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Central Asian Proceedings

**OUR COMMERCIAL POLICY
IN THE EAST**

BY

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Central Asian Proceedings.

OUR COMMERCIAL POLICY IN THE EAST.

In placing before you this short paper, indicating the lines upon which a definite commercial policy for our Eastern Empire may be based, I do so in the hope that its consideration by the Central Asian Society may draw public attention to the great importance of our at once endeavouring to improve our trade relations, not only as between India and the adjoining countries, but also as between Great Britain and all those countries in Asia in which the predominance of our trade appears to be threatened.

This paper has been prepared since the formal recognition of the Imperial obligations imposed upon India, in its present stage of development, as indicated by Lord Curzon's explanation of his views and by Lord Lansdowne's pronouncement in Parliament on May 12 last.

The approval by the Council of a discussion of this paper by this meeting is, I think I may say, something of a new departure, and is a recognition of the great value to the public, and I trust to the State, of the careful consideration by such a Society as this, of matters affecting the interests of India. Most of us have spent the greater part of our lives in the service of our country in its Eastern possessions, and may consequently be able to treat of such subjects from the point of view more or less of

experts and publication of our proceedings will, I hope, tend to make our deliberations appreciated.

My thanks are due to Lord Lamington, whose absence I much regret ; for not only has he taken a close interest in the outline I have endeavoured here to sketch, but last July, by his kind hospitality, a number of us were enabled to meet and to exchange ideas on the subject. We agreed unanimously that, unless a definite policy, based on such wide and solid considerations as to be independent of party politics, could be adopted by Government, all attempt to obtain increased facilities for our commerce must fail.

I should here like to say that, it seems to me to be of the greatest importance that, the history and geography of the countries adjoining our Indian Empire, as well as a record of our trade relations with them, should be made available in a popular form and I hope Sir Thomas Holdich may tell you of the action which is being taken by the President and Council of the Royal Geographical Society in this direction.

Two points seem to me to be of great importance, if we are working for the industrial and commercial development of India. The development of her mines and timber trade, her railways, and factories of all sorts, must be dependent upon English capital, and this will never be attracted to the country in sufficient quantity, until the Government of India are prepared to fix the rate of exchange between England and India ; nor will English capitalists be prepared to invest their money in railways, roads, irrigation works, etc., beyond the Indian Frontier, unless some Government guarantee is forthcoming as a security.

We must not overlook the fact that the expansion of trade I have ventured to indicate, must be a matter of time and must start from small beginnings. The population of such countries as Afghanistan, Persia, and Mesopotamia is comparatively small, and their demand for the produce of English markets will be for a time, at any rate, limited.

But it is only by looking forward, and working to benefit the generations to come, that we can hope to accomplish anything.

In regard to India, we are not only encouraged, we are fairly astonished, by the continually increasing prosperity of her population, and by the confirmed loyalty of her people ; the further development of the country is assured. May we not hope for the extension of a like prosperity to other countries under the influence of an Empire that makes for peace ?

In the summary of my paper I have referred to India as a future manufacturing base, and this matter might well form the subject for further discussion should the Council think fit ; but the outlook in this direction is most hopeful.

In the Blue-Book upon the moral and material progress and condition of India published this year, the chapter which deals with mineral resources makes one realize possibilities in the further discovery of iron ore, of petroleum, coal, and last, not least, of gold. Already the independence of India in regard to military stores and material of all kinds is advancing so rapidly as fairly to astonish one. In a few years her arsenals will acquire an importance that will render her virtually independent of the British Isles, during the early stages of war at least, and Japan excepted, she will, in this respect, be without a rival in the East.

The East Indian Railway Company have set up a steel plant and the manufacture of steel for projectiles and gun-carriages has successfully been carried on in the Government factory at Cossipore since 1891. Considering India as a whole, there are undoubted possibilities of a considerable growth in the iron and steel industries, but large capital is essential for success, as any enterprise must be on a large scale.

It requires but little imagination to picture the construction of ships in Indian dockyards from material obtained in India, and to think of her naval arsenals being

on a par with her military arsenals. The manufacture of machinery and of ordnance in India is merely a question of time. But I do not want to invite your attention to the growth of India in military resources, I wish to indicate her growing ability to export largely articles of food-supply and manufactures that will have a real value in the markets of both East and West—wheat, cotton, rice, tea, coffee, tobacco, indigo, and maybe sugar. Large areas of the country are being brought under irrigation and being secured against famine and her system of agriculture is being steadily improved. Her manufacturing power is at present comparatively small, but, according to the Blue-Book, there is evidence of great vitality. Capital only is needed to stimulate the power of production of her industries.

I can look back on nearly forty-five years of actual service, and some who are present may recall half a century or more. I remember when only one short railway existed in India. Is it difficult to look forward for as long a period? I ask you to do so, and I realize what may be the conditions which some young member of this Society may witness if, in 1950, a discussion is held in these rooms, on the further development of a commercial policy for our Oriental Empire.

The statement made by Lord Lansdowne in the House of Lords on May 12 last, with regard to our position on the Persian Gulf, and the acknowledgment of 'sea power' of which it is the expression, indicate some change in the attitude hitherto maintained by us in that region, and foreshadow a large extension of the area over which the benefits of British influence and civilization may be enjoyed.

If, however, our position in the East is to be at all satisfactory, our relations with the various countries with which the Government of India has to deal must be guided by a definite and consistent policy, which, after having been duly considered by the Council of Defence

and approved by the Cabinet, should be pursued, for at least a generation, irrespective of party politics.

By the extension of our Indian railway system to adjoining States and the development of commerce, we may oppose a Russian advance by means other than those of war, and insure a recognition of our Asiatic Empire as aiming at the well-being and civilization of all the countries coming under its influence.

It is therefore proposed to suggest the objects which a permanent policy for our Indian Empire might embrace.

PERSIA.

Our present difficulties in undertaking the development of Southern Persia are due to Persia's financial obligations to Russia, by which she is bound to allow no railways to be constructed in her territory for a term of years ; might it not be possible, by negotiations with Russia, to place Persia in a position to repay the loan of £2,500,000 which has been made to her, and to induce Russia to release her from the bargain ? The open acknowledgment on our part of a policy avowedly in the interest of the Persian people may be advantageously made at a time when the financial difficulties of Russia are considerable, and she is occupied in other parts of Asia with extensive projects involving large expenditure. The earliest opportunity might be taken of connecting Teheran with the Gulf and Bushire by a railway under British management, and the subsequent connection of Teheran with Herat by Meshed, and the completion of the Siestan railway project, may be kept in view ; as well as a project for connecting the Indian railway system in Baluchistan with Yezd, by a Persian railway under British management, starting from Quetta by Nushki and passing through Kirman ; from Yezd such a line would pass to Ispahan, and ultimately to Kirmanshah. The connection of this railway with Teheran on the one side and with the Gulf on the other is an easy development, Ispahan being con-

sidered a centre from which Bunder Abbas, Bushire, or Muhamerah may be reached, and these lines must be features in any scheme for completing Persian railways.

I have special pleasure in welcoming the appearance of Mr. Valentine Chirol's book upon the Middle Eastern Question. His friends have been eagerly expecting its publication, and people in England will do well to study it with care, as giving a true representation of the actual state of affairs in Persia, and a faithful, if somewhat gloomy, account of British diplomacy during the last two generations in regard to Persian affairs ; but I think that, as in the case of Egypt, the British Government, when it seriously applies itself to the work of resuscitating Persia, and sets to work in the interest of the Persian people, will be able to grapple with the task. Mr. Chirol's book, like that of Mr. H. J. Wigham, covers the whole subject ; they explain the condition of trade and the social condition of the Persian people, and they connect Persia with the Euphrates Valley and that portion of Turkey in Asia which we know as Mesopotamia, from which it may not be separated in a full consideration of commercial policy.

In this connection, I would direct attention to an article in *Blackwood* for December, entitled, 'A Proposal for the Irrigation of Mesopotamia.' It explains Sir William Willcocks' proposals for dealing with the restoration of the ancient irrigation works belonging to the Tigris.

So great an authority may be trusted not to put forward schemes which are impossible of realization, and I am sanguine enough to imagine that in the fifty years to which I look forward this may be more than a dream.

The recent attitude of His Majesty's Government in regard to the Gulf must bring an accession of water-borne trade, which will need encouragement ; and concessions for undertakings in which British and Indian capital may be employed will doubtless be obtained, but some direction must be given by the Government as to what is desirable in the pursuit of the policy they may adopt.

AFGHANISTAN.

Till now we have regarded Afghanistan as a buffer State likely to oppose obstacles to Russia, which it is not in our interest to remove ; if, however, we consider the good of India and of the Afghan people, we may substitute a commercial for a purely military policy by the encouragement of traders, and by the establishment of commercial intercourse, implying a treaty with the right of free entry into Afghanistan.

The trading instincts of the Afghans and of our own subjects may be depended upon to overcome difficulties, provided everywhere security is obtained for commerce and encouragement is given to commercial enterprise.

The construction of a railway to Kandahar and Herat, and from Herat by Meshed to Teheran, and the development of mining, should form part of our settled policy ; a more complete system of railway communication with Kabul, and a connection between Kabul and Kandahar viâ Ghunzi, will assuredly follow.

BURMAH : THE STRAITS AND SIAM.

The growth of these countries in material prosperity and their increase in wealth, so long as peace is maintained by the recognition of 'sea power,' will lead to large additions to the water-borne trade with India and the Gulf.

I commend chapter xxv. of Mr. Chirol's book, 'Can the Balance of Power be restored in Persia ?' to all who wish to know what may still be undertaken in that country ; but I would especially invite the attention of the Central Asian Society to the following passage :

'That, with our vast interests in all parts of the East, this country should still be only one amongst the chief countries of Europe that does not possess any national institution for the study of Oriental languages, such as the *École des Langues Orientales vivantes* in Paris, the Seminar

für Orientalische Sprachen in Berlin, and the Oriental School in St. Petersburg, is an almost unaccountable fact, which increases the difficulty of finding at a moment's notice suitable men even for the posts which are recognised to be most urgently needed. Not that a knowledge of the vernacular, though indispensable, is the only qualification for such.'

I, for one, would hail with delight an announcement that our Council were prepared to initiate steps which may lead to the formation of a National Oriental School of learning in London. The elder society—I had almost called it the parent society—in whose rooms we hold our meetings, the Royal Asiatic Society, would, I am certain, be ready to join us in an endeavour to create a school, which, with the assistance of the University of Oxford and our other great Universities, might have a national character.

Mr. Chirol states very clearly what the policy of Russia in Asia is :

'The policy of Russia in Persia is only part of a great system of Asiatic policy—commercial, military, and political—which is steadily being built up by the persevering hands of Russian statesmen, whose breadth of grasp and continuity of purpose are liable to no disturbance from the fluctuations of public sentiment or the precariousness of Parliamentary majorities. To them Teheran is merely one link in a long chain which stretches from Constantinople to Peking.'

His reviewer in the *Times* still further explains :

'That policy may be briefly stated to consist in maintaining the nominal independence of the States she desires to subjugate, in monopolizing their trade by the exclusion of all foreign competition, in thwarting every attempt at internal reforms calculated to increase their powers of resistance to aggression, in encouraging the lavish and unprofitable expenditure which is the bane of all Oriental Governments, and in getting into her own hands, by means of loans and subsidies, the virtual control of their foreign, their political, and their commercial relations.

'Thus, in the case of Persia, Russia—while she has surrounded the country with railways running through her own dominions, and thereby enabling her in case of need to invade Persia with ease—has done everything in her power to deprive Persia of railway communication. Whenever a scheme was suggested from abroad for constructing railroads or irrigation works, or for introducing improved methods of taxation and a reform of her debased currency, Russia has exerted her influence at Teheran to baffle the success of these enterprises by threats, or more often by bribery.'

We, unfortunately, have no decided and continuous policy ; I would suggest the adoption of a policy, political, commercial, and military, for our Oriental Empire which shall be based upon sea power, which may breathe the spirit of progress, and which may lead to the advancement of all the countries adjoining India in prosperity and civilization, and may insure the maintenance of peace in Asia.

I venture briefly to lay down the lines on which such a policy might be based :

1. The adoption of a settled policy for our Oriental Empire, based on the recognition and the assertion of sea power between Aden and Hong Kong.
2. The extension of the Indian railway system to adjoining countries, and the adoption of a forward commercial policy, throwing back the advance of Russian commerce.
3. The development of India as the manufacturing base of our trade commodities, shortening the lines of advance, by which we may recover markets that have been lost.
4. The general expansion of British commerce by land and sea, the Government giving such security to shipping and to trading interests as may promote initiative amongst our traders, a Government guarantee being sufficient to insure the flow of capital to Persia and to India from England.
5. The military policy which controls the action of the Indian army will be in conformity with the above, being based upon sea power instead of, as at present, being governed by the fear of Russia moving by way of Afghanistan.

6. Such change will insure the ability of India to embark a sufficient force to support our alliance with Japan, and give a reason, beyond that of the defence of India, for maintaining the European portion of the army in India in its present high state of efficiency.

To enable us to initiate such a policy, we have to get rid of the fear of Russia and of her military strength, which has controlled our political and military action during the past thirty years.

We must adopt a new conception of the term a ' Buffer State,' making the prosperity of a country and the progress of railway communication the best barrier to the advance of Russia.

The Government must deal with Russia direct, and must claim from her not only recognition of our right to promote the progress of railways in Southern Persia, but also of our right to influence the Government of the Shah at Teheran in any endeavour he may be willing to make for the benefit of his people.

In openly declaring such a policy as I have outlined, we have a strong position and very hopeful prospect. If the very decided action of the Viceroy in favour of commerce and the future plans of the Government of India result in the flow of capital to that country, the development of trade will be a rapid development.

If at the present time we allow the great importance of the commercial value of our Oriental Empire to be obscured, and do not take full cognizance of its influence in other Asiatic countries; we shall be neglecting one of the most important factors that go to make up the history of the British Empire.

Central Asian Society.

DISCUSSION ON GENERAL CHAPMAN'S LECTURE.

SIR LEPEL GRIFFIN: I wish to express general agreement with General Chapman's lecture, but disagreement with several points of importance; and in the few minutes at my disposal, I hope the lecturer will forgive me if I speak of the points with regard to which I join issue with him. The millennium has not yet arrived, yet, with Russia and Afghanistan both opposed to the programme, I fail to see how it is to be carried out. If Russia strongly adheres to-day to the consistent policy she has pursued for years, what palliatives can be suggested? Why does General Chapman imagine that Russia will be willing to allow the British Government to repay the loan of £2,500,000—a loan made expressly to tie Persia to her chariot wheels? Russia would not consent to such a proposal, nor has the British Government the least wish to make the suggestion, or power to carry it through Parliament. It was with the knowledge of the British Government that the loan was negotiated. If Great Britain had wished to undertake it, no difficulty would have occurred; the amount could have been raised; the Imperial Bank of Persia would have been glad to have arranged the loan; but the British Government declined to take it up, and what Great Britain refused to do Russia was ready to carry out.

On the question of commercial development there is for us no great success apart from the sea and our carrying trade by sea. Do not vainly attempt to develop commerce by railways connecting Central Asia with India. Strategical lines, brought from fortified Russian camps into communication with our Indian system, would be a source of great danger, and would certainly be used against us. Make a line from the Persian Gulf from Bushire to Teheran if you will; such a line might pay. No British investor would agree to subscribe money for the construction of railways according to the programme of General Chapman, which would only serve the hostile purposes of our enemies and commercial rivals.

With regard to the lecturer's remarks concerning Continental schools for Oriental languages, I may say that, knowing the institutions of Paris, Berlin, and St. Petersburg, I should rejoice to see Great Britain better provided in this respect. I acknowledge that there are probably fifty professors of Oriental languages in Germany to the half-dozen English professors who are scattered between London, Oxford, and Cambridge. But yet I maintain that we have a great and world-wide institution for training students in Oriental languages—namely, the whole British Empire. I can put my hand on numbers of young men who speak Arabic, Persian, or the languages of Africa better than the professors on the Continent, because they are learning those languages in their daily work in different parts of the British Empire. So, although I should be glad to see colleges for the study of Oriental languages established in Great Britain, I am disposed to think that, having a world-wide Empire as a training-ground, the need for them is not so essential to us as it is to Continental nations who lack our practical facilities.

MR. E. R. P. MOON, M.P. : I cannot claim that my travels in the East entitle me to pronounce dogmatically on the wide subject that has been brought before us, but I know that there are two opposing schools of thought—that of General Chapman and that of Sir Lepel Griffin. A dozen years ago Sir Charles Dilke declared that Russia was the only possible antagonist of the Anglo-Saxon race, in which term he included the United States of America. Since that time Russia has extended her frontiers in a natural direction, which leaves her enlarged Empire surrounded by a ring fence. It is obviously unworthy for us to be jealous of Russia, as our Empire has extended over the habitable globe. The question of how to treat Russia suggests itself to every inquiring mind. Afghanistan cannot remain indefinitely a no man's land. Russia, through her trade with that country, deems representatives necessary there; these representatives, of course, would exercise political influence. It is impossible to say how soon Afghanistan will be settled and traversed by railways, but it is certain that in 1950—the date mentioned by the lecturer—Afghanistan will be no longer a buffer State. With regard to Tibet also, it is clear that, whether the present British expedition be a great or a little one, Russia has made great advances into that region. Urga, the Buddhist centre, second only to Lhasa, is under Russian control. Russified Buddhists from Urga travel south and establish Russian influence. At some moment, however, and perhaps when least expected, there may be an entire and complete collapse of Russia. I think that she has bitten off more than she can chew in Asia. Siberia, or Russian Asia, exclusive of Trans-Caspia, has, I believe, an area of 5,000,000 square miles, with only 5,000,000 inhabitants, or one to a square mile. There is industrial and economic distress in European Russia and disaffection in the army. A cataclysm may be the result. Only the unexpected, however, happens, and future events may prove such prognostications wrong; but we should not forget Talleyrand's saying: "Gouverner, c'est prévoir." We ought to contemplate the possibility, and be prepared for it.

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH: I will limit my remarks to one phase of this wide subject, and speak, as an engineer and surveyor, of railways only in the countries under discussion. We must remember that as yet all railway schemes are outside the sphere of practical politics, for Russia controls Persia's railway policy, and the Amir of Afghanistan will not have railways at all. I am in agreement with a project for a main line through the length of mid-Persia; it is practical; it is not difficult; it will pay. So much cannot be said of a line along the coast. I do not agree with an extension across the breadth of Persia from the North-East to South-West; it would be very difficult to construct and exceedingly costly. I am one of those who believe in the good effects of intercourse between nations; international knowledge of a commercial nature tends towards better understanding. I am an advocate for a connection between the Russian railway systems and the Indian lines. I do not think Russia could use them against us, and I believe that they would be a distinctly favourable factor towards the maintenance of peace. I believe in a trunk line for the whole of Asia, and I maintain that there is only one geographical break which permits an easy passage for railway communication from north to south, and that is precisely at Herat. From Herat to New Chaman is only a distance of 500 miles. So far, at least, as the engineering difficulties are concerned, and the promise of commercial return, such a line must be superior to all others. I am convinced that it will be made. Afghanistan will *not* disappear as a buffer State because we have right of way through the country; and this line will be a necessity for the general advancement of civilization in the East.

I should like to say one word more about the marked progress which has been made in the Afghan army since we had experience of it. When occupied with the Asmar Survey, I was the guest of the Amir and of the Afghan Commander-in-Chief. This was at the time of the Chitral siege. We had a considerable force of Afghan soldiers to safeguard the Commission. We were certainly not allowed to see very much of the Afghan army; but on several occasions I was able to notice a great improvement in discipline and morale. The Amir's army is a force to be reckoned with; it is fairly well armed, and in mountain artillery it is perhaps a little superior to the Indian army. Whether an opposing force enters Afghanistan from the north or from the east, it may count on meeting a formidable foe.

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR EDWIN COLLEN: I think that General Chapman, in urging closer trade relations and the extension of railways, between India and the surrounding countries, has hardly done justice to the efforts made by the Government of India for the extension of trade; but all efforts in this direction are made in the face of great obstacles and tremendous barriers. A closer trade relation between Afghanistan would be warmly welcomed, but the policy of the Amir is to exclude our people and to uphold a stringent fiscal policy of his own. The progress desired by the lecturer is excellent as a policy, and one which, if possible, every-

one would be glad to see carried out. On the question of railways, sufficient credit has not been given, I think, to the investigations and work which have been undertaken in India. There are many who wish to see railways pushed forward to certain points in Afghanistan, but support could not be pledged to General Chapman's extensive scheme. As a matter of principle, our Indian system should be connected with surrounding countries, but there is little possibility of carrying this principle into general effect at the present time.

As to the military policy of the Government of India, all its endeavours have been to secure internal peace and to safeguard the frontier. But India has been able to send contingents to help the Empire in South Africa and in China. India should be regarded as the great base of military enterprise in the East, and no opportunity should be lost of developing her military manufacturing resources. The advantages of sea power are obvious, but we must be quite certain that it does exist in Eastern waters. No subject is more interesting than the development of our naval resources in those seas.

COLONEL PICOT : Russia is not likely to forego the advantages gained by her loan to Persia ; but it does not seem probable that she will construct railways in that country for some considerable time, for she is already well served both strategically and economically by her railways in Trans-Caspia and Central Asia. A railway such as that suggested from Shinter to Teheran would seem altogether impractical if we refuse all part in the Bagdad Railway scheme. This railway would indeed be 'in the air' with the Bagdad Railway on one side, and a Russian railway through Azerbaijan viâ Kirmansha to the Gulf on the other. Would it not be possible to assist in the construction of the Bagdad Railway whilst still maintaining our great interests in Mesopotamia ?

MR. H. J. WHIGHAM : I must confess to being amazed by some of the arguments that have been put forward. A railway from the Persian Gulf to Teheran is an absolute necessity ; other lines may be better from a strictly engineering point of view, but cannot have the same commercial value. The Gulf must be used as a natural base. The Bandar Abbas, Kerman, Ispahan, and Teheran route offers no serious difficulty ; greater obstacles have been encountered in South Africa. But the point is that, if we do not build the railways, Russia certainly will do so. Russia has carried out her railway policy better than any other country ; her railway programme in Persia has been mapped out for years. Some thirteen or fourteen years ago she wished to gain the monopoly for all Persia, but finding that this was impracticable, she made a secret agreement instead, to expire in 1900. It is believed that the secret agreement has been extended to 1905 or 1910. Why should railways in Persia be outside practical politics ? If we are to build in 1905, it is time we laid our plans. We ought to have a policy. It seems taken for granted that the necessity of railways lies in the fact of communication with India, but

that is not the point. The point is our predominance. If the Mesopotamian Railway, which England wished to construct years ago, had been regarded on its merits, and not merely as a means of communication with India, it would have been built, and the troubles of to-day would not have arisen; both our political influence and our trade would have enormously increased. We know that Russia obtained Manchuria by means of railways. Five years ago, when Japan was turned out of Port Arthur, it would have been thought impossible for Russia to have fortified it and connected it with her own railway system, as she has done. Russia pursues her railways policy, undeterred by party politics at home, and what Lord Lansdowne says will make little difference when Russia controls the whole of Persia. The British people will not agree then to fight her for a port on the Persian Gulf, any more than they wish to do so now for a port on the Gulf of Pechili.

MR. J. D. REES: I should like to ask the lecturer how it is proposed to raise the capital for the projects he has advanced: whether from the finances of India or of England.

SIR ALFRED LYALL: I am sure we all feel greatly obliged to General Chapman for ventilating this wide subject, and for extracting such valuable information. It seems to me that the debate has illustrated Sir Lepel Griffin's remarks with regard to the resources of the Empire as a training-ground, for, as a result of General Chapman's lecture, a number of gentlemen have given us various information with regard to the countries under discussion from their personal experience, whether on service or as travellers.

With reference to the propositions made, the consummation of General Chapman's policy is devoutly to be wished for, but in the realm of practical politics it is not possible to move quickly. Some time must elapse before even the first steps are taken. The discussion has turned, with commendable practicalness, on railways. Nothing has so transformed the world in the last century as the development of communications; it has influenced language, habits, and commerce.

We have to face in the East a powerful antagonist, that opposes with tariff walls our policy of the Open Door. These policies are coming into collision in the competition for fresh markets for European goods, and, as in a game of chess, it is a question of who will get first on to the commercial square. Russia only wants Tibet commercially in order to prevent our entry. Our interest lies in railways. I can easily understand that there are fewer obstacles in the way of railways in Africa than there are in Asia, because nothing can withstand the strong commercial instinct, and the jealousies of the Great Powers do not so seriously affect the situation in Africa. Afghanistan, as a buffer State, merely softens down the collision that must eventually come; it is the same with Persia. We have interfered in Asia Minor in the case of Syria, of Armenia, owing to the misgovernment of the Turk. The most effective way of introducing

civilization into those countries, and of checking Turkish misgovernment by throwing light into dark places, would be, in my opinion, by opening out railways through them, and for this reason I regretted that the scheme for the Bagdad line failed last spring. Our whole object in such papers as that of General Chapman is to get these large questions debated by men of experience and local knowledge. I am not sanguine, however, as to the possibility of filling in the outline of the policy, as sketched, owing to the jealousies of the powerful commercial nations—jealousies which increase every day.

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1904

RAILWAYS IN WESTERN ASIA

BY

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL H. PICOT

Indian Army (Retired)

RAILWAYS IN WESTERN ASIA

SYRIA, ASIA MINOR, AND MESOPOTAMIA.

IN dealing with the question of Railways in Western Asia, I propose to take them in the following order and grouping: Syria, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia, then the Caucasus, and, lastly, Persia and Central Asia.

A glance at the map will show that Asia Minor and Mesopotamia are portioned out into two great divisions of table-land and plain. The table-land—of an elevation of from 3,000 to 7,000 feet, forming part of the high plateau which reaches from the Himalayas to the Mediterranean—is buttressed by the great circle of mountains extending from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. Inside this half-circle lie the rich plains of Mesopotamia and of the Karun, the seats of ancient civilizations, and the valuable prize for which the East and West have so often struggled in the past, and are fated to struggle in the future.

When in the fifties the question of connecting the Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf first came into public view, Western Europe alone appeared vitally interested. There was no Eastern European competition of any consequence; the question seemed one more of finance than of politics. Now we hear again the ancient clash of contending interests; Russia has risen above the horizon as an embodiment of European as well as Asiatic might. Mesopotamia is to her a factor of great interest, and it is

the clash of Eastern and Western ideals which makes the question of such supreme import.

At the time the project for uniting the Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf was first mooted there were no railways in view nearer than Brindisi, on the overland route to India. The natural basis, therefore, for the proposed line lay in the Mediterranean, in the waters directly east of the island of Cyprus. The problem of Asia Minor and its bearing on the future of Turkey was at that time but partially understood, and it was very natural that directness of route to India and the saving of time and money determined the question of the *tracé* of the line.

It is still of considerable interest to us to take note of the various routes to which the attention of the promoters of the Euphrates Valley Railway were directed. The following alternative routes were considered: that of Alexandretta viâ Aleppo to the Euphrates, thence by the right bank to Koweit; or that from the same point, crossing the Euphrates at Belis, thence by the left bank of the Euphrates, or the right bank of the Tigris, to Baghdad and Koweit; or, again, that from Bir on the Euphrates, thence by Urfa and Diarbekr by the left or the right bank of the Tigris to Koweit.

Other proposed routes ran from Tripoli or Beyrout, across the desert to Palmyra, and so to the Euphrates and Koweit; also from Haifa across Arabia to the Shat-el-Arab, the shortest of all in point of time, but of little value in other respects.

Mention was also made much later of a line to run from Ismailia to Koweit, just north of the 30th parallel of latitude. Very little is known of this latter scheme, which seems to have died a natural death.

The estimates of these lines varied from 6,000,000 to 10,000,000 sterling. Particular stress was devoted to the advantages of direct routes as being the more economical.

Capital was not then abundant, and questions of expenditure were thorny ones which loomed even larger in the eyes of the promoters of 1857 than in those of their successors in 1900. That Great Britain should prefer the most direct and least costly route, though that route might not perhaps be to the greatest advantage of Turkey, affected that country but little as long as she did not provide any definite guarantee. The conditions, of course, changed when kilometric guarantees were demanded, and the question had to be recast in an entirely different mould—viz., as it affected primarily the interests of that country.

The opportunity lost to us in 1857, when the Government of Lord Palmerston refused its support to the scheme, could not be restored again in 1872, when the question was referred to a Parliamentary Committee. In the eighties the situation had entirely altered. The development of the railway system in European Turkey had brought about important changes in the outlook of the Porte. Asiatic Turkey had sprung into significance, and through communication of that country with the capital was more essential to her than through communication with the Mediterranean. The strategic value of linking Constantinople by rail with Asia Minor and Baghdad was now clearly seen.

As early as 1858 it had been pointed out that the secure possession of the Euphrates line would be decisive as regards the ownership of Mesopotamia and Syria, and in the hands of a first-class Power might give the control of the Suez Canal. Also that Russia could not turn upon Turkey through Asia until she had secured her left flank by seizing Azerbaijan and Armenia, and that, given their possession, she would advance from the direction of Kars to the valley of the Euphrates, as well as from Erivan by Lake Van to Mosul in the valley of the Tigris. Further, it was also seen that predominance in Azerbaijan would

enable her to threaten the southern part of Mesopotamia by way of Tabriz and Kirmanshah.

The full meaning of all these possibilities was meanwhile only gradually brought home to the Porte; but, once realized, the furtherance of a scheme with a débouché on the Mediterranean, instead of on the Bosphorus, could no longer be entertained. The deputation which waited on Lord Palmerston in 1857 stated the general conviction that the Euphrates Valley route would most assuredly pass into other hands if England declined the task. Their words were indeed prophetic. The task, as the original syndicate first saw it, could, in 1872, be no longer accomplished—our opportunity had been lost.

Having failed, then, to bring about the construction of the Euphrates Valley Railway, the attention of British capitalists turned to more local projects in Syria and Asia Minor. I will briefly refer to the Syrian railways. The most important of these are as follows: The line from Haifa to Damascus and Bosra, the concession for which was granted in 1890. It was partly constructed by a British company, and was spoken of as one of the most important of existing or proposed railways in Asiatic Turkey. It attracted great attention at one time from the belief that it was destined to become the terminus of the Euphrates Valley Railway. Its present importance is due to its port, which is by far the best for large ships on the Syrian coast, and because it taps the exceptionally fertile districts inland. In November, 1902, the Sultan purchased this line from the liquidators of the Syrian Ottoman Railway Company, and the works on it are now being pushed forward under the superintendence of German engineers at the expense of the Sultan's civil list. The line has been completed as far as Beisan—the Bethlehem of the Bible—and it will shortly reach the Jordan at Jisr-el-Majania. This line will traverse those scenes with which Christians are familiar until it reaches Damascus,

which Mahomet deemed so strong a rival of the heavenly Paradise.

The line Beyrout-Damascus-Hauran, which is in French hands, was opened for through traffic to Mezerib in 1896. Considerable difficulties were met with in taking the line over the Lebanon, and a heavy expenditure was made in consequence. The port is unsatisfactory, steamers of any size having to lie outside, whilst the port dues are heavy. Despite these drawbacks, the commerce is increasing. Beyrout itself has grown from 25,000 inhabitants in 1860 to 140,000 in 1900. This railway, which has not yet realized the fond hopes of its promoters, will doubtless ultimately benefit by the great increase in the prosperity of the surrounding country, which is rapidly opening up both as regards population, agriculture, and home industries.

The Ryak-Hamah branch, opened in 1902, with its different gauge and rolling-stock, may be cited as a separate railway. This line is remarkably well built, and will be extended ultimately to Aleppo and some point beyond, to connect it with the projected Baghdad Railway. The Turk'sh Government pays a kilometric guarantee on this line, and will do the same when it is prolonged northward. Branch lines are to be built to the sea, as long as the rights of the Baghdad Railway are not infringed. This branch represents the northern portion of the Hejaz Railway, which will unite the Baghdad Railway with Damascus, and ultimately with the holy cities of Islam, Madina, and Mecca. About 300 kilometres of the Hejaz Railway have been constructed, and trains are now running as far as Maan. Funds for the purposes of the line have hitherto been found by the Sultan's civil list, assisted by the offerings of devout Moslems, but other financial arrangements will be necessary as the line is extended.

Another link in the Syrian railway system is the line

marked as British, and intended to unite the Haifa-Damascus line with Ismailia and the Egyptian system. It runs parallel with the coast, and at no great distance from the sea. No special mention need be made of the Jaffa-Jerusalem Railway.

It will be seen from the foregoing short sketch of railways already built or building that Syria is being rapidly opened up by a well-conceived system of railways, subsidiary to the more ambitious schemes of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. Taking Kilis or Birejik as the point of junction on the future Baghdad Railway, we may at no very distant date be able to traverse the whole of Syria in its length from north to south. The prolongation to Medina and Mecca will be the first step at breaking ground in Arabia, and must lead to great economic and social changes in that portion of Asia.

That British enterprise and capital should have so little part in the opening of Syria by road and rail is not surprising. The political influence of France was for long supreme in Syria, and we could, I think, have viewed an increase of that influence with perfect goodwill, but French influence is on the decline.

The most suggestive factor in the present economic situation in Syria, to my mind, is the entry *en scène* of German agencies for the financing and construction of its railways. German engineers trained on the Anatolian Railway are now supervising the construction of the Haifa-Damascus and the Hejaz Railways, the Sultan's own pet schemes, and there seems no doubt that German financial assistance will be offered, and probably accepted, when the cash resources of the Sultan's civil list become exhausted.

I now come to the network of railways of Asia Minor, and will take them in order of construction. The Smyrna-Aidin Railway dates from 1856, when a concession was granted to British capitalists without the advan-

tage of a kilometric guarantee. The line was constructed by English engineers, and opened in 1866. It continues to be worked under English management.

Major Law, who reported on this line in 1896, and to whose report I am indebted for many of these details, stated that 'It is the only railway in Asiatic Turkey which, on its own merits and without Government assistance, has proved a profitable concern,' whilst Government revenue and the prosperity of the population have been greatly increased by the remarkable development of the fertile districts opened up. The mileage has gradually been extended eastward to Diner and Chivril, tapping further rich districts. The latest reports for 1903 are extremely satisfactory, and within its present restricted area it continues to prosper; but the dream of the promoters of a future extension to the Euphrates Valley has definitely vanished, owing to the advance of the Anatolian Railway to Konia. This dream was a very natural one, for the route taken by the Smyrna-Aidin line followed the ancient caravan route by which the famous cities of Asia Minor conducted their commerce with the interior.

The Smyrna-Kasaba Railway also owes its inception to an English company, to whom a concession was granted in 1863. The progress of the line was slow, and in 1893 only 105½ miles were ready for traffic. Financial difficulties supervened, owing to the failure of the Turkish Government to fulfil its obligations, and in 1894 the company accepted an offer for its purchase. It is now under French control, and enjoys a Government guarantee. Owing to engineering difficulties, the construction caused a heavy outlay, and confidence in the line has not yet been justified. It was hoped that the working would leave but a small margin to be met by the guarantee, but at present it draws heavily upon Turkish funds. The overpowering interests of the Anatolian Railway have also reacted to the

detriment of this line. The extension to the Anatolian Railway at Afium-Karahissar was broken at the instance of the Anatolian Railway, to prevent goods seeking an outlet at Smyrna instead of at Ismid. Perhaps the best that the line can expect is final absorption in the greater scheme.

The Mersina-Adana railway, like the foregoing, was built with English capital. The concession was granted in 1883, the line opened in 1886. In 1896 it was transferred to a French company. The promoters had other aims than the exploitation of the rich belt between the sea and the Taurus. They had in view a prolongation to Birejik, where it was hoped it might affect a junction with the Syrian system. Extensions to Eregli and Konia were also under consideration, but all these plans were held in abeyance owing to the opposition of the Anatolian Railway. Quite a large trade has developed at Mersina, despite its want of a port, but the future of the line must depend on its community of interest with its Anatolian rival, with which it will effect a junction when the Konia-Eregli section is protracted southward. I believe it has already been merged into the greater scheme.

The Mudania-Brussa Railway of 26½ miles, though dating from 1876, was only completed in 1892. It is held in French interests, and doubtless, like all other Asia Minor railways, will become a dependent of the Baghdad Railway. Until such time its extension to Levke and Ine-Oenu is not likely to take place. There is no port, though the roadstead is sufficiently sheltered, and no Government guarantee.

The first section of the Anatolian Railway, from Scutari to Ismid, 58 miles in length, was built by the Turkish Government in 1871, and afterwards leased for a term of twenty years to an English company. This lease was held till 1888, when a German syndicate, operated by the Deutsche Bank of Berlin, acquired rights over the Haidar-Pasha-Ismid

Railway, together with the ninety-nine years' concession for an extension to Angora, the Government guaranteeing mileage revenue over each section. In 1893 the Anatolian Railway came into being. It was under this company that the line to Angora was completed, and further concessions obtained for prolongations to Eski Shehr, and Konia, and from Angora to Kaisariyeh. These concessions were, as before, supported by kilometric guarantees. The concessionnaires were bound to build a railway from Angora to Sivas, from Sivas to Diarbekr and Baghdad, as soon as the receipts on all the lines reached a figure freeing the Government from the kilometric guarantee. The line to Angora was completed in 1892, to Konia in 1896, both sections having been pushed on with energy, despite physical and climatic obstacles. The extension to Sivas and beyond was abandoned out of deference to Russian susceptibilities.

The financial results of the line to Angora have been poor. The main line to Konia tells a different tale. It would appear from recent results that the company will shortly find itself independent of the Government guarantee. The utilization of that guarantee for the extension from Konia to Eregli on the Baghdad line has even been contemplated, but it is doubtful that the Anatolian Railway will forego its rights, when the prosperity of the line might be seriously affected, by bad years and failing harvests.

Before proceeding to the question of the Baghdad Railway, I would like to pass in review certain appreciations of the circumstances attending railway construction in Asia Minor. Just as British enterprise was first in the field when the Euphrates Valley scheme was under consideration, so was it first in opening up new ground in Asia Minor. With the exception of the short line from Mudania to Brussa, every one of the lines mentioned, the Smyrna-Aidin, Smyrna-Kasaba, Mersina-Adana, and the

Haidar-Pasha-Ismid Railways, were built, I believe, in the first instance, with English capital, under English management, with English material, and yet at the present day all we have to show for our labours is the Smyrna-Aidin Railway, certainly the most successful financially of the various schemes, but, still, a poor result after all our effort.

I need not trace the reasons of our want of success in the Euphrates Valley Railway, but it seems necessary to attempt some analysis of our failure in Asia Minor. It would appear that British financiers asked for little or no support from the Turkish Government: they were satisfied with the results likely to follow on legitimate business, and were prepared to await the development of the country before projecting their lines into the interior. Progress was to be slow but sure. Now, this policy, though excellent in itself, was not suited to its environment. The Ottoman Government demanded an instrument adapted to the rapid construction of railways, to subserve Turkish interests rather than the immediate profits or views of the individual; moreover, an instrument with a large financial backing, and this our British companies in Asia Minor never appear to have had. English financial establishments, too, are often averse to risking their capital under foreign guarantees. They discount the support they are likely to receive from their own Government, and are consequently afraid of tying up their capital. It follows, therefore, that where large and influential banks are afraid to tread the public will not venture. British enterprises must suffer in ventures such as those under discussion when opposed by foreign companies having strong financial backing as well as Government support. This was the kind of competition encountered in Asia Minor, and with the advent of the Deutsche Bank of Berlin the tide set steadily against us.

Another and perhaps even nearer cause of failure was the inability of British companies to keep in touch with

Turkish ideals. They were never able to realize that whatever advantages the Mediterranean may have had in the fifties, in the seventies Turkey was more interested in linking up her capital with the outlying provinces. She was not a sea Power, and free communication with Constantinople was everything to her. The base had shifted from the Mediterranean to the Bosphorus, and we had not shifted with it. She had found German agents capable of fulfilling her purpose, and of building railways in Europe to suit her needs ; she now turned to these same agencies to assist her in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. They were adaptable, ready to meet the wishes of the Porte, and to accept her guarantees. What more could be desired ? The *Times* makes the following somewhat involved lament on our displacement : ‘ It is hard to refrain from indulging in a lament at the remorseless regularity with which the lifelong efforts of more than one patriotic Englishman were destined to flicker out in a pitiful succession of unrewarded and abortive endeavours. The attempts made during the first half of the nineteenth century to navigate the Euphrates . . . followed during the early years of the latter half by the railway schemes inseparably connected with the names of Chesney and Andrews ; the reawakening of public interest a few years later in a short road to the East, which led to the drawing up of a report by a Select Committee, and which was indicated again early in the last quarter of the waning century by the formation of the Euphrates Valley Railway and Association, pass successively across the scene, to terminate by a group, chiefly English, to obtain a concession, up to the very time that a telegram was despatched to the Emperor William at Windsor granting to a German syndicate a concession to draw up a report concerning the construction of an iron way which should pass through the heart of the Asiatic dominions of the autocrat at Yildiz.’

The apathy of our statesmen in the past has brought

us to the present *impasse*. It was against this apathy and want of imagination that all the genius of a Chesney and the persistence of an Andrews beat in vain.

I will now pass on to the Baghdad Railway scheme. The attention paid by German financiers to railways in European Turkey had as a natural corollary their counterpart in Asiatic Turkey. The Anatolian Railway Company were either compelled to extend their scene of operation or to submit to absorption by extensions inland from the Smyrna side. They were quick to realize the trend of feeling in Constantinople, and, strengthened by the Deutsche Bank, found no difficulty in retaining the field their energy had opened up to them. The course of their negotiations with the Porte has been drawn by Mr. Chirol in his book on the 'Middle Eastern Question.' He mentions that in 1899 the right was accorded to the Anatolian Railway Company to extend their system from Konia to the Persian Gulf. The negotiations, continued till 1902, resulted in 1903 in a convention giving to the 'Imperial Ottoman Baghdad Railway Company' the right of constructing railways to the Gulf in extension of the Anatolian Railway system. This convention not only assured to German enterprise a monopoly in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, but added thereto a predominance in Syria.

