PROCEEDINGS OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN SOCIETY

IMPRESSIONS OF THE DUAB (RUSSIAN TURKESTAN)

BY

W. RICKMER RICKMERS

Read March 27, 1907

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The Chairman, Lieutenant-General Sir Edwin Collen, said: In introducing the lecturer I think it will be of interest to mention that Mr. Rickmers is a partner in a well-known firm at Samarkand. Although we cannot claim him as a countryman, his grandfather, the founder of the great shipping firm, was a British subject, being born in Heligoland, one hundred years ago, and Mr. Rickmers himself is connected by marriage with one whose memory is still revered in India—I speak of Dr. Alexander Duff. For many years past Mr. Rickmers has travelled in the Caucasus and in Western Turkestan, mainly, I gather, on business, but also in exploration of those mountainous regions. Last year, Mr. Rickmers, accompanied by Mrs. Rickmers and an Austrian lady, made his way up the Valley of the Zarafshan River, and traversed the Alai Pamir and Eastern Bokhara, taking over a thousand photographs to illustrate the features of the country. He is to speak to us this afternoon of the Duab of Russian Turkestan. For the benefit of those who, perhaps, have not been in India, I may explain that the Duab means 'two rivers,' or, as we use the phrase, the land between two rivers. In India, of course, when the word 'Duab' is mentioned we think of the Punjab Duab, or the Duab between the Ganges and the Jumna. I shall not forestall Mr. Rickmers by mentioning the two rivers, the country between which he is about to describe to us.

I believe that the chief *raison d'être* of this Society is the discussion of the political aspect of Central Asian affairs. This belief induced me to resign my membership before I started for Russia. The fact that this resignation was taken in good part by the committee, and that I

have been invited to read a paper, sufficiently proves that I have here to do with cool and clear-headed people, whose opinion on the recent *rapprochement* between Russia and England must be extremely valuable, seeing that Central Asia is the region where the frontiers of the two countries touch.

Though I listen with attention and interest to any discussion *pro* or *con*, I must myself refrain from expressing definite political views, many of which would also be against the feeling of this country. As a German subject, I dare not utter criticisms of this country's politics; I might not be considered impartial. Those who know me here, know that I am a friend of the English people; those who know me in Russia are sufficiently convinced that I am a true admirer of the Russian people. You are doubtless aware that the population of this island is divided into two types, the disagreeable Englishman and the agreeable Englishman; the latter being in a very large majority. Exactly the same in Russia. During my intercourse with these delightful majorities, I have discovered that there is not much difference between them; the human foundation is the same, and the differences are mainly words. Moreover, I have my own axe to grind. We can depend upon it that anyone who is quietly grinding his axe may add to his own prosperity, but he will surely advance the prosperity of the country in which he works. Such a man fights shy of politics. He believes that they are the private affairs of the governments; he gives his vote, be it the unconscious vote of his character and his work, be it the conscious vote of the ballot-box. Discussion he leaves to professional politicians, or to those who have nothing else to do.

Especially in Russia. Whoever has scientific or

business aims in that country should drop politics. He cannot do any good to himself and his work ; he can only do harm to himself and to others. I like to travel and work in Russia, but I shall ever be blind, deaf, and dumb as regards her political and military matters. Those who are the guests of a country should be very careful of hurting the feelings of the host. The traveller in Russian Turkestan had better resist the temptation to put stuffing into his book by posing as a military or political expert. Generally his knowledge comes from other books, or worse, from newspapers, and coloured by some adventure with a village dignitary. To be arrested by some small and narrow-minded official can easily happen anywhere ; I have not yet discovered a country without small, narrow-minded officials. To quote an example : Lieutenant Filchner travelled through the Pamirs in 1900. It was a very plucky journey, very sporting, but in his book he spoke freely about the military importance or non-importance—I forget which—of the Pamirs, of the roads, etc. These are no secrets, but the Russian Ministry of War rightly thought that this was indiscreet. Naturally someone said to the officials, who had given the permission, ' You allowed a spy to come in.' The officials, annoyed, promptly turned the key. I was not allowed to visit the Pamirs simply because my friend and countryman could not keep his very unimportant revelations to himself. I call that spoiling the game for others.

