

CHAPTER LXXXII

GLIMPSES OF TURFAN RUINS

Six rapid marches across a wearisome succession of low and absolutely barren spurs with almost equally dreary depressions intervening brought me by 10th November to the fertile oasis of Pichan. During the short halt there necessitated by topographical work, I was able to settle a provisional programme for my visit to the ruined sites of Turfan and for our surveys around them.

Exceptional conditions made it specially important to turn my available time to best use. Since 1897 an archaeological reconnaissance effected by Dr. Klementz on behalf of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and itself first suggested by Captain Roborowsky's observations, had drawn attention to the abundance of ancient ruins in the small but fertile Turfan tract. This, the Chü-shih of early Chinese records, is known to have been one of the chief seats of Uigur power after the downfall of T'ang supremacy. The facts reported by Dr. Klementz, and indirectly also the results attending my explorations in the far-off Khotan region during 1900-1, led to the despatch of a German expedition under Professor A. Grünwedel, Director of the Royal Ethnographic Museum of Berlin, and a high authority on Buddhist art, which in 1902 visited Turfan from the side of the Siberian railway for the purpose of serious excavations.

Its discoveries of art and literary remains of all sorts proved so important that provision was promptly made by the Prussian Ministry of Education, under the special patronage of the German Emperor, for the systematic continuation of the work by means of scientific expeditions,