

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PUNDITS OF MONTGOMERIE.

In this chapter we have to consider some of the results of the Pundits so far as they concern our lakes, the upper reaches of the Indus, and surrounding regions of Western Tibet.

In 1861 it was proposed to take advantage of the facility possessed by Asiatics and to employ them on explorations in countries beyond the northern frontier of India which were not accessible for Europeans. The Government of India approved of the project and agreed to support it. Colonel WALKER, the Superintendent of the Survey of India, engaged from one of the upper valleys of the Himalayas two Pundits, British subjects, who were trained for Trans-Himalayan exploration. Their training was completed by Captain T. G. MONTGOMERIE.¹ The instruments they were trained to use were compass, sextant, thermometer, and boiling point thermometer. Distances they calculated by counting their paces for which purpose a rosary was used. The compass they kept hidden in a prayer-wheel, the other instruments in their luggage.

The principal object which was put before the two first Pundits was to »define the whole course of the great river known to flow from near the Manasarovar Lake to beyond Lhasa.» Only one point was known on this river, namely, where TURNER had crossed it in 1783.² They were ordered to go to Katmandu and further to the great road between the Manasarovar and Lhasa. Katmandu they reached on March 7th, 1865, but one of them returned from here to British territory. The other, NAIN SING, after many difficulties managed to pass Kirong and reach Tadum (Tradum) where he arrived on September 6th. After his famous visit to Lhasa he was again at Tadum on June 1st, accompanying the Lopchak mission back to the west. He

¹ The title Pundit means generally nothing else than a well educated Hindu, who has read the Hindu sacred books or »shasters».

² T. G. Montgomerie: Report on the Trans-Himalayan Explorations, in connection with the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, during 1865—7: Route-Survey made by Pundit —, from Nepal to Lhasa, and thence through the upper valley of the Brahmaputra to its Source. Proceedings Royal Geogr. Society, Vol. XII, 1867—68, p. 146 et seq.