But there are interests even larger than those of science and of the single explorer intent upon becoming famous. These are the interests of business and finance. There is a good old English principle, typical of the true John Bull as we knew him, say up to ten years ago, and that is, ' Mind your own business.' I am afraid he is

forgetting it to some extent; let us hope he will recover from the slight touch of hysterics. There is a thing which has always been able to introduce itself everywhere, to roll around the world heedless of political boundaries—the English pound sterling. I am afraid, I am sure, that the influence, the quiet work of the solid golden sovereign is now often paralyzed by the nimble halfpenny, simply because the latter can shout.

The English financial interest in Russia is steadily on the increase, and it cannot be furthered, it may even be seriously damaged by the hysterical outbreaks in the English press. The press is misusing its power and overrating its importance when trying to meddle with the internal affairs of a great and independent State. Were the daily paper in a position to keep an army and navy at its own expense, it would probably not risk them with the same light heart as it risks those which it has not paid for. All this talk of Russian oppression, and the comparing of it to the British liberty, is gratuitous insult; absolutely no practical purpose is served by it, and let me mention, to those who speak of ideals, that the ideal results are nil. The Russians want to arrange their own affairs, and do not care for our opinion. Talk is cheap; it is ridiculous when not backed up by sacrifice. Therefore let us mind our own business at home, and we shall be able to increase our trade in Russia. Instead of vapouring against rotten things abroad, one had better pay closer attention to rotten things in the glass-house. A grateful task for the press would be to give attention to business enterprise, to new schemes and syndicates, to discourage financial juggles, and to investigate and encourage sound enterprises.

The scandalous Stock Exchange manipulations of Siberian properties, for instance, have done enormous

damage to the pockets of the shareholders at home, to the prospects of honest workers in Russia, to the promotion of new and *bona-fide* schemes (as I have reason to know), and, above all, to the reputation of English business methods in Russia. Here the press might usefully apply its keen eye and its skill to the great advantage of the country in general and the pockets of its citizens in particular. 'And where do ideals come in?' you ask. Well, I think if an English newspaper enables a Russian subject to find English capital for a sound enterprise, it then will have done more for the ideal welfare of Russia than by praising to the skies some leader of the revolutionary movement, of whom it probably knows next to nothing, or by the blood-curdling report of a massacre, which in nine cases out of ten was a legitimate encounter between the police and a band of hooligans.

I am also supposed to say something on the economic future of the country, which presently I shall describe to you with the help of maps and lantern views. I shall restrict myself to a few suggestions, for I do not see much good in quoting figures from year-books and trade reports. My personal belief is in the great future of the Duab, which is the most important part of Russian Turkestan. Just now we are on the eve of the great boom-period in this California of Russia. The new rule is well established; we have railways and banks, and the people are perfectly quiet and content. We are in the great commercial period, because the country is fertile and possesses a thriving population eager to exchange raw material for industrial products.

Cotton is grown on an ever-increasing area of the soil, and I believe that Russia is supplied with about a third of its wants. The banks in Kokan advance 40,000,000

of roubles every year to the cotton-buyers. Then we have wine, silk, and other things.

After the commercial boom will come industry and mining. But, above all this, there looms large the great work of the country—the work of a century—irrigation. The waters of the Oxus and Yaxartes still flow into Lake Aral. The great task of the future will provide work until the last drops of these rivers have been diverted to agriculture. Realize this: not until Lake Aral is dry need we expect an end to the development of the country between the rivers; until then we can expect a steady increase of produce and population. Realize this, and you then know what it means to speak of the future of the Duab.

The word means 'two rivers,' and was chosen by me on the analogy of Punjab, or 'five streams.' Its outline is easily remembered, for the two mighty rivers, the Oxus, or Amu, and the Yaxartes, or Syr, form the greater part. To complete this boundary, we have only to draw a straight line connecting the estuaries in the Sea of Aral, and another, along the watershed from the sources of the Oxus to where the Naryn, or Upper Syr Darya, comes out of the Fergana Mountains. Now, this very compact contour embraces everything that is typical of Western Central Asia; it is a museum of all the geographic features of a district three times as large, which overlaps portions of China, Afghanistan, Persia, and Siberia. The Duab includes every characteristic feature from the valleys of the Pamir to the shores of a great salt-lake. Thus, we have the great Pamir itself and the long chains of glacier mountains radiating from its western fringe; we have the many rivers from their icy cradle to the sandy plains, and on their way the many forms of mountains, gorges, river-beds, with their

