

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN DID THE NAME MANASAROVAR BECOME KNOWN TO EUROPE?

In several books dealing with S.W. Tibet a statement is found that the Portuguese Jesuit Father ANTONIO DE MONSERRATE should be the first European who ever heard of and mentioned the lake Manasarovar. This statement seems first to have been promulgated by Captain F. WILFORD in 1808.¹ But Wilford goes much farther, and what he has to tell us of the history of the sacred lake cannot inspire us with any confidence in his assertion regarding Monserrate.² For he positively asserts that the lake was mentioned by Pliny and Marco Polo, and probably by Ctesias. We do not need to waste words on Pliny and Ctesias and their pretended knowledge of the Manasarovar, which is, of course, absurd.

Regarding Marco Polo, Wilford probably means Chapter XLVII:³ »*Concerning the Province of Caidu*», which is said to be lying towards the west. All that Marco Polo says is: »There is a lake here, in which are found pearls which are white but not round.» If RAMUSIO is right in his version: »a great salt lake», the identification with Manasarovar becomes so much the more impossible, disregarding the geographical situation of Caidu.⁴

The statement about Monserrate, on the other hand, is so positive, and so detailed that it cannot simply be dismissed as constructed by Wilford's imagina-

¹ An Essay on the Sacred Isles in the West, with other Essays connected with that work. By Captain F. WILFORD. Asiatic Researches. VIII, 1808, p. 327 et seq.

² His own words should be observed in this connection: »The lake of Man-saraur is mentioned by Pliny, and it is probably the same that is mentioned by Ctesias, who says it was eight hundred stadia in circumference. M. Polo describes it as to the West of Tibet, but does not mention its name. It is noticed by P. Monserrat, who accompanied the Emperor Acbar in his expedition to Cabul, in the year 1581. He calls it Mánaruor, and, from the report of pilgrims, places it in thirty-two degrees of latitude North; and about three hundred and fifty miles to the North-East of Serhind».

³ YULE's Marco Polo, Vol. II, p. 53.

⁴ All the material available for the identification of Marco Polo's lake is brought together by YULE and CORDIER. Op. cit. p. 72.