

The priest, or high priest, then sprinkles the slave with consecrated water; and he is made free, or rather is the slave of the fetish alone, with whose priest or high priest he can remain if he chooses, or depart whithersoever he will. Such are the chief points of the religion of the Gold Coast.

[This Paper will be published entire, with the author's Map, in vol. xlvi. of the 'Journal.']

The PRESIDENT said every one must have listened with interest to the Paper, as it gave a great deal of novel information about a tribe of whom nothing was previously known. He was sorry that the exigencies of time prevented a discussion on the subject.

The Assistant Secretary read the following Paper :—

*A Prince of Kâshghar on the Geography of Eastern Turkistan.*

By R. B. SHAW.

[ABRIDGMENT.]

THE interest attaching to the mountain region surrounding Kashgharia, of which portions have been recently brought to notice by the explorations of the several parties detached by Sir T. D. Forsyth's Mission, makes it worth while to review what we know of the remainder, so as to ascertain how much has still to be done before our knowledge is complete.

I have been chiefly led to do this by reading the graphic account of these regions given by Mirza Haïdar, a Prince of the Royal family of Kâshghar, and a contemporary and connection of the Emperor Baber, the first of the Great Moguls of India. Moreover, though I have not had an opportunity of making any personal explorations in the hill-country west and north of Kashgharia, beyond the determination of the position of several peaks and ridges visible from the plain-country, still I have been able to cross-examine several intelligent natives who have been there, and I have formed to myself a pretty definite notion of some of the natural features, subject, of course, to subsequent correction.

Mirza Haïdar thus describes the general characteristics of the region :—

“The mountains of Moghulistân [the Muzart and Thian-Shan Range], from which all the other mountains branch off, passing round the north of Kâshghar, come round to its west, and go off by the south of that city. . . . The province of *Farghâna* [Andijan or Khokand] is in the west of Kâshghar, and these same mountains lie between; and that which is between Kâshghar and Farghâna is called Alaï.

"*Badakhshân* is on the west of *Yârkand*, and there also these mountains intervene. That which lies between *Yârkand* and *Badakhshân* is called *Pâmîr*. The width of *Pâmîr* is, in some places, seven or eight days' journey. When one has passed this, there are some of the mountains of *Yârkand* which adjoin *Balor*, such as *Raskam* and *Tâghdumbâsh*; and when one has passed these, the rest is land belonging to Tibet."

Here we must remember that the writer is in imagination travelling with the mountains, following their curve as above described, which leads him first into the *Alaï* plateau, then into the *Pâmîr*, thence into a region where *Balor* is conterminous with the districts of *Raskam* and *Tâghdumbâsh*, and finally into the Tibetan provinces. This is quite a correct account.

Mirza Haïdar continues:—

"*Badakhshân* is in the direction of summer sunset [viz. about 30° N. of W. for that latitude; but the real direction is nearer west, in accordance with his first statement] from *Yârkand*, as has been mentioned.

"*Kashmir* is in the direction of winter sunset [south of west; but in reality it is very little to the west of south] from *Yârkand*, and the same mountains lie between. That which lies between *Yârkand* and *Kashmir* is a province of Tibet, called *Baltî*.

"Similarly in the winter sunset [south of west] of *Khotan* certain of the cities of India are situated, as *Lahor* and *Sullânpur* and *Bajwâra*; and the same mountains before-mentioned lie between. That which lies between *Khotan* and the cities of India above-named forms provinces of Tibet, viz., *Arduk* [*Rudok*], and *Gugak* [*Gugé*], and *Aspati* [*Spiti*]. And this must be borne in mind, that these mountains end in *Khataï* [China]."