The Baghdad Railway, as at present traced, is to run from Konia through the Taurus, whence it descends by the fertile plains of Southern Cilicia to Adana (here it joins the Mersina-Adana line); from Adana to Kilis and Tel Habesch, thence east across the Euphrates to a point 20 kilometres south of Birejik by Haran, Ras-el-Ain, and Nisibin to Mosul, and so to Baghdad and the Persian Gulf. Branch lines are to run to Aleppo, Urfa, Khanikin, and to a point of the Gulf from Zubeir.

The line has been divided for financial reasons into sections of 200 kilometres, each of which will benefit, when

constructed, by a kilometric guarantee from the Turkish Government.

Before the ratification of the convention, the Deutsche Bank, representing the financial interests of the Baghdad Railway Company, addressed themselves to the Ottoman Bank, as representing French interests, with a view of obtaining their co-operation in the undertaking. The Ottoman Bank would, it was hoped, insure the political support of the French Government as well as the financial support of the French public. Later, similar advances were made to financial houses in Great Britain, with the same objects in view. Both advances were met in the first instance favourably, if without enthusiasm. The Governments of France and Great Britain expressed their general acquiescence by supporting the scheme, but it is said they took no active part in the negotiations between the principal parties concerned. That the German syndicate wished to internationalize the scheme certainly, in a measure, tended to advance its interests. France had been one of the first in the field in both Syria and Asia Minor. It was plain that if they did not march with the times they would be driven out of the field, to find themselves in the same position towards Germany in Asiatic Turkey as they are towards Great Britain in Egypt.

The enterprise had its detractors in France as in Great Britain. The question of French support was early raised in the Senate. M. Firmin Faure argued that the construction of the Baghdad Railway could only injure French influence, and build up the trade and prestige of Germany in Asia Minor. M. Delcassé's views were diametrically opposed to those of M. Faure. M. Delcassé said: 'If this great scheme is to be realized any way, it is better that France should have a hand in it than be left out in the cold,' and on the motion that French capital should be prevented by law from joining the enterprise, the Chamber

expressed its opinion in a very decided way by registering 398 votes to 72 against the motion.

The discussion raised in the House of Commons followed a different course, though the views of the respective Governments were curiously alike. The scheme was regarded with much benevolence by Government, but, as we know, was opposed by a strong party in the House.

Mr. Balfour's views were based on the belief—I give his own reported words—that 'whatever course English financiers may take, and whatever course the English Government may pursue, sooner or later this undertaking will be carried out. There is no difficulty in point of money. Whether the English Government do or do not assist, it is undoubtedly in the power of the British Government to hamper and impede and inconvenience any project of the kind, but that that project will ultimately be carried out with or without our having a share in it there is no question. Therefore, the point on which His Majesty's Government will have ultimately to decide, and which the Government may safely and wisely take into consideration, is whether it is or is not desirable that, if this railway connecting the base of the Mediterranean with the Persian Gulf is to be constructed, British capital and British interests should be as largely represented in it as the capital of any foreign Power.' If Mr. Balfour has correctly summed up the situation, too much emphasis cannot be laid on the fundamental and dominating factor—viz., that whatever our attitude, be it for or against, the enterprise will be carried through. In the debates in the House attention was devoted rather to the detail of the scheme. The fundamental factor received scant consideration, and the Government, as we know, reluctantly withdrew its countenance. The situation is a curious one. In the days of the Euphrates Valley Railway the public favoured the scheme, and Government withheld its support. Now the rôles are reversed.

France followed our lead, and for the time being it would appear that negotiations are in abeyance.

The attitude of Russia has been consistent throughout. Her press threw the whole weight of its opposition into the scales ; it expressed more of sorrow than of anger at the attitude of France. That her ally should support a scheme carrying in its train the possible rehabilitation of Asiatic Turkey was to her indeed surprising. It pointed out that the project conceived in Germany would, despite all internationalization, remain German in its essence, and would only lead to German aggrandizement at the expense of Europe in general, and of Great Britain in particular. Dire pictures were drawn of loss to British trade and prestige, of the aggressive element imported into the Persian Gulf, where Great Britain had hitherto reigned supreme. The Russian press deprecated also, with all its voice, a change in the *status quo*, and sought to emphasize other personal differences between the two countries. Finally, Great Britain and France were heartily congratulated when the negotiations came to a standstill.

Let us now criticise some of the details of this scheme. The generally accepted view was that the offers made by the German Syndicate for British support were inadequate. In return for providing some 30 per cent. of the capital, for assenting to an increase in Turkish tariffs, for finding a desirable port for the terminus of the line in the Persian Gulf, we were to receive inadequate representation on the Board of Directors. The question of equality of treatment was to be an open one ; nothing was said of special spheres of influence, though the Anatolian Railway was to maintain its separate entity.

Taken at their face value, some of these details appear to offer an insuperable obstacle to a fair understanding, but I venture to submit that they are not really as grave as they would appear at first sight. They seem to be

rather of the character of those ordinary business interests negotiation and goodwill often succeed in reconciling.

Take the question of the enhancement of the tariffs. To this we may apply the arguments that the rights of the bondholders would be effected, and that Great Britain would have to find the greater part of the enhanced rates. Now, are the exclusive interests of the bondholders to be allowed to wreck a scheme of reform the reasonableness of which is generally admitted? Is the country at large to suffer because a small body of foreign bondholders take a hostile attitude? Surely this is a matter for compromise! The argument that Great Britain would pay the greater part of the revenue raised by the higher tariff is probably true.

As to equality of treatment. Reports appeared in the press that preferential rates were to be granted for all goods in through transit from Europe—*i.e.*, not breaking bulk on reaching the Bosphorus—and it was argued that British imports, having to unload after their sea journey, would naturally suffer. I have never seen any confirmation of this report. It was explained that what British goods would have to pay in excess of German goods would be for storage whilst awaiting transit, and possibly certain port dues. Against this we must consider that British sea-borne goods could be landed cheaper at the Bosphorus than German rail-borne goods, and that the balance would thus probably be struck in favour of British goods.

A fear, again, was expressed that German influence might be exerted in favour of special rates for different classes of German goods. It is often argued that so-called equality of treatment does not always mean justice of treatment. The recent commercial treaty, for instance, between Russia and Persia may be instanced as a case in point, for although we are supposed to benefit by the most favoured nation clause, the treaty was so framed as to favour Russian

imports. The remedy would seem to depend upon fair and equitable representation on the Board of Directors. It would, moreover, be essential that the Anatolian Railway should be subordinated in all such vital questions as rates to the common interests of the through line.

Much has been said and written of the choice of a Gulf terminus to the Baghdad Railway. The advantages of Koweit were recognised in 1857. These advantages remain the same now as then. The line does not, however, depend upon Koweit, other places may be found in Turkish territory ; but it is of much importance to us that the terminus should be located in some place where we can readily exercise political control.

Of our financial share in the enterprise, it has been suggested that, whilst German and French capital might well finance and construct the northern part of the line, British capital should do the same for the southern, the respective spheres of interest and control following the same broad division. This would seem to offer a possible practical solution of our differences. The Anatolian Railway on the north and the British Railway on the south would thus hold the same relative positions towards the scheme as a whole.

Much has been said in disparagement of the kilometric guarantee, and of the burden it imposes upon the Turkish Government. The burden would presumably be much less if the British Government supported the proposal for the enhanced tariffs. The fact, too, must not be forgotten that the Anatolian Railway is now doing so well as to be practically independent of the kilometric guarantee. There is no reason for thinking that the Gulf-Baghdad section would not in reasonable time do equally well, as soon as the branch line be built to Khanikin. The desert section would certainly entail heavy sacrifices on the part of the Turkish Treasury, which, by all accounts, it is prepared to accept. In any case a guarantee found good

enough for German money might be found good enough for British.

Another and important question remains—that of representation on the Board of Directors. The representation, as originally proposed, was based roughly on a capital basis, with special regard for the rights of the Ottoman Government and the Anatolian Railway, and would have given an overwhelming voice to German capital. This, Mr. Chirol says, was admitted by the Germans both in Paris and London to be an impossible arrangement. If this be so, both France and England could doubtless obtain such representation as the material and moral advantages they have to offer would warrant. Any special rights accorded to the German Anatolian Railway might well be accorded also to the British Southern Railway, and a satisfactory answer found on these lines. In fact, I venture to believe that the whole question of detail might be settled on business principles. I do most sincerely hope that we shall take up the thread of negotiation, and give our best support to the fulfilment of this enterprise. The solidarity of our permanent interests with those of Germany should be strong enough to brush away the cobwebs ephemeral jealousies have woven. The *status quo* in the Persian Gulf, as we now know it, can no longer be maintained, and it is to our interests to take a leading part in a scheme which will ultimately change the political and social relations of the whole of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia and the Karum districts are the richest undeveloped fields in the Middle East, of surpassing promise and potentiality. I pray that the genius of the Anglo-Saxon races may be the moving powers in the regeneration of these regions.

CAUCASUS AND PERSIA.

I now come to that branch of my subject which refers to the Caucasian system of railways, more especially in its relation to the future question of Turkey in Asia and Persia. The map will show that great efforts are being made to remedy the chief defects in the communications between Russian railways in Europe and the frontiers of Turkey and Persia. The gap on the western littoral of the Black Sea separating the Kerch-Dhankoi line from that of the Black Sea coast-line remains to be bridged, whilst direct central communication between the lines on the northern and southern side of the Caucasian mountain range has yet to be effected. The Russian Government have, it would appear, under consideration a new line to connect the European and Western Asiatic railway systems. This line will pass through Voznessenk, Nicolaiev, and Kherson, in order to meet at Dhankoi. The Kerch-Dhankoi line is to be extended towards Anapa and Novorossisk, to effect a junction with the Black Sea coast-line, which will finally branch to Kars and Erivan. The Tiflis-Erivan line is to be extended to Julfa. The European system will thus be brought into direct touch with the Turkish and Persian frontiers, Kars being the objective in the one case, Julfa in the other.

Another extension to connect the Batoum-Baku line with the Caspian provinces of Talish and Gilan has been repeatedly talked of. This branch would start from a point south of Baku on the main line, and run through Lenkoran and Astara to the south and east till it reached the Persian tableland. It is doubtful whether this latter project has ever assumed any practical shape. It would be difficult to construct, expensive, and neither commercially nor strategically would the gain be commensurate with the cost. Leaving this extension, therefore, entirely out

of the question, we see that much remains to be done before Russia can be satisfied with the means of communication by land between her European provinces and those of her Western Asiatic frontier.

It is an appreciation of such factors that has induced Russia to impose on the Government of Persia an agreement by which railway enterprise must lie dormant for a term of years. She thus prevents any competitor entering the lists before she is ready to do so herself. In the present state of her finances it stands to reason that she cannot undertake any large scheme of construction in a country of no immediate vital importance to her. Railways in Persia such as Russia would require would mean not only a large initial outlay, but a continuous burden for their maintenance, whilst their strategic value would be doubtful. For these reasons I am inclined to believe in the continuance of her present policy—that is, a renewal, if possible, of the present agreement with the Persian Government.

That Russia would have liked to impose a similar paralysis on railway enterprise in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia I have no doubt. Any change in the status of Asiatic Turkey, or any concentration of European interests in Mesopotamia, can only prejudice Russia's future in those regions, and that she should stand as the exponent of the *status quo* in that country, as also in Persia, is the natural result of her present stage of development and of her resources.

It was about eight years ago that Russian engineers, bent on railway reconnaissance, commenced to travel over Persia. They examined the following lines of country : from Abbassabad or Julfa on the Araxes to Tabriz, Tehran, Kashan, Yezd, Kirman, Bander Abbas, and the ports on the Persian coast of the Indian Ocean ; from Tabriz again by Kurdistan to Kirmanshah and Khanikin on the Turkish frontier ; and quite recently the country between Meshed

and the Indian Ocean, striking Persia from north to south. Another line of importance likewise examined in Eastern Persia is that which may one day unite the Quetta-Chaman Railway with the Transcaspian system, passing through the north-eastern corner of Persia. This can better be touched upon when referring to the Transcaspian Railway system.

The through line from Meshed southward along the borders of Afghanistan and Baluchistan, which has caused so much discussion, has been shown by Sir Thomas Holditch to offer almost insuperable difficulties. The trend of the mountains is against its *tracé*, its cost would be prohibitive, whilst the danger to which it would be exposed in the event of trouble along its Afghan and Baluchistan border would recommend caution.

The question of a defensible port for the southern terminus of the line is one also now likely to be a factor of much greater consideration in view of recent Russian experience in the Far East. The Indian Ocean, with its open roadstead, dominated by a great naval power, offers no attractions in this respect.

A more likely line would be that from Tabriz to Bander Abbas viâ Tehran, Yezd, and Kirman. It presents no great physical problems. Engineers might, indeed, regard it as an ideal line for constructive purposes. It would, moreover, be protected either by its proximity to the Russian frontier or by the great desert of the Lut. On the other hand, its cost and maintenance would be heavy. Finally, there is the same inhospitable coast of the Persian Gulf or the Indian Ocean.

Its construction would foreshadow a serious alteration in external relations with Persia. It would affect the integrity of that country, and would appear to menace the Baluchistan frontier. Mahan talks of the fear of Russia outflanking the mountains of Afghanistan, a fear which would be accentuated if Russia were ever in railway

communication with a point so far south as Kirman. A rearrangement of the Baluch frontier might then become necessary, whilst the Nushki line of railway would possibly be prolonged to the west and south towards Bander Abbas. It must always be remembered in this connection that the Nushki line could be projected westward to strategic centres very much more quickly than could any line starting from the Russian frontier. The political advantages of this line do not seem to balance its inherent disadvantages, whilst, financially speaking, the outlook would be deplorable.

A much more important line to Russia would appear to be from Julfa to Tabriz, Kirmanshah, and Khanikin, pointing directly at Baghdad—a line easily protected, easily constructed, and offering many facilities for trade.

It must be remembered that Fuad-Pascha, in his political testament of 1869, gave it as his belief that 'in future the most serious attacks of Russia will be directed on Asia Minor.' If Fuad-Pascha's prediction be of any value, a line through Azerbaijan to the Turkish frontier would add considerably to the striking power of Russia. It would place her in a safe position on the flank of the whole of Mesopotamia. At Kirmanshah she would be able to feed and mass troops not only by her line of rail, but by road from the Caspian *viâ* Kazvin and Hamadam, at all of which places would supplies and transport be sufficient, if not abundant. At her back would be Azerbaijan, with the best fighting material in Persia, supplying men by no means adverse to leading an attack on their traditional enemy across the border. I need not comment further on the fresh complications with which Turkey would have to deal with an Achilles' heel in Mesopotamia.

It is regrettable that British enterprise, under present economic and political conditions, is unable to interest itself seriously in railway construction in Persia.

TRANSCASPIA.

Now, to pass to Transcaspia. The main features of the railway system of Transcaspia have not been altered in great degree of recent years. The progress of construction has not been rapid, but up to the present the single line of rail from Krasnovodsk to Tashkend and Andijan has fairly well met the economic needs of the country.

The amount of land under cultivation is strictly limited by the water-supply, and as that cannot be added to without great initial outlay, for which money is not available, there can be no expectation of further rapid development of new agricultural areas. The railway has effected a curious economic change, for a large proportion of the area, once under wheat and other cereals, now grows nothing but cotton. To such an extent is this the case that Turkistan has become an important consumer of Russian and Persian wheat, immense quantities being imported from the Kuban and other districts of the Caucasus, as well as from Khorassan. It was at one time thought that the country irrigated by the Zerafshan River would be able to meet the deficit in Bokhara, but this proved to be far from the case. I travelled through Turkistan in 1893, before the cotton cultivation had reached its present expansion, and even then found that grain was pouring in from Russia. Russian civil officials have always taken rather the economic than any other view of the cotton question in Turkistan, and the pessimistic fear of the military element as to the difficulties a shortness of grain foods might give rise to in time of war were never allowed to react to the detriment of the industry of the country.

I have drawn attention to this one fact to show that an important economic as well as strategic question had to

be solved in Turkistan. From both these points of view the early construction of another line striking back from Tashkend through Orenburg to Russia became an imperative necessity. As long as Turkistan was served by a single line of rail losing itself in Ferghana, the situation was one of isolation, if not of danger. Now the loop to be formed from Krasnovodosk around to Orenburg viâ Tashkend will, in case of trouble on this Eastern border, serve the double purpose of allowing an influx of food-stuffs from Russia for military exigencies, as well as the usual efflux of cotton, any check to which would be severely felt by the merchants of Moscow and Poland. Turkistan, instead of being a detached province of the Empire, will thus form a part of the body politic of Russia, and, both economically and strategically, be not inadequately served.

This line is under construction by way of Orsk, Irghiz, and the valley of the Syr Darya, and is said will be completed early in 1905. Russian papers speak of it as part of the great scheme whereby Moscow is to be united with the heart of Central Asia and of Afghanistan, and which will place the keys to the routes of India in the hands of Russia.

This may or may not be so, but it will certainly enable her to carry out all her movements, military or otherwise, in Central Asia behind a screen almost impossible of penetration.

A scheme very dear to the heart of General Annenkoff, of Central Asian fame, was a prolongation of the Trans-caspian system, viâ Chimkend, Auliata, Vernoe, and Semiretchi, to Semipalatinsk, north of which it would unite ultimately with the Trans-Siberian line—another ideal line from a purely engineering point of view, the only works of first-class importance on it being probably the bridging of the Ili River and the Irtish at Semipalatinsk. This is a line which must eventually be made

to insure direct communication between Transcaspia and Siberia.

I travelled through Kashgar to Semipalatinsk in 1892, and my experience leads me to doubt that any great economic change south of Semipalatinsk would follow on this extension. Rich lands exist between Chimkend and Vernoe, but north of that to Semipalatinsk it is either monotonous steppe or desert—chiefly desert. Along the Irtish itself there is a first-rate opening for cereals. The year of my visit to that river, in 1892, was that of famine in Russia, and thousands of tons of grain were rotting in piles on the banks for want of transport. Annenkoff's scheme will, I believe, have to await on happier conditions.

At present there is only one branch line south of the Transcaspian Railway—viz., that from Merv to Kushk. This line was a reply to our Quetta-Chaman Railway, and was made for the express purpose of bringing Herat into similar touch with the Russian system as Kandahar is with the Indian. The nearness of our approach to Kandahar was for many years a cause of serious anxiety to Russia. That anxiety ceased when the Murghab River line ran into Kushk.

I remember meeting General Kuropatkin in Ashkabad in 1894, when he led the conversation on to our relationship with Afghanistan, and the effect our presence at Chaman might have on the existing political situation. The Russian press was at that time fully convinced of our intention of immediately pushing on the Quetta-Chaman line to Kandahar. This belief was apparently shared by General Kuropatkin, and he asked me to take note that any movement of this kind would be unhesitatingly replied to by the occupation of Herat by Russia. He hoped that the Russian press was misinformed; his Government was quite reconciled to our presence at Chaman, but any alteration of the *status quo* would be resented actively.

The Turkestan system of railways will only approach completion in Russian eyes when its branch lines from Charjui and Samarkand are projected to the Afghan-Turkestan border—one in prolongation of the Transcaspian Railway from Charjui along the course of the Amu Darya to Kerki and Kilif, the other in prolongation of the Orenburg-Tashkend line from Samarkand by Karshi to Kilif. These branches will bring Afghan Turkestan into direct touch with Central Russia by what are practically two distinct and intercommunicating lines of rail—a desideratum to her of the highest importance in case of war.

Another branch to the south, of less immediate importance, to which I have already referred when speaking of railway projects in Persia, may strike off at Askabad, and run viâ Kuchan to Meshed and the Herat frontier. The wall of mountain such a line would have to climb before reaching the Persian plateau makes it probable that the alternative route from Dushak viâ Sarakhs to the same point will be chosen. Meshed would in this case, I presume, be joined by a short branch from Sarakhs. I have never heard the opinion of a competent engineer as to the feasibility of the Askabad route, but from personal inspection can state that the mountain section would prove costly both to build and maintain.

Before closing my remarks on Transcaspia, I would like to add a word on that gigantic enterprise which is to establish direct communication by rail between the heart of Russia and China. Andijan, in Ferghana, the present terminus of the line, is sometimes mentioned as its starting-point, whence it would run viâ the Alai and the Terek Pass to Kashgar, Ak Su, Karashar, Turfan, Hami, Suchuan, to Lau Chau, on the Hwang Ho River—a river watering seven of the richest provinces of China, altogether 1,664 miles in length. I have myself been over the section between Andijan and Kashgar, and can speak

of this part of the country as likely to defeat any such project.

A point west of Kulja, in the direction of the Ili River, on the line some day to be built from Tashkend through Semiretechi northward, is also sometimes mentioned as a starting-point for the China project. This line would have to cross the Thian Shan Mountains before reaching the basin of the Tarim River, whence it would progress as already indicated to the Hwang Ho.

Though this scheme would seem to carry in its train the vassalage of Tibet and the conquest of China, it may fairly be granted that nothing is too difficult for a nation which could conceive and carry out such a scheme as the Siberian Railway ; but, nevertheless, it forms part of a train of Arabian Nights' fancy, having no chance of realization in the present or the near future.

DISCUSSION AFTER COLONEL PICOT'S LECTURE.

GENERAL SIR THOMAS GORDON: With regard to communication between the Gulf and Persia, the scheme which appears to me most feasible and which recommends itself most readily is from Mohammerah to Ahwaz by the Karoon River, and from Ahwaz by rail to Kermanshah. Passing through districts which might add to the granaries of the world, the line would have an economic as well as a strategic value. It could be quickly and cheaply built, as the rise is gradual to the plateaux of Persia. Steamers of 300 tons cover the 70 miles from Mohammerah in twenty hours; they come downstream in from ten to twelve hours. The cost of a light line would probably be about £1,000,000. It would be the answer to the line which Russia could bring to point at Baghdad. Germany would not like it, as she anticipates trade in those regions. This scheme would include 70 miles of river and 270 of rail. Persian trade would not have to pass through Turkish territory; and thus there would be no transit dues. The line would have both commercial and strategic value. England is regarded with favour because she is the mainstay of Persia's independence.

SIR LEPEL GRIFFIN: I wish to express my sense of the value of Colonel Picot's lecture. While I have been listening to what he has been telling us of railways in Western Asia, my mind has been occupied with one special question. I venture to ask, with the utmost humility, to whom are we indebted for the fine old crusted map on which we have been trying to trace the lines referred to by the lecturer? The map may have been suitable to the days of Herodotus or Marco Polo: it might be Asia as viewed from the planet Venus; but it is entirely inadequate to the needs of the present day. I should like to suggest that the sooner it is replaced by an up-to-date map of Asia, the better it will be for lecturers who deal principally with geographical features and for those who listen to the lectures. I should like to associate myself with Sir Thomas Gordon as to the advisability of a line of communication from Mohammerah to Kermanshah and Teheran. It is the only line worth making. English financiers will not consider a scheme if it is not likely to pay. If the Russian taxpayer objects to taxation, he is flogged and sent to Siberia; but the cost of Russian

loans has been rising enormously, and no line in Persia, except that from Mohammerah to Teheran, can pay $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. It may amuse strategists, politicians, and engineers to work out railway lines in Persia, but there are immense difficulties in the way of their accomplishment. The population is small, and there is little cultivation. Russia will not be able to continue to build impossible lines leading to nowhere in order to satisfy vague political ambitions. They are dreams of the future, and their record need not trouble us.

MR. CAZALET : With regard to a line from the Caspian to Teheran, I may say that I rode for two days in that district over very bad roads. It is the line most studied by Russian engineers. If Persia allows it to be built, Russia will be able to strike right into the heart of Persia, and will command the whole country. £300,000 have been spent in the construction of a road from Resht to Teheran—a road which has now broken down. A railway could not cost more than £1,000,000.

MR. J. D. REES, C.I.E. : I should like to ask the lecturer whether he considers that the control of Mesopotamia connotes the control of the Suez Canal? also what progress has been made with regard to the Askabad-Meshed line, and with the line from Kalgan through to China?

SIR ALFRED LYALL said that the Society was deeply indebted to Colonel Picot for the admirable and careful lecture he had given them, and he tendered to the lecturer the hearty thanks of the audience. According to his own views, Sir Alfred Lyall said, the only sure method of opening out Central Asia to European civilization and progress, and of improving the administration of such countries as Asiatic Turkey and Persia, would be by developing communication and commerce.

COLONEL PICOT : The road from Resht to Teheran mentioned by Mr. Cazalet is, owing to its mountainous section, extremely difficult to maintain. I doubt whether its conversion into a line of rail has ever been contemplated. That from Askabad to Meshed is useful as a cart road. There are no signs of railway construction along it. The railway spoken of by Mr. Rees as in course of construction between Kalgan and Pekin is outside the scope of my paper. If I rightly understand Mr. Rees' question regarding Mesopotamia and the Suez Canal, it is one of international law, on which I should be sorry to hazard an opinion.

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NOTES ON A JOURNEY ACROSS ASIA

BY
THE EARL OF RONALDSHAY

December 14, 1904



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NOTES ON A JOURNEY ACROSS ASIA.

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH (as Chairman): I have much pleasure in introducing to you the lecturer who for the second time addresses the Central Asian Society. Lord Ronaldshay is a traveller who knows things; not only is he a wide and careful observer, but, both in his books and in his lectures, he has shown himself to be possessed of the power of imparting information rapidly and clearly. These are two qualifications which are not possessed by every traveller, and they deserve to be recognised in Lord Ronaldshay. I will not longer stand between you and what I know will prove a most interesting lecture.

Rather more than two years ago I had the honour of reading a paper before this Society on a journey which I made over the then newly-opened trade-route between India and Persia, across the arid reaches of Baluchistan. Since that time I have had opportunities of renewing my acquaintance with the countries and the peoples of the East, and have carried out a journey which has taken me the whole length of Asia from Constantinople to Peking; and though I am conscious of having little that is fresh to add to the account of my journey which has recently been published in book form, I have nevertheless fallen in with a suggestion that has been made to me, and have selected for the purpose of this paper a few points which loomed large in the political panorama which unrolled itself before me, more with a view to exciting

discussion upon topics that are of interest to the members of this Society than in any false hope of materially adding to their existing knowledge of Asian affairs.

First, then, since my journey led me across the steppes of Mesopotamia to Baghdad, a word as to the prospects, more especially in connection with railway development, of the Asiatic dominions of the Sultan. This subject has already been dealt with at some length by Colonel Picot in the admirable paper read by him before the members of this Society, entitled 'Railways in Western Asia,' and there is no occasion, therefore, for me to lay before you any detailed review of the project generally spoken of as the Baghdad Railway scheme. There are, however, one or two points in connection with it which seem to me to be worthy of special consideration and discussion. With the general conclusions drawn by Colonel Picot I heartily agree—that when the prospects of the consummation of the enterprise are nearer realization than they are at the present time, this country should be in a position to exercise a dominating voice in its control. And I would lay stress upon the reasons which, in my opinion, render such a contingency necessary. I have been accused—wrongly, if I may say so—of lightly putting aside that section of public opinion which is avowedly—and I may add rightly—suspicious of the designs and objects of German world policy, and which for this reason sees insuperable objections to our having anything to do with any scheme with which that country is concerned. But it is for this very reason—namely, that I should view with dismay Germany or any other great Continental Power exercising the dominating influence in that part of the Near East which stretches from Constantinople to the Persian Gulf which the sole ownership of such a railway would inevitably confer upon them—that I advocate the participation of this country, upon certain conditions, in the Baghdad Railway scheme. As far as our co-operation is concerned, I would lay it down that equal powers of construction, management, and control should be the *minimum* in the

way of concession that Great Britain should accept, and I admit that I should far prefer to see, as I have elsewhere advocated, an ultimate solution of the question which would display this country in possession of the section from Baghdad to the Persian Gulf. Under such circumstances 'the German road,' to quote so high an authority as Captain Mahan, 'would find its terminus in a British system, a not unusual international relation.'

I am one of those who are of opinion that it cannot be too often or too strongly urged that—to make use of the language of Captain Mahan once again—'purely naval control is a very imperfect instrument unless supported and reinforced by the shores on which it acts,' and that just as we believe it to be imperative that we should not abandon our rights and our position of ascendancy in the southern provinces of Persia, so it is equally important that that portion of the dominions of the Sultan which lies between Baghdad and Koweit should be preserved free from the control of a great Continental Power. Even if we admit—and there are those in this country who do admit it—that the strategic line of our communications with India, Australia, and the Far East will lie in the future by the Cape of Good Hope rather than through the Mediterranean, the vital importance of the Persian Gulf remains unaltered. For although under such altered conditions the capital of the Ottoman Empire would to some extent cease to be a source of danger as providing a base for a flank attack, that portion of the Turkish Empire of which I have been speaking lies equally as a menace on the flank of one line of communication as of the other. It seems to me, too, that in assuming an attitude of uncompromising hostility to German aspirations in this matter we are courting a situation which may prove infinitely more difficult to deal with and far more dangerous to ourselves than that which exists, or at any rate until quite recently did exist, in this part of the world.

The aspirations of Russia in South-Western Asia are

well known. We are credibly informed that at one time Russia herself, at the suggestion of the official Tugovitch, considered the advisability of building the Baghdad Railway. The prospect of such an undertaking being carried out by another Power was infinitely distasteful to her, and it was perhaps only natural, therefore, that the chorus of congratulations which rang from the Russian press when the cold reception accorded to the scheme by the House of Commons in the spring of 1903 became known, should have been indecorously loud. The opposition of Russia, in fact, in conjunction with the opposition of this country, raised an almost insuperable obstacle in the path of German ambition. But issues fraught with momentous possibilities have been born in the Cabinets of Europe since the House of Commons expressed its extreme antipathy to the German railway scheme in the spring of 1903. France has drawn nearer to England; Russia has become entangled in a devastating and exhausting war in the Far East; and, more important still in connection with the subject with which I am here concerned, Germany has during the past few months shown an ostentatious desire to be looked upon as the friend in need of Russia. I need not recapitulate all the recent acts of benevolent neutrality which Germany has perpetrated in the interests of Russia, whereby she is laying up for herself a rich credit account with that country, which will some day have to be paid off. But I would direct your attention to the shape which that payment may not improbably assume. Is it not possible—nay, even probable—that Russia's acquiescence or even co-operation in the Baghdad Railway scheme may at some future time figure as part payment of Germany's little bill? And when this country finds herself alone of all the Powers in opposition to the scheme, will she still be prepared to prevent its consummation? And if she is not, will she look on with satisfaction at a Persia and a Turkey dominated by the diplomatists and Ministers of a hostile Russo-German combination?

That the German Emperor is bent upon carrying out his purpose has all along been sufficiently clear, and has been recently emphasized on the occasion of the opening of the recently completed section of the line over the 200 kilometres between Konia and Bulgurlu. In forwarding his congratulations to Herr Gwinner upon that occasion, the Emperor said: 'I am glad that German enterprise and German engineering skill have succeeded in advancing this notable undertaking to this important stage, in spite of the manifold difficulties which have been encountered. I cannot refrain from expressing to you, as well as to all those who are engaged in this great enterprise, my full recognition of what has been achieved hitherto, together with my warmest wishes for the further successful construction and for the final completion of the Baghdad Railway.' Judging by the methods of German diplomacy in the past, there would be nothing in the least surprising in finding her at some future time walking hand in hand with Russia through Mesopotamia to the Persian Gulf. German influence predominant in Asiatic Turkey would be bad enough; but, after all, the nearest German port is thousands of miles away on the shores of the North Sea, whereas the baneful shadow of the Power of Russia, whose aggressive policy and vast ambitions come into hostile contact with our own country in every corner of Asia, hangs heavily over the whole length of the northern frontiers of Persia and the Ottoman Empire, and threatens to steal south till it reaches the shores of the Indian Ocean.

There is another point to which I would like to draw your attention: that is, the nature of the country through which the line must pass. Part of it is, and always must be, of little intrinsic value, but much of it is, on the other hand, possessed of vast potentialities. 'Mesopotamia and the Karun districts,' wrote Colonel Picot in the paper already referred to, 'are the richest undeveloped fields in the Middle East, of surprising promise and potentiality. I pray that the genius of the Anglo-Saxon race may be the moving powers in the regeneration of these regions.'

That is a sentiment which we all of us may echo, and there will probably be few who will deny that railroad iron is the magician's rod that is destined to evoke the sleeping energies of land and water. As an example of what has already been effected by railways in Asia Minor, I may call to witness the report published by the Public Debt Administration in 1903, wherein it is estimated that the tithes of the districts traversed or affected by the railways have increased in the last twelve years by 46 per cent., and the statement by Consul Waugh that the Angora district, which exported no grain before the railway was opened, now has an annual export of wheat and barley valued at from £1,500,000 to £2,000,000. Such is the result of the modest railway system that is already in existence.

But there are in the south-eastern districts of Asiatic Turkey lands which are possessed of infinitely greater potentialities than the provinces through which the railway already runs, and which are but awaiting the bidding of the engineer to bear produce of incalculable value. 'This land,' wrote Herodotus, 'is of all lands with which we are acquainted by far the best for the growth of corn. . . . It is so fruitful in the produce of corn that it yields continually two hundredfold, and when it produces its best it yields even three hundredfold. The blades of wheat and barley grow there to full four fingers in breadth ; and though I well know to what a height millet and sesame grow, I shall not mention it, for I am well assured that to those who have never been in the Babylonian country what has been said concerning its productions will appear to many incredible !' I have never regarded the historian of Halicarnassus as a timid chronicler, or as one who found matter for surprise, even in regard to facts which might strike the average observer as out of the ordinary ; and when, therefore, we are told of crops of such a kind that even so bold a historian as Herodotus dares not venture to describe them, we may rest assured that we are dealing with material of no ordinary description. But we are not

dependent solely upon the evidence of Herodotus for forming an opinion upon the latent wealth of Babylonia. There are in Upper Chaldæa, according to Sir William Willcocks—the famous originator of the great Assouan dam on the Nile—no less than ‘1,280,000 acres of first-class land waiting only for water to yield at once a handsome return.’ ‘Of all the regions of the earth,’ writes that great irrigation expert, ‘no region is more favoured by Nature for the production of cereals than the lands of the Tigris. . . . Cotton, sugar-cane, Indian corn, and all the summer products of cereals, leguminous plants, Egyptian clover, opium, and tobacco will find themselves at home as they do in Egypt.’

Here, then, is an opening for British enterprise and capital. Here is an opportunity for Great Britain to encourage British capital to develop the resources of Mesopotamia, ‘as strengthening her political claims to consideration and excluding that of possible antagonists,’ and to create vested interests which will refuse to be ignored when the break-up of the Ottoman Empire is at hand. Sir William Willcocks gives an idea of the probable cost of a scheme of irrigation and of its probable results. £8,000,000, he says, would suffice for the irrigation of the 1,280,000 acres of Upper Chaldæa—£7, that is, per acre. He values the land roughly at £38,000,000, and, placing the rent at about £3 per acre, shows a return of £3,840,000. Allowing nearly half this sum for the upkeep of canals, there is still a net return of £2,000,000, or 25 per cent. on a capital of £8,000,000.

In considering the whole question of the regeneration of Chaldæa, it is essential that schemes of irrigation and projects for railway construction should be conceived and carried out in connection with one another. In Egypt the soil extracted in the cutting of a canal forms the embankment upon which the line of rails is laid. ‘Indeed,’ writes Sir William Willcocks, ‘it would be an irreparable mistake if the railways were aligned and constructed independently of the irrigation canals, and if, by some ill chance, the railways traversed one part of the

delta, and the profitably irrigable part of the delta were to lie elsewhere. . . . In Egypt the railways and canals are designed together, the canals preceding the railways and settling their location.' The builders of the Baghdad Railway should obviously bear in mind the analogous case presented by Egypt when they come to draw their ribbon of steel through the fertile lands of the Tigris—a necessity, indeed, to which our German friends are fully alive. And for the benefit of those who are content to see our own country stand aside and look passively on while a position of paramount influence in this region is being slowly but surely assumed by a great foreign Power, I may add that I happen to be aware that the attention of German engineers has been explicitly directed to the matter upon which I have touched by no less a person than the German Emperor himself.

Now, I cannot afford further space in this paper to discussing the development of the Near East. In the course of my journey I made notes of what Russia is doing in the way of opening what may be described as the back-door to the Far East, and it is my intention to make brief mention of what I observed, not because I consider Russian enterprise in this part of the world—in Mongolia and Western China, that is to say—to be of the same interest and immediate importance to us as are her movements in Manchuria and the Near and Middle East, but because, for the very reason that it is not, little curiosity is ever shown with regard to it. I may, however, be allowed to make rapid mention on my way of the advance which has recently been made in railway development in Asiatic Russia itself. Little alteration has been made in the Trans-Caspian Railway since the work for carrying on the line from Samarkand to Tashkent and Andijan, taken in hand in 1895, was completed. The much-talked-of branch from Ashkabad to Meshed still exists only in the fertile imagination of alarmists, while the famous Murghab branch, completed in 1899, still rests at the Afghan frontier. The object of this line has never been doubted,

and though it is as jealously guarded from foreign gaze as was until recently the Tibetan oracle of Lhasa, it is whispered that its terminus is to be found within the walls of a heavily-armed fort, garrisoned by a number of troops which at least reaches four figures, and with barrack accommodation for even more. There is also said to be a light railway running over the twelve miles between Kushk post and Chehel Dukhteran, while it is asserted that the length of rails stored within the fort is greater than is the distance to Herat. Who can doubt that some day, when Afghanistan as such has ceased to exist, here will lie the direct overland route to India ?

At one point the Trans-Caspian Railway has received important attention at the hand of the engineer—at the point, that is to say, where it crosses the ancient Oxus. Here the great cumbersome wooden structure erected by the Polish engineer Bielinski, on supports in the shape of 3,300 wooden piles driven into the river bed in 1887, has been supplanted by a fine steel girder bridge a verst and a half in length, which enables one to cross the river in three or four minutes—a great improvement upon the twenty minutes which I was informed was necessary for the passage of the older construction.

But far overshadowing in importance any improvement in the existing line is the completion of the new line from Orenburg to Tashkent. This line, which was in process of construction when I was at Tashkent, is now completed as far as the actual rail laying is concerned, and will in all probability be opened for passenger traffic in the course of the coming summer. Starting from Orenburg, a town of some 60,000 inhabitants built on the banks of the Ural River, it passes by the towns of Iensk on the river Ilek, Aktiubinsk, Kazalinsk, Perovsk, and Turkestan to Tashkent, covering in all a distance of upwards of 1,000 miles. Its importance is considerable, both from a commercial and from a strategic point of view. Raw cotton from the productive cotton-lands of Ferghana will now be carried direct to the cotton-mills at Moscow. The increased

facility and cheapness of importing corn from Russia under the advantages of the 'zone' system common in that country will admit of more and more of the lands of Central Asia being given up to the cultivation of the cotton plant, and ere long, no doubt, will place Russia on the highroad to realizing one of her ambitions—namely, to supply from her own dominions the whole of the increasing demand of those cotton factories which have sprung up in recent years to make Moscow a modern manufacturing city. By the completion of the line, too, Tashkent is brought within a week of St. Petersburg, and in the matter of carrying troops, within fourteen days of the great military centres of Odessa, Simpheropol, Kieff, Kharkoff, and Moscow. The 1st and 2nd Turkestan Army Corps, quartered at Tashkent and Ashkabad, will in the future be fed by a direct line of railway communication in their rear in place of the Trans-Caspian Railway, with its break necessitated by the twenty hours' passage of the Caspian Sea, which will necessarily fall into the position of a mere supplementary line of communication; and Russia's power of mobilizing troops in Central Asia will be more than doubled. So much for Russian activity in Central Asia. Now for a word as to her enterprise on the western frontiers of China.

My journey took me to Kulja, and later on to the Siberian and Mongolian frontier. At the former place no signs of progressive activity were visible. Russian influence is represented by a Russian Consul and a Cossack escort, a Russian post and telegraph office, and the insurmountable fact that half the inhabitants of the town are Russian subjects, while the dignity and prestige of the 'Son of Heaven' are ostentatiously displayed in the person of a Taotai, or provincial Governor, and the whole gamut of minor officials and hangers-on. It appeared to me that Kulja has every prospect of remaining *in statu quo* for many years to come. Russia has nothing to gain by an immediate advance in this direction, and, moreover, she was careful to see that the pro-

vince was at her mercy before she withdrew under the Treaty of St. Petersburg of 1881. There are, besides, other gateways into the Celestial Empire which hold out greater attractions than does the road through Kulja. Mongolia is no doubt for the most part a land of singular unattractiveness, but the shortest and most direct and most practicable route from Russia to Peking lies across the level stretches of the Gobi Desert. Urga, the most important town in all Mongolia, is dominated and permeated by the leavening Russian yeast, and plans and surveys have been made for a line from the Siberian Railway to Peking viâ Kiachta, Urga, and Kalgan, the 850 miles from Kiachta through Mongolia to Kalgan to be built by Russia, and the remaining section from Kalgan to Peking by China.

