

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### RICHTHOFEN.

Already the title of RICHTHOFEN'S standard work,<sup>1</sup> the most remarkable and epoch-making ever written on the geography of Asia, points out the difference between it and its two great predecessors, RITTER'S *Asien*, and HUMBOLDT'S *Asie Centrale*. It is all built up on his own personal observations so far as China and some other parts of Asia are concerned. Ritter and Humboldt had to work their hard ways through heaps of documents. And still no other works have in the same degree developed geography to a science, all over the world. Humboldt's own journey to the Kirgis Steppe and Altai in 1829 did not lead to any great geographical discoveries, but with his sharp and trained eye he understood the general building of the continent, and his work on Central Asia is, in spite of several natural mistakes, a milestone in the history of Asiatic researches.

Comparable with it is Ritter's *Asien*, of which the first volume appeared in 1832, and which contains almost everything known about the great continent at his time.

Germany had given to the world a third Asiatic scholar who was greater than his great countrymen, FERDINAND VON RICHTHOFEN. For, while those were, to a great extent, compilers, Richthofen was one of the scientifically best prepared travellers who ever lived, and regarding the physical geography of Asia, unrivalled. Richthofen says of his two countrymen that they were no mere compilers in the ordinary sense of the word on account of their sharp understanding of the great features and the systematic, critical and philosophic way in which they interpreted the material existing from the very remotest times to their own days.

Richthofen shows how Humboldt's artificial and geometrical construction of the boundaries of »Central Asia» was not at all in harmony with the geological and interior structure of the continent, and, therefore, soon had to disappear, — and he

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<sup>1</sup> *China, Ergebnisse eigener Reisen und darauf gegründeter Studien* von Ferdinand Freiherrn von Richthofen. Band I. Einleitender Teil. Berlin 1877.