

THE
EXPANSION OF RUSSIA

PROBLEMS OF THE EAST AND
PROBLEMS OF THE FAR EAST

ALFRED RAMBAUD

With an Essay on the
RUSSIAN PEOPLE

BY
J. NOVICOW

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THE SOUTHWARD EXPANSION OF RUSSIA IN ASIA.

AN ASIATIC POWER—WARS AND TREATIES WITH
PERSIA—A WAY TO THE INDIAN OCEAN—IN THE
CAUCASUS—PARAMOUNT IN PERSIA.

IF the policy of the present Emperor of the Russias seems to be inspired by other principles than those of his predecessors; if this policy has shown itself to be essentially peaceable and disinterested in Europe; if it has shifted its sphere of activity from the West in order to devote all its efforts to Southern and especially to Eastern Asia,—this is, perhaps, due to the impressions made upon the Czar during his extended travels in the years 1890 and 1891, while he was still only the Czarevitch Nicholas. He visited Greece, Egypt, British India, French Indo-China, Japan, and China. Then, disembarking at Vladivostock, a powerful Russian naval station on a bay of the

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Sea of Japan, he returned overland to St. Petersburg, crossing the whole extent of Siberia. The Czarovitch, of course, did not give his impressions a literary form; but one of his travelling companions, Prince Oukhtomski, has published his in two luxurious volumes, magnificently illustrated by the Russian artist, Karazine.¹

The opinions of Prince Oukhtomski seem to reveal a new element in Russian policy. Formerly the Russians were indignant over Prince Bismarck's reported observation that "Russia has nothing to do in the West. Her mission is in Asia: there she represents civilization." Prince Oukhtomski is not far from holding the same opinion as did this envious foe of his country. For a few parcels of territory conquered with such difficulty in the West, what bloody wars has she not endured? Her efforts to obtain access to the sea have been but half

(1) Le prince Oukhtomski, *Voyage de son Altesse Impériale le Czarovitch en orient*, Paris, 1898.

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successful. The White Sea, blocked with ice; the Baltic, as much Scandinavian and German as Russian, closed to her on the west by the Sound and the Belts; the Black Sea, only yet half Russian, and closed on the southwest by the Bosphorous and the Dardanelles; and the Mediterranean itself, with England holding Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Egypt, and the Suez Canal,—are these seas, so little available, sufficient for the needs of the expansion of the mighty continental empire that Russia is to-day? In Asia, on the contrary, who knows whether by the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf, by Afghanistan and the Indus, she is not going to be able to open her way to the Indian Ocean? Who knows whether, already mistress of the Okhotsk Sea, she will not become mistress also of the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea, both opening with broad outlets into the immensity of the Pacific? Now, the importance that in ancient times the Mediterranean had for mankind, and which the Atlantic possessed from

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the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, seems to-day to be shifting to the Pacific Ocean. Of all the nations bordering on this truly universal ocean, the Russian Empire is destined to be one of the most powerful. As to territorial conquests, how are those that Russia won in little Europe, where every square mile cost her a battle, to be compared with those which, with infinitely less sacrifice and effort, she has already won, or can yet win, in Asia? Bismarck spoke in disdain of the mission of Russia in Asia. Prince Oukhtomski speaks of it with pride: "The time has come for the Russians to have some definite idea regarding the heritage that the Jenghis Khans and the Tamerlanes have left us. Asia! we have been part of it at all times: we have lived its life and shared its interests: our geographical position irrevocably destines us to be the head of the rudimentary powers of the East."

From the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, Russia was a province of the Mongol Empire.

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Everything that constituted that Mongol Empire, however, is perhaps destined to become only a province of Russia. The capital will simply be transferred from Karakorum or from the shores of the Amur to the banks of the Neva. Asiatic in their mixture of races, Asiatic in their history, conquered in the thirteenth century, conquering since the sixteenth, the Russians possess to a higher degree than either the French or the Anglo-Saxons an understanding of things Asiatic. They have all the right that is possible to supplant "those colonies of the Germanic and the Latin races that are taking unwilling Asia under their tutelage." Moreover, the true successor in Asia of the old-time czars or khans of the Finnish race is not the Bogdy-Khan who rules at Peking, but "the White Czar who reigns at St. Petersburg." In one of the pagodas of Canton are to be seen, as Prince Oukhtomski assures us, four colossal figures, called "the kings of the four cardinal points," and Prince Oukhtomski felt confident

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that it was to "the King of the North" that the people rendered the greatest homage.