fauna and flora. We have the foothills with their covering of loess-clay, which gradually become flat steppe, and then the desert, until again we meet life of another kind in the water of Lake Aral. And we have all the peoples, and remnants of peoples, that made one of the greatest histories of the world; we have Bokhara and Samarkand. The conquest we have, the new civilization, centred at Tashkent and infusing throughout the Duab its magnificent future of industry and commerce, for the Duab is the California of Russia. Around all this, springing from a thousand veins, are the two great rivers, the beginning and the end, the life and contents of the whole, from which they are born and in which they die, which they lovingly encircle as a harmonious entity, self-contained and grand.

Through this we travelled. The great mountain ranges are the Alai, which, at the top of the Zarafshan glacier, divides into the Turkestan and Hissar ridges; between them the long and narrow valley of the Zarafshan. To the south the high alps of Peter the Great, and many other important streaks and clusters.

Our route lay up the Zarafshan Valley to its highest point, then across several ranges, and finally by a long curve over the foothills and the plains back to Samarkand, whence we had started three months before with a caravan of twenty horses and six men.

My companions were my wife and Fräulein von Ficker, a distinguished lady-climber; Lorenz, the Tyrolese guide; and the important Makandaroff, the Caucasian interpreter, who has accompanied me on seven journeys.

Six horses carried the photographic outfit, which consisted of one full-plate and two quarter-plate cameras, and 1,000 glass plates.

Now exploring with a big camera is beset with difficulties which sorely tax endurance and temper. To get this heavy artillery into position six or ten times during a hot day is a good test of nerves and will. I confess that I could never have done it were it not for the help of my wife and our friend. In the beginning, it took over half an hour to unload the photo-horse to unpack and prepare the camera, to pack and load up again. Later on a record of nine minutes and a half was obtained.

Our first objective was the famous Zarafshan River, which springs from the Alai mountains, runs 200 miles through a ravine and then about 300 miles in open country, ultimately losing itself in the desert, without reaching its destination, the Oxus.

It is the essence of life of Samarkand and Bokhara. Let us begin at the beginning. We issue forth from the busy streets and crowded bazaars of the great City of Bokhara, the noble and holy.

Through the massive gates we go, and through the silent graveyards where the dead lie in tombs of brick. We walk along the shady avenues without, where hostelries and tea-houses are full with the din of caravans. Gradually the rows of shops and houses break up, and we pass between mud-walls of vast gardens, with their mulberry-trees and vines.

Through many villages we travel—around us the thick abundance of a fertile soil, till at last the clusters of dark foliage open out to the streaks of a distant view. The trees are rare and lonely in the last yellow wheat-fields; the canals and runlets vanish one by one and lose themselves in the swampy thickets of huge reeds. Over a bridge we go—it stands on dry land, but near by is a tiny pool with quacking ducks, and maybe a silvery swan will rise to the crack of our gun.

More dry and bare becomes the ground. It turns into steppe with the cracks in the scorching soil and the scantiest of stunted growth. And then we feel a crunching under foot—sand. Here we may still discover somewhere a darker taint upon the ground—a spot of evanescent moisture. We touch it. It is a faint humidity which fades away in the burning breeze as we spread the sand upon the palm. Beyond is sand, rising in dunes, which retire into the hazy distance like an ocean of yellow waves. That last blush of moisture on the confines of utter aridity is one of the very last drops of water oozing from the last life-pulse of the dying Zarafshan.

The last sigh of a wonder-working slave who has given his best to make a paradise for man. That drop once was ice among the great peaks whence the river came; that very same drop may be one of the snow-flakes which perhaps a hundred years ago alighted on the highest point of the course on the divide of the Zarafshan Pass, 13,000 feet above the plain. This here is the end, that was the beginning, and between them is the life-time and the work of a drop of water; between them are generations of men. We have stood here in the desert, we have stood at the top where the ice-fall thunders, and we have gone along the line. Follow me now to watch again the progress of the water, the magic that shapes the land surface and its destiny.

The distance from Bokhara to Samarkand we skip by taking the train of the Transcaspian Railway through a cultivated, flat country, of the kind we saw during our walk before the city gates. The real journey begins at Samarkand. We ride through the bazaar and past the great buildings of Timur. Outside we meet the wide and slowly flowing river, the Zarafshan, which is to be our guide for the 200 miles, separating us from its source.