To the south, again, the southern regions of Chinese Turkestan, while as much, probably, at the mercy of Russia as the less important province of Kulja, have the supreme attraction, not possessed by the latter, of lying in contact with the semi-independent States which border upon the Indian Empire; and the possibility of controlling what Mr. Chirol describes as 'a great politico-religious organization, whose influence can and does make itself felt all along the north-eastern borderland of India,' has been shown by, comparatively speaking, recent events in Tibet to have appealed to the imagination of chauvinist statesmen in Russia in a way in which an advance into a part of the Chinese Empire, which could scarcely be deemed either necessary or advantageous, as likely to lead—for the present, at any rate—to any further advancement in a policy of territorial aggrandisement and acquisition, would scarcely be likely to do.

On the western frontier of Mongolia I found a laudable interest being taken by Russian officials in projects for stimulating and increasing trade. Manufactured and millinery goods, iron and copper wares, tanned leather and maral horns, pass into Mongolia, and in return furs, wool, skins, brick tea, silk stuffs, and small wares of

Chinese manufacture are brought into Russia. This trade, which had until recently attained a value of only a few hundred thousand roubles, is already showing an increased development, for the Russian authorities have spent during the past few years a sum of £7,000 in constructing a road from the nearest Siberian village, Onguidai—a road which I found sufficiently near completion to admit of the passage of light vehicles the whole distance to the frontier, whence a caravan route leads to Kobdo, Uliissatai, and Urga, the chief centres of Mongolian trade.

Trade with Mongolia is also being stimulated by the opening up of a water route via the Lower Irtish, the Nor Zaisan Lake, and the Black Irtish River, up which steamers and barges have now been run for three or four years in succession by three merchants of Semipalatinsk, who have established a station at the mouth of the Kaldjir River, a tributary of the Black Irtish. In the course of the summer before last 8,000 tons of merchandise were thus carried, and two new steamers, to be built with a Government subsidy, were a short time ago put in hand. The present station at the mouth of the Kaldjir River is 45 miles from the Russian town of Zaisansk, 150 miles from the Mongolian town of Tchugutchak, and 375 miles from Kobdo. A party of surveyors and scientists were under orders at the beginning of the present year to proceed on an expedition of exploration with a view to determining the best route to this latter town; but, owing to the outbreak of war and the consequent withdrawal of all extraordinary expenditure on the part of the Government, this expedition has been postponed.

Now, I have made brief mention of some of the evidence which came under my notice in the course of my recent journey of the unobtrusive activity of Russia in those regions which lie beyond the boundaries of her most remote possessions in Central Asia. That journey, as I have already intimated, took me on through Siberia and Manchuria to Port Arthur and Peking; but time will not admit of my embarking upon such further fields

of political discussion. I will ask your indulgence but one moment longer, that I may give you my justification for having troubled you with such, comparatively speaking, trivial matters as Siberian and Mongolian trade. Such matters might well appear to be no concern of ours ; the efforts, at any rate, of a great civilizing Power like Russia to open up intercourse with adjoining and inferior races should evoke from the people of this country nothing but approbation and applause, and I would not have it supposed that I view such efforts on her part either with the unreasoning distrust which is the common characteristic of the alarmist, or with the jaundiced eye of a virulent and prejudiced Russophobe. But while I admit the perfect right of Russia to encourage intercourse and friendly relations with her many neighbouring States, and admire the energy and enterprise which she displays in this direction, I *do* equally hold that we, whose interest in the preservation of a state of equilibrium in the East can scarcely be exaggerated, have every right to keep such a watch upon the progress of events among the peoples of Central Asia as will enable us at all times to preserve from possible danger the sacred trust which has devolved upon us as the overlords of the Indian Empire. As guardians of the Indian frontier, we should be guilty of neglecting our duty if we shut our eyes to the fact that a harmful intrigue has only too often accompanied Russian commercial activity in Asia in the past. A careful perusal of the Blue-Book published early this year upon Tibet is hardly calculated to reassure us as to the simple disinterestedness of the motives by which Russian statesmen are actuated in that part of the world, and, indeed, a Russian of high position—Prince Ukhtomski—has himself set forth the importance to which Russian intercourse with the Buddhists of Mongolia and Tibet may eventually attain. Writing of the Buddhists in Russia, he says : ‘ Every year thousands of them go on pilgrimage to Mongolia and to the centres of Tibetan learning. Pioneers of Russian trade and Russian good fame, representatives of the Russian name in the depths

of the yellow East, are these simple little men. These nameless natives march on to the mysterious Tashellunpo and the highlands adjoining India, everywhere quietly bearing into this Asiatic wilderness ideas of the White Tsar and the Muscovite people. These sturdy travellers bear also the idea, vague as yet, that the Christian West is called upon to regenerate through us the effete civilization of the East. Scarce anyone in Russia guesses as yet what a valuable work is being carried on by these modest Russian Lamaites at a distance of hundreds of miles from the Russian frontier.'

The escapades of the now notorious Dorjief ring a striking comment on the words which I have just quoted ; and as long as these 'pioneers of Russian trade and Russian good fame' continue to sow such ideas of the White Tsar and the Muscovite people among the populations of the 'highlands adjoining India,' so long will it be open to us, without meriting a charge of harbouring an undue chauvinism, to keep such a watch upon our frontier as will at all times enable us to safeguard the great heritage of which we are the trustees—a heritage which is, in the words of Lord Curzon, 'the noblest trophy of British genius, and the most splendid appanage of the Imperial Crown.'

DISCUSSION.

SIR WEST RIDGEWAY: My Lords and Gentlemen,—I have heard, as I am sure you have all heard, with the greatest interest, the admirable paper which has just been read by Lord Ronaldshay. It is particularly gratifying to me, who have known Lord Ronaldshay from his boyhood, to see him taking up, and not only taking up, but pursuing with ability and persistence, the study of the question of our policy and interest in the East, the Far as well as the Near East, and thus sacrificing what most men of his position and age would consider to be the principal pleasures and interests of life. In short, Lord Ronaldshay is following in the footsteps of Lord Curzon, and I hope to live to see the day when the path which he is treading so skilfully may lead him to the high position (the highest position under the Crown) which is now so ably filled by that distinguished statesman and administrator.

I am not surprised to find Lord Ronaldshay take so statesman-like a view of our duties and responsibilities as regards the Bagdad Railway scheme. I share his dismay at the prospect of Germany, or any other Power, having a dominating influence in the Near East between Constantinople and the Persian Gulf. In my opinion, a huge mistake was made when we refused to listen to the offer made to us by Germany, and thus failed to acquire the influence and control in this scheme which is so essential to British interests. Apparently the Government held the same view, but they yielded to the wave of prejudice and jealousy towards Germany—not unnatural or unjustified, but none the less mischievous—which was flooding, and is flooding, the country, and sweeping away in its impetuous course all considerations, economical and political, quite apart from their merits. We made the same mistake as regards the Suez Canal, but we were saved by an accident, and by the splendid audacity of a Beaconsfield; he, indeed, must be a sanguine man who can count upon another accident and another Beaconsfield.

Lord Ronaldshay has drawn attention to the rich fertility of the country which is to be traversed by this railway, and in doing so he has touched upon a very important question—indeed, a question vital to the Empire—I mean the question of our food-supply. We have surrendered to France (I am not about to criticise the policy) the fertile plains of Morocco, which could grow wheat sufficient to supply the wants of our country; we have surrendered, I say, rightly or wrongly, to France Morocco, which is the natural granary of the United Kingdom, and therefore it behoves us all

the more jealously to watch and to guard other sources of food-supply.

Lord Ronaldshay has done justice to the great progress which has been made by Russia in the opening out of Central Asia. Indeed, when I compare the condition of Central Asia at the present day with what it was when I was there sixteen years ago, the progress is astounding. I do not think that the British public appreciate the feats which have been accomplished by Russia. On the contrary, they are inclined to depreciate them. Thus, when the war broke out between Russia and Japan, the Siberian Railway was condemned: its capacity was more than questioned, and it was confidently predicted that it would break down under the strain of war. That prophecy has not been fulfilled. But the Siberian Railway has carried hundreds of thousands of men, vast quantities of guns, munitions and stores, and yet its last state is better than its first, and it is working more efficiently than ever it was.

Herein is a lesson to us—namely, the facility and rapidity with which Russia could convey and feed an army of 100,000 men or more on the borders of Afghanistan. Personally, I am as sure as the sun shines in the heavens (not a very appropriate metaphor to-day) that the day will come when the Asiatic frontier of the two great Empires will be coterminus. Do not think me an alarmist; I am not an alarmist, as such a contingency causes me no alarm. I do hope, however, that this development will be gradually and peacefully effected. But there is a danger ahead, and that danger lurks not so much in the present war as in the peace which will follow that war. If the victory of Japan is too complete, or if her diplomacy should be too exacting; if she strives to prevent Russia from having access to the sea, then Russia will seek compensation in some other direction—perhaps in the direction of Afghanistan or the Persian Gulf.

Are we prepared for such a contingency? I fear not; and if we wish to be prepared, we must listen to the advice of Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener, and comply with their requisitions. Anybody interested in this subject should study the remarkable articles which have lately appeared in the *Times*, written by their gifted and accomplished military correspondent, especially the last two articles, in which, among other things, he reminds us that in case of war it would be necessary for us to reinforce our army in India by at least 100,000 British troops. If this fact were realized, the British public would not listen to, or look at, any scheme of military organization, however plausible, which did not contemplate and adequately provide for the military necessities of India in case of war.

These are some of the reflections which Lord Ronaldshay's admirable paper have suggested to me

GENERAL SIR E. COLLEN: Before this lecture began a lady in the audience declared to me that she hoped there would be a very heated discussion on it, but I fear her desire will not be realized, because we are all inclined, I believe, to agree in the main with the lecturer. This Society has been formed to deal with all matters relating to Central Asia, and exists for the purpose of bringing complete and up-to-date knowledge to bear upon them. I must congratulate the Earl of Ronaldshay on the attention he has devoted to great questions of the Near, Middle, and Far East, and on the journeys he has undertaken to assure himself of the facts. With regard to the Baghdad Railway, I agree with what Sir West Ridgeway has said. The railway extension of Russia towards the Afghan frontier has been remarkable, and the question we have to face is, How can we best defend India? I hope the occasion will never arise when we shall be called upon to do so; but it is necessary to be warned in time, and to take precautions to repel such an invasion. We must face the fact that Russia's power of advance has been greatly strengthened by means of her two railway lines, and no preparation on our part should be spared to place India in a position of perfect security. In the case of attack, the Indian army must form the vanguard, and we must endeavour by every means in our power to maintain that army in the highest state of efficiency, and by so organizing our forces at home as to admit of the despatch of large and powerful reinforcements. I must once again express my thanks to the lecturer for the excellent paper he has this afternoon read before this Society.

Dr. COTTERELL TUPP: I should like to say a few words with regard to the Baghdad Railway, especially as I do not altogether agree with the remarks made by some of the previous speakers on the subject. I entirely agree that England must share in the control of railway communication between Constantinople and the Persian Gulf. It is true that eighteen months ago we refused to find money for a scheme for such a construction which left all the control to Germany. But the point is, did we do rightly in declining to take part in the scheme which was submitted to us? On the whole, I think we did. The whole control, financial and administrative, was reserved to Germany, and if we had joined in it we should have had no power whatever. We were never offered any share which we could really take with any advantage to ourselves, and the public feeling that we were being jockeyed and played with was a well-founded one. It was in no sense an international scheme that was laid before us. Russia was hostile to it, and

I think that the course taken was the best in the circumstances. We should take up a stronger position than mere refusal to join, and declare that we cannot permit any railway to be made through to the Persian Gulf, unless the last section from Baghdad to the Gulf is entirely under Britain's political control. This is absolutely necessary to insure our supremacy in the Persian Gulf, and if need be, we should insist on this with all the force at our command. We have got to recollect that this railway will not end at Basrah or at Koweit. If you look at this large scale map, you will see that a railway from Constantinople to the Persian Gulf must be sooner or later joined to the Indian system of railways from Karachi to Assam, and that these railways will ultimately be joined on to the Chinese system, and will reach from the Upper Yang-Tse to Peking. We have already got west beyond Quetta, and we are making the extension towards Seistan; some day that railway will run through Southern Persia to Basrah and the head of the Gulf.

Even if (which may the Fates forbid!) we were forced to yield, and the Germans made the railway right down to the Gulf, we have always an alternative line further north, which could run from Constantinople through Northern Asia Minor, and by Teheran, Kandahar, Herát, and Quetta. In the last resort this would be our alternative policy, and whatever line this mid-eastern railway may take, we should always keep in mind that the ultimate goal of our ambition is railway communication from Western Europe through India to Peking.

SIR LEPEL GRIFFIN: I should like to congratulate Lord Ronaldshay on his lecture, to say how good it is that a young Englishman, who has every opportunity and excuse to enjoy life, to spend his time in the fascinations of bridge and shooting-parties, should go to the uttermost parts of the earth in order to acquaint himself personally with existing conditions, and to become familiar with British policy in the East. In his lectures and in his books—I am in the middle of the latest, 'On the Outskirts of the Empire'—Lord Ronaldshay has done his country great service.

There is one point which I should like to emphasize at this meeting, which specially deals with the military defence of India. I maintain that the Punjab is, and must always be, the sword and shield of India. As the only land frontier of the whole British Empire, it is to the Punjab that we must look for effective defence. I should like to recommend to those who have not already read them the two able articles which have recently appeared in the *Times* on 'Our Warning from Manchuria,' written by the capable military correspondent of the paper. With the first one I absolutely agree; it deals with Russia's facilities in Asia owing to her railway

development. With the second I am somewhat less in agreement; I think our position is stronger than the *Times* military correspondent shows. But my point is this: I consider that our power would be largely increased if the Government were to abandon the long-service system in the Punjab portion of the native army. By a short-service system we should insure a thorough and competent reserve. The time will come when the Home and the Indian Government must abandon the former policy, by which it was considered unwise to spread over India numbers of trained soldiers. For now we need a large reserve. At present we are dependent upon forces sent from England for our reserve in India. Why not make the reserve of the martial races of the country itself? It is a mistake to suppose that an unlimited supply is available from the 300,000,000 inhabitants of India. The fighting races of India are really few. They are the Sikhs, Gurkhas, some Rajputs and Punjabi Muhammadans. These men, led by English officers, are equal to stand before any German or Russian troops; in fact, I consider them much superior to Russian troops. The Indian irregular cavalry is not surpassed in dash, courage, and splendid qualities in the field by any troops in the world. I wish that consideration would be given by the authorities in the army to the need for the establishment of an effective reserve, composed of all adult males of the military races of India who may be willing to bear arms.

COLONEL PICOT: I should like to make one observation with regard to the excellent paper we have just heard, and it concerns the Baghdad Railway scheme. It is clear that we must take early action if we wish to prevent the carrying out of the scheme in such a way as to shut Great Britain out of a controlling share. The line just opened beyond Konia has called forth the special interest and expressions of sympathy from the German Emperor. Once the line has been continued beyond and south of the Taurus our position will be critical. The opening of the northern section has revived interest in the scheme; that scheme is certain to be pushed further in the future. We must not delay too long before we make our voice heard. I must personally thank the lecturer for the very able paper he has given us.

COLONEL YATE: I should like to express my accord with previous speakers in the praise expressed concerning Lord Ronaldshay's paper. I have listened to it with great pleasure and interest, and congratulate him upon the good use he has made of his journeyings. With reference to the question of an increased reserve to the Indian army, I would mention that the long-service Indian army referred to by Sir Lepel Griffin is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. I

was much struck recently by finding that the average length of the men in a native regiment out on escort duty with me was only some two and a half years. Many men now in the Indian army, Punjabis especially, get away on foreign service to China, Somaliland, East Africa, and other places, where they save money, and come back with 200 rupees or so in their pockets, and at once 'cut' their names and go off to the new Canal Colonies and such-like work. These men are thus lost to the service, and I am quite in accord with Sir Lepel Griffin as to the necessity of retaining a lien on these men by increasing the reserve, which, I think, may now be safely done. The Government of India have not as yet adopted any short-service system for the Indian army, but it is nevertheless a fact that the Indian is rapidly becoming a short-service army automatically.

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH: Lord Ronaldshay has covered so wide a field in his extremely interesting address that it is impossible in the discussion to do more than take up one part of it. And I propose to take the extreme Eastern part in the few remarks I have to make. I think we do not quite realize how much the Japanese are fighting our battles for us. Manchuria is connected with North-East Tibet by a road which presents little or no difficulty; all the interest of Russia lies in North-Eastern Tibet. I have always been persuaded that the permanent occupation of Manchuria by Russia would lead to her occupation of that part of Tibet. In this case Russia would attain paramount influence over the whole of the Buddhist world of Asia except those portions directly under British sway in Ceylon and Burma. North-East Tibet is now a kind of No-man's-land; it is almost beyond the influence of China or of Lhasa: it is really given up to robbers. It is, however, favourable for colonization. It may be thought that the condition of affairs in this part of Asia, 1,000 miles away from the Indian frontier, could hardly affect our Indian policy. But Russia in North-Eastern Tibet, midway between Urga on the north and Lhasa on the south, would gain complete influence over the Buddhist world. Such an occupation would gain for Russia both political and commercial advantages. At present the bulk of Tibetan trade goes north-east, so that Russia would then command the trade avenues to Lhasa, and in due time would open the door of those south-eastern valleys of Tibet which we believe to be full of mineral wealth. At one clever stroke she would advance to the same relative position on the east as she occupied on the west before the settlement of the Pamirs was made. I agree with Sir West Ridgeway that the present war is not so dangerous as the peace following it may become. The thrusting Russia back in the

Far East may lead to an outbreak elsewhere. Russia's movement which led to the war was a natural and inevitable effort to find an outlet southward. The expansion of Russia must not be regarded as due solely to ambition or earth-hunger; it is an expansion which will certainly find its way. The question is, Where will Russia seek to extend her influence southward? Lord Ronaldshay touched very lightly upon the possibility of the Empires of Britain and Russia becoming coterminous in Asia. In my opinion, such a connection between the two great Powers, if carried out peacefully, would set future apprehensions at rest. No treaty, based on mutual advantage, was ever torn up in the history of the world. The questions of the Oxus and the Pamirs were settled without bloodshed; and our interests and those of Russia might, I maintain, be combined in a political arrangement mutually advantageous to both countries. I am sure that I am conveying the sentiments of the whole meeting to the Earl of Ronaldshay when in your name I thank him very sincerely for the thoughtful and suggestive paper he has read to us.

The EARL OF RONALDSHAY, in reply, said: With reference to the opinions that have been expressed, I should like to make a few brief remarks. We are told that Germany never made a workable offer concerning the Baghdad Railway; but if no offer of a satisfactory nature was made, it was because the British public would not allow negotiations to proceed undisturbed. Germany would, I believe, have been willing to make the concessions that we consider necessary had negotiations been allowed to proceed. But she was extremely unpopular with the British public at the time. The Venezuelan embroglio was fresh in their memory, and public feeling, successfully roused by the press, was violently antagonistic to Germany.

I should like to remind Colonel Picot that the first section of the railway—the 200 kilometres between Konia and Bulgurlu—is the easiest of the whole line. The engineers are now confronted by the Taurus Mountains, and construction will not only become difficult, but also very expensive. The survey that has so far been made is only a rough one, and a further careful survey will have to be made before the section through the Taurus range is undertaken. I am inclined to doubt whether the subsidy demanded from the Turkish Government will be found. This can only be done by raising the Customs tariff from 8 per cent. to 12 per cent. or 15 per cent., and before this can be done the consent of the Powers must be obtained. England and Russia have up to now been the opposing Powers. After the present war Russia may be induced to withdraw her opposition in return for Germany's present friendly attitude. In that case England will stand alone.

With regard to other opinions that have been expressed, I would point out that in the event of Japan securing a decisive success in the Far East, and in the event of her diplomacy at the termination of hostilities proving exacting, Russian expansion will inevitably be driven south, either towards Persia or Turkey. But some years must elapse before she recovers from her exhaustive war. Russian autocracy is not in a particularly happy position. The war is far from popular with the people, and if an aggressive policy is to find favour with the masses in the future, a *popular* cry will have to be raised. For this reason it would seem probable that the next move will be directed against Constantinople. The cross against the crescent! The recapture of Constantinople for the Christian world! These are the cries that could arouse the enthusiasm of the nation, for they are ideals which are ever in its mind.

May I, in conclusion, thank you for the kind reception that you have given me? I can only say that I am keenly sensible to the honour you have done me in welcoming for a second time a paper from my pen upon Asian affairs.

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CHINESE EXPANSION HISTORICALLY REVIEWED

BY

BARON SUYEMATSU



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CHINESE EXPANSION HISTORICALLY REVIEWED*

PART I

GENERAL SURVEY

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH : All eyes are turned towards the Far East, watching the results of what is really a contest between Asiatic peoples, due to a process of expansion which is natural to all great nations. We shall listen, I am sure, with great interest to the historic retrospect of the expansion of China which Baron Suyematsu, with the advantage of his special knowledge on the subject, is to put before us. With characteristic modesty as to his power of reading English, the Baron has asked his friend Mr. Chirol to read the paper for him.

BARON SUYEMATSU : I feel it not only a great honour but a great pleasure to lay before you some of my views on the subject of China. A great deal of what I may have to say may be trite to many, but I shall be very pleased if you will give me your attention. I have divided my paper into three parts : (1) A general historic retrospect of China ; (2) the Khorean Peninsula and Manchuria ; (3) reflections and arguments.

The paper is a trifle too long, and some parts may be omitted in reading if the time is not sufficient. I am not a good reader of English. If I gave the paper myself I am afraid a good deal of it would not be intelligible to the audience. My friend Mr. Chirol has kindly consented to read the paper for me.

LOOKING at a map of the world, one will at once see how vast is the Chinese Empire. There was a time when it was even more vast than at present. The expansion of China is an important subject of history, but its limit was

* Pressure of space has unfortunately rendered necessary the omission of two or three passages in this paper dealing more exhaustively with the causes which restricted Chinese expansion towards India and in Tibet.

reached long ago. How that expansion was brought about and how that limit was reached is a matter which it might interest many of us to know.

I will not go back to the remotest periods, or seek to make any ethnological investigations as to the races that originally occupied the regions which have come under the sovereignty of China, or which, at least, have been included in the sphere of her influence; for were we to do so, we might find there was a time when both Mongolians and Chinese belonged to the same race; or, if we were to go further back still, it might appear that both these and many other peoples living quite outside Chinese influence originally belonged to the same stock. But these connections are too remote and obscure, and have no important bearing on the proposition I am about to make. It is sufficient for my purpose to trace the growth of the Chinese Empire within the limits of the records which we possess—chiefly in the literature of China itself—and that, too, of a very appreciable antiquity.

It is a well-known fact that China is one of the most ancient countries of the world. The Chow dynasty ruled in the period when we begin to find reliable records, and the beginning of that dynasty dates back twelve centuries B.C. The period preceding that dynasty had been a very long one, but of it we have no reliable records. It is mainly regarded as the legendary state of Chinese history; and yet there are some records relating to twenty-three centuries B.C. There is good foundation, moreover, for believing those documents to be genuine records, from the mathematical calculations made by many experts in such matters, relating to astronomical events recorded in those documents, and which all go to confirm their accuracy.

In studying the old documents and history of China, the heart of China in the earliest period is seen to have been located somewhere far up the river Hoang-ho. Those who have studied the evolution of the alphabet tell us that the Hoang-ho is one of three remarkable rivers on the banks of which the three original systems of recording impressions were invented—the Egyptian writing on the Nile, the Cunei-

form beside the streams of Mesopotamia, and the Chinese on the Hoang-ho—and that the hundreds of existing systems of writing now in use are really derivatives of these three, however varied and modified they may be.

The area of the original centre of China was very limited, but its sphere of influence and activity gradually spread, generation after generation, as its civilization developed and extended to the surrounding regions. This extension was carried on with but little intermission through successive centuries, until at last a vast Empire, more or less compact, had arisen from the agglomeration. The one peculiarity of this extension is that, roughly speaking, it has not been the result of aggressive conquest. China has always been on the defensive, and it is the surrounding peoples who have always assumed the offensive against her. The conquests China has made have in reality been the effect of the influence of her civilization. Neighbouring peoples came and attacked China, but they soon were amalgamated with the Chinese through the influence of the latter's civilization, and then became sinicized. There was always a marked difference of degree between the civilization of the inhabitants of the centre of China and that of her neighbours, so that the moment the latter came in contact with the Chinese they discovered their inferiority, and whatever sort of primitive civilization they might have had amongst themselves was soon eclipsed by the higher Chinese civilization, and they became Chinese.

The fact that China has no proper and permanent name for herself, except the names of the successive dynasties, goes a long way to explain this state of things. Such terms as the 'Central Flowery Land,' or the 'Middle Land,' are no more than mere fanciful appellations, and the very term China is only a name by which she came to be called by outsiders. There is some resemblance between the romanization of Europe and the sinicization of Eastern Asia, but the nature of the process, as well as the ultimate results achieved, was very different.

We know that in Tibet letters were only imported early in the seventh century A.D. In Mongolia letters were intro-

duced only in the middle of the thirteenth century A.D., and in Manchuria several centuries afterwards. All this marks the great difference that existed in the degree of civilization between these peoples and the Chinese, who a long, long time before had possessed a very advanced literature of their own. Roughly speaking, the modern China Proper is that part of the Empire which is bounded by the Great Wall in the north, and excludes Central Asia and Tibet on the west and Cochin China on the south. But for many centuries in the Chinese history this so-called China Proper was not one compact nation, because even in the time of the Chow dynasty neither the part which surrounds Peking on the north, nor the regions around Kansu, nor, above all, the regions which are situated south of the Yang-tse River, nor even some zones on the left bank of that river, were strictly regarded as China Proper. They were then included in the general category of the 'land of the barbarians.' All the characters in Chinese representing them in generic form are to be translated as 'barbarians,' and the Chinese themselves also understood them in that sense from very early, if not actually from the earliest, times.

Originally those characters had probably a less pronounced meaning. Perhaps they meant people outside their own civilization, or perhaps some of the characters only represented the names of the tribes. Even if this was so, the fact that the people living in those regions were not to be regarded as belonging to the same community as the Chinese is most plain from ancient records. Nevertheless, in those surrounding regions there arose several compact communities, which afterwards became kingdoms, though no recognition of their status as kingdoms was ever made by China. For instance, toward the latter part of the Chow dynasty there arose on the banks of the Yang-tse a large community called 'Chu.' It was to all intents and purposes a kingdom, and, as a matter of fact, the chief of that community was called a King among his own people, though the word 'King' did not necessarily mean an independent Sovereign of an

independent State. But that chief was only styled a Baron by the Court of Chow, 'Baron' being the lowest of five classes of titles by which the heads of different principalities were privileged to be called.

The Chow dynasty arose, according to the ordinary chronicles, in the latter part of the twelfth century B.C., and came to an end in the middle of the third century B.C. Under the Chow dynasty many principalities came into existence, both within and without what was then the heart of China. The authority of the Central Government appears not to have been thoroughly exercised; but from the fact that such principalities existed, the political system of the Empire may be called a feudal system, though the system cannot be said to have been identical with that which existed in Europe.

There are many documentary records to show that the Chow dynasty had much trouble in its earlier years from barbarians on its western borders, localities which are situated within the boundaries of modern China Proper. The dynasty was exterminated by these barbarians in the earlier part of the eighth century B.C., the last Emperor of its line having been murdered by them. The Eastern Chow succeeded, but the Imperial authority was significantly on the wane. The whole period of the Eastern Chow dynasty is otherwise divided into two, the earlier part being called the 'Spring and Autumn Period,' because that period corresponds roughly with the period which is covered by the chronicle of the 'Spring and Autumn' (Chun-chu), edited by Confucius; and the latter part is called the 'Fighting States Period' (Chan-kue), because it was a time when China was split up between different States, and fighting was continually going on between them.

From the point of view of intellectual cultivation, the latter part of the 'Spring and Autumn Period' and the 'Fighting States Period' are the most brilliant epochs of Chinese history, because, as we see, in those days all sorts of mental activity were manifested in China. Not only from the scholastic and philosophical point of view, but

also from a military point of view, that period gave to China guiding principles for the benefit of all posterity. During the fighting period the various minor principalities became swallowed up by the mightier ones, until at last China was unified under Chin. The Eastern Chow, which had had an existence only in name for centuries, had been totally extinguished some thirty years before. It is to be noticed that Chin and Chu themselves had been regarded in former times as barbarians, but their power obtained supreme recognition during the 'Spring and Autumn Period,' as well as in the 'Fighting States Period.'

Roughly speaking, the unification of the Empire under the Chin dynasty comprised the modern China Proper. The Chin dynasty was a powerful one, and its founder was one of the strongest rulers of China. It is even presumed that the name 'China,' which has come to denote the Empire of China, was first derived from the name of this dynasty. Its founder abolished the feudal system, and divided the Empire into districts, which were governed by State Deputies, and not by hereditary Princes. Yet, strong as this dynasty was, it was gravely harassed by the invasions of the barbarians from the north. It was then that the great General Mung-tien was despatched with 300,000 men to fight the northern barbarians, and constructed defensive works to repel their advance, which resulted in that great wonder of the world, the Great Wall of China. Even that powerful dynasty never thought of extending its dominions towards the north; its only object was to prevent outsiders from coming south. The Chin dynasty, which its founder hoped to maintain for many generations—inasmuch as he called himself Chin-huang-ti, meaning the first Emperor, and decreed that all his successors should be known by their cardinal numbers in due rotation—came to an end soon after his death; and one of the chief causes of this was the exhaustion of the power of the Empire and the discontent of the people at large on account of the tremendous sacrifices and labour involved in the building of the famous Great Wall.

Under the Han dynasty that followed—*i.e.*, from the

end of the third century B.C. until the third century A.D.—the history of China, though containing some brilliant records of internal development, is mainly the story of continual struggles against the northern barbarians—great expeditions and often great reverses and humiliations. We read of a great Emperor himself being besieged by them, and only escaping from being made a prisoner by enormous bribery. Whole armies suffered defeat, and, with their Generals, were taken prisoners. Imperial messengers were kept in detention, and there is a sad story of a Court lady, described as a Princess, being surrendered in marriage to a barbarian chieftain. Giving treasure in the shape of bribes, or handing over a Princess in marriage, was one of the methods of pacifying the barbarians which grew very common in all the later periods.

The northern barbarians whom I have described above were chiefly those called 'Hung-nu' by the Chinese and 'Huns' by Western writers. Their detailed history is not known, but we may presume that they were not much advanced in civilization, though, compared with the modern natives living in the same locality, they had more courage, more organization, and somewhat more cohesive forces. They did not necessarily belong to one community. Sometimes there were many tribes coexisting, and sometimes one of them absorbed all, or nearly all, the others. We also find it recorded that they presently became, after having once amalgamated, divided into two sections, called the South and the North Huns. From about the middle of the Han dynasty, they appear to have turned their chief activity towards the west, and gradually to have made their way, some to India and some to lands still further westward. From the fact that the Great Wall extended from Liautung Bay far away towards Central Asia, it seems certain that the Huns of those days occupied a very wide space of territory north and west of China.

After having passed through the troubled period of the so-called Three States Epoch, China was once more unified under the Chîn dynasty, but a large zone within the Great Wall passed into the hands of the northern intruders in its

earlier years. This was followed by the rising of several new States, one after another, in the north and north-western parts of China, most of them being of barbarian origin. Chin at last fell under their pressure, and was followed by the period known as the 'Period of the South and North Dynasties,' the latter, which were mostly of barbarian origin, being preponderant.

The North and South dynasties were unified under the Sui dynasty towards the end of the sixth century A.D. It is about this time that the barbarians known as the Tuku-Hun (a tribe in Kokonor) seem to have begun giving trouble to China, for we find a Princess was given in marriage by the Sui Emperor to their chief, and later on during the same dynasty several raids are recorded to have been made by them. They seem to have occupied the borderland of modern Tibet; some think they were the same, or part of the same, people who were known a little later by the name of Tufan, who were no other than the modern Tibetans. There was trouble also with the northern barbarians, called Tu-Chueh (Turks), as well as with Korea, with which country I shall deal separately. The Sui dynasty was followed by the T'ang dynasty in the beginning of the seventh century. T'ang was one of the most brilliant dynasties of China, especially as regards the earlier part of it, the second Emperor being truly a great monarch. Under him China shone with a great lustre, and yet even this dynasty was not free from much serious trouble at the hands of the barbarians. On the north the same Tu-Chueh made several raids during the reign of the first Emperor, and they were repeated in the reign of the second Emperor. It was only by the strenuous efforts of the second Emperor that victory was in some measure achieved. At first a temporary peace was bought by the humiliating method of giving a Princess in marriage to the chief of the barbarians, as well as much treasure. On the west also the Tufans gave much trouble; so did also the Wuigur, a neighbouring tribe of the Tufans. The locality of the Tufans' habitation in those days was in the main the same as modern Tibet; perhaps it may have extended

somewhat more towards the Chinese boundary. Great Sovereign as the second Emperor undoubtedly was, and brilliant and prosperous as China had at that time become under the new dynasty, even he at last thought it best to make peace with the invaders. The Tibet of those days was ruled as a kingdom, the name of its Chief or King being Sron-btsan-sgampo. He seems to have been a shrewd and able man. To him the Emperor gave a Princess to wed, and in allying him to his house concluded a peace.

The T'ang dynasty, as we have seen, had much trouble in the west, but it had still more on the north-west and north. The barbarians thence made repeated and sanguinary raids. The earlier of these hordes were designated the Tu-Chueh, but the later ones were known by the name of Kittan. Both of them were probably offshoots of the Huns. It seems that the Tu-Chueh grew in strength as the earlier Huns migrated westwards, and then the Kittan appear in turn to have eclipsed them. We see it recorded during this time that well-known Chinese Generals were despatched to fight these barbarians, and also that a statesman of high repute was despatched as Imperial Ambassador to make peace, only to be detained and murdered.

After the T'ang dynasty came the Period of the Five Dynasties, during the first part of the tenth century. Three out of these five dynasties were of barbarian origin, they having been founded by men who sprang from some regions outside the Great Wall, though they seem to have been already much sinicized. It was at this time that Kittan, which had arisen in Manchuria, rapidly grew into a mighty power. As a matter of fact, Cathay, by which the Westerners of the Middle Ages called China, or Kitaiski, by which the Russians do the same, seems to have been no other than a corruption of Kittan. Its Chief adopted the title of Emperor, and called the dynasty the Great Liao, the Liao being the same as the Chinese character for Liao in Liautung. It rose in power rapidly, and before the Period of the Five Dynasties came to an end it had expanded right up to the Great Wall, and, moreover, a large portion within

the Great Wall had been ceded to it by one of the Five Dynasties. The last of the Five Dynasties was succeeded by the Sung dynasty, which commenced a little after the middle of the tenth century and ended in the early part of the twelfth century, A.D.

During the Sung dynasty the Kitan—*i.e.*, Liau—grew stronger, and became a source of constant uneasiness and danger to China. The dominion of Liau extended from the north to well inside the Great Wall, comprising the regions belonging to modern Pechihli, or even more. It was to all intents and purposes a well-organized empire. It lasted over one hundred years, having had ten Emperors in succession. Side by side with it there arose another mighty power, called the Kin, from the shores of the Japan sea. It fought against the Liau, and it at last destroyed the latter in the earlier part of the twelfth century, and having made itself master of the territories occupied by the Liau, it then fought against China. In a short time it overran the northern part of China; the last two Emperors of Sung were taken prisoners in quick succession, and both were carried into the interior of Manchuria, and kept in custody in a castle called Wukuocheng, where they ultimately died. Thus the Sung dynasty came to an end.

Yet another empire, with the name of Hia, had arisen in the region adjoining the western part of the Great Wall, also giving much trouble to the Sung dynasty, whilst the Cochins raided in the south. On the fall of the Sung dynasty, the Southern Sung dynasty established itself in the South of China. But Kin had become a great Chinese power. It was no longer a northern barbarian State. In many senses it may be said to have become a real Chinese dynasty. But even while Kin was contesting in China Proper with the Southern Sung dynasty, there arose behind Kin yet another power in the north from the banks of the Onon, in the modern Transbaikal province of Russia, which was no other than the mighty Mongolian Empire, under the leadership of the great Genghiskhan. Thus the Kin had an enemy both in the front and in the rear—the decaying

but still active Chinese dynasty in its front, and the Mongolians at its back. Kin was finally destroyed by the Mongolians in 1234, having lasted 180 years, with ten Emperors in succession. It now became a struggle between the Mongolians and the Southern Sung dynasty. Towards the latter part of the thirteenth century the Southern Sung dynasty was finally destroyed by the Mongolians, who at last came to govern the whole of China under Kublaikhan, grandson of Genshiskhan, and the dynasty was named Yuen.

The Yuen dynasty lasted until a little after the middle of the fourteenth century. Whilst their relatives and old compatriots were still doing great things in other directions, the Mongolians, who had established the Yuen dynasty in China, adapted themselves to the ways of China, and adopted all Chinese institutions as their own, except that they introduced the Lamaism of Tibet, not only into Mongolia, but also into China, which did more harm than good to the Imperial cause. Powerful as the dynasty was at first, it failed to become a firmly consolidated Empire, and in the earlier part of the fourteenth century much discontent manifested itself among the people, and the Empire fell again upon evil days, until at last its place was taken by the Ming dynasty, a little before the middle of the fourteenth century. The Ming dynasty reigned in China until the middle of the seventeenth century, after which the prestige of that dynasty was only maintained by Kokusenya (Coxinga), a loyal subject of the Ming dynasty, and half Japanese, who established a kingdom on his own account in Formosa, though still paying allegiance to the memory of the last dynasty, and setting the new Tartar dynasty for some time at defiance. The Ming dynasty was a weak one, and it suffered all along the eastern coasts from a succession of so-called Japanese attacks, though they were in no sense authorized Japanese forces that ravaged the Chinese shores; but they were very powerful, and it seems that even many Chinese subjects joined them. The blow inflicted on the Ming dynasty was a very heavy one; so also

was the invasion of Korea by the Japanese troops of Hideyoshi, as the Mings cast in their lot with Korea. Above all, there arose the Tartar dynasty of Manchuria. This Tartar dynasty originated somewhere in Manchuria at a place called Odoli, and grew in power in the same fashion as the Liau and Kin had done. Having made repeated attacks on China, it at last destroyed the Ming dynasty, and subjugated the whole of China under its yoke ; it is the present ruling dynasty of China, and the name of this dynasty is Tsing.

I may here mention that the Liau made Peking its chief capital, and so did the Kin. The Ming dynasty, which was a proper Chinese dynasty hailing from the south, also kept its Court mostly at Peking, though Nanking was also its capital. The present dynasty also, as everyone knows, removed its capital from Manchuria to Peking, and thus Peking, which is situated in a region which in ancient times was only a barbarian country, has become the great centre of China, and one of the largest capitals of the world ; and I need not say that the present dynasty has entirely adopted the Chinese notions of civilization and all Chinese institutions, though some precautions are taken to maintain Manchurian influence in every public department. This was only natural, because the degree of Tartar civilization seems to have been very low, and one thing is certain—namely, that through amalgamation with China the Tartar nation has almost lost its distinctive existence.

On the western side, towards Central Asia and Tibet, Chinese influence was gradually extended, especially under the Mongolian dynasty, and later on under the Tartar dynasty. On the south, Tonking, Annam, Siam, and Burmah, also came to be influenced by China, more especially under both the Mongolian and the Tartar dynasties. But in all these places China's influence has been of a loose nature, and not permanent or preponderant. The limit of her expansion was reached long ago, and for some time past it has been decidedly and rapidly waning, as I shall hereafter show.

PART II

KOREAN PENINSULA AND MANCHURIA

I WOULD now invite your attention to the Korean Peninsula and the Liautung Peninsula and Manchuria, as well as to Siberia. Amongst these regions the Korean Peninsula seems to have at one time attained in its civilization a degree far superior to other regions in the northern as well as western and southern boundaries of China.

The Korean Peninsula formed for centuries a compact kingdom, having a well-defined boundary on the north, in the same shape as it has now, but one must not think that it has always been so. The first mention made in Chinese history of that peninsula is at the beginning of the Chow dynasty—*i.e.*, the eleventh century B.C., when it was known by the name of Chowsen. The first Emperor of that dynasty is reported to have sent Kitsu, a wise man and an uncle of the last Emperor of the preceding dynasty, to that region, and empowered him to rule it as King. His descendants continued to exercise the same prerogatives down to the beginning of the second century B.C., when the Ki family is reported to have been put an end to, and another Chowsen kingdom was established.

It is impossible to define the exact area of the region which was comprised within the compass of Chowsen, either in its earlier stage or in the later one, but the most trustworthy views are that it extended on the north far into the interior towards the Liau River, or that it was gradually extended so far, and that at one time it included the modern Yingkow. And this seems the more likely to be true, inasmuch as the heads of Kau-ku-li some time later received from China on one or two occasions the title of Prince of Liautung. But on the south it does not appear to have reached much beyond the Tatung River, on which

the modern Pingyang is situated. According to the Korean account, Kitsu established his capital at Pingyang. The Koreans credit Kitsu with having initiated everything in the direction of civilization, and revere him accordingly. His tomb is to be seen in Pingyang, and it is still reverently preserved by the Koreans. That tomb, however, is said to have been discovered after much research by the founder of a later Korean dynasty—namely, Kau-li—at the beginning of the twelfth century A.D. We cannot, therefore, state how far the early history is exact, but there is no ground to doubt its general accuracy. The second Chowsen kingdom was destroyed by China at the end of the second century B.C., in the reign of the fifth and very able Emperor of the Han dynasty. In the meantime, in the southern part of the peninsula several kingdoms came into existence. In the north, where was situated the former Chowsen kingdom, another kingdom sprang into prominence, named Kau-ku-li. There were many vicissitudes among the southern kingdoms, but they were generally three in number.

