General Narrative: Discussion

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Europeans—I believe even their names were unknown. Bongba is divided into twelve districts, with a Gova as chief of every one of them. It is a well-populated country, with a great many tents, sheep, and yaks; thus the district of Bongba-changma was said to have 300 tents. During such a year as this, when the grass is bad, as there was no rain in 1907, a great part of the nomads go north to the central plateau land where the grass is better.

The province is crossed by innumerable roads. I distinguished seven different sorts of roads—gold roads, salt roads, trade roads, administrative roads, pilgrims' roads, nomads' roads, and robbers' roads. The last category are practically no roads, as they go where nobody else is going. The Serpun-lam, or "the gold-inspectors' road," also called Ser-lam, or "the gold road," is one of the most important roads in all Tibet. It begins from Lhasa, crosses Guring-la, passes Shansa-dsong, goes south of Dangra-yum-tso, north of Teri-nam-tso and Tabie-tsaka, crosses the Surla range in Ka-la, and continues to Selipuk, Yumba-matsen, and Tok-jalung. The salt roads, or "Tsalam," converge from all parts of Tibet to Tabie-tsaka, and many of the Trans-Himalayan passes I have mentioned are taken by the salt caravans. By administrative roads I mean simply local tracks used by representatives of certain districts, who, on a certain day every year, come to a certain place where the Government officials meet to collect the contribution they have to pay for the right of using the grazing-grounds to their flocks.

But now I must finish, and I hope you will excuse the length of this paper. I wrote it between Selipuk and Tokchen, and it is forty-three pages long in manuscript. So, as my diary is a little more than 6200 pages long, I should have to deliver one hundred and forty lectures like this if I should be able to give all the information I have brought home. This lecture is thus a very short account of a very long journey, the results of which it will take two or three years to work out. But, once put into order and published, I hope it will prove to be of some use to India, and then my work in the grand loneliness of Tibet will not have been in vain.

The PRESIDENT (before the lecture): We welcome here to-night the man who, without doubt, has done more than any single individual has ever done to add to the knowledge possessed by the civilized world of Central Asia. It is useless to attempt to condense into a few short sentences all that Dr. Sven Hedin has done for geographical science, and I shall limit myself to reminding you very briefly of the occasions of his two last visits to London. The first of these two visits was in 1898, shortly after he had concluded his great four years' journey in Central Asia, a journey in which, in the opinion of your President, Sir Clements Markham, he encountered "desperate dangers and hardships," and did work which in the circumstances was notable for completeness and thoroughness. Not long after Dr. Sven Hedin had described to us his experiences on that journey, he was awarded

our Founder's Medal for having crossed the Takla desert for the first time, and for having solved various important geographical problems.

In 1903, after the lapse of five more years, three of which our guest of to-night passed in the same inhospitable regions, he was with us again describing his adventures, and again, in the words of your President, proving himself to be "a scientific geographer of the highest rank." During that visit we honoured him with the award of the Victoria Medal, the medal given occasionally for scientific geographical work of exceptional merit; in this case, for investigations concerning the great plateau of Central Asia, the Tarim valley, and the Lob regions.

Again six years passes. Again our indefatigable explorer traverses unknown regions for three years. Again he returns with his hands full of carefully gathered scientific facts. Again we accord to him the most hearty welcome and congratulations. With the record I have so briefly touched upon, we know full well what to expect from Dr. Sven Hedin, and in our expectations we shall not be disappointed. I will, therefore, delay you no longer, but will at once ask Dr. Sven Hedin to kindly deliver his lecture.

After the lecture, Lord MORLEY OF BLACKBURN: I rise to propose a vote of thanks to Dr. Sven Hedin with every assurance that it will be cordially welcomed in every part of this hall. And not only in this hall, but the welcome you have given to-night to the lecturer will, I am confident, be re-echoed all over the country wherever Dr. Sven Hedin may think it worth his while to pay a visit. He has, in the discourse he has favoured us with, not only given us a remarkable account of a remarkable achievement, but he has brought us face to face with the man. He has shown us, as he has shown the world almost ever since he was a schoolboy, not only that he is a born geographer, but that he is a man with a pity in him, with a sense of justice in him, with a good temper in him, qualities which would save all explorers a vast deal of trouble if they would but imitate our lecturer. There has been no bloodshed, so far as I understand, in any of his explorations. He has raised no ill-will anywhere. He has shown us how he is full of pity, and some of us at all events, with ideas of our own, think with him in what he has said about dogs, and were with him when he described the longing, wondering, melancholy eye of the dogs to whom he was bidding farewell. It occurred to me, while I was listening to Dr. Sven Hedin, how different is the career and how different the duties of a great explorer from those of a politician. He told us that he tried to drive a flock of sheep, and that he found he had no gift for driving sheep. If he had been in the profession of politics, he would have found that those gifts were sorely needed. I mention that because it occurs to me that Dr. Sven Hedin may think that the Secretary for India, who, after all, holds the keys of the frontier gates of India, is, unlike himself, a hard-hearted, a cold-blooded, and a timorous man. He will well know the circumstance to which I am now referring, the circumstance, namely, that we thought it inexpedient that he should approach Tibet from the Indian side. I will not be guilty of the intolerable bad taste of attempting for a moment to show that my decision was not over-cautious. I think a good deal of what Dr. Sven Hedin has said to-night rather shows that the decision was a right one as far as it went. But I will not argue it because, after all, be the decision as wrong as you like, Dr. Sven Hedin has to-night had his revenge, for he has drawn me captive—though captive impenitent—at his car, and I am very glad to find myself able to congratulate him on the great exploit he has performed in spite of it. The subject of Tibet not many years ago was a topic of some warm political controversies, not purely party—the controversy was as much within one party as in the other. It may be that the topic may again be revived. It may be that some of the points raised by it may be revived by Dr. Sven Hedin's explorations, and he may have

