

## EXPLORATIONS IN CENTRAL ASIA.

THE detailed results of Dr. Stein's latest achievement in the world of scientific exploration are awaited with the deepest interest by all who concern themselves with the problems of Asiatic research, and

Dr. Stein's systematic investigation of cause and effect which might lead us to believe in a return swing of the climatic pendulum; another beat in the "pulse of Asia" of which Mr. Huntington writes so convincingly. Here and there were found a people pushing

gradually outward from the narrow ring of cultivation which borders the desert back again towards the old-world sites, although, in Dr. Stein's opinion, the sources of water supply once dried up will never again reopen.

However that may be, the important part of Dr. Stein's work in the field was the collection of those archæological relics of the past, including miscellaneous records (some of which are far older than any which have as yet come to light in Central Asia or China), bearing inscriptions in Indian Kharosthi and Brahmi, and specimens of early Buddhist art in moulding and in painting, the classification and interpretation of which will certainly prove to be the work of several years. Undoubtedly Dr. Stein has added a new chapter to Indian history, a chapter which deals with the period of Indo-Chinese religious affinity, when Buddhism, still rooted in the land of its birth, had spread outwards to the older civilisations of Central Asia and a never-resting

tide of pilgrims passed to and fro, seeking inspiration at every wayside fount of knowledge that marked the weary road from the Chinese frontier through Khotan to Kashmir, or, striking farther west, refreshed the devotee in Badakshan and Kabul.

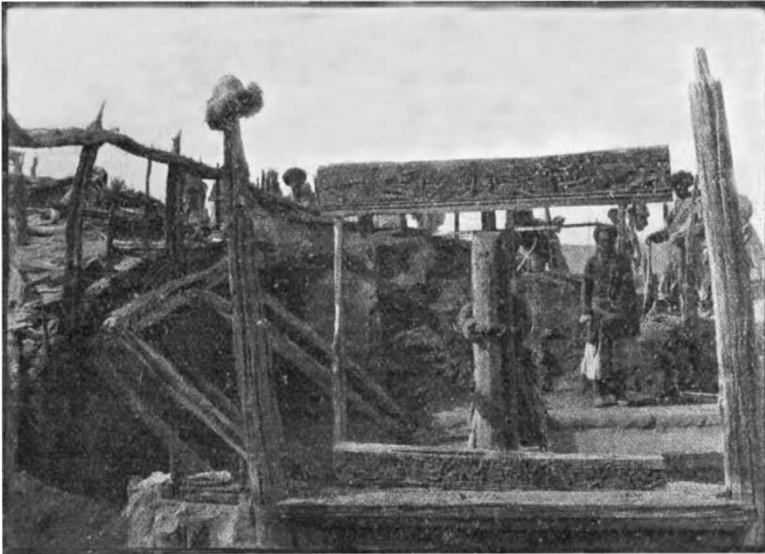


FIG. 1.—Hall of Ancient Dwelling (Third Century A.D.) after Excavation, Niya Site.

it seems probable that we may sit expectant for many months yet before the extraordinary mass of information contained in his collections can be reduced to concrete form. Meanwhile, the Royal Geographical Society has published the text of the lecture (considerably amplified) which he delivered before it last March, and has issued a neat little map which is in itself a most necessary illustration to the story of his adventures.

The particular field of exploration which Dr. Stein has made his own is the *Tarim basin of Chinese Turkestan*. It was here at the very beginning of the century that he unearthed the first relics of an ancient civilisation, which, under the joint influence of India and China, had flourished in the oases of the Takla Makan desert and surrounded the shores of that elusive lake, Lop-nor, some fifteen or twenty centuries ago. It has been usual to think and to write of these buried Buddhist cities of the past as if the gradual encroachment of a great sand-sea, sweeping in huge progressive waves from the westward, had in the course of ages irresistibly engulfed them, and driven forth their ancient population to seek for more profitable fields elsewhere. To a certain extent this is true, but the movement of the sand-drifts was frequently the result rather than the cause of the desertion of these ancient sites. It was the failure of the water supply, the universal process of desiccation which now almost ranks as a geological feature recognisable throughout the world, that permitted the sand-waves. Yet there are points in

