

## CHAPTER XI

### ON THE ROAD TO KHOTAN

ON the morning of the 2nd of October my caravan wended its way through the busy little town towards the East gate, from whence the road to Khotan starts. On my way I visited a large Madrasah called after the Ghujak Masjid, opening on one of the principal Bazars. It comprises a large quadrangle with rows of vaulted rooms for about 150 students, and at its west end an open hall of imposing dimensions. The wooden pillars supporting the roof as well as the roof itself are painted in lively colours, chiefly shades of red, suggesting the polychrome splendour of some classical building.

Chang-Darin had sent his principal 'Tungchi' or interpreter to accompany me on my start and bring me his farewell good wishes. Within a mile of the Khotan gate where I parted from the good-looking old man the caravan road emerges on barren desert. A few miles further on this gave way to narrow strips of cultivation forming the little oasis of Besharik, but this was soon traversed, and beyond there received us an unmitigated wilderness of gravelly Dasht. The road is marked all along by wooden posts erected at short intervals—no useless precaution considering how easy it would be for the traveller to lose his way at night or in a sandstorm. At Kosh Langar, where the day's march ended, I was surprised to find in the midst of the barren waste a commodious Sarai built of hard-burned bricks, with vaulted rooms and