

for the sake of my scientific interests. Once I had mastered the rudiments of conversational practice in Chinese (I regret to say, only in that troublesome Hunanese variety of the Mandarin), his ever-cheerful companionship was a great resource during long months of hard travel and exertion. With the true historical sense innate in every educated Chinese, he took to archaeological work like a young duck to the water. Slight and yet wiry of body, he bore the privations and discomforts of desert life with a cheerful indifference quite surprising in a *litteratus* accustomed all his life to work near the fleshpots of the Ya-mêns. Yet whenever travel brought us in the oases to the hospitable board of Chinese Mandarins, he could show keen appreciation of the good things there provided. Excellent *causeur* as he was, he would keep the whole company in good spirits by his humorous talk. How often have I longed all these years for my ever-alert and devoted Chinese comrade, now, alas, long departed to his ancestors!

When on June 23 I started from Kashgar my goal was Khotan, a fortnight's journey by the caravan route to the south-east. That oasis must have all through historical times been just as now by far the most important area of cultivation to the south of the Taklamakan. Ancient sites abandoned to the sandy desert far away to the north-east of the present oasis had been the first to yield plentiful relics of the Buddhist period when on my first expedition I began explorations in this region. I knew this field for interesting archaeological work to be by no means exhausted, and was hence anxious to start fresh and more extensive explorations. But owing to the great summer heat of the plains work at sand-buried ruins in the desert could not be thought of