

discover the loftiest summits of the world. The two intermediate chains, going from north to south, are the Thian-Shan, or "Celestial Mountains," and the Kuen-luen, which is terminated on the west by the Tsung-ling; these again, on the west, unite with the chain of Bolor-Tagh, or "Mountains of the Mist."

The Celestial Mountains seem continued, beyond the great Aralo-Caspian basin, in the Caucasus, which forms the eastern boundary of the Black Sea. Siberia is separated from European Russia by the Ural Mountains, stretching from north to south; the banks of the Indus bear the oases of the East and West Ghauts, which form in the south the plateaux of the Neilgherry, or "Blue Mountains." (See *antè*, p. 177.) Finally, Asiatic Turkey is traversed by the Caucasus and the Libanus.

The elevation of the *ligne de faite*, or the mean height of the Asiatic Passes, is, according to Messrs. Schlagintweit, as follows:—

For the Himalaya,	17,700	Eng. feet.
„ Karakorum,	18,600	„
„ Kuen-luen,	16,850	„

These figures exceed those given by Humboldt. The latter computes at about 375 feet the primitive elevation of the low lands of Asia. The Chinese plateau is 4850 feet above the sea; the plateau of Tibet has an average altitude of 5400 feet. The distribution of all the mountains, and all the lofty table-lands, over the entire surface of Asia, would raise the mean general height of that continent more than 1140 feet, which surpasses the mean elevation of America or Europe.

The western slope of the Bolor-Tagh includes the famous table-land of Pamir, which the wandering Kirghiz name "the Roof of the World." The first European traveller who described it was Marco Polo:—*

* [Marco Polo was born of a noble Dalmatian family, at Venice, about 1250. In 1275, he visited the Court of Kúblai, the Grand Khan of the Mongols, and was employed by that sovereign on various important missions. He returned to Venice in 1295, and died in 1323. The first edition of his "Travels" was published by Ramusio in his *Raccolta di Navigazioni e Viaggi* (Venice, 1559).]