

## CHAPTER IX

Reception at Yarkand—Dining with the Amban—After effects—Swedish missionaries—Another attempt at exploration in winter—Route followed—Foiled by snowstorm—Recrossing the Yarkand River—Punishment of dishonest natives—Incapacitated by illness—Kosarab—Return to Yarkand—Meeting Macartney and Father Hendriks—Stay in Yarkand—Apology of Teetai—Observing in Yangi Shahr—Ignorance of Chinese officials—Islam Akun—Preparations for excursion to the Takla Makan—Discovery about “ancient” Khotan MSS.—Suspicious about Islam Akun.

THE greater part of my first day at Yarkand was devoted to a visit to the Chow-Kuan, commonly called the Amban, the chief Chinese official. Here, as elsewhere within the Celestial Empire, strict ceremonial politeness is expected even at the hands of strangers. It is necessary to give notice of an intended visit, and to mention the hour at which it is intended to pay it. If the day is unlucky, *e.g.*, a day of mourning for a deceased emperor, then the Yamen is closed to visitors till the afternoon. Such days are fairly numerous, and as they come round they are denoted by the words Chi Shen (“Bad omen day”) written on a yellow cloth spread on a table at the entrance. I recognised that, so far as they concerned myself, the Chinese requirements were not unreasonable, for I was provided with officials ready to assist me. One of these I sent to make the announcement of my visit in the proper manner. Taking my visiting card, a piece of