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Two Books on Central Asia

The Pamirs by Earl of Dunmore

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The Indians are very superstitious, and are Roman Catholics, nearly every small group of houses having a tiny chapel with an image of the Virgin or a saint inside; these are sometimes very curious, being made of mud or wood and being very rudely carved.

They are very suspicious of strangers; and on first acquaintance refuse to do anything or sell anything, always saying that they have nothing even when it is before one's eyes. I found that by treating them well and not doing the same as all the natives do, *i.e.* cheat them, they will in a few days do anything one wishes, and bring everything that they can, such as forage, etc. It is very inconvenient when one is in a hurry; but as nobody is ever in a hurry in this country, and everybody is poor but won't work because they have what is necessary, one can only be patient or swear, the latter being the most frequent recourse of the Anglo-Saxon.

The district lying north of the river of Cotagaita is of the same mountainous description, the two mountains of Tasna and Ubina being the principal features.

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## TWO BOOKS ON CENTRAL ASIA.

THE journey described in Lord Dunmore's two volumes \* was undertaken last year for purposes of sport and pleasure by the author and his friend Major Roche. They travelled from India by the ordinary route through Kashmir and Ladak, to Yarkand, and thence made a tour on the Pamirs, which was brought to a close at Kashgar, where the travellers separated, the author returning to Europe by the Russian road through Ferghana and Transcaspia, and his companion (it is inferred) by way of Gilgit, to India. The book is written in a lively and interesting way, and contains two useful maps. There are also many illustrations, some of them good, though the greater part can hardly be said to give a faithful representation of the scenes they are meant to depict.

In his preface Lord Dunmore tells us that the book "has no pretensions beyond being a faithful daily record of the wanderings of Major Roche" and himself. Still the author frequently treats of matters that are usually considered to lie within the domain of the geographer, the surveyor, and even, in some instances, of the historian. When dealing with these subjects he is not always so happy as when he adheres to his original purpose of describing the events of his tour. If the journey had been made over unknown ground and in a new country we should have welcomed with gratitude Lord Dunmore's attempts to furnish us with some preliminary knowledge of the geography of the region he had visited. But he does not appear always to distinguish between new

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\* 'The Pamirs.' By the Earl of Dunmore. 2 vols. London, John Murray, 1893.

geography and old, or to sufficiently appreciate the fact that a traveller untrained to geographical work, and possessing but a meagre "scientific" outfit, should be very cautious in his attempts to correct the results of the researches of the professional surveyors and more or less trained geographers in whose footsteps he is following. The consequence is that the book contains statements which cannot be accepted as accurate. Though the last visitor to the Pamir region, Lord Dunmore's descriptions should not be regarded as superseding those of former travellers.

The indications for altitude are given throughout the journey with little misgiving, apparently, as to their trustworthiness. They are based on the readings of ordinary aneroids, and cannot consequently be accepted as geodetical measurements. There is nothing in the book to show that the instruments used had even been tested for any particular ranges of altitudes, or that the results taken from them were based on corresponding observations at fixed stations. Even if these precautions had been taken, the heights deduced would have shown the altitudes much too high, as any reader of Mr. Whympers's work on that imperfect machine, the aneroid, would be aware; but from all the author tells us to the contrary, his altitudes are merely the readings of the aneroid scale, and have not been subjected even to local corrections. Previous travellers—Colonel Trotter, R.E., and Dr. Scully for instance—had used mercurial barometers, and had based their observations on a system (arranged for before leaving India) of corresponding observations at selected stations, whose heights had been fixed by the trigonometrical survey, and each result was properly calculated and corrected for deducing the final altitude after returning to India. Other explorers had used boiling-point thermometers, and had calculated in the same way the differences on fixed stations; work of this description, and in some cases even heights fixed directly by the trigonometrical survey, cannot be superseded by means of crude aneroid readings. These remarks apply to the whole of the route traversed by Lord Dunmore, from Kashmir to Khokand, but they do not refer to his authority for giving the heights of mountains seen only from a distance, which he could have had no means of measuring, and more especially for altering the elevation of perhaps the highest and most noteworthy mountain of the Pamirs from 25,350 feet to 25,800 feet. This peak, variously called Mustagh-ata, Tagharma,\* etc., was fixed trigonometrically by Colonel Trotter, from the plains of Kashgar, in 1874; and it is difficult to conceive on what grounds Lord Dunmore adds 450 feet to the height given by Colonel Trotter on his map.

