

cal features and of their influence on the distribution of living species. It must deal with a given region, or natural province, as a whole; and must describe the entire assemblage of organic forms which result from a specified group of inorganic controlling features. The description is not complete unless it includes the highest and most interesting realm of geography, — the influence of physical environment, directly or through other forms of life, upon the mental and moral condition of man.

In accordance with this view of geography, I shall describe some of the chief and most typical physical features of Central Asia, not for their own sake, but as a preparation for the study of their relation to life. Then I shall set forth certain events, conversations, and scenes which fell within my own experience, and shall show how they illustrate the influence of the physical environment already described upon the habits, thought, and character of the people. The descriptions centre in five basins located in northern India, western China, eastern Persia, and Asiatic Russia. The first basin, that of Kashmir, lies among the Himalaya mountains. Unlike the others, it has sufficient rainfall, so that it is not self-contained, but is drained by the Jhelum River, which flows out through a gorge in the surrounding mountains and reaches the sea. Hence the conditions of life are different from those of Central Asia in general, and resemble those of moister countries, such as Italy. The next three basins, those of Lop and Turfan in China, and Seyistan (Sistan, or Seistan) in Persia, are so arid that their rivers either dwindle to nothing in the desert, or end in shallow salt lakes. They closely resemble one another, and