

I. ARRANGEMENT OF THE ROUTE-BOOK.

Geographical area. — Alphabetical arrangement. — Index-map. — Nature of the routes. — Principal and intermediate stages.

Although our globe (in consequence of the varied shape of its solid surface, in the form of mountainous regions, valleys with their rivers, plateaux, and peaks) offers serious and unexpected difficulties to man, when he endeavours to traverse it, still many efforts have been made by him to overcome them; and his struggles may be said to have been crowned with extraordinary success—considering the obstacles he had to contend against—in High Asia, the most elevated mountainous region of our earth hitherto known. At the present day, regular routes are annually traversed by large caravans in those very countries which, from their orographical and physical conditions, formerly seemed quite inaccessible. Many an illustration of this remarkable fact—which did not fail to arrest the attention of earlier travellers, and even at a time not very remote, when Europe could not boast of such extensive means of communication as now—will be presented by the routes contained in this volume.

The various routes (241 in all) are compiled from my brothers' and my own travels¹ in these countries; and for those parts which we had not ourselves occasion to visit, from the itineraries and works of European travellers, or from accounts given by intelligent native merchants, and leaders of caravans. The variety of the sources from which our information was derived, will at once account for the inequality in the amount of detail furnished for the different routes. Accompanied as they are

¹ Our original observations on the routes are contained in our manuscript-volumes Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4, quoted in Vol. I., p. 8; and the detailed itinerary of our travels is also given in Vol. I., pp. 11—35.