhibition of 1872. Soon afterwards there was a war, and the Admiralty was so retiring then that it did not send even a single squadron to sea. A Popoffka, now, would be something for the Moscow people to stare at, as much on account of its inutility as its cost. In general, I may conclude by saying, that the Russian navy would do better if it distinguished itself more at sea and less on land."

It was not always thus that Russian historians referred to the national fleet. There have been epochs when it covered itself with glory, and inspired the poet and painter with enthusiasm. Why it should not have done so during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 is easily susceptible of explanation, and this will be rendered all the more clear by a short account of the rise of the navy, and its decadence since iron superseded timber in the construction of ships. The subject, irrespective of politics, should be interesting to most English naval officers, because it is to their predecessors that the Russian fleet largely owes its development, and to such admirals as Greig, Elphinstone, Cruse, and Crown, that it is indebted for its most brilliant exploits.

History* is at variance whether the "Little Grandsire," the tiny castaway sloop on the Moscow river that gave Peter the Great his first idea of a ship, and put in his head an intense longing to make Russia a naval power, was of Dutch or of English construction; but evidence seems to incline to the latter

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* I should remark that much of the matter of this narrative appeared in two articles in the "Army and Navy Magazine," December 1880 and January 1881, headed respectively "Russia's Decadence as a Naval Power" and "The Story of the Russian Cruisers." They provoked a prolonged and animated controversy in the Russian press, and, according to the "United Service Gazette," had no small share in subsequently bringing about the downfall of Admiral Popoff. Whether this be correct or not, the first article certainly served as an excellent weapon for the Russian non-official press, which all along had been discontented at the miserable *rôle* played by the regular fleet during the Turkish war, and was only too glad to make use of it for a series of bitter attacks on the administration of the navy. I may mention that neither the facts nor the conclusions in the two articles were ever

belief. However this may be, the early shipwrights that Peter invited to Voronej, on the Don, to help him build a flotilla for operations against the Turkish fortress of Azoff were brought from Holland, and it was not until the Tsar came over to Deptford Dockyard, to work as a shipwright, that he decided upon discarding the Dutch, and confiding the construction of his fleet to the English; whose superiority in naval architecture he admitted within a very few days of his arrival. On his return to Russia in 1698, William III. presented him with the "Royal Transport," the finest yacht in the country, built frigate fashion, and carrying twenty-four guns. The Tsar took with him, to help create the Russian fleet, 3 captains of men-of-war, 25 captains of merchant ships, 40 lieutenants, 30 pilots, 30 surgeons, 250 gunners, and upwards of 300 artificers. These were first conveyed to Archangel—a town founded by English traders a century and a half earlier—and then despatched overland either to Voronej, or to a naval station Peter had planned on Lake Peipus, close to the Swedish frontier. The Dutch officers and artificers hired at Amsterdam went direct overland to Russia by way of Narva, then a Swedish fortress. The Russian Admiralty archives contain a curious order of Peter's, commanding that the men from Deptford Dockyard should receive higher wages than other foreigners, "because the English are a people so bent on enjoying life that they will spend money on pleasure, whether it exceeds their income or not." Most of these Englishmen prospered in Russia. Captain Perry rose to a prominent position at Voronej; Ferguson, the mathematician, and two assistants from Christchurch Hospital, established and had the management of the Marine Academy; and Captain Raes became rear-admiral of the fleet. Their names are not yet forgotten in Russia, although they are less known than those of General Patrick Gordon (Peter's intimate friend), of Colonel Crawford, and the forty other Scotch officers who helped to organize the first regular army at Moscow.

When the "Royal Transport" arrived at Archangel, Russia's

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contested by the Russian press; both, however, have been modified by the light of later information, and the matter has been brought up to date. If I add that since 1876 I have acted as Russian naval critic to the "Army and Navy Gazette," during which period hardly a week has passed without something appearing from my pen in its columns, it will be seen that the generalisations are not hasty ones, being, as a matter of fact, the results of six years' continuous survey of the subject.—M.

only outlet was the White Sea. Peter had, however, already decided to create two fresh openings—through the Gulf of Finland into the Baltic, and through the Black Sea into the Mediterranean. The bitter rivalry of Sweden compelled him, *bon gré mal gré*, to force the former outlet first. Early in 1701 the Tsar shifted his naval operations from Voronej to the shores of Lake Peipus, and built 150 galleys, each carrying fifty men. A number of larger vessels were also constructed on the Ladoga. These preparations were scarcely complete when war recommenced between Sweden and Russia, and Field-Marshal Sheremetieff had the good luck to capture with his galleys a Swedish frigate on Lake Peipus. A few months later the same commander reduced Nöteburg, now Shlüsselburg, an island fortress at the entry of the Ladoga into the Neva. From this base Peter worked his way down the river, founded St. Petersburg, conquered Narva, and made himself master of the Gulf of Finland. In forcing the channel connecting Lake Peipus with the sea a whole Swedish flotilla, with ninety-eight cannon, became the prize of the Russians.

Ten years after this we find Peter setting out to capture Sveaborg with a 50-gun ship of his own make, followed by 92 galleys and 110 half galleys, affording transport for 16,000 troops. Sveaborg was occupied in 1713; and Peter, not satisfied with mere successes along the shore, boldly sought the Swedes on the high seas with sixteen ships of the line and 180 galleys. The Swedes were defeated, Aland was conquered, and the Tsar returned in triumph to Cronstadt. In 1719 the fleet had grown to 30 ships of the line, 250 galleys, and 300 barges. When the Tsar died in 1725 the Russian Navy boasted of 41 line-of-battle ships, with 2,105 guns and 15,000 seamen.

We have dwelt somewhat fully on these details of development, because the rapid growth of Russia's Navy during a single reign contrasts strongly with the difficulty the present Emperor experiences in keeping up a respectable appearance at sea. When we remember that at the close of Peter the Great's career the population of Russia was barely fourteen millions, whereas to-day it amounts to nearly 101 millions, we can hardly dispute the fact that, relatively, the country was a stronger naval power in 1725 than it is in 1883.

After the death of Peter the Great, the fleet rapidly went to decay. Catherine the First, Anne, and Elizabeth, the three empresses succeeding the Tsar, were German in their sympathies and took no interest in the fleet. It was not until Catherine the Great seized the reins of power in 1762, that a

revival took place, accompanied by a second influx of foreign blood, chiefly Scotch. A few short years sufficed to restore again the glories of a fleet, which, to use the sonorous diction of the historian Gibbon, "sailed from the Baltic, circumnavigated the continent of Europe, entered the Mediterranean by the Straits of Gibraltar, and carried terror to the gates of Constantinople."

The fleet set out in two squadrons, commanded ostensibly by the court favourite Prince Alexai Orloff, but really by Admiral Greig. The first comprised ten line-of-battle ships, four frigates, and a number of transports, commanded by Admiral Spiridoff, a clever and experienced officer. The second consisted of five line ships and two frigates, under the control of Admiral Elphinstone. There were Scotch and English officers on board every ship. Elphinstone's squadron was the first to meet the Turks, fighting sixteen line ships and eleven xebecs for two successive days (May 15th and 16th, 1770) and driving them to Chios; where, on the 5th of July, they were followed by ten Russian men-of-war. The Turkish admiral's ship was blown up early during the engagement, and Spiridoff's also was destroyed by fire, 700 seamen perishing in the flames, and only the officers escaping. The defeated Turks foolishly fled to the narrow Bay of Tchesmé, on the Asiatic coast, where they were driven against one another and had no room to turn. This circumstance led Captain (afterwards Admiral) Cruse, the English commander of the flag-ship, to make the proposal to burn the fleet where it lay. Alexai Orloff agreed to the plan, and the exploit of Tchesmé—the most venerated victory of the Russian Navy—was successfully achieved by the combined exertions of three Scotch officers: Admiral Elphinstone blockading the ships, Admiral Greig conducting the cannonade, and Lieutenant Dugdale leading the fire-ship into action. At the very moment of starting, the Russian sailors abandoned their places and jumped overboard; but Dugdale steered bravely on unmoved, and setting fire to the outside ship, involved the whole of the rest, except one, in flames.

After the victory of Tchesmé the Russian fleet remained a year in Turkish waters. Its strength at the close of the campaign, brought up by vessels purchased in England and by Turkish prizes, was sixteen line-of-battle ships, three galliots, twenty-three frigates, nine polacres, nineteen xebecs, nine brigantines, and sixteen sloops; in all ninety-five sail. It is well to compare this magnificent naval demonstration in the Archipelago in 1770 with Russia's impotence in the Mediterranean in 1877. Not only was Russia then supreme on the Grecian

side of Turkey, but she was also complete mistress of the waters of the Black Sea.

Returning home, Greig, a year later, with fifteen line-of-battle ships, gave good account of himself in a battle with the Swedes in the Baltic. If, in 1790, the Russians were not so successful with their northern enemy, the circumstance was due, not to Greig and his Scotch subordinates, but to the obstinacy and incapacity of Admiral Tchitchagoff, one of those regrettable individuals found in every country, in every age, who appear to be born for the no other purpose than that of lowering the pride of their fatherland, and reminding it of the instability of prestige.

On the whole, however, Catherine's reign deservedly ranks as the most brilliant epoch of the Russian navy. To Peter the Great the credit belongs of having found Russia without a fleet, and left her the chief naval power in the Baltic. To Catherine the Great the merit belongs of having restored the dimmed glories of the fleet, and rendered Russia supreme in the Black Sea and a leading naval power in Southern Europe. The one showed what Russian seamen could do in their own shallow seas; the other, what they could do in the more distant and deeper waters of the Mediterranean. In these twin achievements our countrymen took such a prominent part that a history of the Russian fleet would prove most popular reading. The memory of many of the officers who helped to establish the Russian land and sea forces has faded away, but their warlike descendants may still be found scattered broadcast throughout the Russian service. Even after the lapse of a century, it is impossible to take up a Russian Army or Navy List without the eye constantly resting on such names as Gordon, Greig, Boyle, Gascoigne, Ramsay, Leslie, Brown, Michelson, Johnstone, and others.*

After the death of Catherine the fleet languished again. Paul did not pay much attention to it, and the early years of Alex-

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* The "fighting Ramsays" are known as one of the most famous families of Finland. General Baron Ramsay died full of honours in 1877, and his son led the Finnish contingent during the Turkish war; when he so distinguished himself at Gorni Doobniak that he was made Commander of the Semoneff Guards. General Brown was Governor of Riga in the time of Catherine the Great; Colonel Michelson suppressed the celebrated Pugatcheff revolt; General Gascoigne established the first Russian gun foundries; Captains Bruce and Elton effected the early naval

ander's reign were chiefly remarkable for the two or three successful exploits of English men-of-war in the Baltic, during the rupture between England and Russia. Its conduct at Navarino in 1827 is too well known to be dwelt upon here, although we may remark that the destruction of the Turkish fleet by the Allied Squadron rendered it an easy task in the subsequent year for Admiral Greig (a son of Tchesmé Greig) to sweep the Euxine clear of Ottoman ships, and facilitate the land operations against Varna and Adrianople. The remnants of the Ottoman fleet, under Ahmet Papooji (Ahmet the Shoemaker), remained inactive in the Bosphorus the whole of the war, with the exception of one solitary cruise in the Black Sea, when the Russian 45-gun ship "Raphael" unsuspectingly sailed into the Turkish place of anchorage one evening and allowed itself to be captured. The blockade of the Bosphorus after this was maintained by Admiral Greig himself, while Admiral Heyken kept watch with a squadron at the Dardanelles. Russia's ability in 1828 to keep Turkey shut up in the Sea of Marmora, contrasts strongly with her complete helplessness in the Black Sea and Mediterranean fifty years later.

At the close of the war greater attention than ever was paid to the Black Sea fleet, and when the Crimean struggle commenced, Russia's naval power was pretty evenly divided between the northern and southern seas; the total effective force being forty line-of-battle ships, twelve frigates, and twenty war steamers. At the very outset the fleet was crippled by the departure of the numerous English officers serving on board it, although a weeding process had been in progress some years. Another cause of its weakness was the abominable corruption pervading every branch of the naval profession, and blasting the efficiency of every Russian ship afloat. In spite of all that has been said on this score, it is, notwithstanding, open to doubt whether the flagrant peculation of Russian Admiralty officials during Nicholas's reign was relatively greater than in the epochs of Peter and Catherine. There was, however, this difference. In the two earlier reigns corruption had pervaded

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surveys of the Caspian. From the "Russian Army List" for 1883, I take at random the names of Major-General Stewart, Colonel Count O'Rourke, Captain Leslie, Captain Hamilton, Captain Boyle, and Lieutenant Wilson. General Greig, the late Finance Minister, is a descendant of the two admirals of that name. An interesting book might be written on the influence of the English on the development of Russia.—M.

the naval service of every European power, as well as of Russia. Hence, in this respect, all were weak alike. By the time of Nicholas, however, the navies of Western Europe had become free, or nearly free, of corruption, while Russia had not improved a bit. Hence the superiority of the Allied Squadron in one very important respect over the fleet of Russia.

The fate of the fleet is well known. Half of it perished at Sebastopol, the other half remained ingloriously in Cronstadt the whole of the war. Whatever successes Russia gained during the Baltic blockade, were due to her hastily improvised fleet of gunboats and corvettes; of which no less than 81, with 10,000 horse-power and 297 heavy guns, were constructed by a contractor named Putiloff in the course of two years.

We have mentioned the absence of foreign officers and the prevalence of corruption as being two of the causes of the sorry figure cut by the Russian fleet during the Crimean War. There were, however, other forces at work striking at its ascendency, which subsequently became the prominent instruments of its decay. The more important of these were the substitution of steam for wind as a motive power, and the supersession of wooden vessels by ships of iron.

