

THE LATEST GREAT EXPLORER:

DR. SVEN HEDIN'S OWN ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE AND TRAVELS IN THE EAST.

BY ROBERT SHERARD.

Illustrated by Unique Photographs by DR. HEDIN.

OF the achievements of Sven Hedin, the young Swedish traveller, but meagre accounts have reached the West; and, indeed, beyond Sweden itself—

if we except Germany and Berlin—his name is practically unknown. Yet for pluck and perseverance, for triumph over obstacles and difficulties, for courage and a defiance of danger, even mortal, which springs from a high trust in God and a strong assurance in self, Dr. Hedin can take rank side by side with his fellow-countryman, Dr. Nansen; whilst in accomplishment his travels have perhaps been even more prolific. Of his recent journey through Central Asia, which lasted for a period of three years and seven months, and which took him from Orenburg in the West to Peking in the East, this may be said, that he not only did all that he had

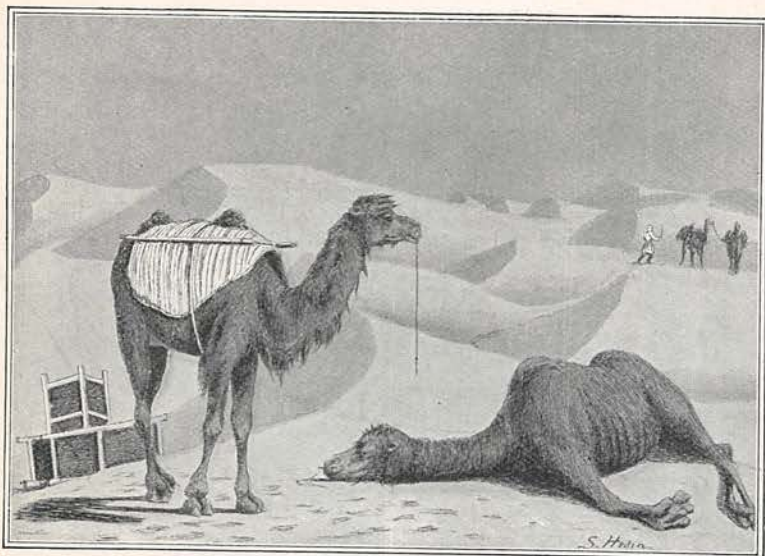
promised his king that he would do when the king equipped him for the expedition, but many things beside of high scientific



DR. SVEN HEDIN, THE SWEDISH EXPLORER.

importance. He discovered the ruins of two Buddhist towns in the heart of a Mohammedan country, ruins which tell of high

Sven Hedin is still a young man. He was thirty-two last February. Yet his last journey was the third journey of exploration



THE FIRST BREAKDOWN.

(From a sketch by Dr. Hedin.)

civilisation where now is only a desert waste; he settled a controversy which for years has divided the geographers of Europe into two camps. And as the accomplishment was far greater than he had expected and hoped for, so also were the difficulties and dangers incomparably more formidable than he had anticipated. It fell to him in his journey across the Takla-Makan desert to undergo sufferings which assuredly beat the record of human endurance; and had his journey given no other result than to show how a man, by sheer strength of will and determination to save his life, can fight death and triumph over it, Sven Hedin's story would be full of direct encouragement to everyone who hears it told.

It was in his study on the third floor of a house in the Norra Blasieholmshamnen, in Stockholm, that Sven Hedin told me this wonderful story; and this study, which has been his workroom and bed-chamber for the past fifteen years, tells one about him much that the sight of his athletic frame, his firm, strong face, and vivacious, even restless manner, had left untold. For furniture it has a large writing-table and a small bedstead. "I go from the one to the other," he says. The windows are wide open day and night. On the walls are books, and all the books are books of travel.

ionate application ever since he could read. He drew maps before he was seventeen which fill five large volumes — exquisite samples of draughtsmanship they are. There are maps of the constellations, maps giving the routes followed by every Polar traveller, maps hypsometrical, topographical, statistical, maps geological and zoological, executed with such characteristic neatness and thoroughness that one can well understand that "Professor Brögger, my teacher of geology, has often urged me to publish them." They show the industry of the man as a boy. "I always worked," he said. "I have never taken any pleasure." His parents had to drive him to bed when he was a lad.



