

CHAPTER XVIII

Marpa—Preparations in Yarkand—Attack on missionaries—Plucky behaviour of Macartney—Delays in starting—Eastwards once more—Stopped at Khotan—Complaint to Macartney—Stormy interviews with Amban—Passport useless—Circumventing the Amban—Reply to complaint—Dust storm in desert—Arrival at Polu—Loss of sheep—Opposition by Chinese—Negotiations broken off—"Protection" refused—Raju dismissed—No assistance obtainable—Compelled to start.

THE journey to Yarkand, performed mostly in the jolting marpa, or native cart, took me over the monotonous, sandy and dusty main route by Yangi Hissar. It had been my intention to break the journey at Kizil and visit the tombs of Urdu Padshah and Hazarat Begum, both of which are annually visited by crowds of pilgrims. The tomb at Hazarat Begum is said to contain the remains of Hazarat Sultan who about nine hundred years ago defeated the Chinese near this spot, and established the religion of Mohammed in Sin-Chiang. My purpose was simply to determine the true position of those tombs; but hazy weather, obscuring both sun and stars, supervened, and, as I was unwilling to lose time, I continued my journey without interruption.

On reaching Yarkand, on March 14th, I found the animals which had been left in charge of Abdul Karim in excellent condition, and also two fine camels purchased by Raju near Kugiar for 1,100 tongas. Arrangements for