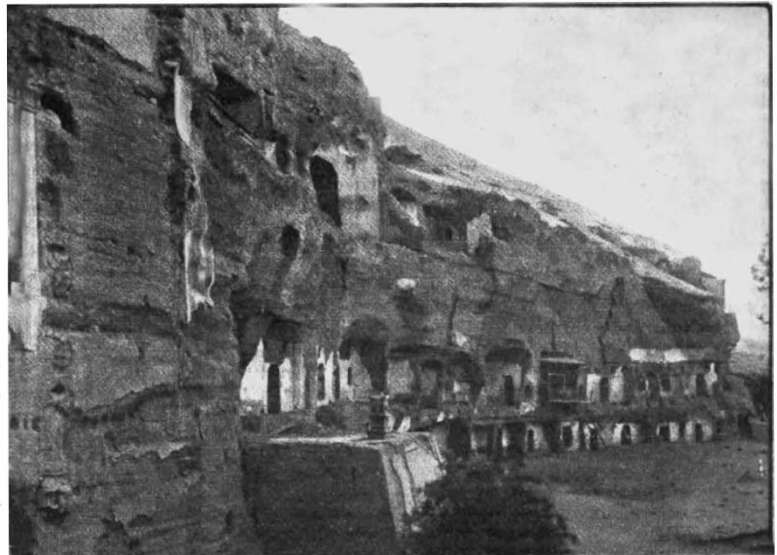


FIG. 2.—Southern Series of Cave Temples at the "Halls of the Thousand Buddhas."

The bourne of pilgrimage was ever the same. It was northern India and the cradle of Buddha on the borders of Nepal that was the end of all endeavour; and the marvel of our present knowledge (derived chiefly from the results of Dr. Stein's researches) is that the way was made so plain and the facilities for



travel were so great in the early centuries of our era. We read of regular posts and connected lines of open route which must have been furrowed by the feet of thousands where never a soul passes in these later days.

With new history we have also to welcome a broad expanse of new geography. Dr. Stein's methods are nothing if not thorough. We have no uncertainty as to whereabouts he found this or that most ancient site; and when he records his remarkable discovery of a long extension of the time-worn wall of China he is able to define, not only its exact position, but its geographical significance as a defensive work with regard to surrounding topography. He does ample justice to the ability of his geographical assistant, Rai Sahib Ram Singh, but Ram Singh would never have effected such results without Dr. Stein's effective guidance and active help. One hundred and thirty sheets of the standard degree size, on the scale of four miles to the inch (which is what has been secured for the records of the Indian Survey), is a solid addition to our geographical knowledge which ranks well even with his vast store of accumulated archæological lore. Perhaps the most noteworthy discovery made by Dr.

#### THE SIXTEENTH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF MEDICINE.

MEDICINE is so self-centred, and its practice is conducted so largely in private, that an international congress, where men meet on a level, rub shoulders, and part again once in three or four years, is an excellent corrective. It serves the same function in the profession as is answered by a public school for the only son of wealthy parents. It is not so much what is taught as what is seen and heard. The knowledge which is obtained by conversing with men brought up in different schools of thought, under various forms of civilisation, and often with wholly divergent ideals, is in itself remarkable, and is sufficient to start new trains of thought in many lines of research. In a great gathering like the International Congress of Medicine, where five or six thousand medical men are gathered together at fixed intervals, old friendships are cemented, new ones are formed, and whilst the scientific reputation of some falls to the ground, others are exalted. The quack is taken at his true value, for his work is judged by those who know the truth, whilst the humble and earnest worker in the difficult paths of research goes home strengthened by the encouragement which he has received from fellow toilers.

