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THE INTERCOURSE OF  
CHINA WITH EASTERN TURKESTAN

AND THE ADJACENT COUNTRIES IN THE 2ND CENT. B.C.

By THOS. W. KINGSMILL.

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THE following notes refer to a period which is one of considerable historic interest. In the Far East the Emperor Wu-ti, the most enterprising of the Han dynasty, having broken the power of the Turkish empire of the Hiung-nû, *i.e.* Kara-Nirus, was engaged in strengthening the internal administration of China, and in extending its influence abroad. In the west the Romans had, B.C. 146, captured and destroyed Carthage, and had reduced Greece to a Roman province. The Ptolemies yet ruled in Egypt; and, in Asia, the Syrian empire under the house of the Seleucidæ still survived, but was showing evident signs of decrepitude. In Asia Minor, Pontus was rising into importance under Mithradates V., who was one of the first of the more important sovereigns of the continent to enter into close relations with Rome. This position of affairs finally resulted in the great war between his son Mithradates VI. and Rome, which afforded that encroaching power the opportunity of firmly establishing the Roman rule in Asia, and of eventually overturning the decadent power of Syria, already frittered away by internal dissensions between the members of the royal house of Seleucidæ.

To the east of Syria lay the powerful state of Parthia, which, founded by Arsaces I. about the year B.C. 250, had now, B.C. 124, descended to the greatest of Parthian monarchs, Mithradates II. His father, Artabanus, had lost his life in an attack on the Tochâri, the Ta-hia of the Chinese narrative, who, having accomplished the destruction of the Greek kingdom of Bactria, were threatening the adjacent kingdom of Parthia. Mithradates continued the war and was ultimately successful, taking possession