

THE PULSE OF ASIA

INTRODUCTION

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CENTRAL ASIA

IN the progress of human knowledge the marked advances in each science have been made under the stimulus of a great fundamental principle. Astronomy could proceed but little beyond astrology until Newton discovered the law of gravitation; physics remained empirical until the conservation of energy was recognized; chemistry was merely alchemy until its pioneers worked out the unfailing law of the replacement of atom by atom; and geology would still be miner's lore, if scientists had not seen that in the course of ages the earth as we know it has been slowly evolved by processes identical with those still in action. So, too, in the biological sciences, botany, zoölogy, and physiology, all was confusion until Darwin touched the key of evolution and a vast number of apparently unrelated facts fell into their appointed places, and the way was open for the wonderful advances of the last half century.

The anthropological sciences are also bound together by the unifying principle of evolution. Geography, anthropology, history, and sociology form an anthropological group possessing a unity as great as that of the biological sciences, although this has been perceived only within a few years. The average man thinks of geography, the oldest of all the sciences, as a schoolboy study of maps and of empirical descriptions of places and people. He forgets that