A CHINESE SOLDIER.
(Drawn by Dr. Hedin.)

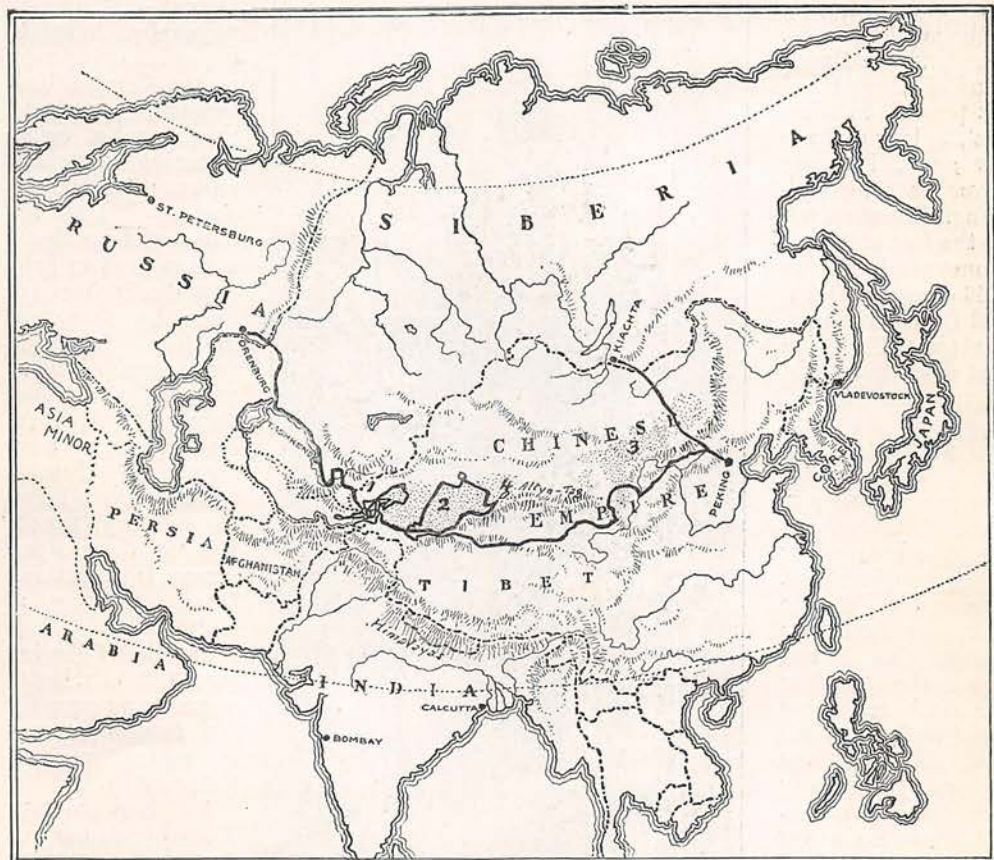
When he was twenty, he interrupted his

which he has undertaken in Asia. Till he was about twenty he intended to become a Polar explorer. He relinquished this project because it seemed to him that the dark region of Central Asia offered a field of wider scientific interest than the frozen seas of the North. And Hedin's scientific interests have a very wide range. In the first place a geographer, his studies embrace all the many sciences which are in relation to geography. This science he has studied with pas-

studies at Upsala to take a post as tutor at Baku. "In my spare time," he said, "I studied languages which were likely to be of use to me in the journeys I had already projected. I studied the Tartar dialect of Turkish. I also learned Persian. I had very good teachers, and I *would* learn them." He earned one hundred and sixty dollars for his year's work as tutor, and employed this sum to take a first journey through Persia, which he has described in his

taken as an apprenticeship to travelling in Asia."

