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UNKNOWN MONGOLIA

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A Record of Travel and Exploration in
North-West Mongolia and Dzungaria

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WITH THREE CHAPTERS ON SPORT

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AND A FOREWORD BY
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a whole, Mongolia has a representative fauna of the Central Asiatic type; but its northern edge, bordering on Siberia, includes a considerable number of species peculiar to the temperate forests of the northern Palæarctic region. This is especially noticeable in the Uriankhai country, between the Syansk and Tannu-ola ranges, which, although lying within the boundaries of Outer Mongolia and being in itself a terrace between the Siberian plain and Mongolian plateau, yet possesses a fauna and flora entirely Siberian. Dzungaria has, on the whole, a Central Asian fauna, but a few Siberian species range thus far into the heart of the continent.

We can, first of all, draw a main dividing-line between typical Siberian and Central Asian flora and fauna; this will roughly follow the southern limit of the forest-zone. The southern or Central Asian portion of this division will again be subdivided by the insular Tian Shan mountain-group, which forms in itself a peculiar and isolated faunistic and floristic zone. Another dividing-line is necessary between the Tian Shan and Altai, to show the exact limits of the special types peculiar to each region. The first great faunistic division to be delimited is that between Siberia and Inner Asia. In the course of our journey we first passed the line of demarcation between these two areas in the neighbourhood of the Tannu-ola Mountains. This watershed between Arctic and Mongolian drainage may be taken as the junction of the two zones, although, of course, they overlap and there is a broad neutral zone between them.

Broadly speaking, the Tannu-ola is the *southern* limit of such species as the reindeer, moose, beaver, many fur-bearing animals, squirrels, black-game (*Tetrao tetrix*), hazel-grouse (*Tetrastis bonasia*), and capercailzie (*Tetrao urogallus*); the same range forms roughly the *northern* limit of such Central Asian types as the wild-sheep (*Ovis ammon*), wild-horse (*Equus prjevalskii*), marmots, and a host of small mammals.

The neutral zone, of which I spoke, consists mainly of mountain-groups such as the Altai and Turgun, or Kundelun, which extend southwards into Mongolia across the watershed of Arctic drainage; these by their altitude compensate for the more southern latitude. On these mountains we find that the ranges

of many Siberian and Mongolian species overlap. The Turgun Range, for instance, is more truly Mongolian than the Tannu-ola. This forms the northern limit of the yak; it is here we first meet with the *ovis ammon*,—although it formerly ranged on to the southern slopes of the Tannu-ola; here, too, begin the snow-leopard, the marmot, and the snow-cock. Siberian types are represented by the ptarmigan (*Lagopus rupestris*), which ranges thus far over the Tannu-ola.

The Altai Range is difficult to define as belonging exclusively to either faunistic zone; but I should continue the line of demarcation, which runs the length of the Tannu-ola, along the Little Altai and thence in a south-easterly direction along the crest of the Great, or Mongolian Altai to the head-waters of the Black Irtish. In other words, all that part of the Altai which drains into the Arctic should belong to the Siberian, whilst the remainder should represent a portion of the Mongolian zone. The Urungu basin should probably be included in the former. Beyond the Altai, in a south-westerly direction, lies the lowland of Dzungaria, which connects the plains of Siberia with the plateau of Mongolia, and across which continues the line of demarcation between the two main life-zones, as well as another secondary line to show the subdivision between Altai—whether Mongolian or Siberian—and Tian Shan fauna.

The first and most important line, which we have so far traced to a point on the crest of the Altai somewhere between the sources of the Black Irtish and the Urungu rivers, now continues across the central plains of Dzungaria, cuts in between the mountain groups of Barlik and Urkashar on the south and the Sair and Tarbagatai on the north; and runs westwards into Northern Turkestan. This line forms the southern limit of the Siberian larch tree (*Larix sibirica*) and the northern limit of the Chukar partridge (*Caccabis chukar*) and the Tian Shan spruce (*Abies schrenkiana*). But most forms peculiar to the Tian Shan area stop at the Ala-tau, and do not extend their range across the Dzungarian depression, or Gate, to the Barlik Mountains.

Practically the whole of Dzungaria belongs to the Central Asian zone, which includes the subdivisions of the Tian Shan and Mongolia. The plains form a neutral ground for some widely