

therefore wrote to the Editor of *The Athenæum*, saying that I thought the remarks contained in his paper were somewhat premature.»

As it has turned out, the anonymous author in *The Athenæum* was right, and his statement was not premature. It is also interesting to read what the same author has to say 25 years later in a review* of my last book of travel. He says *inter alia*: »This conclusion** is satisfactory, not only because it attests the accurate discernment of a scientific traveller (von Richthofen), whose monumental work on China deserves to retain the admiration of geographers, but also because it bears out the trustworthiness, to a certain extent, of Chinese maps.»

I delivered precisely the same lecture, from which the passage about the Lop-nor cited above was taken, in St. Petersburg, and there my statements encountered the most energetic opposition, for practically all the Russian geographers who have occupied themselves with the geography of Central Asia combated their correctness, and maintained that Prschevalskij's views with regard to the Lop-nor were alone acceptable. The only ones who adopted a neutral attitude were Muschketoff, Pjevtsoff, and Bogdanovitsch, all men who count amongst those possessing the fullest knowledge of the geography of Central Asia. Shortly after my lecture Kosloff printed in the society's journal a substantial essay on the Lop-nor*** under the polemical title of »Lop-nor with Reference to Mr Sven Hedin's Lecture before the Imperial Russian Geographical Society on the 15th October 1897». In 1899 the same traveller published his work descriptive of the part he took in the expedition of 1893—95.† In this book he devotes almost an entire chapter to the Lop-nor, but unfortunately there is nothing new in it beyond what was contained in his essay; in fact this latter is printed word for word in the book, leaving out the long historical account. This surprised me, for in the course of the discussion to which I was invited in the topographical section of the Russian General Staff, I set forth more explicitly than I had done in my lecture the views which I held with regard to the Lop-nor question, several of my arguments being of such weight and importance that they might reasonably expect to receive some attention in the great and handsome book which Roborovskij and Kosloff soon afterwards published. Kosloff's energetic championship of Prschevalskij's views gave a fresh impulse to the dispute about the Lop-nor question, and marks the beginning of its second phase. But now that the problem has been solved, and a natural and simple clue has been found to the complicated hydrographical tangle, it may perhaps appear to many a matter of supererogation to rake up old quarrels, and adduce arguments *pro* and *con* (though these have now for the most part been deprived of their point). I repeat however, a re-survey of the various opinions which have been held is by no means without its interest, especially as it was the decided opposition of the Russian geographers, and especially of Kosloff himself, which more than anything else determined me to pay yet one visit more to the Lop-nor country, and carry out the survey which I have described in

* *The Athenæum*, 5th Dec. 1903.

** That is, the conclusion I arrived at in *Central Asia and Tibet* as to the Lop-nor question.

*** *Isvestija Imperatorskago Russk. Geografitschesk. Obschtschestva*, vol. XXXIV (1898), pt. I pp. 60—116.

† *Trudij Ekspeditsij Imp. Russk. Geogr. Obschtsch. po Tsentralnoj Asij*, pt. 2.