The sixteenth International Congress of Medicine was held at Budapest during the first week of September. The seventeenth congress will be held in 1913 at some town in Great Britain. Budapest lends itself especially to a large gathering of foreigners. It is a splendid city, magnificently placed on the Danube, easy of access both to the northern and eastern races of Europe. The inhabitants are active, intensely patriotic, eager to show the progress that has been made, and to prove that the youngest civilised State in Europe has not much to learn, and is in some respects already ahead of the older civilisations the best points of which it has endeavoured to copy. It is, indeed, very difficult to realise that Budapest was a Turkish possession little more than two hundred years

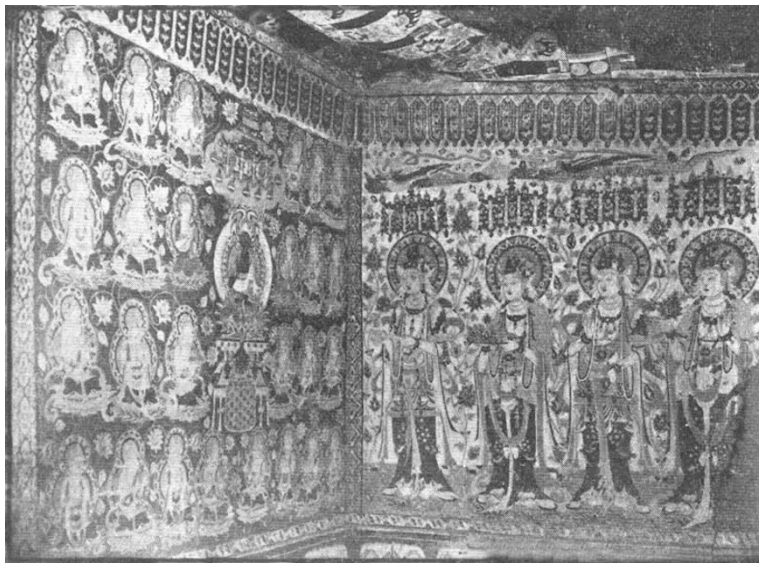


FIG. 3.—Frescoed Wall in Cave Temple at "The Ten-thousand Buddhas."

Stein during his investigations was the extension of the Turkestan basin eastwards to a point some seven degrees farther east than had been previously recorded. From the Chinese frontier town of Suchau a clearly defined line of drainage follows a course parallel to the extension of the Great Wall towards the central depression at Lop-nor; nor can there be much doubt that in the early days of Buddhist settlements in this region this now partially desiccated line of drainage marked the main trade-route from China to Turkestan. That route now hugs the foothills of the Altyn Tagh to the south between Anshi and Lop-nor, but it is a desolate and forsaken route, untrdden by the trader and unsanctified by the pilgrim.

It may be long yet ere we are able to appreciate as they deserve the discoveries and collections of Dr. Stein in relation to their bearing on the history of India; for the mass of raw material which has yet to be classified is so great as to have proved almost an embarrassment to its owner. In the meantime the short and instructive booklet on the subject now issued by the Geographical Society is well worth careful study.

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ago, though the vigilant observer will notice the very faintest trace of orientalism as he walks amongst the people and through the smaller streets of the town. For a medical congress, Budapest is ideal, because it is full of springs and baths which would in themselves have brought it fame, the Hunyadi and Apenta springs being known throughout the world.

The congress was excellently organised, and the greatest credit is due to the president, Prof. Kálmán Müller, and the general secretary, Prof. Emil de Grösz, for the manner in which they brought things to a successful issue. His Royal and Imperial Highness the Archduke Joseph, acting on behalf of the King of Hungary, was indefatigable in the cause of the congress, for he not only attended the inaugural meeting in the municipal buildings, where 5000 persons were gathered together on one of the hottest days in the year, and remained throughout the whole sitting of three hours, but later in the week he welcomed the members to the palace and spoke personally to a very large number of the more important official