Another subject on which Lord Dunmore seeks to upset the well-reasoned conclusions arrived at by previous explorers and geographical critics, is that of the origin of the Oxus. He is of opinion that the

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\* It is not the Tagharma peak, however.

**Aksu**, or **Murghábi**, springing from the basin of the **Chákmák Lake**, or **Oi Kul**, is the real head-stream of the **Oxus**, and gives as his reasons: (1) that the course of the **Aksu**, from its source to **Kila Wámar** in **Roshan**, is some 10 miles longer than the **Panjah** from its source (close by that of the **Aksu**) to the junction of the two rivers at **Wámar**; and (2) that the name *Oxus* is derived from the Turki *Ak-su*, hence the **Aksu River** should be the parent of the **Oxus**. Neither of these reasons can be accepted as adequate. In the first place the length of course or remoteness of origin has no weight in determining the relative importance of two rivers. The chief, and usually the only, standard of comparison is that of volume, or cubic discharge for a given period of time.\* This is a proposition long recognised by geographers. If Lord Dunmore could show that the **Aksu**, on reaching the point of confluence with the **Panjah**, possesses the greater volume, he might prove his theory, but this is a matter that can only be determined at the confluence itself, a locality which he had no opportunity of visiting. As far as we are informed up to the present, the facts all tend in favour of the **Panjah** being the larger stream. The only English explorer who has ever seen the confluence went carefully into the subject, and showed that the **Aksu** (there known as the **Bártang**) has a much less volume of water than the **Panjah**, while the only Russian traveller (the botanist **Regel**) mentions nothing about the matter. As regards Lord Dunmore's second reason, the question of the derivation of the name of *Oxus* need not be further entered into here than to point out that authorities of no less weight than **Sir Henry Rawlinson** and the late **Sir Henry Yule** have shown that it is from *Wakhsh* (the **Surkháb** of **Karategin** and **Eastern Bekhara**) that *Oxus* is descended, and that the similarity to the Turki *Ak-su* is a matter of chance only.†

On the subject of the lakes of the **Pamirs**, also, our author seems to have arrived at certain conclusions intended to modify those of previous travellers, though in one case, at any rate, he does not appear to have examined the question very closely. He tells us that the sheet of water "represented in nearly all the maps" as one large lake, and called **Rang-Kul**, is in reality "two distinctly separate lakes," called respectively **Chor-Kul** and **Rang-Kul**. More particular inquiries from the local **Kirghiz**, however, might have revealed the fact that the sheet is entirely divided only during the winter, or low-water season; while during the summer, when all the water in these regions is at a high level, the dividing spit of sand, marked in most maps as jutting out from the south shore, is submerged, and the two **Kuls** become one. Lord

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\* The extent of drainage area may sometimes become a factor, but it cannot well be applied in the case of a glacier region like the one dealt with here.

† Since these lines were written, Mr. Curzon has set forth the same view in an able letter to the *Times* of December 14th, 1893.

Dunmore was at this spot late in November when the water was low. In the same way the small lakes in the neighbourhood of the Sássik (or Sassigh) Kul probably alter their shapes, sizes, and relationship to one another according to the variation in the water-supply at different seasons, and need not therefore always be as described in the book. The author is probably right when he states that the Bulun Kul communicates with the Yashil Kul; but the map at the end of Vol. I. is distinctly faulty in regard to the small lakes above alluded to.

With respect to the tribes of Kirghiz who inhabit the Pamirs, Lord Dunmore tells us, rightly enough, that these are divided into four main tribes and many subsidiary ones, but in detailing the four chief divisions he is misleading in giving their names as “(a) the Naiman, (b) the Kipchak, (c) the Tai-it, (d) the Kissack.” As far as we are aware, the list should stand:—(a) the Naiman, (b) the Tai-it, (c) the Kara Tai-it, and (d) the Kasik (not Kissack). The Kipchaks are not Kirghiz, but a tribe of entirely different origin; and though in this region they intermarry occasionally with the Kirghiz,\* they can, in no sense, be regarded as Kirghiz by blood or descent. We need not enter here into particulars regarding the sub-tribes further than to remark that the Sarts are not a sub-tribe, or tribe of any kind, ethnographically speaking. The word merely indicates a townsman, or sometimes a settler, as distinguished from a nomad or grazier. A Sart may therefore be a person of almost any tribe or race common in Central Asia.

