

Turkestan. Those Russians who speak a foreign language, speak it very well indeed ; but, contrary to the general belief in England, the majority of even Russian officers speak Russian only.

Enlivened by these conversations with Central Asian merchants and with the Russian consul and his staff, the winter at Kashgar passed more quickly than it might be expected to do in so remote a corner of the world. We were fortunate, too, in having several visitors from Europe. The first of these was M. E. Blanc, a French traveller, who, having spent a few months in Turkestan, was perfectly willing to put both the Russian consul and myself right upon any point connected with Central Asia. The next visit was from the young Swedish traveller, Doctor Sven Hedin, who impressed me as being of the true stamp for exploration—physically robust, genial, even-tempered, cool and persevering. He only paid a hurried visit to Kashgar from Russian Turkestan, but he had already made a remarkable journey in Persia, and has since travelled much on the Pamirs, in Tibet, and Chinese Turkestan. I envied him his linguistic abilities, his knowledge of scientific subjects, obtained under the best instructors in Europe, and his artistic accomplishments ; he seemed to possess every qualification of a scientific traveller, added to the quiet, self-reliant character of his Northern ancestors.

Later on, again, we had a visit from M. Dutreuil de Rhins and his companion M. Grenard, who did me the honour of staying with me during their fortnight's halt in Kashgar, preparatory to their three years' wandering in Tibet, which ended so disastrously in the murder of De Rhins by the Tibetans. M. de Rhins was a man of about forty-five, who had served the principal part of his life in the French navy and mercantile marine. He had already devoted his time for some years to the study of Tibet, and was most thorough and methodical in all his arrangements, and especially in his astronomical