

of European travellers in their estimates of Oriental wealth.

When Europe was poor, Asia was relatively rich, but never as rich as the camel would have one believe. When you see even a hundred of him marking the distant plain with immutable pace you would swear him to be some gnome in Pluto's service, bearing half a world's wealth. But the simplest arithmetic shows that the whole caravan load is less in weight than that of one big American freight car. So it is that only the most precious commodities can be interchanged even at the astonishingly low per-diem rates of hire for man, and the equally low rate of food-consumption exacted by the self-restraining brute. Thus let us pursue the calculation on the basis of forty cents per day per camel, paid by us to the Kirghiz in Western Tibet. Each burden was about four hundred pounds, and the day's march averaged about fifteen miles; that makes the cost per ton-mile about thirteen cents. On the great railways of America the corresponding figure is 0.65 cents, or one twentieth as great. Such comparisons have led to the dreaming of fabulous profits by the over-zealous promoters of steam railways in caravan lands, the infirmity of their calculations arising from an over-estimate of the total amount of merchandise to be handled.

The dominating feature of Tibetan traffic is tea, imported from China, chiefly through the mart of Ta-chien-lu, where caravans sent from Lhasa and even from Shegatze are loaded annually with thirteen millions of pounds of the heaven-sent leaf. Coming out of Tibet, their loads have been lighter