

When the great bridge across the Amou Daria—the classic Oxus—has been passed, when our reluctant eyes have again turned from its cool flow to the dark, hot sands, the Russian officer recalls to us the hardship his people suffered in constructing this railway, which is a mighty engine of war, and a yet stronger implement for peace. The Oxus once flowed to the Caspian Sea—but the Amou Daria flows to the Aral basin; truly an erratic, radical change to be made by a great, dignified river. Yet not less radical has been the change in the political destiny of all the vast region which the river traverses. And as there is now no other basin to which it would seem possible that its waters could run, so there seems no other power than Russia which could govern this Central Asian region. Neither of these parallel propositions shall here be argued at length, but a relief map and a skeleton history would establish both.

Bokhara is our first halting-place. We find and monopolise the three rooms of a decent boarding-house near the station, in the small Russian settlement. Here is the residence of the Czar's representative who "advises" the Emir—and whose advice is so singularly sound that it is always followed. The relation thus established is one of the oldest in political history, and may safely be recommended to any strong power desiring to economise its strength, while never ceasing to threaten and "protect" the weaker one.

From the Russian town we drive over to the native city—fifty thousand people or more protected by several miles of sand from the rush of the