

## CHAPTER XVI

### YOTKAN, THE SITE OF THE ANCIENT CAPITAL

My march on the 25th of November to Yotkan, the site of the old Khotan capital, took me over ground that I had partly seen before, but the day did not close without a novel, though somewhat annoying, experience. Coming from the south, I had, within a couple of miles from my destination, passed two deep ravines, or 'Yars' as they are called, cut into the loess beds by the action of flood water. Though the banks were steep, the ponies found no difficulty in crossing, and I did not give a thought to the question how the camels with the baggage would fare at these obstacles. I reached Yotkan, to which I had already paid a preliminary visit in October, about sunset, and selected a suitable ground for my tent close to the Yüzباشi's house, overlooking the area where the excavations of treasure-seekers have laid bare the soil of the ancient capital. The best room of the well-to-do villager was quite a cosy place, with its carpets and coloured Khotan felts, and with a cheerful log fire burning in the little fire-place. So the time of waiting for the arrival of the baggage passed quickly at first. The Yüzباشi's little red-cheeked son kept me company and amused 'Yolchi Beg,' my faithful follower.

At last, long after it had got pitch-dark outside, one of the camel men arrived—not with the eagerly expected animals, but with the news that they had stuck fast at the bottom of the first ravine and could not be got to move further. So a rescue party was despatched under the orders of the village headman. I have reason to suspect