

PREFACE

THE purpose of these volumes is to furnish the general reader with a personal record of the archaeological and geographical explorations which, during the years 1906-1908, I carried out under the orders of the Government of India in remote parts of Central Asia and westernmost China. The plan of these explorations was based upon the experiences and results of my earlier journey in Chinese Turkestan, during 1900-1901, of which my *Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan*, first published in 1903, contained a popular account. In the Introduction to that book I explained the manifold historical and other interests which first attracted me to pioneer work in what was then practically a virgin field for antiquarian research. When subsequently publishing the Detailed Report on the scientific results of that journey in my *Ancient Khotan* (Oxford University Press, 1907, two vols. quarto), I had occasion to dwell more fully upon the singular fascination possessed by the ancient remains of a region which once served as the main channel for the interchange of the civilizations of India, China, and the classical West, and also upon the geographical interest of the deserts which have helped to preserve those relics. There seems therefore no need to detail here the general aims which guided me in the plans of my second journey.

A kindly Fate allowed me to carry through my programme in its entirety and with abundant results.