

Southern Africa forms a vast table-land, whose three faces, the western, southern, and eastern, descend towards the sea in bold abrupt terraces, which are broken up by numerous clefts, and surrounded here and there by a few elevated peaks. The eastern escarpment of this great plateau, which stretches due north, having on the east Cape Guardafui opposite the Gulf of Aden, was considered by the elder geographers a vast mountain-plain, which they christened the Lupata Mountains, or "Backbone of the World;" but the name of Lupata, which signifies "a gorge," is only applied by the natives themselves to the group of rocks traversed by the river Zambesi. These mountains are clothed with noble forests; the plains with palm-tree groves; the river-banks with marish-plants and mangroves. Between Zanguebar and Cape Guardafui the African coast seems to be a ravine-intersected plateau, with no inferior mountains. The chains of Arabia Felix and of Persia run from south-east to north-west, and link themselves to the grand Asiatic range, which begins in Asia Minor under the name of Taurus, skirts the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, and, under the name of Hindu-Kush, joins the mighty mass of the Belor-Tagh ("Mountains of the Mist").

[This mass is spread over the countries of Koonduz, Budakshan, and Kafferistan. Seen from the south it appears composed of four distinct ranges running one above another, the last of which abuts on the great central table-land, and is so high that its snow-crowned summits are visible at the distance of 150 miles. A stupendous ridge encloses the fairy vale of Cashmere, to the east of which the chain assumes the well-known name of Himálaya, "the dwelling of snow." Its mean height is enormous, not less than 16,000 feet; while not a few colossal summits tower to the elevation of 29,000 feet.

More to the north runs the volcanic chain of the Thian-Shan, or "Celestial Mountains;" beginning at the Belor-Tagh, extending along the 42nd parallel, and sinking into the desert of the Great Gobi; whence it rises again under the name of Shan-Garjan, strikes to the north-east, and terminates on the shores of the Japan Sea.

The Thian-Shan attach themselves by various mountain-links to