something to tell us some of these days, not to-night, upon this controversy. And whatever he may tell us, we shall know that we are being told by a man of scrupulous honesty and integrity and of enormous industry in investigating all the phenomena before him, because, so far as I am acquainted with his books, Dr. Sven Hedin is not content with geographical research, but busies himself with historical research as well. But be that as it may, we are every one heartily glad to have heard his lecture to-night. We are also very glad to have seen so brave a man, a man who has performed such a wonderful geographical achievement, face to face. He has got, I think, some two or three years' work still before him in working out all his plans and drawings, and we all hope that he will have the same kind of success in completing this portion of his task as has followed the earlier portion of it. I do not do wrong, I am certain, in expressing on behalf of this very great and rather wonderful gathering, our gratitude to him and our sense of the wonderful qualities which he has shown, and of the great and valuable additions he has made to geographical knowledge. I beg to propose that our thanks be given to Dr. Sven Hedin.

Colonel Sir HENRY TROTTER: As an old explorer in Central Asia, I have been asked to second the vote of thanks to Dr. Sven Hedin for the admirable lecture he has given us this evening. I am especially pleased to do so as I was intimately associated with the veteran explorer Nain Singh, whose name has so often been mentioned this evening, and described by the lecturer as "the admirable and noble Pundit." On my return from Central Asia in 1874, I started him from Ladakh on the mission to Lhasa which gained him the R.G.S. Gold Medal, and on his return to India I worked up his observations and prepared his map and report, so that I have been deeply interested in noting where his work came in contact with that of our distinguished guest, and was especially struck with the observation that on arrival at the Teri-nam lake, he found that its position had been almost correctly placed by Nain Singh, although he had never seen it—only heard of it. The dotted line which showed its approximate position on our maps for the last thirty years will now be replaced by a correct delineation. Still more important, however, is the confirmation of Nain Singh's observations to peaks of a high snowy range, one of which he estimated to be 25,000 feet high, lying to the south of Dangra Yum lake. I recollect that at the time grave doubts were thrown by unbelievers on the existence of these mountains, but the correctness of his observations has now been verified.

It is difficult perhaps for most of those present this evening to realize fully the hardships and difficulties encountered in such a journey as we have heard described this evening. Dr. Sven Hedin, for instance, says in one short sentence, "On the heights of the Bukamanga range we lost nine mules in one day." I well recollect on the journey of the Forsyth mission to Kashgar in 1873, one mule lost its footing and fell several hundred feet into the torrent below. Its load consisted of twelve months' supply of brandy and whisky for the expedition, and its loss was most serious; what, then, must be the effect of the loss of nine mules in one day? It is difficult to realize. The wonderful energy and perseverance of the lecturer when driven off the ground and compelled to go round to Leh and start a fresh expedition in order to complete the task he had set himself to do—the way in which the almost insuperable difficulties were faced and surmounted is worthy of our highest admiration, and is an example to us all.

Another important factor to be noticed in judging of the difficulties of the work is that the general height above sea-level of the Tibetan plateau from which rise the mountain systems we have heard described to-night varies from 13,000 to 16,000 feet above sea-level.

Dr. Sven Hedin has condensed for our benefit three years' hard work into a single

lecture—a most difficult task, especially as we are informed that he has materials for 140 more, and his “geographical conscience” must revolt at leaving so much good matter undescribed. After the hardships and dangers encountered by Dr. Sven Hedin, not only in this but in former expeditions not less adventurous and noteworthy, it is an extraordinary result, on which we must congratulate ourselves as well as him, that he is left alive and in good health to tell his tale, and I am sure that the audience will join enthusiastically in the vote of thanks which it has been my privilege to second.

