

CHAPTER XXXI.

FORSYTH'S FIRST AND SECOND MISSION.

I have referred to the erroneous opinion Sir HENRY RAWLINSON had of the highlands to the north of Himalaya. He regarded as the great discovery of JOHNSON, the existence of an open road from Khotan round the Kwen-lun over the Chang-tang, a road by which wheel carriages could pass from the Himalayas directly into the plains of Central Asia. The verification of the existence of that road was a desideratum in Asiatic exploration.

This view seemed first to be somewhat supported by FORSYTH'S statement that the Kara-korum road was almost the only one which had so far been used for trade. If the Chang-chenmo route could be used instead, all the difficult passes of the Kara-korum would be avoided. Instead of marching six days without any kind of grass for the animals, as over the Kara-korum, the tradesmen would find anything they needed if they took the Chang-chenmo route.¹

In spite of HAYWARD'S discoveries, Rawlinson still felt tempted to regard even the western part of the highland as an even plateau. For he says that SHAW and HAYWARD »had surmounted five different ranges in their journey across *the Himalayan plateau* between India and Turkestan.»²

But soon the cart-road had also to disappear, for in a letter to MURCHISON, FORSYTH says that the road to Charchan »skirts the foot of the Kuen Luen Range, which by all accounts, and certainly so far as we could see from the heights of Linzi Thung, extends far to the east, thus dispelling the notion that a cart-road could ever be found from Khotan to Ghartokh.»³

In another letter: *On the Transit of Tea from North-West India to Eastern Turkestan*, FORSYTH touches upon the futility of attempting to open up a trade

¹ *On trade Routes between Turkestan and India. Proceedings Royal Geographical Society. Vol. XIII. 1868—69, p. 10 et seq.*

² *Proceedings Royal Geographical Society. Vol. XIV. 1869—70, p. 232.*

³ *Proceedings Royal Geographical Society. Vol. XV. 1870—71, p. 23.*