
Review: Across Asia

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chapters deal with the fauna and flora, the races and the numerous mixed peoples, means of communication, administration, economical development, etc. A few words might have been given to education, and the Duma should have been mentioned. The general condition of the people is, however, fully described in connection with agriculture and industries, and the causes (land tenure, etc.) which arrest the progress of the Russian people are noted. The last chapter, on the towns, is of the nature of a gazetteer. If a smaller number of principal centres of industry and commerce had been selected, and their origin traced to the natural or political advantages of their situation, this chapter would have been better suited to a geographical work. The illustrations include many small maps, but some one would expect to find are absent. Such are a hypsometrical and hydrographical map on a larger scale than can be inserted in the text, a geological map, and a map showing the minerals and chief manufacturing centres; also a railway map. On the whole the work is a valuable contribution to geographical literature, especially the chapters on physical geography, which are compiled from the latest information. Exact surveys have not been executed over a great part of Russia, and many geographical problems still await solution.

ASIA.

ACROSS ASIA.

'From Pekin to Sikkim: through the Ordos, the Gobi Desert, and Tibet.' By Count de Lesdain. *With Map and Illustrations.* London: John Murray. 1908.

There being nothing to show that this book is a translation from a French original, we shall assume that the author has written it in English as it stands; if that be so, the performance is at once highly creditable to his knowledge of our language, and explains some slight peculiarities of expression to be found here and there throughout the volume. Moreover, he was unexpectedly summoned to South America before the sheets had finally passed through the press, and Mr. Murray, at his request, has written the preface. From it we learn that the journey was in fact a wedding trip, "undertaken to gratify our wish to cross country hitherto unknown, and if possible to increase the geographical knowledge of our day." The ambition is laudable, and is in a measure fulfilled; for though other travellers have crossed and recrossed the route selected by the Comte and Comtesse, none can be said to have followed the precise line save here and there on known roads. The names of Major Bruce, Sven Hedin, Rockhill, Littledale, and Bower in recent times, and of Huc and Gabet in 1845, occur to any student moderately familiar with the geography of Chinese Turkistan and Tibet, and many other names might be added.

Our travellers started from Pekin on June 20, 1904, reached Sien-hua-fu on June 26 *en route* for Mongolia. At Or-tan-ho, where they expected to find Mongols, they found Boxers, the place being a retreat for brigands and a nursery for rebels. Passing on to Ta-tung-fu, they visited the grottoes of Yung-yang-miao containing relics of Buddhist architecture. "Though now in poor preservation, they remain a proof of some sculptural achievement. Each room contains over a thousand figures, some nearly 6 feet high, others only a few inches. The ceilings especially are a maze of painted dragons. The statues also were painted, but are now discoloured by the effects of the water." Further on a diversion was made to Edchen Koro to see the tomb of Chinghiz or Jenghis Khan, "so jealously guarded," says the preface, "by its custodians that no European has hitherto been able to discover its actual site, much less to see it." Yet in Yule's 'Marco Polo,' 3rd edit., vol. 1, p. 249, mention is made of visits by MM. de Vos and Verlinden, two

Belgian missionaries; and M. Cordier (relying apparently on Rockhill, 'Diary,' p. 29) says, "The last traveller who visited the tomb of Chinghiz is M. C. E. Bonin, in July, 1896." The description given in this note agrees reasonably with that by our author: "Two small tents, one behind the other, and connected by a very low inner door, made of worn-out felt, and admitting through their rents the rain and the wind, are the 'monument' destined to perpetuate the renown of the greatest conqueror the world has known. . . . The ashes of the body of Jenghis Khan are deposited in a kind of chest, cubic in shape, and placed on a wooden support made of small coloured pillars, adorned with paintings on all its sides, except that facing south, which is covered with a finely worked copper plate representing a divinity surrounded by four animals which are difficult to identify. . . . The Tomb, in fact, has not always been here; but it is difficult to know exactly where the first descendants of the great Emperor laid his remains."

Thence the travellers crossed the country of the Ordos to Ning-hsia, on the Yellow river, a town described as killed by opium, and passing round the Alashan mountains *via* Lan-chou reached An-si-chou, whence they proceeded in a fairly direct line, considering the country, across Tibet to Shigatse on the Brahmaputra, where they were entertained by Captain O'Connor. They then passed into Sikkim and enjoyed the hospitality of Mr. Claude White, the political agent, "with the pleasant feeling of having succeeded at all points in our long and dangerous journey."

The volume is well turned out, and there are not many printer's errors. At p. 54 "heaps of verdure" probably have been substituted for something less fragrant; and at p. 139 a well-known name appears as Baron von Reichtoffen! The illustrations are fair, and the route map, though sketchy, is sufficient. The author's transliteration of names has generally been followed in this notice.

W. BROADFOOT.

AFRICA.

WEST AFRICAN BORDERLANDS.

'Les Frontières de la côte d'Ivoire de la côte d'Or et du Soudan.' Par M. Delafosse. Paris: Masson et Cie. 1908. *Price* 6 fr.

M. Maurice Delafosse is known as a sympathetic and patient investigator of the manners and customs of the negroes of the Upper Guinea coast. He is also an expert surveyor, and the book before us records the work of the Anglo-French commission, which, in 1901-1903, determined the boundaries indicated in the title of the volume. M. Delafosse disclaims for himself and his colleagues the title of explorers, but the accurate mapping of 3750 miles of frontier was no mean achievement. The book is, however, of greater value for its ethnographical than for its geographical information. The author has studied several of the languages spoken by the Ivory Coast natives, and is thus the better able to enter into the ideas of these primitive folk. He has interesting philological notes, showing that amid much linguistic confusion similarity of structure exists among diverse Negro languages. No one tongue is common over a really wide area, though Fanti is more or less the official native language on the Ivory Coast. A considerable part of the value of the book lies in its panoramic effect. From the forest regions of the coast we pass to the open plains of the plateau, and to the upper basin of the Black Volta, and note successively the difference in the character and culture of the inhabitants—the N'Denie, Abrow, Birifo (about whom there is much new information), Dagari, etc. In the northern region the boundary commission found still in ruins several small towns and villages ravaged by Samory many years since