

Larson, Duke of Mongolia, by Frans August Larson, Boston, 1930

Far beyond the forest clad mountain ranges of Southern Siberia and the Great Wall of China lie the rolling steppes of Mongolia, a country whose vast expanses have long ago tempted the curiosity of pioneers and explorers. The present book is a sympathetic account of the nomad life on the Mongolian plains by a man eminently suited to be the interpreter of modern Mongolia. Frans August Larson, formerly a member of the Christian Missionary Alliance of New York, and Adviser on Mongolian Affairs to Yuan Shih-kai, President of the Chinese Republic, has spent much of his lifetime wandering among the nomad tribes of Eastern and Northern Mongolia. Sometimes as missionary, sometimes as official, as trader, and hunter, or <sup>as</sup> guide to big scientific expeditions, he had the unique opportunity to observe the life and customs of the descendants of Chengiz Khan.

True to the commandments of the ancient nomad code of life, modern Mongolia until very recently has preserved a simple, yet fascinating mode of life that for centuries has produced a sturdy race of men. The first chapter of Larson's book is dedicated to the nobles of Mongolia, many of whom trace their line to the House of Chengiz. With many of them he was on friendly terms and descriptions of Mongol festivals, races and hunting expeditions, vividly depict the congenial atmosphere of a princely camp in Mongolia. Several pages are dedicated to the memory of the late Prince Tsereng Dorje, an outstanding personality in modern Mongolian history and a man who had the distinction of holding important governmental posts through all

the vicissitudes of modern times in Mongolia. With his death Mongolia lost a great patriot and a man of striking acumen.

The next two chapters give a brief sketch of Mongolian life, written mostly from personal experiences, acquired during a long stay in the country. Western literature, except Russian, is sadly lacking in good books on Mongolia, and the knowledge of the Mongol language is exceedingly rare among Western explorers; therefore a description of Mongol manners and customs is particularly valuable.

Chapter IV is dedicated to a sympathetic account of the last Living Buddha or Lama Ruler of Outer Mongolia. His personality, full of striking contrasts, has created considerable speculations among Lamaists and outside observers. The apparent contradictions of his character can only be explained by the background on which his life was staged.

The next chapter contains several interesting descriptions of marriage and other ceremonies, among them the Fire Ceremony, a remnant of the primitive religion of Mongolia, in which the Fire Cult occupied a prominent place. This cult had a vast influence among Central Asian tribes of Turkish-Mongolian origin, and we know of a number of ceremonial manuals describing the different phases of the Fire Ceremony.

Two chapters are dedicated to the cattle-breeding problem of Mongolia. Horses have always been the national wealth of Mongolia. To a Mongol a horse is more than a mere article of commerce; it is a symbol of his very existence, a symbol deeply imbedded in his national consciousness. This attitude

remains true even in the present days of mechanical transportation and the growing intrusion of mechanical vehicles into the Mongolian plains.

The last chapters of the book contain a brief account of Mongol political history, business conditions, Christian missions and personal reminiscences of great Western explorers of Mongolia whom Mr. Larson met during his residence in the country. Mongolia is a striking example of a case where European business concerns failed to understand local conditions and ignored the necessity of getting thoroughly acquainted with the local ways of business transaction. The result was a flat failure to establish themselves on the Mongolian market.

The book is written in an easy style, and the only drawback is a certain inconsistency of transcription of personal and geographic names, which in most cases is based on local pronunciations. The book is illustrated by several characteristic scenes of Mongolian life, and forms a valuable addition to the inside knowledge of modern Mongolia.

George N. Roerich

*Did you send this letter?*

THE  
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REVIEW  
*A National Quarterly*

*g.R. 4*

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JOHN HAY WHITNEY  
ASSISTANT EDITOR

P. O. BOX 1729  
NEW HAVEN  
CONNECTICUT



March 31, 1930.

Dr. George N. Roerich,  
310 Riverside Drive,  
New York City.