His book aroused the interest of King Oscar, who, having later on to send a mission to the Shah of Persia, remembered that Hedin was the only Swede who had travelled in Persia, and attached him to this special embassy. "We were received with great honour at Teheran. The Shah knew that I had been in Persia before, and was much pleased to find that I spoke his



MAP SHOWING DR. HEDIN'S TRAVELS.

book, "Through Persia, Mesopotamia, and Caucasus." An amusing incident which occurred during this journey was that, his funds having completely given out, he was helped with princely generosity by a wealthy Arabian of Kirmanshah—the famous Aga—Mohammed Hassan, for no other reason than that he was a countryman of Charles XII., the Swedish King, whose life, by Voltaire, is known to every lettered Mohammedan.

"This journey," said Sven Hedin, "was

own language, the dialect of the Kadjars, a nomad tribe from which Nasr-ed-Din sprung. He took great interest in my drawings, and used to ask me every day to show him what I had drawn. When we were preparing to return, he asked me to stay with him and accompany the Court on his annual summer journey to the mountains. I was able to accept the invitation, as I had received special authority from King Oscar to separate from the mission if I wished to

do so. So I accompanied the Shah and his Court, who travelled in great state, up North to Mount Demavend. We were three hundred tents, and the Shah took fourteen wives with him. The Shah used often to call for me, 'Ed-Din! Ed-Din! Ed-Din!' He was much amused at the similarity of our names. When the Shah calls you, you must go at once. He was very fond of speaking the French he knew. To me he always showed great favour. As we were leaving Teheran on this journey, he sent me a handful of gold and his portrait, in token that, as long as I was his guest, I should never want for anything. We encamped at the foot of Mount Demavend. It is 5,465 metres high, and I wanted to go to the top. The Shah was much interested in my project, and gave me provisions and a retinue. The men were good climbers, and we performed the ascent easily, and were back in camp in four days. The nobles of the Court refused to believe that I had been to the top. Then the Shah called me and made me tell him all about the journey, plying me with questions. 'Did you make any sketches?' 'Yes.' 'Show them.' He examined my drawings with great interest, and then turned to his Court and said in a very firm tone, 'He has been up to the top. Of that there is no doubt.' And all the nobles bowed to the ground before me. On our return to Teheran the Shah took leave of me most kindly, and gave me the Order of the Lion and the Sun. He said that he hoped to see me again. And so did I, for I liked him very much. Poor man. He ill deserved his fate."

On his return to Stockholm, Hedin wrote an account of this journey, a book which includes a description of an interesting excursion which he made into the Salt Desert of Khorosan, the Deshti Kevir, where he made studies, important from a geological point of view, about the salt crystallisations.

In the summer of 1892 Sven Hedin finished his University career by taking his

degree as a Doctor of Philosophy, with the highest certificate for geography. In speaking of his experiences at the German Universities, he made, in answer to a casual question, a typical remark: "I had no duels. I told my fellow-students that I did not want to fight any duels because there was no danger in them. They are very stupid. They only make the face very ugly. If there had been any danger in them I should have liked them very much. But as there is no danger, I did not think them interesting at all."

In the following year (1893) Dr. Hedin began to prepare for his famous journey of exploration into Central Asia.

"I had always wanted to do this. I had read everything that had been written on the subject, especially the writings of Prshewalsky and of Richthofen, and I wished to do many things and to solve many problems. My principal objects, as described in the paper which I read here in Stockholm in the presence of the king, were at first—that is to say, before I started on this journey—(1) To study the glaciers in the mountains on the eastern side of the Pamirs. (2) To search for the old Lop-Nor Lake, and thus to settle the controversy between Prshewalsky and



A KIRGHIS ON HORSEBACK.

Richthofen.* (3) To explore the Thibetan plateaux from the point of view of physical geography. (4) To cross Asia from west to east. I concluded that this work would occupy not more than two years. My expedition lasted in fact three years and seven months. My journey was much richer in results than I had expected, and raised many questions of very great interest. The fund for the expedition was subscribed by the king and Emmanuel Nobel of St. Petersburg, and some other Swedes, and amounted to 30,000 Swedish crowns. I spent besides 4,000 kroners which I earned during the first

respect for money, but the earning of money is not with them the highest ideal.

