

most Asia are still as fresh and cherished as before. So when the President of Harvard University kindly invited me to deliver a course of lectures at the Lowell Institute, Boston, I gladly availed myself of the opportunity offered to describe the travels and discoveries of those years in a condensed form suited for a wider public.

Considering the great extent and varied character of the explorations, it would have been still more difficult to achieve the requisite condensation, had I not been able adequately to illustrate my account of them on the screen. This need made itself felt also when presenting here these lectures in print with suitable additions and changes. Hence I must feel grateful for the discerning consideration of my publishers which has rendered it possible to provide sufficient illustrations both of the scenes of my explorations and of the finds that rewarded them at ancient sites.

Before taking the reader to the distant region of Asia over which those explorations extended, it seemed necessary to sketch in broad outlines its characteristic physical features. Equally helpful it appeared to give a summary account of the history of which that region had been the scene for the last two thousand years, and for which it was destined mainly by its geography. For these introductory chapters I was able to avail myself largely of what I had occasion to set forth in my lecture on "Innermost Asia: its Geography as a factor in History", delivered in 1925 before the Royal Geographical Society.

In the course of three long expeditions carried over a vast area where practicable routes are limited by great natural obstacles, it was unavoidable that geographical considerations and archaeological tasks should cause certain