Mongolia.
(DIARY LEAVES)
BY NICHOLAS DE ROERICH

Would you wish to fly? Why not fly over Mongolia?
What about landing fields?...... Mongolia has natural
landing fields for "iron birds" everywhere.

Would you like to speed by motor? You can speed over all
the roads and across the entire plain. Rarely can one cover such
distances without interruption.

Would you care to cross the deserts by camel? You may
continue endlessly without an obstacle ahead. And you will find
bristling brush for the camels to eat everywhere.

Would you like to gallop on horseback? Gallop ahead. The
Mongols conquered immense spaces, as the hordes of Chengis
Khan may testify. These spaces seem like waterless deserts—yet
very often the water is very close to the surface, sometimes within
two or three feet. Besides, as I have often written, there are
subterranean currents which even to this day may be heard
through the pebbles and boulders. If one wishes to bring the
water to the surface, the possibilities are there.

Many vegetables may be cultivated in the forest lands and on
the sandy soil here; if one cares to occupy himself with it, he can
have results. If one wishes to breed better horses, it is only
necessary to cross the local breed with the Turkestan and Afghan
horses. In two years of breeding you will begin to see results.
The same applies to sheep and cows because there is nothing to
prevent the possibility of obtaining the best breeds here.

Future forests are also possible. Not only in ancient times
were all these sites covered with virgin forests, but even within a
decade were there trees here everywhere. The cruelty of ignor-
ance destroyed them because the cruelty of ignorance does not
consider the future. Nor is there anything to hinder the organi-
zation here of model farms, under the direction of people of
understanding and experience. How much cultivation and plant-
ing of grasses could be introduced here in a very short time. And
how simple it would be to introduce the best methods of cattle
breeding. Schools could also be organized in connection with
these model farms, thus permitting the nation to progress along
modern lines, without losing any of its traditional virtues. In
this way, all kinds of handicrafts may be encouraged and labour
co-operatives also introduced. During the great frosts, blizzards, and the spring 'burans', a vast amount of useful objects could be created by the hands of the people coupled with their creative gifts. However strange it may seem, when you see the inborn artistry of the Mongols in their weaving and designs, you realize how simple it would be to demonstrate to those who have not yet realized it, how much of value could be created here. And this creation would be possible without sacrificing the fine traditions or imitating foreign importations but by working along the traditional and native lines.

In fixed amity with the Chinese Government the autonomous Government of Inner Mongolia is being organized. Its capital is in Batu-Khalaga, which is nearest to the railroad station of Kokokhoto or Guihu-achen. The head of the Government is the local prince, but the actual moving spirit is the Prince of Barun Sunit. All the princes come together at stipulated times to decide the current problems. By agreement with Nanking, autonomous Inner Mongolia decides all its own inner affairs.

Although the mineral wealth of Mongolia is unexploited, the salt revenues from the great salt lakes in themselves afford a vast revenue. It is widely known that Mongolia has a profusion of high grade hard coal, oil, iron and gold. Certain ridges of Mongolia are especially famed for the latter—and in our travels we had occasion to see great nuggets of gold as well as gold sands washed down in the river beds. We also had occasion to see many deserted gold mines, although it was difficult to ascertain whether they had been deserted because the gold had been removed or through ignorance of methods in mining, or because of the military movements here.

Not long ago, we had occasion to write upon the subject of the "Brimming Chalice"—just such a brimming chalice is here before us in Mongolia. In various walks of life opportunity comes to each man to encounter circumstances, which for some reason seem strangely concealed. Although it may sometime seem that mere accident contributed to these concealments, in reality there is no accident, and it is far more probable that these circumstances have been hidden in some great design. Special caution and good will must be exerted when such hidden possibilities disclose themselves, and help should not be withheld. The thought of help and mutual co-operation becomes a vital and humanitarian responsibility; although help should be at the proper moment and in the proper direction. In this case, the help needed is not great—merely that of preventing a child from burning itself at the fire, and permitting it to gain experience along the proper channels.
Medical work in Mongolia is thus far in the hands of Swedish, Belgian, Japanese and American physicians, as well as in the hands of local Mongolian lamas. I have always been exceedingly interested in local folklore and the native pharmacopoeia, but there should be attentive research and study into these subjects. Of course, the people have great need of an established medical help.

The many hundreds of "dzeren" which trot beside the horses indicate that the destructive work of human hands has not yet touched these spaces. From the humane point of view it would be especially regrettable if some new forces would enter here also to apply only the deadening conditions of mechanical civilizations—only with the proper realization of local conditions and with sincere benevolence and constructive efforts will mutual response be aroused. The heart is the one infallible indicator of the proper benevolent mutual efforts.

Recently a rather detestable joke was told us of some travellers who taught the labour-loving Mongol women to rouge their lips. Such perversity among travellers is despicable. If certain conventions have become part of our civilization, it is hardly necessary to contaminate these simple people with these unfortunate customs. Thus early is contagion spread. It is necessary to find the way of good thinking, good vision, good action. Each traveller should spread along his path a helpful benevolence. Although he may be travelling with some special aim, still the help of benevolence is without limits.
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