

CHAPTER XV.

WILLIAM MOORCROFT.

In his preface to MOORCROFT'S second journey, WILSON gives a good *résumé* of the knowledge in Europe about our region, as it was in 1841¹:

The whole of the intervening country between India and China is a blank; and of that which separates India from Russia, the knowledge which we possess is but in a very slight degree the result of modern European research, and for the most part either unauthentic or obsolete. The statements of Chinese geographers, or the details to be gleaned from Persian historians and biographers, are calculated only to be a substitute for accuracy, and are preferable alone to utter ignorance; and the travels of Carpini, Rubruquis, Marco Polo, and the Jesuit Missionaries, even if they were more comprehensive and trustworthy than they are, were performed under circumstances not less different from the present in Central Asia than in Europe. Such authorities, therefore, are wholly inadequate for the demands of the present age, and, except in a few of the great unalterable landmarks of their several routes, leave, as it were, still undescribed some of the most interesting countries of the East.

He expresses a wish that the Government of India should cooperate with Russia in dissipating the mist which still (1841) enveloped the geography of these regions.

And then he turns to MOORCROFT, whose ambition it was to penetrate into Turkestan, the country of a breed of horses which he would domesticate in India. To prepare his way he sent MIR IZZET ULLAH before. Moorcroft started in 1819 accompanied by Mr. GEORGE TREBECK.

On new roads he travelled to Leh. His information about this town is »entirely new in the annales of geographical research«. And Wilson adds that GERARD'S results »by no means supersede the labours of his predecessor«, they only confirm the observations of Moorcroft and Trebeck. Moorcroft reached Leh in September, 1820, and remained two years. His wish to visit Yarkand was refused by the Chinese authorities. Unsuccessful in this direction and without assistance from the

¹ *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab, in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara; by Mr. William Moorcroft and Mr. George Trebeck, from 1819 to 1825. Prepared for the Press, from Original Journals and Correspondence, by H. H. Wilson, Prof. Sanscrit, Oxford. London 1841.*