Laying aside these dreams of the future, let us see what, up to the present time, has been actually accomplished to bring about their realization. The efforts of the Russians throughout their history as an Asiatic power are connected with one or the other of two great movements: her southward expansion towards Persia and British India, and her eastward expansion in the regions bordering on China, Corea, and Japan.

In 1554, during the reign of Ivan the Terrible, the Russians gained a foothold on the Caspian Sea by the conquest of the czarate of Astrakhan and of the lower Volga. Towards the close of his life, Peter the Great waged war on Persia, captured Derbend on the Caspian, and occupied the provinces of Daghestan, Shirvan, Ghilan, and Mazandaran, and the cities of Rasht and Astrabad. The unhealthy character of these regions made them "the

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cemetery of Russian armies," and the successors of the great Czar had to abandon them. A war undertaken by Catherine II., also in the last years of her reign, ended in the same result, and her son, Paul I., recalled the troops. In the region of the Caucasus, the Russians had gained a foothold, between the years 1774-1784, by the acquisition of the Kuban as far as the Terek, and, strangely enough, it was not on the northern slope of the mountains, but upon the southern that they were to begin the conquest of this Caucasus. In 1783, the King, or Czar, of Georgia, Heraclius, declared himself to be the vassal of Catherine II. in order that he might have her assistance against the Persians and the Ottomans. In 1799, his son, George XII.,¹ formally ceded his state to Paul I., although his son, David, continued to govern until 1803, when the

¹ Dubrovine, *Georges XII., dernier tsar de Géorgie, et son émigration à la Russie* (in Russian), St. Petersburg, 1897.

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annexation was consummated. This acquisition brought Russia into collision with the Persians and the Ottomans on one hand, and, on another, with the independent tribes of the Caucasus. By the Treaty of Gulistan, in 1813, Persia ceded to Russia Daghestan, Shirvan, and Shusha, and renounced all claims upon Georgia and other territories of the Caucasus. Another war broke out in 1826, which was terminated by the Treaty of Turkmanchai, February 22, 1828, by which Persia surrendered her two Armenian provinces,¹ Nakhitchevan and Erivan. The same year, in the Treaty of Adrianople, Turkey gave over to Russia the fortresses and districts of Anapa, Petch, and Akhalzikh, and all rights (hitherto contested by the inhabitants) over Imeritia, Mingrelia, and Abkhasia. Then began, in the new possessions, the task of pacifying the wild mountaineers of these

(1) Lord Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, London, 1892.

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regions, and also the Tcherkesses, or Circassians, of the northern slope. The Circassians and the Abkhasi, roused to fanaticism by the soldier priest, the *Imam* Shamyl, held out against the Russians for nearly thirty years. In 1844, Russia had in the Caucasus two hundred thousand soldiers, commanded by her best generals. The capture of Védéni, in 1858, and the surrender of Shamyl, a year later, assured the pacification of the Caucasus. The increase of territory that Russia made at the expense of Turkey, in 1878, by the Treaties of San Stefano and Berlin, included the districts of Kars, Ardahan, and Olty, and the port of Batum, and fixed the boundary line between Turkey and Russia as it has since remained.

Since the Treaty of 1828, Persia under the Shahs, Fet-Aly-Khan, Mohammed, Nasr-ed-Din, and Muzafer-ed-Din, has fallen almost entirely under Russian influence. In 1837-38, the Shah Mohammed, with an army commanded by Russian officers, besieged Herat,

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defended by Afghans under the leadership of English officers. In 1856, the Shah Nars-ed-Din, at the suggestion of Russia, besieged and captured Herat: but the English compelled him to abandon his prize, by making a descent on the Persian Gulf, where they captured the port of Bushire and the island of Karrack, which they have kept. In 1841, Persia ceded to Russia the Caspian port of Ashurabad, near Astrabad: in 1881, Askabad was given to the same power, and, in 1885, Serakhs,—all three places very important strategic points on the eastern frontier. Persia has also agreed to the building of Russian railroads that are to pass through her territory and terminate on the Persian Gulf. The present year, she has negotiated a loan of twenty-two million five hundred thousand rubles through the agency of the "bank of Persia," established under Russian auspices. This loan is payable in seventy-five years, and the interest is secured by all the customs revenues of the

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kingdom, save those of the Persian Gulf. The Shah has bound himself not to seek further loans of any other European power, and has thereby placed himself financially in the hands of Russia. It is thus that Russia, by her diplomacy, by her banks, and by her railroads, making Persia her political and commercial vassal, has succeeded in furthering her scheme of expansion towards the Persian Gulf and the shores of the Indian Ocean.

