

CHAPTER XIX.

ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT.

In a preceding chapter we have already dealt with ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT'S views regarding the great mountain systems of Asia.¹ Here only a few quotations from his works may be sufficient.

In 1829 Humboldt accomplished his journey to the Kirgiz steppes and Altai,² the most important result of which was his great work, *l'Asie Centrale* written in a scientific and methodic way and which is full of new perspectives and brilliant ideas. But already several years before this journey he had directed his attention to the question of the mountain ranges of Central Asia. In 1816 he published an article on the height of the mountains to the north and N. W. of India.³

Here he speaks of the difficulty of measuring the height of mountains situated far from the coast, amongst others »cette chaîne immense qui, sous les noms de Hindoo-Coosh et l'Himalaya, s'étend depuis Herat et Caboul, à l'est de l'Indus, jusqu'au-delà du Bourampouter.»⁴

The necessary material for his conclusions he gathers from ELPHINSTONE, MACARTNEY, CRAWFORD, WEBB, COLEBROOKE, and MOORCROFT. In connection with the researches of the latter, Humboldt expresses the following very sound view regarding the morphology to the north of Himalaya: Il est impossible de réfléchir sur le résultat de ces mesures, sans se demander si derrière le groupe de montagnes de l'Himâlaya il ne se trouve pas quelque autre chaîne encore plus élevée.

He feels convinced of the existence of an enormous plateau-land in the interior of Asia, the plateau-land of Tartary, a large part of which has, however, a very insignificant height:

¹ Vol. III, p. 77, *et seq.*

² *Reise nach dem Ural, dem Altai und dem Kaspischen Meere . . .* von A. von Humboldt, G. Ehrenberg und G. Rose. Berlin 1837, 2 Vols.

³ *Sur l'élévation des montagnes de l'Inde.* — *Annales de Chimie et de Physique*, Rédigées par MM. Gay-Lussac et Arago. Tome III. Paris 1816, p. 297 *et seq.*

⁴ Humboldt uses the spellings Hindoo-Coosh, Hindo-Kho, and Hindou-Kouh, *i. e.* Black Mountains in Persian, or Indian Caucasus. For Himalaya he has also the forms Hemâlleh, Himâleh or Hemmachal, Imaus of the ancients.