Up to 1850 Russia may be said to have surpassed every other European nation in resources for the construction of fleets. She possessed immense forests of oak—one of which, in East Russia, was larger than all England; she had unbounded supplies of hemp and tar; and, in short, she enjoyed a monopoly of every article required for the construction of wooden ships of the line. We have seen what Peter could do with these resources, and when we examine the progress which Russia had made in the course of a century and a half, we have no hesitation in affirming, that had he been alive in 1850, and the agency of steam been then unknown, he would have made his empire the foremost naval power in the world, so far as the possession of fleets of line-of-battle ships was concerned. But the adoption of steam as an auxiliary to sails infringed upon this potential supremacy of Russia, while the subsequent exclusive employment of iron in naval construction robbed her completely of it. These innovations found Russia deficient of three of the most vital essentials—iron, coal, and skilled labour. In these respects she was not only immensely behind England, but also far to the rear of many other states of Western Europe.

A glance at a few statistics will bring these facts home more strongly to the reader. Peter the Great, who did everything, from cobbling shoes to planning the future invasion of India,

early gave an impulse to the iron trade of his country by sending Demidoff to the Urals and Botatchoff to Central Russia. These men and their contemporaries did so much towards advancing the industry, that, in 1740, the iron production of Russia was six times greater than that of England; the respective totals being 107,000 and 17,500 tons. Russia, with her vast supplies of timber, had for years a magnificent advantage over England in the production of charcoal iron, but the innovation of mineral coal in smelting, and the subsequent operation of free trade, rapidly destroyed this superiority. Already, early in the present century, England was ahead of her rival, and in 1860, when the knell of wooden ships was sounding, Russia, clinging obstinately to her charcoal furnaces, was sticking at an output of three hundred thousand tons a year, while the rapidly growing output of England was five millions. At the outbreak of the Turkish war in 1877, the output of Russia was still the same, notwithstanding the creation of an ironclad fleet in the course of thirteen years. England's yearly output, on the other hand, had reached seven millions of tons, of which a very large quantity was able to force its way, in spite of a hostile tariff, into Russia. Since then there has been no improvement. In spite of every assistance from the State, the iron industry of Russia is in a ruinous condition, and although it is admitted that charcoal iron can never compete with the coal-smelted material in price, no genuine effort is being made to change the process. Russia, the leading iron-producing country in Europe in the time of Peter the Great, is to-day the poorest. From producing six times more iron than England, she has relatively retrograded till she produces twenty-three times less. Supremacy in the greatest of the resources for building men-of-war has passed completely from Russia to England.

The adoption of steam in lieu of sails found England already a great coal-producing country. When the English fleet steamed into the Baltic in 1854, Russia had absolutely no coal of her own whatever. Near the Baltic was none, and near the Black Sea the two or three shafts sunk into the beds of the Donetz had only produced something like coal, inasmuch that it gave out smoke, though it refused to emit heat. In the quarter of a century that has elapsed since then there has been no improvement, except within the last two or three years. Coal beds have been discovered in the province of Olonetz, but they have not yet been worked; and pending their very problematical development, the Baltic fleet continues to burn Cardiff and Newcastle fuel, using 25,000 tons a year. In South Russia

there has been greater progress. Coal beds have been discovered in the Donetz valley capable of furnishing a yearly supply of one hundred million tons for two hundred years. Thanks to foreign capital, these have been slightly worked, and in 1877 their output was a million tons; the output elsewhere in Russia that year being eight hundred thousand tons, thus forming a total of one million eight hundred thousand tons, as compared with one hundred and fifty thousand tons in 1855. This production, however, was not of much use during the Turkish war, as there existed no easy means of conveying the coal to the Black Sea. Early in 1877 the stocks of English coal accumulated at Odessa and Sebastopol became exhausted, and many a time the Russian war-steamers were unable to proceed from port for want of fuel.

Recently the Admiralty has issued an order that all the Government vessels in the Black Sea shall use exclusively Donetz fuel, although the regulation has since been rescinded in favour of the yacht "Livadia," the voracious furnaces of which are to be fed with doubly-screened coal from Cardiff. It is a question whether the order, thus infringed, will be carried out strictly in other instances. All the same, however, the extraction of Donetz coal is a developing industry, while there are symptoms of an impending opening up of the immense iron deposits in the valley of the Dnieper by French and American capitalists. The presence of coal and iron, in unbounded quantities, in proximity to the Black Sea, must inevitably give Russia immense power in that region at some future period. It will be there and not in the Baltic, that her regeneration as a naval power may be expected to take place; to be followed by a development of her political power in the Mediterranean.

In this regeneration the petroleum supply of the Caucasus may be expected to play a very important part. The Caspian gunboats and private steamers (many of the latter 250 feet long) use oil-consuming furnaces, and there seems no reason why this should not also be the case with the Black Sea marine, the moment a cheap and unlimited supply of petroleum is conveyed to Poti and Batoum. Instead of using English or South Russian coal, the men-of-war could then take in their supply of liquid fuel at either of those two points, or, in the event of a war, from the abundant supply that exists in the Sea of Azoff. Should the powerful forts at Kertch and the rows of submarine torpedoes across the straits of Yenikale prove no barrier to an English fleet, in spite of their success in keeping Hobart Pacha in 1877–78 out of the Sea of Azoff, then a

fluid fuel supply could be laid on to Odessa and Sebastopol by railway by means of the tank-car system *viâ* Tsaritzin, as described in the article on the political bearings of Baku oil.

The third and final factor needed for the construction of an ironclad fleet, was skilled labour. Every Russian *moujik* is amazingly dexterous with his axe, and thus, in olden times, there was abundance of tolerably skilled labour for shipbuilding. In those days the lumber men on Russian rivers made very good sailors with a little foreign training. The ironclad movement changed all this. Russia needed skilled mechanics and artificers, and she possessed none anywhere outside her scantily manned dockyards. She needed engineers, and having no mercantile marine, or private ship-building establishments, to fall back upon, she had to create a special class by sending a number of officers to England to be trained, and by establishing technical schools. After a lapse of twenty years Russia is no better off in these respects than she was at the outset. There is still the same dearth of good mechanics; for the Russian does not take kindly to the working of iron. There is still a scarcity of practical engineers; shown by the difficulty the Admiralty experienced in 1880 in obtaining competent men for Lesovsky's Pacific Squadron, and by the constant mishaps that befall a Government vessel the moment it clears the moles at Cronstadt. There is still the want felt of a good class of stokers; proved by the indisputable fact that every set of engines constructed in England works at a diminished speed of two or three knots an hour the moment it is placed under Russian control. We are not saying all this in a carping spirit, for the defects of the Russian Navy are readily admitted by Russians themselves, and they are anxious to promote improvement by discussion. A more charming class of men than Russian naval officers it would be difficult to find, and they are invariably so genially disposed towards England that we would be sorry to say anything to hurt their feelings. But facts are facts. Russian commanders are too often very inexperienced; Russian engineers are better at theory than at practice; and Russian artificers and stokers would drive the mildest English officer out of his senses. To quote the case of the frigate "General Admiral" in 1880, Messrs. Baird hunted up a gang of English stokers from the foreign steamers at Cronstadt, and these men, although drunk most of the time, made the vessel go three knots an hour faster that the Russian stokers. The competitive powers of the Russians were exerted to the utmost, but to no avail. So also the frigate, while controlled by English engineers, steamed smoothly through the waters, but when the

actual voyage commenced in September the engines broke down, from the unskilfulness of the Russian engineering staff, before the vessel had got fifty miles from Cronstadt.

Notwithstanding that she lacked the three great essentials—coal, iron, and skilled labour—Russia, nevertheless, early decided to construct an ironclad fleet by her own unaided efforts. The engines of the wooden men-of-war of the 1850–60 period were, in many instances, constructed in England, but during the next decade the iron ships and their engines were mostly built in Russia, although with the aid of English engineers. Towards the end of the "sixties," as Russians say, the edict went forth that all Englishmen were to be discharged the Russian navy, to prevent a recurrence of the difficulty of 1854, when they refused to fight against their own country, and, in common parlance, "put Russia in a hole." At the same time, to promote the native industries, and render Russia independent of foreign support, orders were successively issued that the fleet was to be built exclusively by Russians, with Russian material only.

In pursuance of this policy vast workshops were erected, and immense purchases made of English plant. From an intimate knowledge of Russian and English dockyards, the writer is able to affirm that in 1870 the naval establishments at Cronstadt and on the Neva, were, in these two respects, superior in a large measure to many of our own. Even to-day, when the extensions and improvements of Chatham and Portsmouth have left Russia miles behind in the race, the English engineer cannot but admire the architecturally beautiful and commodious workshops of Cronstadt and St. Petersburg, with their magnificent array of machinery and their admirably graded technical administration. When he comes to inquire, however, as to the work turned out by these Imperial establishments, he is irresistibly reminded of the old fable of the mountain and the mouse. He finds they are unable, even under pressure of a European war, to produce anything approaching the common, everyday results of some of the dirty little rows of private shanties on the Thames, the Clyde, and the Tyne.

We have only to glance at Russia's ironclad fleet to see the truth of these assertions. The ironclad frigate "Peter the Great" was commenced in 1869; it was still in the probationary stage of trial trips in 1877 when the Turkish war broke out; and in that summer, when the Emperor desired to send her to the Dardanelles, the hull was found to be so porous, and the engines, from bad design, so faulty, that she could not possibly steam safely out of the Baltic. Since then she has been under constant repair, and although provided in 1882 with a fresh set

of engines by Messrs. Elder & Co. of Glasgow, is still a serious drain on the navy estimates, and to a large extent is now obsolete in design. A second instance is the half-armoured frigate "General Admiral." This vessel was planned in 1870; was commenced in 1873; launched in 1876; and completed for sea in September 1880, when she was found to be, by an error of calculation, 500 tons heavier than originally designed.

Two other new frigates, the "Minin" and the "Duke of Edinburgh," were also planned in 1870. The former was launched in 1874, and after numerous alterations, was completed sufficiently to proceed to the Mediterranean in 1879. The "Duke of Edinburgh," launched in 1875, did not approach completion until so late in the navigation season of 1880, that she had to be sent through the ice to Revel to be finished there for despatch to the Pacific.

None of the above vessels were of purely Russian make. The armour plates of the "Peter the Great" were rolled in England and fixed on the vessel's side under English supervision; and to a great extent the same was the case with the other vessels. The engines of the "Peter the Great," the "General Admiral," and the "Minin" were made by Messrs. Baird, on the Neva, and the hull and engines of the "Duke of Edinburgh" and the hull of the "Minin" at the Baltic Iron Works; the former firm being wholly English in its administration, and the latter nearly so. In every case the more delicate parts of the machinery were made in England, the iron used in their construction was chiefly English, and they have steamed ever since their birth by the agency of English coal. The same remarks apply to most of the remaining vessels of the Russian fleet, even to the frigate "Vladimir Monomarchus," launched so recently as late in the autumn of 1882. Every bit of the 1,500 tons of steel composing its hull was obtained from Glasgow; the 400 tons of steel-faced armour plating were supplied by Camel & Co. of Sheffield, and the firm of John Brown & Co., of the same place, furnished all the boiler plates. The machinery in the various workshops employed in utilizing these materials, was almost entirely of English make, and the coal used in all the operations was obtained from Newcastle. Of the clipper series, constructed since 1873, the "Kreuzer," "Djigit," "Razboinik," and "Naezdnik" were engined by Baird, while the "Strelok," "Plastoon," "Vestnik," and "Opritchnik" were built by the Baltic Company. The engines of two of the latter four clippers were constructed by Penn, and the engines of the remaining two by the Baltic Company from Penn's designs. The engines of both the Black Sea Popoffkas were also made by Baird. As

to Russia's torpedo boats, half of the 120 constituting the present flotilla were made by Baird and the Baltic Company, and the greater part of the rest abroad. In all these instances we find the material used in construction chiefly imported from England, together with most of the finer portions of the machinery. The designs may have been prepared at the Russian Admiralty from English Admiralty drawings—it is amazing how rapidly our most secret designs find their way from Whitehall to the Naval Construction department at St. Petersburg—and Russian labour, supplemented in special instances by English workmanship, may have created the hulls and the engines, but the iron and coal used has been English, the plant for constructing the ships English, and the practical supervision to a very large extent has been English also. The two Russian factors—the indifferent mechanical labour of the workmen and the ultra-technical supervision of officials—have been precisely those which have enhanced the cost, and impaired the excellence of the rest.

In this manner, from causes very largely beyond her control, Russia has lost the naval ascendency she possessed in the time of Peter and Catherine the Great. Her efforts to construct an ironclad fleet have resulted completely in failure; and after a vast outlay she has discovered, to her chagrin, that Russian armour-plated vessels take three times as long to build as English ones, involve two or three times the outlay, and, in the end, from bad construction and a destructive climate, are half-a-dozen times more troublesome to keep in order. A comparison of Russia's naval resources of the three epochs of Peter the Great, of Catherine the Great, and of the two Alexanders, Second and Third, cannot but lead to the conclusion that Russia is immensely weaker to-day than she was at the beginning and at the end of the eighteenth century, and that, with her present undeveloped and restricted resources, she cannot build or maintain any war-vessel without assistance in every detail from other European countries.

