

CHAPTER III.

PTOLEMY.

The greatest geographer amongst the Greeks and Romans of antiquity was PTOLEMY, and it should require ages before he, in a modern period of history, was surpassed. The discoveries made during Alexander's campaign were a revelation to the west; at one blow the east had been opened up to the Greek world. Through the campaigns of SELEUCUS NICATOR more reliable information was won about the countries on the Ganges. The journeys and the trade of the Ptolemæans in Egypt to India, and the foundation of Greek kingdoms in Bactria and Cappadocia promoted a better knowledge of the east with the western world.

Eratosthenes already had a fairly good idea of the great outlines of Asia; he knew Paropamisus and Imaus, and even the Seres. That knowledge was enlarged by Rome, more especially by the Syrian and Parthian wars, and by a more developed and widespread trade on land and by sea.¹ Strabo supersedes Eratosthenes, but is himself in a much higher degree superseded by Ptolemy, who is the first to speak of India extra Gangem, and has collected a much greater amount of information about the mountains in Central Asia than his Greek and Roman predecessors had been able to do.

Ptolemy wrote about 150 and 160 of our era. A very considerable part of the knowledge which has made his name so famous, he borrowed from MARINUS of Tyre. The backbone in the orographical skeleton of Asia which had been founded by Eratosthenes and accepted by Strabo was strongly confirmed as a fundamental fact by Ptolemy, in whose geographical system it formed a partition wall between the plains of Scythia on the north and the countries of Ariana and India on the south. Regarding the names of the great mountain system, Strabo had the following order: Paropamisus, Emodi Montes, Imaus. In accordance with him Pliny applied

¹ FORBIGER even goes so far as to say: »So hatten denn die Alten zur Zeit der höchsten Blüte Roms von dem grössten Theile Asiens mit Ausnahme des nördlichen und nordöstlichen wenigstens eine oberflächliche, von den westlichen und südwestlichen Theilen aber, d. h. von den römischen Provinzen, eine sehr genaue Kenntniss, ja theilweise eine noch umfassendere und vollständigere, als wie in unseren Tagen.« Handbuch der alten Geographie. Band II. Leipzig 1844, p. 42.