While remarking on the tribes, we should like to ask our author for some information regarding the “Chinese Tartars” whom he appears to meet with, if not on the Pamirs, at all events in Ladak, Yarkand, and other places. Who are these mysterious people never yet described by any traveller? In old books we believe that the name of “Chinese Tartar” was applied to the Mongols—the true Mongols of Mongolia—but there are no Mongols in Ladak or the districts of Yarkand and Kashgar, and indeed there is no race in any part of Asia, so far as our knowledge goes, to which such a name as “Chinese Tartar” can rightly be applied.

In matters historical Lord Dunmore is more successful than when he deals with geography and ethnography, for he has produced a fairly accurate account (Chap. 22) of the last days of the rule of the Andjanis and the subsequent (1877–78) re-occupation of Eastern Turkistan by the Chinese. The events were related to him at first hand by an eye-witness, and the story agrees mainly with the more trustworthy of the accounts which were received in India at the time. But it is tantalising to be told no more about the inscribed stone carried away by the Russians

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\* More especially with the Naimans, whom they regard as the direct descendants of the original Naimans of Northern Mongolia, and consequently, according to their ideas, of the most ancient Kirghiz blood.

from the banks of Yashil Kul than what is vouchsafed at p. 167 of vol. ii. It was placed in the museum at Tashkend, the author tells us; but though he furnishes a translation, he gives no hint of the date, the event it was intended to commemorate, or the language in which it is cut. It is believed that the inscription refers to the flight to Badakhshán of the Khoja rulers of Kashgar in 1759, and their pursuit by the Chinese (who had just then taken the country) up to the spot where the stone was erected. The language of the inscription has been said to be Uighur; and it was first seen by Captain Younghusband in 1890.

As might be supposed, Lord Dunmore is at his best when describing his stalks among the *Ovis Poli* and grey bears in the high nullahs of the Taghdumbásh Pamir. Though his visit happened to be at about the worst time of the year for finding game, he achieved a good deal, and showed himself so excellent a sportsman, that we wonder all the more when we find him make the mistake that he does at p. 191, vol. i., of believing himself to have seen a *Kastura*, or musk-deer, at Kizil-Angur near the foot of the Depsang plain, at an elevation of 16,000 feet or over. Sportsmen and naturalists may rest assured that the animal seen on that occasion was not a musk-deer, for these creatures are not to be found beyond the wooded regions of Kashmir, some 200 miles off, and are rarely seen above an altitude of about 10,000 feet. In all probability the animal met with was a female Burhel, or *Ovis Nahura*.

Dr. Lansdell, who now produces his third book,\* is, like Lord Dunmore, a traveller pure and simple, and makes no pretensions to be explorer or geographer. His travels in Russian and Chinese Turkistan and in Ladak, etc., were undertaken chiefly, as he himself tells us, "to spy out the land for missionary purposes;" and it is, for the most part, to those interested in missionary enterprise that his narrative is addressed. He appears, however, to have added to this primary object a sort of hope that it might be possible for him to visit Lhasa, or, if not Lhasa, some part of Tibet easily accessible from India or China, by one of the routes already frequently attempted by others and as often proved to be impossible. By all these roads the European is expected, and they are, in consequence, carefully guarded by the officials of the Lama government. The author admits that he was many times warned by our frontier officers and others, who knew how the land lay, that his entry into Tibet by any of these gates was certainly barred; but having been provided by friends with funds to make an attempt, he thought himself bound to make one. He records with much detail the efforts he made to realise his desire by seeking the advice and help of various British officials,

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\* 'Chinese Central Asia. A Ride to Little Tibet.' By Henry Lansdell, D.D. Two vols. London, Sampson Low & Co., 1893.



missionaries, and former travellers. It of course formed no part of Dr. Lansdell's programme to try and penetrate Tibet from the north on his own account, as it were. Had he viewed the matter otherwise, he would have stood as good a chance as Rockhill, Bower, Bonvalot or Miss Taylor, of seeing a great part of the country and something of its people, though, it need scarcely be added, that any attempt on Lhasa would have proved as unsuccessful in his case as it was in theirs.