In 1877, when the Turkish war broke out, Russia had enjoyed a period of twelve years' peace to form her armour-plated fleet, and was commonly credited with possessing twenty-nine ironclad vessels. Early in the spring, Sir Edward Reed, whose "puffing" of the Russian fleet had given rise to a panic a few years earlier, and who was considered (except by the very numerous anti-Popoff party in Russia) as an authority on Russian naval matters, penned an article for the "Illustrated London News" of May 23, in which a forecast was made of the squadron that would probably proceed to the Dardanelles to repeat the exploit of Tchesmé. Of the nine men-of-war Sir Edward Reed enumerated, the first,

the "Peter the Great," was at no time in 1877 or 1878 in a condition to proceed to the Mediterranean; the second and third, the "Sevastopol" and "Petropavlovsky," were old wooden frigates, since relegated to harbour service; the fourth, the "Prince Pojarsky," was being re-engined at Cronstadt, and was *hors de combat* throughout the war; the four next vessels, known as the "Four Admirals" (the "Greig," "Lazareff," "Tchitchagoff," and "Spiridoff"), were cranky turret ships of the "Captain" class, with extremely limited coal space, and, for these reasons and worn-out engines and boilers, unfitted to proceed on a distant cruise; and, finally, the ninth, the floating battery "Kreml," nicknamed the "Slow-coach Kreml," was a ricketty vessel, whose weak points came out conspicuously in 1880, when, while starting for the Pacific, she collided with a merchant vessel, and smashed her ram to pieces. Such was Russia's crack squadron, which had frightened England so much in 1875, and which two years later, shook the public faith in fancy forecasts and professional "puffing," by remaining ignominiously in harbour the whole of the Turkish war. Not only was this squadron utterly incapable of repeating the blockades of the Dardanelles effected in the reigns of Catherine and Nicholas, but it was even unfit to do what Peter the Great's flotilla had done—fight the enemy on the open waters of the Baltic. Had an English fleet invaded the Gulf of Finland in 1878 the Russian ironclads might have done a little in the way of harbour defence, behind the batteries of Sveaborg and Cronstadt, and in this they would have been assisted by some of the thirteen antique monitors of the Ericson epoch, and two more floating batteries like the "Kreml"; but, from the unsoundness of all their machinery and boilers, and their marked deficiencies in armour and artillery, they certainly could not have waged open offensive warfare in the Baltic Sea. The brunt of the fighting would have fallen to the torpedo boats, and to a hastily constructed gunboat flotilla. The real Russian fleet, as understood by Europe, would have done little or nothing.

In the Black Sea, Sir Edward Reed expected that Russia would oppose a good front to the Turks with her Popoffkas. Instead of this, these wretched ironclad barrels, which have cost a million apiece, and have never done anything except waste coal and kill their own stokers, remained useless at Odessa until the conclusion of the war, when they went on a triumphal "trial trip" with the High Admiral, the Grand Duke Constantine, to Batoum! The Black Sea Steam Navigation Company's fleet, on which subsidies amounting to £3,000,000 sterling had been spent to qualify it as an auxiliary to the Southern Navy, was

found to be almost entirely worthless for purposes of transport and war, owing to badness of build and inefficiency of engines and boilers. At the outbreak of hostilities, it could only furnish some four or five steamers, and these did absolutely nothing commensurate with their enormous cost. Excluding the capture of the Turkish transport "Mersina" by the "Russia" (the fabricated victory of the "Vesta" needs no mention here), the Black Sea war-steamers rendered no important services throughout the campaign, and whatever exploits Russia achieved on the Danube, or along the coast of the Euxine, were due to a roughly extemporised system of torpedo attack and defence, which could have been carried on without any assistance from the regular fleet.* In a word, all that Russia did along her coast, and at sea in 1877 and 1878, could have been done by the untrained fishermen of any country. The famous fleet of twenty-nine ironclads possessed no power of attack, and scarcely any of defence.

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In the early spring of 1878, Admiral Lesovsky found himself confronted by a difficult problem. For years vast sums had been expended on the Russian navy, and now that a war with the leading naval power of the world appeared imminent, the Minister of Marine discovered himself unable to send even one small, solitary squadron from the Baltic. Splendid workshops and machinery Russia possessed in abundance, and numerous vessels famous for originality of design, but, however he might *wish* it, the minister could not put his hands upon half a dozen effective vessels, and despatch them to sea against England. It is true that the celebrated fleet of 29 ironclads, which, thanks to Sir Edward Reed's assertions, had frightened England into convulsions a few years earlier, still existed on paper, but the only prominent feature about it was the extreme simplicity with which the vessels could be divided into three categories:—Class I., ironclads like the "Four Admirals," too obsolete to send to sea; Class II., ironclads like the "Peter the Great" and "Popoffkas," too faulty in design and construction to trust to the mercy of the unsympathetic ocean; and Class III., ironclads like the "General Admiral" and "Kniaz Minin,"

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* The torpedo operations in the Black Sea, which secured the coast from Turkish attack, and the exploits of Doubasoff and others on the Danube, were effected at an expenditure of less than half a million sterling—half the cost of a circular ironclad. —M.

as yet unfinished, and therefore of no present use to the country. Admiral Lesovsky, to put the matter plainly, was the minister of a fleet that was not a fleet, and to fight England he had to begin *de novo*, and exercise his ingenuity to create another.

Fortunately for Russia, Admiral Lesovsky's mind was of a different class to that of the hobby-haunted, ultra-theoretical Admiral Popoff. He was not a successful landsman, helped into power by a self-seeking English naval architect abroad—both unpatriotically oblivious of the interests of their respective countries; but he was a practical, clear-headed, and hard-working frigate officer. While yet a young lieutenant, he had served with distinction under Admiral Nakhimoff at Sebastopol. At the close of the war he had taken the frigate "Diana" to the Pacific, and when that vessel foundered during an earthquake in Simoda Bay he had been complimented for the courage he had displayed, and had been rewarded by the appointment to the port command at Cronstadt. In 1863 he had been secretly despatched with a squadron to America, to deter England from meddling with the Polish revolt, and had subsequently brought home the dead body of the Czar's son, Nicholas, from Nice. An appointment ashore had afterwards been given him, and he had risen from post to post, until he had become Minister of Marine.

With the hobbies of Admiral Popoff he had no sympathy. As a practical officer he knew that seamen require to *live* in ships as well as to fight in them, and had set his face against such floating "black holes" as the "Popoffkas." For years he had recognised the hopelessness of Russia attempting to beat England in the construction of ironclads, and had strongly advocated instead the formation of a powerful fleet of lightly armoured cruisers to strike at our weakest point—our mercantile marine. Now that matters had come to a crisis, the Grand Duke Constantine could not but recognise that he had been led astray by the glib-tongued chief of the Naval Construction Department, and that, after all, Stepan Stepanovitch Lesovsky had been right in preferring swift cruisers to crawling and cumbrous ironclads.

The powerful effect which Russians believe the despatch of the squadron to America in 1863 had upon England's policy towards the Poles, suggested to Admiral Lesovsky a repetition of the manœuvre. But there was a difficulty to overcome at the very outset. In 1863 Russia had had numbers of swift wooden frigates. In 1878 she had nothing but immobile masses of iron. It was, therefore, decided in council to send a body of

Baltic seamen to the United States, and purchase cruisers for them there. And, in order to give the expedition greater effect, it was arranged that the despatch of the sailors should be conducted with such secrecy, that nothing should be known of their departure from Cronstadt until they had set their foot on the American coast.

Secret instructions were at once telegraphed to Germany to secure a steamer for an unknown cargo, and to send it with sealed orders to Port Baltic, an out-of-the-way harbour on the Esthonian coast, near Revel. On the 7th of April orders were sent to Cronstadt to prepare for the expedition, and in forty-eight hours all the officers and men had been selected and warned to prepare for the journey. Two days later (April 11th), sixty-six officers and 606 seamen set out from Cronstadt for America. They were divided into three crews, commanded respectively by Captain K. K. Grippenberg, Captain F. K. Avelon, and Captain E. I. Alexaeff. At dusk, they marched across the ice from Cronstadt to the mainland, and took train direct from Oranienbaum to Port Baltic. A few hours after their arrival at that desolate place, the "Cimbria," belonging to the Dutch-American Company, steamed into the harbour. Grippenberg and Avelon thereupon went aboard and arranged matters with the captain, and in the evening the ship's boats came off and took all the men aboard; few of the Port Baltic people being aware of the embarkation or having any idea as to the destination of the detachment. Sixteen days later the "Cimbria" arrived at the coast of Maine, and cast anchor in Mount Desert harbour.

The precautions against letting the movement become known outside Cronstadt had been so stringently enforced, that Lesovsky's plan for frightening the English by the sudden apparition of Russian seamen in American waters would have been brilliantly successful, but for an untoward incident. At Bretneff's engineering works at Cronstadt was an Englishman named Anderson—there is no harm in mentioning his name now, as he is dead—and he, hearing particulars of the expedition from the officers concerned, at once sent a letter to me which I forwarded to the "Globe." In this manner it happened that while Grippenberg was effecting his embarkation at Port Baltic under circumstances of almost melo-dramatic mystery, the newsboys were already crying the intelligence of the cruiser scheme about the streets of London. So much importance was attached to the news at Whitehall, that inquiries were made at the "Globe" office by the Admiralty as to its reliability. A few days later, a second letter from Anderson cleared up

any misgivings that might have existed as to the accuracy of the first.*

None the less, however, the effect on the public mind of England was prodigious when it was known that 600 Russian seamen had arrived on the American coast, in proximity to our Canadian shipping. It was believed that the "Cimbria" was already equipped as a cruiser, and that other steamers were following her across the Atlantic. If one cruiser had slipped past Scotland unobserved, what guarantee had we that others had not eluded notice likewise? It is often affirmed by Russians that the shock administered to England's sense of security by the arrival of the "Cimbria" at Mount Desert, had a powerful effect in bringing about the concessions of Lord Salisbury to Count Schouvaloff. However this may be, it is beyond dispute that Lesovsky's expedition was eminently successful in proportion to its size and cost. When the "Globe" first published the news, the English press had ridiculed the idea as preposterous that the United States would ever grant Russia a foothold for fitting out privateers. The spectacle was now presented, however, of Russians turning American private shipbuilding establishments into temporary Russian dockyards, and arming and equipping three large steamer-cruisers within a few days' run of Canadian shipping. England discovered, to her chagrin and disgust, that the power to which she had paid a huge indemnity a few years earlier, as an acknowledgment of her error in allowing a single Confederate cruiser to be fitted out from Birkenhead, was ready to accord her reciprocal treatment by unblushingly permitting Russia to equip in American ports an entire privateer squadron against her mercantile marine.

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* The "Neue Freie Presse," in commenting upon the "Globe" intelligence, after the arrival of the "Cimbria" at Mount Desert, expressed its opinion that the real warning to the English Government had been given, not by the "Globe," but by the English Consul at Revel. This being copied into the Russian papers, Baron Soucanton, being a Russian subject, was assailed as a spy and traitor to his country. To defend himself from these aspersions the consul preferred a charge of libel against the "Golos," in which he distinctly declared he had not advised the Foreign Office of the departure of the seamen, although aware of the fact. In this, in common with the English Consul at Cronstadt, he failed in his duty, and exposed the disadvantage and danger of England employing Russian subjects as consuls at Russian ports.—M.

On the 20th of May, Captain Semetchkin arrived from Russia to supervise the land operations of the expedition. After a visit of inspection to Mount Desert, he proceeded to Philadelphia to purchase cruisers for the seamen. The business negotiations were entrusted to Mr Wharton Barker, a local banker, in order to avoid the rise in prices which would ensue if Semetchkin himself made inquiries, and to prevent the English consul from outbidding him. Barker soon discovered on the stocks of Kramp & Co. a nearly finished steamer—the "State of California"—destined for the Pacific Coast Steamship Company. The contract price of this was 365,000 dollars, which Kramp raised to 400,000 when he found Barker desirous of buying it. "The extra amount of 35,000 dollars was large," Semetchkin afterwards reported home, "but there was danger in any delay in closing the bargain. Already the English consul had caught wind of the negotiations, and had telegraphed to London for permission to outbid us. As a matter of fact, a few hours after Barker paid down the hand money, he made the builders an offer of half a million dollars for the steamer."

The second vessel secured was the "Columbus," which had been running for four years between New York and Havanna. The price paid for this was 275,000 dollars. Her engines being nearly worn out, Kramp received instructions to commence at once a fresh set, of a more powerful description.

A difficulty was now experienced in getting any more steamers. Prices rose enormously, and most of the vessels suitable for privateering purposes were found to be fettered by contracts that could not be broken by their owners. In course of time the "Saratoga" was discovered, and, after a deal of haggling, the price demanded—half a million dollars—was reduced to 335,000, and accepted. All three vessels, rechristened the "Europe," "Asia," and "Africa," were handed over to Kramp to be converted into war-steamers.

"Attention was then turned," said Captain Semetchkin in a lecture two years ago, "to the 30,000 ships of Canada, of which all but 2,000 were lying on the Newfoundland bank. To destroy these we decided to build a special cruiser, and designs were prepared by Grippenberg, Rodionoff—the only naval architect with the expedition—and a New York engineer, named Webb. The contract we gave out to Mr. Krasin, the price being 275,000 dollars. The keel was laid on the 13th of July—the day the Treaty of Berlin was signed—and on the 21st of October the vessel was launched."

In the meanwhile, Russia's cruiser activity had branched out

in a fresh direction at home. The excitement—I will not say scare—in England, had provoked the keenest delight in Russia. It was felt by every Russian that Lesovsky had succeeded in probing England's weak spot. The mere arrival of a single cruiser in Transatlantic waters had excited more apprehensions in our breast than the entire host of ironclads lying in the Gulf of Finland! If one war-steamer could frighten England so terribly, what could not a dozen do? In the midst of this excitement the "Society for Encouraging Russian Trade" chanced to hold a meeting, and a fervent spirit broached the idea of a Volunteer Privateer fleet.

