

more in the traits already instanced as in the eeriness or psychic sense of the man born under the Northern lights.

The book is entitled "Through Asia," and does certainly recount the author's progress over the whole distance from St. Petersburg to Pekin. But the main concern of the explorer and the chief interest of his story gather round the central region, where most of his time was spent and which he thus describes :

"In the heart of Asia, between the two highest chains of mountains on the earth, the Kwen-lun and the Himalayas, is the most stupendous upheaval to be found on the face of our planet—the Tibetan highlands. Its average height is 13,000 feet, and in the north it attains as much as 15,000 feet. Its area, therefore, of 770,000 square miles (two and a half times that of the Scandinavian peninsula) is on a level with the highest peaks of the Alps."

This vast tableland is moreover the backbone whence proceed the Alpine ribs of the great continent which stretches from the Baltic to the Pacific. Yet these extraordinary elevations, which resemble some sort of knob or bulge protruding from the surface of the globe, have close beside them, as in the Tarim basin, depressions among the lowest in the world, one of them—at Luktkhin—sinking to a depth actually below the level of the sea.

Toward this objective Dr. Hedin made his way in the end of 1893. On October 16th he left Stockholm for St. Petersburg, and took rail for 1,400 miles to Orenburg. There he purchased a tarantass—a heavy carriage without springs or seats—and set out for a drive of one thousand three hundred miles over the Kirghiz steppes to Tashkend. This was a rough prospect for November and December, and the reality was not below expectation.

The Kirghiz, whose acquaintance he now made, impressed him as "a half-savage people, but capable, healthy, and good-natured. He found the steppes, to which they are passionately devoted, to be "grand and impressive," like the sea : but "utterly monotonous and melancholy." In the interior of Asia textiles almost take the place of current coin, and travellers have to provide themselves with cloth and cotton in order to pay their way. From Tashkend Dr. Hedin went on to Kokand, and some idea of the religious earnestness of the natives may be inferred from that town of sixty thousand inhabitants possessing no fewer than thirty-five madrasas or Mohammedan theological colleges, with three thousand students supported by donations, and five hundred self-supporting.

At Margelan the doctor prepared for a winter journey over the Pamirs to Kashgar. He secured the services of Islam Bai, who was his companion, able, loyal, devoted, throughout all his perilous wanderings, the second hero of the expedition. The blinding snowstorms which suddenly fell on the traveller, and made a few yards' distance from the caravan almost equal to certain death, were only one of the dangers of the route. The party were exposed to the risk of terrific avalanches. One which had fallen over their route only the day before was measured; it was a quarter of a mile across, and was nearly seventy feet deep.

The Pamirs, prominent as they have ever been in the physical configuration of the globe, only recently emerged into the popular consciousness of Great Britain, as a turning-point in Anglo-Russian diplomacy. For on the roof of the world the two vast empires met, and the momentous problem of exactly marking out their com-