Dr. Lansdell's route lay eastward through the Russian possessions—by rail and post road—to the Chinese province of Ili, or Kulja; thence over the Tien-shan mountains by the Muzart pass (which he claims to be the first Englishman to cross) to Aksu, Kashgar, etc., and, after a flying visit to Khotan, along the ordinary road, by the Karakorum, to Ladak and India. Thus he saw only those parts of Chinese Turkistan which have been visited and described many times of late years by European travellers of nearly every nation, and there is therefore no occasion to trace his journey with great minuteness. After arriving in India he made some excursions to Nepal, Darjiling, Mandalay, Peking, etc., with a view to obtaining assistance to enter Tibet, and finally returned home by way of the Persian Gulf and Bagdad. His book is well and carefully got up, and bears evidence of a great deal of reading in the fields of history and geography relating to the countries he visited. The epitomised results of these studies he has embodied in several chapters which are interpolated at intervals through the two volumes, and they form, in some cases, very useful summaries. As a student, therefore, if not as a traveller, Dr. Lansdell may be said to have acquired a good knowledge of the eastern regions of Central Asia; but this being the case, it is a little surprising to find the second title of his book called 'A Ride to Little Tibet.' Little Tibet, or *Tibet i Khurd*, is a Persian name for Baltistan, a province of the Kashmir dominions lying among the mountains between Ladak and Gilgit, and was not visited by Dr. Lansdell. It appears from the context that the author has applied the name to Ladak, but that country is known to Central Asians as "Tibet" pure and simple, while the region to which the latter name is given by Europeans is usually called in Central Asia, *Chin*.

We are obliged to Dr. Lansdell for his protest (p. 318, vol. i.) against the irrelevant names frequently used in Europe to denote the province known to the Chinese as the *Sin-Chiang*, or "New Dominion"—that is, the Turki country lying east of the Pamir, and between the Tien-Shan mountains on the north, and the highlands of Tibet on the south, respectively. It is time to give up the use of such names as *Altı Shahr*, *Eastern Turkistan*, *Kashgaria*, etc., and to adopt, as the author rightly points out, that of "Chinese Turkistan," thus distinguishing it clearly from Russian Turkistan and Afghan Turkistan, besides applying to it a simple effective name, and one with a distinct meaning.

The three maps published with the book are all more or less general

ones, and are therefore suitable to the narrative, but the illustrations are not always effective or pleasing. There are some good appendices, however; more especially Appendix B on the bibliography of Chinese Central Asia, which will be found extremely useful to those interested in these regions. Indeed, printed together with the bibliographies in Dr. Lansdell's previous works, as a separate pamphlet, these lists would form a valuable guide to the literature of an important section of Asia.

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## THE STATE OF THE SIBERIAN SEA: THE NANSEN EXPEDITION.

By Captain JOSEPH WIGGINS.

CAPTAIN WIGGINS writes from Yeniseisk, Siberia, under date December 7th, 1893:—

I daresay you are wondering how we have succeeded in our attempt to reach this part of the world once more. Suffice it to say that we found the Kara Sea much the same as usual. During the latter part of August it was well free of ice; there was no difficulty in avoiding what ice there was, and in reaching our port of destination, Golchika, in lat.  $71^{\circ} 40' N.$ , at the entrance of this magnificent river. This is my fifth visit to this place, and the ninth voyage across the Kara Sea since our first successful attempt in 1874.

The most interesting fact connected with this memorable trip is that we have succeeded in conveying the first Russian Government vessels that have ever arrived on these waters. What is perhaps of more importance to the future of this country, Siberia, we have (under private contract with the Russian Government) succeeded in landing the first section of rails for the construction of a Trans-Siberian Railway.

The Russian Government hearing of our proposed voyage with Mr. Popham in the *Blencathra* Arctic steam yacht, for the purpose of pleasure, and with the desire to assist Nansen with stores and coals across the Kara Sea, offered us the privilege of taking these first 1600 tons of rails. Though rather late in the season, we at once closed with the offer, and quickly despatched the *Orestes*, a large merchant steamer, to Vardö, where we were joined by two Government steamers and a large schooner barge, all for future use on this river. We also brought our own shallow-draught steam barge, now named the *Minusinsk*, and I am happy to say without any mishap. All these four riverine craft are now safely laid up in winter-quarters here. True, we have not managed to bring all the rails, owing to the wretched lighters that were sent down river to receive our cargo. They literally fell to pieces as we loaded them. A large portion of the rails now lies at Golchika, which must be brought up river next summer. Another