



A Ride to Khiva

Frederick Burnaby

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In the winter of 1875, a young British officer set out across central Asia on an unofficial mission to investigate the latest secret Russian moves in the Great Game. His goal was the mysterious caravan city of Khiva, closed to all European travelers by the Russians following their seizure of it two years earlier. His aim was to discover whether, as many British strategists feared, this remote and dangerous oasis was about to be used as a springboard for an invasion of India.

Captain Frederick Burnaby was already something of a legend. For a start he was reputed to be the strongest man in the British Army, standing six-foot-four and weighting over 200 pounds. He also spoke no fewer than seven languages, including Russian and Turkish, and possessed a most vigorous and colorful prose style.

Unknown to his superiors, who would have forbidden the venture, he rode for over a thousand miles across steppe and desert, struggling through blizzards and snowdrifts, to reach forbidden Khiva. Burnaby was ordered home by an alarmed government and there he immediately sat down and wrote this best-selling account of his adventures.

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