

## CHAPTER II.

### DESIDERI.

The brave IPPOLITO DESIDERI is the first European who has followed the southern foot of almost the whole Transhimalaya. There is a lapse of 190 years before the next came, namely, the members of Rawling's and Ryder's expedition. Desideri knows Kailas which has especially fascinated his attention. He mentions the mountains round Lhasa and the mountains north of Sera. He makes special mention of his observations and experiences on mount Langur. Speaking of the cold, frost and snow of Tibet he says it does not depend on the latitude, but partly on the subtlety of the air, as the country is surrounded by continuous mountains on all sides, and partly on the winds which have passed over high mountains. The greatest cold, he says, prevails from the middle of October to the middle of April, but on the mountains the snow is more abundant than in the inhabited parts of the country and remains longer. He knows the roads from Lhasa to the north, which cross the eastern Transhimalaya and he has a very clear idea of the general extension of Tibet. In spite of all this he never speaks definitively of the mountains north of the Tsangpo between Kailas and Lhasa. From time to time, as in the above cases concerning the climate, he speaks of the mountains. But he never says, for instance, that north of his road he had mountains the whole way from lago di Retoa to Lhasa, or anything of the same kind.

Still, however, this silence is easy to understand. Following the high road in the valley of the Tsangpo, the mountains to the north have not impressed him; nor did the southern mountains until he crossed them and saw them from close quarters. But as he never had an opportunity to cross the northern mountains, he had no impression, no personal experience of them. From the road along the Tsangpo some peaks may be seen to the north, situated very near the great valley. But one has to cross them in order to get an idea of their morphology, their general orographical structure, their height and extension.

Speaking of his own journey Desideri tells us that he travelled a whole month from the region where he found the first population to Lhasa.<sup>1</sup> Then he shows

<sup>1</sup> Il Tibet, secondo la relazione del viaggio del P. Ippolito Desideri (1715—1721), published by Carlo Puini, Rome 1904, p. 25 et seq.