

PRELIMINARY ESSAY.

NOTES ON THE INTERCOURSE OF CHINA AND THE WESTERN NATIONS PREVIOUS TO THE DISCO- VERY OF THE SEA-ROUTE BY THE CAPE.

“On se formeroit des notions peu exactes sur la Chine, et l'on n'auroit qu'une idée imparfaite des avantages qu'on peut obtenir en étudiant l'histoire de ce pays, si l'on se representoit un empire isolé, pour ainsi dire, à l'extrémité de l'Asie, séparé du reste du monde, dont l'entrée auroit toujours été interdite aux étrangers, et dont les relations au dehors se seroient bornées à quelques communications passagères avec les peuples les plus voisins de ses frontières.”—*Abel Remusat.*

I. EARLIEST TRACES OF INTERCOURSE. GREEK AND ROMAN KNOW- LEDGE OF CHINA.

1. THAT spacious seat of ancient civilisation which we call CHINA has loomed always so large to western eyes, and has, in spite of its distance, subtended so great an angle of vision, that, at eras far apart, we find it to have been distinguished by different appellations according as it was regarded as the terminus of a southern sea-route coasting the great peninsulas and islands of Asia, or as that of a northern land route traversing the longitude of that continent.

In the former aspect the name applied has nearly always been some form of the name SIN, CHIN, SINÆ, CHINA. In the latter point of view the region in question was known to the ancients as the land of the SERES; to the middle ages as the empire of CATHAY.

2. The name of Chin has been supposed, like many another word and name connected with the trade and geography of the far east, to have come to us through the Malays, and to have been applied by them to the great eastern monarchy from the