THE MEANS AND METHODS OF RUSSIAN EXPANSION.

FRUITS OF DIPLOMACY—ABSOLUTISM OF RUSSIAN
GOVERNMENT—AN ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM—RUS-
SIAN COLONISTS—RACE CHARACTERISTICS—RELIGION
—POPULATION—FRANCO-RUSSIAN ALLIANCE—FROM
THE BALTIC TO THE PACIFIC.

We have followed Russia in all the directions that her policy of expansion has carried her. It now remains for us to study the means that she has employed, especially in what concerns her expansion in the East.

The essential characteristic that distinguishes her Oriental from her Western policy, is that, while nearly all the progress she has made in Europe has been either the cause or the result of bloody wars like those of the Czars of Moscow against Poland, of Peter the Great against Charles XII., of Catherine II. and Alexander II. against the Ottomans, of Paul I. against the

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French Republic, of Alexander I. against Napoleon, and of Nicholas I. against the Allies in the Crimea, her Oriental expansions have never brought her into war with a power of the first magnitude, not even with China. However bellicose Russia may have shown herself in Europe, in Asia she has exhibited a prudence wholly Oriental. A score of times it has seemed that she was on the brink of a mighty war with Great Britain over the frontiers of India; with China over Albasin, Kuldja, or Manchuria; and with Japan over Liao-tung and Corea. Some sort of an agreement has always come in time to ward off an open rupture, as in 1872, 1885, 1887, and 1895, with Great Britain; and as at Nertchinsk, at Agyun, at Tientsin, and at Peking with China. In 1871, war with the latter seemed imminent with respect to the Kuldja question, but, rather than proceed to extreme measures, Russia preferred to abandon a part of her conquest. In these agreements, Russia it is found, has

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generally the better part of the bargain. She understands how to utilize the *amour propre* of her adversaries. Thus, she helped the Chinese "to save their face," for example, by inducing them to lease for twenty-five or ninety-nine years what they would obstinately have refused to lease definitely. Thanks to this expedient, it appeared to the Chinese that the dignity and integrity of their empire would remain inviolate. England also has grown accustomed to allowing herself "to save her face," and to be put to sleep by the mesmeric passes, energetic, and at the same time, caressing of Russian diplomacy. She allows herself to see in the "explanations" brought to London, the proof that some bold Cossack raid, some thorough lesson administered to her Afghan clients, is the result of an "error", a "misunderstanding." A company of six hundred soldiers is almost always a "scientific expedition." The English minister, in order not to stir up strife, allows himself to yield,

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and hands over to his successor the task of disentangling the knot. This successor is careful not to meddle with what he himself was not mixed up in, and what the jingoes and London cockneys have already forgotten; and so what the Russians have skillfully acquired remains permanently in their possession. If the occasion demands it, they will declare that they did not intend to conquer Bokhara; but have they proved that they have not made a vassal state of it, something that will be more useful to them than an annexed province? They never intended to advance to Merv; but if the people of Merv of their own accord came to them, would it be a wise policy to reject a "voluntary" submission? And thus, slowly, silently, without excessive cracking of her whip, Russian supremacy, in her well-oiled car of progress, has been moving on through all Central Asia.