Here we have a geographical description which shows that Mirza Haïdar was able to rise above details and conceive a general idea—a rare faculty among Orientals. The account of the mountain region sweeping round the north, west, and south of *Kâshgharia*, and thus enclosing that country on three sides, is the simplest and truest that can be given. Our author evidently considers all that lies between *Yârkand* and *Khotan* on the one side, and *India* on the other, as one great mountain mass; in the same way as that which divides *Yârkand* from *Badakhshân*, or *Kâshghar* from *Khokand*; only, the mass widens as it runs round by south and east. He is not troubled by any theories about the mountains of *Sanju* (the *Kuen-Lun*) not forming a part of the same mass. This mass is composed of many subordinate ridges, but they combine to form one grand system. No one of these subordinate ridges or

ranges (such as the so-called Kuen-Lun) deserves to be distinguished from the general system, in any sense in which each of the others could not equally be distinguished from the rest. Looked at individually, they are ranges distinct from one another; but viewed *en masse*, they all (including the Kuen-Lun) form but one system or chain.

The idea of gauging the width of the chain by giving us lines across it in different parts, together with a statement of the countries which they lead to, is very satisfactory. These lines, radiating from the cities of Eastern Turkistán, are probably routes travelled by himself or by his informants.

With regard to the first of these, viz., that *from Káshghar to Farghána*, he merely says that it crosses the Alai, and that the Alai is narrower than the Pámir, which is seven or eight days' journey in width. I have obtained some information regarding one of the routes between Káshghar and Khokand, which does, in fact, cross the Alai, and which, I think, has not yet been described. I have drawn up the accompanying sketch map from the description and under the eyes of a very intelligent native merchant who has traversed it, and who, knowing the kindred region of Tibet well also, was able to point out to me examples in the latter country of the natural features of the Alai, which he was trying to describe. The position of the northern Passes I have taken from Colonel Walker's last map.

The lamented Fedschenko has made us acquainted with a more westerly part of the Alai, "a table-land at the head of the Surkh-áb, or northern arm of the Oxus. At the point at which M. Fedschenko visited this plateau it was about 7 miles wide and 8000 feet high, towards the east there are no mountains visible, and the plateau seems to widen out towards the north-east. On the south, the Alai is skirted by a snowy range. . . . Across these mountains, which M. Fedschenko calls the Trans-Alai, there is a pass into Sarikol, and further east there is another pass, called *Tau Murun*, which leads to Káshghar." He himself crossed a range which bounds the Alai on the north by a pass of 13,000 feet.

Now it is across this same range farther east that the *Shart* Pass leads (the *Terek*, or main route, between Khokand and Káshghar, being still farther east). On crossing the Shart Pass from the north, one enters the flat Alai plateau, which is here described as a day's march across (say 12 or 15 miles). At first small rivulets are met with, running west, to form the river Surkh-áb, or Kizil-su, seen by Fedschenko. Crossing the plain transversely (south-east?) towards the southern snowy range, one

gets to the edge of a sudden depression running along at the foot of the southern mountains, like a ditch under a rampart, with the Alai plain for a "glacia." In this depression is a small stream running *east* and coming from the *west*, where the depression itself seems to originate only a few miles off, being, in fact, a kind of fissure between the plain and the mountains.

Another road across the western mountains is given by Mirza Haïdar in a separate passage, in which he describes the rivers of Kashgharia. It lies up the valley of the *Shahnáz*, and leads from Káshghar to Badakhshán. This introduces us to the question of the drainage of the mysterious region north of that which was the scene of Colonel Gordon and his party's late spirited and valuable exploration, and south of the Alai; and also to that of the origin of the streams which one crosses between Káshghar and Yárkand. I give the passage from Mirza Haïdar which refers to this subject:—

"When I say that the length of the cultivated country of Káshghar and Khotan extends along the skirts of the western mountains, so that from the borders of Káshghar to the extremity of Khotan may be one month's journey, still, in the width of the inhabited portion, if one travelled quickly from the Western Mountains in an easterly direction, one would pass out of the cultivated country in one or two days.

"By the side of every river that issues from the mountains corn is sown and the land inhabited. Thus the first river is *Tuman*. It comes out from the mountains which lie between Káshghar and Farghána (Andiján). And this river passes through the midst of the old fortress which Mirza Abu-Bakr destroyed. . . . Many districts are fertilised by this water.

