

But a comparison of the passage with Ptolemy's chapter on Serice from which it is derived will show, I think, convincingly that he is speaking merely of an encircling rampart of lofty mountains within which the spacious and happy valley of the Seres is conceived to lie.

14. If, however, we try to fuse into one general description the ancient notices of the Seres and their country, omitting anomalous and manifestly fabulous statements, the result will be something like the following:¹ "The region of the Seres is a vast and populous country, touching on the east the Ocean and the limits of the habitable world, and extending west nearly to Imaus and the confines of Bactria. The people are civilised men, of mild just and frugal temper, eschewing collisions with their neighbours, and even shy of close intercourse, but not averse to dispose of their own products, of which raw silk is the staple, but which include also silk stuffs, furs, and iron of remarkable quality."

Now the Chinese Empire had during the century before our era, and again about a century after that date, just the extension which such a description would imply,² whilst the other characteristics all have a distinct basis in the character of the nation. Their reputation for integrity and justice, in spite of much that might be said against it, must have had some solid foundation,

et Commerc. de l'Empire Romain, etc., p. 192. The original words run: "Ultra hæc utriusque Scythiæ loca contra orientalem plagam in orbis specie consertæ celsorum aggerum summitates ambiunt Seres ubertate regionum et amplitudine circumspectos." The whole of the passage from Ammianus will be found translated in Note VI. In a previous page he speaks of Serica as a province of Persia!

¹ It must be acknowledged, however, that apart from the exceptional statement of Pausanias (see § 17) the serious notices of the Seres reduce themselves to two, viz., that given by Pliny and that given by Ptolemy. For it will easily be seen by comparing the extracts in the notes, (1) that the notices of Mela and Pliny are either the one copied from the other, or both copied from a common source, and (2), that, as has been already observed, the statements of Ammianus are copied from Ptolemy and Pliny.

² Strabo, in the only passage in which he seems to speak *proprio motu* of the Seres, says of the kings of Bactria that "they extended their rule to the frontier of the Seres and the Phryni" (*Muller's Strabo*, book xi, p. 1016).