Russia is the only European power which has an absolute government. Its autocratic feature, so fiercely assailed upon the accession of

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Nicholas I. by the "Constitutionals," or "Republicans," of 1825, and under Alexander II. by the Nihilist conspiracies, seems to have taken on a new life in the estimation of the Russian people, because, according to the expression of Prince Oukhtomski, it is the necessary condition of the greatness of their nation and of her "supernatural" and providential mission in Asia. If the foundation of the government remains autocratic, this autocracy, is at least more sincerely an "enlightened despotism" than was the absolutism of the eighteenth century, a despotism thoughtful of the economic interests and the well-being of the people, blending its ambitions with the legitimate aspirations of the nation. It has borrowed from the West municipal or provincial self-government, but not the parliamentary, not even the representative regimen. In Russia there is no minister responsible to legislative bodies, where changeable majorities successively displace one another; but ministers having the

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confidence of the sovereign continue in office for a long time, in such manner that from 1815 to 1882 Russia had only two ministers of foreign affairs, Nesselrode and Gortchakof, and since the latter date there have been only three, De Giers, Lobanof, and Muravief. How many have been those that have followed one another during these past eighty-five years in France, England, and even the United States! This permanency in office allows continuity of the same political views and constancy in realizing them. No parliament, therefore, no questionings, no blue or yellow books. A restricted liberty of the press closes with respect the indiscreet lips of reporters and interviewers. Hence secrecy in both planning and executing is possible. There is no need of throwing dust in the eyes of parliaments, of the newspapers, and of the people; nor is there any need of brag, optimistic proclamations, and of oratorical heroics. Great conquests can be accomplished silently.

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This form of government, though it may appear as archaic as the despotism of Nebuchadnezzar or of the Grand Turk, does not exclude the use of the most modern appliances and scientific methods over which free peoples pride themselves: railroads, telegraphs, telephones, improved cannon and rifles, battleships and cruisers of the latest pattern, a thorough knowledge of history, of ethnography, and of all forms of human speech, from those of Finland to those of Kamtchatka. It does not exclude the system of military organization in vigorous operation by the powerful and enlightened nations of France and Germany, nor yet the art of securing from the people the maximum of military power.

Russia has a regular army like France and Germany, national militia like Switzerland, and irregular troops like those of the Shah of Persia and the Emperor of China. These irregulars date back to the beginning of Russian expansion. The Czars of Moscow had their Cossacks

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of the Dnieper, of the Don, of the Volga, and of the Ural. In proportion as conquest succeeded conquest, the soldier class of the subdued peoples were amalgamated with the Russians in the "Cossack armies" of the Terek, of the Kuban, of the Caucasus, and of Turkestan. There are to-day Cossacks of the Trans-Baikal, of the Pamirs, and of the Amur. For hundreds and thousands of kilometres, they constitute the grand guard of the regular army, the mobile curtain of light cavalry that will screen its movements, "free lances," for whose too audacious encroachment and too bold raids, it will be possible to disavow all responsibility.

Behind these, like another advance guard, come the merchants, adventurers also, *merchant adventurers*, as the English of the fifteenth century said. Behind these, again, sally forth the colonists in search of cheap land, and who, following the course of the rivers and streams, at times venturing into the jungles, found villages over which will soon rise the humble bell-

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tower of a church. All these people, Cossacks, officers, and soldiers of the regular army, merchants, colonists, and even the *tchinovniks*, or officials, possess to a degree not met with in any other European nation, the gift of adaptation to a new climate and environment, and the gift of assimilating native races or of becoming assimilated with them. The peasant of European Russia, very much mixed, especially in the East, with Finnish or Turkish blood and characteristics, does not differ essentially from the Ostiak and the Vogul of Western Siberia. These, in turn, show no marked difference from the Turkish population of Eastern Siberia, such as the Yakuts. From these to the Mongolian races, such as the Tunguses, the Buriats, and the Manchus, and from these to the Chinese population, there is scarcely any noticeable transition. There was a time, when from the Dnieper to the Pacific, all obeyed the same master, the Grand Khan, "the Son of Heaven," whose heir to-day is the "White Czar." From

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the Dnieper to the Pacific extends the same plain, are found the same climate and the same soil, barren steppes alternating with fertile mould; the same manner of life, of dwelling, and of dress; the same endurance of extreme cold, excessive heat, privations, fatigue, long journeys, and a half-nomadic existence; and the same tendency to Oriental fatalism, which the orthodox term Christian resignation. And thus, as Elisée Reclus remarks, the Yakuts easily become Russians and the Russians as easily become Yakuts, and both Russians and natives possess the same readiness in acquiring the language of the foreigner.