The idea was caught up with enthusiasm. Sober Russians who had never seen the sea in their life, and who hardly knew the difference between an ironclad and a screw collier, drew up elaborate projects for the creation of a vast mercantile marine out of a temporary squadron of cruisers. Of the 67,000 ships carrying the products of the world, two-thirds were English. England's ironclad fleet Russia could never hope to crush, but never mind, all her ironclads were slow lumbering vessels, and the swifter Moscow cruisers, scornfully eluding them, could prey upon the merchant shipping. With half a dozen "Alabamas" the entire shipping of England might be swept off the face of the ocean; and then, at the close of the war, these cruisers might develop (somehow or other, the Moscow Committee did not concern itself with mere commonplace details) into a mercantile marine, powerful enough to compete with and drive out of the Baltic and Black Sea the hundreds of foreign steamers yearly visiting the Russian ports!

Directly the Committee was formed at Moscow subscription lists were started in every town in the Empire, and large subscriptions were given by merchants and landowners, impelled to reckless liberality by their enthusiasm. When it became known that the Cesarevitch had accepted the presidency of the Committee, the feeling developed almost into one of frenzy. Cronstadt led the van with a vote of 5,000 roubles; on the exchange at Narva, 7,000 roubles were subscribed in a few hours; a Toula merchant telegraphed a donation of 10,000 roubles; Count Stroganoff gave 50,000; and then the chief towns followed with splendid liberality—Moscow setting the example with a grant of a quarter of a million. At Moscow, Professor Gradovsky gave eloquent addresses on cruiser warfare; at St. Petersburg Skalkovsky lectured with Baranoff at his feet—Baranoff, the ruling spirit of the war-steamer operations in the Black Sea, the lucky captor of the Turkish transport "Mersina," and the hero of the famous victory of the "Vesta" over the Ottoman ironclad

which never occurred!* Even the Kirghiz nomads subscribed 24,000 roubles; although, in their case, their generosity must be admitted to have been stimulated by the application of a little gentle administrative pressure.

One of the first acts of the Committee was to compile an account of the cruise of the "Sumter" and "Alabama," for popular reading. In this it was pointed out that the "Sumter," a vessel of 500 tons, with a crew of 10 officers and 96 seamen, captured in the course of six months 18 vessels, burnt 7, and released on bail 2. This was in 1861. The following year, the "Sumter" being worn out, Captain Semmes hoisted the Confederate flag on the corvette "Alabama," a vessel of 1,000 tons, 200 feet long, 32 broad, fitted with engines of 600 h.p., steaming at 14 knots, and carrying a crew of 18 officers and 108 men. In two years this steamer destroyed 65 vessels, and gave the mercantile marine of the United States a blow from which it has never recovered. Commenting upon the above data, the Russian press insisted that if the Moscow Committee could only start three or four "Alabamas" from advan-

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* Every European knows that it was the "Vesta" that fled from the Turkish ironclad, and not *vice versâ*, and that Baranoff, as soon as he had distanced the enemy, went into his cabin with Lieutenant Rojdestvenni, and penned the most impudent despatch mortal hand ever wrote, claiming victory where there had been ridiculous defeat. The news of the exploit excited the utmost enthusiasm in Russia—a mere merchant steamer had beaten a real ironclad with Englishmen aboard! The Tsar made Baranoff an *aide-de-camp*, and decorated him; penny storybooks carried the account of the battle to every village; the cities vied in honouring the victor. Then came the reaction. Rojdestvenni, jealous that Baranoff should have got all the plums, disclosed the fabrication of the despatch. Baranoff challenged him. This the Lieutenant refused to accept. Baranoff then demanded a Court of Inquiry, and when this was refused, wrote a letter insulting the Minister of Marine. For this he was tried by court-martial. When the day arrived, the court was attended by the *élite* of Russian society. The Grand Duke Constantine attended as Baranoff's personal friend. Found guilty, the Court ordered the prisoner to be cashiered. This was carried out by withdrawing him from the navy, making him a colonel of the artillery, and appointing him Governor of Kovna! Later on he was appointed Prefect of St. Petersburg, then Governor of Archangel, and finally Governor of Nijni Novgorod. That many Russians should still believe in his victory is no extraordinary matter. It is so difficult to kill a lie, once it has taken its place in history.—M.

tageous points, immediately upon a declaration of war, or BEFORE it, enormous damage might be done to English shipping. Even if a Moscow cruiser only sank half a dozen ocean liners before being brought to bay, the injury inflicted would immensely outweigh the loss of the Russian vessel.

To the declarations of the English press that we should retaliate by issuing letters of marque, the Russian newspapers replied—"Do it." One timorous writer, it is true, did attempt to stem the tide of cruiser enthusiasm, by pointing out the wretched results that had followed the use of letters of marque by France at the beginning of the century. For the benefit of his countrymen he quoted the following passage from the works of the French naval historian, J. de la Graviere:—"From 1793 to 1802 the English lost only 20 vessels, of which but 5 fell into the hands of the enemy, while the French suffered from the cruisers of England a loss of 184 frigates, 244 corvettes and brigs, 950 privateers, and 6,200 merchantmen. In order to preserve the remnants of French shipping, the Government found it necessary to prohibit the issue of any more letters of marque." But this quotation had no effect upon the partisans of privateering. Turning upon the timorous writer, they said:—"Yes, the French suffered, because they had something to lose. Our case is different. Russia has nothing to lose. She has no sea-going shipping. England, therefore, cannot hurt her with her cruisers, while we, on our part, can injure her as much as she injured France at the beginning of the century. If the English close us up in the Baltic and Black Sea, we can smuggle seamen across the Atlantic in neutral vessels, and hoist the cruiser flag on steamers purchased from the Yankees. *Treaties against letters of marque?* Pshaw! treaties are only waste paper once hostilities begin. A declaration of war dissolves all restrictive international obligations!"

The Moscow Committee did not have to wait long for offers of vessels for privateers. In the course of a few days of its formation, 67 foreign steamers were placed at its disposal, ranging in size from 850 to 6,300 tons, and in price from £13,000 to £160,000. At an early sitting of the Technical Branch of the Committee it was decided to adopt, as the ideal type of cruiser, a steamer of 13 knots, with a coal-supply for 20 days at full speed, sufficient deck-room for two or three heavy guns, and costing at the outside £65,000. Through the instrumentality of the Cesarevitch, the State Bank granted credit for funds to purchase three such cruisers, and Captain Baranoff was despatched abroad in search of them. Accompanied by Lieut. Andraeff, the hero of the mock victory of the "Vesta"

set out from Russia on the 5th of June, and after visiting the principal French and German ports, concluded his investigations at Hamburg with the purchase on the 14th July of the "Holsatia," "Hammonia," and "Thuringia," for the aggregate sum of £160,000.

Although the Treaty of Berlin was already a month old when these German Transatlantic steamers arrived at Cronstadt, the visit of the Cesarevitch to inspect them was made the occasion of a fresh display of cruiser enthusiasm. In the following month—September—it was found that the Cesarevitch had received at the Anitchkoff Palace no less than 1,246,000 roubles in donations, while the Governor of Moscow had been made the recipient of 2,000,000 more, the entire amount in the hands of the Committee being 3,393,000 roubles. At the close of 1878 the funds of the Committee amounted to 3,753,524 roubles; and at the end of 1879 to 4,005,215 roubles. As only a few unimportant donations have been received since, we may reckon that the people of Russia subscribed altogether about half a million sterling towards the Moscow cruiser scheme.

The three German vessels were re-christened the "Russia," "Moscow," and "St. Petersburg," and having been fitted out as cruisers, were sent to the Black Sea to assist in the transport of Russian troops to and from Bulgaria. A few months later the Committee purchased the "Saxonia," of Glasgow, for £80,000, and changed its name to "Nijni Novgorod." This vessel has gained an evil reputation as the exile ship conveying prisoners to Saghalien. The deficiences of the "Novgorod" led the Committee to decide to buy no more merchant steamers, but to build regular cruisers instead. After numerous meetings of the Technical Committee, the points of the model Moscow cruiser were defined as follows:—"Steel steamer, with double skin and water-tight compartments, accommodation for 150 men, provisions for three months, coal-space for 80 days' fuel, and deck-room for three 7-inch guns, two 9-inch ones, two 9-inch mortars, and two torpedo launches, each 85 feet long." A number of native and foreign firms competed for the construction of the fifth cruiser, and the order fell to the "Forges et Chantiers de le Mediterranée," the Toulon firm that had overhauled the machinery of the other Moscow steamers. The new vessel, upon its completion, received the name of "Yaroslavl."

After the evacuation of Bulgaria by the army of occupation, the cruisers languished. The Atlantic steamers were allowed to lie idle at Cronstadt, and those of the Moscow Committee

dabbled unsuccessfully in trade. The revival of the Chinese Question, however, in the summer of 1880, brought them again to the front. Russia then found how valuable they were as armed transports for conveying troops and stores to the Pacific, and the praises heaped upon Stepan Stepanovitch Lesovsky swelled into a universal acclamation of approval when the Tsar begged him to leave the Ministry of Marine for a while, and go out as commander-in-chief of the Chinese Fleet—essentially a cruiser one.

The result of that naval demonstration is not yet forgotten. China, influenced by the presence of seventeen men-of-war in her waters, listened to the calming counsels of "Chinese Gordon," and concluded a treaty with Russia. It was undoubtedly wise on her part to do this, but it is a question whether a war would have resulted in an easy success for her opponent. The naval force Russia had collected in the China seas represented nearly the whole of her available fighting-strength. Had the excellent fleet of Chinese gunboats and men-of-war, managed by English and American officers, shattered this squadron, Russia would have had no reserve to fall back upon. She could not have sent away another vessel, of recent construction, from Cronstadt.

However, the brave display Russia made with what she had got answered every purpose, and Lesovsky returned, morally, in triumph to the Baltic. Physically, he was a shattered man. In one of the storms in the China seas he had had the misfortune to fracture his thigh; and on his return to Russia his ill-health made it necessary he should quit the service.

As the Russian Cruiser Fleet is designed and maintained with a special reference to the devastation of English shipping in time of war, it is well that we should be able to gauge its effective strength. The following list, compiled from the latest Russian data, represents the fleet as it stands to-day. For convenience, it is divided into frigates, clippers, and Atlantic and Moscow cruisers:—

I.—Frigate Cruisers.

"Minin."	"Vladimir Monomarchus."
"General Admiral."	"Prince Pojarsky."
"Duke of Edinburgh."	"Svetlana."

The "Minin" was planned in 1870 as a turret-ship of the "Captain" type. The loss of that vessel, however, led to her transformation into a broadside frigate, with a central battery of the Reed description. The bankruptcy of the builders, and

the numerous alterations effected from time to time, delayed her completion until 1879, when she was sent to the Pacific. She is 289 feet long, 47 broad, has a displacement of 5,800 tons, carries engines of 800 nominal, or 5,600 indicated horse-power, steams at 13 knots, and has a large coal-supply and large spread of canvas. Her armour-belt is 7 inches thick, her central battery 98 feet long, 10 feet above water-line, and protected by 12-inch plates, worked on to 24 inches of teak backing; her armament being four 8-inch guns and two 6-inch, fired *en barbette*, together with four 4-pounders and eight mitrailleuses. The crew comprises 46 officers and 501 men. The "General Admiral," commenced in 1873, and completed for sea in 1880, is very similar in type. Length 285 feet, breadth 48 feet, displacement 4,603 tons, engines 900 nominal horse-power, speed 14 knots; armament four 8-inch, two 6-inch, and four 4-pounder guns, and two Engstrem machine guns; arranged, two 8-inch guns on either side of the upper deck in a barbette battery, two 6-inch guns in the forecastle, and two under the poop. She is not such a sound vessel as the "Minin," and is said to be 500 tons heavier than originally designed. The "Duke of Edinburgh," began in 1870, and completed in 1880, is a sister ship to the above. The hull of each cost 1,375,602 roubles, and the engines 639,000 roubles; artillery and alterations raising this to an average expenditure on each of 4,000,000 roubles, or about £400,000 sterling. The "Vladimir Monomarchus was launched in the autumn of 1882, and is expected to be completed in the course of the present year. Her armament consists of four 8½-inch and 6-inch guns in an open battery on the upper deck, besides six Hotchkiss machine guns. She is defended by a belt of armour extending from 2½ feet above the load water-line to 5½ feet below the armour, tapering from 6 inches to 4½ forward and 3½ round the stern, and the plates themselves from 6 inches to 4½ inches downwards, 3 feet below the water-line. The dimensions of the hull are as follows:— Length at water-line, 295 feet; beam (extreme), 52 feet; draft forward, 21 feet; aft, 25 feet; displacement, 5,796 tons. The contract price was 1,795,000 roubles. She has two engines, built at a contract price of 1,155,000 roubles, each giving 3,500 horse-power indicated, with 6 boilers and 36 furnaces. She will carry 1,000 tons of coal, and steam at 16 knots. In all, she has nine water-tight bulkheads, two of which enclose the boiler-rooms. One high-pressure cylinder has a diameter of 60 inches; two low-pressure ones have diameters of 78. The stroke of the piston is 39 inches. A sister ship, the "Dmitri Donskoi," is in course of construction, but will not be available

for service for two or three years to come. Excluding this, we may say that these four vessels constitute the whole of the new half-armoured frigates belonging to Russia. The "Prince Pojarsky" is an early iron ship, built in 1867, with 4½ inches of armour worked on to 18 inches of teak, and furnished with a central battery and ram. Length 280 feet, breadth 49 feet, displacement 4,500 tons, engines 1,800 indicated horse-power, speed 11 knots; armament, eight 8-inch, two 6-inch, and two Gatling guns; crew, 45 officers and 466 men. The "Svetlana" is a still older wooden frigate, armed with six 8-inch and six 6-inch guns and one mitrailleuse. Both these vessels may be expected to be withdrawn from the active fleet in course of time as obsolete. The frigate "Peter the Great," although recently re-engined, is excluded from the list, because it would never be sent on a cruise.

