

details of the places he had seen would have been of extreme interest and value.

Though Klaproth was probably acquainted only with the abridgment translated by Lee, and thus had not the means of doing justice to the narrative, I must say there is some foundation for his reproaches, for, especially when dealing with the Saracenic countries, in which Islam had been long established, his details of the religious establishments and theologians occupy a space which renders this part of the narrative very dull to the uninitiated. It seems to me that the Mahomedan man of the world, soldier, jurist, and theologian, is, at least in regard to a large class of subjects, not always either so trustworthy, or so perspicacious as the narrow-minded Christian friars who were his contemporaries, whilst he cannot be compared with the Venetian merchant, who shines among all the travellers of the middle age like the moon among the lesser lights of heaven. There seems to be something in the Mahomedan mind that indisposes it for appreciating and relating accurately what is witnessed in nature and geography.

Of the confused state of his geographical ideas, no instance can be stronger than that afforded by his travels in China, where he jumbles into one great river, rising near Peking, and entering the sea at Canton, after passing Kingszé and Zayton, the whole system of Chinese hydrography, partly bound together by the Great Canal and its branches.¹ These do indeed extend from north to south, but in travelling on their waters he must, once at least, and probably twice, have been interrupted by portages over mountain ranges of great height. So, also, at an earlier period in his wanderings, he asserts that the river at Aleppo (the Koïk, a tributary of Euphrates) is the same as that called Al' Asi, or Orontes, which passes by Hamath.² In another passage he

¹ See i, 79, and hereafter in his travels through China.

² See i, 152, and French editors' note, p. 432. It is a remarkable feature in the Nile, according to Ibn Batuta, that it flows from south to north, *contrary to all other rivers*. This fact seems to have impressed the imagination of the ancients also, as one of the Nile's mysteries, and Cosmas says it flows slowly, because, as it were, *up hill*, the earth according to his notion rising towards the north.