"I started on my journey on October 16, 1893, and proceeded *via* St. Petersburg and Moscow to Orenburg, where I bought a tarantass and hired five horses, and with this equipage I crossed the Kirghiz Steppes to Tashkent, changing horses at each of the 94 stations, and covering the 2,000 kilometres in 19 days. I remained a month and a half in Tashkent, making the final preparations for my journey, and invested 500 roubles in presents to give to the natives—very bad revolvers, trumpy microscopes, and so on.



DR. HEDIN'S CARAVAN ON TOP OF TENGIS-BAI PASS.

part of my travels by contributing to the newspapers, so that the whole expedition cost 34,000 crowns."

Dr. Hedin's occasional references to details of business are characteristic of the Swedes. They have a strong commercial spirit and a

I reached Margelan, the capital of Ferghana, in February, and on the 22nd of that month started out for Kashgar. It was the worst season of the year for crossing the Pamirs, for the snowfall on those mountains is heaviest in February and March, and the danger to caravans is very great. So dangerous was my expedition considered that I could only obtain horses at an exorbitant rate. A horse costs 20 roubles in Tashkent, and I had to pay one rouble a day for each of the twelve horses I hired. The stable-keeper did not expect to see them again, for a snowstorm on the Pamirs kills men and

* A long and very interesting polemic war raged between the two explorers. Prshewalsky claimed to have discovered Lop-Nor. Richthofen declared that, arguing from the old Chinese maps and books, the real lake of Lop-Nor was much further north than the lake discovered by Prshewalsky. This was the Lop-Nor also reached by Bonvalot and Henri of Orleans. Prshewalsky said the Chinese maps and books were wrong.

horses. That is why I wanted to go. I wanted to see the snow on the mountains; I had climatical studies to make. It took me five days to cross the Alai range, proceeding south over Tengis-Bai Pass, the height of which is 3,850 metres. There were no roads. All was snow and ice. We had to cut out roads for the horses. When my five men and myself did not suffice, we hired Kirghises to help us—thirty or forty at times. We crossed very happily, but had we come a day earlier or a day later we should all have perished. The preceding day an avalanche of half a mile in length had fallen which would have destroyed us utterly. The day after our crossing there was a terrific snowstorm on the pass. It was very difficult work to proceed

which nobody has yet done. I believed it to be very deep. I was very successful, for the lake was frozen over, and we were able to move over the surface, so that I could select places for my sounding experiments. The deepest place I found was about 900 feet (230½ metres). Here I lost the caravan, and with one attendant spent a night on the ice, with nothing to eat or drink, tramping up and down in a temperature of 15° below zero. Then on to Murgab, where I spent twenty days with the Russian garrison; then to Lake Rangkul, which I also sounded. Crossing the Djugatai Pass in the Sarik-Kol range, I entered Chinese territory. The Chinese were very afraid of me. They thought I was a Russian conqueror, and were



SOUNDING LAKE KARAKUL.

up the Alai valley. We had, in places, to hire camels to trample out a path in the snow. In one part of our track the snow was 10 feet deep over an extent of 200 yards. We crossed this by laying tent-felts, which we borrowed from the Kirghises, over the snow. In six days we reached the Kizil-Art pass, in the Trans-Alai range, and crossed it safely. It is 14,620 feet high. In the valley on the other side the cold was very great. It reached 38½° * Celsius, which is near to the freezing point of mercury. But I am indifferent to cold. I am a Swede. It is often very cold in Stockholm. From Kizil-Art I travelled to the great salt lake of Karakul. I wanted to measure its depth,

sure that all my boxes were full of soldiers. During my first night on Chinese territory Chinese soldiers kept peeping into my tent, to make sure that I was not opening my boxes and letting my soldiers out. The Chinese commander at Bulun-kul was very unpleasant. He was an enemy to Europe. Many Chinese detest Europeans. He gave orders that no one was to trade with me, or give me fodder for my horses. At last,

however, I persuaded him to give me permission to proceed south to Mus-tag-ata Mountain. I wanted to climb it. It is 25,000 feet high. During that year I made three different attempts to get to the top, but the highest point I reached was 20,000 feet. On each occasion the snow drove us back. On that first occasion I was attacked with violent iritis, and had to make my way back to Kashgar. There I got well again and wrote a book in German on the climate of the Pamirs. In June I returned to Mus-tag-ata, and spent the whole summer in camp there studying the glaciers. I made topographical maps of fourteen glaciers. I passed the winter in Kashgar, where I was ill with fever. When I recovered I wrote several scientific articles.

