

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

OF THE PROVINCE OF CHARCHAN.

CHARCHAN is a Province of Great Turkey, lying between north-east and east. The people worship Mahommet. There are numerous towns and villages, and the chief city of the kingdom bears its name, Charchan. The Province contains rivers which bring down Jasper and Chalcedony, and these are carried for sale into Cathay, where they fetch great prices. The whole of the Province is sandy, and so is the road all the way from Pein, and much of the water that you find is bitter and bad. However, at some places you do find fresh and sweet water. When an army passes through the land, the people escape with their wives, children, and cattle a distance of two or three days' journey into the sandy waste; and knowing the spots where water is to be had, they are able to live there, and to keep their cattle alive, whilst it is impossible to discover them; for the wind immediately blows the sand over their track.

Quitting Charchan, you ride some five days through the sands, finding none but bad and bitter water, and then you come to a place where the water is sweet. And now I will tell you of a province called Lop, in which there is a city, also called LOP, which you come to at the end of those five days. It is at the entrance of the great Desert, and it is here that travellers repose before entering on the Desert.¹

NOTE I.—Though the *Lake* of Lob or Lop appears on all our maps, from Chinese authority, the latter does not seem to have supplied information as to a town so called. We have, however, indications of the existence of such a place, both mediæval and recent. The History of Mirza Haidar, called the *Tárikh-i-Rashídí*, already referred to, in describing the Great Basin of Eastern Turkestan, says: "Formerly there were several large cities in this plain; the names of two have survived—*Lob* and *Kank*, but of the rest there is no trace or tradition; all is buried under the sand." [Forsyth (*J. R. G. S.* XLVII. 1877, p. 5) says that he thinks