

mountain-chains possess a similar general direction, with the exception of certain southern chains stretching from S.S.E. to N.N.W., between Cape Comorin and the Arctic Ocean. These are the Western Ghauts; the Solimaun range, bounding the Persian table-land on the east; the Beloot Tagh, which forms the western limit of the Oriental plateau; and the Ural Mountains, separating Europe from Asia. In China the Khing-han extends from north to south.

The great historic range of the Caucasus, which ages ago gave birth to the conquering Caucasian race, may be described as an offshoot of the Asiatic table-lands. It stretches for 700 miles between the Black Sea and the Caspian, throwing off lofty spurs and lateral branches on either hand, whose low-lying valleys and sheltered plains are remarkable for the fertility of their soil and the amenity of their climate. The central portion of the chain loads its massive flanks with glaciers; but the line of perpetual snow does not descend lower than 11,000 feet, and the lower slopes bloom with a vegetation which is almost tropical in exuberance.

All Asia Minor is intersected by "short chains and broken groups of mountains," inclosing quiet Arcadian hollows—the fitting nurseries of myth and legend—and declining rapidly towards the sea-coast, to terminate in bold headlands and romantic islands, which the Art of antiquity has consecrated with its beautiful memorials and monuments. Along the shore of the Mediterranean spreads a region of almost unsurpassed interest and loveliness—a region abounding in verdant plains, in broad shining rivers, in silent and fertile glens, in rich leafy groves, and steep acclivities clothed with the vine, the olive, and the myrtle. On the south rises the serrated range of the snowy Taurus, which begins in the isles of Rhodes and Cos, traverses the south-western districts of Asia Minor, and in a single lofty range edges the iron-bound coast of Karamania.

Of the lofty mountainous regions of Armenia, Kurdistan, and Azerbijan, Mrs. Somerville eloquently writes :*

"Here the cold, treeless plains of Armenia, the earliest abode of

* Mrs. Somerville, "Physical Geography," i. 81, 82.