The views now shown at short intervals represent the first section of about fifty miles from the ruined edifices of Samarkand, through the plains and steppes and over the foothills. That is the lowland section of the river's career, and its landscapes are typical of the Duab between the rock and the desert.

Here reigns the yellow clay, called loess, which produces exuberant life wherever water touches it.

The road, covered one foot deep with fine dust, leads through fields and gardens, which are generally surrounded by low walls of mud. Innumerable channels intersect the country, for the water must be brought to every tree and to every blade of grass.

The rivers have cut deep ravines into the loess, and the houses of the natives are sometimes poised on the very edge of the cliffs, the abode of teeming life of insects, reptiles, birds, tortoises, jackals, and other animals which lodge in the many cracks and fissures, or burrow into the soft material. Over this cultivated region is spread a population of settlers partly Aryan, speaking Persian dialects, partly of Tartar origin with a Turkish language. Their mode of life, however, is uniform, the town-dweller and villager, irrespective of race, being known by the name of Sart. He is a product of the loess.

Just as the houses and the men of Scotland have grown from the hard grey granite of the North, so the Sart and his character have risen from the yellow clay. He thrives where the sun shines and water flows, but his progress and destiny are shaped by a few strong men or conquerors. His energy never goes beyond the mere up-keep of a life which allows him as many idle hours as possible. Take away the hand of a good ruler, the main irrigation canals will run dry, and

the great public buildings will crumble; the Sart and his work return to what they were—dry mud. His wants are few, and the envy of every explorer. Give him a horse, a pair of saddle-bags, a five-pound note, and he will travel 2,000 miles in six months. In his baggage is a bed-quilt, a teapot, and a hooka. He has two or three top-coats, which enable him to adapt himself to every temperature, and which serve as coverlets at night. The turban is his pillow, and innumerable are the uses of the square cotton cloth which he wears round his waist; it is belt, purse, pocket, napkin, handkerchief, table-cloth, horse-halter, and rope. Thus equipped he is able to face any and every emergency; and let me mention that there is no difficulty in this world which a Sart cannot overcome by waiting. If there be no bridge, he will wait till there is one; if his life is a burden to him he waits till it is over. He can work when he must; he can work very hard, and then rests with a vengeance. He can work permanently when it is sitting down and giving orders; for when he is in power he is a great oppressor. And he really loves work—that which other people do for him. Our horse-boys were good examples, quite willing on the whole, but from time to time I had to promise a *tamashá*, a feast with floods of mutton-grease and green tea. Their ideal was quantity, not quality; variety tires their intellect, monotony they enjoy. Of course the Sart has also many qualities which appeal to us, but these are not interesting.

This is the people which lives in the cities and villages, in the fruit-gardens and the vineyards, in the rice-fields of the great plains. It lives on the bounty of the Zarafshan, which has worked hard to collect water and earth in the mountains which are our goal.

Gradually we come nearer, at first meeting the foot-

hills, the undulating slopes and rounded hillocks, the transition to the massive block. Green pasture in the spring, these foothills dry up later on, for to irrigate them is beyond the technical means of the native. But colour adorns the barren soil, composed of loam, marl, conglomerate, and sandstone. A profusion of red, brown, orange, of subdued tints, is painted in bold streaks or patches across the slopes and hollows; delicate shades of grey and sepia are thrown in between. An effect of artistic distemper with a snake-line of vivid green through the middle, where willows and spiræa hug the river bank.

Then we enter upon the second section of the Zaraf-shan's course, from the opening of the valley to the glacier, 130 miles between two parallel lines of imposing mountains. Here difficulties begin, and our horses, unaccustomed to the stony tracks, have a hard time of it. The valley is narrow, the sides are precipitous. Sometimes the path creeps along a narrow ledge of rock; then the packs must be carried over the dangerous bit and the horses are led across, two men at the head, two at the tail. Sometimes the great terraces afford a mile or two of level progress until we meet a side valley, obliging us to dive down one bank and up the other by corkscrew-trails cut into the conglomerate. In order to circumvent difficult places, the track gropes about in the most tantalizing fashion. Six times a day it will descend to the river's edge and climb away from it again to some more likely spot 200 to 500 feet higher, not to speak of erratic peeps to the right or left. That is because the natives worm around obstacles instead of making a dash for them and overcoming them by a public-spirited effort. We never find a bridge or balcony otherwise than as a last resort.

