

## CHAPTER IV.

[MOUNTAINS OF ASIA—TABLE OF THE PRINCIPAL SUMMITS—THE CAUCASUS, THE HINDU-KUSH, THE GHAUTS, THE CHINESE AND TIBETIAN MOUNTAIN-CHAINS—THE ALTAI—THE HIMALAYAS—ASCENT OF THE IBI-GAMIN BY ADOLPHE AND ROBERT VON SCHLAGINTWEIT, IN 1855—GAURISANKAR, OR MOUNT EVEREST—KANCHINJINGA.

**N**ATURE, on the Asiatic continent, has worked with greater magnificence than in Europe. Its table-lands rise above the mean elevation of the European mountains ; its mountains soar to an altitude which we should barely equal if we imitated the old Titanic strife of mythology, and piled Pelion upon Ossa, the Pyrenees upon the Carpathians. Its deserts are of extraordinary vastness and barrenness ; its dense forests and blooming valleys of no less extraordinary a fertility. Mighty are its rivers : the Volga and the Danube are but paltry streams compared with the Ganges, the Indus, or the Hoang-Ho. Nowhere else is animal life so varied and so abundant ; nowhere else does it exhibit such noble and terrible types as the elephant of Ceylon, or the tiger of the jungles. Then, too, in Asia, we find, as most authorities believe, the very cradle and nursery of the human race. There, when all the world beside was shrouded in darkness, reigned a wonderful and mysterious civilization. Babylon and Nineveh had almost terminated *their* history before the annals of Greece and Rome began. While the Danube still flowed through silent solitudes, vast cities teemed with busy life on the banks of the Euphrates. Ere yet the prophets had proclaimed the will of Jehovah to the conquerors of Palestine, the priests of Brahma taught their Vedas to the dusky races of the Ganges. Of fallen empires, of vanished peoples, the gigantic monuments are still extant which witness to their skill, their industry, and their power. And here, too, the evidences remain of