II.—Cruiser Clippers.

"Kreutzer."
"Djigit."
"Razboinik."
"Naezdnik."
"Strelok."
"Plastoon."
"Vestnik."
"Opritchnik."

The "Kreutzer," the first of the series, was commenced in 1873, completed 1876, and then sent to the Pacific. Length 214 feet, breadth 32 feet, displacement 1,331 tons, hull of iron, engines composite, 250 nominal or 1,500 indicated horse-power; armament, three 6-inch guns, with traversing carriages and slides, four 9-pounders, and one mitrailleuse; crew, 18 officers and 148 men. The "Djigit," completed and sent to the Pacific in 1877, shares with the above a bad reputation for speed, professedly steaming at 12 knots, but, in reality, it is said, not exceeding, at the utmost, 8 knots. The two next clippers were finished in 1878. The engines of the "Naezdnik" were made by Penn, those of the "Razboinik" by Baird. Both vessels were a vast improvement on the "Kreutzer," and were greatly complimented by English naval critics for their smart appearance on their visit to Plymouth in 1879, *en route* for the Pacific. They are sheathed with 6 inches of timber to about a foot above water-line, carry coal for 14 days at half-speed, equal in distance to 3,000 miles; they steam at 14 knots, are furnished with Palmkrantz and Engstrem machine guns, and are replete with torpedo appliances. The remaining four vessels were finished and sent to sea in 1880. The "Plastoon, "Strelok," and "Vestnik" are of iron and steel, the "Opritchnik" exclusively of steel. They carry six Hotchkiss cannon apiece, and a

crew of about 180 all told. The hull of the "Opritchnik" cost 594,350 roubles.

Exclusive of these eight new clippers there are several older ones, which are still on the sea-going list. The "Askold," which took part in the Dulcigno demonstration, is one of the best wooden vessels of the fleet. It steams at 10 knots, carries eight 6-inch guns, four 9-pounders, four Palmkrantz cannon, and torpedo appliances, and is furnished with a crew of 17 officers and 250 men. The "Jemtchoug," another vessel, was built in 1861, and engined by Humphries. Length 240 feet, breadth 30 feet, depth 15 feet; displacement 1,595 tons; engines 350 horse-power nominal, or 1,438 indicated; speed 11 knots; armament, three 6-inch guns, four 9-pounders, and four Palmkrantz cannon; crew 200 all told. The "Abrek," of the Siberian flotilla, was built in Finland in 1860; is of 1,069 tons displacement, carries engines of 360 nominal or 740 indicated horse-power, and is armed with three 6-inch guns. She is an old slow-steaming vessel, and is only fit for coast defence. The three remaining clippers and corvettes on the active list—"Bayan," "Vsadnik," and "Gaidamak"—were relieved on the China station in 1879, after several years' service there, and are rapidly passing at Cronstadt into the category of vessels ineffective and obsolete.

III.—Atlantic Cruisers.

"Europe." "Africa."
"Asia." "Zabiaka."

The "Europe" was formerly the "State of California," built in 1878 for the Pacific trade. Length 312 feet, breadth 36 feet, depth 19 feet; displacement 3,000 tons; engines 350 nominal horse-power; coal reserve 1,100 tons, allowing her to proceed 9,500 miles at 12 knots an hour, and 14,000 miles at 10 knots. Steaming 13½ knots she burns 32 to 35 tons a day; 12½ knots, 28 tons; 10 knots, 18 tons; has thus a supply for 100 to 120 days. Armament, one 8¼-inch Krupp, three 6-inch guns, four 9-pounders, four Palmkrantz cannon, and two mitrailleuses. The crew comprises 28 officers and 260 men, the latter armed with magazine rifles holding 26 charges. Carries torpedo boats and mines. Is commanded by Grippenburg, who has served ten years on the Pacific station, and is one of the smartest naval officers afloat. The "Asia," formerly the "Columbus," was built in 1874. Length 275 feet, breadth 35 feet, depth 15 feet; displacement 2,500 tons; engines 225 nominal or 1,200 effective horse-power; coal reserve 760 tons,

or sufficient for a distance of 12,500 miles, covered in 35 days; speed 13 knots; steam chest exposed to shot; armament the same as that of the "Europe." The "Africa," once the "Saratoga," is 292 feet long and 38 feet broad; carries engines of 1,500 indicated horse-power; steams at 13 knots; and is furnished with a coal reserve of 960 tons. Armament as above. These three cruisers are converted merchant steamers. The fourth, the "Zabiaka," is a regularly-built fighting clipper. Length 220 feet, breadth 30 feet; displacement 1,200 tons; engines 200 nominal horse-power; speed 14 knots; armament the same as the rest. All are provided with torpedo cutters and appliances.

IV.—Moscow Cruisers.

"Russia." "Nijni Novgorod."
"Petersburg." "Yaroslavl."

The "Russia," formerly the "Holsatia," was built by Caird, of Greenock, for the Hamburg-American trade. Cost the Committeee 750,000 roubles; is a little larger than the "Himalaya"; length 348 feet, breadth 39 feet; displacement 3,200 tons; cargo capacity 2,500 tons; engines 500 nominal or 2,200 indicated horse-power; speed 14 knots; carries coal reserve of 700 tons, equal to 4,700 miles at 14 knots, or enough for 30 days; can carry 1,600 troops on a long voyage and 3,000 on a short. In 1880 conveyed 60 officers (1st-class passengers), 320 officers (2nd-class), and 1,000 troops from Cronstadt to Vladivostock, besides 1,200 tons of stores. Crew, 15 officers and 120 men. In common with all the steamer-cruisers, she is immensely strengthened internally with beams and pillars. The armament is kept in the hold, only two 6-inch guns being placed in the bow, two machine guns amidships, and four 4-pounders on the quarter-deck. Carries two torpedo-boats and mines, and is splendidly fitted. The "Petersburg" ("Thuringia") is a vessel of 3,098 tons displacement, furnished with engines of 800 nominal and 3,500 effective horse-power, steaming at 14 knots. Is armed with one 8-inch, two 7-inch, and four 6-inch guns, together with two machine cannon and one 9-pounder. The "Moscow" ("Hammonia") which foundered off the East African coast in 1882, cost 400,000 roubles to purchase; was built in 1867 by Caird; used to carry emigrants from Hamburg to America; had on the poop one 7-inch gun, at the bow one 6-inch gun, and two ditto on either side. She is to be replaced by another steamer. The "Nijni Novgorod" ("Saxonia") is the poorest vessel of the Moscow fleet,

and as it is very improbable that it will ever be used as a regular cruiser, it needs no description here. In excess of these there is another vessel, which was constructed by the Moscow Committee from its own designs as a regular cruiser, but on reaching the Black Sea was purchased by the Government, and incorporated with the Black Sea Fleet. This is the "Yaroslavl" which was built in 1880 at the "Forges et Chantiers," at La Seyne, near Toulon. Cost 2½ million francs, without armament; is built of steel, with two bottoms and water-tight compartments; length 295 feet, breadth 41 feet, depth 16 feet; displacement 3,050 tons; engines 240 nominal or 2,900 indicated horse-power; speed 16 knots; armament one 8-inch gun at the stern, two 6-inch on either side, four 9-pounders, and four Gatlings. The Moscow Committee also owns a sixth vessel, the "Vladivostock," purchased for £22,000 on the stocks at Renfrew in 1878, for port communication in the Pacific. Length 225 feet, breadth 29 feet, depth 12 feet; speed 11 knots; cargo capacity 1,000 tons; crew 28 men.

Total, six frigates, eight clippers, and eight steamer-cruisers —22 vessels in all.

From the time Russia sent the cruiser "Cimbria" to America in 1878, up to Lesovsky's return from the Pacific in 1881, she enjoyed great prestige as a cruiser power. After then her prestige rapidly began to wane. In 1878 England had been taken completely by surprise by the apparition of Russian cruisers in Transatlantic waters. It took some time for her to realize that America could allow Russia, in time of peace, to set on foot a naval expedition directed against her merchant shipping. Once she got the measure of Russia's intentions, she set to work to neutralize them, and by 1881 she was, if not quite secure, at least well prepared against any repetition of the expedition to America.

This was less attained by the addition of regular cruisers to the fleet than by the alterations introduced into the construction of new steamers at the suggestion of the Admiralty, so as to fit them for offensive purposes in time of war. By the summer of 1881 we had nearly 200 large steamers available for cruisers, while Russia was no stronger than she had been in 1878. Since then the number has almost doubled, and Russia's cruiser fleet, in consequence, has been dwarfed into insignificance.

As an ironclad power, Russia is now nowhere. She has even been surpassed by Germany, which has beaten her not only in the matter of ironclads but in that of cruisers also. The autocrat Nicholas once declared it to be the cardinal maxim of Russia's northern policy, that Germany should never be allowed

to become a naval equal in the Baltic. Up to 1870 there was no need for Russia to concern herself about this matter, as Germany made no effort to pose as a naval power. After the defeat of the French, however, Germany began to increase her marine, and, all unnoticed by Russia, developed it until the latter woke up a few months ago to find herself the inferior of her rival.

Under the most favourable circumstances Russia to-day could only fit out seventeen ironclads, of which only one, the "Peter the Great," would be able to attack thickly plated vessels armed with heavy artillery. Germany possesses sixteen ironclads, but of these five answer the conditions fulfilled by the "Peter the Great," and most of the vessels are better constructed than the Russian ones. The 131 guns of the Russian ironclad fleet could be almost numerically matched by the 129 of the German fleet, but the latter is far and away the stronger, having 56 guns of heavy calibre as compared with the 14 of the Russian ironclad fleet. With respect to speed, only three Russian ironclads can steam at 14 knots, while 11 German plated vessels attain this velocity. The lowest speed of any German ironclad is 11 knots; on the other hand, twelve of the Russian ironclads steam below that velocity, and in some instances only 8 knots is reached. Finally, only 4 of the German ironclads were constructed before 1870, while 13 of Russia's vessels were built anterior to that year; hence, the German fleet is newer and of better design than the Russian fleet. In the matter of cruisers, Germany is equally ahead of Russia, possessing 28 vessels as compared with the 22 of the latter power. The quickest speed, 16 knots, is attained by four German vessels, and only a single Russian one (excluding the as yet untried "Vladimir Monomarchus); 15 knots is reached by 3 German vessels and 2 of Russia; 14 knots by 12 German vessels, and 5 Russian ones, and so on, giving Germany the superiority all the way along the line. In excess of this Germany owns 13 specially constructed vessels for making a descent on the enemy's coast, of which class of ship Russia does not possess one. The only advantage Russia has over Germany is in the torpedo branch of the navy, Russia possessing 120 torpedo cutters, and Germany but 18. But this is a defect which is being repaired by Germany, and is of itself of little moment. Torpedo cutters, regularly constructed or improvised, can be turned out by a manufacturing country like Germany by the hundred in a very short space of time. Even Russia, handicapped as she is, was able to assemble 110 torpedo cutters by the close of the Turkish war. For purposes of adequate comparison, therefore, the *personnel*

of the torpedo branch must be compared, and not the cutters. In this respect Germany is far ahead of Russia.

Thus Germany, which a dozen years ago possessed no fleet at all to speak of, is now not only the rival of Russia in the Baltic, but her superior. She has, further, this advantage over Russia, which the latter power cannot well repair—she possesses a large mercantile marine, and harbours which remain unfrozen all the year round. German interests clash so little with those of England that one cannot but rejoice to see the Teuton superseding the Slav in the control of the Baltic. And this superiority is extending itself not only on the sea but on land also. Every year Germany becomes stronger and stronger on the Russian frontier, and better able to annex the Baltic provinces of Russia in the event of a war. A decade ago Russians used to laugh at the idea of a German invasion of their country. The tone is altogether changed now. In the interval the lines of fortifications, offensive and defensive, on the German side of the frontier, have developed until they now far and away surpass the lines on the Russian side; and they keep on growing, while Russia, with her limited finances and her expensive policy in the far East, is able to do but little more than keep her fortifications in repair. Russians candidly admit to-day a German invasion of Poland and the Baltic Provinces to be inevitable in the event of a war, and even go so far as to express a fear that they would temporarily lose them, although they insist that they would get them back again after a while. If, however, Germany's power keeps growing while Russia's power stagnates in the Baltic, they may have to fling away even this consolation in course of time.

But, all the same, the lesson taught by the "Cimbria" scare of 1878 should not be lost to view. It might be repeated under more favourable circumstances by Russia, weak as she is, on a recurrence of the Anglo-Russian conflict in the East. The remark is often made that we need have no fear of Russian cruisers, because for every cruiser Russia can place on the sea, it is affirmed England can supply fifty. This is very true, but the fact is overlooked that much damage might be done by one of these cruisers to English merchant vessels before meeting any of our fifty cruisers. The fact of the matter is, that Russia stands in the position of having nothing to lose by a cruiser system of warfare, since she possesses no mercantile marine. The English merchant fleet of 50,000 vessels, on the other hand, presents a most inviting target for Russian cruisers.

So far as resources for privateering are concerned, England is immensely stronger than Russia. On the Clyde, vessels of 2,000 tons can be built in three months. There would be no difficulty

experienced in constructing a cruiser there of the "Yaroslavl" type in that space of time, did circumstances require it. In Russia, on the other hand, such a vessel could not be completed within a twelvemonth, and at least three months would be needed to fit it out at Cronstadt. In a word, Glasgow could build a cruiser and send it round to the Thames, in less time than Russia could fit out an old one from the Baltic. Such are the resources of the Clyde, to say nothing of the Tyne and other rivers, that the productibility of two or three establishments, like Elder's, exceeds that of all the dockyards and private establishments in Russia put together. In making the comparison, we contrast Russia under the pressure of a Turkish war, with Glasgow stimulated by briskness in business. So far as enormous yards, huge collections of machinery, and the ostentatious display of an Imperial naval administration are concerned, the Clyde cuts in comparison an insignificant figure. But these factors do not, by themselves, manufacture ships of war. Skill and energy are needed, backed up with abundance of coal and iron and skilled labour. In these essentials Russia is absolutely wanting.

