

CHAPTER VII.

FRANÇOIS BERNIER.

The famous French traveller, FRANÇOIS BERNIER, was born in Anjou in 1620. In 1659 he visited Surat and Agra, in 1663, Delhi, in 1664, Kashmir. After a visit to Lahore he travelled, in 1665, with TAVERNIER to Bengal, and west to Golkonda the next year. In 1667 he met CHARDIN at Surat. In 1669 he returned to Marseilles, and published his book the next year. He died at Paris 1688.

In the first volume of his work¹ he only mentions »le grand Tibet» as a hopeless country, full of mountainous deserts. And he tells his readers that the horses called »Turki» come from Turkistan or Tartary.

In his second volume he gives us more information and has even something to say of the caravan-road over the Kara-korum. Bernier accompanied Aureng-Zebe on his journey to Kashmir. During his stay in that country he got some news about the mountainous country all around. Some merchants told him that between »the other mountains, situated further away and independent of Kachemire», there are to be found very agreeable places, inhabited by white and well built people, who almost never leave their country, and that there are amongst them, peoples who have no kings at all and even no trace of religion, so far as can be made out, and if the fact should not be regarded as being of a religious character, that they never eat fish, believing it to be impure.

Bernier saw the king of little Tibet, the neighbour of Kashmir, who came to pay his respects to Aureng-Zebe, and whom he describes as a rather poor »Roitelet».²

J'entendois qu'il disoit que son Pays de costé de l'Orient confine avec le grand Tibet; qu'il pouvoit avoir trente ou quarante lieuës de large; que veritablement il avoit quelque peu de crystal, quelque peu de musc & de laines, mais que du reste il estoit fort pauvre, & qu'il n'y avoit point de mines d'or comme l'on disoit; qu'il y avoit en certains

¹ *Voyages de François Bernier, Docteur en Medicine de la Faculté de Montpellier, Contenant la Description des Etats du Grand Mogol de l'Hindoustan, du Royaume de Kachemire, etc.* Amsterdam 1699. Tome premier, p. 145.

² Tome second, op. cit., p. 306 et seq.