With all these kingdoms, more especially the southern ones, Japan had much connection in the early centuries A.D., and the intercourse became much more extended and its effects multiplied in the sixth and seventh centuries. It would be idle for me here to recite the whole history of our relationship with these kingdoms, but I may sum it up by saying that Japan's historical interest in Korea is of very ancient date. At one time intruders from the Korean Peninsula infested Kiushiu, and the Japanese counter-attack on the peninsula was carried out in order to repress them at their bases, and to secure permanent peace. Again, at one time Japan derived her civilization from China chiefly through Korea, as the Japanese went there and their people came to Japan for purposes of study and the acquisition of learning. There was even a period when one or other of these kingdoms was directly under Japanese rule, Japan having her Government establishments there.

At the beginning of the seventh century A.D. some complications arose between the Sui dynasty of China and

Kau-ku-li, and the former sent expeditions against the latter, the Chinese Emperor once commanding in person, but the expedition proved an entire failure.

Toward the latter part of the reign of the great second Emperor of the T'ang dynasty of China another expedition against Kau-ku-li was undertaken by China, the origin of which is reported to have been that one of the southern kingdoms was menaced by Kau-ku-li and asked China's help. That expedition also did not prove successful, but in the reign of the next Emperor Kau-ku-li was destroyed by the combined effort of China and one of the southern kingdoms above mentioned. Kau-ku-li changed its capital several times, but Ping-yang and Kiu-lien-cheng were in their turn the two principal seats of government.

In the beginning of the tenth century A.D. another kingdom, called Kau-li, arose on the old ruins of Kau-ku-li. This is the origin of the name Korea, by which the peninsular kingdom came to be known to the Westerners. The Chinese characters which represent *Kau-li* and the *Kau* and *li* of Kau-ku-li are identical; hence they are often confused even in Oriental books, but the terms are quite distinct from one another, although Kau-li might possibly have been taken in the first place from Kau-ku-li. The whole Korean Peninsula was unified by Kau-li in the earlier part of the tenth century A.D.

The kingdom of Kau-li came to an end towards the end of the fourteenth century, and was replaced by another which revived in itself the ancient name of Chowsen. This latter is the present reigning family of Korea. It seems the region north of the Yalu was lost to Korea in the later days of Kau-ku-li, when that kingdom came to an end, and its territory was divided between Shinlo and China. Korea has never regained it; on the contrary, she always had on the north to struggle from time to time with powerful opponents who arose in the regions of Manchuria, and to whom in the end she had necessarily to submit.

As to the general relationship between China Proper and the Korean Peninsula, it seems that the latter had

usually a leaning towards the former, excepting in regard to her close connection with Japan. It was only natural that this should be so, because Korea's civilization was also derived from China, and that, too, as I said before, in even a greater degree than other regions that were close to China; hence they felt a natural deference to China.

Nevertheless, Korea had occasional troubles with China, and this was especially the case with its northern part—*i.e.*, the kingdom of Kau-ku-li. These troubles, however, cannot be attributed to any aggressive ambition of the Chinese, for their causes and circumstances as a rule proved the exact opposite. At the worst, the decision of China in each case was arrived at more for the sake of restoring her damaged prestige than with any idea of accomplishing territorial expansion.

As to the regions further to the north—that is to say, modern Manchuria and the maritime provinces of Siberia—we do not know much about them; but, as I have shown already, the Huns seem to have been living there in the Chin and Han dynasties, and were even then a very strong combination. But the exact boundaries which they had under their sway are not known, except that their dominion seems to have extended from Manchuria far to the west. The parts of the region surrounding Yingkow and Liauyang from time to time belonged to China, but no permanent hold was maintained.

In the north (in the regions of the modern maritime provinces and Harbin) there were two great hordes of Machieh. The southern one of these is said to have gradually extended far into Southern Manchuria. In the beginning of the eighth century we see there was a principality called Pohai; that principality is said to have been identical with the Southern Machieh. The name is very often mentioned in Japanese history, Japan having now and then had some dealings with it. The modern Liautung Bay is sometimes called Pohai Bay, and this would imply that the principality had extended to the coast of that bay. It seems to have formed a regular State, but

it also, after the lapse of some centuries, disappeared into oblivion.

There was another State, which was sometimes known as Shushen, sometimes Nuchen, and sometimes Nuchih. It was probably situated in or near the part of Siberia which is called the Maritime Province. This State afterwards actually developed into the Kin dynasty of China. We see in history several other names having some connection with these regions—that is to say, modern Manchuria and the Maritime Province of Siberia—but it is almost impossible to make any accurate statements about them. It appears that in many cases one and the same region belonged in succession to different tribal associations, some of which gradually became very powerful forces, as we have already seen in such cases as those of Liau and Kin. We must also note that not only did the inhabitants of these regions come into close contact with the Chinese, but they also had much fighting amongst themselves, as well as against some of the powers which properly belonged to the Korean Peninsula.

On the whole, however, I can safely say that China has never had any secure hold of Korea, even in recent centuries. True it is that China claimed a sort of suzerainty over Korea, but on the part of Korea there was as much respect and deference paid by her to her eastern neighbour as was paid to China, and in a manner that was almost identical. Then, what has taken place within the last few decades is known to everyone. Even in the case of Manchuria, apart from dynastic reasons, it is one of the weakest parts of the Chinese Empire, as I shall presently be able to demonstrate, so that in this direction also the potentiality of China's expansion long ago reached its uttermost limit.

PART III

CONCLUSION

I HAVE now given the essential points of Chinese expansion. What I have said will, I hope, be sufficient to give a fair idea of the subject under our consideration. We have seen that the rough outline of modern China Proper was formed very early. Within these limits there are, of course, some differences of degree in the way of civilization. Progress was slower on the west and south-western sides than elsewhere ; in fact, on the south-western side traces of the earlier barbarian tribes are very clearly recognisable even to this day.

But, roughly speaking, China Proper has become a huge nation. It is true that, owing to the fact that the distance from one end of the country to the other is so vast, the inhabitants do not orally understand each other (except those who speak the Mandarin tongue); but their written language is the same, and their thoughts, ideas, customs, and manners have all become almost identical. It must not, however, be imagined that this was so from the beginning, because, as I have shown already, the ancient China Proper was but a very small portion of the modern China Proper. It has grown to its present dimensions chiefly by the influence of its civilization. Then, again, outside China Proper we have already seen that on the south the Malay Peninsula came to share to some extent the Chinese influence ; and this was the case also on the west as far as Tibet (the region bordering Tibet having actually come under the Chinese rule), as well as throughout the greater part of Central Asia. Of course, these regions in turn have given trouble to China, but they ultimately had to bow their heads to China's superior

civilization. But it was the north that at all times gave China the greatest anxiety—a region whence the disturbing elements of Eastern Asia have always sprung up. That there is the Great Wall on the northern side, whilst there is no such thing on the south or west, is a fact more eloquent than words. China would have been more than satisfied to make that Great Wall the outermost limit of her northern dominions, but the peoples outside of it were of another mind.

We all know that the large domains of Mongolia and Manchuria in these days form part of the Chinese Empire. Considerable parts of Siberia also at one time belonged to her, until she was deprived of them at quite a recent date by her great northern neighbour. These regions, however, were added to China, oddly enough, by those very people who, having resolved to war with their peaceable neighbour, set out on an errand of conquest. In that errand they succeeded, but the conquerors did not convert the country they conquered to their own ideas, minds, customs, manners, or institutions; on the contrary, they were themselves converted by the conquered country, and, having imbibed Chinese ideas, it was they who extended the influence of the conquered country into their own original homes. The very fact that, whenever a barbarian State acquired some power in China, it adopted a Chinese name for its dynasty even before it subdued China explains much. There is a notable exception to this rule—namely, in regard to the custom of shaving the head, which was a Tartar custom, and which it was considered necessary, it seems, for political reasons, to enforce upon the conquered in the very beginning of the present Tartar dynasty.

In general, China's neighbours set out, in fact, to annex China, and it ended in their being themselves annexed, and to a great degree absorbed.

There are, it seems to me, three principal systems of civilization: the Western—*i.e.*, the European—the Indian, and the Chinese. From the scholastic point of view, the Egyptian civilization should be counted as a fourth; but it

was so remote and unique in character, and came to an end at comparatively so early an age in the world's history, that I need not concern myself with it in discussing my present theme.

Western civilization may, it appears to me, be regarded as a development of the Greek civilization, tempered by Semitic religious notions. With regard to this last system of civilization, scholars are prone to trace its descent from something much further back—some will even discern a direct derivation from India—but it is a matter involving too much detail for consideration here, and there is no necessity for me to enter upon it. And this Western system of civilization progressed almost entirely westward, until a new start was made towards the east within only very recent times.

We may therefore say that there were only two systems of civilization in the whole of Asia—that is to say, the Indian civilization in India and the Chinese civilization in the Far East. Indian civilization made no expansion towards the Far East beyond its own boundary, except in respect of Buddhism. Chinese civilization was paramount in that part of Asia which faced the Pacific Ocean. It was therefore natural that all the tribes and peoples dwelling round the centre of that Chinese civilization should have bowed to China as their elder sister, and ultimately have been fused into one nation with her. Even in the outer regions, where small States rose and fell from time to time, it was to have been expected that there should also be found a readiness to pay her much respect as the mistress of that civilization, much in the same way that different European States for many centuries revered Rome. Even Japan cannot claim to have been any exception to the rule, for she likewise was in the habit, in ancient times, of setting high store on Chinese civilization. There was, however, one marked difference which existed between Japan and the other smaller States bordering China on the Asiatic Continent: Japan did not scruple to avail herself of the opportunity of introducing Chinese civilization, but she

always endeavoured to maintain her own individuality, partly because her people always were possessed of distinctive characteristics, and partly, perhaps, because she was able, from her insular position, to escape actual contact with Chinese political ascendancy. We read in an ancient chronicle that when a letter not altogether courteous was sent to the Emperor of Japan by the Emperor of China, the Emperor of Japan wrote an answer commencing with these words: 'The Emperor of the land where the sun rises addresses himself to the Emperor of the land where the sun sets.'

It is recorded in a Chinese history that in the reign of the great second Emperor of T'ang an envoy was sent to Japan, where some dispute arose concerning matters of ceremony between him and the Court of Japan, as the consequence of which the envoy was obliged to return to China without delivering the Imperial message he had been commissioned to deliver. This appears to be due to the fact that the Chinese envoy wanted to act as though he was a messenger from a superior power to a subordinate State—a thing which Japan would never have consented to. We have a phrase which is very common—'the Chinese intelligence and the Japanese soul.' This phrase is attributed to Sugawara Michizane, a great scholar and statesman of the tenth century, who is deified. When he was ordered by the Emperor to go to China, he begged to be excused on the ground that it was not becoming in Japan to be too slavish to China by imitating her in everything. He maintained that the intelligence which was obtainable by studying Chinese was important and beneficial, but it was also necessary to keep the old soul of Japan intact. During the T'ang dynasty of China—that is to say, in the reign of Hsuan-tsung—the envoys of Japan, of Tufan (Tibet), of Shinlo (the then most important of the Korean kingdoms), and of the Tajiks (Persian), happened to arrive in the capital almost simultaneously. There were also numerous other envoys and their suites, from different foreign lands, present at the time. On the occasion of a formal audience, which was then given for the purpose of

receiving congratulations for the New Year, the first and second seats to the right of the throne were allotted to the envoys of Tufan and Japan respectively, and the first and second seats to the left to the other two envoys. To this arrangement the Japanese envoy objected, and it was at once modified, the first and second to the right being allotted to Tufan and Shinlo respectively, and the first and second to the left to Japan and the Tajiks respectively (the left from the centre is regarded by the Japanese as higher than the right, because it is the right when faced from the front). And again, when the Mongolian Emperor sent his envoys inviting Japan to submit to him, and persisted in seeking to obtain a definite answer from Japan, the Japanese statesman—barbarous as the act may appear—who was responsible for the negotiation, becoming impatient with the repeated insolence of the envoys, ordered them to be beheaded. We also see it recorded in history of an earlier date that when Japan used to send envoys and students to China, the composure and dignity of those envoys were objects of admiration to the Chinese Court, so much so that Japan came to be called by them 'Kuntsukuo' (the country of gentlemen). All these incidents will show, in outline, what sort of position Japan always occupied with regard to China.

A close examination of the nature and characteristics and growth of Chinese civilization shows that it achieved vast expansion ; but long before even the advent of Western civilization in the East the limits of that expansion had been reached. On the North the Mongolian regions were incorporated with, or rather annexed to, the Chinese Empire ; but the influence of Chinese civilization beyond the Great Wall was always very feeble. It may be said that its limit was practically marked by the Great Wall. Towards Central Asia also it was very weak. And, moreover, the natives of Mongolia, Manchuria, and Central Asia are no longer those of ancient times. They have not a spark of the fire and energy of the time gone by left in them. On the contrary, they are perpetually hampered by the superstitious influences which have grown up with, and

are nurtured by, Lamaism. If there are any Mongolians or Tartars who are still to be feared, they are those who now belong to the Russian community—a fact so often overlooked by the ordinary public.

I have already alluded to the introduction of Lamaism into these regions by the Mongolians of a former period. It appears that at the time of Genghiskhan some steps had already been taken. Kublaikhan, at a later date, made a great priest of Tibet his teacher. That priest invented for him the Mongolian alphabet, founded upon Indian letters, and by its aid a large number of the Buddhist Sūtras were translated by Kublai's order into the Mongolian language by that priest and several of his compatriots and coadjutors. The work, which was a tremendous undertaking, was accomplished in the succeeding reign. When the Tartar dynasty was established in China, it also favoured Lamaism, and the course taken with reference thereto by the Mongolian dynasty was adopted by it also. Venerable priests were sent for from Tibet; Manchurian alphabets were elaborated on the basis of Indian characters, and the translation of a huge number of the Buddhist sacred books was forthwith resolved upon. Besides all this, the Lama priests were, under both dynasties, the favoured recipients of much patronage and distinction. From all this one can easily imagine what an immense influence Lamaism exerted in those regions. I can say with certainty the influence thus exercised sufficed to govern the mental faculties of the natives of those regions in a way that even Chinese civilization had never been able to do. Thus, on the one hand, while the modern Mongols and Manchus do not retain the old dash and spirit that distinguished them in former times, on the other, they have not been able to attain to the full height of Chinese civilization, the result being their thorough degeneration.

In Manchuria the original Tartars that still remain are only a minority of the inhabitants, the rest being chiefly immigrants from Shantung. A large proportion of the original Tartars have in one way or other penetrated into China Proper, and have there become sinicized, so that

the present Manchuria is no longer the Manchuria of former days ; even the Tartar language itself is said to be almost disappearing. One might have expected the Chinese, who have taken up their abode in Manchuria, to inherit some of the better qualities of the original Tartar inhabitants, but it is not the case. Some people say that they do not even come up to the standard of their compatriots of other parts of the Chinese Empire. In a word, I can say that there is now little or no probability of any powerful people arising from those regions of Mongolia and Manchuria, as was the case centuries ago.

Towards Tibet the influence of Chinese civilization is blocked by the Tibetan State, where Indian influence under somewhat transformed conditions is crystallized and paramount, and that influence is stronger than that of China. If we look a little further south, it is blocked by the Himalayas, and, still further south, in the Malay Peninsula, it is held in check by Siam and Annam, not to say Burma, in all of which the Indian elements preponderate over those of China. Even Tonking has never been truly sinicized. Then, as to the internal condition of China, civilization arrived at a state of complete stagnation many centuries since. No statesman dares to embark on innovations, for if he were to do so his fall would be assured. Take, for example, the case of Wang-An-Shi, of the Sung dynasty. Great as he was as a statesman and scholar, he totally failed when he attempted a radical change in the administrative and economical system, and his character is always painted in the blackest colour in consequence, not of his failure, but of his attempt. Moreover, the Empire is big enough ; the Chinese have no desire, nor do they perceive any necessity to extend it further. It has never entered their minds to create any colonial possessions outside their own Empire. Such things have ever been totally at variance with their ideas. The Chinese, especially the southern ones, are as a rule sagacious in commerce, and large numbers of them have gone abroad in recent years. This is due mainly to the fact that they have had little field for enterprise at home

in political and kindred matters, so that they have come to exert their faculty for pecuniary gain. Hence those who go abroad do so only for personal and material advantages, and have no political significance.

The highest ideal entertained by the Chinese of the best kind of government has always been Jen-Cheng, which may be translated as 'merciful and humane administration.' Theoretically, the Emperor is an autocrat, but when he becomes excessively oppressive and tyrannical the population rises against him to put an end to his dynasty, setting up a new one in its place. This has become a recognised principle, and has been morally justified through thousands of years. The natural consequence of it has been to cause individual subjects to contribute their private means as little as possible to the State; hence they have the greatest abhorrence of heavy taxes, for whatsoever causes they may be levied, and in China there is actually almost no system of taxation as a national institution, though all sorts of devices are used by the provincial officials to raise certain sums for contribution to the Central Government as required by them. Hence the Central Government has very little means to undertake any enterprising works on a grand scale. This is also one of several causes why the thought never occurs to the Chinese to organize any colonial possessions. True it is that several grand public works, such as the construction of the Great Wall and of canals, were undertaken by energetic rulers, but they were done chiefly by forced contribution of labour, and were generally unpopular, so much so, indeed, that the verdict of Chinese history is generally rather unfavourable than favourable to those rulers who conceived and accomplished costly works of avowedly public utility.

The mass of the Chinese are not patriotic in a political sense, and in any given part of the Empire but little concern is felt about the calamities that may befall other parts of the Empire, even in the shape of armed aggression from outside. Their common interests are few, and the immense distances militate against solidarity of feeling. Moreover,

China has always regarded herself as placed above all surrounding countries, and her notions of mankind, as interpreted by her own traditions and ancient teachings, have prevented her people from entertaining any feeling of healthy rivalry with outsiders. Her feeling with regard to dwellers beyond her borders was that it was better to placate them by conciliatory methods than to combat them by sheer force. This has been China's cosmopolitan policy, always kept in view by her rulers and expounded by her moralists.

There is a Chinese phrase to this effect : 'No two suns in the heavens, and no two Emperors on the earth.' This simply means, however, that there ought not to be two supreme rulers in China. The Chinese mind never took into account the possibility of there being any rulers in other and remote regions of the world. Hence in China, although the country was split up into several States from time to time through the weakening of the reigning dynasty and the rising of new leaders in different parts of the Empire, such conditions as these were always considered to be merely temporary and quite abnormal. People always expected that order would be restored sooner or later under the régime of one Emperor. This being so, even a foreign dynasty, when it had once conquered the Empire, was the real and true master of the country, to whom the allegiance of the whole Empire was due. Here, again, we may perceive that there can exist in China no pure and simple patriotism. It is, however, to be borne in mind that the brotherhood or common interests of the Chinese population, loose and lukewarm as these ties perhaps are, are nevertheless so wide and in a measure so deep that it is difficult to separate altogether the different parts from one another—I mean to such an extent as obtains in Europe, where so many different and independent States coexist side by side.

The Chinese are a nation, despite all their faults. I might compare the Chinese nation with a mass of raw cotton. It is not solid, but its different particles have their mutual cohesive power, and form a more or less compact substance. It can exert no damaging force against any

other substance, from the very nature of its yielding disposition, yet it is best to leave it compact as it is, because it is more useful in that form, and, figuratively speaking, it will rest quite satisfied and content if left to itself in that way.

The limitation of Chinese expansion has become more marked since the advent of Western civilization in the Far East. China is surrounded by this new force on all sides, and her attitude is constantly one of defence. A little time ago I read in an American review an article written by a Chinese diplomatist. He made a remark somewhat in the following words :

‘ Our motto is, “ Do not do unto others what you would not have others do unto you,” but your motto is, “ Do unto others as you would have others do unto you ”; in other words, we are negative, but you are positive. In consequence of this your people often force other people to do what you yourself like without inquiring whether those other people want it to be done or not. It therefore often results in your doing things against the wish of other people, and often with mischievous results.’

This seems to be about the correct description of the feeling of the Chinese as against the rest of the world. China has her moral notions, which are by no means lacking in refinement. It is well for outsiders not to despise the Chinese too much, or, rather, it is desirable that they should be treated with proper consideration. If they are so treated they will always prove themselves to be a good nation with which to maintain peaceable and beneficial intercourse.

Of late there has been much talk about the Yellow Peril, or the possibility of a Pan-Asiatic combination ; this appears to me, as I have said so often elsewhere, nothing more than a senseless and mischievous agitation. How can China rise up alone, and become a source of peril in this form to the rest of mankind ? From what I have said in this paper it will be plainly seen that it is a matter of the greatest improbability. It is therefore in this respect all the more desirable that the mass of Chinese cotton be left

alone. We have a proverb saying, 'Even a small insect has a soul,' and another saying, 'A rat in despair might bite a cat.' These proverbs mean that too much persecution should not be inflicted even upon weak objects. Therefore I can say that even such peaceful people as the Chinese should not be treated without due consideration for their feelings.

As I have shown already, China has not been and is not of her own seeking an aggressive nation. It is not only so with the ruling classes—in other words, with those who conquered China and became sinicized—but with the nation itself at large, which has been imbued with the same spirit and the same ideas throughout all time, so that they have become its distinguishing and permanent attributes. The very basic principle of Chinese civilization is essentially pacific.

Looking back through the whole course of history, the Chinese rulers who despatched well-organized counter-expeditions into the lands of the enemy were, as a rule, able and renowned Emperors, such as the first and fifth Emperors of the Han dynasty, the second Emperor of the T'ang dynasty, and the first and second Emperors of the Sui dynasty; but nevertheless they almost invariably failed in their enterprise, often suffering very serious defeats.

Hence distant expeditions came to be universally regarded by the Chinese as a curse to the Empire. There is in Chinese a well-known phrase, which might be translated as the 'degradation or disgrace of militarism.' That phrase consists of only two words in Chinese, and represents the stigma which all rulers have for several tens of centuries been most afraid of incurring, as well as the warning which councillors of the Empire came most commonly to employ in advising their masters. Even when an expedition against Korea was mooted by the great second Emperor of T'ang, at the zenith of his splendid career, the voices of his councillors were one and all against it.

In literature, also, almost all the sentiments which have survived about China's warfare with barbarians in the form

of poetry merely echo the misery and hardships entailed, and but seldom is there any glorification of war. The examples of the expeditions of earlier rulers are not to be esteemed subjects of emulation for later Sovereigns. And yet if they are steadily driven into the position of a chased rat, it is not possible to guarantee that even these men of peace may not in the end betray some sort of resentment. I may, for instance, be allowed to say here that Europeans cannot be regarded as entirely free from responsibility for the trouble which culminated in the Boxer rising some years ago.

Then, again, there are some who accuse Japan as the probable organizer of the Pan-Asiatic Peril. Peace-loving as the Japanese also are, the characteristics, notions, and feelings of the Japanese and Chinese are so different that there is no possibility of their complete amalgamation in one common cause; and what is true with regard to the Chinese holds even more true with regard to other Asiatic peoples.

Japan aspires, moreover, to elevate herself to the same plane and to press onward in the same path of civilization as the countries of the West. Even in everyday matters one likes to choose good company, so as not to estrange his best friends. Can anyone imagine that Japan would like to organize a Pan-Asiatic agitation of her own seeking, in which she must take so many different peoples of Asia into her confidence and company—people with whom she has no joint interests or any community of thought and feeling? And what of the risks Japan would wantonly incur were she to dare to attempt such an enterprise in the face of the most powerful nations of the earth? Furthermore, the conditions of existence throughout the whole world are totally changed from the time when Genghis Khan or Timur (Tamerlane) carried out their extraordinary exploits.

Let us view the matter from another standpoint, and I trust I shall be excused if I allow myself to be extremely candid. In Europe and on its borders there are many States, some of them well advanced, some rather backward. Would it be practicable for all these States to form themselves into one compact body in organized offensive com-

bination against an outside Power, say America? I venture to assert that, even with the intelligence and ability of the advanced nations of Europe, such a union of interests and strength would be quite impossible. How, then, could it be expected for one moment that the various peoples of the East, with their varying degrees of intelligence, their conflicting interests, and their old-standing feuds and jealousies, could ever have cohesion enough to range themselves under one banner against the powers of the Occident? And if they could do so, is it to be imagined that Japan would enter upon so quixotic an enterprise as to place herself at the head of so unmanageable a mob? At the very first onset of a Western military force, the untrained masses would take to flight, and Japan would find herself alone, to bear the consequences of her folly. In Japan we have profited by our military studies to the extent that we comprehend the value of a thoroughly homogeneous force. Could any conceivable agglomeration of Asiatic troops be termed a homogeneous body, and could such an agglomeration be made, by any means known to man, into a compact force fit to associate with a highly-trained and thoroughly experienced army such as Japan now possesses, even were she prepared to sacrifice everything for the very dubious privilege of placing herself at their head? Turn we for an instant to India. There we have an example of a vast population immeasurably more numerous than the white element which rules it, yet split up into so many States and sects and castes that combination always has been and must be completely out of the question. Has anyone seriously supposed that England has to fear a peril there, such as might be conceivable were union among the many divided peoples at all possible? What is the history of the one attempt to overthrow British rule? That of its utter failure owing to lack of combined effort; of a mutiny of a comparatively small number of troops checked by the fidelity of other regiments who refused to assist in the rising, owing to personal and tribal difference and caste prejudices. Is it not notorious that these Indian races have not only no cohesion but downright antagonism, notwith-

standing that they are alike subjects of a conquering nation? Is there any likelihood of these Indian natives and other Asiatic peoples being organized into a compact and united force, as some mischievous writers suggest? If this argument can fairly be applied as regards organization into an effective fighting force of the Asiatic peoples, how much stronger does it become when the matter is considered in a political sense! The peoples of the East are, some of them, politically independent; others are under the sway of one or other European Power. To combine them in a single undertaking would be a task utterly impracticable and unpromising. Japan has already cast in her lot with the Occident, and in the eyes of many Asiatics it is to be remembered the Japanese are no less 'Yang-Kwai' (foreign devils) than the Occidentals.

In addition, and with the same candour as before, let me say that Japan has herself chiefly to consider. While she does not for one instant wish it to be thought that she looks down with contempt upon other Oriental nations—which she does not—they, for reasons of their own, have not chosen to accompany her along the path of progress, and actually regard her as something of an apostate. Can she, by any stretch of the imagination, be suspected of a willingness to permit her own future to be jeopardized by pausing in her own advance in order to join them in what she fully realizes could only be an enterprise foredoomed to disastrous failure? Moreover, no Occidentals need imagine that Japan would particularly welcome the creation of a strong power on the Continent of Asia in close proximity to her own shores. To me it seems that the charge of organizing a Pan-Asiatic League which is now and then brought against Japan, if taken seriously, would only be to subject her to utterly unjust persecution, quite unworthy of the civilized nations of the world. It would be like turning round upon an apt pupil whom one had one's self trained and encouraged and brought to the world's notice—rather against its own original inclinations and wishes—and that on the mere ground that the pupil belonged to a different set from one's own, and had grown a trifle more quickly

and more robust than one had expected when one first took him by the hand and led him forth into new paths.

Japan took up the cudgels in the present war with Russia, as I have elsewhere shown, and as it is by this time, I hope, perfectly understood, with no other motive than the defence of her own interests. Whenever it may come to a conclusion she will, as heretofore, seek to establish peace on a sure and sound foundation, having no objects in view that are not consistent with a pacific policy. She has sought throughout, and will continue to seek in the future, the benefits which accrue from this line of action, and it is in pursuance of these principles that she has endeavoured to associate herself with the aims and objects of Western nations. Her people cannot, if they would, change the tint of their skins, and if, after all her efforts, she is to be ostracized merely on the score of colour, she will be obliged to regard it as harsh treatment, far exceeding anything that she had a right to expect from the chivalry and enlightenment of the nations of the Occident. At all events, I cannot imagine what material advantage those Occidental Powers who profess to be friendly with Japan can achieve by driving her to desperation with those ungenerous and, let me say, unmanly accusations. When this war ends, we shall devote ourselves to the arts of peace, and I may add that we can hardly expect that, no matter in what form the present contest may terminate, circumstances will permit of our embarking upon hostilities in other directions. I can positively declare, in the name of Japan, that when this struggle reaches its conclusion she will honestly and faithfully pursue a policy of peace.

DISCUSSION

SIR WEST RIDGEWAY: I think that the general reluctance to speak arises from the fact that we all agree with everything in this most instructive paper. There is no point on which to join issue in a discussion. Not only do we all highly appreciate the highly instructive and interesting paper which the Baron has read, but we feel intense sympathy with the latter part of it, in which he exposed that absurd bugbear and bogey, the Yellow Peril.

SIR ROBERT DOUGLAS: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,—I have very little to say, except to express my great interest in the paper we have just heard. I may, however, emphasize one point. The Baron urges that China is eminently a pacific nation, that all her tendencies, all her aggressions even, are peaceful. He has thus, I am glad to say, struck another nail into the coffin of that dead bogey, the Yellow Peril.

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH: As the discussion seems to have come to an abrupt conclusion, I may venture to say a few words. The subject is one of the greatest interest, and, coming from such an authority as we have had the pleasure of welcoming here this afternoon, the views advocated must strike us as conclusive.

If there is any point which it is possible to criticise, it would be the question of the fighting qualities of the Chinese. The Baron does not think much of their military prowess. No symptom at present shows itself of the scientific application of China's enormous latent capabilities to military purposes; but if we look further into her historical expansion, we shall find that China has given evidence of considerable vitality in this direction. One instance I may mention. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, after Warren Hastings had done his best to establish friendly relations between Tibet and India, the Gurkhas of Nepal broke loose and raided Tibet, pillaging Shigatse, and dispersing the priestly authorities. Tibet appealed to China. China responded with alacrity. General San Foo led 70,000 men through the gorges of Western China to the Tibetan highlands, crossing at least half a dozen passes as high as Mont Blanc ere he reached the plateau. He had then to cover 400 miles of the terrible Tibetan plateau-land before he came upon the Gurkhas. We regard the Gurkhas as the best fighting material in India, and they were a strong military people even at that time.

When the Chinese General found his foes, he first inflicted upon them a severe defeat in the open ; then, forcing them back to Nepal, he followed them up till he had them in front of their capital city, Khatmandu. The river, their homes, and their women were behind them. The Chinese forces, which had just covered an enormous distance in the face of gigantic natural obstacles, did not like the look of things ; they hesitated in the attack. It is on such an occasion that a great General shows his capacity. San Foo was a great General. He turned his guns on to the rear of his own army, forced Gurkhas and his own soldiers all together into the river, inflicted a severe defeat upon the enemy, and took heavy reprisals from Khatmandu. To this day Nepal sends a mission through Lhasa to China in recognition of Chinese suzerainty.

I do not think that China, as a consolidated nation, is ever likely to be aggressive ; but we must remember what the Chinaman can do if he tries. Two of our best soldiers, General Gordon and Colonel Bower, who went to Wei-hai-wei to raise a Chinese regiment, declare that the Chinaman has in him the makings of a good soldier. As the strength of China was referred to somewhat lightly, I think I am justified in recalling the manner in which China, in past history, has signalized herself in military feats.

I ask you to allow me, in your name, to convey sincere thanks to the Baron for his most interesting and able paper, and to Mr. Chirol for the way in which he has read it.

BARON SUYEMATSU: I thank you very much: First, for the manner in which you have received my paper ; second, for the vote of thanks ; and, third, I wish to especially thank Mr. Chirol for the admirable manner in which he has read the paper.

I should like to add just a few words regarding the Chairman's remarks. I quite agree that, in some ways and under certain conditions, the Chinese may make good soldiers. The whole intent of my paper was to show that China was not aggressive if left alone. China will not pick a quarrel with outsiders—she is not a military nation. Militarism is looked down upon. To be a soldier is the worst kind of profession. She has fine and high ideas of enlightenment, very different from those of Western civilization, but, one must own, most refined. Militarism is not China's idea of refinement.

What I said was that even a chased rat might turn and bite a cat. I did not like to say too much, but I hope you understood what I meant. If I had meant to show that China was very weak and could do nothing, she would have been exterminated many centuries ago. That she has kept her corporate existence until now proves that she can do something. I wished to impress upon the

Occident that she may, by easy means, make good friends with China ; but Westerners do not employ those easy means—quite otherwise. You very often make yourselves into a cat chasing a rat ; and the rat may bite. That is what I ask you not to do. I beg once more to thank you for the most kind manner in which you have received me and the views that I have been able to lay before you.

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OUR RECENT PROGRESS IN SOUTHERN PERSIA,
AND ITS POSSIBILITIES

BY

H. R. SYKES



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OUR RECENT PROGRESS IN SOUTHERN PERSIA, AND ITS POSSIBILITIES

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH, in introducing the lecturer, said : It is well known that the Central Asian Society moves freely over all parts of Asia in the subjects which are brought forward at its meetings. Turning from the Far East, which has occupied our attention recently, we are to-day to consider the more familiar ground of Southern Persia. It is a subject which has many points of interest ; they may be military, commercial, political, or historical. And we shall, I am sure, derive much pleasure in listening to a gentleman bearing the distinguished name of Sykes—a name always welcome to the Society. Our lecturer to-day has had most recent opportunities for observing how affairs are progressing in Southern Persia. I will now ask Mr. Sykes to read his paper.

In the paper which it is to be my privilege to read to you this afternoon, I shall deal, as its title suggests, with a series of events that have recently occupied a foremost place on the commercial and political arena of Southern and South-Eastern Persia. I shall endeavour to show that the apathy with which our Foreign Office had too long regarded the gradual advance of Russia has at length been dispelled, to be followed by a recrudescence of activity in those portions of the Shah's dominions which, adjoining our Indian frontier, we have every right to regard as coming within the legitimate sphere of our influence.

With this opportune revival I do not entirely credit the Foreign Office. Much is due to the energy and influence of Lord Curzon, and one must search for the origin of the events of the last two years at the selfsame source from which sprang the missions to Lhasa and Kabul. Foremost among these events I would certainly class the construction

of the new transcontinental wire across some 750 miles of Persian territory. For some years the old line, viâ Tabriz, Teheran, Bushire, and thence by cable to Karachi, has been growing insufficient for modern requirements. The rate of transmission is always slower through a cable than through an overhead wire. It was costly to maintain, and was wearing out. The convention for the new line across Persia was signed at Teheran on August 16, 1901, and the following are among the more important conditions of the agreement.

A three-wire line was to be constructed by the Persian Government from Kashan to the Baluchistan frontier, viâ Yezd and Kerman, traversing wherever possible inhabited districts. It was to be built under the direction and supervision of the British telegraph staff then controlling the international line in Persia, the British Government agreeing to procure for the Persian Government the material, and to arrange for the carriage of the stores to the sites required.

The Persian Government agreed to lease the use and transit revenue of the line when complete to the Indo-European Telegraph Department at a rental of 4 per cent. on the capital expended on its construction, three-fourths of such rental to be retained by the British Government to recoup them for the advances made, and one-fourth, subject to a minimum of 25,000 francs, to be paid annually to the Persian Government.

The maintenance of the line is to remain in the hands of the British Director and his staff, the cost being defrayed by the British Government. The Persian Government retains the revenue derived from the local traffic on the Persian wire; and as regards international messages, originating or terminating in Persia, the Persian Government shall receive two-thirds of the receipts of all *bona-fide* terminal messages.

This convention is to remain in force until January, 1925, or for so much longer as the debt due by Persia for the construction of the line remains unpaid.

So, in general terms, we have built the line for the

Persians ; and we have advanced them the money for its construction, which we recover from the traffic later on.

The actual building of the line commenced more than two years ago, and was completed early last summer. For months before its commencement stores were accumulated at various ports on the Persian Gulf, whence they were moved up-country and dropped at various points on the route. The work of construction was pushed forward at a rapid rate, and between Kashan and Yezd, a distance of 237 miles, an average of fifteen miles per week was maintained, notwithstanding a delay at one point of twenty-one days owing to bad weather. At Yezd thirty days were wasted in waiting the arrival of material from the coast, and the work was then advanced another 218 miles to Kerman, which was reached in October, 1903. Thence, after a few days' halt, the line crossing the Zain-ul-abad Pass was carried forward 115 miles to Bam, and in due course another twenty-five miles to Azizabad. Here, however, an unfortunate delay of six weeks occurred.

There was more than one route by which the desert to the Baluchistan frontier might be crossed, and the Government had not come to a decision as to which of these should be adopted ; and when the point was finally left for Mr. King Wood, the chief constructor, to settle himself, he found his progress seriously handicapped by the want of transport, which had dwindled away during the period of inactivity. Indeed, he was only enabled to retain his Persian workmen, whose terrors of the desert ahead were now augmented by a spell of heat excessive for February, owing to the fact that he had omitted to pay them their last month's wages. This delay was all the more unfortunate as the spring was now advancing, and the heat and other horrors of the Lut were growing daily more formidable. But eventually the desert was crossed viâ the wells of Shurgaz and Gurg and the village of Nasratabad Ispi, whence the line was carried due east seventy miles to Kuhl-i-Malek Siah, where it joined the newly-constructed line from Quetta.

The cost of this line through Persia works out at about

£130 per mile, and is about equally divided between the cost of material, working expenses, and transport; and with regard to the latter item, by far the largest expense consisted in carrying the material up-country to the various sites, an average distance of not more than 300 or 400 miles. For whereas it cost about 30s. per ton to transfer the material from English to Persian ports by sea, a distance of several thousand miles, it cost six or seven times that amount to carry the same material less than one-tenth of the distance across Persian plains and passes. Moreover, the large advance it created on all transport rates throughout all Southern Persia seems to point to the fact that the available transport of the country is only just sufficient for its normal requirements.

I was fortunate enough during my recent travels in Persia to meet the line in course of construction on two occasions: once between Yezd and Kerman, and again just as it was entering the Lut after the six weeks of idleness at Azizabad. The whole of the work has been splendidly and most efficiently carried out. The materials are of the best; no detail has been overlooked; no nut or bolt or insulator in which the least flaw was discernible has been employed. The line from Kashan to Bam carries three wires, two of them for British international use, while the third, the Persian wire, fulfils local requirements. Beyond Bam a single wire only is carried to Kuh-i-Malek Siah, and the masts, instead of twenty, now only number ten to the mile. The difficulty of carrying even a single-wire line across a desert country like the Lut, and of supplying during this period of construction men and animals, not only with provisions, but even with water, is evidenced by the fact that no fewer than 1,000 transport animals were required for this section of the work.

The benefits that this new line confers upon all classes, and particularly upon Europeans, in Yezd and Kerman is immense. When I first saw Kerman, a little more than two years ago, it was connected with the outer world by a most unreliable wire of Persian construction and control. In the winter months it was seldom in working order, and

we were obliged to send on telegrams 220 miles for transmission from Yezd. Moreover, it was only possible to telegraph in Persian characters. To-day our officials are in touch with Simla and the Foreign Office, and Reuter's news reaches Kerman daily.

But it is eastward of these centres that I anticipate the full weight of its importance will be felt. Its presence should have a most salutary effect on the lawlessness and brigandage so common in those less-known portions of Persia and Baluchistan through which it passes, owing to the prompt notice of outrage which can be given to the authorities. And so, by making the passage of caravans safer, it should be the means of stimulating new trade along routes which, owing to bad repute amongst other causes, have fallen into disuse. Baluchistan will be a great gainer, and it is even possible to look forward to an increase of trade along the Quetta-Nushki route; for whatever may be the advantage of the Bandar Abbas routes to and from India on the score of cheapness, they are still far from safe, and I see greater possibilities for the westward development of this route (*i.e.*, from Kuh-i-Malek Siah across the Lut to Kerman, and even Yezd) than northward into Khorassan, where our trade is blocked by Russian bounties and quarantine officers, not to mention the difficulties our traders experience of finding loads for the return journey to India.

A little development of the Lut along the course of the line between Kuh-i-Malek Siah and Azizabad, such as the digging of a few wells and the construction of an occasional rest-house, might do much towards the realization of this scheme.

Thus, I anticipate that, like the railway, though of course to a less degree, the telegraph may help to develop the country through which it passes. It will then possess a decided local and commercial influence. Now, it has been pointed out that commercial influence in these days, especially in regions where government is weak or remiss, readily becomes political. So although the first effect will probably lie in the direction of pacification and civilization, to the benefit of our traders, we may look to it as pro-

ductive of something more far-reaching and more substantial in effect than a mere development of trade, so that the final result cannot be shown under the heading of pounds, shillings, and pence.

It offers us important vested interests and an undoubted political influence through the very heart of Persia, and whatever may be the effect north of the line, there can be no doubt that south of it—that is to say, between the line and the seaboard of Persia and Baluchistan, where the question of our supremacy is vital to our Imperial interests—the presence of the line will have an influence second only to that derivable from the existence of a railway.

I will pass on now to what I consider one of the most hopeful signs of official awakening to the great importance of the Persian Question. I allude to the large increase which the past two years have shown in the number of our consulates. At the commencement of 1903, including the Resident at Bushire, we had in all Persia only nine or ten consular officials. To-day we have fifteen. In that year there were added to the list a permanent Consul at Shiraz, and a new Vice-Consul at Turbat-i-Haideri.

The appointment of a permanent Consul at Shiraz gives the Resident at Bushire liberty to devote the whole of his attention to matters concerning the Gulf. Until two years ago it was his custom to retire from the coast and spend the hot months in Shiraz, thus dividing his attention between the two stations. The necessity for this annual migration has now been removed.

The appointment of a vice-consulate at Turbat-i-Haideri, within eighty miles of Meshed, where British representation already appears to be out of proportion to the amount of British trade, might strike the casual observer as superfluous. The Government of India was, however, obliged to place a Consul there to protect our Indian traders from the pressing attention paid them by the Russian quarantine officers, on the plea of preventing the introduction of plague from India.

