

of little people called Japanese, whose fathers, so report said, were English, and whose mothers were Chinese, but at any rate a people who had fought and whipped the Russians. It would not be pleasant in Russia, he and his friends thought; it would be better to go by way of India, where it was reported that food was cheap and officials not inquisitive, even if the way was execrable. So it happened that on his return I met this highly traveled, ignorant pilgrim under the mulberry tree, and found that unconsciously he had grasped the essentials of the geography of Asia. From his standpoint in Central Asia, the world was chiefly desert with some oases. Had he not seen countries of that sort from far away in Mongolia to the ends of the earth in Arabia? China, known to him as "Bajin" (Pekin), stood for civilization, something vast, populous, and unknown; the land of his rulers, to be sure, but a place whither he had no thought or desire of going. Russia, by which he meant Siberia, was a broad land, easy to traverse and interesting, but not a place in which to stay, for it was expensive, and its people were prone to investigate the affairs of others. And finally, India, under its Sahib rulers, represented plenty, freedom, and honesty, coupled with impenetrability, for it lay beyond the frigid ranges of the "Abode of Snow," and the breathless desert of "Black Gravel."