* Equals about 25° below zero, Fahrenheit.

Then I prepared for the journey through the desert."

And now Sven Hedin, seating himself on the sill of his study window, swinging his legs to and fro like an idle boy, and leisurely smoking a cigar as he spoke, proceeded to tell me, quietly and without gesture or emphasis, the most wonderful story of human endurance and human courage, of trust in self and faith in God, that man has ever lived to tell.

"I started from Kashgar on February 17, 1895, with four Turki servants and eight fine camels. I wanted to cross from the Gyarkand-Darya river to the Khotan-Darya river over the Takla-Makan desert. I wanted to explore this desert, which nobody had ever done.

There were many legends anent it amongst the inhabitants on its confines, stories of ancient towns buried in the sand, and I wanted to learn if there was any foundation for these stories. I entered the desert on April 10. We had water for twenty-five days with us, carried in iron tanks on the backs of the camels. It was all sand—moving dunes of sand. The days were very hot, the nights were bitterly cold. The air was full of dust. We crossed the first half of the desert in thirteen days, and came to a region where there were some hills and small fresh-water lakes. Here I bade my men fill the cisterns with fresh water for ten days. We then proceeded, all going well. On the second day after we had left the lakes I looked at the cisterns and found that water for four days only had been taken! I thought we could reach the Khotan-Darya in six days; one of my servants told me that in three days' march from where we were we should find a place where we could dig for water. I believed him, and we went on. We found no water, and two days after our supply was exhausted the camels got ill. We lost three camels before May 1. On May 1 the men began

to sicken. I was so thirsty that I drank a glass of the vile Chinese spirit. It made me very ill. We only proceeded four kilometres that day—early in the morning. My men were all weeping and clamouring to Allah. They said they could go no further; they said they wanted to die. I made them put up the tent, and then we undressed and lay down naked in the tent. During that day we killed our last sheep and drank its blood. We all thought to die. I thought I would do my best to go on as far as possible; that is the difference between a European and an Oriental. A European thinks that a life is not so easily taken away; an Oriental is a fatalist, and will not fight for its preservation. In the evening of May-day we were all mad



THE FIRST TAMARISK.

with raging thirst. When night fell we walked on. Two of the men could not move. They were dying; so we had to leave them. I said to them, 'Wait a little here, sleep a little, and then follow us.' I had to abandon much of my luggage—five thousand kroners' worth—for the camels were too weak. But I took my most important instruments with us, all my Chinese silver, my maps and my notes. That night another camel died. I was ahead, carrying a torch to lead the way. In the night a third man gave in and lay down in the sand, and motioned to me to leave him to die. Then I abandoned everything—silver, maps, and note-books—and took only what I could carry, two chronometers, a box of matches, ten cigarettes, and a compass; the last of the

with raging thirst. When night fell we walked on. Two of the men could not move. They were dying; so we had to leave them. I said to them, 'Wait a little here, sleep a little, and then follow us.' I had to abandon much of my luggage—five thousand kroners' worth—for the camels were too weak. But I took my most important instruments with us, all my Chinese silver, my maps and my notes. That night another camel died. I was ahead, carrying a torch to lead the way. In the night a third man gave in and lay down in the sand, and motioned to me to leave him to die. Then I abandoned everything—silver, maps, and note-books—and took only what I could carry, two chronometers, a box of matches, ten cigarettes, and a compass; the last of the