The following year, 1904, saw a still further addition to our consular staff, and the number of our officers was raised from twelve to fifteen.

A Consul was appointed at Ahwaz, a town of no small importance, situated on the Karun, Persia's only navigable river. From here an excellent road has been constructed by Messrs. Lynch to Ispahan, a distance of 270 miles, as against 485 miles from Bushire; so that, in view of the costliness of land-borne as opposed to sea-borne traffic, Ahwaz, rather than Bushire, appears to be the natural port of Ispahan. The climate is fair, and the district is free from the curse of fanatical population, which is not the case at the neighbouring town of Shuster. Kermanshah, too, has been added to the list. This large and flourishing town on the Baghdad-Teheran route is the first of any importance reached (from Baghdad) after entering Persian territory, and the annual trade passing through it is valued at over a million sterling.

Then, we have sent a second political officer to Sistan, on the flank of our Indian Empire, where it is most important to watch carefully our commercial and political interests. During last year he has spent much of his time travelling between Sistan and Meshed, and may eventually take up his position at Birjand, a considerable town lying some 200 miles north of Sistan on the Sistan-Meshed and the Bandar Abbas-Meshed trade routes. There is one very interesting point with regard to the creation of these new consulates which is clearer if their positions be marked off on a map of Persia. It will then be seen that three of them—Kermanshah, Ahwaz, and Shiraz—lie at points on the principal Gulf trade routes, while at Turbat and in Sistan we are strengthening our position on the flank of our Indian Empire. We are thus additionally safeguarding our interests on two flanks of Persian frontier, the only two of which our trade has any chance of entering Persian territory—the one by sea, the other along the overland routes through Baluchistan or Afghanistan, and where it is so important that our influence should be maintained.

There is a point in the system of administration of our consulates in Persia which I venture to suggest calls for remedy. Whereas a proportion of our consulates are under the Foreign Office in London, the remainder have

been appointed by, and are maintained at, the expense of the Government of India. I should prefer to see all these consulates under one control, and I have no hesitation in saying that this control ought to be the Government of India. We might then be in a position to consider the advisability of a general system of Eastern Consuls under an Eastern Department. The Indian Political Service would probably be the best source from which these officials might be derived, but they should be caught young enough and receive a special training.

There is much in the nature of his surroundings that an Indian Political on entering Persia will find new. He is no longer amongst a race of his fellow-subjects. He is apt to forget this. The Persian is poor, but inordinately proud, and withal very sensitive; and he is apt to forget this also. Tact is a most important qualification, and the failure to remark this axiom may hinder the British cause in Persia. Besides this, there is a new power at work in the land which he must learn to recognise as being permanent. The introduction of Belgians to superintend the Customs has been a most astute move on the part of Russia. Their presence at once disarms suspicion; moreover, it was not unlikely that the eradication of the evils of Persian administration would be a source of irritation to many. The Persian—an unprogressive Conservative of the most pronounced type—cannot brook innovations, especially when they affect his pocket, and Russia preferred that the odium which might be invoked by constitutional changes should be borne by other shoulders than her own. She is now going a step farther, and we hear of a proposal to employ Belgians for the purpose of administering provincial finances. When the time is ripe we may perhaps see the Belgians superseded by Russian officials. But though this state of things is not entirely in favour of British interest, still, there is much that our Indian official in Persia, and even the Government of India itself, may do, and much that may be left undone, to make chances of friction between Belgians and our traders of less frequent occurrence. For the Belgian has come to stop, and nothing

we can do can have any effect in checking his acquisition of power, whereas opposition can only serve to turn his sympathies where his interests already are—to Russia.

Incidentally the work of the Belgians is good, and we are placed in the false position of opposing what is obviously a good thing for the country. An excess of energy, then, in certain directions on the part of our Consuls is not conducive to harmonious relations with the powers that be ; and in the exercise of their duties they should be warned against an unbending attitude, which will oftener than not fail to obtain the desired result.

The Perso-Afghan Frontier Commission, under Colonel McMahon, which has just finished most important work in Sistan, might very well engage our attention for a few moments. The necessity for a redelimitation of this boundary, which, as you probably all know, was originally delimited by General Goldsmid in 1872, arose in consequence of the river Helmund, which for some miles constituted the frontier between the two States, relinquishing its old bed and forming a new one a few miles within Persian territory. Disputes arose between the villagers, a few shots were exchanged, and the British Government, in accordance with the treaty of 1857, claimed the right to arbitrate.

The striking difference between the scale of the present mission and Goldsmid's mission is indicative of the increased attention which is now being paid to Persian affairs. Goldsmid arrived in Sistan from Bandar Abbas early in February, 1872. His following, including a staff of six, escort, servants, and camel-drivers, was seventy-three. McMahon has over 1,500 men with him ; and whereas ninety camels sufficed to transport Goldsmid's stores and baggage, McMahon requires over 2,000. Throughout his stay in Sistan Goldsmid was shamefully treated. His work was constantly hindered by Persian intrigue. The property, and even the lives of his followers, were often in danger. His attempt to fly the British flag met with a storm of fanatical resentment on the part of the Sistanis, and both he and his surveyors were repeatedly refused

admission into forts and villages. After six weeks of such treatment, can we wonder that he was obliged to withdraw from Sistan? Travelling viâ Meshed, he reached Teheran on June 5, delivering his award on August 19. His decision had the advantage of pleasing neither party, and notice of appeal was given, but the appeal was disallowed.

The six weeks spent in Sistan by the Commissioner and his small staff in no way sufficed for an accurate survey of the country, and it has been far from easy for McMahon to establish which of the many streamlets that flow northward through Sistan was the original bed of the Helmund constituting Goldsmid's boundary.

McMahon's mission left Quetta at the end of 1902, and reached Sistan through Afghan territory early the following year. There was some small opposition offered to his crossing the Helmund into Persian territory near the Band-i-Sistan, but this and all subsequent opposition was easily traceable to Russian intrigue.

For some years previous to the mission's advent, Russian influence had been gradually gaining ground in Sistan. Ever jealous of our increasing trade along the Quetta-Nushki trade route, she employed every means at her disposal for its annihilation; for British trade meant British influence in Sistan, and this was contrary to Russia's interests. She therefore sent as her consular representative one of the cleverest men in her service, a man whose reputation for intrigue was beyond question, and whose conscience would in no way interfere with Russia's object of driving the British and British trade out of Sistan. In this endeavour he was assisted by Belgian Customs officials and Russian quarantine officers. The governorship of Sistan — one of the last remaining hereditary posts in Persia — was in the hands of the Hashmat-ul-Mulk, whose position now became most difficult and delicate. For he well knew that his tenure of office depended on the Shah's pleasure, which in its turn was equally dependent on the will of Russia, who holds at Teheran the power of the sword tempered by that

compelling influence, power of the purse. It is therefore hardly surprising that in the circumstances the Russian Consul found in the Hashmat-ul-Mulk a puppet that would dance to his music, and to such an extent did he play on the old man's fears that our Consul was thwarted in every direction.

The allegiance of our Baluchi chiefs was strained to the uttermost by the promise of land and villages and presents of arms. It is greatly to their credit that in some cases they handed over these weapons to the British authorities, saying they did not think they ought to keep them and asking whether the Russians were really, as they said, going to annex Baluchistan. Such were some of the means employed by Russia to maintain and increase her influence in Sistan. Her desire to possess this territory is not unnatural. Sistan lies on the direct route to the Gulf. It forms a rich oasis which may be compared to Egypt, fertilized as it is by the never-failing waters of the Helmund, and surrounded on all sides by vast deserts. Here might be grown an almost unlimited supply of grain, and, notwithstanding a disagreeable climate, Russia would find herein a most convenient halfway house in view of the contemplated development of her railway system to the Gulf or the Indian Ocean. For that purpose she must feel that her supremacy in Sistan is a point of vital importance, and that as long as we remain the controlling influence in those regions her hopes of reaching the sea are somewhat remote.

Colonel McMahon's arrival saved the situation. The Russian Consul now found himself face to face with an influence he failed to master, and after repeated attempts to do so he left Sistan, and the power of Russia was felt by all parties, but particularly by the Persians, to be a diminishing quantity. For two years McMahon and his staff have been carrying on the work of delimitation. He is escorted by two companies of infantry and a troop of cavalry, and the mission has been constituted on a scale which demands universal respect. Determined that the flag incident of Goldsmid's mission should not be repeated,

and as a protest against the Sistanis on that and a subsequent occasion, McMahon provided himself with a Union Jack of gigantic proportions which floated at the head of a pole some 60 feet high. It might appear that such an incident as this is scarcely worthy of mention, but to the Persian mind matters of this kind are matters of great moment.

During the first year elaborate and accurate surveys of all Sistan and the surrounding districts were carried out, and the award was made and agreed to by both the Persian and Afghan Commissioners before it was sent for ratification to Teheran and Kabul.

On October 15 last the actual delimitation commenced. The straight line between Kuh-i-Malek Siah and Band-i-Sistan was marked out by pillars, the erection of which was no small matter. In some cases, water for the party as well as for the mixing of cement had to be carried a distance of twenty-five miles.

Our influence in Sistan has been augmented by the recent opening at Nasratabad of a branch of the Imperial Bank of Persia, and buildings are now in progress which I am informed bid fair to outdo the British Consulate in magnificence. The advent of a British bank was rapidly followed by that of the Russian rival, notwithstanding the fact that there is little local trade in Sistan, and certainly not enough to occupy two banks. The British Bank was established here largely at the request of the Government of India, who wished to do all in their power to encourage the Quetta-Nushki route, and I am glad to hear it is paying its way.

While increasing our political influence in Southern and South-Eastern Persia, our Government has not been neglecting commercial interests. The Commercial Intelligence Committee of the Board of Trade recently sent an expert—Mr. W. H. Maclean—to travel through Western Persia, and his report on British trade was published during the summer of last year. Since then, at the suggestion of the British Consul at Kerman, a commercial mission has left Bombay with a view to examining the

condition and prospects of trade in South-Eastern Persia and Baluchistan. It has been thought that these districts offer greater facilities for trade with India than with Great Britain. The Government of India thereupon addressed a letter to the Bombay Chamber of Commerce, suggesting that they should place themselves in communication with the Chambers of Commerce at Calcutta, Karachi and Cawnpore, and invite their co-operation, at the same time undertaking to grant the delegates a sum to be agreed on as representing the actual travelling expenses, including transport for each individual and a reasonable amount of baggage and camp equipment, as well as providing an escort.

But subsequently the Bombay Chamber of Commerce withdrew their delegates, two Parsee gentlemen, on the pretext they had been authorized to pay only the salaries of their delegates and the cost of samples collected, and intimated that unless the Government of India could guarantee every other expense, as well as the catering and the appointment of a responsible Government official as President, they would be obliged with regret to withdraw from the undertaking.

Finally the mission, under the presidency of Mr. Newcomen, and accompanied by a hospital assistant, a native consular agent, and an escort of six sowars, left Bombay for Bandar Abbas about the middle of October last, and proceeded from that port to the districts of Sirjan and Rafsinjan, and thence to Kerman. From here it was arranged that they should visit Bam, and leave the country by the Gishan Pass, Bampur, and one of the Baluchistan ports. A few weeks ago, however, news reached London from Calcutta that owing to the disturbed state of Persian Baluchistan, where the Sirdars are refusing to pay tribute and have fled to the hills, the mission thought it advisable to reach the coast viâ Shiraz and Bushire. This reported rising of the Baluchis, which I fear is all too probable, comes at a most unfortunate moment, and must interfere materially with the mission's scope for usefulness, for I gather one of its main objects was to open up trade

relations with the districts of Bampur and the Makran coast.

It is instructive to note with what jealous eyes Russia regards this purely commercial enterprise. She cannot lay claim to any trade relations with this part of Persia, which owing to its geographical position must necessarily rely for its commerce on sea-borne trade in which British interests are still paramount, notwithstanding the heavily subsidized Russian line which sends a periodical vessel into the Gulf; and therefore the hostile criticism of the Russian press serves to remind us again that Russia has already earmarked this territory as her own, and deeply resents any further British intrusion.

I have so far dealt with some of the more important events of the last two or three years in Eastern and Southern Persia, and have, I trust, shown that within this period events have followed one another in such rapid succession as to leave no doubt that our administrators realize the significance of the Persian Question, and that it would be well to be not unprepared when the moment arrives.

Not only does this appear to be the feeling in India—where under the capable rule of Lord Curzon, whose foreign policy is perhaps the strongest of his many strong points, we may rest assured the question will not be allowed to fall into abeyance—but also in London, where we have recently had a guarantee from the Foreign Secretary that any attempt on the part of a foreign Power to establish a naval base in the Persian Gulf will be regarded as an unfriendly act to be resisted by every means at our disposal. It will be noted, too, that this straightforward statement was followed the next cold weather by Lord Curzon's tour in the Gulf, as though he were setting the seal to Lord Lansdowne's policy. It would doubtless be immeasurably to our interests if Persia and Afghanistan could remain for ever in *statu quo*—that is to say, as buffer States between India and our neighbours in the North. But Persia is at this very moment undergoing the process of Painless Identification at the hands of Russia, whose advances surely cannot be fostered by the prospects of

increased trade with a bankrupt and poverty-stricken country; while from the westward another Power bids fair to push her way down through what might be made the phenomenally rich plains of Mesopotamia on to the shores of the Gulf. And this being the case, it cannot be many years before we find ourselves face to face with the railway problem. I cannot believe that railways will ever be constructed in Southern Persia as a purely commercial enterprise, but must be of a more or less strategic nature.

I cannot speak from personal experience of the routes leading from Ahwaz or Bushire into the interior. I believe they offer certain difficulties to the engineer, but from Bandar Abbas a route extends to the Iran plateau practically free from mountain ranges. It lies through Minab and over the Gishan Pass, and Regan can be reached at a distance of 275 miles, less than thirty of which could possibly be described as mountainous country. From Regan to Kerman, 170 miles, you could almost drive a coach and four. Regan would make a convenient junction whence a branch striking across the desert and following the course of the Indo-European telegraph-line would join a continuation of the Quetta-Nushki line somewhere in the region of Sistan.

At Kerman you are on the Iran plateau, and access to Teheran is easy. There is no doubt such a line as this would enable us to deal a severe blow to Russian trade over a great portion of Persia, for Manchester goods could then be put on the Teheran market at a cost for freightage of one-third to one-fourth that of Moscow goods.

But there is a much broader and more far-reaching aspect of the railway question which we shall find ourselves bound to consider.

Until the discovery of a sea-passage to India by way of the Cape of Good Hope, Persia lay on the highway of the nations. Since that time, however, the great caravan routes have fallen more and more into disuse, and the land has yielded her sway to the ocean. But we seem at the present moment to have arrived at an epoch when the question of recovering for the land a portion at least of her ancient

heritage is coming to the front. It is sometimes asked whether, in view of this possibility, we are altogether wise in trusting to our sea-power to safeguard our possessions on the land, and whether, in view of Russia's large extensions of railways in Northern Asia and consequent expansion, we are following a sound policy in withholding ourselves from a corresponding increase of railway communication in the South. And this naturally involves the great question of an overland route to India. I suppose there is nobody who would advocate such a scheme unless it were largely, if not entirely, under British control. A glance at the map of the middle East will show that such a line must pass between the shores of the Caspian and the Persian Gulf; therefore I think, in view of its possibility, it behoves us to watch very closely our interests, not only in the Gulf itself, but northward across those ranges that divide the littoral from the Iran plateau.

As a means of opening up a country, developing trade and industry, for rapidity of mail and passenger service, a railway stands supreme. But it has this serious disadvantage—its capacity is always limited; at times of extra pressure it is apt to become congested, while the occurrence of a flood or some similar contingency may contrive to render it entirely ineffective at times of great national requirement. But the sea tenders no such difficulties. There is no fear of congestion, but there exists an unlimited permanent way, and the cost of transport is infinitely cheaper. I cannot believe that an overland route to India would serve any material purpose beyond insuring a speedier delivery of the mails, and obliging at considerable discomfort the occasional traveller or official who is in a desperate hurry to reach his destination four or five days sooner than he otherwise could do. I am therefore led to the belief that as it is by sea-power that we have expanded in the past, so by sea-power we shall continue to maintain our Empire in the future, although by railway enterprise we shall be enabled to develop it.

With Russia the case is wholly different. Her vast territorial possessions must be maintained and developed

by railways. Still, she is ever seeking an outlet in a warm sea ; and though no one would grudge her this possession, we at least cannot allow her—it would be antagonistic to all our interests in the East—to descend with that object on to the Persian Gulf and establish there a second Port Arthur : for that is what it would inevitably mean. Yet this is exactly what Russia contemplates, in proof of which there is to be seen in St. Petersburg to-day a map published in Russia, showing a complete project for the opening up of Persia by a railway system destined to join on with the British lines in India by way of Afghanistan. She proposes to link up her territories with the cities of Persia by building the three following routes. One is an overland route from Baku to Resht and Teheran. Another, emanating from the present railhead at Erivan, on the Russo-Persian borders of Transcaucasia, will eventually work its way through Julfa, Tabriz, and Teheran, thence viâ Kashan, Ispahan, and Shiraz, until it emerges on to the Gulf at Bushire. Thirdly, Ashkabad in Transcaspia is to be linked up with Meshed ; and once Meshed is reached, the way lies open for an extension southward to Sistan, and thence, if needs be, to the shores of the Persian Gulf or the Indian Ocean. That would bring Russia on to the flank of our Indian position.

With regard to her schemes for the continuance of her railways through Afghanistan I will say little. We might, I suppose, take a leaf out of her own book by making a secret convention with the Amir, as Russia has done with the Shah, prohibiting the construction of railways within his territory for an indefinite period. The one at least would be as binding as the other.

It is one thing to sketch in proposed railway routes on a map ; it is quite another matter to carry out the project. And this brings me to the question, When are we to see the consummation of these schemes ?

Before we can attempt to solve this problem, we shall have to determine the value of more than one unknown factor. Russia is at present occupied with a disastrous war in the Far East. It appears that the one controlling

influence at St. Petersburg is his Imperial Majesty the Czar. It lies with him at any moment to declare peace or to carry on the war to indefinite lengths, and therefore on the state of his mind depends the condition in which Russia will emerge from the struggle. In the event of her losing all access to a warm sea in the Far East, the time will come when she will exert her energies in the direction of the Gulf or the Indian Ocean; but the intervening period can only be determined when it becomes known to what extent her resources have been strained by the exigences of the present struggle. It may be ten, or twenty, or even fifty, years before she finds a suitable opportunity for the realization of her desires. The war has staved off for the time being the instant of the Persian Question, but when it does come, I feel it will descend upon us with redoubled vehemence.

I cannot view with equanimity the possibility of a Russian port in the Gulf, and an envious rival slowly but surely strengthening and fortifying her position on the flank of our Indian Empire, in those very waters which we alone have policed for centuries, where we have exterminated piracy at great expenditure of British money and still more valuable British blood, and which we rightly regard for all time as a British sea.

DISCUSSION.

SIR EDWIN COLLEN : I had no intention of speaking this afternoon, but as I was a member of Lord Curzon's Government when the Persian Question was exhaustively debated, I should like to say that I agree with the lecturer in his view of the situation. The establishment of a strong Consular Service was one of the recommendations made, and, personally, I would go a step further and increase the actual number of Consuls now appointed. One point struck me in this connection, and that is that Russia supports her Consuls with considerable means. We do not always do so. With escorts of Cossacks and generous support local dignity is enhanced, and I believe it would be an advantage if we took a leaf out of Russia's book, and allowed larger escorts of Indian cavalry to be attached to British Consuls in Persia, although I am aware some sowars are detailed for this service. It would be easy to pick out men who would form an admirable escort and would be examples of proficiency ; they would also be able to procure intelligence, which is one of the functions of efficient Consular Service. I also consider that it would be well if consular affairs and diplomatic arrangements in Persia were transferred to the Government of India.

The lecturer remarked on the necessity for training and enlisting men for special Eastern Service. I agree with him that it would be better to train them for Persia than to appoint men with Western experience.

I endorse his opinion that Sistan must not be allowed to fall into the hands of Russia. It is on the flank of an advance to Kandahar, and any such occupation must be strongly opposed.

COLONEL YATE : In the first part of his paper Mr. Sykes referred at some length to the new Central Persian Telegraph. I agree with him that it has a salutary effect on lawlessness and brigandage. Linked up with Kuh-i-Malik Siah, it should help the trade route between Quetta and Kerman as well as that between Quetta and Meshed. There are good possibilities of trade along the Kerman route. The desert between Bam and Sistan has been described as difficult country, but Goldsmid found no difficulty in marching his Mission across, and the telegraph has found no difficulty either. In time to come I trust that a good opening for trade will be found in this direction.

As to the Consuls, I am in accord with the lecturer and Sir Edwin Collen, that they should be under the Government of India

instead of partly under the Foreign Office and partly under India, as they are at present. The training for Consular Service in Constantinople and the Levant is excellent, but it is not what is required for Persia, where Indian and other problems have to be dealt with. Shipping questions and Turkish, for instance, are mainly taught in Constantinople, but those are not needful in most parts of Persia. Let us have a regular Middle Eastern Consular Service emanating from the Indian Services.

Mr. Sykes made some remarks with regard to the attitude of Consuls in dealing with Belgian officials. I trust that the difficulties experienced by some of the British Consuls is now a thing of the past. He mentioned the Russian Consul in Sistan, and his efforts to drive out the British and British trade through the Belgian officials. I can testify to the truth of this, but I fully hope that this is a thing of the past, and that friendly feeling will always exist in future between the two local Consulates. The fault in this instance was certainly not due to the British Consul.

The lecturer mentioned, too, that the Commercial Mission to Persia has not been able to complete its journey according to the route planned, owing to the disturbed state of Persian Baluchistan. This is most unfortunate. Persian Baluchistan is part and parcel, so to speak, of our own Baluchistan and Mekran. It is the same country; the people are the same. Persian Baluchistan does not belong to Persia proper. It was seized by the Persian Government, and we allowed them to occupy a country which is not an integral part of Persia, and it is needful for us to keep a careful watch over it. Lawlessness in Persian Baluchistan reacts on British Mekran, where we have had trouble enough already.

Another important point mentioned by Mr. Sykes was the Bandar Abbas-Kerman railway line. He said that Regan could be reached at a distance of 275 miles, less than thirty of which could be described as mountainous country. Such a description is new to me; from what I have heard, I have been led to think that such a line was impossible. If such a line is possible within reasonable expenditure, it is a matter of great importance, which requires to be well considered.

Mr. Sykes dwelt on the advisability of a main route by sea, not by land. I entirely agree with him. It seems to me that but small advantage is to be gained by an overland railway from Europe to India. I cannot understand anyone choosing to travel by rail through a hot, dusty country for twelve days when a first-class P. and O. steamer is available. The railway, it is said, will shorten the journey; but steamers can be quickened, too. One day was saved in the last P. and O. contract, which comes to an end in three years. The voyage can be still further quickened under the

next contract, and there will be little differences in the time occupied by either way.

MR. LYNCH : I am sure we are all agreed that we have listened to a well-informed, comprehensive, and masterly paper. I should like to allude to one or two points. Mr. Sykes has qualified himself for writing the paper mainly by long residence and travel in the south-eastern provinces of Persia, and has come under the influence of the operations conducted by Lord Curzon. The Viceroy is putting into operation views formed by him as a traveller in Persia, and he has achieved remarkable results. But we must not forget—we should be slow here to forget—the man to whom we owe the breaking down of the barriers against British trade in Persia, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff. To him, as emissary of the Foreign Office, we mainly owe the various developments, the course of which you have followed through the paper this afternoon. This brings me to a point on which we do not all agree. The Central Asian Society, however, does not exist for entire agreement, but for debate and exchange of ideas. I disagree as to the advisability of placing the British Consular Service in Persia under the Indian Government. From my experience, I have not found that training in India is the best qualification for diplomatic office in Persia. I know of cases in which that training has been a barrier between the official and the people of Persia, with whom he is on different terms from the people of India.

The great question of Persia is not merely of interest to us as specialists ; it is of vital consequence to this country, for on the Persian borderland the battle for supremacy in Asia will ultimately be fought. We must focus opinion on that most dangerous point ; we must excite the interest of the British people and of the governing classes. We must bring home, not only to the people, but to the House of Commons, all the requirements of our position in Persia. The more British effort is directly brought to bear on that scene, the greater will be the effect. To have one portion of the Consular Service on the immediate borderland of India under the Government of India, and the other portion trained and directly controlled by the Foreign Office, seems to me the best solution.

We shall very soon be face to face with the renewal of Russian energies in Persia, and we must prepare for it. I only fear that the little we have done will seem as nothing compared with what Russia will do when she strikes.

The various steps taken by Great Britain in Persia have been met by corresponding steps taken by Russia—steps which have been more far-reaching. To know what the sequence of events has been, we must remember that the ball opened in 1898-1900. The

Persian Government, after the death of the late Shah, came to us for a loan of £2,000,000. We were to receive a great number of advantages. But we were engaged in the South African War and refused the loan. Since that time, when we failed to provide the money, the history of the dealings of Great Britain and Russia in Persia has been entirely in favour of Russia. You must prevent the present Government from repeating such a grave mistake. We, as travellers, administrators, or merchants, try to stem the Russian advance, but we have to depend on the support which you, the people of Great Britain, through the Foreign Office, can give to the Consuls on the spot.

What was the transaction? In 1900 we were offered interest on a small loan at the rate of 6 per cent. per annum, and, as security, a revenue far greater than was required to pay the service of the loan, namely, the Customs of the Gulf ports which are immediately under the noses of our ships. The Chancellor of the Exchequer refused the loan. On a security of 6 per cent. per annum, he would have borrowed at $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and pocketed the $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. increment in the interest of the British taxpayer. It was therefore excellent business as well as good politics to grant the loan. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach was the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time. He went down to address his constituents at Bristol, and told them that nobody thought of retrenchment. He drew a woeful picture—he had just resigned—of the demands made upon him day by day for more and more expenditure. After giving instances, he added that there were some people who wanted him to lend money to Persia, to guarantee railways in China, Mesopotamia, Persia, and elsewhere. It was not to be thought of.

From the date of that extraordinary blunder we lost our leverage in Persia. The Railway Convention debars you from building railways; there is only the Telegraph Convention, the agreement for which was signed before the question of the loan was under consideration.

As to the Belgian Customs officials, it might be said with justice that if the first blunder was the failure to grant the loan, the second was our adhesion to the tariff between Russia and Persia. It was open to Great Britain to say that Persia might frame a tariff, but that we, under the favoured nation clause, could not allow our trade to be treated worse than the trade of any other country. But why did we sign such an agreement? It was merely assisting Russia to damage British trade. This agreement is known as the Anglo-Persian Commercial Treaty of 1903, by which duties were enormously increased. On Manchester goods they went up 6 per cent.; on sugar $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; on tea 66 per cent.; on

opium 13 per cent.; on wheat 13½ per cent.; on barley 25 per cent. Not only this; articles of trade between Persia and Russia are subjected to much more lenient treatment. I am not going to argue that the taxes are paid by the foreign importer; I do not follow Mr. Chamberlain; they are not paid by the British merchant, but by the consumer, and the consequence is that the trade which Persia can do with this country is considerably narrowed.

We have heard something this afternoon in favour of the Belgian Customs officials. That they have introduced regularity, I concur. But they are instrumental in wringing out of the Persian peasant higher sums, and in so far they are a great evil. The capacity of the people to buy is diminished by these great exactions. They will revolt, and then there will be a great strain on the Belgian administration.

Now that there is a pause in Russian activity, there occurs the opportunity for making hay while the sun shines, and for so establishing our position in Persia that at no future date it may be imperilled by such manœuvres as I have described.

DR. COTTERELL TUPP: It appears to me that the whole tenor of the debate has been marked by an entirely exaggerated fear of the influence of Russia in Persia and elsewhere. I do not think that the speakers have sufficiently allowed for the absolute destruction of Russian political influence. We shall never again have to fear Russia as we have done during the past thirty or forty years. Do you believe that a country absorbed in internal revolution and defeated in a disastrous war can make any effort towards expansion and the increase of her influence? Her whole influence in Asia is destroyed. Where she has dominated and terrorized she has been disliked and hated, now she will be defied and opposed. I do not believe that Russia is able to injure us or impede our action in Persia. We must in future conduct our political schemes without the smallest regard to her power or wishes. The Russian bugbear which has threatened our power for fifty years is now at an end, and we can act as we please in Asia without dread of any European complications.

MR. J. D. REES: I should like to express the interest and pleasure I have felt in hearing Mr. Sykes' able paper. With regard to Russia, it seems to me that if she took a forward course international complications might ensue, and the Powers might intervene to maintain her in her present position. Her disasters will not render her a negligible quantity in Persia and elsewhere. I should like to ask the lecturer whether he can tell us anything of the effect on Persia of Russia's failure in the Far East? And on another point: I do not want to go into the legendary history of Rustum, but Mr. Risley,

in his learned treatise on the Indian census, thinks that the invasions of Aryans came across Seistan when the climate resembled that of the banks of the Helmund in the present day. Can he give us any information on the matter ?

Then as to the controlling influence of the Czar. I cannot regard him as other than the mere figure-head of the Romanoff family, and though he wields special influence, I think the extent of it is extremely problematical.

Sir Edwin Collen wished the British Consuls to have, in Persian parlance, the large lantern to light them on their way. I quite agree that an escort would give them dignity. Mr. Lynch doubts the propriety of appointing Indian officials as Consuls in Persia. He seems to hold the view of Indian officials that is usual in British politics, namely, that their influence is bad ; they represent force. I was told the other day that an ex-Indian official, a candidate for Parliament, was declared, in a company of Parliamentarians, to be 'an autocratic Indian who pretends to be a Radical.' Mr. Lynch evidently agrees with this view, and that it is better to have men who have been through the refining influence of the Foreign Office. I am bound to confess, I think, that there is a great deal to be said for the non-Indian, but there is room for both ; they may be valuable examples one to the other, and friendly rivalry can do no harm.

As to when Russia strikes : this cannot be within measurable distance, in view of her recent defeats. Too much has been made of the Russian bugbear. Russia is terrible in diplomacy, but not in arms. If she had originally been withstood when the Caucasus was in revolt at the time of the Crimean War, she would never have come across the Caucasus. Lord Lansdowne is doing so well at the Foreign Office that we may safely, I think, leave things to him. Mr. Lynch criticised severely, and with the authoritative knowledge with which he always speaks on Persian questions, the recent action of Britain towards the Persian Convention. I consider we could not have done otherwise. We may be hard hit. Yes, but we have always had the most favoured nation clause ; on paper we have it still. The Convention may have given advantages to Russian trade to the detriment of British, but the piece-goods people do not consider that they are seriously affected. I am bound to stand up for the Government, for I think they have hardly received fair treatment in the criticisms that have been made. True there is an enormous duty on tea, something approaching, in fact, what we ourselves charge the product of a British industry worked with British capital.

MR. PENTON : I should like to make one remark in connection with the lecture and the discussion, and that is that the Commercial

Mission to Persia has been called the Bombay Mission. That is a mistake. The mission was due to the Cawnpur Chamber of Commerce in its origin ; Bombay withdrew.

MR. SYKES, in his reply, said : I should like to thank you for the kind manner in which you have received my paper, and I wish to say a few words on several points raised in the debate. In preparing the paper I had the debate in view, and touched on a great many subjects in order to produce a good discussion, and here at least I think I have not failed. Sir Edwin Collen said it would be a good thing to give the Persian Consuls sowars as escorts. We do, in nearly every case ; they are taken from the Sikh cavalry. Kerman has six ; Meshed twelve ; Turbat-i-Haideri twenty-five ; Sistan nearly twenty-five ; only Bandar Abbas is without them. The list of Consuls has been increased during the last two or three years, and I have confidential information that the end of the extension has not yet been reached. Colonel Yate referred to the Quetta-Nushki trade route. I am glad to say that the latest reports are to the effect that within the last twelve months the trade has been doubled. This is largely due to the presence of Colonel McMahon in Sistan. Tea has diminished, but cottons have increased.

With reference to training in India for the Persian Consular Service, there are considerable difficulties. There is considerable difference between Persia and India as to the treatment of the Persians and the people of India. Unless Consuls recognise this important fact, endless difficulties may arise. In speaking to a Persian, one must be most careful to use exactly the right word for his station of life, and it is most necessary not to rub him up the wrong way by accident. I have not studied the question of the tariff very closely, but I believe that in practical working it has not proved so disastrous as was at first thought. The whole onus has fallen on the Persian peasant ; this is particularly hard, especially in the matter of tea. He can only buy the cheaper kinds, and the increase of duty on cheap teas is 95 per cent.

Then as to the question that, Russia being now engaged, we should take a more forward policy : I think that she will be engaged for some time, and that when disengaged she will not be in a position to do much in Persia. The Shah will want to come to Europe again ; he will be glad of some pocket-money, and we can perhaps find it for him. To press matters now would not be good policy. Russia poses as the only true friend of Persia. She could point to us and say : Here is England pressing you when we are engaged. It is all very well to disregard Russia's power ; the last year has shown that she is not so formidable an antagonist as we feared, but we must not go to sleep and say she never will be.

She works quietly and slowly; we hardly see any advance till, suddenly, it is brought home to us in an unpleasant manner.

With regard to the effect in Persia of Russia's defeats in the Far East, I must explain that I left Persia last April, when the war had been in progress only a few months. Crossing the desert between Sistan and Kerman, I was out of reach of the telegraph, and heard little of what was transpiring in the Far East. But I have heard lately that the effect in Persia is disastrous to Russia, and that she has lost much of her prestige.

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH: At this late hour I will not detain you long. I entirely agree with Mr. Lynch and other speakers that we have listened to a most masterly paper, which has led to a very interesting discussion. I should like to make just a few remarks upon one or two points on which I have special information. On one matter I do not quite agree with the lecturer, and that is with regard to the railway from Bandar Abbas to the Persian plateau. I do not know the source of his information, but from what I saw it would not be easy to construct the line, and this is also the opinion of the engineer officer who made a survey subsequent to my visit.

Long before her present difficulties Russia had closely examined Persia with regard to railway enterprise, and the more she looked at the country from this point of view, the less she liked it. It has been very different in Siberia. In Persia there would be immense expense and great difficulties. From her position Russia would be compelled to lay her lines from north to south, and she would thus come upon every geographical difficulty. I am aware that Russia has been thrown back by the disastrous war with Japan, but is there not the same condition of affairs on the Persian frontier? In one case she had to meet a well-prepared enemy; in the other she would have no enemy, no opposition, and it is quite likely that things would go on as before.

Colonel Yate alluded to the overland connection between Europe and India. In my opinion it must come, unless the world's general development goes backwards. I cannot see why the advantages which railways bring elsewhere should not occur in such a line of communication. Without considering travellers and freight, the acceleration of the mail service alone would be enough to decide the question. I am sure that I am only expressing the wishes of everyone present when I convey to the lecturer your thanks for his admirable paper and the useful discussion to which it has given rise.

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ENGLAND'S STRENGTH IN ASIA

BY

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH,
K.C.M.G., K.C.I.E., C.B.



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ENGLAND'S STRENGTH IN ASIA

It seems to me not altogether inappropriate that we should conclude the session of this Society with something of a general review of England's position as an Asiatic Power, and the possibility of any serious modification or change in that position which may be brought about by the march of those great events which are making history in the Far East. It is our endeavour that here, at least, should be recorded from time to time the opinions of those who have had the best and widest opportunities for observing the passing changes of Asiatic politics, absolutely independent of their local position in any Parliamentary arena, only giving at first-hand impressions and opinions which have been gathered, as far as possible, straight from free Asiatic fields. We are nothing here if not original observers, and it is just that quality of originality which gives this society such value as it possesses. I will not, therefore, apologize for offering you a few opinions, crude and imperfect though they may be, which can at least claim the merit of being based on personal observation.

I have always held the belief that England's strength in Asia is greater than that which the majority of Englishmen are disposed to admit, if we are to judge by Parliamentary utterances and military warnings. The general tendency is undoubtedly to depreciate our strength and the value of our local geographical position. It is somewhat curious that, whilst we pride ourselves on being level-headed people as a rule, we seem so often to miss the golden mean of appreciation which is the true criterion of level-headedness, falling into the double error of overconfidence at one time and a miserable want of it at another ; balancing our

military policy between foolhardiness and timidity. I need not recall historical examples to prove my point; I will only, and very shortly, draw your attention to a few of those factors in the Asiatic field of political contention which appear to me to be chiefly overlooked.

In the first place, what do we mean by strength? Strength may be political and moral, or it may be military and physical; it may depend on area or geographical position, on population or on wealth; and as all these conditions are more or less interdependent, acting and reacting on one another, we get a tolerably complicated problem before us, admitting undoubtedly of very wide divergences of opinion in detail, and too complicated to admit of our doing more than touching on a few broad principles this evening. Politically and morally, then, how does England stand in Asia? What is the value of English prestige relatively to other Asiatic Powers? Naturally it will not be admitted in Asia, beyond the geographical limits of our political influence, that we hold a paramount position. We need not expect it. Amongst Asiatic peoples political opinions are even more a matter of education than they are in Europe. The average Asiatic believes only what he is taught. He has no basis for independent opinion, unless some big war involves him in personal action and new lessons are impressed by physical force. Thus, comparative prestige becomes, under normal conditions, a question of geographical position.

Throughout India, to the borders of the Indian Empire, the 'izzat' of the 'Sarkar'—the prestige of the British Government—is undoubtedly supreme. Nothing short of a successful invasion of the peninsula would ever affect this conviction, which is born of educated observation, and is not exactly an expression of loyalty so much as a belief in the inevitable dispositions of Providence, which has arranged that England should rule Asia. It is important to note the distinction. People discuss the loyalty of the Indian native without clearly defining what is meant by the term. Personal loyalty there is, and it has its quality of reverence, almost of affection. Few English people, I

think, understand the sentiment with which our late Queen was regarded in India, and even beyond India. In Tibet Queen Victoria is an incarnation. She still lives there as a truly beneficent influence, albeit under an unpleasant form. In the utmost wilds of the Central India jungles I have been able to recognise the same sentiment. I doubt if the 'great white Queen' is dead to the famished women-kind of the Gond aborigines, who daily place their little swings of twigs and sticks by the wayside with a scanty offering of rice to propitiate the great mother (*mata*) who comes into their houses and carries away, gently and happily, the child who has died of small-pox; and the war-worn *sowar*, who can only remember, of all that he had seen in England, that the Queen spoke to him in Hindustani, and who would have given his life to serve her as cheerfully as any Japanese soldier for his Emperor, is only one of many such. There *is* personal loyalty in India, deep and strong, but there is beyond that loyalty a practical faith in the length and strength of England's arm, mingled with a light-hearted contempt for the might of other nations, which is not always shared by the Englishman.

If, on the other hand, we could transfer ourselves from India to Russia in Asia (it is inevitable that we should take Russia for comparison), we should find widespread exactly the same belief in Russian prestige, but not the same sentiment of personal loyalty. In Asia the Czar is hardly a human ideal. The sort of academic faith, unsupported by sentiment, which Russian methods propagate, is apt to be rudely shaken under stress of reverse and loss. I firmly believe that the fighting capacity of Russia's Asiatic soldiers has been largely discounted by the first successful blow struck by an Asiatic Power and the consequent loss of prestige. That they should fight on at all, and fight so well under a flag for which they never have had, and never could have, any affection now that its prestige has been so fatally damaged, is to me an unexpected thing, and one of which we may take due count when reckoning up the staying powers of our own Asiatic troops.

Turning to the intermediate buffer states lying between Russia and India—the frontier kingdoms of Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Persia, and Tibet—we may reckon that our prestige is exactly in proportion to the spread of our influence, and we cannot but expect that the native rulers of these states should live in a state of half-hearted expectancy, waiting upon events to determine their course of action under any given circumstances. It is of no use for us to pretend that we depend on the Shah, or the Amir, or on any discredited Grand Lama, for a whole-hearted alliance to us and our cause, nor even for much respect for political agreements and treaties, unless we make it clear that it is worth his while to back us, and for this we must depend on the maintenance of our prestige; and this prestige—our moral strength—will ultimately depend on the clear outward and visible evidence that we are physically strong. Not for an instant do I suppose that the minds of these frontier chiefs are to be influenced by the ephemeral political persuasions of this or that Viceroy. They will only listen to reason when reason is backed by sound artillery and the latest fashion of small arms; and in estimating the position of England in Asia from the point of view of her political influence and moral suasion, the trans-frontier borderland can only safely be considered as an indeterminate factor.

Whilst on this subject, we may ask, What will be the effect of Japan's crushing victories over her European foe on *British* prestige? Shall *we* suffer, as a European Power, as undoubtedly, in a much larger degree, Russia will suffer? Will our frontier and trans-frontier allies turn to us with greater confidence, or will they think that they, too, may emulate Japanese success hereafter by adopting Japanese methods? Of the effects so far as Russia is concerned there can be no doubt at all; but the Afghan or Baluch chief will certainly appraise the position more clearly than we do, and will not miss the point (so frequently ignored in England) that the Russian army is Asiatic rather than European, and that the fight is largely a fight between Mohammedan and infidel, in which the members

of the true faith are distinctly coming off second best. My own impression is that the result of the war will lead to but little change in trans-frontier sentiment. The bigoted Afghan prefers the Christian, with his alien faith and his incomprehensible politics (but whom he can respect, sharing the Old Testament with him, and giving him credit for a real if a misguided belief in the greatness of Allah), to the yellow infidel, who has no belief at all, and with whom he has absolutely nothing in common. He will hate the Jap as he hates the Gurkha or the Sikh, to whom he accords a shorter shrift in the hour of trial than he ever deals out to the European. It is well to remember that race antagonism is far more bitter between Asiatic nationalities than between the Asiatic and the European. Were it not so, we should not be in India now. I doubt much whether a definite alliance with Japan will raise us much in the estimation of our frontier neighbours, although, as soldiers by heredity and right, they will marvel at the military capacity shown by this new and incomprehensible Asiatic Power, and will fully appreciate the astuteness of those who have made good use of it to fight their battles for them. Knowing something of the limits of Afghan perception, I consider it inevitable that they should regard us as immensely clever, but not over-conscientious as allies.