Constant oppression has killed all enterprise in these people. Their experience was that anything permanent only made things more comfortable for the blood-suckers. In this way they have become past-masters in the art of improvisation; their houses, their roads, their institutions, their very lives are improvised. Where no future is visible, the nearest present is enough. Why build a sound bridge? The old one will carry our crops to market this autumn, and if the spring floods take it away, the tax-collector must leave us in peace for three months. Of course Russian rule is now teaching the coming generation a better view of things. Nothing shows better their great skill of improvising than the balcony-cornices which are made to carry the path along a smooth face of rock. The mountain people cannot build iron bridges, but our engineers cannot build cornices out of crooked trees and rubble, without the waste of a single ounce of powder for blasting or a single inch of string for tying. How they cling to the precipice is a mystery, but they do, by a cunning use of the shape and balance of each bough.

As there is but little clay in the valley, the villages are built of smooth water-polished stones, cleverly cemented. Very little wood is used, and the cavernous houses are built close to support each other, only leaving narrow lanes. The nearer we approach the glacier the rarer wood and cement become, until we find hovels consisting of nothing but loosely-piled blocks. The inhabitants are a hardier set than the Sarts of the plains, but suspicious and miserly, the faults of most poor mountain people.

The middle section of the Zarafshan is hot and dry—a veritable mountain desert; but it has its oasis. We ride for many hours through a cañon of forbidding

severity, where the cruel sun beats on the naked rock during the day, where a silent dread creeps through the shades of night; then suddenly, at a bend of the river, we come upon a vision of the Arabian Nights. From among the gaunt, grey pillars of water-chiselled concrete bursts a thick luxuriance of refreshing green. A wonderful effect of stern beauty mingled with refreshing gaiety. But think of tired feet and weary eyes to fully understand our rapture when these lovely pictures stood before us. Here is water, here is life; here the traveller may stretch his limbs on swelling lawn under the great apricot-trees, where the melodious call of the owl sings him to sleep. These green spots in the desert owe their existence to the water from the side valleys, which is conducted to the level of the terraces in the main valley by elaborate sluices. Water-supply, the question of life or death, is the only thing which makes these people work together towards a common cause without pressure from above. Their aqueducts are constructed on the same principle as the roads, sometimes being carried on cornices and bridges, but much more carefully made, so that but little water is lost.

The Zarafshan Valley is a perfect museum of typical examples of morphology. You see the work of water as a destroyer and sculptor, as a builder and accumulator. There are the huge deposits which the Zarafshan had heaped up in bygone ages and through which later it has again cut deep gorges; there are the curious pillars and flutings which the rain of spring has carved from vertical walls of conglomerate; there are valleys of all sorts to illustrate the erosion of a river-bed; then we find the many shapes of cones and fans of detritus, which streams have deposited at the mouth of their valleys; we have mud avalanches, from the welted furrow, which

traces elaborate designs upon the cones, to the deep winding channel disgorging waves of semi-liquid material. Indeed, I have become quite a specialist in mud, for the mortars, cements, and concretes formed by moraines, river-terraces, mud-avalanches, or scree-slopes, are represented in the Zarafshan Valley by innumerable varieties in all kinds of positions, often occurring all together and overlaid in the most bewildering fashion.

It is these deposits, and the work which the water has performed upon them, that give to the Zarafshan Valley it peculiar aspect. It is a perfect record of the youngest geological ages. The reason why all these things are so clearly seen, so pure in outline, so typical, is to be found in the dry climate and the consequent absence of distributed vegetation. Grass and forest not only hide the ground, they also protect it from quick destruction. Look at the scarred and furrowed slopes of the Zarafshan; it rains little, but every drop of water takes effect upon these unprotected surfaces; we can clearly see what it has done; its record is finely chiselled, revealing the faintest scratch, and the fragments are piled up below in proper order.

Thus we learn, as a general rule, that a dry climate makes shapes of great regularity with hard clear outlines, whereas moisture gives softness to form, atmosphere, and life. Moreover the processes are intermittent and catastrophal; nothing stirs during many months, then suddenly a great volume of water is set free by rain or melting snows, and within a few hours hundreds of thousands of tons of blocks, rubble, and ooze are poured down the mountain. Dryness gives contrasts, moisture softens them, and nothing is more striking in these countries than the sudden transitions from death to life, from rest to movement.