*I need the  
manuscript a.s.  
soon.*

Dear Dr. Roerich:

Just in time to reach you before you start for the East again, we have received from the publishers in advance of the official date of issue, a copy of "Larson, Duke of Mongolia" on which you have kindly consented to write a few words for The Yale Review. We should be very much pleased if you could send us a few words giving your estimate of the main value of the book and also the main defect, if it has one. We could use a manuscript of from five hundred to six hundred words, and could send you a cheque of fifteen dollars for it. Perhaps you will be able to do this before leaving New York. But if you are too busy now, we hope you can send it back from San Francisco, or whatever may be your final port of departure for the East. We do not actually need to have it in hand until the end of April, if we can count upon it then.

With best wishes to your father and yourself for the success of the great expedition you are taking,

Yours most sincerely,

*Helen McAfee*

G\*

*Please let us know what your address in the East will be. Hm.*

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File

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April 4, 1930

Miss Helen McAfee  
Managing Editor  
The Yale Review  
New Haven, Connecticut

Dear Miss McAfee:

I have your letter of March 31 regarding a review of  
"Larson, Duke of Mongolia".

I am sailing tonight but will be glad to read this book  
enroute and send you an article from London.

My address in India is shown on this letterhead.

Yours very sincerely,

Director

H

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May 14, 1930

Miss Helen McAfee  
Managing Editor  
The Yale Review  
New Haven, Connecticut

My dear Miss McAfee:

Dr. George Roerich has asked  
me to forward to you the enclosed review of  
"Larson, Duke of Mongolia."

I hope that the delay in its  
reaching you has not inconvenienced you.

Sincerely yours,

Secretary to  
Dr. George Roerich

Copy

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CONNECTICUT



May 23, 1930.

Dr. George Roerich,  
Urusvati,  
Himalayan Research Institute  
of the Roerich Museum,  
Naggar, Kulu,  
Punjab, India.

Dear Dr. Roerich:

Thank you very much for  
the interesting criticism of Larsen's book,  
which we shall be glad to print in The Yale  
Review. At the time Mr. Cross will send  
a cheque to you at the above address, unless  
you prefer to have it sent elsewhere.

Very sincerely yours,  
  
(signed) Helen McAfee



June 4, 1930

Miss Helen McAfee  
Managing Editor  
The Yale Review  
New Haven, Connecticut

My dear Miss McAfee:

Some time ago I sent you,  
by registered mail, Dr. Roerich's review of  
"Larson, Duke of Mongolia." I wonder whether  
you have received this. would you please let  
me know?

Sincerely yours,

Secretary to  
Dr. George Roerich

June 18, 1930

Miss Helen McAfee  
Managing Editor  
The Yale Review  
New Haven, Connecticut

My dear Miss McAfee:

Thank you for sending me a copy of your note to Dr. Roerich, acknowledging receipt of his article on the Larson book. As Dr. Roerich is at present in Europe, we should appreciate your sending the check to him in care of this office.

Sincerely yours,

Secretary to  
Dr. George Roerich

November 22, 1930

Miss Helen McAfee  
Managing Editor  
~~The Yale Review~~  
New Haven, Connecticut

My dear Miss McAfee:

I wonder whether Dr. Roerich's review of "Larson, Duke of Mongolia" has yet appeared in the Yale Review, and, if not, when you are planning to publish it? We should very much like to have one or two copies of the issue in which it is printed.

Sincerely yours,

Secretary to  
Dr. George Roerich

*Handwritten notes:*  
Nov 22, 1930 Yale Review, 7 E. D. ...  
for Dr. M.  
...  
Dr. G. Roerich, ...

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CONNECTICUT



December 9, 1930.

Miss Kathryn Linden,  
Secretary to Dr. George Roerich,  
310 Riverside Drive,  
New York City.

Dear Miss Linden:

Accompanying this letter is  
a cheque by way of honorarium for the  
criticism which Dr. Roerich kindly wrote  
for the Winter issue of The Yale Review,  
appearing on December twelfth. Two copies  
of the magazine are now being sent to Dr.  
Roerich in your care with our compliments.

Very sincerely yours,

Encl\*  
Ch. \$15.

December 15, 1930

Miss Helen McAfee  
Managing Editor,  
The Yale Review  
New Haven, Connecticut

Dear Miss McAfee:

Thank you very much for sending us the two copies of the Yale Review containing Dr. George Roerich's review of "Larson, Duke of Mongolia," as well as the honorarium. These have already been forwarded to Dr. Roerich in India.

Very sincerely yours,

Secretary to  
Dr. George Roerich