The larger question of how far the qualities of loyalty and faith in our prestige make material for cohesion, and their influence on our military strength, we will for a moment defer.

It will be conceded that our moral prestige and our military strength are largely interdependent, and when we come to this point we may as well accept the necessity of reckoning up our military strength, and of comparing our resources with those of our only serious rival in Asia. And we will, if you please, ignore the possibility of a combination of purely Asiatic Powers against us as too remote a contingency to be usefully considered now.

It has always been a surprise to me that there should be men of light and leading in this country who, to judge

by their utterances or their writings, are actually afraid of Russia—afraid that, with her vast resources in men and money, and the development of her railway system to the borders of Afghanistan, she can thereby peril our security in India by a general advance across the Oxus. We will, for the purpose of estimating our comparative strength, set aside the results of the present war with Japan, treating them as a passing rather than a permanent influence on Russian capacity for further military action in Asia, although it appears to me that there are ample reasons for assuming that many a long year will pass ere she will again be in a position to assume an offensive attitude on a large scale. We are dealing with the question of our own strength in Asia, and as it is impossible to treat such a question from the purely abstract rather than the relative point of view, we must take it for granted that the statements of these military experts to whom we are so often called to listen (but who have for the most part but a theoretical basis for their assumptions) are true.

We will suppose that Russia is in a position to distribute a force of 500,000 men at the termini of her Central Asian railway system on the Herat frontier and on the banks of the Oxus facing Afghan Turkestan, and that she could, if she so pleased, occupy the great plains which constitute Afghan Turkestan to the south of the Oxus and to the north of the mountains which extend from the Hindu Kush to the Persian frontier without serious difficulty. Under normal conditions such a supposition is certainly not unjustifiable, although, in my opinion, it requires considerable modification. It is only wise, however, to accept it in full in estimating the balance of power and formulating our own position in India. The possibility of facing such a condition is our criterion of strength or weakness. Now what constitutes military strength apart from moral prestige? Geographical position, in the first place; the sinews of war—men and money—in the second; fighting capacity in the third. At any rate, we shall have no time to go further than this into the question to-day. It has often appeared to me a marvellous circumstance that

England, protected as she is by sea from foreign invasions, should have secured to herself so much of the world's surface almost equally well protected by geographical barriers, a fact which really goes much further to account for the British Empire than is at first sight perceptible. India, with her long-extended land border, is a notable instance of this remarkable feature of protective geography. There is no borderland in the world like that of India. The Alps and the Andes are as nothing compared to the gigantic Asiatic upheavals which, in bands and battalions of serried mountain ranges and desolate, wind-swept plateau, divide off the Indian peninsula from the steppes and plains of Central Asia. From China and Tibet on the east through the Pamir uplands to Kashmir, the geographical wall, or series of walls, is so complete that not even in the remote historic periods of human history can we trace any record of a successful passing southwards of those Asiatic hordes who, unopposed, were constantly seeking more favoured climes and everlastingly beating at the golden gates of Ind.

If any people would have successfully carried their arms through that mountain band into India it would have been the Chinese. And they did succeed in getting farther than any other people, but they never really broke the back of the Himalayas. Nothing yet has occurred in the process of the world's development to make that task any easier. Railways and roads may effect much elsewhere, but railways and roads across the Himalayan ranges (anywhere, in short, to the east of Kabul in Afghanistan) would, I think, be almost impossible, even under conditions of absolute peace and security, and with the goodwill of the people on both sides pressed into their construction. From the Himalayas we pass to the much-discussed Hindu Kush, and here we encounter a weak link in our line of geographical protection. We know perfectly well that from the days of Alexander to those of the Moghul, the Hindu Kush has been crossed north of Kabul, Kabul itself reduced, and India invaded time after time. Kabul, indeed, is the historic gate to India. But through all these rather misty records, can we

find any trace of an organized defence of those natural barriers which form the real bulwark of the Kabul plains? I know of none. I am aware that this is a much-discussed link in our geographical barrier of Northern India, but I can only give you my personal opinion, from a fairly close and practical acquaintance with that memorable country, that the occupation of Kabul as a base for further advance on India can only be achieved again if we are kind enough to sit still and allow of its accomplishment without serious interference. And so we may proceed round the circle westward, finding no convenient crack in the geographical armour of our northern defence works till we come to the valley of Herat.

For the benefit of those who are not well acquainted with the map of India, I must explain that this mountain barrier which we have been following round from the Chinese frontier is to the south of Afghan Turkestan, which lies between it and the Oxus River. It affords no protection whatever to these Oxus plains which we have assumed, just for the sake of argument, to be at the mercy of Russia. It is not until we reach Herat that we come to a real open way—the true line of least resistance between Central Asia and India. Here, for the first time, our geographical dispositions for defence fail us, and we cannot but recognise that from Herat southward to Kandahar or to Sistan, on the western flank of Baluchistan, we have a possible line of approach to India, which requires all our attention and all our resources to close. Personally, I do not believe in any serious threat to our borders from any other point but this; for it is here and here only that men can be successfully massed in large numbers, and the issue fought out on the open plains. It is Herat and Kandahar and Sistan and Quetta which call for armies and oblige us to reckon up our resources in men lest perchance we should be found wanting when the time should come to exhibit our strength.

Nature, then, has so arranged her geographical distributions of mountain and plain that we may look on India as we look on our own country as most exceptionally favoured

for defence against outside aggression. But we must not lose sight of the weak points of our position. Were there no weak points we might sit still comfortably and pursue the policy of masterly inaction. But we are faced with the fact that there is a comparatively open way (it is not an easy way) in Western Afghanistan, or in Eastern Persia, which requires more than watching. It requires the distribution of proper scientific means of defence and the maintenance of an army to make use of the means. There is no possibility of shirking this point. We must have an army in India, and it must be an army fully equal to any that can be brought against it. Anything short of this is to invite attack. Let me guard against misconception. I have already stated that, in my opinion, the valley of Herat and the broad plains of Balkh—all that constitutes Afghan Turkestan in short—is practically at the mercy of Russia as things stand. But we are, perhaps, a little too much in a hurry to undervalue the capacity of the Afghan for holding his own, just as we undoubtedly undervalued the Japanese. Afghan material in fighting-men is splendid material. I can imagine none better. Man for man, the Afghan is fully a match for the frontier tribesman whom Russia puts into the field against him. But we do not know what his present value in the aggregate as a fighting machine may be. Twenty years ago he was not able to hold his own against properly-led troops for a day. He had no leading and no confidence in his officers; two essential qualifications for success. He may have improved since those days—probably has improved; but all the same I should doubt whether the military system of Afghanistan has done more yet than make him a most valuable auxiliary for irregular mountain warfare. He could not stand against properly manœuvred battalions in the plains in spite of his personal courage. Of this, however, we may be sure. The occupation of these northern provinces would take time—a considerable time—and the necessary construction of railways and supporting lines of communication (without which the advance of a large force southwards would be impossible) would all be so much advertisement of

further proceedings, and give us breathing space to prepare for them.

We may turn now to the question of England's strength in men and money to meet any emergency, likely or unlikely—for I insist that we cannot wait till the emergency is probable—that may call for its exhibition.

We are in the habit of talking a little wildly about Russia's millions as if millions of men meant overwhelming strength. If millions of men are scattered over millions of square miles of territory, with thousands of miles of frontier to look after, they do not, after all, loom large in any one section of it; and under any circumstances these millions are dependent on population. There must be a definite limit. It is, then, to the purpose to recall to your minds the fact that Russia, all told, can only muster about 150,000,000 of people. We have very nearly double that number (290,000,000) in India alone, and it is with India that we are just now concerned. Mere numbers, however, may mean very little. It is quite true that of our 290,000,000 a very large proportion are people of unwarlike races, who could hardly be guaranteed for purposes of soldiering, but we must remember that exactly the same may be said of Russia as a whole. In all large communities the proportion of the warrior caste must be comparatively small. Japan is no exception to the rule. We are not all warriors even in England. If we reckon up the population of those districts in India to which we are accustomed to look for our recruits; if we take into account the varied Mohammedan tribes of the long North-western Frontier, the Mohammedan of the Punjab and Hyderabad, the Sikhs of the plains, and the Gurkhas and Dogras of the hills, to say nothing of the Rajputs and the fighting races (and some of those of Madras may well take their place in the list)—that is to say, the people amongst whom fighting is a tradition and the military profession an hereditary right—we shall find at least 50,000,000 from whom we can draw our soldiers without indenting in the Bengali or the Parsee shopkeeper, or even the Hindu agriculturist, although it is from the latter class that some of the best of our

soldiers have been made. The proportion of natural fighting material in India is at least double that of Russia, look at it how you will, and yet we talk as if we could not make an army for want of men to make it with! What, then, is the difficulty? It will be said that, although we have the numbers, regarded as a raw product, we have not the means of inducing the necessary numbers to join the ranks, and consequently we have not a trained and disciplined army, even if we have the money wherewith to maintain it. This entirely depends on whether we limit ourselves to our present methods of inducement, our present ideas of military efficiency, and our old world standards. We may be disinclined to adopt Russian methods, we may discard the idea of compulsory service, we may still believe that an efficient soldier must measure a certain number of inches in girth and in height; but if we do this, I would point out that we are imposing our own artificial limits on our military strength. I maintain that the strength is all there, only we cannot persuade ourselves to utilize it as others do. For my own part, I do not believe that any form of compulsory service would be found necessary in the particular case which we are considering. A call to arms to meet a foreign invader would be responded to almost with enthusiasm. Should, indeed, any temporary measure of conscription become necessary under such circumstances, it would be received by the Asiatic in quite a different spirit to that accorded by the Englishman.

A war with Russia would be a popular war with the native soldier. To a great majority of the best of our Indian troops, it would be but the realization of their military ambition. It is a constant theme of conversation amongst them, and not only in India but even beyond the borders. The spirit which animated a newly-recruited battalion of Gurkhas, who not long ago went off disgusted to their homes when they found that they were not at once to be led against Russia, is the spirit of a great part of the Indian army in a greater or lesser degree. *We* may profess to be afraid of Russia. *They* are not. Like the Japanese Minister to whom it was suggested that there were many

points of similarity between England and Japan, they would say that fear of Russia is the only thing they are not prepared to share with us. It is at least within our power to insure that long before Russia had placed herself in a position to seriously threaten our borders we should possess an Indian army numerically quite equal to any that we should be asked to meet. Again, we shall hear that an army so constructed would have no military training comparable to that which it would have to meet, that we cannot fashion a soldier out of raw material in a day, and that an armed mob would be the result of a hastily-raised force. There is doubtless much to consider in such a suggestion ; but I am inclined to think that here again we must revise our ideas as to what constitutes military efficiency under the special geographical conditions with which we have to deal.

The lesson of our latest frontier war in Tirah was that 10,000 (even less, I believe, and I had special facilities for estimating their numbers) well-armed mountaineers, such as the Afridis, could keep four times their number of regulars quite sufficiently at arm's-length for an almost indefinite period even without scientific leading or strategic organization.

The lesson we ought to take to heart from the present war is even more to the purpose. Does anyone suppose that Japan has held a standing army of drilled and disciplined soldiers for years past—500,000, or, say, 700,000 men—in readiness for the present contingency? What she has had is a system of universal, or national, military training, tempered by selection of the fittest. This is very different from a standing army. The vast majority of her soldiers are but trained civilians, and it is this sort of training which might be applied with effect on our Indian frontier. Where we in England take two years to turn out a reputable cavalry trooper, a few months are sufficient in a country—like Argentina, for instance—where men learn to ride from their youth. The truth is that the methods, and the length of time, required for fashioning a suitable fighting force depends entirely upon circumstances,

and circumstances in mountainous Asia point to the attainment of efficiency by the process of selecting the quality of the material, and preparing it for special action, rather than by maintaining a large force all strictly turned out to the same pattern. The question of a large European force to fight a quasi-European foe is apropos to this consideration. To my mind this has always appeared to be a matter of sentiment rather than practical necessity. As a necessity it almost seems to imply a mistrust of Indian troops which I consider to be absolutely misplaced. This is not the time to enlarge on such a theme, but let me say once for all that I trust that all the silly nonsense which is sometimes talked about stiffening the native army with English bayonets is a thing of the past. British troops, invaluable as they are, and invincible as we believe them to be under conditions which suit them, should not be wasted when they are apt to be ineffective from physical causes. They are not, and they never will be, good mountaineers, for instance.

I fear that I am drifting too far into military considerations, but while on the subject of our military strength, I must just put in a word for our Asiatic allies. What could Afghanistan do in case of invasion? You may take it as absolutely certain that Afghanistan would declare against the first invader who violated the Afghan border, no matter who the invader may be. It is a great mistake (one that might cost us dearly) to underestimate the strength of Afghanistan, or to undervalue the splendid fighting materials which that country possesses. At a very moderate computation the Amir could put 100,000 men of all arms into the field, including excellent light infantry and artillery for mountain work, besides a fair contingent of serviceable, if irregular, cavalry—cavalry, that is to say, better mounted and equipped than the average Cossack, but not so amenable to discipline. But Afghan troops, however excellent the raw material may be, want discipline and leading, and that they can only get by the importation of instruction from outside. That they will get it is certain—Afghanistan is not standing still; but time will

be necessary for the adoption of any new system in a country like Afghanistan, and meanwhile Afghan military efficiency is at a discount. Eventually Afghanistan may admit of European instruction, and we know that the young British officer is unmatched in all the world for his capacity to turn native raw material into good fighting stuff. Here, unfortunately, is a possible weak link in England's chain of defensive armour. Where are the young officers to come from? That unlimited supply which appeared a few years ago to be inexhaustible shows symptoms of running short. There is an unfortunate spirit of unrest, which is ominous of a difficulty in filling up vacancies as they occur. Indeed, there are not wanting signs that it is in the ranks of the officers rather than in those of the men that the real shortage is to be feared. Let us hope that this will pass, and that some means will be found of making the best of all our excellent voluntary material without necessarily exacting a universal standard of ability as the one great criterion of efficiency.

As for our intra-peninsular allies, the rulers of the native states of India, we ought to know their sentiments and aspirations by this time. The one prominent feature in their policy lately has been the readiness of a great majority of them to give us all the assistance they can in time of trouble. I do not mean to say that they altogether love us, or that they love British rule, but they are wise enough, educated, and enlightened enough, to know when they are well off, and to see that no other rule at present is possible. They are no longer an ignorant and impulsive race of irresponsible rulers. To suppose that they would willingly exchange British rule for Russian, after what they have seen lately of the latter, is simply an absurdity. We should certainly have their backing, and such assistance as they could render if we wanted it—at any rate, until we muddled ourselves into a disastrous mess—which Heaven forbid! Into such a question as the nature and extent of such assistance I have no time to enter. I have, I trust, proved my point that as regards numbers we are essentially strong in Asia, and I hope I have made my opinion clear that in

the matter of military efficiency of these numbers, we have absolutely nothing to fear if, without maintaining an enormous standing army, we carefully watch the signs of the times and know beforehand how and where to make our demands with the certainty of a satisfactory response. This is purely a question of military administration which we need not pursue further.

But there is another factor in the strength of a nation which will have occurred to you all. It is, perhaps, the most important of all. We have seen a comparatively small and a peace-loving people (unmilitary according to their own showing), a people devoted to the acts and graces of social life, suddenly rise to a military pre-eminence after a fashion which has almost no parallel in the world's history—certainly none in modern history. These makers of fans and lovers of flowers, conscientious artists in ivory carvings, and enthusiastic workers in the potter's field—a small people, who would pass no tests for physical measurement in height or girth—what is it that has made them great as a fighting nation? Religious enthusiasm, the symbol of the cross, or the banner of Islam has accounted for much in the military annals of the world. It is not that—there is no spirit of fanaticism in Japan. The mad lust for conquest and greed for loot has sent many a scourging army across Asia. It is not that; there is no bloodthirstiness, no greed in Japan. Perhaps we know what it is without being able to define it. The encircling bonds of pure-hearted patriotism, the spirit of self-sacrificing devotion to country, the sentiments, the passion, aroused by endangered nationality and of outraged independence, stirring the man as it stirs the heart of the individual, sinking the individual in the mass and amalgamating the whole—all that we know, in fact, of patriotism in the truest and highest sense of the word—this is at the bottom of their efficiency, the very bed-rock of the whole structure of their irresistible military strength. Are we then strong in Asia as Japan is strong? Have we combined all the varied elements of Indian nationality into one homogeneous whole, with one faith in their rulers and one impelling spirit of

patriotism to move them? It would be ridiculous to maintain that we have done so. We have not even shown them what it means. Is the spirit of patriotism so freely abroad in this country that we can point a moral and call for imitation? Where do we find it? In those unseemly exhibitions of party faction which disgrace parliamentary procedure? In trades unions and strikes for less work and more pay? In the countless resignations of army commissions which are sent in because more is demanded of an officer in the way of professional capacity than he is disposed to accede? I fear that we are not such brilliant examples at home of the living principle of patriotism that we can pose as a fine moral example to the East. And yet we all know, all of us here, that, weak as our power of national expression may be, and lamentably deficient as is its appearance in the councils of the Empire, it is there all the same; and it is the very knowledge of its existence, deep-seated and unimperilled by the storm of party faction, that renders us all so careless about its appearance on the surface. Any national peril at once reveals it, as did the Boer War; but under the ordinary routine of the country's daily life it is difficult sometimes to detect. It is not our national characteristic to wave our flag and to call attention to our assets of loyalty and patriotism. We think we can take all that for granted, and that it matters not what others think about it. I believe this to be absolutely wrong. It matters very much what the Indian native thinks about it. Remember that he can only judge by appearances. I particularly dwell on this point, for I believe it to be at the very root of the question of our strength in Asia. It is the basis of the strength of Japan beyond all contradiction. It ought to be so with us. Do we take the least trouble to inculcate the principles of patriotism *ab initio* in our elementary schools, either in England or in India?

Do we ever attempt to hold together the infinitely varied units of which we are destined to constitute a powerful and Imperial nationality by the strong and binding force of education? A child is always a little patriot at heart. Teach him to love the sight of his country's flag, to sing

patriotic hymns from his earliest beginnings, and you will have that which you find in the South American republics—a strong and intense fervour of patriotism developed for each separate state, although the original and varied stock from which all these patriots are derived may be essentially the same in all states. If you want a child to become a British patriot, teach him to love the British flag. If you want him to love England, appeal to his imagination, teach him something of the romances of England's patron saint, St. George, and let him know the English flag when he sees it. It is in this connection that I regard all these new societies, lately formed for the preservation of Imperial unity, as most essentially useful. The pity is that they usually deal with old, sundried, and unimpressionable people instead of with the enthusiastic natures of the young. We must shake off something of our hard, practical, armour-clad methods, and learn again that sentiment, sheer sentiment and idealism, have been at the root of all victorious feats of arms from the days of Helen of Troy until the spirits of Japanese ancestors looked down on the victory of the Sea of Japan. What I have said of English education is doubly true of India. In all the broadcast elementary schools which are scattered through that land of sentiment, I have never once seen an Imperial symbol—never once heard a loyal hymn from the lips of Indian children. Nevertheless, when all is said, I maintain that there *is* loyalty in India, and there is belief in British prestige. There is not half the loyalty there might be, but such as it is, it places us in a position of distinct superiority to Russia, and makes us comparatively strong.

As to what would happen if Russia made a serious move towards India by the invasion of Afghanistan, I have little now to say, though I think I have formulated clear notions (to myself, at least) of what would actually happen. Only one point must be impressed on you to-night—*i.e.*, that the first move must meet with a response. We cannot sit still and wait upon events, however convenient it may be to do so. A waiting policy is never a winning policy in the East. We must act, and we must know well before-

hand what that action is to be under given circumstances. We must act, not because—as some advisers seem inclined to affirm—not because we are afraid of unrest and disaffection, and perhaps of a rising in India, the instant we are threatened on our remote borderland, for there would be no rising. For that matter, there never has been a rising of the Indian masses. Not even in the dark days of the Mutiny did the people rise (as they are rising in Russia, for instance), or we should not be in India now. Not, surely, because we are afraid of another mutiny amongst our troops?

For reasons into which I cannot enter here, such a disgrace would be practically impossible. To me the idea that Indian troops would become unsteady in face of the one eventuality for which they have lived their lives and learned their work is not merely an absurdity—it is a criminal absurdity; for it means that we do not believe in our Indian army, and if we do not believe in them, how are we to expect that they will believe in us? In the event of a war with Russia, we should be asking Mohammedan troops to assist a Mohammedan nation (Afghanistan) to repel a foreign invader. Where does the incentive for disobedience come in? I fail to see it. It is a ridiculous and pernicious suggestion. Let us say no more about it. We should have to act because there would be a wave of indignation against us throughout the country whose interests we have undertaken to protect, if we did not help them.

I have been told that the Afghan would view with horror the approach of British troops marching to his assistance in his country, foreseeing that ultimate division of it between England and Russia which would destroy for ever his national dependence. I have only time to protest against what I conceive to be a total misapprehension of the position. To begin with, the Afghan knows well enough by this time that we don't wish, and don't mean, to burden ourselves with his country if we can help it. He knows nothing of the sort about Russia. But what he expects at all costs is that a professed ally should be true

to his engagements and help him with the material help of his troops and his guns. If you do not believe it, remember, at least, what I have seen. I have seen the Afghan bitterly, dangerously, disgusted because we did not help him at Panjdeh; and, in spite of that most melancholy failure, I have seen him turn out in thousands to sweep away his own villages, clear out broadcast his own cemeteries, destroy his own hallowed mosques, break down his cherished religious symbols—all at the bidding of English engineers—for the purpose of confronting a Russian foe and with the enthusiastic hope of ultimate support from a British escort. I have held council with Afghan generals as to what they could do in combination with British troops to hold their own against a Russian advance. With a force behind them of the most fanatical of all Afghan tribesmen (Duranis chiefly), they decided at once, not only that we could work together with right goodwill, but that they were confident and hopeful of a successful issue, provided we English engineers directed the defence of Herat. What more do you want? You need not ask me to believe, after that, that the Afghan would resent our assistance. I ask you to believe that he would be dangerously indignant if we did not offer it. The danger would be that he would give us up as hopeless, and finally combine with Russia.

The question of *what* we should do is another story altogether, into which we cannot possibly enter. I have indicated briefly that which I consider the weak line of resistance in our defence, and I can do no more here and now; but just that brief indication should be enough to convince you that I am no advocate for a policy of unpreparedness, a drifting policy of letting things slide. I *know* that we have a weak side to our armour; I have had the opportunity of seeing it from every possible point of view, and, knowing it, I know also that it is essential that we should strengthen it by all available means, keeping our stout little frontier army up with full strength in men and material, improving our defensive works by all scientific methods, employing nothing but the latest and best of offensive

weapons, and preserving a wise counsel of thorough understanding with our frontier allies as to where and how we shall strike if the time ever comes to strike. Above all must we foster those germs of loyalty and patriotism which undoubtedly exist in India. What I deprecate so strongly is the notion that we are weak in Asia ; that we have anything to be afraid of ; that we must maintain a huge and costly army like the army of Russia ; that we want masses of European troops to enable us to hold our own ; and that we shall have no unity of action, no support from those who have everything to gain by supporting us and everything to lose by our discomfiture, an idea which to me is as preposterous as it is mischievous. But, when all is said, I can only conclude as I began by expressing my conviction that it will be long yet ere we are called on for decisive action. I may be wrong, but I cannot believe in the mad-dog policy on the part of Russia of courting further disaster under the most unfavourable conditions by striking at India because she has been defeated by Japan. I have too much faith in Russia still to believe it. Yet we must be prepared, because readiness for action is our best security for peace.

Once again I would like to refer to the brighter alternative which our undoubted strength in Asia at present and Russia's disasters seem faintly to point—the alternative of a good understanding with her ; of the realization of an agreement which shall be of mutual benefit to us both ; the linking up of railway systems which will promote international commerce (which, at the worst, will give her no more facility for approaching India than it will give us for preventing such an approach), and will at once outflank all the complications of Afghan and Persian policy ; complete understanding with those countries, too, based on mutual commercial interest, and that security for peace and relief from the everlasting burden of nervousness about India which can only be obtained by the development of such interests—all of which we are told is quite outside the pale of practical politics. It may be so, but I am not convinced. Already I think I see in the Far East a faint white light

betokening the dawn of a brighter day—a day of which the coming has been heralded by the extraordinary success of a powerful and self-contained ally—a success which creates a new era in the world's history, and must inevitably lead to a total redistribution in the balance of political power in Asia.

DISCUSSION.

SIR ALFRED LYALL: I have listened with great pleasure and profit to the excellent lecture which Sir Thomas Holdich has given to us, and in expressing my appreciation of his kindness I should like to say a few words. I entirely agree with his views with regard to the only vulnerable frontier of India, and I consider that he has properly and fairly represented the strength of England in Asia to meet any possible emergency that may arise. His lecture has served to clear our heads and strengthen our hearts in case of danger. If the time should come—I hope it may never come—when England and Russia have to fight for the debatable land of Central Asia, England will be able to give a good account of herself. With her base on the sea and her resources for recruiting her army from all parts of the British Empire, she has nothing to fear from Russia.

I have always believed, and all who really know believe, that our real frontier in Asia is the boundary of Afghanistan. We are pledged to defend Afghanistan, and it is vital to us to keep a foreign enemy out of the Amir's country. Looking back over all history, we find that every invader who has penetrated with success into India was obliged to secure a solid basis of operations in Afghanistan. It was the case with Alexander the Great. As soon as he was in India difficulties arose on his rear, and he was obliged to go back and settle the marauding tribes. Perhaps one reason which led to his determination to return home by sea was the difficulty he was likely to experience as to communications, supplies, and resources, through the mountainous tribes to the west of India. The Moghul Baber could do nothing—and he made five invasions—until he was sure of Afghanistan. As soon as he lost Afghanistan he lost India. When Nadir Shah came down on India he first wrested the province of Afghanistan. A consideration of the historical, geographical, and military aspects of the case shows that it is essential and vital for our strategy to maintain the military command of Afghanistan, because those who hold Afghanistan hold the only gate of access by land to India.

I wish Sir Thomas Holdich had had time to give us more particulars of those parts and places of which he has a more intimate knowledge than any living Englishman, and regret that he has not dealt more fully with the borderland question on which he is so

capable an authority. But we are exceedingly grateful for what he has done. He has certainly reassured us on several important points, and I sincerely share the hope he expressed in concluding his lecture that eventually a mutual understanding will be reached between England and Russia in Asia.

MR. J. D. REES: It is comforting to those of us who have thought that the Russian spectre with regard to India has been greatly exaggerated to find that two such authorities as Sir Thomas Holdich and Sir Alfred Lyall share this belief. I should like also to express my conviction of the truth of Sir Thomas's remarks about the native troops in the Indian army. If we have no confidence in them, they will have none in us or in themselves. The only remark I feel impelled to make which in any way approaches criticism of the excellent lecture to which we have listened is the statement that though the Asiatic knows no argument but force yet—(the same remark used to be made of the Tories in England)—yet England would not gain prestige in the Far East by closer alliance with Japan. But if the description of the Asiatic be, as it is, correct, would not the British position in the East be improved by the alliance with Japan? Sir Thomas was doubtful whether the Anglo-Japanese alliance would raise us much in the estimation of our friendly neighbours. But having seen the Japanese strike down the Russian, the Afghan must have been impressed by the prowess of Japan. There seems to me to be a slight discrepancy between the two statements. I should have thought that a closer alliance with Japan would have led to an increase of our prestige. We all believe that Russia's career has been checked by recent events in the Far East, but it is equally true that Russia has still the power to make things very unpleasant for us. She may not be able to consider the possibility of an aggressive movement against India, but she may make feints, and compel us to pour out money. India's condition is not such that she can pour out millions to further strengthen the strong frontier of Nature. A war with Russia may be popular with the best of the Indian troops, as Sir Thomas observed, but no war could be popular with the masses of the Indian people. They would not comprehend the position, nor would they be interested. Long ago they looked on, but continued to plough, while contending armies fought for the privilege of taxing them; and it would be the same to-day. Outside the army there is complete indifference, as was shown in the days of the Mutiny. When their own people were fighting the foreigner, they treated English refugees kindly.

The sudden and glorious uprising of Japan has caused an astonishment in the Western world which has been accentuated in England

by theatrical reminiscences. But those who knew Japan were fully aware of her proud chivalry, and of the patriotic spirit which animated her soldiers. The inculcation of patriotism begins with the children. Every Japanese child is fed on the forty-seven Ronin; and taught the practice of self-sacrifice. If we had not been led away by *The Mikado*, *The Geisha*, and other scenic representations of Japan, we should not have been so astonished to find that the comic opera did not represent actual life in those distant islands.

As to the loyalty to Britain of the Indian people, I agree; but it must be remembered that millions of them only see one Englishman, and they cannot be expected to cherish the loyalty of races who are ruled by their own people. They are loyal to us as good governors, but I do not consider, though I should like to think it, that in the lump they are personally animated by an affectionate feeling for ourselves. One word more. When the understanding with Russia comes to pass, we must not forget the record of Russia in past understandings, and it will be well to keep our powder dry.

COLONEL YATE: Sir Thomas Holdich has touched upon many points in his admirable lecture, and it is impossible to discuss them all fully now. The principal point, however, is Russia's main road of advance to India by Herat and Kandahar. I may mention that Afghans, high and low, firmly believe an ancient tradition, which declares that a tremendous battle will one day take place on the great plain of Bakwa to the west of Kandahar. This plain is covered with grass, and is at present inhabited by a nomad population. There is plenty of forage. At the end of the fight it is said that 12,000 riderless horses will be galloping about the plain. I have tried to get at the origin of the tradition. It is said to be in writing, and I have given the author's name in my book on Khurasan and Seistan, but his writings are only in manuscript, and I was never able to obtain a copy. The author did not name the combatants in the great fight, but the Afghans have taken the prophecy as applying to Russia and England, and look forward to the day when the supremacy of Asia is to be decided on this Bakwa plain. As to the question of railways, there is no doubt that Russia will build railways, extending her present lines in Central Asia. This brings us to Mr. Balfour's memorable speech in which he recommended that the country should take its stand on the prohibition of railway construction by Russia in Afghanistan. We must naturally adhere to the present boundary, which has been delimited by joint British and Russian Commissions. Any advance beyond that should be considered a *casus belli*, but we should leave experts to work out the military problems. Sir Thomas Holdich has expressed great hope in the number of troops that we can raise

in India. There is a great deal of truth in what he has said, and also in his remarks about trust in our Indian soldiers. It does not seem to me that it would be necessary for enormous contingents to be sent from England in case of war with Russia; we can doubtless obtain material on the spot. We all agree, I think, as to the need for patriotic teaching in England. I consider that physical training and military exercises for the youth and accurate rifle-shooting should be obligatory. There is a regrettable lack of patriotic teaching of the youth in India, and in this matter we are in striking contrast with what Russia does to inculcate patriotism in her schools. I hope that with Lord Curzon's active interest in the cause of education due consideration will be given to this most important subject.

As to the Afghans wishing us to join them, I believe that they do so; but it must be remembered that there is a great and striking difference in the attitude in this respect between the Afghans who reside on the Russian and on the Indian frontiers. The Afghan of the Russian frontier is all in favour of British aid, but the nearer to British territory, the less the Afghan is anxious for our help. I do not consider it advisable for us to offer help to the Afghan too soon. Let us pull him out of the ditch when he is in it, not before.

MR. T. HART DAVIES: We are told that the Afghan looks upon the Russian as an enemy. I should like to know whether Sir Thomas Holdich considers it possible that Russia may offer Afghanistan an alliance with the plunder of India as an attraction. The Afghan has long had before him the hope of a march on Delhi. After Maiwand he thought he was helping in the invasion of India. Would it be possible for Russia to get Afghanistan on her side by the hope of loot from India? Few Russian officers, it appears to me, think of a direct attack upon India; they would take the line of least resistance. They wish to get to warm water, and Persia offers facilities. I apprehend that Russia's object would be to place Persia in the position of Manchuria before the war. Railways would be built, and a flank attack upon India would be difficult for us to meet. It is more likely that Russia would try to circumvent us through Persia than by an advance through Afghanistan. If she got at the Persian frontier it would make our position dangerous and awkward.

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH: In replying to the remarks which have been made on my paper, I must express my thanks for the kind way in which it has been received. As to an inducement offered to Afghanistan of Indian loot by Russia, I think that the day for such inducement is past. The Afghan Government must now be

reckoned as an educated Government. There was a time when such an appeal would have had great effect ; but Russia has been trusted by Afghanistan once or twice, and has proved a broken reed. There is now intercourse between the Afghan chiefs and India, and the proposition would have to come from one Government to the other ; an appeal could hardly be made to the populace generally. To reach warm water through Persia is certainly one of Russia's plans of operation, and she will adopt the way most easy of accomplishment to gain her end. We must certainly keep a look-out in Persia as well as in Western Afghanistan, and concentrate our attention on what is taking place. As other remarks coincided generally with my observations, I need not add anything more.

A vote of thanks to Sir Thomas Holdich, proposed by Sir Alfred Lyall, was enthusiastically received and unanimously carried.

OCT 26 1913

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN SOCIETY

RUSSIAN RAILWAYS TOWARDS INDIA

BY

COLONEL C. E. DE LA POER BERESFORD

Late Military Attaché at St. Petersburg



LONDON
CENTRAL ASIAN SOCIETY, 22, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1906

**Proceedings of the Central
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READ DECEMBER 13, 1905

RUSSIAN RAILWAYS TOWARDS INDIA

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH : Although at present public interest concerning the far-off frontier of Afghanistan is somewhat discounted owing to the miserable position in which Russia finds herself to-day, the subject will continue to be of undying interest so long as Russia and England remain as they are in Asia. As to railways in Central Asia, they must always have a peculiar interest, because further extension towards Afghanistan can only have a strategic military meaning. Under no circumstances can they be considered purely as a commercial venture. They are more or less a disguised threat to peace on the frontier. We shall this afternoon be able to hear much more on this question from Colonel de la Poer Beresford, who has had unusual opportunities as Military Attaché at St. Petersburg for studying the subject. I have, therefore, very much pleasure in calling upon Colonel Beresford to read his paper.

[Before reading his paper, Colonel de la Poer Beresford gave a few words of explanation about a map which he had brought to illustrate and to make clear his remarks. It was, he said, a Russian map published in St. Petersburg, but not officially, and was entitled 'Railway Lines to India.' It had been carefully copied by a friend, but he explained that the mountains were not marked sufficiently clearly, and the existing and projected railway-lines were hardly so conspicuous as they ought to be. But the map was of special interest, and would be of considerable help to the audience in following his remarks.]

The completion of the line from Orenbùrg to Tâshkènt gives Russia direct rail communication from St. Petersburg to Kûshk post on the frontier of Afghanistan. From St. Petersburg to Orenbùrg is about 1,230

miles. From Orenbùrg to Tâshkènt the distance is 1,500 miles, and from Tâshkènt, viâ Samarkànd and Merv to Kûshk post, about 450 miles. It is possible to proceed to Kûshk post viâ Rostov on the Don, Petrovsk and Bakû, to embark there for Krasnovòdsk on the East Caspian shore, and to entrain there again for Askhabàd and Merv. These are the existing lines of railway towards India. The projected lines shown on the map are not yet commenced. An exception to this statement must be made, as will be seen later on, as regards the line from Chârjui on the Amû to Termèz on the same river. Another line that must be considered is the Batûm-Tiflis-Erivân. It is proposed to carry this eventually from the Russo-Persian frontier at Julfa, near Nakhitchevân, through the Persian provinces of Azerbidjad, Kâsvîn, Teherân, and Khorassân. To this I will come presently. At this moment the rail-head is some miles short of the Persian frontier. All the lines I have mentioned are single lines, with the broad Russian gauge. I have visited Erivân, Orenbùrg, and Tâshkènt, and watched the construction of the various lines. They, like all railways in Russia, are laid on transverse sleepers, to which they are pinned down by large nails. Fish-plates at the joints give extra security, but chairs are unknown. With such an arrangement much ballast is necessary to ensure ordinary stability. Unfortunately for Russia, her Asiatic lines run, as a rule, through sandy countries where stone is rarely found. It is impossible, then, to run heavy trains at great speed over these lines. Nevertheless, the late war in Manchuria has shown us of what one line, the Trans-Siberian, is capable.

Prince Hilkoﬀ laid two great railways in Asia—the Trans-Siberian and the Orenbùrg-Tâshkènt. The

Central Asian, formerly called the Transcaspian, was thought out by Sköbeleff; but General Annenkoff actually bridged the black sand (Kàra-Kûm). Ûzun-Ada, the original starting-point, no longer exists. It is from Krasnovòdsk, where the condensers are, that the rails from piers in the Caspian run on to Andijàn, 1,350 miles away. The first section of the line to Mulla-Kari was finished in December, 1880. Water-trains overcame the difficulty of the dry desert. These still ply on the line. Huge vats, truncated pyramids in form, fixed on waggons convey the precious fluid. The line was laid from Kizil-Àrvàt to Merv, 352 English miles, in fourteen months.

From Krasnovòdsk to Askhabàd is a desert journey of eighteen hours. The traveller passes through the country of the Yòmùd Turkomàn, entering the Akhàl-Tekké oasis at Ûzun-Sû, and skirting the base of Kopet Dâgh, or Damán-i-Kûh. It has been said that a railway was projected to run from Askhabàd to Meshèd, viâ Firuzè and the Gûlistàn hills. But I saw no sign of such a thing three years ago. The projected line to Meshèd will not pass this way. An error in Central Asian cartography is that many places, Askhabàd, Luftabàd, etc., are shown in our maps as fortresses. They are guileless of defensive works. The only fortress is Kûshk post, on the Afghàn frontier. Along the railway in the Akhàl-Tekké oasis are seen the Persian towers—for Shâh-Abbàs ruled up to Karà-Kûm—into which the inhabitants fled at the approach of the Turkomàn. A mounted Tekké here and there, his black stallion's coat glistening in the sun, is all that remains of the Alamàn that swept the plains of Khorassàn. The hardy Turkomàn horse is almost extinct.

In this nearly rainless district water is so precious

that it is hoarded underground ! When found beneath the surface it is led along underneath it by a system of horizontal tunnels ventilated by vertical shafts. It is thus brought to the level of the land to be irrigated. These wells are styled *kârez*, the ordinary cylindrical cuttings being named *châh*. From Askhabâd to Giaours we are still in the Akhâl-Tekké oasis ; but thence the rails are laid across the Kâra-Kûm. Thirty miles beyond Dûshâk a bridge spans the Têjend, whose waters mingle with the sand among the tall reeds that cover the plain to the north. Only 300 miles to the south the Têjend flows, as the Hari Rûd, under the walls of Herât. It waters the country of the Sârik Turkomâns. Their beautiful carpets are known in the trade as Pendjeh rugs. Seven hours from Askhabâd the engine draws up at a commonplace station lit by petroleum lamps. A noisy crowd of Russian ladies, officers, Persians, and Úsbègs surround the train. The Murghâb here is but a muddy stream, whose waters are soon lost in the desert. To the east is a high, continuous wall of earth. Nearer, a few miserable houses and dust-smothered locust-bean trees. Yet the place has a famous history. Here Timûr the Lame fought nine battles. This is Merv, *Aîn-i-jahân*, the Eye of the World.

The district between Merv and Bokhâra is an irregular, wind-swept sea of sand. Sven Hedîn's description of Gobi applies to it : ' A regular chaos of sand dunes all linked together, running without a break one into another.' These hillocks appeared to me like petrified waves, from whose crests blew a sandy foam. The station in the centre of this awful desert is called *Pesski*, or ' the Dusty.' The constant danger is that these shifting masses may overwhelm and bury the line. To prevent this wattle screens are erected in the direc-

tion of the prevailing wind. Tamarisk and Saxaöul (*Haloxylon ammodendron*), the only things that will grow there, are planted on the embankment to hold it together. The light of the sun is never veiled here save by the simûm, through the dust of which it glows red, as through fog. Ten miles west of the ancient Oxus begins the territory of the Amîr of Bokhàra. In this green fringe of the desert the Esâri Turkomàns tend their horses, carefully wrapped in camel's hair blankets to preserve their silken skin sheen. Merv is left at 6 p.m. At 2 p.m. next day the train reaches Chârjui. The Turkomàns rove no further to the east than the great river.

The original wooden bridge over the Amû, or ancient Oxus, at Chârjui (Four Springs), was built on 3,300 piles, driven through the sandy bottom into an impermeable substratum. It took seven months to build, being finished in January, 1888. I crossed it twelve years later. It has been replaced by a steel lattice-girder bridge, carrying a single pair of rails, over granite piers 30 feet high. In May, 1888, Samarkànd was reached. Not until 1895 was Tâshkènt joined by rail to this place. That branch, which will now become the main Moscow-Samarkànd line, crosses the Sir-Daria (Jâxârtes) at Chinàz, by a bridge similar to, but smaller than, that at Chârjui. I read in the *Times* a short time ago that the line from Chârjui to Termèz is in process of construction. It is only shown as projected on the map on the wall. I leave to the military correspondent of the *Times* the responsibility for the statement which bears the stamp of probability. I am not able to confirm it from personal observation. It forms, in any case, part of the most direct projected line towards the frontier of India. Russian troops at

Termèz would be within forty English miles of Mazàr-i-Shérif. This place is on the road from the ruins of Balkh to Khûlm and Tâsh-kûrgàn, about ten miles east of the ruins. From Merv to Kûshk post a branch line, finished in 1897, follows the Murghàb Valley. I could only drive a short way alongside of it. The stations are Yulatàn (the camp to which Salzâ's brigade of Caucasian Rifles was quickly moved from Tiflis five years ago), Bând-i-Sultàn, Imân-Bâba, Àk-tèpé, Pûl-i-Khisti, Kàrà-tèpé, and Kûshkhinski post. The trackless desert to the east of this single line is called the Desht-i-khòl. On its southern borders are the âouls of the Kàrà Turkomànans; the Aliéli Turkomànans wander to the east of the Murghàb Valley.