"The second river is called *Kara-Tazghun*. It passes the above-mentioned fortress three farsangs (15 miles) to the south; and most of the districts of Káshghar are cultivated by means of this water.

"Three farsangs from this river is another, the *Kusan Tazghun*. The villages of *Yangi-Hissár* are on this river, and the lands of these villages are irrigated from this water. From Káshghar to Yangi-Hissár the road is six farsangs.

"After Yangi-Hissár there is an insignificant hamlet called *Kara-Khanak*. It may be about six farsangs. In front of it flows the river *Shahnáz*, and several villages are fertilised by this water. *Shahnáz* is also a valley situated in the Western Mountains, and the road from Káshghar to Badakhshán is through that valley.

"From Kara-Khanák to *Kilbin-Rabát* there are villages which are stages for goers to and fro. It may be five farsangs. Then

there is another rest-house, which they call *Kosh-Gumbaz*. It is a fine halting-place, and irrigated by the River *Shahnáz*. It possesses cultivated fields and gardens, which are all assigned to the service of this rest-house. Goers and comers have the use of this rest-house.

“The next stage is a village called *Kizil*. It has salt-water. At this stage they do not halt unnecessarily. This is the half-way stage between *Yangi-Hissár* and *Yárkand*.”

With these two descriptions before us, viz., *Mirza Haïdar's*, written three centuries ago, and that of the present features of the road given in the notes, we see the water distribution which we have to account for. There is one strange thing about it: that streams crossing the road several miles apart are often said by the natives to be one and the same; and on further inquiry one learns that they are derived from a single trunk stream. Thus the *Telbachuk*, the *Faïzabad*, the *Kizil Boi*, and the *Karasu*, I was told, have one origin, which is said by some to be identical with that of the *Kāshghar* rivers; and *Captain Biddulph*, in the interesting account of his visit to *Maralbashi* (see *Royal Geographical Society's 'Proceedings,'* vol. xviii.), mentions “three considerable streams flowing from the south,” whose names were given to him as “the *Derbuchk*” (my *Telbachuk*), “the *Chokanah*” and “the *Faïzabad*.” He was told “that they are all united into one stream called the *Yamányár*, at no great distance above where I crossed them.” Thus it would seem that all the streams crossing the *Kāshghar* and *Yárkand* over a space of, at the least, some six miles, beginning from the Fort, are derived from one parent trunk, whose proper name we may conclude to be the *Yamányár*, as stated to *Captain Biddulph*, notwithstanding that my own informants applied the name more particularly to the northern branch.

Thus, the natural rivers of the country seem to have disappeared or become merged in the number of artificial water-courses or canals into which they have been distributed by the industry of the children of the soil. And instead of finding the streams diminishing in number and increasing in volume as we follow them downwards, it is the reverse that takes place. There is complexity below, and unity above. They resemble arteries rather than veins, though, of course, in the mountains the case is the reverse.

As we leave *Kizil* and travel towards *Kok-Rabát*, the secret of this curious state of things begins to reveal itself. The skirts of the mountains are here nearer the road than before, and the desert, sloping down from the low outer hills on our right hand, begins to exhibit, on a scale not too large for comprehension, a surface-

formation which is common in Tibet, where it can be recognised and studied with greater ease than here. This formation has been most graphically described by Mr. F. Drew, F.G.S., in a Paper read before the Geological Society in August, 1873. He has given the name of "alluvial fans" to these deposits of loose material (a sort of convex deltas) brought down through narrow ravines and laid out on the flat land outside their mouths.

With regard to the desert slope on the road from Kizil to Kok-Rabát, I can best characterise it by saying that it consists of a series of fans such as that described by Mr. Drew, only they are on a much larger scale, and (as generally follows) with a gentler inclination.

