

In the topography, in the forms of life, and in the climate, we find here the greatest contrasts the earth affords. The eternal snow-fields on the Bogdo-ula, Khan-tengri and the highest peaks of the Tibetan mountains are kindled by the purple splendour of the rising sun while the rest of the world rests in the shade for several minutes. And whereas the distance from their summits to the centre of the earth is greater than is the case for other parts of the continent, we also find within our field of work the Turfan-Lukchun depression, that with the exception of the shores of the Dead Sea is nearer to the centre of the earth than any other spot on the land-surface of the globe.

Here, too, we find the extremes of the continental climate, ranging between eternal snow and ice on the one hand and arid deserts on the other. At the southern foot of the Lang-shan we have noted  $-40.7^{\circ}$  C., and at Tsondol on the Edsen-gol  $+42.4^{\circ}$  C. In the interior of the Takla-makan Desert one may die of thirst within sight of the Muz-tagh's and the K'un-lun's snow-crowned crests and blue-shimmering glaciers.

Our routes in this gigantic territory form the spider's net reproduced on ERİK NORIN's map, appended to this volume. Actually, this map does justice above all to our routes and especially to my own, whereas the orography is given in only broad outlines. A more detailed map on a larger scale, which will show the general configuration and orography, hydrography, as well as the extent of the deserts and oasis, is under preparation and will be published in a separate volume with explanatory text by NORIN and introduction by myself. In the meantime a compilation of our Mongolian routes between Batu-khalagh-sume and the Edsen-gol will be appended to parts IV—V of this work.

Our eight years in Asia passed all too quickly, leaving us with a rich store of ineffaceable memories. We remember the dangers and adventures that threatened us daily in the period when civil wars were raging in North China, Mongolia and Sinkiang. But kindly stars shone over our paths and we remember, too, periods of years when we enjoyed the profoundest peace and the most undisturbed working atmosphere.

Now, as the wings of time increase the distance between the past and the present, news very occasionally seeps through to our ears of the great changes that have taken place in the tracts where we spent so many happy years. But however fundamental and violent may be the revolutions that in our times are celebrated by all peoples and states like some huge saturnalian orgy, our old earth remains untouched.

Closing my eyes, I see a carnival of timeless images — I see a crowd of weather-beaten Mongols in red heavy coats and fur caps; they are riding on spirited ponies or on dark, tall camels from whose swinging lips the froth hangs down in white