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OLD DELUSIONS ABOUT CLIMATE

Exaggerated notions as to the intensity of cold in high latitudes and of heat in low latitudes, very prevalent in the world today, have been handed down from the ancient Greek geographers, most of whom believed both the torrid and the frigid zones to be uninhabitable on account of their extreme temperatures.

Geographers and travelers of the middle ages kept such delusions alive. Dr. Nansen, in his "Northern Mists," quotes a mediaeval writer on the climatic conditions endured by the Icelanders as follows: "These people also are good Christians, but in winter they dare not leave their underground holes on account of the terrible cold. For if they go out they are smitten by such terrible cold that they lose their color like lepers and swell up. If by chance they blow their nose, it comes off and they throw it away."

The twelfth century traveler Benjamin of Tudela writes of Russia: "No one issues forth from his house in winter time on account of the cold. People are to be found there who have lost the tips of their noses by reason of the frost." The same writer tells us that in southern India nobody leaves his house all summer on account of the sun.

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