After 100 miles of this fantastic wilderness, but somewhat monotonous in the constant repetition of its phenomena, the valley assumes a more Alpine character. The cañons and large terraces disappear and travelling becomes much easier. During the last day we were able to cover over thirty miles. In the upper hamlets we engaged fifteen men as porters and took them to our camp at the foot of the glacier. Here we were at last, at the gate of ice from which a swift volume of slate-coloured water rushes forth, often carrying blocks of transparent ice.

The first thing we saw was that the glacier had evidently retreated, as shown by a broad scar on the sides where it has shrunk back from the mountain slope. At the end is a small lake, which, according to native report, did not exist last season, and which, therefore, proves that the glacier has lost over 100 feet in one year. Altogether the glaciers of the Duab give one a sort of moribund impression; they are flat and loaded with an enormous quantity of stones which they can hardly carry down. This, of course, is due to the dry climate. Mushketoff, who visited the place in 1880, says that one of the side-glaciers was joined to the main stem. If that is true, this small glacier, the Yarkhich, has retired three-quarters of a mile in twenty-seven years. If his descriptions of glacial landscapes are to be taken as correct, very great changes must have occurred since then.

Walking over the Zarafshan glacier in its lower half is far from pleasant; this is a mountain-world of its own, of enormous piles of loose blocks, of cones, falling away in ice-slopes 150 feet long, into deep pools of great size. One has to go continually up and down over sharp blocks of granite and slabs of friable slate, circumvent

ice-holes or mouse-traps of neatly-balanced boulders. To anyone not accustomed to pick his way among such obstacles this means a very severe struggle and great fatigue.

We reached the Matcha Pass, which is 13,000 feet high, and which the Russians believed to be the true beginning of the glacier. That it is not, but only a snow-saddle in the left boundary divide. We looked over the sea of great mountains in the east and down the short Sardaliu glacier, which is somewhat steep and made Mushketoff's hair stand on end. The mountains around here are up to 20,000 feet high, but, owing to the possible desertion of porters, I was not able to attack the Achun Peak, a fine ice-dome, which looks quite possible. Instead of that we followed the glacier, which curves round to the north-west in a sharp semicircle, and after a walk of two and a half miles, found ourselves at the foot of a dangerous ice-wall which leads up to the real top of the glacier. The entire length is about ten miles. As our present knowledge stands, the Zarafshan is the largest glacier in the Duab, but cannot compare in size and weight of ice to many glaciers of the Alps or the Caucasus.

And so we have stood at the end and at the beginning of the Zarafshan. It is the middle line of the Duab, and can serve as a symbol for the whole. On its banks are greater cities than on the Amu or the Syr. The Zarafshan is history; it runs through the very heart of the country: it is in the midst of its events. Its waters cleave and fissure the rock and grind the mountains to dust; they blast the boulders from the spine of the land and carry them down on a back of ice; they cut the valley and chisel the cliff; they build the terraces with villages and gardens; they bank up the plain and make

it green with trees and yellow with corn and busy with the throng of men ; they have been the life-blood of an empire, for them the glorious temples, for their sake the clang of many battles ; a new empire watches the waters of the Zarafshan, how they give their last drop to humanity and then die in view of the western horizon. They are in the full throb of nations ; they have seen the glory of Samarkand and the greatness of Tamerlane. The Zarafshan is history—history of landscape, history of man. Will you hear the softly falling snowflake of conception, the majesty of ice-gestation, the thunder of a river-birth, the youthful rush, the manly flow and the last dying murmur ? then go and listen to the waters of the Zarafshan.

DISCUSSION

The Chairman : You will agree with me that we have listened to a very instructive and eloquent lecture (cheers). The admirable photographs thrown on the screen have presented to us in a very clear way the characteristics of the country. That country must always be of special interest to us, not only because the region of Russian Turkestan and Bokhara borders on a State whose integrity we are pledged to maintain, but because of the travels and sufferings of heroic Englishmen in that region. I need only recall to you the names of Stoddert, Conolly, and Wolff. Since their days many of our countrymen have followed in the footsteps of those brave men. Now I think I must disclaim the soft impeachment of the lecturer that this society concerns itself mainly with politics. That has not been my experience, and I have been a member and attendant at the meetings now for some years. At the same time I quite agree with the lecturer that a resident or traveller in Turkestan should eschew politics. His advice in this regard is very sound, for obvious reasons.

