

16. That Greek and Roman knowledge of the true position of so remote a nation should at best have been somewhat hazy is not to be wondered at. As the circle of their knowledge widened its circumference from the central shores of the *Mare Nostrum*, it also became of course, in something like quadruple ratio, fainter and less definite; a fact that seems to have been forgotten by those who, in dealing with the identity of Sera and Thinaë, have attached as much precision to the expressions of partial knowledge hovering on the verge of ignorance, as if these had been the expressions of precise but fragmentary knowledge such as our geographers possess of the Antarctic Coasts, or of the Nyanza Lakes. Yet how very vague this knowledge was we may see in comparing the positions of Thinaë as assigned respectively by Ptolemy and the author of the *Periplus*, or in observing the wholesale corrections which Ptolemy applied to the data of Marinus in determining the distance in longitude of Sera from the Stone Tower and of the Stone Tower from the Euphrates. Moreover it is natural in such a state of imperfect knowledge both that the name of the remoter but dominant nation should sometimes be applied to its nearest subject races, and that the characteristics of these nearest races should sometimes be transferred to the governing nation. Something in a degree analogous has taken place in our own specific application of the term DUTCH only to our own neighbours of the Netherlands. Still more in point is the fact that in the days of the Thang dynasty, when the Chinese power extended to Transoxiana, Arab, and Armenian writers sometimes spoke of Farghana by the name of China; and the Armenians sometimes gave the name of Chinese even to the Khazars and other races north of the Caspian.¹

17. We shall also find presently that the view entertained by

back the standards which they had captured in the catastrophe of Crassus. Thus all round the inhabited earth there was an unbroken circle of peace or at least of armistice" (iv, 12).

¹ *St. Martin, Armenie*, ii, 19, 20. An author quoted by Ibn Haukal places the frontiers of *Sin* close to Mawaruhnahr, and an Arab poet speaks of Kutaiba, the conqueror of Transoxiana for the Moslem, as being interred in the land of *Sin*, whilst it is known from other testimony that this was in Farghana (*Remusat in Mem. de l'Ac. des Insc.*, viii, 107).