

So long as this kind of symmetrical and exalted geography is confined to the Puranas it is interesting; but even a glimpse of fresh observation by an Arabian geographer would be of greater value. Such a glimpse Alberuni gives us of the town and fortress of Nagarkot, at the Mohammedan conquest of which he was present. The town was situated at the foot of the Himalaya and famous on account of its old temple. At a certain epoch the name Nagarkot became famous even in Europe, when the whole central Himalaya was called the mountains of Nagarkot, as, for instance, on ORTELIUS' map of 1579.

Another instance of first class geographical information is the following.¹ One marches 77 farsakh eastwards from Kanauj; further on the country of Tilwat is to the right;

»Thence you come to the mountains of Kâmrû, which stretch away as far as the sea.» And then he goes on to say: »Opposite Tilwat the country to the left is the realm of Naipâl. A man who had travelled in those countries gave me the following report; — 'When in Tanwat (?), he left the easterly direction and turned to the left. He marched to Naipâl, a distance of 20 farsakh, most of which was ascending country. From Naipâl he came to Bhôteshar in thirty days, a distance of nearly 80 farsakh, in which there is more ascending than descending country. And there is a water which is several times crossed on bridges consisting of planks tied with cords to two canes, which stretch from rock to rock, and are fastened to milestones constructed on either side. People carry the burdens on their shoulders over such a bridge, whilst below, at a depth of 100 yards, the water foames as white as snow, threatening to shatter the rocks. On the other side of the bridges, the burdens are transported on the back of goats . . .»

We shall have to return to this road later on. It has been trodden by the Pundits in recent years. It was used by the first Europeans who ever visited Nepal, namely GRUEBER and DORVILLE in 1662. Before their journey even the name of Nepal was unknown in Europe. In the first half of the 18th century it was travelled many times by the Capuchin Missionaries stationed in Lhasa. It is either from Padre Horatio della Penna or Fra Cassiano Beligatti that Father GEORGI has got his picturesque description of this same road from Nesti to Kuti, of which a few sentences should be attentively compared with the above quotation from Alberuni:

»Altero ab hoc rure milliario, per angustissimas scalas ex sectis mobilibusque lapidibus structas ascendis descendisque ex editissimis rupibus ad oram semper immanis præcipitii . . . Directus est iter propius ad Boream. Viæ in præcipiti positæ angustissimæ sunt, circumque altissimorum montium latera perpetuo serpunt. Rupes persæpe disjunctæ ponticulis pensilibus sine laterali fulcro, junguntur. Duodecies per tremulos hosce angustosque ponticulos ex perticis, arborumque ramis contextos transeundum est. Terrorem augent tum immensa barathra trajicientium oculis ad perpendicularum utrinque subjecta, tum strepitus & fragor ingens aquarum in imo per saxa ruentium . . . Scalpro lapidem medium excavarunt per interstitia ad gressum hominis accommodata, ut viatores haberent, quo ni totum vestigium, calcaneum saltem figure caute possent.»²

¹ Op. cit. Vol. I, p. 201.

² Alphabetum Tibetanum, Romæ MDCCLXII, p. 437, 438.