As regards England, the real danger of Russia's cruiser policy is, that we have to deal with a Power utterly unscrupulous and completely deficient of a sense of fair-play, and imbued with the notion that the destruction of our merchant shipping and the loss of India would lay our Empire prostrate in the dust. Viewing the matter by the light of Russia's tone and Russia's action in 1878, we must express our profound conviction—not arising in any way from Russophobia—that no solemn treaty, nor international obligation of any kind against privateering, would in the slightest degree deter Russia from doing her utmost to destroy our shipping in the event of a war. Russia has long ago given up all thoughts of fighting our navy. Her sole object to-day is to maintain a fleet of cruisers, with the object of attacking our merchant shipping and colonies in time of war.

Landlocked as she is, Russia is not well adapted to carry on cruiser warfare, for England has only to block the Baltic and Black Sea to prevent the egress of any vessels after a declaration of war. Russia is well aware of this circumstance, and would, therefore, endeavour to get her cruisers well posted about the ocean before hostilities were declared. She imagines they could keep themselves well supplied with coal and other necessaries by gutting the vessels they captured on the high seas. Had a war broken out in 1878, some half-a-dozen cruisers would have been despatched from the Atlantic coast of America, two or three from San Francisco, several from French and German ports, and a cruiser or two from the Pacific. While these were exciting

alarm at sea, it was the intention of Russia, had Stolietoff been a better and more expeditious envoy, to have brought down the Afghans upon India. Russia imagined that the attack of Kaufmann's three columns upon India from without, with a rising against our power in the peninsula from within, would have, at the least, prevented our offering material assistance to Turkey. The objective of the war would have been Constantinople, not Calcutta, and hence Kaufmann's expedition would have been successful, even if he had only, by his presence in Afghanistan, prevented India sending troops to succour the Turks.

How far these operations would be repeated on the recurrence of the war-fever in 1878 between England and Russia must be left for events to determine, but we entertain little doubt that Russia would again resort to a land demonstration against English power in India, and to a marine demonstration against our merchant shipping. Since 1878 the intercourse between England and the United States has been so friendly, and there is such an evident desire on the part of both peoples to sink their old grievances against one another, that we question whether Russia would be allowed to repeat her Transatlantic expedition. But she need not go so far as America now. In the interval, the friendliness existing in 1878 between England and France has become so impaired, that Russia might very easily secure permission to fit out her cruisers in French ports against our shipping. Unfortunately, the divergence between England and France is not a transient one. The aims of France in North Africa, on the Congo, in the Gambia, and in Madagascar, clash so violently with English interests, that there is a greater probability of the breach increasing than healing over.

Russia has no vital interests in Africa; France has none in the area of Asia coveted by Russia. In no part of the world do French and Russian aims and interests clash. On the other hand, Russia finds herself opposed everywhere in Asia by English interests, and France cannot realize any of her African schemes without placing herself in direct antagonism to England. In this manner there is a solidarity of interests between Russia and France; both would gain, and gain immensely, by our downfall. On this account the possibility of a Russo-French alliance against England must never be lost to view by our statesmen.* Such an alliance, even if it only manifested itself in the form of a

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* Gambetta and Skobeleff, the foremost men in France and Russia in 1882, were both in favour of such an alliance. It is true that they wished to apply it against Germany, but England and France happened then to be friends. Their interests had not

sympathetic neutrality, would be very embarrassing to ourselves. At the least the Russians might hope to be allowed to repeat in French ports what they accomplished in America in 1878, and considering that our communications with India run all the way by sea, the danger of such unscrupulous cruiser operations should not be dismissed as illusory by this country. Whoever imagined, previous to 1878, that the United States would allow their seaboard to be turned into a Russian naval basis for operations against Canada and England, countries with which they were at peace? Even when the "Globe" sounded the alarm on the subject, the notion was treated by English politicians and the press as preposterous and unlikely to be carried into effect. Of all maxims there is none truer than the one that "it is the unforeseen that always happens," yet there is no maxim more persistently disregarded.

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become so violently antagonistic as they have since. In connection with this, Aksakoff, who was on intimate terms with Skobeleff, has recently published in the Panslavist organ, the "Russ," an interesting account, based on a memorandum supplied by Skobeleff, of the famous speech to the Servian deputation that rang like a war-cry through Europe, and gave such an impulse to the idea of a Russo-French alliance. It appears that the speech was in reality never delivered, but was concocted by Camille Farcy from the statements of the students, pieced together by all the ingenuity and talent at the command of the "Nouvelle Revue." It contained much that General Skobeleff said, but in a greatly exaggerated form, and with considerable additions. When the General, on reading this production in the paper, went down to Madame Adam's office to remonstrate, he was entreated not to deny the words attributed to him—words which had already spread like wildfire, and awakened the dormant patriotism of France. General Skobeleff allowed himself to be persuaded, and afterwards received the thanks of M. Gambetta himself, who said: "The speech has already done great good; it has filled all hearts with patriotic ardour, and rouses hopes of a Franco-Russian alliance. *Cela a pris comme une traînée de poudre.* Look at these telegrams I have just received from Havre and Marseilles! The fleet and army are wild with enthusiasm, but I warn you that in my paper I shall have to condemn the want of tact shown by General Skobeleff, out of political caution, and so as not to appear a party to its utterance." M. Gambetta further spoke of his efforts to obtain a revision of the Constitution, to raise up a strong power in France, and of the value of the Franco-Russian alliance, saying amongst other things, "Thank God that you have no Parliament; if you had one, you would go on talking for over a hundred years without doing anything."—M.

II.

THE RIVAL TURKESTAN AND CAUCASIAN MOVEMENTS TOWARDS INDIA.

Bitter rivalry between Tashkent and Tiflis.—The difference between the Turkestan and Caucasian administrations.—Ill-treatment of Skobeleff.—The gradual development of the Caucasian movement.—Lomakin's conquests.—Kaufmann unable to share the laurels at Geok Tepé.—Turkestan played out.—Danger of being effaced.—Revival occasioned by Tchernayeff's appointment.—Schemes of improvement.—Prospects of the two rival administrations.—The Caucasus will probably win the race to India.

"The mysterious veil which has covered hitherto the possibility of a Russian conquest of India begins to disappear before our eyes."—GENERAL TCHERNAYEFF, after the capture of Tashkent.

THE return* of General Tchernayeff to Central Asia is accompanied by a circumstance to which as yet no attention has been directed, although forming one of the most powerful factors in the Russian advance upon India. This circumstance is the rivalry between Tashkent and Tiflis, between the two Russian bases in Central Asia, which has long been active, but which has only reached an acute stage with the despatch of Tchernayeff to the scene of his former triumphs. English writers on Central Asia, who mostly survey the Russian advance by the light of Indian or purely English experience, are accustomed to speak of only one administration or one movement in Central Asia. But in reality the administration of the Caucasus is as distinct from that of Turkestan as the Government of India is from that of Canada; and while the Tashkent authorities have no authority over the movement towards India from the Caspian, the Tiflis authorities, on their part, exercise no influence whatever over the movement from Samarcand. The rivalry between the two

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* By the author, published in the "Morning Post."

administrations is such that innumerable quarrels have taken place in connection with the conquest of the Turcomans. A good illustration of this feeling may be cited in the attitude of the late Viceroy of the Caucasus, the Grand Duke Michael, towards General Skobeleff on the occasion of the last Turcoman war. Skobeleff was a Turkestan officer, and it was galling to the Tiflis Government that he should have been sent to retrieve the errors of a Caucasian general. When Skobeleff, therefore, arrived at Tiflis, the Grand Duke Michael issued a private verbal order that the principal army officers were to keep aloof from him, and give him no assistance. Skobeleff's angry appeal to the Emperor when he found himself shunned had no effect in improving matters, and one of the greatest difficulties he afterwards had to contend with was not the huge clay ramparts of Geok Tepé, but the hostility of the Russian officials at the Caucasian base, whence he derived all his troops and munitions of war.

Of late years this rivalry has taken the form of a race as to which administration shall get to India first. The operations of the one base are jealously watched by the other, and any outpost activity in Turkestan begets at once similar activity on the part of the outposts of the Caucasus. The jealousy between the two Russian bases is all the more embittered by the fact that, although only thirteen years have elapsed since the Caucasus began to take a part in the advance towards India, it has already acquired a better position in Central Asia than its rival, and seemed likely a short time ago to relegate Turkestan to the unimportant and neglected condition of a second Siberia. When one remembers that the entire army and administration of Turkestan had their origin in the desire to place the Cossack alongside the Sepoy, and that it has always been regarded as the *raison d'être*, nay, destiny, of both to swallow up Central Asia to the very confines of India, one can well appreciate the chagrin and anger of the Kaufmanns and Kolpakovskys, of the Abramoffs and Kouropatkins, at finding their career blighted in the bud, and their aspirations snatched from them, by the generals of the Caucasus.

Up to 1869 Turkestan had the game entirely in her hands. The Caucasus took no part in any of those operations which won for the Orenburg troops the right to carve out of Bokhara and Khokand the province of Turkestan, and set the ball rolling in the direction of India. The only post the Caucasians held on the east shore of the Caspian was the forgotten fort of Alexandrovsky, which had not changed a bit since Major Abbott wandered into it thirty years previous, on his way home from

Khiva. Any designs that had led to the seizure of the island of Ashoorada, in the Gulf of Astrabad, had been allowed to droop under the fierce opposition of Persia and England to a further extension of Russian authority in that quarter. Colonel Stolietoff's descent on Krasnovodsk in 1869, to establish a base for Caucasian co-operation in the projected campaign against Khiva, completely changed all this. That invasion of the East Caspian coast marked the first participation of the Caucasus in the conquest of Central Asia. It was the commencement of a new movement against India, which has already, according to Skobeleff, rendered a "demonstration" against us feasible, and may some day place an easy invasion within the region of possibilities. The significance of Stolietoff's aggressive act was lost upon England, and was hardly realized by Russia. The Turkestan army warmly welcomed the Caucasian column that afterwards co-operated in the capture of Khiva, and eclipsed it somewhat by arriving first. When the troops returned to their depôts Kaufmann evidently thought that the next move, upon Merv, was to be made by him, and laid his plans at Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk accordingly. But his attention was suddenly drawn from that quarter by the revolt in Khokand, and when he had conquered and annexed that khanate he had lost his opportunity for ever. By the time the Khokandese were crushed the war clouds had gathered over Turkey, and the attitude of England was such that Russia, having in view the demonstration against India, which Kaufmann subsequently commenced to carry out in 1878, naturally considered it wise to refrain from any more conquests in the country between Turkestan and India through which the army was to march. But this consideration did not apply to the Caucasus. Circumstances not being ripe for a Caucasian demonstration against India, it mattered little what the Caucasian authorities did in Central Asia in the meanwhile. Indeed, it was rather a necessity that they should do something against the Turcomans, so as to keep those desperate horsemen from falling upon Kaufmann's flank, in the event of a Russian advance from Tashkent to Cabul. In this manner circumstances conspired to drag the Caucasus into the Central Asian conflict, and brought about the present rivalry between the authorities of Tashkent and Tiflis.

At the same time, it is but right to point out that the Government of the Caucasus did its utmost to force events in this direction. After the return of the Caucasian troops from Khiva the Transcaspian military district was formed with a capital at Krasnovodsk, and to the commander of the force, Lomakin, was confided the control of it. This may be said to

have first given the Caucasus a real interest in Central Asia, and it began at once to set to work. Year after year reconnoitring expeditions were conducted by Lomakin against the Turcomans, all more or less attended with bloodshed, and in which, on the whole, the Russians suffered quite as much as the natives. But these operations had this important effect. Each expedition involved another, each baffled advance provoked a fresh one on a larger scale, and rendered conquest the more inevitable. Lomakin was beaten in 1877; he was beaten again in 1878, when he had an army of quite 10,000 men; and in 1879 he experienced the final disgraceful defeat at Dengeel Tepé, which led to Skobeleff's great campaign of 1880. In that campaign Kaufmann was prevented from co-operating by the menaced Chinese invasion of Kuldja. When the Turcoman war was over, Turkestan was seen to be altogether out of the race. The Caucasian troops at Askabad were closer to Herat than the Tashkent troops were to Bokhara, let alone Cabul. The world saw that it was through the Transcaspian region, not through Turkestan, that the real Russian road to India lay. Keen-witted Russians laughed that they should have succeeded, while we were fussing about an imaginary advance through Cabul, in creating a new and shorter road of conquest *viâ* Askabad and Sarakhs. For the moment this new movement appeared to have given a death-blow to the prospects of Turkestan. In official circles at St. Petersburg the game in that region was spoken of as "played out," and every effort was made to avoid being appointed to the province. As time wore on, circumstances appeared to favour this view. Kuldja was torn from Turkestan and given back to China, a huge portion of north-east territory abutting from Siberia was formed into the "Government of the Steppe," and all control over the Aral-Caspian Turcomans, hitherto the prerogative of the Turkestan outpost in Khiva, was given up to the authorities at Askabad. A few months ago the future of Turkestan appeared so desperate that rumours circulated that the Government meant to utterly efface it, on account of its administrative iniquities, just as it had recently done the corrupt governor-generalship of Orenburg, and that it intended to parcel it between Siberia and the Caucasus. At this dark moment affairs suddenly brightened by the appointment of Tchernayeff as successor to Kaufmann. The "Turkestantsi" plucked up their spirits again, and pressure was brought to bear upon high quarters with most encouraging results. Instructions were issued to diminish the importance of Turkestan no further, but to improve matters by giving Tchernayeff *carte blanche* to reorganize the army and administration. At Tchernayeff's request

funds were furnished for laying down a direct telegraph wire from Orenburg to Tashkent (the existing service running through Siberia), and Government support was readily given to a Central Asia Cotton Company, and a company for establishing steamboats on the Oxus. Projects were also examined for continuing the Transcaspian railway to Khiva, and the drooping spirits of career-hunters were revived by the promise that Bokhara should be annexed after the present weakly Emir's death—that annexation foreshadowing fresh conquests in the direction of India. Within a few short months Turkestan recovered most of its lost prestige, and now that Tchernayeff, its principal founder, has returned to Tashkent with every evidence of Imperial support and encouragement, the "Turkestantsi" are eager to show what they can do again.

