

CHAPTER VII.

DUTREUIL DE RHINS.

On his general map that is the result at which DUTREUIL DE RHINS has arrived by studying both eastern and western sources, this author has preferred not to enter any mountain ranges at all. He has only marked out on his map some prominent peaks, as Nien-chen-tang-la, Targo-gangri and Kailas. But of the few orographical features as shown on his map in the interior of Tibet he says that they are rather hypothetical, »car la plupart n'ont pas été même entrevues par les explorateurs modernes».¹ He says that an altogether hypothetical orography may perhaps be allowed only on an atlas map for giving an approximate idea of the general structure of a country. And he asks: »Sur les cartes d'étude, ne devrait-on pas supprimer tout dessin orographique jusqu'au moment où la cartographie repose sur de véritables levés topographiques?» This sound and conscientious view was expressed many years after the publication of the maps of Hodgson and Saunders, who, disregarding the most elementary rules of accuracy, drew tremendous mountain ranges in regions where no Europeans and no Pundits had ever been.²

Still, in his work de Rhins at some places comes into contact with the Trans-himalaya. In the beginning of the Manchu dynasty the Chinese had only very

¹ L'Asie Centrale, Paris 1889, p. 19.

² The map is the *pièce de résistance* of de Rhins' work. The text only explains how the map was constructed. From well known points at the periphery he approaches the centre. He has the greatest confidence in the Chinese maps, just as Richthofen. Of de Rhins' view regarding Tibet Dr Georg Wegener says (Petermann's Mitteilungen, 38. Band, 1892, p. 87): »mit Recht weist der Verfasser darauf hin, dass das grössere Verdienst an unseren heutigen Kartenbilde von Tibet noch immer den Chinesen gebührt, denn alle unsre modernen Reisen zusammengenommen, würden noch nicht im Stande sein, ein annähernd so vollständiges, organisches Gemälde zu liefern, wie es die Chinesische Geographie, von aller Hypothese frei, uns giebt.» This was true in 1892, but not now after the important journeys during the last 20 years. His intention has been to use all existing material and to get a reliable foundation for geographical co-ordinates on which in the future could be further built upon. His book is admirable for the immense amount of work it contains and for its great erudition, but Wegener thinks the author must have suspected that nobody would ever read it through. His interpretation often seems conjectural and speculative. The way in which de Rhins translates the »li» is not certain and his distances therefore often unreliable. Regarding the author's not using German geographical works Wegener is perfectly right in saying: »Er hat also ein Lebenswerk über Zentralasien geschrieben, ohne die bei weitem hervorragendsten zeitgenössischen Untersuchungen darüber zu kennen.» Thus he had not the slightest idea of the modern physico-geographical and geological views on Central Asia, which would have been of great assistance to his map.