Now it is probably this fan formation, and the radical direction of the water-courses caused by it, which enables the water issuing from one ravine-mouth to embrace in its branches wide tracts of country. For example, after leaving a certain ruined Chinese post-house, situated in one of the triangular flats between the fan edges (near the well and rest-house of Aklangar), one rises up the slope of a fan which is seen to come from a remarkable ravine-cutting in a low range of outer hills to the south-westward. After traversing this fan-undulation for about 7 miles, one reaches the bottom of another trough, marked by a dry water-course, which is distinctly seen to come from the same unmistakable cutting, away to the west. So that when the water flows in spring (if it ever does here) the depression in which stands the Chinese post-house, and that near Kok-Rabát (some 7 miles apart), must be supplied with water radiating from one and the same spot.

If we judge by analogy, we shall conclude that in the other instances where we see the same result, viz., widely separated water-courses ascribed to one source or origin, the cause is the same, although we have not yet had the opportunity of verifying it by ocular inspection as in the district between Kizil and Kok-Rabát.

We may perhaps take Mirza Haïdar to be detailing only the natural river systems, each under the name of its principal branch, and neglecting the artificial and perhaps more modern subdivisions of the water. Even then, in an author usually so careful and accurate, it would be difficult to account for the omission of any representation of the Yamán-yár or Telbachuk system from his list, unless it be that they are derived from the parent trunk of the Tuman.

South of the Shahnáz there is no other important stream till we get to the Yárkand River.

Having thus traced up most of the water which flows through the country between Kâshghar and Yârkand into four or five main trunks, radiating in deltas or fans, we have to discover whence these come. There seems little doubt that the *Kâshghar River* derives its chief supply from the combined Terek and Alaï streams mentioned above. It is doubtful whether the Yamân-yâr system has an independent trunk stream distinct from that of the Tuman or Kâshghar River. The Chinese author quoted by Colonel Yule assigns to a river of that name a very important part. After various adventures in the mountains, it is said to enter the Kâshghar frontier, and form not only the River Tailibuchuk (Telbachuk), but several others, that is, it is made to be the parent of what I cannot help considering as at least two distinct and unrelated river-systems, or at any rate of parts of them.

The origin of the most southerly of the river-systems detailed above, that of the *Shahnâs*, seems pretty safely assigned to the great valley or opening in the mountains almost due south of Yangi-Hissâr. By this gorge the Pâmir may be gained, and thence Wakhan and Badakhshân.

There remain then the intermediate system or systems, the *Kusus* and the *Tazghun*, whose origin we require to ascertain.

Now I have convinced myself since arriving in Kashgharia (as far as one can do so without visiting the spot), that there is a distinct opening in the mountains between the two culminating snow peaks to the west and south-west of Yangi-Hissâr, which probably approach 20,000 feet in height. The more northerly of these two peaks may be called the *Tash-bailik* (Kirghiz dialect, *Tashmulak*), from the township of that name near its base. The second is known as the *Tagharma* (Kirgh., *Taghalma*), on the one side, and as the *Ui-tagh* (house-mountain), from its shape, on the other. It is not often that one gets the opportunity in this hazy climate of distinguishing more than the mere outline against the sky of a line of mountains some 60 miles off. It requires a very clear day to show the details against the face of the mountains. Two or three such opportunities I have lately enjoyed from Kâshghar, however, and the impression which I, as well as others of our party, have received, is that, what in outline appears a mere depression or "col" in the ridge between the two above-mentioned peaks, is in reality an opening through it. In this opening, which leads apparently far in between the mountains, we have a probable origin for one at least of the river-systems whose sources we are looking for.

A Kirghiz acquainted with these mountains informed me the other day that the *Kara-kul* (the smaller of the two lakes of that

name, of course) lay directly behind them, on a large elevated plain. No water, he says, actually leaves the lake; but if any were to do so (owing to the raising of the surface), it would flow out past the *Uf-tagh* (*Taghalma*) into the *Tashbalik River*. This approximate position, and the eastern outflow of the smaller *Kara-kul*, agrees with the account given to Colonel Gordon's party. My Kirghiz informant was not able to say which of the rivers of the plain was formed by the *Tashbalik stream*.