Farâb, opposite Chârjui, on the right bank of the Amû, is the headquarters of the Russian steamboat service on the river. The steamers draw about 5 feet. The navigation is difficult owing to the shifting sandbanks. At night-time all craft anchor. From Farâb to Termèz upstream is a five to seven days' journey. Downstream to Kungrâd about the same. The stations at which the steamer stops between Farâb and Termèz are Sâkar-bazâr, Burdâlk, Kerki, whence leads a fair road to Samarkànd, 160 miles away, Jishâk, Kelif, etc. Stores and war material pass by these steamers, but their importance as carriers will diminish as the railway along the left bank comes into use. I do not believe the stories lately circulated as to concentration of large bodies of troops at Termèz or Kerki. These tales fall around in Russia like leaves in Vallambrosa every year as the recruits pass to garrisons in Asia from their European homes. It is worth noting that these lines of communication towards the upper Amû, or Oxus, have a great strategical importance. They lead to Mazàr-i-

Shérif and Badakshân. A large Russian force could, in the event of an advance southwards, be brought by these ways into this country. Quartered on the line Mazâr-i-Shérif-Kungrâd-Faizabad (in Badakshân), it could draw a certain amount of food from the country and be also continually fed along its own communications. There is a road that I am told is tolerable from this region to the Dora Pass leading into the Chitral Valley. I do not think that this road is at present passable for troops of all arms, but no doubt it could soon be made so. Perhaps some such thoughts entered the mind of the Russian diplomat who, on hearing of our occupation of Chitral, said: 'Vous nous avez fermé la porte au nez.'

Bokhàra is some ten hours by train from Merv. A branch railway from the main line runs up to its walls. I saw here the revolting dungeon or pit in which our brave countrymen, Stoddart and Conolly, were confined. They were put to death by order of Nasrùlah-Bahàdur, Amir of Bokhàra, some seventy years ago. The State of Bokhàra counts 1,250,000 Mahomedan inhabitants. The army is 11,000 strong. Of this force 4,000 men, armed with old smooth-bore muskets, are quartered in the city. Bokhàra is in an oasis surrounded by deserts watered by the Wafkàn, a tributary of the Zàrafshàn. The waters of this river, regulated by hatches and locks in Russian keeping, are the food and drink of Bokhàra. No garrison is necessary, for with a few turns of a lever the conquerors can cut off the whole water-supply of the oasis. The relations between these and the conquered races seem satisfactory. In Moslem lands there is always a hidden fire. It broke out at Andijàn in 1899, and was quickly suppressed.

The distance from Bokhàra to Samarkànd is 140

miles. A good unmetalled carriage-road runs close to the railway through Kerminé to the ancient Marakànda. At Katta Kurgàn the mountains come in sight, the Hissar chain under features, almost, of Alaï and the great Tiánshân. The contrast to the hateful sands is so great that one perhaps overestimates the beauty and resources of this region. We are nearing the cotton and vines of Fergâna. Leaving Bokhàra at 10 a.m., the train arrives at Samarkànd at 7.30 p.m. Samarkànd is divided into two distinct towns: the Russian, not unlike a large Indian cantonment, with broad poplar-shaded avenues, and the native town. Here are the stately ruins of the Bibi-Khânûm, to the memory of Timûr's wife, a princess of, I think, the Ming dynasty of China. There are, also, the Gûr-Amîr, Timûr's own tomb, and the resting-place of Shâh Zindeh. There are good roads from an Eastern, not Indian, point of view, from Samarkànd to Kerki, on the Amû-Dària, to Tâshkènt viâ Jizâk, and thence to Khokànd, Khôjènt, Namangàn, Andijàn, Margelàn, and Osh. I travelled to the latter place from Andijàn on a *tarantàss*, and remember the ruts! Samarkànd yields to Tâshkènt as a military station, but from its central position and good communications is a place of importance. Of all the ruins of Samarkànd, so eloquent in their deserted grandeur, none impressed me as did the Gûr-Amîr. Inside the dome, in front of the horse-hair standard, one feels the presence of Tamerlàne. Beneath the cupola is a nephrite cenotaph, the largest block of green jade in the world. Around it a carved gypsum balustrade. In the crypt below lie the bones of the conqueror of Tôktâmish Khân, of Sultan Bâyezîd, of the Caucasus, Persia, and India.

Tâshkènt is about 110 miles from Samarkànd. The

capital of Central Asia is well placed on the Chirtckik stream, some 1,300 feet above sea-level, and, though hot in summer, is cold enough for furs in winter. The fine new town, with its cathedral, where Kauffman lies buried, observatory, parks, etc., contrasts curiously with the huge but squalid collection of mosques, medressés, and shaded bazaars that make up the old Tâshkènt, and in which 160,000 souls bargain, pray, and lie dormant. The chief importance of this place is that it is the centre of Russian communications in Central Asia. Before the iron horse came three great roads joined here. One to the south, to Khôjent, branching thence eastwards to Margelân, Andijân, and China; to the west to Samarkând and Merv. A second was the post-road viâ Chimkent, Aulie-Àta, Vernoe, past Lake Balkash to Semipalâtinsk on the Irtish, 2,000 miles to the north. A third, passing Chimkènt and Àralsk, led to Orenbùrg. With the creation of the railway system, not yet completed, Tâshkènt becomes the southern apex of an irregular triangle of railways, of which two sides, Samàra-Tâshkènt and Samàra-Tomsk, are finished, and the third, Tâshkènt to Ob on the Siberian line, is projected.

Having now described the Central Asian Railway from personal observations, I must say a word as to its projected continuation, and the alternative line towards India through Persia. The black dotted line on the map shows the former as running from Chârjui along the left bank of the Amû, or Oxus, on Russian territory as far as Kerki. A few miles south of this it crosses the Afghàn border passes near Mazâr-i-Shérif, almost in a direct line to the valley of the Kabul River, Jellalâbâd, and Peshawur. To do this it must, after crossing the Àk-Serai stream, a left affluent of the Upper Amû, or

Oxus, pass either through or over several small mountain masses and the huge main chain of the Hindù-Kûsh. I confess that, for Russian engineers, little accustomed to tunnelling, this seems to me a very difficult as well as a very costly undertaking. Turning to the projected line through Persia, its projectors ignore the treaty that closes the dominions of the Shâh alike to Russian or British railways. The physical obstacles to the laying of this line are not considerable. It is almost finished to the frontier at Jûlfa, on the Aras or Araxes River. Thence it is to proceed past Tabriz to Teherân. At the capital a line is to branch south to Kûm, Isfâhàn (Isphahàn), Shirâz (where it might meet a line made by us), and thence to Bunder-Abbàs in the Ormùs channel. The main line is to run eastwards from Teherân through Khorassàn almost on the old trade route to Meshèd and Kûshk post. Thence it is to be continued to Herât to Farâh. Here it branches again; one line goes towards Seistân, the other to Kandahâr. According to the map, British lines are in course of construction, or projected, to Kandahâr and to Nushki, Kerman, and Shirâz, with a branch to the north through the marshes of Seistân to Meshèd. Of these projected lines to India, that from Kûshk post to Herât and Kandahâr seems to me, speaking academically (without raising the military side of the question), easy and cheap to construct. It is the prolongation of the line Moscow-Orenbùrg-Tâshkènt-Merv-Kûshk post, already constructed. The engineering difficulties in the way are inconsiderable. The Paropismus chain can be easily crossed; but there is the veto of the Amîr of Afghanistan to be considered. Leaving these questions to the discussion of those amongst my audience so much more fitted to give an opinion than I am on them, I will very shortly describe the Russian military position in Central Asia.

The Russian troops quartered in Central Asia consist of two army corps. The strength of each corps may be taken as in round numbers 38,000 men and 124 guns available for service. It is true that the 'Statesman's Year-book' for 1905 places the strength of a Russian army corps at 47,653 men, but the Turkestàn army corps are not so fully provided with cavalry as those in Russia, and their normal casualty list is very high. Thus, if we put Russia's forces in Turkestàn as from 76,000 to 80,000 men and 248 guns, we shall be close to the mark. The Army List tells us that the First Turkestàn Army Corps has its headquarters at Tâshkènt, and consists of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Turkestàn Rifle Brigades, the 1st Turkestàn Reserve Brigade, the 1st Turkestàn Cossack Division, the 1st Turkestàn Artillery Brigade, the 2nd Orenbùrg Cossack Battery, the Turkestàn Mountain Horse Artillery Battery, and the Turkestàn Sapper Battalion. Reference to p. 106 *et seq.* of the same list shows us that in Tâshkènt are four battalions of riflemen, two battalions of the 1st Turkestàn Reserve Brigade, one Orenbùrg Cossack Regiment (No. 5), the 1st Turkestàn Artillery Brigade, and the Turkestàn Sapper Battalion. At Samarkànd, some ninety-five miles south-west of Tâshkènt, are three rifle battalions, one reserve battalion, one Cossack cavalry regiment, and a few details. The remaining rifle battalions of the First Turkestàn Corps are stationed thus: The 8th at Kâttà-Kurgàn, on the railway from Samarkànd to Bokhàra; the 9th at Margelân; the 11th at Andijàn (terminus of the Central Asian Railway); the 12th at Khokànd, in Fergâna. The whole of the 4th Turkestàn Rifle Brigade, comprising the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th battalions, is stationed at the most unhealthy and dreary town of Termèz, on the Upper

Amú-Daria, about forty-five miles north of Mazàr-i-Shérif.

I will quote the opinion of an officer of the Indian army as to the appearance of the Russian troops in Central Asia: 'It is the characteristic of the English nation to despise and depreciate a rival, and it is to be feared that our appreciation of Russia's military power is derived rather from what we would wish to think it than from what it actually is. It is to be trusted most sincerely that we may never find out our mistake, but these are questions that should be studied carefully and coolly with a mind unbiassed by national training and prejudices. Nothing is more surprising than to observe the fine physique and soldier-like bearing of the Russian soldiers here, so different from the impression generally prevailing amongst Englishmen. The men are great, broad-shouldered fellows, well set up and active, while the officers are a most remarkably intelligent-looking and smartly turned-out lot, and both would compare favourably with any other European troops that I have seen. Both officers and men, too, have a particularly impressive bearing. They carry themselves, as every British soldier is taught to do, as if they were proud of themselves, and yet without the offensively overbearing demeanour of the Prussian soldiers. Altogether the impression derived from such specimens of the Russian troops as are seen about here is most favourable to them.'

The regiments of the Turkestàn Cossack Division are divided into two brigades, the first of which has one regiment, the 2nd Ural Cossacks, at Samarkànd; and the other, the 4th Orenbùrg Cossacks, at Kerki, in Bokhàra. The second brigade, with headquarters at New Margelân, has but one regiment there, the 6th Orenbùrg

Cossacks. Its other unit, the 5th of the same, is at Tâshkènt. A Semirètchia Cossack regiment takes the place of the last-mentioned in the brigade at Margelân, where is also quartered the Turkestàn Mountain Horse Artillery Battery. This Cavalry Brigade is intended to act in the valleys of the Sir Dària and Narin. The only unit of the First Army Corps unaccounted for is the 2nd Orenbùrg Cossack Battery. It shares with four rifle battalions the unhealthy quarter of Termèz. A glance at the map will show that, with the exception of the brigade and battery on the river at Termèz, this Army Corps, say 30,000 men, is at Tâshkènt, or on the railway from near Bokhàra to Andijàn. The troops at Osh and Nâmângàn, although off the line, are within six hours' march of it. It is particularly to hold in awe the large native population of Tâshkènt, 150,000 in number, and the Khokàndis, who are turbulent and impatient of restraint, that the First Army Corps is thus disposed. The 8,000 troops, ill-armed, ill-disciplined and worse clothed, paid (occasionally) by the Amìr of Bokhàra and the inhabitants of that ancient city, are controlled by other means. No Russian soldier shows his face there save those of the escort of the Political Resident.

The Second Turkestàn Army Corps has its headquarters at Askhabàd, on the Persian frontier, in the Akhâl-Tekké oasis, which town is at present being patrolled by armed Cossacks. The Tekké Turkomàns number some 750,000 souls. The Yomùts range from the Caspian to Kizil-Àrvàt ; the Akhàls roam the oasis thence to Merv. The Sârik Turkomàns line the river Murghâb as far south as the Afghàn border. These nomadic tribes are watched by the Second Turkestàn Army Corps, commanded by the able General Ûssa-

kòfski. His command consists of the 5th, 6th, and 7th Turkestàn Rifle Brigades; the 2nd Turkestàn Reserve Rifle Brigade; the Transcaspian Cossack Brigade; the 2nd Turkestàn Artillery Brigade; 4th Kùbàn Cossack Battery; the Kùshk post Fortress Artillery; and the Transcaspian Sapper Battalion. Of these the whole sixth brigade of four battalions is at Askhabàd.

There are also the 2nd Reserve Brigade, the Geok-Tepé Reserve Battalion, and two cavalry regiments. The 5th Rifle Brigade is along the river Amû, one battalion being near the Aral Sea at Fort Petro-Alexandrovsk, one at Chârjui, and two at Kerki, near the Afghàn border. The 7th Rifle Brigade has two battalions at Merv—one at Saràks and one at Kùshk post. There is one reserve battalion at Krasnovòdsk, on the Caspian, one at Kùshk post. The Transcaspian Sapper Battalion has its headquarters at Merv, but its men are constantly employed along the railway. It will thus be seen that, although the Russian troops in Turkestàn are somewhat scattered, yet they are almost all on the railway. The Turkomàns are watched by one Army Corps, the Khokàndis and Bokhàriots by another. The mountain batteries awe the few mountain tribes, whilst some eight battalions of riflemen observe the Afghàns from the line of the Amû-Daria. It is, of course, possible that a general rising in Turkestàn may take place after the Russian reverses in the Far East. But the Mahomedans of Central Asia are far less fanatical than those of the Caucasus. The Turkomàn is a bad believer; the Tajìks, Ûsbègs, and Sarts are unwarlike people. The Kirghiz are pagan nomads, much scattered. The Bokhàriots are Aryan Mahomedans. There is very little cohesion and no unity existing between these various races.

DISCUSSION.

SIR EDWIN COLLEN : Sir Thomas Holdich, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I am quite sure that we have all listened with immense interest to the admirable lecture which Colonel Beresford has given us, and have gathered a great deal of information, plainly put, with regard to Russia's position in Central Asia. Owing, no doubt, to the shortness of the time at the lecturer's disposal, he was unable to dilate more freely on the enormous difficulties which would follow Russia in any attempt to prolong the railway from Chârjui and Termèz, on the one side, and from Kûshk post on the other ; and the details were hardly, perhaps, within the scope of Colonel Beresford's lecture, although he alluded to the difficulties which would pursue Russia in carrying on the line from Mazâr-i-Shérif towards the Hindû-Kûsh and the Peshawar Valley. It appears to me that Russia can easily enter Afghàn Turkestan, but that she would meet with almost insuperable difficulties in her advance to any distance beyond the Afghàn frontier. We have been assured by the late Prime Minister that any further extension of railways towards Afghanistan would be regarded as a hostile enterprise. Afghanistan is not likely to permit such an extension, and if we could possibly obtain from Afghanistan the permission to advance our railway-lines to Kabul and Kandahâr, we should be in a remarkably fine strategic position. To hold this strategic front, and to connect Kabul and Kandahâr by rail, would be essential to any prolonged defence of Afghanistan. I wish once again to express my great appreciation of Colonel Beresford's lecture, and to thank him personally for his kindness in coming to address us this afternoon.

SIR ALFRED LYALL : In expressing my thanks and appreciation to Colonel Beresford for his able lecture, I have nothing to say, being a civilian, on the military question which has been set before us this afternoon with great precision and effect. Colonel Beresford has given us much information concerning Russia's railways, the different places on the lines, and the disposition of troops. I should like to ask him how many troops Russia has enlisted from the population itself of Central Asia, and how her system contrasts in this respect with ours. I am aware that

Russia promotes Asiatics to high offices in the army, but my general impression is that the difference between the two systems might be broadly described by saying that, while Russia has Asiatic officers, but very few Asiatic soldiers, England has no Asiatic officers of high rank, but maintains a larger Asiatic army. I myself shall be disposed to advocate the occasional promotion of our native officers to the upper grades in our military service. It is curious how Afghanistan, the last of the old-fashioned khanates of Central Asia, still blocks up all political and commercial communications across the Asiatic continent. The Amir naturally does not like a great armed Power to project railways towards and into his territory. The mountains are an enormous barrier against any advance ; they stop all intercourse, and keep apart two great nations who are jealous of each other. History certainly shows that India has been conquered from the mountains, and Afghanistan commands the passes through these mountains by which all invaders have descended upon India, while no invader has ever been thoroughly successful until he has conquered Afghanistan. Baber himself was only successful when he had made his base firm in Afghanistan, because all his previous inroads were checked and foiled by insurrections of the highland tribes in his rear. But the English, who came into India from the sea-coast, took these natural defences of India in reverse, and have marched up from the sea to the mountains.

LORD RONALDSEY : I have little to add to the excellent lecture to which we have listened, but, as having travelled extensively in that part of the world to which Colonel Beresford has directed our attention, I should like to make one or two observations. He has spoken of the Orenbùrg-Tâshkènt line which is now in existence. This line has certainly increased Russia's power of massing troops. Colonel Beresford gave the distance between Orenbùrg and Tâshkènt as 1,500 miles. Is this a slip of the tongue, or is it correct ? I was told that the distance was 1,600 versts, which would be about 1,000 miles. A correspondent of the *Times of India*, who has been travelling recently in Central Asia, gives the distance as 1,738 versts, or, roughly, 1,150 miles. A projected line spoken of in Russian official circles is from Tomsk to Tâshkènt. I have travelled the whole of the distance that such a railway would follow. There are no engineering difficulties, and official support was promised as soon as the Orenbùrg-Tâshkènt line was completed. I am in a position to

know that advances have been made to contractors for surveys and estimates. For the moment railway schemes are in the background owing to convulsions in Russia, but when she has recovered from her internal difficulties, I think the next line that we shall have to consider will be the link between Central Asia and the Siberian system.

Colonel Beresford spoke of the Tiflis-Erivan line to Julfa, on the Persian frontier. In October, 1905, it was completed to within twenty-five miles of the Persian frontier, and was to be finished within a year. He alluded to the difficulties of railway construction in the Shah's dominions owing to the Secret Convention. I do not think any difficulties stand in the way of Russian railways. The Convention prohibited all but Russian lines. Subsequently less drastic arrangements were made, and Russia was to have the first call. No one was to build railways in Persia until Russia had done so, and she will no doubt begin as soon as she is in a position to undertake the work. As to the Askabad-Meshed line, with a possible extension to Seistan, I have travelled through that part of the country, and it seems to me that a railway-line from north to south would be very difficult of construction, owing to the parallel mountain-ranges which lie transversely across the route. Sir Thomas Holdich will tell you that any attempt to build a line in this direction would be both exceedingly difficult and exceedingly costly. The information that Colonel Beresford has given us about the Russian troops in Central Asia is very important. I am glad to find that he dismissed the idea that Russia possessed a large number in the vicinity of the Afghan frontier. The correspondent of the *Times of India* to whom I have alluded says that Russia has at the present time 200,000 soldiers in different parts of Central Asia, and that large numbers are quartered on the Afghan frontier—1,600 at Kushk post, 10,000 on a war footing at Askhabad—and other figures which he gives show a large army not far from the frontier. Obviously, with the railways which she has constructed and those she has projected, Russia is in a position to amass troops easily so far as transport is concerned. We certainly owe a debt of gratitude to Colonel Beresford for his admirable lecture, and it emphasizes the fact that it is our duty to keep our eyes on the future.

MAJOR MACSWINEY: A point of great importance in the very able lecture which Colonel Beresford has given is the question of

Russia's troops in Central Asia. There is much discrepancy as to the actual number. In 1899 I went through the region to try and substantiate rumours and clear up the mystery of the numbers. My conclusion was, after conversations with General Kuropatkin, who was then Military Governor there, that Russia has a very large force, the bulk being reservists. I have studied the question and watched the returns for seven and a half years. Large numbers go out from Russia ; about 20 per cent. return. What has happened to the balance ? They do not all die. I admit the wastage is considerable, but the majority settle in the large military colonies which Russia has established throughout Central Asia. At Andijan, where the rising took place, the authorities hanged twenty-one mutineers and sent the colony to Siberia. How did repopulation take place ? By means of Russian reservists. The Government gave them ground, and sent for their wives and children. I know, on the authority of a Russian officer, that there are large Russian colonies in Central Asia. Kuropatkin also said to me : ' We have got our mobilization arrangements, just as you have.' Large numbers are sent from Russia proper to Central Asia who are nothing more than reservists who may be mobilized. A gentleman who came from Odessa said that a Russian officer had told him that Russia had 300,000 men under arms in Central Asia. This is a point which must be kept well to the front.

LIBUTENANT-COLONEL A. C. YATE : I can perhaps claim to say a few words on the subject which Colonel Beresford has dealt with in so admirable and interesting a manner to-day, because fifteen years ago I visited Tashkent, via Krasnovòdsk, Merv, and Samarkand. Colonel Beresford has described Russia's railways in Central Asia in the light of recent experience. In 1890 it was difficult to visit that region, and the fact that I was able to do so was almost an accident. I was in England on leave, and, wishing to use some of the time at my disposal in seeing something of the Russian army, I went to the manœuvres which took place that year at Krasnoe-Selo and Narva. While there, information reached me that an exhibition was about to be held at Tashkent, and that the Wagon-Lits Company had been commissioned by the Russian Government to invite strangers to visit it and to arrange for their journey to and fro. I resolved to take advantage of this opening, and sent in my name. After leaving Russia, I spent some time at Berlin and Karlsbad. Still

no permit arrived. Finally I moved to Odessa, and wired thence to St. Petersburg to know whether the necessary permit would be granted to me or not. Within twenty-four hours of the sailing of the last possible steamer from Odessa came a telegram in the affirmative. At Baku I found Sir James Hills-Johnes and Mr. C. E. Biddulph. We three travelled together, and had 'a very good time.' We met with great kindness from General Annenkoff, notably at Jizak, where horses were refused us. (The Samarkând-Tâshkènt line had not then been constructed.) A telegram to General Annenkoff at Samarkând brought an order which the post-master could not ignore. M. Vishnegradsky, the Russian Minister of Finance, travelled in the steamer and train with us from Baku to Samarkând, and at Amu Darya we met Prince Khilkoff, then Annenkoff's assistant, since the Russian Minister of Ways and Communications. I must, however, confine myself more strictly to the subject-matter of the lecture which we have just heard.

As to the Russian troops in Central Asia, I may say that I was greatly impressed by the physique, bearing, and spirits of the soldiers—*i.e.*, the non-commissioned officers and men—but not so much by the officers. Sir Alfred Lyall has asked how far Russia's army in Central Asia is native. I saw not one native soldier, and I was not told that any were employed. I remember at Amû-Daria Station General Annenkoff brought and introduced to us a Colonel who was a Khirghiz and an Adjutant who was a Kalmûk. The impression left by this on me was that these were rather exceptions; but much may have been done in the fifteen years which have elapsed since I was in Transcaspia and Turkestan. May I venture to offer one or two opinions as to the possible future of Russia's railways towards India? Afghanistan at present will have neither our railways nor Russia's. Under these circumstances our best policy seems to be to enable Afghanistan to continue the course she has been pursuing since the late Amîr came to the throne. That course consists in the organization of her army and consolidation of her strength. If Afghanistan holds her own as a strong independent Power, we may wait for the time foretold by the late Amîr in some such words as these: 'When we have a powerful army of our own, we can begin to think about railways and telegraphs.' This opinion will be found in the Amîr's autobiography, published some years ago by Murray. We cannot,

perhaps, rely absolutely on the authenticity of all that the book contains, but I believe it represents the late Amir's real opinions. If we had as much grit in Persia as in Afghanistan, we might feel that India was safer. But I doubt whether anybody can put backbone into Persia and the Persian Government. Reform in that country seems impossible.

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH : I should like to make a few remarks on one or two points before we tender the thanks of the meeting to Colonel Beresford for his excellent paper. He spoke of the difficulties in extending the line from Kûshk post to the town of Kûshk. There are no mountains in the way ; all that the railway engineers have to do so far is to run the line up the flattened northern slopes of the Koh-i-Baba. As to the main extension of railways in Central Asia, I think we are hasty in assuming that they are all built from purely strategic motives. Had we been in the place of Russia, we should have done as Russia has done. And as for the concentration of troops, we, too, should have found that it was necessary to maintain a large force north of the Oxus, in order to keep so vast a territory in order. But whenever a line passes south of the Transcaspian line it must be regarded as a direct menace to the Afghan frontier. How far these lines have been pushed south is, so far as we know, a matter of doubt. Only one, however, has been carried to a successful conclusion. The road into the Chitral Valley I consider to be impracticable for military purposes, owing to the mass and the altitudes of the mountains. No military railway could ever be maintained across such high mountains and be kept in efficient order all the year round. As to the line due south from Meshèd to Seistân, it would be very difficult to construct. In fact, I cannot conceive of such a line as a rational project so long as the Kandahar-Herât route is available. At some future time, when we and Russia have consented to agree, it is a certainty that the Kandahar-Herât line will be carried out.

As to the troops, I should like to ask what proportion of the Russian Army is Asiatic. We are apt to confuse the words 'Asiatic' and 'native.' The term 'native' is misleading, and is often loosely applied. Colonel Yate says that he saw no 'native' soldier in the Russian army in Central Asia. He means, I expect, that native soldiers were not derived from the State in which they were born and bred. What I should like to

know is on what terms Russians would meet our Asiatic soldiers in India. I should say that in the whole of the army the pure European Russian element is not a very large proportion, because the Empire contains such a large number of Asiatic subjects, such as Cossacks and Siberians. But whether the troops are Asiatics or Europeans does not matter so long as they are good soldiers. I do not quite agree with what has been said as to the physique of the Russian army. The Cossacks and Guards are certainly exceptionally fine men; but the infantry of the Oxus frontier I considered distinctly inferior, and amongst them I should say that the proportion of Asiatics to Europeans is about ten to one. But it is not a question as to European or Asiatic; it is a question of the quality, training, and leading of the troops. Sir Alfred Lyall will forgive me for saying that the English cannot claim to be the first conquerors of India by sea. He overlooked the fact that the Arabs, under Muhammad Kasim, came by sea, successfully occupied Sind, and remained in power for two centuries. Colonel Beresford has given us a most interesting paper, which has led to a useful discussion. We beg to tender him our hearty thanks.

COLONEL BERESFORD: I should like to say a few words with regard to some of the points raised and questions asked by those who have taken part in the discussion. As to the point about the troops belonging to the territory they occupy, there is only one regiment in Central Asia in which this is the case—namely, a division of irregular Turkoman cavalry, which is in camp near to Askhabad. I have visited the camp, and seen the horses and men. There are 700 sabres. The married men are allowed leave every year, as an officer told me, to go to see their wives. He remarked that they were faithful husbands, which is more than other Russians are. All cavalry regiments, Cossacks and Kalmuks, are practically Asiatics. The Kalmuks came across the river after the Hun invasion, and settled at Kazan in masses. The Cossacks have lost much of their value since they became less nomadic. There are many Khirghiz and Turkoman officers in the Russian army.

As to the distance from Orenburg to Tashkent, it is about 1,200 miles; I am obliged to Lord Ronaldshay for calling my attention to an error which crept into my remarks. Most men in the infantry regiments in Central Asia are Poles. They form the best shooting corps in the army. The climatic conditions

are more favourable, and the physique of the men is good. I cannot say anything now as to loyalty in the army. I should be sorry to depend upon it myself. The Poles are as good fighters as any in the Russian army; they are more intelligent and alert than the Russians. I do not think that the troops available for active service can, under any computation, exceed 100,000 at the outside; there are many reservists who must, of course, be considered potentially. They and their sons are useful warriors. Settlers in past days crept up to the Caucasus, and took care that the mountaineers did not rob them of their lands. The poor Armenians came across the country and pushed inland. They drove the other inhabitants out into Turkey. Then these came back and found the country occupied. This was the beginning of the war. But I am straying from the subject of this afternoon's lecture. There is no difficulty to be overcome in the construction of the line from Kandahar to Herat. I am exceedingly grateful to you all for the kind way in which you have listened to my remarks, and to Sir Edwin Collen, Sir Thomas Holdich, and the other distinguished gentlemen who have been kind enough to take part in the discussion.

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN SOCIETY

BALUCHISTAN

BY

COLONEL C. E. YATE, C.S.I., C.M.G.



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BALUCHISTAN

I AM going to try to give to-day a short description of Baluchistan, the Frontier Province of which I was the Chief Commissioner from 1900 to 1904.

The total area of Baluchistan is 132,000 odd square miles—that is, some 11,000 square miles larger than England, Scotland, and Ireland put together, or some 21,000 square miles larger than the whole of Italy. I do not propose to burden you, though, with any further statistics. These can be obtained, by anyone who requires them, from the able census report of Baluchistan compiled by Mr. Hughes-Buller in 1902, or from his gazetteer which is shortly to follow.

Let us look, first of all, at the map here before us. You will see that the province extends from the Gumal Pass, near Dera Ismail Khan in the north-east, right down to the sea at Gwettar, on the Persian border in the south-west. Regarding the Eastern Frontiers adjoining the North-west Frontier Province, the Punjab and Sind, I need not say anything—that is all internal India. I will not either trouble you much with questions of local administration. Speaking as I am to members of the Central Asian Society, that would be foreign to our subject, but I may just point out to you that the northern portion of Baluchistan directly administered by the British Government is divided into five districts, viz., Zhob, Loralai, Sibi, Quetta-Peshin, and Chagai.

The first four of these are each controlled by a Political Agent or Deputy-Commissioner in charge, with one assistant to help him. Chagai, which is the latest addition to our administered territories, has as yet only one assistant in charge of it, and, though in actual extent some 19,000 square miles, Chagai greatly exceeds the other districts, still it is very sparsely populated, and the time has only lately come when more detailed administrative machinery is a necessity. Considering, however, the importance of the Seistan trade route which passes through it, more especially now that the railway has reached Nuski, I trust the Government of India will soon give the officer in charge the same status as those in charge of the other districts, and also an assistant to work under him. When I succeeded Sir Hugh Barnes in the charge of the province in 1900, the whole of the country from the Gumal on the north to Sibi in the south, was administered by two district officers only. Each district averaged over 14,000 square miles in extent, and as time went on and administration became more complex, the officers in charge found it impossible to give the outlying portions of their districts the supervision that was necessary. The Government of India, I am glad to say, agreed to my proposals to divide the area into three districts instead of two, and the central portion was therefore taken away and formed into the new district of Loralai—so named from the cantonment which forms its head-quarters—and the size of the Zhob and Sibi districts was thus reduced to more workable limits. At the same time, the consent of His Highness the Khan of Kalat, was obtained to the lease, on a fixed quit-rent, of the strip of country running along the Sind border to the north of Jacobabad, known as the Khan's lands. This small strip, belonging

to the Khan of Kalat, but irrigated by British canals from Sind, had long been the cause of much trouble, owing to the unsatisfactory state of the Khan's administration, and its transfer to British rule was a relief to all concerned, and especially to the people themselves.

You thus see that the whole of Northern Baluchistan, stretching from the Gumal Pass on the north to Chagai on the south-west and the Khan's lands on the south-east, a tract of some 53,000 square miles in extent (including the Marri and Bugti country, which is tribal territory), is governed by five district officers with four assistants ; a total of nine British officers in all this great extent of territory. One revenue and judicial commissioner controls them all in those two branches of the administration, and I don't suppose that ten British officers can show better results in any part of the world. The rule of these ten Britishers—one officer, roughly speaking, to an average of some 5,000 odd square miles—is a magnificent testimony to the strength and power of our Indian Administration.

Considering the importance of Baluchistan, both in a political and military sense, in case of war on the frontier, the wildness of the tribesmen and the constant fights, disputes, and disturbances connected with land, women, cattle, and everything in fact that man holds dear, that are continually going on amongst them, the constant and strong personal rule which British officers alone can give is a necessity, and the British element in the Baluchistan administration should be extra strong ; but this can hardly be said to be the case at present.

There are many questions connected with the internal administration of Baluchistan that I could touch upon, many of them peculiar to Baluchistan, and all affording an interesting study, but, as I said before, they are

foreign to our subject to-day. I may simply mention that, before I left Baluchistan, I had the good fortune to receive a special grant from the Government of India of 10,000 rupees for the construction of a boarding-house to be attached to the Sandeman High School at Quetta for the accommodation of the sons of Sirdars and headmen who may be sent in there for their education ; and now that the chiefs will be able to place their sons under proper supervision in a well-constituted boarding-house, I hope education amongst the upper classes of the province will make more rapid progress than it has hitherto done.

Another grant was also given us for the construction of a library and museum, which building was well in hand before I left. I trust that before long a really comprehensive collection of books bearing upon Central Asia will be the distinguishing feature of this library. I did my best to get as many of these books together as I could before I left, and my successors, I hope, will continue the work. I am sure I can count upon the co-operation in this of my immediate successor, Sir Henry McMahon. The library and museum has been erected close to the beautiful Sandeman Memorial Hall at Quetta, in which the autumn meeting of the Shahi Jirga, composed of all the native chiefs of the province, is held. The spring meeting is held at Sibi in the plains, where, at my suggestion, a roomy hall was erected in 1902 by the chiefs, officials, and people of Baluchistan to perpetuate the memory of Her Majesty Queen Victoria ; so that Baluchistan is now gradually becoming fairly well provided with public buildings.

So much for the northern portion of the province, which we may call, in a general way, British Baluchistan-

The southern portion of the province is all native territory, and here we have one political agent with two

assistants controlling the whole country from the Bolan Pass right down to the sea, a country nearly 80,000 square miles in extent, and one of the most difficult and important charges of its kind in the whole of India. There are two minor territorial chiefs, the Jam of Las Bela and Sir Nouroz Khan of Kharan, but the Khan of Kalat is the nominal ruler of the country. After all, though, His Highness the Khan is only *primus inter pares* amongst all the Brahui and Baluch Sirdars of which the Kalat confederacy is composed, and it was the revolt of these chiefs from the Khan's authority that first led to British interference resulting in Sir Robert Sandeman's settlement, known as the Mastung Treaty of 1876. Since that date, the power of the tribal chiefs has increased rather than decreased, and the power of the Khan, as the leading factor of the country, is no longer what it was in olden days.

Kalat is like no part of India that I know of, in that the Khan takes no revenue from the chiefs, and the chiefs take no revenue from the people, so that the income both of the Khan and of the Sirdars, or chiefs of tribes, is, except partly in the south, entirely derived from the lands owned by themselves individually. The territory owned by His Highness the Khan is divided up into various districts called Niabats, each under its own Naib, or local governor. Each chief has his own family lands in virtue of the chiefship he holds, and we thus have the Khan at the head of the confederacy as chief landowner, and some fifty Sirdars, or chiefs of tribes, each holding lands in various degrees, and each controlling their own particular tribesmen. Under the agreement of Mastung of 1876, all important disputes between the various Sirdars and tribesmen come up for settlement before the political agent and are disposed of

under his orders, by Jirgas, or assemblies of chiefs and head-men, or by Shariat, that is Muhammadan Law, or by arbitration, as the case may be. In such a huge tract of country it is impossible for any one British officer to get to know the various chiefs and tribesmen properly in the ordinary tenure of a political officer's appointment. What with illness, leave, and transfers generally, no officer remains long, as a rule, nowadays in any one appointment, and successful administration is thus all the more difficult, and especially so in Kalat, where every effort should be made to prevent a constant change of officers.

The Baluchis and Brahuis of Southern Baluchistan are large camel and sheep-owners, and are nomads and graziers more than cultivators. In case of war we should draw on them largely for transport, and, in fact, camel registration has been successful beyond all expectation in Baluchistan, and arrangements have been completed for the enlistment of many camel corps both from Pathans and Baluchis in case of necessity. As an instance of what can be done, a complete camel corps was enlisted and despatched to Somaliland during the operations there a couple of years ago within a space of ten days, and many such corps could be enlisted and sent off to any part of the world with equal celerity. The Pathan and Baluch has no objection to crossing the sea, in fact a large portion of the camelmen in Western Australia hail from Baluchistan, and they are still constantly coming and going to and fro.

It is not only, however, in camels that Baluchistan offers such a fine field for recruitment. Every day the desire for enlistment amongst the men is more and more marked. The first step to further this desire for enlistment amongst the Baluch tribesmen is to enlist

them in a local levy corps, the frontier term for what corresponds in Baluchistan to our yeomanry and militia. As yet, only two such levy corps exist in Baluchistan : one in the north known as the Zhob Levy Corps, composed almost entirely of Pathans, and one in the south known as the Mekran levy corps, composed of Baluchis and Brahuis from Kalat. In the Zhob Levy Corps the press of men to enlist is becoming greater every day, and the Sirdars and people thoroughly identify themselves with the corps in every way. Owing to the impossibility of entertaining all applicants the desire to enlist in regular regiments is getting stronger and stronger, so much so that the Zhob Pathans are beginning to look upon it as a grievance that recruiting in the two local Baluchistan regiments is closed to them. I hope that before long the Punjabis and the Sikhs in these Baluchistan regiments may be eliminated, and that, not only both regiments may be made Baluchistan regiments, in reality as well as in name, by the enlistment of only local men, but that a third battalion may also be raised to complete the centre. It is a curious thing that in England we have been doing our utmost to make our regiments territorial, and yet in India, where we have our local and territorial regiments we do just the contrary.

The Brahuis and Baluchis in the Mekran Levy Corps are hardy tribesmen, inured from early youth to long distance rides, and who in time of war would make excellent scouts, and would also be reliable men in case of internal disturbance in India. We have, at present, three Baluch regiments in the Indian Army, but they have only two companies of Baluchis each instead of eight, and the system of recruitment by recruiting-parties under non-commissioned officers is not of the

best. The real way to get the right stamp of men is to obtain the help and co-operation of the Sirdars and chiefs of tribes by getting them to give a son, a brother, or a cousin of their own as a native officer, with the required complement of their own tribesmen as sepoys. These tribesmen, doubtless, are wild and unused to discipline and inclined to break the bonds of restraint ; but one has to remember that the generation which knew not the British Government has not yet passed away. The wildness is gradually wearing off, and the generation to come will probably take to discipline without a murmur. Thus the day is not far distant when Baluchistan will become a most valuable recruiting-ground, and every penny spent now in raising local levy corps, and in thus inducing a spirit of discipline amongst the people, will bear good fruit hereafter. Indeed, without levy corps properly armed and disciplined under the command of British officers—something after the fashion of the old Punjab Frontier Force when first raised—I do not see how the district officers in Baluchistan can be expected to maintain proper control over their frontiers in peace time, or throughout their districts in time of war, when the regular troops will be called away. The police maintained in Baluchistan are mostly enlisted in India, and are employed almost entirely on the railway line and at head-quarters of districts and Tehsils, and it is properly armed levies or militia that we have to look to for the preservation of law and order in the outlying districts and along the frontier, where Indian police and regular troops are equally out of place.

The raising of the Mekran Levy Corps and the appointment of an assistant to the political agent of Kalat for the special charge of Mekran, was one of

Lord Curzon's last administrative measures before I left Baluchistan ; in fact I stayed on as long as possible in order to see the measure through. At present, Mekran is ruled by an uncle of the principal Sarawan Sirdar under the supervision of the political agent ; but the hold of the Nazim, as he is styled, over the country is not sufficient to enable him to carry out reforms or to introduce really efficient administration, and the sanction for the raising of a local levy corps to guard the frontier from Persian raids, and for the appointment of a British officer to control our frontier relations and to support the Nazim in his administration and facilitate trade, will, I hope, have most beneficent results.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, let us turn to the western or external frontiers of the province. If you follow me on the map, you will see that on the north we first of all have to deal with the Waziri country—that hitherto lawless tract which has given so much trouble in former years, and whose people have been so prone to raids. Since the Mahsud-Waziri blockade, the one frontier operation during Lord Curzon's viceroyalty, things have mended greatly, though the danger of fresh outbreaks is always present. Leaving the Gumal River at Domandi we come to Afghan territory, and this extends for no less a distance than some 650 miles of frontier in a general south-westerly direction till we come to Koh-i-Malik Siah on the Persian frontier—the small hill that marks the tribeyt of our Indian Empire, Persia, and Afghanistan.

The Baluchistan frontier, on its northern side, is guarded by a chain of posts held by the Zhob Levy Corps, extending from the Gumal Pass on the Waziri border on the north-east, down along the Afghan border to the confines of the Zhob district, to the north of Hindabagh,

on the south-west. The large tract of highland country along this portion of the Afghan border is known as Kakar Khorasan, and is a wild and comparatively little known part of Baluchistan, standing at an elevation of between 6,000 and 7,000 feet above sea-level, and almost entirely cut off from the rest of the district throughout the winter months. In spring and early summer it is one vast grazing ground, inhabited by numbers of nomads with their herds of camels and sheep ; but during the winter it is almost entirely deserted, except for the small settlements that are gradually springing up around the Zhob Levy Corps' outposts. I was much struck by the almost entire absence of cultivation when I travelled through this country ; but the efforts that I directed to be made to induce cultivators to settle there, will, I hope, show good results.

