

full bloom, were strewing my tent and the garden around with their blossoms as with fresh snow.

During my brief stay at Khotan I had to occupy myself, besides other immediate tasks, with arrangements for my return journey to India. But there was still a considerable programme of work to be finished northward, and I knew how soon the rapidly increasing heat would put a stop to all operations in the desert. So by April 5th I said good-bye again to old friends and familiar surroundings at Khotan, and started on the journey which in the end was to take me to Ak-su and the foot of the T'ien-shan. My first goal was supplied by certain ruins which my 'treasure-seeking' guides had succeeded in tracing near the northernmost outskirts of the Khotan oasis. I had taken care to have their exact position fixed beforehand by Rai Lal Singh while he was completing our surveys around Khotan. Thus near Kara-sai, a new outlying colony to the northwest, I recovered from a much-eroded site a number of small Buddhist relievos finely worked in true plaster of Paris, and remarkably well preserved in spite of the total decay of the building (Fig. 76, 8).

On my move there I could let Islam Beg, my old factotum of 1900, have the eagerly claimed satisfaction of affording me hospitality for a night in his newly built country house at Altunche. My recommendation, in return for zealous and effective services, had earned him six years before from P'an Ta-jên an appointment to the office of 'Mirab,' or canal charge, of his native canton of Kayash. By good administration he had managed to retain his official employment, and since my second visit in 1906 he had gained promotion to the office of Beg. It was a pleasure to see how well my old protégé had prospered, and to have local proof, too, with what wise moderation he had used his opportunities.

The sight of expanding cultivation which greeted me everywhere was most cheering. A big new canal, dug along the left bank of the Kara-kash River when my old friend P'an Ta-jên was Amban, had brought verdure over what was before a belt of sandy waste, and now formed the canton of Bogar-ming, for nearly a day's march north-