

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## CONCERNING THE CITY OF SAPURGAN.

ON leaving the Castle, you ride over fine plains and beautiful valleys, and pretty hill-sides producing excellent grass pasture, and abundance of fruits, and all other products. Armies are glad to take up their quarters here on account of the plenty that exists. This kind of country extends for six days' journey, with a goodly number of towns and villages, in which the people are worshippers of Mahomet. Sometimes also you meet with a tract of desert extending for 50 or 60 miles, or somewhat less, and in these deserts you find no water, but have to carry it along with you. The beasts do without drink until you have got across the desert tract and come to watering places.

So after travelling for six days as I have told you, you come to a city called SAPURGAN. It has great plenty of everything, but especially of the very best melons in the world. They preserve them by paring them round and round into strips, and drying them in the sun. When dry they are sweeter than honey, and are carried off for sale all over the country. There is also abundance of game here, both of birds and beasts.<sup>1</sup>

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NOTE I.—SAPURGAN may closely express the pronunciation of the name of the city which the old Arabic writers call *Sabūrḳān* and *Shabūrḳān*, now called *Shibrgān*, lying some 90 miles west of Balkh; containing now some 12,000 inhabitants, and situated in a plain still richly cultivated, though on the verge of the desert.\* But I have seen no satisfactory solution of the difficulties as to the time assigned. This in the G. T. and in Ramusio is clearly six days. The point of departure is indeed uncertain, but even if we were to place that at Sharakhs on the extreme verge of

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\* The oldest form of the name is *Asapuragān*, which Rawlinson thinks traceable to its being an ancient seat of the *Asa* or *Asagartii*. (*J. R. A. S.* XI. 63.)