

CHAPTER XXIX.

ROBERT SHAW.

The famous and noble Captain T. G. MONTGOMERIE in 1863 started his brilliant work in sending out natives to unknown parts of the countries north of India. »While I was in Ladak,» he says, »I noticed that natives of India passed freely backwards and forwards between Ladak and Yarkund, and it consequently occurred to me that it might be possible to make the exploration by their means.»¹ He addressed the Asiatic Society of Bengal with reference to this plan and got a favourable answer.

Montgomerie first of all would have a route survey from Leh to Yarkand, and as the inhabitants there were known chiefly to be Mohammedans, he selected a Mohammedan munshi called MAHOMED-I-HAMID, who started from Kashmir June 12th 1863, and reached Yarkand September 30th, the same year. He was equipped with a pocket sextant, artificial horizon, prismatic compass, pocket compass, thermometers, watches, boiling point thermometers, etc.

The munshi died on his way back, but Montgomerie was able to draw a sketch map of his observations. He also got valuable information about Eastern Turkestan. In the route-survey it is noted that the Kara-kash River joins the Suget River not far below Suget. It is reported by Montgomerie that »the country was surveyed for several marches beyond the Karakorum Pass, and a rough reconnaissance was made of the Suget Valley between the Karakorum and the mountains above Khotan».

Otherwise the report does not contain much of interest. On the little diagram of Montgomerie we find that Mahomed-i-Hamid crossed the Shayok only twice, the second time when coming down from the Saser Pass. Thence he went the eastern, or Murghu road *viâ* Dapsang to the Kara-korum Pass. This seems to indicate that the western, or Kumdan route was closed by the glacier snouts in 1863.

¹ *On the Geographical Position of Yarkund, and some other places in Central Asia. Journal Royal Geographical Society. Vol. 36, 1866, p. 157 et seq.* With a diagram of the route between Leh and Yarkand.