

tury B. C., during which the peoples of an area as large as Europe, driven by nature from their home lands, drenched the soil of Asia and Europe with blood, gave dynasties to China, and overthrew the Greek and Roman Empires, recasting the whole racial and social complexion of the world?

The home of our Aryan ancestors was then—in the sixties—thought by such authorities as Lassen and Max Müller to have been in High Asia. Reading these speculations, I recalled the fact that on a native map in an old Chinese commentary of the historical book of Confucius, there was the legend at a point in the Tarim basin: "Here dwell the Usun, a people with blue eyes and red hair." And with this the problem assumed an added fascination.

The reader who know seven the elements of the Aryan problem of fifty years ago will understand how quickly it became a controlling factor in my dream. To the idea that the progressive shrinkage of an inland sea indicated a progressive desiccation that forced destructive radial migrations was added the thought that migrations similarly forced might have brought to Europe the Aryan peoples, Aryan culture, and Aryan languages. In this form the dream remained for many years the background of a busy life until 1891, when, in discussing it with the Director of the Russian Geological Survey, Mr. Tschernyscheff, I learned that strata containing shells of the glacial period had actually been found in a position that seemed to really point to an inland sea of that period. Then my dream assumed the form of what seemed to me a legitimate hypothesis, worthy of being tested. It had before this been too subjective in character.

Among the friends with whom I had talked on the subject in the early eighties, Messrs. Henry Adams and Alexander Agassiz had given me much encouragement. So, after Mr. Carnegie had founded the Institution for scientific research that bears his honored name, I suggested to Mr. Agassiz, who was a Trustee, that the Institution should send an expedition to Central Asia to reconnoiter. This the Executive Committee agreed to do, on the condition that I should go myself.

It is one thing for a man of scientific training to live in the enjoyment of framing an attractive but only subjectively supported hypothesis, and it is a quite different thing to find himself, as I then found myself, face to face with the duty of testing it on the ground. Fortunately for the enterprise, Professor W. M. Davis was sufficiently interested to volunteer, at my request, to take charge of the physical-geographical part of the reconnaissance. I had little doubt that Mr. Davis would find evidence toward confirmation of the physical side of the hypothesis; but it was not without much anxiety that I faced the uncertainties of a search for traces of long-since-vanished peoples and cultures, which, even if once existent, might well have been obliterated.