In Tchernayeff the Turkestan party have an ambitious and energetic leader, who gave birth to their best traditions, and who is not disposed to allow them to be surpassed by the party of the Caucasus. On the other hand, the Caucasian Government suffers for the moment from the fact that the zealous promoter of its operations beyond the Caspian, the Grand Duke Michael, has been replaced by an official, Prince Dondukoff Korsakoff, whose aims appear less ambitious in that quarter. But Prince Dondukoff Korsakoff would be more than mortal if he could withstand the jealous feelings that have been aroused in the hearts of his subordinates by Tchernayeff's good luck at St. Petersburg. If Tchernayeff on his return to Tashkent displays any activity along the Turkestan border, we may look to an enhanced interest in Merv on the part of Tiflis. If Turkestan can annex Bokhara before the Caucasus occupies Merv, Tchernayeff will stand a chance of getting Merv also. In this case the task of absorbing Afghanistan will probably fall to Turkestan instead of to the Caucasus, and the control of Russia's relations with India to Tashkent instead of to Tiflis. All these considerations give a point to the rivalry of the two bases, and render any hope of a cessation of the Russian advance out of the question. If the Russian Government found it difficult a decade ago to keep one set of officials from pushing onwards in the East, what success may be expected now it has two, both inflamed with feelings of rivalry, both animated by the desire to get to India first? Much will depend upon Tchernayeff himself as to the rapidity with which this double movement towards India will develop itself in the immediate future, and hence his acts in Central Asia will be watched with the keenest interest by the public for some time to come.

III.

ENGLISH EXPLORATION OF MERV.

Failure of the Russo-Persian Convention of December 1881 to bring about a subsidence of the Central Asian Question.—Russia's restlessness beyond the Caspian.—O'Donovan's "Merv Oasis."—His early operations in Central Asia.—Inability to take part in Lomakin's campaign.—Refused permission by Skobeleff to join his expedition.—Departure for Merv.—Previous English travellers at Merv.—Ill success of more recent explorers.—Valentine Baker, Burnaby, Gill, and MacGregor.—Foolish policy of the English Government towards Central Asian exploration.—O'Donovan compared with other travellers.—Improvements beyond the Caspian.

"We are a curious people. A man who supports his party by the easy process of voting consistently on its behalf in the House of Commons for two or three years, is rewarded by being made a knight or a baronet. A man, on the other hand, who spends the same period in the wilds of Central Asia, exposed to all manner of privations, and who culminates his services by going to Merv, in the face of danger, and represents the country there at a moment when it is longing for a representative on the spot, is completely ignored by Royalty, by the State, and by the scientific bodies, and is not even asked to give assistance to the 'Intelligence Department,' which should surely be in need of his knowledge."—"Newcastle Daily Chronicle," November 10, 1882.

ALTHOUGH* the conclusion a year ago of the Convention of Teheran, for determining the Russo-Persian frontier beyond the Caspian, was hailed by the Russian official press as indicating the subsidence of the Central Asian Question for an extended term of years, restlessness of a very ominous description still

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* By the author, published in the "Morning Post," November 13th, 1882.

continues in the Transcaspian region. Within the last few months the pioneer of the Russian advance, Lessar, has paid visits to Sarakhs, Merv, and Herat, and surveyed the country extending from Askabad to each of these important stategical points. Lieutenant Alikhanoff and Cornet Sokoloff have crossed the desert to Merv in the disguise of traders' clerks; Admiral Svinkin has been to Astrabad to report upon the removal of the Ashoorada naval station to a portion of the Persian mainland, long coveted by Russia; Prince Khilkoff, the clever and enterprising controller of the Transcaspian Railway, has been summoned to St. Petersburg to advise the Government as to its further extension; and, finally, a military road has been taken in hand which is ultimately intended to run from Geok Tepé to Meshed, and place Khorassan completely at Russia's mercy. All these facts, the reliability of which is beyond question, indicate that Russia has no intention of carrying out Sir Charles Dilke's famous declaration during the Candahar debate last year, that the new Emperor had abandoned the forward policy of his father in Central Asia; and compel this country, however much she may desire otherwise, to maintain a very vigilant watch over Russia's restlessness in the Perso-Turcoman region. On this account, the public will hail with satisfaction and pleasure the opportune appearance of two massive volumes from the pen of Mr. O'Donovan, consecrated to a description of the whole of the country from Astrabad to Merv, which seems fated to be early seized by Russia. Much of "The Merv Oasis" (Smith, Elder, and Co.) has already been published in the "Daily News," but the matter has been carefully revised, and considerable additions made from the note-books of Mr. O'Donovan. The frontispiece of the first volume consists of an excellent engraving of the author himself in the costume of the Tekke Turcomans, and the frontispiece of the second a facsimile of the seal of the principal cadi of Merv. In excess of these there are plans of Merv, an excellent map of the Transcaspian region—the best obtainable at the present moment in this country—and reproductions of various documents by some process which leaves nothing to be desired on the score of clearness and finish. One of these, by the way, is erroneously headed. A podorojnaya, or road pass, which authorised Mr. O'Donovan to obtain horses at the posting houses between Tiflis and Baku, being designated a "Russian passport," an altogether different kind of document, used for residential purposes only. Mr. O'Donovan is a brilliant writer; in his power of graphic description he is unrivalled; and without exaggeration his "Merv Oasis" gives the best account of Central Asian

life that has been published since Arminius Vambéry wrote his charming travels in 1865.

Mr. O'Donovan went to Asia Minor during the Russo-Turkish war, and was the hero of a notorious little affair at Batoum, from which town he was forcibly expelled in a nude condition for writing down the Turkish authorities entrusted with the defence of the place. Resting awhile at Trebizond, he proceeded in February 1879 to Poti, and crossed the Caucasus to the Caspian, where preparations were being made for an expedition against the Akhal Tekke Turcomans, to revenge the rebuff General Lomakin had received at Khoja Kala, near Kizil Arvat, in 1878. The "Daily News" being then in the height of its fame as a Russophile paper, and Mr. O'Donovan being well-known in Russia as a leading exposer of Turkish defects in Asia Minor, a warm reception was accorded to the new-comer, and he was allowed to pass to and from the camps at Krasnovodsk and Tchikishlar, the base at Baku, and the foreposts along the Atrek, without any restriction whatever. Several months passed in this manner, the Russian preparations continually collapsing from various causes; and at length, when the advance was made, Mr. O'Donovan was too ill with dysentery to accompany the troops. By the time he had recovered, Lomakin's brief though disastrous campaign had come to a close. But for the presence with the force of several Russian correspondents, the story of the disaster at Dengeel Tepé would never have been accurately told, as in the brief official version the campaign was described as being rather a success than otherwise. Early in 1880 Mr. Charles Marvin collected the correspondence furnished to the Russian papers, and published it under the title of "The Eye-witnesses' Account of the Disastrous Russian Campaign against the Turcomans." Mr. O'Donovan pays an indirect compliment to the veracity of these Russian "specials" by leaving Lomakin's operations in Akhal altogether undescribed, even omitting from his volume the large amount of hearsay matter he collected from the Russians on the return of the broken-down and discomfited column to the Atrek. Disappointed in seeing the campaign of 1879, the "Daily News" correspondent decided to accompany the expedition of revenge of 1880. The new commander, however, Tergoukasoff, would have nothing to do with journalists, and expelled Mr. O Donovan from Tchikishlar; and for several months he had to lead a weary, nomad life, watching the Russians from Astrabad and Gömush Tepé. In the spring of 1880 Tergoukasoff was succeeded by Skobeleff, who had strict orders from the Russian Government, which had been displeased at the Russophobe tone of Mr.

O'Donovan's letters, to allow no journalist to accompany the force.* This led Mr. O'Donovan to proceed along the Perso-Turcoman frontier to Deregez, with the heroic intention of joining the Akhal Tekkes at Geok Tepé and viewing the operations from the other combatant's stronghold. But before his negotiations with Makdum Kali for permission to proceed thither could come to a satisfactory termination the Russians had closed round Geok Tepé, and all Mr. O'Donovan saw of this second campaign, with its prolonged and desperate siege, was a distant glimpse he caught through his telescope of the flight of the Tekkes on the day of the fall of the fortress. Chagrined at being disappointed a second time in seeing the fighting, and recognising that if he returned home after his two years' exertions, his mission, valuable as it was in many respects, could not be regarded as a successful one, Mr. O'Donovan decided upon winning a reputation by the desperate expedient of riding direct to Merv, without waiting for any permission of the chiefs, and in face of the probability that the Turcomans, maddened against Europeans by the terrible defeat at Geok Tepé, would sacrifice him to their fanatic rage.

For nearly forty years no European traveller had penetrated to Merv, and no English eyes had ever seen the oasis since it had passed into possession of the Tekkes. The whole of our direct knowledge of "The Queen of the World," as Orientals called the ruined ancient city, gathered around the epoch of 1830–40, when Central Asia was traversed by a succession of English travellers and envoys, in pursuance of a policy of activity which collapsed with the disastrous retreat from Cabul in 1842, and was not really revived again afterwards until the despatch of the Stolietoff embassy to Shere Ali caused us to overrun Afghanistan. The first to visit Merv in modern times was Joseph Wolff, the missionary, father of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, M.P., who passed through it on his way to Bokhara in 1831. A few months later Lieutenant Burnes, afterwards Sir Alexander, halted there while journeying from Bokhara to the Caspian. In 1840 Major Abbott rode through Merv in proceeding on a mission from Herat to Khiva, and was followed in succession shortly afterwards by Richmond Shakespear, and William Taylour

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* Mr. O'Donovan seems to think Skobeleff himself was responsible for the refusal, but this is a mistake. Skobeleff, against his own inclination, was obliged to give the same refusal to several of his most intimate literary friends at St. Petersburg. —M.

Thomson. All these were well treated by the Sarik Turcomans, then holding the oasis, and the accounts of their travels leave no impression on the mind that any particular danger was to be apprehended at their hands. But at that period an English army occupied Afghanistan, and our prestige was widespread throughout Central Asia. Even after our retirement Joseph Wolff was well treated at Merv in passing through there in 1845, to elicit the fate of Stoddart and Conolly in Bokhara. The first to visit Merv, Wolff was also the last, and from that year until Arminius Vambéry travelled to Khiva in the disguise of a dervish, in 1863, Central Asia was a sealed book to Europeans. In the meanwhile, Merv had been occupied by the Tekke Turcomans, a tribe once occupying the peninsula of Mangishlak, but driven by Russian pressure to Akhal, and thence, by overgrowth of population, to the Merv oasis in 1857, where it expelled the Sariks, and a few years later defeated a Persian army of eighteen battalions, 8,000 cavalry, and thirty guns, sent to chastise it for their devastating man-stealing forays.

The early travellers had merely casually referred to Merv in the narratives of their journeys, the Russian advance not being sufficiently developed in the period of 1830–45 to give the oasis any particular importance. Even Vambéry, in 1863, made no effort to reach and describe the place. When, however, the Russians, who had hitherto been advancing from Orenburg through Turkestan towards India, suddenly raided across the Caspian in 1869 and seized Krasnovodsk, Merv attracted at once the attention of English statesmen; and the interest of the country in it grew all the stronger as the menacing preparations against it and Khiva unfolded themselves in the course of the next few years. To effect a survey of the threatened Turcoman region Colonel Valentine Baker patriotically proceeded thither at his own expense in 1873, accompanied by the late Captain Gill and Lieutenant Clayton. Thanks to his exertions, we obtained a full account of the country between Astrabad and the Persian border close to Askabad, but Merv itself remained unexplored, the English Government refusing to countenance any journey thither, and Kooshoot Khan, the leader of the Merv Tekkes, declining to receive Colonel Baker in a private capacity. On the return of Baker, the Government sent Captain Napier, son of Lord Napier of Magdala, to survey the Perso-Turcoman frontier, but with instructions not to approach Merv at all. In 1875 Colonel Macgregor, now General Sir Charles Macgregor, one of Sir Frederick Roberts' best assistants at Candahar, and at present acting as Quartermaster-General in India, rode from the Persian Gulf to Herat, and thence to Sarakhs, with the intention

of proceeding to Merv. This time Kooshoot Khan was only too ready to receive an English officer; but, to Macgregor's bitter vexation, he was stopped just as he was leaving for Merv by an embassy courier from Teheran, prohibiting him, at the instance of the Indian Government, from crossing the Persian frontier into Central Asia. How stunned and mortified he was at receiving this stupid and unnecessary prohibition he has given a good account in his "Journey through Khorassan," which serves to-day as the text-book to the region between Askabad and Herat. Simultaneously with his disappointment Colonel Fred Burnaby was recalled by our Government from Khiva, just as he was preparing to ride away to Merv; and three years later the same treatment was applied to Captain Butler in Khorassan. Even in 1880, when Skobeleff seemed to be getting ready at Askabad to advance upon Merv, and when knowledge of some description of the place and its people was urgently needed by England to enable it to shape its policy, the present Administration committed the incredible folly of ordering home, at the request of Russia, Colonel Stewart, who had gone to the Persian frontier disguised as an Armenian horse-dealer, followed by the late Captain Gill, and who, with the latter, was preparing to go to Merv. It is difficult to read the record of these successive recalls without the blood boiling at the snubs and the slights accorded to these brave explorers, to please a Power which has never on any single occasion reciprocated the action of the English authorities. Since the Crimean war hardly a year has passed without Russia despatching fresh pioneers into the region intervening between her border and India, with a total disregard for the susceptibilities of England. What could be a more flagrant insult than the despatch of Grodekoff to Herat in 1878, after the treaty of Berlin was known at Tashkent; or, to quote more recent instances, the despatch of Lessar to Herat during the last few months, and Alikhanoff and Sokoloff to Merv? If this cringing of English officials to Russia has been reprehensible, still more so has been the indifference shown to the exertions of the explorers above mentioned, both by the State and the public. For riding to Herat in 1878 General Grodekoff was rewarded with an audience of the Emperor, with two greatly-prized decorations, and with a lucrative appointment on the general staff. On the other hand, not the slightest recognition has ever been made in this country of the eminent services rendered by Baker and Burnaby, Macgregor and Stewart, and the ill-fated Captain Gill, in accomplishing arduous and dangerous military surveys of the Perso-Turcoman region at their own initiative and expense, on behalf of English interests in the East.

