

important, being an attempt to use all reliable material and to approach the truth as nearly as then was possible.

In the text (p. XVIII) ERSKINE says: »The Túrki nations have the western boundary of the Moghuls as their eastern frontier; on the south they have the Múz-Tâgh, the Belût-Tâgh, the Hindû-kûsh, and the limits of the cultivated country of Khorasân down to the Caspian....»

Erskine gives the following interesting explanation to the orography of the map.¹

It has been already remarked, that the Himmâla Mountains, those of Thibet, Kashmîr, Hindûkûsh, and Paropamisus, form a broad and lofty barrier, separating the countries of northern from those of southern Asia. The mountains, as they advance west, acquire a very great height, and measurements made at various places, towards Nepâl and Hindûkûsh, by assigning to these ranges a height of upwards of 20.000 feet, would make them rank with the highest in the world.² Nearly parallel to this great chain, on the north, runs a considerable range, which has been called the Múz-tâgh, or Ice-Mountains. It extends on the east, at least from the northward of the Tibet range, near Leh or Ladak, and has a north-westerly direction, skirting Eastern or Chinese Turkistân on the south till it meets the Belûr, or Belût-tâgh Mountains in the latitude of about 40° 45', and longitude 71°; whence it seems to proceed on westward, as far as Khojend and Uratippa, under the name of the Asfera Mountains, and then divides into three or four principal branches.... Connecting these two great ranges of Kashmîr or Hindukûsh, and of Muz-tagh, a third range proceeds northwards from that part of the Hindukûsh which lies near Kafferistân, in longitude 72°, and meets the Múz-tâgh, as already mentioned. This range is called by geographers the Belûr, or Belût-tagh. It seems to revive again to the north of the Múz-tâgh, running, under the name of the Ala- or Alâk-tagh, and according to others of the Ming Bulâk, or Arjun Hills, first to the north as far as north latitude 42°, and next to the westward towards Tashkend, where it terminates in the desert of Arâl, about the 65th. or 66th. degree of east longitude. The extensive country which lies between the grand ranges of mountains, the Kashmirian, Múz-tâgh, and Belût-tâgh, does not perfectly belong to Turkestân, though some parts of it at the present day are traversed by Túrki tribes.

He continues his detailed description thus:

»The mountains by which this country is buttressed on every side are very lofty, and bear snow on their summits the greater part of the year. It has been conjectured, that if we except some parts of the Greater Tibet, it is the highest table-land in Asia.» Thus still a hundred years ago, this complicated world of mountains was regarded as a table-land, a belief that held its ground for another fifty years. Erskine finds a confirmation of the enormous height of this table-land, which he calls Upper Kâshgar, in the fact that great rivers, as the Indus, the Amu-daria and the Lop-nor rivers start from there in different directions and to different seas or lakes. On the other hand: »No river is known to cross the Muz-tagh; but the rivers which originate

¹ Preface, p. XXVI.

² To this Erskine has a note stating that according to recent measurements the Himalaya Mts. reached an altitude of 28.000 feet, »which would make them decidedly the loftiest in our globe».