Another similar upland tract of country to the West of Kakar Khorasan is known as Toba, and stretches along the northern side of the Peshin district. This similarly is thickly occupied in summer, but is mostly deserted in winter when the majority of the Achakzai tribesmen move down into Afghan territory on the Western borders of the Registan Desert. This divided population, living one half of the year in British territory and the other half in Afghan territory, is one of the main causes of trouble on this part of the frontier. The original fault was the rendition to the Amir after the termination of the Afghan war of the small district called Shorawak, a little tract of land lying at the foot of the Khwajah Amran range and between that and the Registan desert. This outlying bit of territory had been taken over by us with Peshin under the treaty of Gundamak and had been administered by us for some years, and it would have been much more

politic both for the British and Afghan Governments had we retained Shorawak and constituted the Registan desert as the boundary between British territory and Kandahar. As it is, any man with a grievance, real or fancied, whether about family matters, land, cattle, wife, betrothal or anything whatsoever, has only to cross over the Afghan Border and raid back to his heart's content; whereas were the desert the frontier, he would, at any rate, have to go to the other side of it and he would thus be too far away to do much harm. You may have noticed reports of raids on this frontier in the papers, and though the border is now far, far quieter in this respect than when I first went to Baluchistan sixteen years ago, still there is always the possibility of trouble, and I trust the Government of India will eventually come to my opinion that the best way to put a stop to these local disturbances is to garrison the Peshin frontier with a properly organized local Levy Corps under British officers, as has already been done further north in Zhob. I should like to see, not only a Peshin Levy Corps, but a Chagai Levy Corps and another corps for service in the Loralai and Sibi districts as well.

Following the frontier westwards, the boundary line passes through desert uninhabited country. In the Chagai Hills half way along this portion of the frontier there is an elevated bit of land known as Barabchah, some 5,000 feet or so above the sea level, where it may be possible to live in the summer out of the great heat and constant dust-storms of the plains below, but unfortunately only half of this little plateau belongs to us, as the boundary line runs through the middle of it. The original frontier in this part of the country, ran along the northern edge of the desert only some eight or ten miles to the south of the Helmund, but for some

unexplainable reason the Government of India permitted the late Amir to occupy and subsequently to claim the country all this way to the south and finally gave it to him, and, as in the case of Shorawak, we have had cause to rue it ever since. Instead of having a comparatively straight run for our Persian trade-route from Nushki to Seistan, which might possibly have been arranged in exchange for the concessions given elsewhere if the Government of India of that day could only have been induced to take the question up, merchants and traders have now to go all the way round by Koh-i-Malik Siah, and this of itself is a serious hindrance to trade.

From Koh-i-Malik Siah, the Persian frontier commences and this runs for some 350 miles in a general southerly direction to the sea at Gwettar. This frontier too has had almost as many vicissitudes in its settlement as the Afghan frontier I have just referred to. The first portion from Koh-i-Malik Siah to Jalk is only a paper frontier and has not yet been locally demarcated. In the Teheran Agreement negotiated by Sir Mortimer Durand in 1895, it was laid down that the boundary was to run in a straight line from Jalk to Koh-i-Malik Siah and that in any deviation in local demarcation Persia was not to have more land than would be comprised in such a straight line. Just as the Amir was permitted to advance fresh claims after the Kabul Agreement in the case of the Helmund boundary, so was the Persian Government permitted to advance fresh claims after the Teheran agreement in the case of the Jalk boundary, and the final result has yet to be seen.

It is a curious thing but we have given way to Persian aggressiveness in almost every instance that I can think of along the Persian frontier. Take the case of Kuhak, which you see marked on the map a little

below Jalk. Kuhak was in dispute so long ago as the time of the Goldsmid Mission of 1872. It was then decided that it belonged to Kalat, and not to Persia. Despite this Persia subsequently occupied it by force of arms. The Government of India submitted to the occupation and Kuhak has remained Persian to the present day. We reap the loss of it now when Kuhak is blossoming into importance as a station on the new Central Persian Telegraph line, which will, in future, become our main line of telegraphic communication between England and India.

The aggressiveness shewn by Persia in overrunning the country now known as Persian Baluchistan is only of comparatively recent date. A large portion of this country, more especially near the coast, formerly owed its allegiance to the Arab rulers of Muscat, and other places were nominally under Kalat, but the Arabs were gradually ousted and so was the influence of the Khan of Kalat, and the result is that we now have a Persian Baluchistan bordering on a British Baluchistan, and there has been much friction resulting from this dual control.

The story of the pacification of the country on our side of the Border—the country shown as Mekran on the map—takes us back only a few years. This is not the time to enter into an account of all Sir Robert Sandeman's endeavours to bring Mekran under proper Government, or the various ups and downs that the Mekran administration has gone through of late years, or the successive expeditions that have been necessary to punish outrages. The last of these expeditions occurred at the end of 1901 and I mention it to show what little control Persia has over its so called Baluchistan subjects. A Mekran outlaw was able to collect a

body of no less than some 500 men formed of contingents from the leading Baluch chiefs on the Persian side of the border and to invade Mekran and to attack and plunder a village called Kuntdar carrying off loot to the value of a lakh of rupees or more. The Persian Government were unable to punish the offenders, and while we were vainly demanding the restitution of the stolen property, some of these very raiders returned and took possession of one of the little mud forts, of which there are so many in Mekran, known as Nodiz in the Kej valley. The Nazim of Mekran lost no time in assembling his men and surrounding this fort and there I found him when I arrived on the scene. I think it was the fifty-third day of the siege when I appeared and the Nazim had then no less than 1,000 men round the fort.

Major Showers, the Political Agent of Kalat, had been directed to march across country with a couple of mountain guns and a small cavalry escort, while I myself met him at Turbat in Kej with a couple of companies of Infantry by the sea route viâ Karachi and Gwadar. Major Showers, leaving the guns to follow, rode on to join me and we went on to Nodiz together. The scene there was a curious one. In a ring outside the fort were the various parties of the Nazim's Mekranis in shelters and trenches of sorts and the raiders defiant within: and so they might have remained to this day for all they could do to each other had we not appeared on the scene. As soon as the guns came up in the early morning of the following day, the men and mules had just an hour or so to water and feed—thinking nothing of having been on the march all night—and off we all went against the fort; the Nazim's men being told to stand fast in their shelters.

One thing that we badly require in India, for use against mud towers and small forts in country where no wheeled artillery can go, is a jointed howitzer or some sort of gun capable of throwing a heavy shell and yet made in pieces light enough to be carried on camels. I tried my best to induce the Military Department in India to take this question up and to supply Quetta with such a gun but without result, I regret to say. In the case of Nodiz the mountain guns were practically useless against the walls of the fort and could only knock down some of the battlements, but the fire of the outlaws, though hot for a time, was reduced by the gallantry of the storming party who got in by a hole in the wall, and the guns being brought up to close quarters, finally battered down the building inside held by the last of the raiders and the fort was ours. The two British officers who led the storming party were seriously wounded and a few of our men were killed and wounded, but the almost instantaneous attack and capture of the place combined with the death or capture of all the raiders, so different in promptness and decision to the tactics of the people themselves during the two months preceeding our arrival, had an extraordinary effect through the country generally and I may say that Mekran has remained quiet ever since.

Major Showers subsequently proceeded into Persia with the troops who had captured Nodiz, where the Persian Governor-General of Kirman met him with a body of Persian troops, and the united forces then marched through the country and exacted reparation for the plunder of Kuntidar. Without the support of the British troops the Persians could never have done this, and though the Indian Government has always gone out of its way to assist and support the Persian Government in every possible manner, and, as in this case, even went to

large expense to do the work that the Persian Government ought to have done for itself, I have never yet seen a case in which any gratitude has been shown to us by the Persian Government, or in which anything but obstruction has been shown to British officials and traders. The trouble and worry that has been given to our officers and traders in Seistan alone during the last few years has filled volumes. We have been doing everything we could in India to open up trade through Nushki with Persia, but hitherto every Persian official has been against us, and the wonder is that trade has been carried on so well as it has. Whatever results have been obtained, have been obtained by the dogged perseverance and patience of our Indian political service consular officers.

In Mekran itself the opening of the port of Pasni will, I think, do much to facilitate trade. Lord Curzon visited Pasni at the conclusion of his memorable tour round the Persian Gulf in December, 1903, and held a Durbar there, at which I was present together with the political agent and all the Mekran Sirdars and head-men. His Excellency the Viceroy's speech, on that occasion, is one that will be long remembered by the latter. Since that date the road from Pasni to Turbat, Bolida, Panjgur, and Ladgasht, has been, or is being, opened up, and the question of the erection of a small landing-stage at Pasni was being favourably considered by the Government of India when I left. If this landing-stage is built, Pasni will become the port of the Mekran coast, and will soon outrival Gwadar, which is a foreign port belonging to Muscat, and which only obtained pre-eminence owing to the fact that in former years it was the only port of call on the whole Mekran coast. The British India steamers now call regularly at Pasni ; various

traders have settled there, including several from Gwadar, and amongst other results, the Customs contract for the first two years, went up from 9,000 to 16,000 rupees. With a seaport of its own, Mekran trade is sure to go ahead. We must not forget either the military importance of the road now being opened up, giving us direct lateral communication from the sea to Eastern Persia, and Southern Afghanistan.

One of the most serious questions on the Persian Baluchistan coast is the import of arms from Muscat. When I was last at Muscat in 1902, a French trader was established at the place, through whom thousands of rifles and thousands of rounds of ammunition were annually imported. These were run across the Arabian Sea in native dhows, and landed in the secluded creeks along the Persian coast. The Persian authorities are unable to prevent this. Not only is every fort in Persian Baluchistan, and there are some very strong ones there, now filled with arms of precision, but the result is that the Persian Government in the future will be incapable of controlling the country on their side of the border. Disturbances may break out there at any time, and we have to consider what the effect may be on our own administration in Mekran. The British Government is doing its best to help the Persian Government, in aiding it, by every means in its power, to prevent the importation of arms and ammunition, but the question is one of difficulty from a treaty point of view, and until the French Government consents to measures for the prevention of the import of arms into Muscat, comparatively little can really be done. Here again we are apparently suffering from the inability of our Government officials to look ahead, and to provide for future contingencies. Muscat and Zanzibar were originally one,

and anybody who is familiar with the history of those two Sultanates, will remember how the French treaty of 1863 applied to both. When that portion of the treaty regarding Zanzibar was abrogated in return for the French occupation of Madagascar, there can be little doubt that, had the opportunity been taken to include Muscat in the negotiations, we might have effected an Agreement that would have saved us not only from our present difficulties, but from various others that have arisen there before this, and have given rise to much friction.

It is not Persia alone, though, that is affected by this trade. You may have noticed by an article in yesterday's *Times* headed 'Rifle-selling in the Middle East,' that attention has now been drawn to the fact that a number of Martinis, with an Arabic inscription on them, have been imported into Afghanistan from the Persian Gulf, and are finding their way to the tribal country on the north-west frontier of India, where they are being sold at less than half of what was formerly the cost of such a rifle. This is most serious for India, and every effort will have to be made to prevent the trans-frontier tribesmen obtaining breech loading weapons so cheaply, if the peace of the country is to be maintained.

It is true we have had a Hague Arbitration lately, on the right of Muscat dhows to fly the French flag, but we can only hope that this will be followed up by the further action necessary to get at the root of the present evil regarding the importation of arms.

Now to turn to Russia.

We have had various communications in the newspapers of late on the subject of an understanding between England and Russia, and any understanding with Russia regarding Persia or Afghanistan naturally affects

Baluchistan. One of the first of these communications was a telegram from the *Times* correspondent at St. Petersburg, published on October 14 last, in which a Russian advocate of such an understanding, stated that Russia sought no modification whatever of the *status quo* in Afghanistan or Tibet ; that as regards Persia, Russian policy was the policy of the open door, and as regards Afghanistan, Russia strictly adhered to existing treaties.

Another of these communications was an article by a Russian writer, described by the Paris correspondent of the *Times* in his telegram to that paper, published on November 22 last. The Russian writer stated that ' the understanding would comprise a formal Russian guarantee of the inviolability of India and Afghanistan : a delimitation of purely commercial spheres of influence in Persia : an understanding concerning Turkish affairs, in which England would support the traditional policy of Russia, and settle in agreement with Russia, France, Austria and Italy, the Armenian, Cretan, Syrian, and Macedonian questions : while coming to a negative understanding as to the completion of the Baghdad railway for the exclusive advantage of the Germans.'

A further telegram to the *Times*, dated Paris, December 31, says that the bases of an understanding have already been arrived at, and if domestic peace is restored to Russia, the agreement decided on in principle would be immediately concluded, based on mutual concessions by the two contracting parties.

Now nothing is said as to what these mutual concessions are to consist of, and in none of the communications have the Russian writers apparently offered us anything we have not got already. If the proposed Russian ' formal guarantee of the inviolability of India and Afghan-

istan' is to consist of nothing more than the paper it is written on, I do not see that we are likely to be any better off than we are at present. No one would welcome a really friendly understanding with Russia more than myself. No people can be more friendly to the Britisher than the Russians in Russia, and no one has received greater kindness than I have from Russians in Russia. It is only when we meet Russians outside Russia that our interests clash, and mutual susceptibilities are aroused, and if any understanding can be arrived at, by which the clashing of our respective interests in the Near East, the Middle East, and the Far East can in the future be avoided, a great advance will be made ; but the guarantee must be of practical value, and the concessions really mutual. An offer simply not to break existing treaties is not of itself a sufficient inducement to call for concessions on our part. All nations, too, are probably already agreed that the Baghdad Railway should not be constructed 'for the exclusive advantage of the Germans,' and considering the overwhelming preponderance of British interests in the Persian Gulf, and the importance to India of a railway from the head of the Gulf to Baghdad in connection with the large pilgrim traffic between India and the Holy places at Kerbela and elsewhere near Baghdad, it is only natural that the British share in the Baghdad Railway scheme should be the construction of the portion from the eastern terminus on the Persian Gulf up to the point where the line enters the northern confines of the Baghdad Government. When we consider what India did in the construction of the Uganda Railway, it is clear that no Government in the world could build a railway through Turkish Arabia so cheaply and so well as the Indian Government.

Regarding railways in Persia—Colonel Beresford in his lecture on ‘Russian Railways towards India,’ in December last, told us that the projected Russian line through Persia was to run from Julfa, past Tabriz, to Teheran. From there the main line was to run east to Meshed, Herat, Farah, and thence onwards in two branches, one to Seistan and the other to Kandahar ; while from Teheran another line was to run south to Kum, Isfahan, and Shiraz, and thence to Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf.

The first line from Meshed to Herat, Seistan and Kandahar, need not be considered here. The Amir of Afghanistan, we all know, is averse to railways in his country.

Regarding the second line, I cannot help thinking, despite the dotted lines on the Russian map exhibited by Colonel Beresford, that the Isfahan, Shiraz, Bandar Abbas line is not the only project that has been considered by Russia. Bandar Abbas does not appear to me to be the only port on the Persian Gulf that the Russians have had an eye on. Indeed, I am inclined to think that Chahbar has been the real objective that the Russians have had in view. So long as Afghanistan is closed to railways, any Russian line from their Central Asian railways to the south, must run entirely through Persian territory, and instead of the proposed Meshed, Herat, Farah, Seistan line, described by Colonel Beresford, we may, I think, substitute a line taking off from the Transcaspian Railway somewhere about Doshakh, or from the Merv-Kushk Railway and running down the eastern border of Persia, skirting the Seistan Hamuns by Behrang and along the foot of the Palang Koh Range, and thence on southwards to Chahbar.

I have traversed the country between Meshed and

Herat on the north and Seistan and Farah on the south, four times by four different routes, and I know of no impediment to a railway there. South of Seistan to Chahbar the country is little known, but I have never heard of anything to lead me to suppose that the difficulties there are insuperable ; and of one thing we may be very sure, and that is, by taking this route railway engineers would avoid the tremendous and sudden drop from the plateau to the coast that is experienced between Shiraz and Bushire for instance, and also the difficulties through the mountains between Kirman and Bundar Abbas. It may be said that a line through these desert regions of Eastern Persia would never pay, but then we have to remember that Russian railways are made for strategic not for commercial purposes, and the Russian Government, if once embarked on any hostile policy, would certainly not be debarred from railway making by any commercial considerations.

Now, if railways are ever to be made in Persia, Russia and India will each naturally claim to have the making of them within, what the Russian writer above referred to was pleased to term, the respective Russian and British 'purely commercial spheres of influence.' If Russia and England are to have such spheres, the British sphere will, of course, extend from the southern borders of Khorasan near Turbat-i-Haidari and Khaf on the east, across the middle of the great salt desert to the westward, somewhere along the line of the thirty-fourth or thirty-fifth degree of latitude, including on our side the Kain Kirman, Isfahan and Kirmanshah provinces. I mention Turbat-i-Haidari and Khaf on purpose, because to the south of those places there is a desert tract marked by a small salt marsh, called Nimaksar, which forms the frontier between Khorasan on the north, and Tabas, Kain,

Birjand and Seistan on the south, and these four districts, which are all held by members of one family, that of the old Amir of Kain of Goldsmid's days, all fall within the British commercial sphere. The great salt desert is the natural divide of Persia, and should any railways be required in the British sphere to the south of this in the future, they should naturally be in British hands. Russia would not consent to British railway guards garrisoning Khorasan just on the border of her Central Asian possessions ; and similarly England could not agree to the presence in Kain, or anywhere on our side of the desert, of Russian troops as railway guards—such guards, for instance, as not so long ago, were quartered in Manchuria ; and just as Mr. Balfour in his memorable speech of May last, stated that any railway construction by Russia in Afghanistan should be considered an unfriendly act to us, so should any railway constructed by Russia in the south or eastern portions of Persia that I have described, be equally considered an unfriendly act, and resented accordingly.

A final telegram from St. Petersburg, on the subject of Anglo-Russian relations, appeared in the *Times* so late as this day week. The correspondent then stated that Anglo-Russian relations were once more receiving attention in the Russian press, and that the *Slovo*, in a series of articles, declared that an understanding with England was possible only on condition that Great Britain offered serious concessions regarding Southern Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet ; secondly, that an intention seemed to be indicated on the part of the Russian Government to devote greater attention to Persian affairs, and that this was entirely borne out by the views prevailing in Russian military circles ; thirdly, that the chief of the Central Asiatic section of the general staff, in a recent lecture,

dwelt upon the necessity of co-ordinating the efforts of Russia's army and her diplomacy, in order to reach warm water in the Persian Gulf.

This lecture was delivered before a military society in St. Petersburg, and a résumé of it was published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of the 7th inst. It is well worth the attention of all interested in Central Asian politics as a type of the spirit, that I regret to see, is being shown by Russian officers of the present day. The lecture, which is rightly described by the *Pall Mall Gazette* as an 'extraordinary address,' consists of one long tirade against the Indian Government, which is said to be a system of 'piracy tempered by trade,' a 'robber government,' 'condemned for its cruelty and injustice,' which 'evoked the hatred of the population'; while the relations of the British towards the Indians, are said to be those of 'cattle-drovers with their cattle.'

I have hitherto always given it as my opinion, that the more British officers in India and Russian officers in Central Asia met each other and travelled in each other's territories, the more we should each learn to appreciate the work the other was doing, and the higher the respect we should each have for the other, and I must confess I am sadly disappointed to find that Colonel Snyesareff's visit to India has resulted in nothing better than the out-pouring of this bitter feeling towards the English in India now described in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. We Indian officers who know and love India, and have many Indian friends, well realize the true and fervent loyalty that pervades all that is good amongst the Indian chiefs and people; as indeed has been fully instanced by the warm attachment to the British throne that has been so strikingly displayed throughout the present tour of their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of

Wales. We can therefore afford to view with disdain such utterances as those I have referred to, but what we cannot afford to treat with neglect, are the unfriendly sentiments that inspire such utterances. Colonel Snyesareff, so the St. Petersburg correspondent of the *Pall Mall Gazette* says, is 'an officer of the Liberal school who will occupy a high position at the Russian War Office in case the liberalization of Russian institutions becomes an accomplished fact.' Any Russian officer in power, who is imbued with such sentiments towards the Government of India as Colonel Snyesareff has so lately given public utterance to, can only be looked upon, by those who would welcome a friendly understanding with Russia, as a public danger, and the lecture only shows how little, apparently, we can really rely on friendly co-operation with Russia in the Middle East. There have been other references, in the papers of late, to the agitation in Russia for the acquisition of what is now called a 'military port' in the Persian Gulf, and however disappointing this agitation may be to those who hoped for more friendly relations, it just shows us how necessary it is for us to maintain to the full our vigilance in upholding British interests in Eastern and Southern Persia and throughout the Persian Gulf.

DISCUSSION.

COLONEL SIR T. H. HOLDICH, in opening the discussion, said : Colonel Yate's address presents several very interesting points for discussion. I will, if you will allow me on this occasion, say what I have to say first, and leave Colonel Yate to do the summing up. In the first place, I am entirely in agreement with Colonel Yate in his expression of opinion as to the value of the Baluchi if he can be enrolled in the ranks of the Indian army for the defence of his country. I have always maintained that the defence of the Indian frontier is a Mahommedan problem, and that it appeals to the Mahommedan peoples of India principally. We have at least forty millions of Mahommedans within the limits of India on whom to draw to assist us in the defence of their faith and their principles ; and I confess I cannot see where the difficulty as regards numbers would arise if it became necessary to raise the necessary force. I take it the people of Baluchistan are amongst the best for the purpose of active campaigning. They have not as yet lost the savage instinct of fighting ; and they show every disposition to make excellent soldiers. Neither do I see any particular danger in making a regiment entirely Baluchi instead of there being only one or two companies ; provided, of course, that the dangerous policy is not adopted of locating several Baluchi regiments together.

To take another point in Colonel Yate's lecture. As regards Russian railways southwards to the Persian Gulf, we have had every proposition laid before us as to which way such railways might be run. Regarding the physical obstacles which lie between Seistan and the coast, Colonel Yate says he believes there is no insuperable difficulty. In my opinion it would be an exceedingly troublesome district to cross by any line ; I take it that in the whole Russian system there is no section of railway line so difficult as that would be, excepting, perhaps, a part of their Trans-Caspian line which passes south of Lake Baikal. But if we admit that they succeed in pushing railways down to the Persian Gulf, I fail to see what advantage they would gain.

If a commercial port should be founded they would only be offering it as hostage for their good behaviour to England so long as we hold the sea. If they want more than that: if they select a spot for another Port Arthur, I take it that other nations would have something to say before anything so aggressive could be constructed. And even then such a port would be of little value to them unless they had command of the sea. Russia has found some little difficulty in getting command of the sea; and I think the time is very far off yet before she will make great progress in that direction. I think myself we have nothing to fear at present, whatever her paper projects may be. We have nothing to fear for a long time to come from any projected railways southward to the Persian Gulf.

There is just one other point to which I should like to refer, though it is a matter which is perhaps slightly technical. But at the same time I do not think it always receives due consideration; and that is touching the nature of boundaries.

Colonel Yate explained just now that of the boundaries of Baluchistan there was one section extending from Malik Siah to Jalk which was undemarcated. I can hardly agree to that statement, seeing the records of that boundary from point to point which were completed by the Perso-Baluch Commission. One of these reports exists at Teheran, and another exists at the Foreign Office or the India Office—I should be afraid to say at which. There were certainly two of them. In those reports every single mile of that boundary will be found duly registered. And that boundary has this rather unusual advantage, that in the first place it is almost absolutely coincident with the hypothetical boundary which was laid down by the agreement between Sir Mortimer Durand and the Shah of Persia. I do not think it differs more than a mile or two here and there. It is in this respect very different indeed from some other parts of the boundary to which Colonel Yate referred, where, in the course of the actual demarcation, the position has been shifted some seventy miles south of the line of the original agreement.

Another advantage of that boundary is found in the magnificent line of hills, which define it like a wall from Malik Siah nearly to Jalk. Where the Kharan desert ends there is the end of Kharan territory. Where the hills commence (at any rate, where anything in the shape of cultivation commences) there is the commencement of Persia. Of all the many sections of

that Afghan and Persian boundary which I have seen, I consider there is none quite so strong or quite so self-evident as that natural boundary which any one may see when fifty miles away from the Baluch desert.

What I think Colonel Yate meant was that there are no outward and visible demarcation marks left. That is not only possible but very probable. But in that case the boundary is only in the position of many another boundary which we have taken infinite pains to demarcate. Of the Zulikar-Oxus boundary I take it that there is not a single pillar left of all that we took pains to erect. Yet that boundary has maintained its position, and is respected, so far as I know, on both sides. Of the boundary pillars which I know Sir Henry McMahon took pains to put up in the desert south of the Helmund I suspect not a vestige remains.

LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR EDWIN COLLEN: The first remark I would like to make is in regard to the enlistment of Baluchis. When I was in India I was a strong advocate of the enlistment of Baluchis in our regular regiments; but, unfortunately, we were always told that they could not be obtained. Now, I believe with the lecturer, that the first step towards this is their enlistment into local levies; and by a process of accustoming them to a certain amount of discipline we might gradually remove what has been for long a great objection in their minds, and that is being uniformed and being subjected to the rigid rules of discipline. If we could increase the number of Baluchis in the army we should, I believe, attain a great political object, and we should have a counterpoise to the other constituents of the army which would be of great importance. Colonel Yate rather spoke of the territorialization of regiments as being objected to in India, while it was the cardinal principle at home. I may remind you that there are in the Indian army a certain number of regiments which may be called territorial regiments, and that the policy which we endeavoured to bring into force after the year 1885 was that each regiment in India should have its regimental home in, or as near as possible to, the area from which it was recruited, because we believed the system would afford the greatest possible contentment to the soldier, and would conduce in many other ways to the efficiency of the army. We have seen the separation of the Bengal army by territorial limits—that is to say, making the Punjab army distinct from the

Hindustani or the Bengal army—retaining the Western army of the Marathas and other races, and the Southern army of Madras. My opinion is that recently that territorial distinction has been departed from, and may possibly constitute a danger. I have made these remarks so that it might not be thought that I entirely agree with Colonel Yate in his apparent opinion that our military policy in India neglected to take count of the advantages of applying the territorial principle within certain limits.

SIR LEPEL GRIFFIN: One remark on the point raised by Colonel Yate on territorial local levies. No doubt he is absolutely right, and the Baluchis will efficiently perform the particular service required of them. But with regard to Baluchi regiments outside Baluchistan, I think all persons in the room, like Sir Frederic Fryer, who thoroughly know Baluchistan and the frontier, will agree that the Baluchi is a man very difficult to detach from his own country, and that he has great objections to serving in a regiment with any but his own fellow-countrymen. The difference between the Afghans, Afridis, or Waziris, in the north and the Baluchis in the south is the difference of the whole world. The Baluchi is aristocratic in his government by local chiefs, as Colonel Yate has told us; and the Afghan is democratic, giving little or no authority to tribal chiefs—as independent and democratic in his procedure as the majority of the present House of Commons. The Baluchi will not serve outside his own country; and this is the difficulty which will always confront those who wish to enlist these most estimable soldiers and very agreeable men, who have no defect which might not be removed by a little washing.

SIR FREDERIC FRYER: My connection with Baluchistan ended a great many years ago; in fact, it is more than twenty years since I served on that frontier; and certainly in my time, as far as I can recollect, the Baluchis were not disposed to serve in the regular army, though they made excellent soldiers in local levies. I remember in the Afghan War I had 700 Baluchis serving under me, and they did excellent service. They did all the escort work, and they relieved the troops of all trouble in connection with transport and commissariat. They were a most useful body of men; but then they were serving as irregulars. In those days we made several attempts to get the Baluchis to enlist in the regular army, and some were persuaded to do so.

But they did not like discipline ; and the thing they particularly disliked was serving away from their homes. I remember that Colonel McLean of the 1st Punjab Cavalry took a great interest in this subject, and he succeeded in enlisting all, or part of a troop from the Gurchani tribe ; and they went with the regiment to the Afghan War. When they got as far as Khelat, they were told to build feeding troughs for their horses ; but they promptly left the regiment and came back again. When they returned to my district I said there must be some mistake, for no true Baluchi would turn back from facing the enemy, and their chief turned them out of his tribe. As a matter of fact, they were good fighting men, but they felt the absence from their homes. It is a pity, for they would make excellent soldiers, especially in the Cavalry, because all Baluchis are horsemen from their youth up ; and I have always thought that if Baluchi mounted men could be drafted into Cavalry regiments, they would be found to be much of the same nature as Cossacks, because they can march for very long distances and carry everything they require with them. They want no tents ; and as to supplies very little will satisfy them for many days. For that reason I think they would always make most excellent light cavalry. The Baluchis now, perhaps, are not so well off as in my day. In my time no Baluchi wanted money very much. They had all they required, and thus they had very little temptation to serve away from their own homes. I listened with great interest to Colonel Yate's lecture, for I came to learn something of Baluchistan affairs in the present day.

THE EARL OF RONALDSHAY: I do not wish to add anything to what has been said ; but I would like to ask two questions.

Colonel Yate has told us that this boundary on the North of Baluchistan has been demarcated 70 miles South of the Durand Agreement with the Amir of Afghanistan ; and he has told us that the route between Nushki and Seistan has been elongated in consequence. Baluchistan to start with is anything but an attractive country from the physical point of view. The Baluchis have a proverb that when the Lord made the earth He used the refuse to make Baluchistan, and Sir Thomas Holdich himself has described it as 'a crude and unfinished corner of Asia.' The line followed by the present trade route is a sufficiently desert one, and I have vivid recollections of travelling frequently with only salt water to drink, in spite of the new wells sunk by

the Indian Government. But I believe the route North of the present one is even more of a desert of sand, and I would like to ask whether this large expanse of water here which I believe is known as the Gaud-i-Zarih, extends so far as is shown in the map, or whether that is an eccentricity of the draughtsman. If it is so large, how could a route pass over it?

Only another question in regard to the Persian railway. I should like to have it decided once for all by a competent authority, whether it would be possible for Russia to build a railway from Meshed to Seistan. Sir Thomas Holdich thought the chief difficulties would be found between Seistan and the Persian Gulf. But, travelling up this line of country myself, I am bound to say I was struck with the extreme difficulty which a railway engineer would encounter if it was decided to build a line from Meshed to Seistan. For instance, there are large ranges of mountains there, not marked on this map, which run parallel to one another and transversely across the route. That is a point which I am anxious to elucidate. I would like to ask a competent engineer like Sir T. Holdich whether he thinks it would be possible to build a railway from Meshed to Seistan; and, if possible, whether it would be at all likely that it could be made to pay?

COLONEL SIR HENRY McMAHON: The reader of this interesting and able paper, has, in the course of his remarks, referred to the Northern boundary of Baluchistan, which he said was 650 miles from the Gomal to Persia. But it is really 800 miles in length. The deviation in its course West of Chaman was explained by him as caused by the surrender of Shorawak to Afghanistan after we gave up Kandahar. Colonel Yate has particularly referred to this portion of the boundary line in which I must explain I am personally interested as having demarcated it from end to end. He said this line was in places some miles south of the line laid down by Sir Mortimer Durand, in the Kabul Agreement; and the President, Sir Thomas Holdich, in ably defending his own Perso-Baluch boundary also mentioned this line as being 70 miles south of the Durand Agreement line. Well, I wish to correct that small mistake. It is of no great importance; but even a worm will turn, and I am rather proud of this boundary line, though it does run through peculiarly ugly country, as the last speaker has said. It is not 70 miles below any agreement line. There was no line laid down defi-

nately as a boundary line at the time of Sir Mortimer Durand's Boundary Agreement. It was agreed that the boundary was to be a tribal one. We then knew very little about the limits of the tribes; and a rough line was sketched on the agreement map. I myself drew that line at Kabul, and it was put in with a generous margin, and I drew the Western portion of it well inside Afghanistan. That agreement has been adhered to. My instructions were to find out the tribal boundaries as we went along—*i.e.*, the limits of the tribe on either side, and demarcate accordingly. The line, as demarcated, is the actual tribal boundary line between the tribes owing allegiance to the Amir and those whom we recognised as coming under ourselves; and it may be reassuring to you to know that no country was given away to Afghanistan. On the contrary, at that time the Afghans had long had a garrison of troops at Chagai, and had their outposts at Galichah and Panihan, which are some 80 miles south of the present boundary. These they had to withdraw when the line was demarcated. Then, as to the boundary pillars, built along my line. They are still in existence, because they are carefully repaired and white-washed every year. I do not see why the same method of maintaining boundary pillars should not be adopted with regard to any other boundary line on which boundary pillars may have been erected.

In reply to the last speaker, as to the relative delights of travelling along the present trade route and the direct route northwards. Well, there is not much to choose between them. At present, owing to the present trade road being marked out, and having rest houses and *thanas* along it, it is much to be preferred to striking a line across the desert. Of the two the Southern road is more roundabout; and the other is shorter. On the other hand the Southern route is the easiest to traverse throughout the whole year, taking both summer and winter into consideration.

LIEUT.-COLONEL A. C. YATE: I have had some experience of this country, having travelled through it in 1884 with the Commission under Colonel J. W. (now Sir West) Ridgeway. The Amir at that time had no outposts at Chagai or south of it. His territory was then limited, as far as Thurenter, to the basin of the Helmund. The Amir evidently took a lesson from the Panjdeh incident of March, 1885, and prior to the Durand Mission to Kabul had pushed his outposts considerably to the

south. The time was when Kalat and the territory around it was tributary to the rulers of Kabul and Kandahar. The Amir sought to re-establish the *status quo ante*, and the Government of India appears to have partially admitted the validity of his claim. This has cost us the most direct route from Nushki to Seistan and Meshed. This route the Afghan Boundary Commission traversed in 1884; and, with the exception of the waterless tract, fifty-six miles broad, from Galichah to Pulalak on the Helmund, the route was practicable for caravans.

As regards the Perso-Baluch frontier, settled some seven or eight years ago, by an Anglo-Persian Commission, I see three good reasons for considering that the boundary should have been laid down considerably to the west of its present position. Firstly, the Persian Government has shown itself incompetent to maintain order in these lawless Perso-Baluch marches, and so entailed on the Indian Government the trouble and expense of sending troops to do Persian work. Secondly, the existing boundary robs us of the best trade route from Pasni to Seistan. Thirdly, whatever is Persian territory is a possible field for Russian aims which are hostile to our interests. I am of opinion that neither of the two boundaries referred to above is satisfactory.

Having commanded a Baluch regiment and served in one for twenty-five years, I know something of the difficulty of enlisting Baluchis in the regular regiments of the Indian army. The majority of officers in the three Baluch battalions are indifferent or actively averse to the enlistment of Baluchis and Brahuis. Although those in high authority have appealed to them over and over again to do their best in the matter, that appeal has always been met in a very lukewarm manner. From this I except myself, for I have always done my best to encourage the enlistment of Baluchis. It was in the Afghan War of 1838-1842 that we had our first practical experience of the Baluch tribes. They commenced by harrying and looting Sir John Keane's baggage columns. We turned them into local levies, and paid them to protect our communications from Shikarpur to Quetta via the Bolan Pass. Nevertheless, they troubled us sorely, and handled our detachments severely. They showed ability in their tactics and courage in action, as Major Clibborn, Captain Browne ('Kahun' Browne) and Lieutenant Clarke and the troops under them there can testify.

This episode of border-fighting in the Marri and Bugti countries is one little known in these days, and yet fraught with romance. These merciless mountaineers let Captain Browne and his garrison march out of Kahun with the honours of war after a four months' siege. They promised to let them withdraw in safety, and kept their word. How many civilized conquerors have broken it on similar occasions? Brigadier-General John Jacob had both hatred and contempt for the Baluch; and certain it is, that he and his officers and men (the latter being Hindustani Mahomedans) of the Sind Irregular Horse thrashed them so soundly, whenever they came across them, that in a few years' time—from 1844 to 1847—Upper Sind no longer feared the Baluch raiders, who formerly harried it at their own sweet will. Seventy years of experience, however, of the tribes of Baluchistan has dispelled the prejudices cherished by General Jacob, but certainly not shared by Sir Charles Macgregor, who, some thirty years ago, travelled with Captain Lockwood through Baluchistan.

At the time of the Mutiny, a body of 500 Baluchis under Lieutenant Macaulay went to Central India, joined Sir Hugh Rose there, did good service, and returned laden with loot. Recently, at Karachi, I asked the permission of the Commissioner in Sind to see whatever correspondence could be found among his office records about the first and second Baluch Battalions raised by Sir Charles Napier. I was interested and surprised to find there a file recording a determined effort made in 1855-1856 by General Jacob to get those two regiments disbanded. The reason for this was, I take it, partly his dislike and mistrust of the Baluch and Pathan, and partly his desire to raise two local infantry corps at Jacobabad. I am glad to say that the Commander-in-Chief in Bombay put forward, in reply, such cogent arguments in favour of preserving Napier's two Baluch battalions, that Jacob failed in his attempt. Within twelve months—*i.e.*, in 1856-1858—the first battalion at Delhi and in Oudh, and the second battalion in the Persian Gulf, had amply justified their existence and proved their loyalty; for Jacob, among many other grave charges, impugned their loyalty. No two regiments in the past sixty years have done better service; and recently the third battalion (formerly Jacob's Rifles) won Viscount Kitchener's prize for the best regiment in the Indian Army.

Speaking from my own experience I have found the Baluch

and the Brahui good soldiers. I succeeded, under difficulties, in getting one or two men of good Baluch family into the regiment under my command as direct-commissioned native officers. But I fully experienced the difficulty to which one or two speakers have alluded, viz., the reluctance of these men to leave their families and homes, or the reluctance of their friends to let them go. Major Showers found me one very good fellow indeed, and he would have come as a native officer. But when his father was informed, he replied by letter, urging him on no account to leave his native land. I read the letter at the time, and I still keep it as a record of Baluch feeling on this point. To meet this difficulty we must get the men to enlist for service, at any rate at first, in their own country; and I feel that, in view of the political importance that Baluchistan is acquiring in face of Russian and German ambitions in the direction of the Persian Gulf, that we want to make the most of the Baluch and the Brahui as soldiers, above all as mounted infantry. They are born and bred mounted infantrymen.

MIR AYUB KHAN OF LAS BELA : With regard to the enlistment of the Baluchis, I agree that they do not like to depart from their own homes. I think the best way to meet the difficulty would be to induce the two leading chiefs, the Jam and the Khan of Kalat, to send their relatives to the Baluch regiments. That would go a great way towards inducing Baluchis to serve in the army, and thus help to defend Baluchistan should there be an invasion of India. I hope Sir Henry McMahon, when he goes back to take charge, will induce these leading chiefs to try their best in this way to defend the bulwark of India.

COLONEL C. E. YATE, in summing up, said : The only question apparently remaining unanswered is the one by Lord Ronaldshay regarding the mountains that would have to be crossed by a line of railway running down the Eastern frontier of Persia. My own idea is that a railway coming down along the frontier would have no great mountains to negotiate, as it would come down along comparatively open country. Just as the easiest line for a railway into Meshed is probably one from Doshakh round the end of the Kalat-i-Nadiri Hills, near Sarakhs, and up the valleys of the Hari Rud and the Keshef Rud, so probably the easiest line for a railway to Seistan would be from Sarakhs up the left bank of the Hari Rud as far as Karez, and thence past Hashtadan and round the final spurs of the Nishapur Hills at

the eastern ends of the Bakharz and Khaf valleys. To the south of that the country is open. There is nothing that I know of to impede a railway till the Palang Koh Hills are struck to the south-west of Seistan. Beyond that, as I said in my lecture, the country is little known, and the report of the railway engineer must be awaited, but so far as we do know there is no such drop there to the sea as there is further west.

The Gand-i-Zireh Hamun is, as Lord Ronaldshay remarked, shown on too large a scale on the map. The size of the lake varies with the seasons. In severe winters, when the snowfall has been large in the mountains of the Hazarahjat, floods pour down the Helmund. The two Hamuns to the north of Seistan become one vast lake, and this lake overflowing inundates the ground to the west of Seistan, and the water finally finds its way down the bed of the Shelah River into the Gaud-i-Zireh. We thus have the curious phenomenon of waters flowing in contrary directions within a few miles of each other.

I need not say anything more than what I have already said in my lecture regarding the Baluchistan boundaries, about which we have had some discussion.

As to the enlistment of Baluchis, which has been referred to by several speakers, it is the case that they will not serve permanently far away from their homes, nor do I see why we should wish them to do so. To my mind local territorial regiments are a great feature of strength to the Indian army, and it is the fact that the local system is being departed from, and that local regiments are being delocalized, which makes me think there is danger to the country. Sir Edwin Collen spoke of the steps taken in his time to localize regiments by the formation of regimental centres. In my opinion one battalion out of the three should always be stationed at the regimental centre, and if possible two. What with canal colonies, irrigation, railway, and other works that now cause such a great demand for labour all over India, and especially in the Punjab, the margin of men for enlistment is being rapidly narrowed, and every endeavour must be made to make military life acceptable to those that do enlist. The first thing a native wishes for is the chance of enlisting in a regiment with a fixed cantonment within a reasonable distance of his own home and family. I believe that the great safeguard of India is to be found in local regiments, enlisted locally, and as far as possible stationed locally in time of peace, though available for service

anywhere. The Sepoy will go anywhere, and do anything if only he is assured that within a certain time he will be permitted to return to his own cantonment. He will take his turn of service for two years, or four years, away in other parts, if only he knows that in due course he will get his turn near his own home, and that is why I say one battalion out of the three should always in rotation be quartered at the regimental centre.

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