The PRESIDENT (after the vote of thanks was proposed and seconded): When travellers return to us after long journeys in distant regions, we have not only to obtain from them all that is new to science in their gleanings, but also to note the difficulties under which they have laboured in making their researches. Dr. Sven Hedin has dealt but lightly with the dangers he has encountered; but, in spite of his reticence, his lucid account of his journeying, and the admirable photographs which have illustrated it, have made it clear how full of difficulties must have been the task of collecting the mass of material he has brought back. To few men, indeed, is granted the physical endurance which he has displayed in his ten and more years' wanderings in the desert. And as to his contributions to geographical science, their extent can only be realized by those who have noted the great white spaces which existed on our maps of Central Asia in 1894, how largely these spaces are now covered with the network of his topography, and how comparatively few great problems now remain to be solved. Speaking in 1898, Dr. Sven Hedin said he was glad to find himself placed by the side of our other Gold Medallists—Carey, Ney, Elias, Holdich, Littledale, Younghusband, and Prjevalsky. Let me assure him that we also rejoice to see his name on our walls in that list of our medallists, since, as I have said before, he has done more than any other one man to open this country to our knowledge. Sweden may well be proud of their great explorer, while we must content ourselves with remembering that he is our twice-honoured Gold Medallist. In conclusion, I know I may declare this motion carried by acclamation, and give to Dr. Sven Hedin your most hearty thanks and congratulations.

Dr. SVEN HEDIN: May I express my very heartiest thanks for the beautiful and sympathetic reception I have had to-night in the R.G.S.? It is twelve years since I first had the honour to address your Society, the richest and most famous in the world, and since then I have been overwhelmed with honours, hospitality, and appreciation by the Presidents, Council, and members of the R.G.S., and when I now am here again, I do not feel any more a guest or a stranger, but a friend amongst friends and as one of your own.

It has been a very great pleasure to me to listen to those very flattering and kind words just addressed to me by the President, and they are the more precious to my heart as I know he has also been talking on behalf of the Council and members of the R.G.S.

And I regard it as a special honour that the Secretary of State for India has been kind enough to propose a vote of thanks, and that he has done it in a way that I appreciate more than I can say and that I never shall forget. Three years ago I did not quite love Lord Morley, although even then I understood very well that whatever he did was done in the interest of that great and powerful empire, in whose service he occupies such a high position, full of responsibilities, and I understood that the personal wishes and ambitions of explorers had to come in the second place. But now, since I have travelled for twenty-five months in the unknown parts of Tibet, I look upon the situation in a quite different light. In connection with this journey, there is no man who has made me a greater service than Lord

Morley. When the noble Viceroy of India so very kindly tried to get a permission for me to enter Tibet on the Simla-Gartok road, the Secretary for India refused it. What would have happened if he had consented? I should have prepared a big and heavy caravan in Simla, crossed the frontier, and—been turned out by the Tibetans already at Shipki! It is easy to understand what a great loss of time and money this would have been, as I could not possibly have brought the same caravan all round with me to the Turkestan side.

But Lord Morley did me a still greater service. During the whole time I was in Tibet he kept the frontier between India and Tibet closed to all travellers, and so I was left quite alone with the great white patch which I had decided to explore as carefully as possible. Everybody will understand what that meant for me—especially in a time when the white patches on the map of the Earth are not very numerous. If the frontier should have been opened by some new agreement, I am afraid the Bongba province would have been overwhelmed by explorers, and I should have been obliged to give up a good deal of the conquest which I desired to save for myself only. And for my life I *would* not capitulate on any single point, as some of the most beautiful and important problems of Asiatic geography were to be solved only on this very white patch. So it is not only a *manière de parler* when I say that nobody has ever done me a greater service than the Secretary of State for India; and if I did not love him three years ago (which was for a very short time only), I hope I may take the liberty now, and for the rest of my life, to reckon Lord Morley amongst my very best friends.

Let me also express my sincere and hearty thanks to Sir Henry Trotter for the excellent and appreciative speech he has been kind enough to address to me, and which is the more valuable for me as it comes from a man who knows so much of Tibetan geography, and who has played such an important part in the history of exploration in that mysterious country. I have always admired the clever and careful way in which Sir Henry worked out the maps, notes, and observations of the great Pundit, Nain Singh, more especially of his journey 1873-74, which is one of the most important that ever have been undertaken in Tibet. I am really proud of the words Sir Henry Trotter has just uttered.

The reception I have had to-night by the President and members of the R.G.S. I regard as a new and very great honour added to those which I have received already years ago. And may I finally express my very hearty thanks to all those distinguished guests present who have spared some hours of their valuable time for coming and listening to the story of my last journey in the fascinating land of the eternal snows, the lamas, and the mysterious formula "On mane padme hum"!

II. DISCOVERIES IN SOUTHERN TIBET.*

By Dr. SVEN HEDIN.

WHEN I left Stockholm on June 24, 1899, for my fourth journey into Central Asia, one of my chief objects was to try and find the source of the Indus, but although I did my best to penetrate to that part of the forbidden country, I had to give it up altogether on account of the opposition of the Tibetans. When I again

* This must be regarded as only a preliminary statement on the points in dispute, necessarily written in some haste.—S.H. Royal Geographical Society, February 23, 1909.