

tunity within my reach. But remembering the circumstances under which it had been secured, I could not prevent anxious thoughts often crossing my mind in the course of my preparations and after. Would Fate permit the full execution of my plan within the available time, and would the results prove an adequate return for the liberal consideration and aid that the Government had extended to me?

I knew well that neither previous training and experience, nor careful preparation and personal zeal, could guarantee success. The wide extent of the region to be searched and the utter insufficiency of reliable information would alone have justified doubts as to how much those sand-buried sites would yield up during a limited season. But in addition there was the grave fact that prolonged work in the desert such as I contemplated would have to be carried through in the face of exceptional physical difficulties and even dangers. Nor was it possible to close my eyes to the very serious obstacles which suspicions of the local Chinese administration and quasi-political apprehensions, however unfounded, might raise to the realisation of my programme.

When I now look back upon these anxieties and doubts, and recognise in the light of the knowledge since gathered how much there was to support them, I feel doubly grateful to the kindly Destiny which saved my plans from being thwarted by any of those difficulties, and which allowed my labours to be rewarded by results richer than I had ventured to hope for. In respect of the efforts and means by which these results were secured, no remarks seem here needed; the reader of my present narrative, whatever his knowledge of Central Asia and its historical past may be, can safely be left to judge of them for himself. But in regard to the scientific value of the results similar reticence would scarcely be justified, however much personal feelings might make me incline towards it.

It is impossible to overlook the fact that archæological research in great fields like India and Central Asia, which lie beyond the stimulating influence of Biblical associations, has not as yet succeeded in gaining its due share of sympathy and interest from