The mountain belt visible on the west of *Kashgharia* thus seems to be broken through by several streams flowing with a general west to east direction from the high plateau behind it. We have first the *Oksaldi opening* (from the *Alaï*); perhaps another at *Bori-Tokaï*; then the *Tashbalik opening*; then that of the *Shahnáz*, south of *Yangi-Hissâr*. These seem to be divided from one another by a series of gigantic ridges, whose eastern extremities and spurs, coalescing together to the view from the effect of perspective, give an appearance of continuity to the mass. This is a very common experience in mountain exploration; and several times it has happened to me to walk through what, to all appearance, was a serried mountain range barring my path, and to find it really consists of several ridges running at right angles to the apparent axis of the mass, whose seeming continuity was a mere optical illusion. I think we should consider the mountains on the east of the *Pâmîr plateau*, not as a range lying roughly north and south, and cut through by the rivers (as is the case with the continuation of the *Mustak Range* south of *Karakoram*), but rather as a series of more or less parallel ridges whose direction is roughly east and west, and between which the eastward drainage of the *Pâmîr plateau* escapes. It is probable that we could trace some of these ridges right out and even across the table-land at their back, where their axes would form a separation between the several *Pâmîrs*. This would be in harmony not only with the lie of the ridges bounding the *Alaï* (seen by *Fedschenko*), but also with those traced by Colonel Gordon's party on the north of *Kâshghar*, where the southward flow of the streams does not prevent the ridges from running east and west; or, as *Dr. Stoliczka* expressed it, "the system of drainage has no essential effect upon the direction of the hill-ranges. This, dating from much older times, was mainly an east-westerly one, following the strike of the rocks which compose the whole mountain system."

A somewhat corresponding account is given by Colonel Gordon's party of the Southern *Pâmîr* region, adjoining the district in question. Captain *Biddulph* writes: "The *Pâmîr*, instead of being

a steppe which you can march across in every direction, consists, as far as we can make out, of a series of broad valleys at a great elevation, called by the names of the different Pâmir, along which the different roads run" (between Eastern and Western Turkistan and Badakhshân). "The whole way from Aktash to Sarhad, four days' march, we were in one broad valley, there being no perceptible rise between the lake (Pâmir Kul) and the commencement of the waters flowing west." The forthcoming report by Captain Trotter, R.E., on the exploration of the Southern Pâmir, may be expected to clear away all remaining difficulties on this subject.

It is across this Pâmir region that Mirza Haïdar's next gauge-line leads, viz., that from Yârkand to Badakhshân. *Balor* is here mentioned, in passing, as being conterminous with the Yârkand provinces of Raskam and Taghdumbash in the region which succeeds Pâmir, as one follows round the mountain-curve. After Balor comes Tibet, according to our author. Now, the farthest province of Tibet in this direction, as described by him, is *Balti*.

In another passage he tells us: "The Eastern border of *Baloristân* adjoins the country of Kâshghar and Yârkand" (viz., the provinces of Taghdumbash and Raskam above mentioned), "its Northern border adjoins Badakhshân, its Western, Kâbul and Lumghan (Lughman), and its Southern border is the country of Kashmir."

Balor, therefore, included the present districts of Kâfiristân, Chitrâl, Yas-in, Gilgit, Hunza-Nagar, &c. Probably, it also extended south of the Indus to Astor and Chilâs. Wakhân is excluded, being considered part of Badakhshân.

According to Mirza Haïdar's definition, therefore (and he was in a good position to judge, having conquered the country), Balor answered to Dardistân. Colonel Yule has already shown, from a comparison of authorities, that this is where we must look for it.

We now come to the route from Yârkand to Kashmir. We know that he traversed in person the Karakoram Route, though whether by precisely the same line as is now in use seems uncertain. And here I must mention a feature which I noticed in my last journey, having missed it before.

