

CHAPTER I.

WHEN His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council was pleased to appoint me to conduct a mission to Yarkand for the purpose of concluding a commercial Treaty with His Highness the Amir of Yarkand and Kashghar, I was instructed to endeavour to obtain the fullest and most precise information on every subject, connected with the condition, resources, history, geography, and trade of Yarkand and the neighbouring countries.

In carrying out these instructions, I have had the advantage of the valuable aid of the staff of officers appointed to accompany me.

The History of Eastern Turkestan contained in the following pages has been carefully compiled by Dr. W. H. Bellew, C.S.I., from many Persian and Turki manuscripts, which were procured in the country, and the description of the people, their manners and customs, and of the country generally, is the result of enquiries made by him and all the other members of the Mission.

Captain Trotter, R.E., has given a preliminary report, containing the general results of his explorations and observations which will be read with interest, but we may expect at some later period the publication of a much fuller work, when his calculations and observations have been carefully worked out.

In the chapter on geography, Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon, C.S.I., and Captains Chapman and Biddulph are also associated with Captain Trotter, and Lieutenant-Colonel Gordon's account of his visit to Chakmak and Wakhan, and Captain Biddulph's account of his visit to the Passes on the Hindû-kush, will be found specially interesting.

The statistics of trade and all other information now put forward regarding the commerce and manufactures of the country have been carefully collected by Captain Chapman.

Science has much to regret in the untimely loss of our much lamented friend, Dr. F. Stoliczka, but what notes and memoranda he left in a completed form will be found embodied here, and arrangements are in progress for giving to the world the result of his labor in the collection of natural history and other specimens.

I wish prominently to record my acknowledgment to Colonel Yule, C.B., who, with generous kindness, supplied me with all the information he possessed regarding the countries we were about to visit, and who, from time to time, sent me most valuable suggestions as to the enquiries we should make.

As the success of an expedition such as this, depended greatly on the preliminary arrangements, and the provision made for all contingencies, it may not be uninteresting to go into the subject in some detail.

The staff of officers and subordinates placed at my disposal consisted of—

Lieutenant-Colonel T. E. Gordon, C.S.I., B.S.C., second in command.

Dr. Bellew, C.S.I., Surgeon-Major.

Captain Chapman, R.A., Secretary to the Yarkand Mission.

Captain Trotter, R.E.

Captain Biddulph, 19th Hussars, A.D.C. to His Excellency the Viceroy.

Dr. Stoliczka, Ph. Dr.

Ressaidar Mahomed Afzul Khan, XIth Bengal Lancers.

Ibrahim Khan, Inspector, Punjab Police.

Tara Sing, Treasurer, and in charge of mule train.

Faiz Buksh, Moonshee.

Asmat Ali, Native Doctor and Assistant to Dr. Bellew.