Reply by Dr. Sven Hedin

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V. REPLY BY DR. SVEN HEDIN.

SIR THOMAS HOLDICH calls his article "What we have learnt from Dr. Sven Hedin. As I have followed now the same methods as during my former expeditions in Asia, the author probably means *all* my journeys. It is interesting to compare this article with the opinion he expresses about my journeys in his own book, 'Tibet, the Mysterious.'

So far I have only had time to read a paper about the last half of my journey (in Queen's Hall), and later in a more technical paper—more especially about the results of other travellers in Tibet. But it will take me three years to work out all the scientific results, and until this is done it is curious that anybody should take the trouble to write criticisms about those results.

As I am lecturing all over Europe, I have no time to enter in any detail upon Sir Thomas Holdich's article, but there are some points on which I must say a few words in reply. Sir Thomas Holdich says that the conditions of travelling in the country did not exclude the possibilities of triangulation. If the conditions were such, it is wonderful that the British in India have never sent out any expeditions to the unknown country north of the Tsangpo. In reality the conditions were such, that I had to travel a great deal in disguise, and I cannot see how a triangulation of the country should be possible under such conditions. In another critical article the same author asks why I did not take Russian topographers with me when the Indians I had asked for, and whom Lord Curzon so kindly had promised me, were refused. This question is probably only meant as a joke, so I don't reply to it at all.

Sir Thomas Holdich regrets that I did not carry out the same trigonometrical mapping as Bower, Deasy, Rawling, Ryder, and Stein. They had all native surveyors with them, and all the moral and substantial support from India which had been refused to me. I had not even a single man as an escort. Then the circumstances of travelling in those parts where the explorers mentioned have been are extremely different from those in the province of Bongba.

Sir Thomas Holdich compares my methods with those of the Indian native explorers. He has never seen my methods, so he has no right whatever to judge them; but regarding all the praise he gives to Nain Singh's work, one may get the impression that my work is at least as good as Nain Singh's. He seems to believe that only Nain Singh had a lot of difficulties to overcome, but that I had none at all. The "glittering pinnacles" Nain Singh saw to the south are by no means situated upon the Indian water-parting. They are situated on another range north of the water-parting. It is difficult to understand how Sir Thomas Holdich, who has not the slightest idea of the geography of Bongba, can express an opinion about the situation of the water-parting; but it may be interesting in this connection to note that the same author twice in his above-mentioned book believes that the great lakes of Nain Singh drain to the upper Brahmaputra. This proves, however, what vague ideas Sir Thomas Holdich has of the situation of the water-parting.

How does Sir Thomas Holdich know that I did not determinate the altitudes with the theodolite, nor delineated the natural features by local topography? It would have been wiser of him to keep to himself such reflections, but as he has given publicity to them without having got a word of information from me, I am very sorry to be obliged to address him publicly in this way. As to the value of my maps, I should advise those interested in this question to look up the two folio volumes of maps I brought home from my last journey, and to compare them with the maps of the pundits. Then they ought to compare what Dr. B. Hassenstein says of my maps from my journey 1893-97 (in *Pet. Mit.*, Erg. Band xxviii.), and

what Dr. Stein said of the same maps in his lecture, March 8, before the R.G.S.—with Sir Thomas Holdich's criticisms. Dr. Hassenstein worked out those maps, and Dr. Stein found the ruins near Lop-nor and the end of Keriä-darya by help of them, so they have, anyhow, had more occasion to be familiar with them than Sir Thomas Holdich. And since then my methods of topographical survey and astronomical determination have improved considerably.

I hope nobody will be so extremely childish as to suppose that I do not understand the difference in exactitude between the first mapping of a pioneer in an absolutely unknown country and the careful detailed work of a general staff or a Survey of India. But I cannot understand how two such things can ever be compared by any serious man. And I cannot understand how anybody can be so absurd as to blame me, or "regret," as it is called, that I did not introduce trigonometrical mapping in the blanks of the map of the Bongba country. With the same right somebody may blame me for not having started some gold-mining companies, and built some cathedrals on my way through Bongba.

To Sir Thomas Holdich triangulation seems to be all. There are some other sciences a traveller in an unknown country has to serve. As I could not possibly do everything myself, being alone, I had to do as much as I could and as the length of the days allowed. It was my wish to take three native assistants with me, and I should have paid them myself, but the British Government refused me them. So if Sir Thomas Holdich has to blame anybody, it is rather the British Government.

To possess a preliminary sketch-map of a country is better than to have no map at all. I have been able to follow and draw the principal geographical and orographical lines of Bongba, and I have several geological profiles from Bongba, together with specimens of rock with dip and fall—a science which has been utterly neglected by most of the British travellers mentioned by Sir Thomas Holdich. There have been thousands of British officers in India during the last hundred years, but not *one* of them has ever tried to enter Bongba, a country of which Sir Thomas Holdich positively says that the conditions of travelling did not exclude triangulation work. Is it really possible that they and their chiefs could take so little interest in a country which was situated so close upon the Indian frontier? So, as to Bongba, and whatever the value of my maps may be, I suppose I have done more for our knowledge of this province than all those thousands of officers put together and, inclusive, Sir Thomas Holdich.

A child of a primary school in Sweden will understand that there is work enough to do in Bongba for generations of topographers and geologists—in those two sciences there is still a good deal to do even in England, Scotland, or Sweden, I suppose. But the very first traveller who, under exceptionally difficult conditions, enters an unknown country and brings home with him the first knowledge of it, should be the very last to be blamed for his work.

A PROPOSED NORTH POLAR EXPEDITION.*

By ROALD AMUNDSEN.

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* Royal Geographical Society, January 25, 1909.