The valley by which one approaches the Karakoram Pass from the south side is a broad open one, bordered by comparatively low ridges on either hand, arranged as it were *en échelons*. After ascending very gradually for some 12 miles from Daulat-Beg Uldi (the last camp), rising only some 800 feet in that distance, the road leaves the valley and turns up the hill-side on the right, and after a short ascent (of some 700 feet) crosses a low neck into some other equally sloping open valleys leading north. This is the Karakoram

Pass. There is no snow near it, and the neighbouring ridges are only 100 or 200 feet higher than it. But while resting on the southern ascent above mentioned, I noticed that the broad Daulat-Beg Valley culminates a mile or two beyond where we had left it, and rises no longer. On the contrary, after seeming to continue at the same level for a short distance, it begins to slope distinctly downwards and away from us towards some snow mountains on the north-west. Further it seems to turn northwards under these mountains (disappearing from the sight), and the caravan-men reported that it joins the Yarkand River at *Kufalung*. The following was my note, written on the spot:—"It seems certain that it cannot turn *southwards* and join the Shayok, for a careful distant scrutiny reveals no opening in the wall of mountain which forms its south-west side, and which appears to join on to the mass of snowy mountain which bears from 293° to 300° (about)."

This appearance might be deceptive, but there remains the fact that all the head-waters of the Shayok south of this, as well as of the Nubra River, come out of vast glaciers amongst gigantic mountains; and it is almost impossible to conceive that a higher source should exist, whose water would have to enter one of these glaciers at its head and flow out under it. The native report of the junction of this valley from the southern side of the Karakoram, with the Yarkand River at *Kufalung*, seems less liable to objection, and agrees better with other circumstances. Strangely enough, we have a report to the same effect, given by Vigne: "The Kurukurum Mountains I believe to be a branch or spur from the Muztak. . . . The appellation appears to be applied to a crest at the summit, 500 feet high, *which can, however, be avoided by a circuit of a few miles.*" The easiness of the ascent of the small rise constituting the pass, and the importance of avoiding any prolonged stay in this rarefied atmosphere (which forms the real difficulty of the Karakoram), accounts for the fact of the short cut over the "col" being used by caravans instead of the *détour* by the almost equally elevated valley.

But if the above conclusions be correct, it is evident that the so-called Karakoram *Range* has no *locus standi* left. It has before been shown that further *east* the water-parting, supposed to be represented by that name on the maps, is not even a ridge, but that many of the streams running into the Indus on one side, and into the Turkistan Rivers on the other, originate close together on open (though elevated) plains. But now it would seem that even directly *west* of the Karakoram Pass we may ride across on a level from sources that feed the Indus into others which join the Yarkand River. The little ridge of Karakoram, therefore, is cut off on both sides, and has no

physical connection with the mighty Muztak Range and its peaks of 28,000 feet of elevation, on which it has wrongly imposed its name in European maps, though never in the minds or speech of the natives.

It may perhaps be urged in reply (as it has been before) that this is a mere question of names. But I venture to think that, unless it be considered that the difference between a *range* and a *plateau* is unimportant, it is best to keep its own proper name for each.

[The above Paper will be published entire, with a Map, in the 'Journal,' vol. xlvi.]

The PRESIDENT remarked that the Paper was full of interesting geographical matter with regard to the mountainous region to the N. and N.W. of India, and contained a great deal of new information, especially with regard to the passes between Kâshghar and Kokand. This subject was particularly interesting now, because it was generally known that China was making a great effort to recover from Yakoob Beg possession of Eastern Turkistan, Russia having taken part in supplying the commissariat for the starving Chinese troops, who were waiting while the wheat was sown and grown behind the Great Wall. The subject was, therefore, one of political as well as geographical importance.

LORD LAWRENCE said the regions described in the Paper had always been to him a source of great wonder, for our knowledge of it had been only of a mythical nature until very recently, and even the travels of our countrymen, however meritorious and interesting by comparison with what was known before, still left our information very meagre, and it was very difficult to draw any conclusions of a satisfactory nature with regard to those countries. In a military point of view he thought our Indian Empire had very little to fear from that side of Asia, owing to the wide extent of lofty mountainous country that intervened. If ever the British and the Russians encountered each other in India, or the countries adjacent to India, it would be rather on the western side towards Khorassan and Meshed. He, however, trusted that that day was far distant. There was room enough for both nations to employ themselves in peaceful work in Asia for many generations without coming into contact, and if he were a Russian instead of an Englishman, he should strongly advise his countrymen to rest content with what they had in Central Asia, and what they might still get at a comparatively cheap cost, and not to break their heads against the British power in India.

