

## CHAPTER XIX.

### ABBÉ HUC.

Under such conditions, as those set forth in the preceding chapters, it is really a hopeless task to search for information about the Transhimalaya in the geographical literature of Europe. What I have related so far, the best, fullest and most important, — although not always the most reliable sources, are, to the greatest extent, Asiatic. For from the early missionaries we got next to nothing at all. Klaproth, Ritter and Humboldt took all their information from Chinese sources. The Pundits did excellent work in the west and east and on the periphery. Thomson and Cunningham in the west and Hooker and Campbell in the east, all of them belonging to the most excellent explorers of Asia, had no opportunity to penetrate into Tibet. And beyond these sources, what did we know of the Transhimalaya? Has anybody dealt with the problem in a monographical and scientific way? Even the Chinese texts are extremely meagre. In Ritter and Humboldt we find only a few passages. Hodgson touches the problem more *en passant* and in a way that remains beneath all serious criticism. We shall see later on what Saunders' suggestions are worth.

If Odorico de Pordenone and Grueber and Dorville were the first Europeans to cross the Transhimalaya, HUC and GABET are the first of whom we know with perfect certainty, although they passed our system without even mentioning it. But still their journey is, from a historical point of view very important. They proved beyond doubt the possibility of reaching Lhasa from Peking and of crossing, even during the winter, eastern Tibet. Their journey will for ever remain classic in the history of exploration in the land of the Lamas.

Only the section of Huc's and Gabet's journey which goes from Koko-nor to Lhasa concerns us here, and I will dwell upon some interesting passages in Huc's narrative.

Huc says the Si-Fan or Oriental Tibetans live along the mountains of Bayen-Kharat towards the sources of the Yellow River. He stayed here nearly a month. Towards the end of October 1845 the Tibetan embassy arrived and the two Lazarists joined it. So did also several Mongolian caravans en route. The caravan was very big: 15 000 »boeufs à long poil», 1 200 horses, 1 200 camels, 2 000 men, Tibetans