

CHAPTER XXVII.

GODWIN-AUSTEN.

In 1858 Sir R. MURCHISON reminded the members of the Royal Geographical Society that the gigantic peaks which enclose the lofty plateau of Tibet, and separate India from Turkestan, had generally been considered by British geographers as constituting one vast mass, or sea of mountains.¹ He regards the mountains as being concentrated in the west, in a knot or group around the Hindu-kush, from where they expand to the east and south in the shape of a fan. Farther north and beyond the plateau of Tibet is a band of parallel altitudes, also starting from the same western knot and proceeding southeastwards. — This is the Mus-tagh which farther east »acquires the synonym of Karakorum. This last range, which, still further to the east, is the Kailas.... has for some years been marked on maps as the watershed of the mountain region which separates the drainage of India from that of Turkistan and China.» This opinion of the watershed was the dominating one in these days.

It is curious that Murchison could say of this axis or water-parting: »the same chain was passed over in its far eastern prolongation by . . . HUC and GABET, though, unfortunately, they have given us no materials by which we can define its orographical features». How could he know that Huc crossed the same chain which THOMSON had reached in the Kara-korum Pass? It was a theory which happened to be correct, and it proved that MURCHISON was a very clear-sighted man.

In this address MURCHISON gives a rather good *résumé* of what was known of these regions in 1858. He ascertained that already in 1838, Dr. FALCONER crossed the mountains of Iskardo, and followed up one of the sources of the Indus by the valley of the river Braldo to about 36° N. lat., on the glacier which hangs upon the southern face of the Muz-tagh or Kara-korum. Murchison, in the same address, calls the Himalayan regions: »that part of Asia to which, as Englishmen, we attach deep interest, as constituting the northern frontier of our Indian possessions,

¹ *Journal Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. 28, 1858, p. CLXXXIII *et seq.*