

Kush Mountains or the river Oxus, then trade will increase, railways and good roads will be constructed, and oppression by petty officials be unknown. The Central Asian question is therefore one of great interest to them; every move in the game is watched with keenness, and the relative strength and probable intentions of the two great powers, whom they regard as struggling for the supremacy of Asia, are freely discussed by them.

It is naturally difficult for an Englishman to get at their real opinions as to the respective merits of British and Russian rule; but, as merchants, I think they highly appreciate the benefits which are conferred by an administration which makes such efforts to improve the communications of the country, by the construction of railways, roads, and telegraphs; which adds so greatly to the production of the country by the cutting of irrigation canals; and which encourages trade by removing all duties that are not absolutely necessary, as the British do. They hate the system of law in India, though they believe in the justice of the individual officer, and I am not altogether sure that they do not prefer administrations where the decision of law may be less just, but will probably be less costly, and will certainly be more rapid. But they consider that, on the whole, their trade interests are furthered more under British than under any other rule.

In regard, however, to the comparative strength of the two rival powers of Asia, there is not a doubt that they consider the Russian more powerful than the British. Even if they have not really got the greater strength, the Russians succeed better in producing an impression of it than do the British. Their numbers in Central Asia are really very small, but they are much more numerous in proportion to the number of natives than are the British in India. Then, again, the Russians, when they strike, strike very heavily; and when they advance they do not go back, as the British generally find some plausible