men followed. We went east. The man carried a spade and an iron pot; the spade was to dig for water, the iron pot held clotted blood, foul and putrid. Thus we staggered on through the moving dunes of sand till the morning of the 2nd of May. When the sun rose we dug out holes in the sand, which was cold from the frost of the night, and undressed and lay down naked; with our clothes and the spade we made a little tent, which gave us just enough shelter for our heads. We lay there for ten hours. At nightfall we staggered on again, still towards the east. We advanced all the night of the 2nd and the morning of the 3rd of May. On this morning, as we

speak, I did not speak; we had no interest to talk; it was impossible to do so, for our mouths were as dry as our skins. That night we walked on for several hours, and so on till the sun grew hot on the 4th of May, and we again lay down naked on the sand. On the night of May 4 we advanced, crawling on all fours, and resting every ten yards or so. I meant to save my life; I felt all along that my life could not be thrown away like that. We came to three desert poplars on a patch of soil where there was no sand. We tried to dig, but we were too weak, and the frozen ground was too hard; we barely dug to a depth of six inches. Then we fell on our faces and clawed up the



ON THE KIRGHIZ.

stumbled along, Kasim suddenly gripped my shoulder and pointed east; he could not speak. I could see nothing. At last he whispered, 'Tamarisk.' So we walked on, and after a while I saw a green thing on the horizon. We reached it at last, but we could not dig; it was all sand, yards deep. But we thanked God and munched the green foliage, and all that day we lay naked in its shadow. At nightfall I dressed and bade Kasim follow; he lay where he was and said not a word. I left him and went east. I went on till one in the morning. Then I came to another tamarisk, and as the night was bitterly cold I collected the fallen branches and made a fire. In the night my companion came up; he had seen my fire. He did not

earth with our fingers; but we could not dig deep, so we abandoned the hope of finding water there, and lit a fire, in the hope that Islam Bai, the man who had stayed behind with the camels, might chance to see it and follow on. It happened so, but I only knew it later. On the 5th we went on—east! We were bitterly disappointed, for the poplars had given us hope, and we had to cross a broad belt of sterile sand. At last we saw a black line on the horizon, very dark and very thin, and we understood that it must be the forests of Khotan-Darya. We reached the forest by the time the sun grew hot; it was very deep and very dense, a black forest of very old trees. We saw the tracks of wild beasts. All that day we lay

naked in the shade of the trees ; there was no sign of water anywhere. In the evening I dressed and told Kasim to arise. He could not move ; he was going mad ; he looked fearful, lying flat on his back, with his arms stretched out, naked, with staring eyes and open mouth. I went on. The forest was very dense and the night black. I had eaten nothing for ten days, I had drunk nothing for nine ; I crossed the forest crawling on all fours, tottering from tree to tree ; I carried the haft of the spade as a crutch. At last I came to an open place ; the forest ended like a devastated plain. This was a river-bed—the bed of the Kotan-Darya. It was quite dry ; there was not a drop of water. I understood that this was the bad season for water. The river-beds are dry in the spring, for the snow which feeds them has not yet melted on the mountains. I went on ; I meant to *live* ; I would find water. I was very weak, but I crawled on all fours, and at last I crossed the river-bed ; it was three kilometres wide. Then as I reached the right bank of the river I heard the sound of a duck lifting and the noise of splashing water. I crawled in that direction and found a large pool of clear, fresh water. I thanked God first, and then I felt my pulse ; I wanted to see the effect that drinking would have on it ; it was at 48. Then I drank ; I drank fearfully. I had a little tin with me ; it had contained chocolates, but I had thrown these away, as I could swallow nothing ; the tin I had kept. I had felt sure all the time that I should find water, and that I should use that tin as a drinking-cup. I drank, and drank, and drank. It was a most lovely feeling. I felt my blood liquefying ; it began to run in my veins, my pores opened, my pulse went up at once to 53 ; I felt quite fresh and living. As I lay there I heard a noise in the reeds like a big animal moving. I thought it must be a tiger ; there are tigers on the Khotan-Darya. I had not the faintest feeling of fear ; I felt that the life that had been just regained could not be taken from me by such a beast as a tiger. I waited for him with pleasure ; I wanted to look into his eyes. He did not come ; he was probably frightened to see a man."

"Was not the torture of thirst terrible during those nine days ?"

