

CHAPTER VI.

THROUGH TURKESTAN TO YARKAND.

MY first inquiries after arrival were as to whether Colonel Bell had arrived. I had reached here some weeks later than the appointed date on which we were to have met, but still he had had a long round to travel, and might have been late too. I was told that he had passed through about three weeks before, and it was a marvel to me how he had managed to travel so quickly. But there is probably no faster or better traveller than Colonel Bell. He has travelled in Persia, Asia Minor, Beluchistan, Burma, and China, besides this present journey that he was engaged in ; and those who have read the accounts of these travels know that there are few, if any, Europeans who have seen and done and recorded more than Colonel Bell.

My next inquiries were as to the means of reaching Kashgar, and the time it would take to get there. Difficulties, of course, arose at first. It was the hot season, and carters would not hire out their carts. In any case it would take seventy days to reach there, and this would bring us to the end of September, with the whole of the Himalayas to cross before winter.

In the evening I took a stroll through the town, and found all the bustle of life customary to a small trading centre. Hami is a small town of perhaps five or six thousand inhabitants. There are fairly good shops, and a busy bazaar, where one sees people of many nationalities meeting together—