

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF EMPIRE
IN ASIA

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BY

THE EARL OF RONALDSHAY

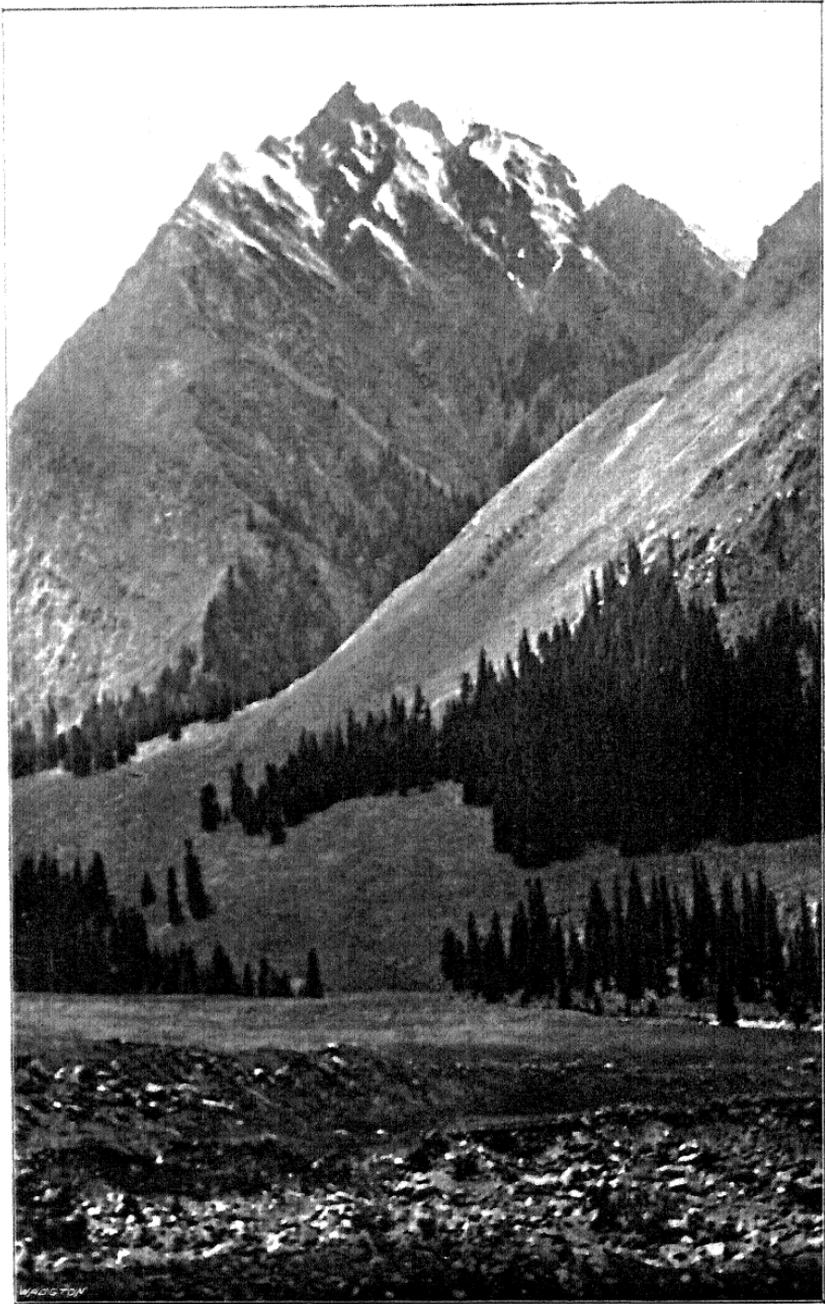
F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF 'SPORT AND POLITICS UNDER AN EASTERN SKY'

"It is in Asia once again that will be decided the destinies of the world. In Asia will be founded and will increase great empires, and whoever succeeds in making his voice heeded in the Far East will be able also to speak in dominating accents to Europe."—PRINCE HENRI D'ORLEANS: *Around Tonkin.*

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WALD G. TOM

VIEW IN THE THIAN SHAN,

P R E F A C E.

THE object and scope of the present volume are set forth at sufficient length in the opening chapter, and no further explanation on this score is required from me here. With regard to arrangement, it has been my endeavour to place before the public an account of some of the less accessible countries of Asia and of the problems to which their existence and present position give rise, which may appeal equally to the general reader and to the student of Eastern questions. With this object in view I have caused to be inserted a number of illustrations, reproductions in every case of photographs taken by myself, in the hope that they may prove of assistance to the reader in forming a mental picture of the countries and peoples that I describe. The countries through which I passed being many and various, I have divided the volume into sections, each one of which may be read without reference to the others. In Section I. will be found a synopsis of the chapters that follow; in Sections II.-VI. a description of a journey the length of an ancient continent; and in

the concluding section some account of the political situation in the East with which this country is confronted at the present time. Sections II.-VI. may be said to consist in the main of a narrative of travel, and, since my wanderings led me at one time through an unrivalled sporting country, I have not hesitated to include among them a section upon sport; but though devoted largely to a description of travel, some political questions—the Baghdad railway problem to wit—are discussed in them, something of history is recalled, and such information as my inquiries in various directions elicited is adduced for the benefit of all who take a close interest in the peoples and politics of Asia. It has been said of travellers—not altogether without reason perhaps—that they forget much that they have seen, and remember much that they have not! If I plead guilty to the former charge, I may, I hope, in my own case conscientiously take exception to the latter, since it has been my practice, whenever seeing anything of interest or learning anything of importance from reliable sources, to take instant note of it upon the spot.

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary for me to add that I am indebted to many for much willing help and sympathetic interest shown to me by my own countrymen and by foreigners alike, whether official or otherwise, whenever my wanderings have brought me in contact with them in the remote corners of the East. In this connection it is also my pleasant duty to acknowledge my indebtedness to the proprietors of 'The Times' for the ready assent which they gave