I also join Mr. Rickmers in deprecating what he calls anti-Russian crusades in the press, which do no good, and I would add on my own account that I entirely condemn the publication of alarmist and quite unfounded estimates of Russian strength

in Central Asia. I have more than once, not only in this room, but elsewhere, strongly advocated, as many of us have done, that understanding with Russia which we hope is in view to-day (cheers). I have also expressed my abhorrence of that very detestable term, 'a Russian scare'—a term which, I am sorry to say, is still beloved by many journalists. But, having said so much, I may add that I am equally convinced that it is not military weakness on our side, but military strength, which is the best guarantee for peace in the East (cheers).

General Sir Thomas Gordon said: I have listened with very great interest to the lecturer's admirable story, so beautifully illustrated, of a journey through a land where water is such a unique wonder-worker. He showed us how water in Russian Turkestan builds, and carves, and cuts in the most wonderful fashion. I have observed the same effects in Eastern Turkestan, in the high regions of Kashmir, on the mountain route leading from Kashghar to the Russian frontier, and in Western Tibet. At one time you pass from the heights into the valleys by deep cuts with bordering walls of architectural-like shapes formed by the action of water; at another you mount up again to great altitudes of 19,000 feet or more, to find that even there water has made the gradients smooth and easy-going. A 16-hand horse might carry one safely and easily over some of the great mountain passes of Western Tibet. I merely wish to mention that my own observation of similar country to that described by the lecturer has led me to thoroughly enjoy his well-told travel-story (Hear, hear).

Colonel C. E. Yate said: I have never had the luck to get as far as the Valley of Zarafshan. The nearest I got to it was when General Annenkoff was making his railway. He took me across the bridge over the Oxus at Charjui and on to railhead on the way to Bokhara with his Railway Battalion in the construction train, and I need not say I thoroughly appreciated and was interested in the journey. I should like to express my concurrence in what the lecturer has said as to the attractive personal qualities of the Russians. There is no country in the world where I have had greater kindness and greater hospitality than in Russia. In that country an Englishman was always well received. It was only when we got into the countries outside Russian dominions, such as in Persia or China, where our interests clashed, that we found ourselves in opposition. I

hope we shall soon see a Russian understanding in force, and that in Persia and other countries the two Great Powers in future will be able to work together in complete accord (Hear, hear).

Lieutenant-Colonel R. Manifold Craig, R.A.M.C., said he would like to be permitted to suggest a prolongation of the journey just described to them. From fair Kashmir to the country of which Mr. Rickmers had spoken was, no doubt, a far cry, and yet there was a connecting-link, for Lala Rookh was a princess of Bokhara, and her journey to the 'vale of Kashmir' was probably through scenery very much like that which had been described to them. He trusted that some time, when Mr. and Mrs. Rickmers were exploring in Turkestan once more, they would find their way down into Kashmir by way of Ladakh. He spoke in ignorance of the geography of the country from the point where the lecture left off, but he believed the journey could be undertaken, and he knew no one better fitted than Mr. Rickmers for the task. The lecturer was too true an artist not to admit that there was a certain amount of monotony in the bare mountainous regions he had described. At the same time he would bear him (the speaker) out that there came to be a feeling of breezy freeness about such places, inducing in the traveller an inclination to fight rather shy of cities and the haunts of men. If Mr. and Mrs. Rickmers would journey from Turkestan into Kashmir they would be rewarded by more beautiful and less monotonous scenery.

The Chairman, in summing up the discussion, said: Sometimes it is the duty of the chairman to sum up under rather difficult circumstances—that is, when notes of discord are struck; on this occasion, however, there is but one note, and that is the note of admiration (Cheers). I believe it is the case that Mr. Rickmers is returning to Samarkand, and that he intends to devote at least some of his time to the study of scientific geography in those regions. In according him, with your permission, our hearty vote of thanks for his paper, I will express on your behalf the hope that his future career at Samarkand may be prosperous, and that he will be able to add largely to our information about this region of Central Asia. Some day, let us hope, this society may have the benefit of further lectures from him (Cheers). I have rarely listened to a more admirably delivered, eloquent, and instructive lecture than that given by him.

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