

CHAPTER VIII.

FRASER'S JOURNEY.

JAMES B. FRASER is one of the Britons who at an early date contributed to our knowledge of the mountain barriers between Tibet and India and who went in search of the sources of the great rivers. We are not concerned with the Jumna, but as Fraser also took a good deal of interest in the Satlej he must be mentioned in this historical account.

It may sound as a paradox that he proves the Jumna as originating from a glacier and still he did not know what a glacier was. For he simply calls the glaciers »snow». He approached the place pointed out as Jumnotrí, all around which the snowy peaks were towering above him.¹ The bed of the river was stopped by a prodigious mass of snow which had carried down with it a mighty ruin of rock and soil. From under these »ravines of snow» two rivers flow, one of them, the At'h-paisa Gunga, being equal to the upper Jumna. From here it was not far to Jumnotrí. Above and around this place were seen all the numberless ravines, down which all the various sources of this branch of the Jumna trickle.

He describes the hot springs of the place and tells us that the spirits of the twelve Rishis or holy men who followed Maha'deo from Lanca, after the usurpation of the tyrant Ravan, to the Himála range, inhabit this rock. In a little village only one day's journey from Gangotri he got the information that Chaprang was a large town situated in a plain where there was nothing but short grass and no wool of any sort. The distance to Chaprang was said to be one month to the north, — the ordinary exaggeration. Only one day's march was said to go through snow, the rest over a level plain. On the way the Satlej is crossed on a wooden bridge; »it is even then of considerable size, and it goes under the name of Lang-gin-T'hang; but they know it to be the same stream, which, in Biseher, is called Satudra or Setlej».

¹ »Account of a Journey to the sources of the Jumna and Bhagirathi Rivers.» Asiatick Researches, Vol. XIII. Calcutta 1820, p. 170 et seq.