

particularly deserving exploration and as to the best means for organising a systematic search for antiquities. Apprehensions about possible forgeries had prevented me from sending in advance to Khotan information as to the main object of my journey. I now found that some time would have to be allowed for the collection of specimens of antiquities from the various old sites which "treasure-seekers" were in the habit of visiting. "Treasure-seeking," *i.e.*, the search for chance finds of precious metal within the areas of abandoned settlements, has indeed been a time-honoured occupation in the whole of the Khotan oasis, offering like gold-washing and jade-digging the fascinations of a kind of lottery to those low down in luck and averse to any constant exertion. In recent years, owing to the continued demand of European collectors from Kashgar and elsewhere, the small fraternity of quasi-professional treasure-seekers had learned on their periodical visits to ancient sites to pay attention also to antiquities as secondary proceeds. Nevertheless, all the information that could be elicited about such localities, even from persons who seemed reliable, was exceedingly vague, and I soon realised that if I were to set out without having before me specimens distinctly traceable to specific sites, much valuable time might be lost and labour wasted. In order to secure such specimens, Badruddin Khan, who had previously rendered useful services to Mr. Macartney, offered to organise and send out small "prospecting" parties. Their return, however, could not be expected before a month, and I decided to utilise this interval for the interesting geographical task which I had already marked out for myself in the mountains south of Khotan.

That portion of the Kuen-luen range which contains the headquarters of the Yurung-kash or Khotan River had hitherto remained practically unsurveyed, the scanty information available being restricted to the sketch map of the route by which Mr. Johnson, in 1865, had made his way from Ladak down to Khotan. Colonel Trotter had, in 1875, ex-