"No. After the first three or four days the sharpness of the want seemed to blunt itself. But as the days went on I grew weaker and weaker. I felt like a convalescent after many, many years of sickness.

"Then," continued Sven Hedin, "I remembered Kasim. So I took off my Swedish boots and filled them with water, and hooked them by the tags over the ends of my spade-haft, and retraced my steps. I could walk now. But it was so dark when I reached the forest I could not find my track. I shouted 'Kasim ! Kasim ! Kasim !' but he did not answer, and I thought he was dead. Then I made a fire in the forest—for fear of tigers—a huge fire, a splendid illumination, lighting up the mysterious darknesses of this primeval forest. It gave me very great pleasure to see this fire. At sunrise I searched for Kasim and found him. I called him. He lifted his head a little. 'Water !' I cried. He shook his head. 'I want to die.' I shook the boots near his head so that the water splashed. Then he rose like a wild beast, and flung himself on the water vessels, and drained them one after another to the last drop. Then he fell back and would not move, though I asked him to come to the pool with me and bathe. So I left him and went on. I took a bath, and then made for the south down the river bed. I walked on for three days, and did not see a living soul all the time, and lived on leaves and grass and tadpoles, when I could catch them. On the fourth day I fell in with some shepherds with great flocks. They had never seen a European before. They were very frightened at my appearance, especially at my black spectacles, and they fled to the forest. I called to them in their own language. Then they came out and asked me what I wanted. They were good to me, and gave me some milk and bread. I stopped some days with them, and heard from two merchants who arrived that at two days from there they had seen a man and a white camel lying in the river-bed. They had spoken to him, but he had cried only, 'Water ! water !' They had given him drink and food. I recognised that this was Islam-Bai. I sent a shepherd to fetch him, and in a few days Islam arrived with Kasim and the camel. He had saved all my money, some instruments, and my maps and notes. I felt quite rich. I could not continue my journey without the hypsometrical instruments which had been lost, so I had to go back to Kashgar to get a new outfit. From Kashgar I sent couriers with telegrams to Europe, *via* the Russian Turkestan, asking for a new supply of things. Whilst awaiting their arrival I returned to the Pamirs, and explored the northern slopes of the Hindoo Koosh, and visited the sources of the

Amu-Darya. In August I fell in with the English-Russian Boundary Commission, and spent three very pleasant weeks with them. Then I returned to Kashgar and stayed there, writing for three months. When my new outfit arrived I went on to Khotan."

And resuming his impressions of his sufferings in the desert, Dr. Sven Hedin said with a laugh, "It was fearful, but I *would* save my life."

Fearful as these sufferings had been, they did not deter him from another journey of exploration in this same desert. "I wanted to see if there were any old towns. This

which were covered with beautiful paintings. Then I myself made a great discovery. It was a fragment of an old manuscript, or something which looks like paper, but is not paper; some of the characters resemble Sanscrit, but they are not Sanscrit. Afterwards I sent agents back to search for other manuscripts, and they found some more. We found nothing else, for we could not stay long, and we could not dig deep, for the sand keeps falling in. But I do not think there can be much to find there beyond the mural paintings; for no doubt these towns were gradually abandoned by their inhabitants as



WOMEN IN THE PAMIRS.

time I marched from south to north. After a seven days' march I came upon the ruins of a very old town. In the valleys between the sand dunes there rose wooden posts or stakes of poplar wood, hard as stone. These had been part of the framework of the houses—the skeletons of the houses—and innumerable they were everywhere in the valley of the dunes. It must have been a very big town. I camped here, but was not able to stay more than two days, lest my water supply should be exhausted too soon. But during these two days we dug in the sand, and found fragments of the plaster walls of the houses,

the sand kept coming up, just as in a few hundred years the towns on the southern fringe of the desert will all be abandoned, the siege of them—Guma, Cherchen, and Nia—having already begun."

And here, in the hazards of the conversation, came another characteristic remark. I had observed that most explorers, having made so interesting a discovery, would have left some mark of their passage—had it only been their name cut on one of the upright posts. Sven Hedin shook his head vigorously. "I did not write my name. I have a horror of such things. I was shocked to

see the many names written on the tomb of Cyrus in Persia. I think it Vandalism to write our European names on such old and precious remains."