Does not the difference in religion constitute a barrier between them? The Russian peasant with his rudimentary faith, to which, nevertheless, he holds with all his heart, and even the *pope*, or parish priest, with his vaguely uncertain theology and his ignorance, are free from all intolerance. Any form of the Christian religion, whatever value it may have, although

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it clashes with the still less highly developed beliefs of the Mohammedan peoples, makes its way among tribes that are pagan, Shamanist, Fetichist, or vaguely Buddhist. Between the Russians and the pagans there is established a oneness of faith or superstition. There is no question of complicated dogmas devised by the subtle brains of Alexandria or of Byzantium. The untutored Siberians do not fall into controversies over the mystery of the Trinity, the twofold nature of the Redeemer, or transubstantiation. The idea of God is too lofty for these coarse minds, but they all agree in placing on the summit of their Pantheon Saint Nicholas, the Thaumaturgist, and above him, beneath him, or equal with him, Christ and the Virgin. Beneath these come saints, Christian or with a physiognomy that may be pagan, Buddhistic, and at times Mohammedan. And all this multi-form worship is in full harmony with the primitive cult of springs and of certain venerable trees, with the belief in demons of the forests

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and river sprites, and with the custom of wearing certain amulets that the orthodox priest, the Shamanist sorcerer, or the Hadji returned from Mecca, may furnish. What more is necessary in order to be, in this life, successful on the farm, or in fishing, or in hunting, or in war, and, in the next, to be certain of salvation? The Tunguse, the Buriat, the Vogul, and the Ostiak, who firmly believe in Saint Nicholas, have already become, or are in the process of becoming, Russian. Are not the Tehuvashi, the Mordva, and the Meshtcheraks all children of the same father, that is, subjects of the same Czar? Though they may be Mohammedans, do they not still believe in the virtue of certain magical words uttered by the orthodox priest, the efficacy of the holy waters in driving away Cheïtan (Satan) and evil Djinns, in the protection that Saint Blaise, the old-time god, Valoss, of the Russians, extends over their flocks, and in the cures wrought in the name of Saint Cosme or in that of Saint Damian,

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those heavenly physicians, who cure their adherents without requiring remuneration?

These two scourges, journalism and theology, being almost unknown in the Asiatic Empire of the Czar, one can live there in a happy confusion of things. Politics does not create any differences among men, and religion scarcely any. There is no time to reflect and subtilize upon the more or less brown or yellow color of the face, the more or less turned-up shape of the nose, the more or less slant of the eyes, or the more or less prominence of the cheeks. In no degree of the social scale is there known the prejudice of "the skin," so pronounced among the English and Americans, and noticeable, but to much less extent, among the French, Portuguese, and Spanish colonists. Russian colonization is not destructive of aboriginal races: it does not exterminate them, it absorbs them. Marriages, legal or otherwise, are frequent between the conquerers and the conquered. Already, in the days of Ivan the

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Terrible, Tartar Khans became Russian princes. To her subjects of brown or of saffron complexion, of Buddhist or of Mohammedan religion, Russia has always shown more liberality than France has to her Algerian subjects. In Algeria it has become difficult for an Arab or a Berber to rise above the grade of captain, but majors, colonels, and even generals of Turkish or Circassian race, and even of the Mohammedan religion, are numerous in the Asiatic armies of the "White Czar."

The Russians of Europe are fully able of themselves to people their Asiatic colonies without having to assimilate the natives, and without the assistance of foreign immigration. Russia is fortunate in that her colonies are only a prolongation of her own territories. To become a colonist, there is no ocean to cross, no steamboat fare to pay. The poorest peasant, a staff in his hand, an axe at his belt, his boots slung from a cord over his shoulder, can pass from one halting-place to another, until

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he reaches the ends of the empire. Moreover, the population of Russia, by its own birth rate, increases, in spite of insufficient medical care at childbirth, with a rapidity unknown to any other nation of European blood, excepting, perhaps, the Canadian French. In 1878-79, the subjects of the Czar numbered ninety-six millions, in 1899 they reached one hundred and twenty-nine millions, an increase in twenty years of thirty-three millions, a number almost equal to the population of the kingdom of Italy, or an annual increase of about one million six hundred thousand souls, a number that about equals the present population of North Carolina or Alabama. With such a treasury of men to draw from, neither military power nor colonial strength will be lacking. In Siberia, before 1895, the increase of population by immigration alone was only about ninety-two thousand per year. Since the suppression of penal transportation, especially since the construction of the Trans-Siberian railroad, immigration has

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brought in two hundred thousand annually. The population of Siberia must by this time have reached the figure of seven millions. Of this number at least six millions are Russians. This, however, is one person for each square kilometre of territory, so that neither is there any lack of land.

