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Review: A Journey across China

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ascribed to the *Ancylus* period. No traces of the *Yoldia* period have been found, and those of the *Litorina* sea are very few.

#### ICELAND.

'Island in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart.' Reise-Erinnerung von Paul Hermann. Erster Teil: Land und Leute. Zweiter Teil: Reisebericht. Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhelm Engelmann. 1907. Pp. 376 + 316. *Map and Illustration.* Price 15m.

Iceland has of late years attracted to its shores a large number of geologists, mountain-climbers, and sportsmen and tourists, and their narratives have made us much more familiar with the natural features of the island and its inhabitants. The chief merit of the present work is that it brings together in two volumes of moderate size information on various subjects. The first volume chiefly consists of chapters on the history, geography, and geology of the island, and the industries, arts, and culture of the inhabitants, compiled from numerous authors, old and recent; while the second part, narrating the author's ascent of Hekla and his journey along the south coast and northwards to Akureyri, is also interspersed with numerous extracts—legends, descriptions of eruptions, poems, and other gleanings. A more strict separation of the various subjects might from some points of view be more advantageous, but a good index makes it easy to find any desired information, and the actual arrangement is better suited to the taste of the general reader. Of the present state of Iceland the author speaks in very favourable terms, conveying the impression that it is a home of refinement and art. He speaks with great approval of the educational system, judging, however, only by the results shown at examinations he attended. For the moral state of the Icelanders he has nothing but praise, and asserts that drunkenness is almost entirely confined to foreigners, especially Englishmen, though he admits that the country farmer avails himself to the full of the few opportunities he has to get drunk. Cleanliness he met with everywhere; nor does he complain of the foul atmosphere of the *Bathstofa*, as most travellers do. In fact, he was thoroughly pleased with all his experiences. Certainly there has been of late years great improvement in the condition of the Icelandic, and in some respects he no doubt compares not unfavourably with peoples living in more fertile lands with a climate more genial, but Prof. Hermann's picture seems rather too highly coloured. Perhaps two or three more visits to Iceland would induce him to modify his opinions. For the rest, his work is an interesting sketch of Iceland and its inhabitants in ancient and modern times, and the narrative of his journey contains good descriptions of the country and life in remote districts of the island.

#### ASIA.

##### A JOURNEY ACROSS CHINA.

'From Peking to Mandalay.' By R. F. Johnston, M.A., F.R.G.S. London: Murray. 1908. *Map and Illustrations.* Price 15s. net.

The author, as district officer and magistrate of Wei-hai-wei, was well qualified, both linguistically and by travel in other parts of China, to undertake the expedition described in the present work. In 1902 he had journeyed through Tongking, Yunnan, the Chinese Shan States, and down the Mekong to Siam; and in 1904 he had visited several of the provinces of Eastern China, and had even inspected the tomb of Confucius, and been presented to the seventy-sixth descendant in a direct line of the great philosopher and saint. The last and more ambitious tour was begun in January, 1906, the main object of the author being to explore the principalities of Eastern Tibet that now own allegiance to China, and thence to proceed southwards to Yunnan and Burma. Instead of ascending the Yangtse to Hankow and Ichang, Mr. Johnston followed the more interesting Lu-han railway

route that the completion (a few weeks previously) of the famous bridge across the Yellow river had made possible. He was thus enabled to reach Hankow, 759 miles from the capital, in three days. The journey thence up-stream, past Ichang, is, of course, well known; at Wan-hsien the great river was abandoned, the hardy boatmen paid off, and the land journey to Chengtu-fu commenced. Here and elsewhere it is gratifying to note the uniformly good behaviour shown to the author; even at Liang Shan, where the late Mrs. Bishop was mobbed and so seriously knocked about, he found the people orderly and good tempered. At Chengtu-fu and elsewhere light was shed on some of Mr. E. C. Baber's researches, not the least interesting points referred to being the temples and the prehistoric cave dwellings of Chiating, and the wonderful fascination of Mount Omei, the highest precipice in the world, with its strange atmospheric phenomenon of a gleaming aureole, the "Glory of Buddha." Pilgrims are expected to have certificates sealed at the summit as proof of their having visited the sacred place; probably the European notion of sending off postcards from the topmost monastery may eventually prevail. At Ta-chien-lu the author had to carefully consider his further route, and eventually, after encountering great opposition from the local authorities, decided to diverge from the Batang road and explore the Yalong valley and the mountainous road south-west of Ta-chienlu. Along this section of the route his only predecessors had been M. Bonin and Mr. Amundsen. The inhabitants of these parts seem all Tibetan, for between Cheto and Likiang in Yunnan—about a month's journey—the author did not meet a single Chinese, even the language being entirely unknown. At Muli, which looks strangely like a bit of the Austrian Tyrol, Captain H. R. Davies's route was struck, and European associations were further called up by the excellent chanting of the monks in the lamasery, which reminded Mr. Johnston of Palestrina. A little further south the remarkably acute bend of the Yangtse was reached, a geographical feature only revealed to science within the last ten years. At Likiang a French gentleman, engaged in the purchase of musk, was met, and from thence to Tali-fu and the Burmese frontier is fairly well-trodden ground. Mr. Johnston's return to Wei-hai-wei was by sea. His familiarity with Chinese, and careful study of ethnological and other questions, and of the native literature, invest his notes with special value, which would hardly attach to the researches of an ordinary traveller, while his concluding chapter contains some exceedingly well-weighed and instructive reflections on the relations between China and Western nations.

## AFRICA.

### THE ASWAN CATARACT.

J. Ball, 'A Description of the First or Aswan Cataract of the Nile.' Survey Department, Egypt. Cairo, 1907. 121 pp., xiii. pl., and 20 figs. Price 200 *millièmes*.

The first cataract of the Nile is a locality of exceptional interest in the history of geography, as it was the southern end of the base line which extended northward to Alexandra, used by Eratosthenes in his measurement of the Earth. Dr. Ball opens his interesting monograph on Aswan by an account of the methods used by Eratosthenes and explanation of the comparatively slight error in his results. The literature of the locality goes back even earlier than the classical geographers, and Dr. Ball's comprehensive bibliography begins with Ezekiel and ends with Baedeker. The district is also famous geologically, as it includes the granitic rocks of Syene, which has given to petrology one of its best-known names. This rock and some of those associated with it are illustrated in the report by a series of beautiful coloured plates of polished specimens.

Aswan has been brought into prominence in recent years by the Aswan dam,