We have dwelt somewhat fully on this subject because, on Mr. O'Donovan's return home from Merv, an attempt was made in some quarters to disparage the officers we have enumerated, by asserting that a Special Correspondent "had done what a whole series of military men had failed in effecting." This is not a view which any person acquainted with Central Asian travel would attempt to maintain, and which Mr. O'Donovan himself would be the last to encourage. It is possible to accord the warmest praise to the "Daily News'" "special," who deserves all the encomiums which have been heaped upon him, without aggravating the injustice shown to his predecessors by sneers at the admirable spirit of obedience all of them displayed in promptly responding to the orders to return home, even when the sacrifice involved the bitterest chagrin. Mr. O'Donovan, we may remark, makes no reference to these explorations in his volumes. They, however, had only recently been fully described in Marvin's "Merv," and to have dealt with them at all would have rendered his work, already large, inconveniently voluminous. Mr. O'Donovan also omits any description of Skobeleff's thirteen months' campaign against the Turcomans, the history of which, therefore, we shall have to take again from Russian sources. In this manner, although the first volume is consecrated to Mr. O'Donovan's adventures in the Atrek delta, to his journeys up and down the Caspian, and to his travels from Teheran to the Perso-Turcoman frontier and Meshed, the real interest centres in the account furnished in the second of his daring ride to Merv, and his eventful residence among the Tekkes. The "Special Correspondent" quitted the Persian border at the end of February 1881, a month after the fall of Geok Tepé, and rode to Merv by a route a little to the east of that recently pursued by the Russian caravan accompanied by Alikhanoff and Sokoloff. The country intervening is usually designated on the map as a desert, though General Petroosevitch exposed this error of geographers in 1879, and Mr. O'Donovan's description confirms his view that it is a vast area of cultivable clay, broken here and there by patches of sand, which only needs irrigation to render it teeming with vegetable life. The oasis of Merv merely marks the portion of this expanse that is regularly irrigated. Were the river Murghab to be dammed and diverted in any other direction, as has been done once or twice in the case of the Tejend, and as is of common occurrence with rivers in Central Asia, the cultivation of other portions of the so-called desert would be attended with the same remarkable results visible at Merv. This is a very important matter, since when the Russians occupy the country they will be able, by a few inexpensive and easy engineering works, to create

a line of cultivated country all the way from Askabad to the Merv oasis. If, as has been further suggested, the top of the Kopet Dagh range be clothed afresh with trees, and reservoirs be erected for storing the heavy autumnal rains, the Transcaspian region from Krasnovodsk to Merv may be made to become one of the most fertile provinces of the Russian Empire.

Arrived at Merv Mr. O'Donovan was treated first as prisoner, then as a guest, and afterwards as a chief; but during the whole of the five months he was among the Tekkes, the feeling of distrust on both sides never wore off, and it was only by trickery that he induced them to let him go. At the time of his release the Russian Government obtained most of the credit for securing it, but Mr. O'Donovan expresses no obligations on this score, and there is every reason to believe they were unmerited. Throughout his stay the Tekkes were animated by the bitterest feelings against the Russians; and if they have subsided somewhat since, the effect has probably been quite as much due to our evacuation of Candahar, and to the non-return of Mr. O'Donovan—their envoy to Europe—as to the intrigues and threats of the Russian authorities at Askabad. Mr. O'Donovan obtained for England what she badly needed, a thorough account of the Merv oasis; but it is a question whether he did any good in arresting the Russian advance. The Tekkes made him a chief, and they begged him over and over again to hoist the English flag over the fortress of Merv; but he had not the ambition, nor yet, perhaps, the inclination, to become a ruler of Merv and shape its destinies in accordance with English interests, even if such a course had been practicable and likely to be attended with permanent success, which is very much open to doubt. Having personally visited every part of the oasis, his great desire was to get back home again, and this was accomplished after a series of dangers which indicate clearly enough the hazardous character of the task so successfully achieved. These adventures we regret we have not space to enter into fully here. They are deeply interesting, and we can assure the reader that he will never regret our advice to peruse "The Merv Oasis." If Mr. O'Donovan had never republished the letters he contributed to the "Daily News," he would have still laid the public under a deep obligation for the valuable service he rendered the country in surveying Merv, at a period when both the Government and the people urgently needed a descriptive account of it. By issuing "The Merv Oasis" he has further enhanced the obligation; and as no knighthood or other reward is likely to be given him for his explorations, which share in this respect the fate of those of his predecessors, the least the

public can do is to read his book and applaud the author. They will be then the better able to appreciate the significance of that fresh restlessness beyond the Caspian which has already placed Herat within easy reach of a Russian *coup de main*, and which may in a few years see Russia permanently established alongside our Indian border.

USEFUL VERST TABLE.

COMPILED BY CHARLES MARVIN.

Versts.	Miles.	Versts.	Miles.	Versts.	Miles.
1 =	0·66288	44 =	29·16672	87 =	57·67056
2	1·32576	45	29·82960	88	58·33344
3	1·98864	46	30·49248	89	58·99632
4	2·65152	47	31·15536	90	59·65920
5	3·31440	48	31·81824	91	60·32208
6	3·97728	49	32·48112	92	60·98496
7	4·64016	50	33·14400	93	61·64784
8	5·30304	51	33·80688	94	62·31072
9	5·96592	52	34·46976	95	62·97360
10	6·62880	53	35·13264	96	63·63648
11	7·29168	54	35·79552	97	64·29936
12	7·95456	55	36·45840	98	64·96224
13	8·61744	56	37·12128	99	65·62512
14	9·28032	57	57·78416	100	66·28800
15	9·94320	58	38·44704	105	69·60240
16	10·60608	59	39·10992	110	72·91680
17	11·26896	60	39·77280	115	76·23120
18	11·93184	61	40·43568	120	79·54560
19	12·59472	62	41·09856	125	82·86000
20	13·25760	63	41·76144	130	86·17440
21	13·92048	64	42·42432	135	89·48880
22	14·58336	65	43·08720	140	92·80320
23	15·24624	66	43·75008	145	96·11760
24	15·90912	67	44·41396	150	99·43200
25	16·57200	68	45·07584	155	102·74640
26	17·23488	69	45·73872	160	106·06080
27	17·89776	70	46·40160	165	109·37520
28	18·56064	71	47·06448	170	112·68960
29	19·22352	72	47·72736	175	116·00400
30	19·88640	73	48·39024	180	119·31840
31	20·54928	74	49·05312	185	122·63280
32	21·21216	75	49·71600	190	123·94720
33	21·87504	76	50·37888	195	129·26160
34	22·53792	77	51·04176	200	132·57600
35	23·20080	78	51·70464	205	135·89040
36	23·86368	79	52·36752	210	139·20480
37	24·52656	80	53·03040	215	142·51920
38	25·18944	81	53·69328	220	145·83360
39	25·85232	82	54·35616	225	149·14800
40	26·51520	83	55·01904	230	152·46240
41	27·17808	84	55·68192	235	155·77680
42	27·84096	85	56·34480	240	159·09120
43	28·50384	86	57·00768	245	162·40560

Versts.	Miles.	Versts.	Miles.	Versts.	Miles.
250 =	165·7200	580 =	384·4704	2300 =	1524·624
255	169·0344	600	397·7280	2400	1590·912
260	172·3488	620	410·9856	2500	1657·200
265	175·6632	640	424·2432	2600	1723·488
270	178·9776	660	437·5008	2700	1789·776
275	182·2920	680	450·7584	2800	1856·064
280	185·6064	700	464·0160	2900	1922·352
285	188·9208	720	477·2736	3000	1988·640
290	192·2352	740	490·5312	3100	2054·928
295	195·5496	760	503·7880	3200	2121·216
300	198·8640	780	517·0464	3300	2187·504
310	205·4928	800	530·3040	3400	2253·792
320	212·1216	820	543·5616	3500	2320·080
330	218·7504	840	556·8192	3600	2386·368
340	225·3792	860	570·0768	3700	2452·656
350	232.0080	880	583·3344	3800	2518·944
360	238·6368	900	596·5920	3900	2585·232
370	245·2656	920	609·8496	4000	2651·520
380	251·8944	940	623·1072	4100	2717·808
390	258·5232	960	636·3648	4200	2784·096
400	265·1520	980	649·6224	4300	2850·384
410	271·7808	1000	662·8800	4400	2916·672
420	278·4096	1100	729·1680	4500	2982·960
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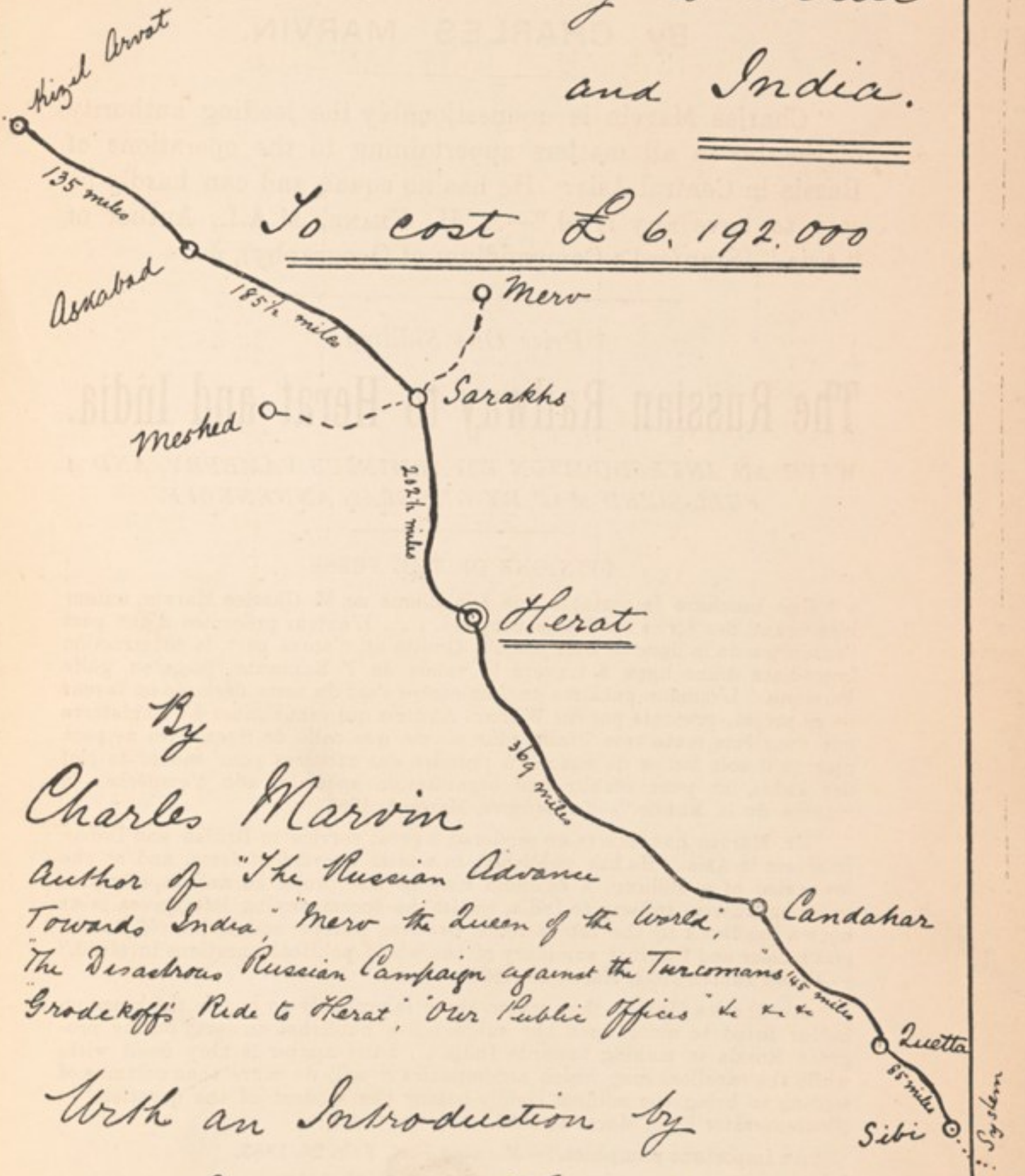

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