

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE RUINED FORT OF MIRAN

My stay at Charklik gave my men the rest which they amply deserved and needed. But I myself found the five days to which, in spite of my efforts, it dragged out, almost too short for all the tasks there were to get through. An early visit to the Ya-mên, where Liao Ta-lao-ye greeted me with the cordiality of an old friend, allowed me to arrange for the rapid progress of Ibrahim Beg, who was to proceed to Kara-shahr and fetch my silver reserve with all possible speed. Using freely all official resources, the journey to and fro could not be accomplished in less than a month, and it was important that my own start for Tun-huang should not suffer delay on that score.

Ram Singh's rheumatism, in spite of a week's rest at Abdal, had shown no sign of abatement; and I realized that, even if we could get him fit again for more field work, it would be useless to expect him to face the hardships of another desert campaign next winter. So I used Ibrahim Beg's despatch to Kara-shahr for addressing to the Surveyor-General in India a telegraphic request *via* Kashgar to send another native surveyor in relief of Ram Singh. It was due to this accelerated appeal and prompt compliance with it on the part of the Survey Department that Rai Lal Singh could join me nine months later far away in Kan-su. Then I was kept busy with securing fresh labourers for my excavations at Miran, and collecting all supplies my large party needed, not merely during our protracted work there, but also for the long desert journey to Tun-huang. I knew that Abdal had no resources to offer, and that all arrangement for the additional transport