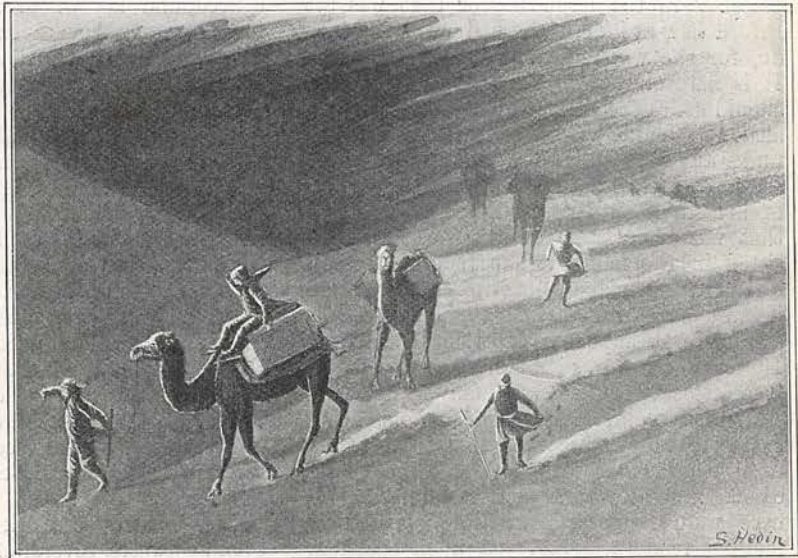
Continuing the story of his journey, he said—"From the first town I proceeded eastwards, and in about a week's march I discovered the second of the towns, but here I found nothing. I shall return there, of course, for I consider this one of the most interesting discoveries ever made. It was certainly the most curious thing that ever occurred to me during my four years' journey. No traveller ever expected to find anything here, and it was given to me to discover the traces of Buddhist civilisation in a Mohammedan land, towns where, to judge from the very high point of development of the mural paintings, the state of civilisation must have been very far advanced. Buddhists the inhabitants certainly were, for some of the ornamentations are pure Buddha and on one of the fragments in my possession is a painting of Buddha sitting on a lotus."

"Can you fix the epoch of these towns?"

"Not at all. The only thing that I can say with absolute certainty is that they existed before the Mohammedan era. There are no Buddhists now in these parts of Asia.

"In the city of Korla I prepared for my journey to discover the old Lop-Nor. I did discover it. My course was S. by S.E. I found the old Lop-Nor in April, 1896. Then I marched on south to the new Lop-Nor—the one discovered by Prshewalsky. At the end of April I returned to Khotan by Marco Polo's southerly route and made many scientific observations on the way. In Khotan I prepared for my journey through Thibet. This was a very difficult journey :

I had to climb the Kwen Lun range and cross on to the high Thibetan plateaux by the lofty passes. For two months we marched along these plateaux at an altitude of 16,000 feet. It was a horrible country—bare desert, sand and stones, here and there a salt lake. There was but the scantiest vegetation, and we could find so little fodder for our horses, that in those two months forty-nine out of the fifty-six I had in my caravan perished of fatigue and starvation. We did not meet a single man during all those weeks, and the only living things we saw were herds of wild yaks and of wild horses. We used to shoot the yaks for food. We reached Tsaidan in the beginning of November. And so on to



A SAND-STORM IN THE DESERT.

(From a sketch by Dr. Hedin.)

Pekin, which I reached on March 2 of last year. I was very well received. Li Hung Chang invited me to dinner. It was not a good dinner. There were two large photographs in his room, one of Li and Bismarck, and one of Li and Gladstone." From Pekin Dr. Sven Hedin travelled through Mongolia in Chinese carts to Kiachta, and thence by the Trans-Siberia Railway home. He reached Stockholm on May 10, after an absence of three years and seven months. He was summoned to the Palace on the following day, and King Oscar embraced him and said: "Well done. You have brought honour to Sweden."