For a long time the Russian sovereign needed two things to enable him to plunge boldly into the depths of Asia. First, he lacked the assurance that England or the German powers would not be able to foment on his European frontiers one of those coalitions like those that resulted in the Crimean War or in the revision of the Treaty of San Stefano; secondly, he lacked "the sinews of war," or, as the English phraseology is, "the Cavalry of Saint George." The alliance with France, outlined at Kronstadt in 1891, proclaimed at Paris in 1896, and at St. Petersburg in 1897, has given the Czar two things that were wanting. It assures the safety of the European frontiers against any effort of

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the Triple Alliance. In the Far East, in 1895, we have seen how, at the same time, France and Germany took in hand the interests of Russia against Japanese ambition and British hostility. The Germany of Bismarck attempted to ruin Russia's credit in the Berlin exchange and in the European market. France threw open her market and her credit to Russia, and either in France, or thanks to her, the Czar, within a few years, has been able to borrow several milliards. This has enabled him to strengthen his army, put a powerful navy afloat, consent to large loans to China and Persia, complete his European railroad system, and push forward the work upon the Trans-Caucasian, the Trans-Siberian, the Trans-Manchurian, and the Trans-Chinese railroads.

The results of the daring raids through Turkestan, in the direction of the Persian Gulf and of Afghanistan, and towards the Amur and the Japan Sea, are now consolidated by a wholly modern outfit of war and travel. In

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Turkestan, the ancient capitals of Tamerlane, the fortresses conquered by the heroism of the Pérovskis, the Tchernaiëfs and of the Skobelefs, all of which called for so much skill and careful manipulation on the part of Russian diplomacy, are to-day railroad stations. There are dining-room stations at Merv, Bokhara, Samarkand, Kokhand, Andijan, Tashkend, etc., and the Russian station of Kushk is only one hundred and twenty kilomètres from Herat. The Trans-Siberian railroad, with its numerous stations, its branch lines to Khabarovsk, Port Arthur, and Pekin, and the annexed systems that penetrate the Chinese Empire, has consolidated all that was accomplished by the venturesome explorers of former times, from Irmak or Khabarof to Lieutenant Nevelskoï of our day. The principal line, six thousand two hundred kilomètres long, with its bridges of eight hundred mètres over the Obi and the Irtysh, of one thousand mètres over the Yenisei and the Selenga, with its ferryboat, one hundred mètres

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long, that ferries the trains across the southern bay of Lake Baikal, permits the transportation of colonists, merchants, regiments, and brings to bear upon the further side of Asia all the power of the Czar who reigns at St. Petersburg. In 1889, the merchants of Nizhni Novgorod, in an address to the Emperor Alexander III., predicted in these terms the brilliant future of the Trans-Siberian: "It will unite to Europe, through the Russian Empire, four hundred millions of Chinese, and forty-two millions of Japanese. One will be able to go from Europe to Shang-hai by Vladivostock in twenty days instead of the thirty-five which the Canadian route requires, or the forty-five of the Suez route." The distance between Europe and the Far East has been still further shortened by the extension of the Russian railroad to Port Arthur. In the commerce of the world, the Trans-Siberian will work as important a revolution as did the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope in the fifteenth century, or the construc-

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tion of the Suez Canal in the nineteenth. The policy of Russia is to secure the full attainment of what she has been striving after for centuries in her onward march through the Siberian wilds, that is, access to seas free from ice, where her fleets of war and commerce may have unhindered course. Russia is striving for this freedom of the sea four hundred years later than Spain, Portugal, France, England, and Holland. She has lost nothing in having waited so long. Thus far, she has passed through the Baltic, and the Mediterranean periods, with a power for expansion unknown to her predecessors. She is about to inaugurate a new era in her history; the oceanic, the world-wide era, is merely beginning for the Slav.