

**THE COMING STRUGGLE FOR INDIA:
BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE
ENCROACHMENTS OF RUSSIA IN
CENTRAL ASIA, AND OF THE
DIFFICULTIES SURE TO ARISE
THEREFROM TO ENGLAND; PP. 4-214**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649552658

The Coming Struggle for India: Being an Account of the Encroachments of Russia in Central Asia, and of the Difficulties Sure to Arise Therefrom to England; pp. 4-214 by Arminius Vámbéry

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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ARMINIUS VÁMBÉRY

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BY

ARMINIUS VÁMBÉRY.

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED:

LONDON, PARIS, NEW YORK & MELBOURNE.

1885.

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Eo

RUSSELL SHAW, Esq.

BUDA PESTH UNIVERSITY,

July 2, 1885.

MY DEAR MR. SHAW,

You are a Liberal in your political views; I found you liberal in the hospitality you have bestowed on me; and I hope you will be liberal in judging these pages, which I dedicate to you.

In other countries an author would have hardly ventured to dedicate to his friend of Liberal persuasion a book containing a strong criticism upon the policy of the Liberal party. But in England fair play is fully admitted in political opinions, even if they come from a foreigner. This is a fact, of which I have had ample opportunity to convince myself during my late lecturing tour in your country; and it is the substance of the various addresses which I then delivered, that I offer now to the public in the present book form.

Believe me,

Dear Mr. Shaw,

Yours sincerely,

A. VAMBÉRY.

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representative of Europe two centuries ago, and, armed with the superior arms of that time, she managed to conquer vast multitudes with a comparatively small number of men. Siberia was conquered in the sixteenth century, and when Kutchum Khan, after having been defeated by the daring troopers under the lead of Yermak, armed with firearms, and losing his crown and empire, was asked to surrender, the old blind man, discovered in the midst of the woods, said : "I am blind, deaf, poor and deserted, but I do not complain about the loss of my treasures, I only grieve that the Russians have taken captive my dear child, my son Asmanak. If I had him with me I should willingly renounce my crown, my riches, all my other wives and remaining children. Now I shall send my family to Bokhara, and I myself shall go to the Nogais. I did not go to the Czar in my more prosperous days, when I was rich and mighty ; shall I go now in order to meet with a shameful death."

From the eastern Tartars in Siberia, Russia turned to the western Tartars in the Crimea, to those very Nogais with whom Kutchum Khan expected to find a shelter. Here the sway of the Sultan of Turkey had become loosened at that time, and the Empress Catherine plucked fresh laurels for her crown after a hard struggle, which sealed the fate of the Khans of Bagtche-Sarai for ever. From the Isker in Siberia

to the banks of the Pruth, all became Russian. The various populations had to undergo the process of Russification, and the newly annexed elements had hardly been incorporated into the body of Muscovitism, when the progress towards the south already began, and the subjugation of the Kirghis steppes was already initiated.

That is the real outset of the Russian conquests in Central Asia.

It was a hard nut Russia had to crack here, a task arduous beyond measure; for besides the struggle to be fought with men, she met with a serious obstacle in nature, through the endless barren steppes, varying with hard clay, sand many feet deep, and wide waterless tracts of country. Any other Government would have been afraid to engage in that undertaking; but despotic Russia, unchecked in the waste of men and money, entered upon it with the determination of overcoming all obstacles. The steppes were attacked from two different sides, from the east and the west. As to the eastern route, Siberia formed the basis, and down glided the Russian Cossacks from the Altai, along the western border of China to the lake of Issyk Kul, as smoothly and quietly as the Russian outposts succeeded in skirting the western frontier of the Kirghis country from the Lesser Horde to the Aral lake and to the Yaxartes. It was the

work of two centuries, accomplished in a wonderful way, with that characteristic Muscovite tenacity, cunning, and recklessness, which have wrought so many wonders and surprises to the western world.

The Kirghises, numbering beyond three millions of souls, and representing the prototype of Turkish nomadic society, offered from the beginning that special mode of resistance we encounter in the case of the nomads of Asia and America. At first a few influential chieftains were enticed by bribes, presents, and imaginary distinctions, assisted as usual by the generously offered flask of *vodki*. Of course, the allegiance thus obtained was of no avail and no duration, for no sooner had the Russian *tchinovnik* disappeared from the scene of his action, than the Kirghis chief forgot his oath of fidelity, as well as the rich presents he had received from the White Padishah of the Neva. Russia had to resort to other means. She built on various points small forts, originally intended to harbour the merchants on their way to the steppe; for the Czar is a benignant ruler, who is anxious that his subjects should be provided with all the necessaries of life, and he even went so far as to build mosques and Mohammedan colleges for the pious Kirghises, an act which has been very frequently rebuked as impolitic and unwise. This paternal care, however, did not bear the expected fruit; the so-called

THE WAY TO TASHKEND.

halting places for Russian traders were soon turned into small forts, garrisoned by soldiers; from the walls of which loopholes for cannon looked far into the desert, and overawed the restless nomads more than any imperial ukase, written with gold ink, and all the sacred oaths of the chieftains sworn upon the Koran had done. By extending this line of fortifications into the country of the Kirghises, Russia succeeded in thrusting a formidable wedge into the body of her adversary. Disunion amongst the Kirghises did the rest, and in spite of temporary risings, Russia could safely assert soon after the Crimean war that she had become the undisputed master of the whole Kirghis country as far as the right bank of the Yaxartes, including the Aral Sea, where her operations by land were supported by a small flotilla.

While these large operations were going on, Europe, always happy to engage Russia in Asia and to keep her off from European politics, cared but very little for the doings of the northern colossus in this outlying part of the eastern world. But little oozed out concerning these new conquests, and that little generally came through the channel of European travellers, *savants*, delighted at the warm reception they got from Russian officials, and full of praises of the humanitarian work Russia was doing in those outlying barbarous countries, where