Colonel MONTGOMERIE said Mirza Haidar appeared to give a very correct account of the mountains in and around Kashgar, and his remarks as to the Pamir, and the Alaï, and the route across to Khokand were exceedingly valuable even at the present day. In the twelfth century Marco Polo crossed from Badakhshan over the Pamir to Kâshghar, but from that time to the days of Mirza Haidar no information was obtainable about those regions. Since this latter period, with the exception of the account given by the Jesuit missionaries, nothing had been learned with respect to the district till quite recently, and it was not even known how Marco Polo made his way from Badakhshan to Kâshghar in preference to Yarkand. This difficulty arose from a mistake in the earlier maps, which placed Yarkand very much further to the west than its true position. From the time of the Jesuits nothing was heard of those regions till Moorcroft in 1834 sent Izzut-Ullah from Leh to Kâshghar. From that time to 1861, when he first had the honour under Lord Lawrence of initiating the explorations by natives, the subject was dropped; but in

1863 they at last succeeded in fixing the position of Yarkand by means of the journey of Mahommed Amin, and in 1864 and 1865 Mr. Johnson made his way to Ilchi. From that date our knowledge of the country had increased almost as rapidly as our knowledge of Africa had done. Still, it was only the immediate neighbourhood of the lines of route that anything was known about, and we were still ignorant of what became of the great river that runs past Yarkand at a rapid rate. It might run into a great lake, or disappear in the desert of Gobi. All that was known was that it did not reach the sea. There was also a very large track away to the east about which nothing was known. He agreed with Lord Lawrence that the Himalaya system of mountains 400 miles in breadth, and, on an average, over 15,000 feet high, presented an impenetrable barrier to a modern army. The only army that ever crossed it went from the Indian side, and according to the Raja-Tarangini it never came back again. The surveys in which he had been engaged extended only to the frontier, but the whole of the supplies of the surveying parties had to be carried on the backs of sheep, and when the food was eaten they eat the sheep. Every one in India, however, was curious to know what lies behind the snowy peaks that were seen from the plains. Since our occupation it had only been crossed in two places, by Turner and one or two others near Darjeeling, and by Johnson, Shaw, Hayward, and the late missions near Laduk. Until his agents made their way to Kinglo, literally nothing was known of what lies beyond. It was now known that there was a series of four districts running along at the back of the mountains and coming out to the north of Lassa, utterly desert, and only inhabited by a few nomads who picked up sufficient grass for their flocks. It was quite incapable of supplying any commercial traffic of value, and it was not worth the while of the Indian Government to run any great risk for anything that was to be got on that side. In the interests of geography, however, it was most desirable to have more complete knowledge of the north of those 1500 miles of mountains. There was a very large tract of country lying between India and China about which nothing was yet known. Quite recently one of his explorers extended his journey from Kinglo to a point on the Tengri Nur Lake north of Lassa, returning through Assam to Calcutta, but he did not come across any rich country which would give any hope of a profitable connection with that part of the world.

The PRESIDENT said all present must be glad to hear from such excellent authorities as Lord Lawrence and Colonel Montgomerie, each *facile princeps* in his own line, that the Indian Empire was quite safe from any approach on the side of the Himalayan barrier, which presented a width of 400 miles of mountain ranges higher than the Alps. The chief features of interest, so far as the approach to Eastern Turkistan was concerned, were the rivers, which, flowing from west to east, formed the avenues of approach from the west and from Káshghar, the great caravan route across the desert, led into Szechuen and the other rich western provinces of China.

The President, in conclusion, announced that the Council had that day taken into consideration certain proposals that had been laid before them by General Strachey, Mr. Francis Galton, and supported by many other distinguished members, in reference to the promotion of the more scientific branches of geography. A scheme had been approved of, which provided, amongst other things, for a series of Lectures by eminent men of science on various subjects in Physical and General Geography. The resolutions had been ordered to be printed in the 'Proceedings.'

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