

CHAPTER XII

THE ENDERE RUINS

SECTION I.—THE MARCH TO THE ENDERE RIVER

I HAD already heard at Niya of ancient remains in the desert near the Endere river about half way towards Charchan, and subsequent information as to the existence there of a 'Potai' and other structural ruins decided me to select them for my next exploration. Their distance had supplied a special reason for completing my explorations at the Niya Site as rapidly as possible. During the greater part of my stay there had been a succession of deliciously clear days with bitterly cold nights and mornings, the minimum thermometer usually showing temperatures from 6° to 9° Fahr. below zero. It was striking evidence of the remarkable clearness of the atmosphere that early on the morning of February 11 the Surveyor's sharp eyes distinctly sighted the snowy mountains south of Niya, some 120 miles away. But I knew that such favourable conditions for desert work could not be expected to serve us much longer. I thought of the number of sites that still remained to be explored, and the great distances to be covered between them, before the season of sand-storms would put an end to my explorations, and consequently realized the necessity of setting out for those fresh fields of work as early as possible.

Start from
Niya Site.

The timely arrival of the camels enabled me on the 13th of February once more to start my caravan back to Imām Ja'far Sādiq. As I passed one ruin after the other familiar to me from the incessant work of the last weeks, my elation over all the discoveries they had yielded mingled with regret at having to leave this fascinating site so soon. But there was the hope of fresh discoveries awaiting me elsewhere and the possibility of return in years hence, by which time a shifting of the dunes might have helped to reveal yet other ruined structures still hidden under their protecting cover of sand.

It would have been difficult to take all my former labourers along to the new site, as the distance was great and the men were well-nigh exhausted by the hard work and exposure of the last three weeks. The fresh set of men needed could only be secured from Niya, and it was hence no small relief when, on arrival at that day's camping-place, information reached me that all arrangements had been made by the local Bēg for the timely dispatch of the fresh contingent. The next day's march brought me to Imām Ja'far Sādiq, the living forest passed *en route* proving even in its winter sleep a great change after the silent sands and ruins amidst which I had dwelt. At the Mazār I was kept busy long into the night by the dispatch of my mails to Europe and India, with the first notice of my recent discoveries, and by the settlement of all accounts with the labourers and the Shaikhs of the pious settlement.

Return to
Imām Ja'far
Sādiq.

I had wished to reach the Endere ruins by striking straight across the desert to the east of Imām Ja'far Sādiq, instead of returning to Niya and thence marching along the Charchan Road. At first all knowledge of such a route was stoutly denied, but in the end one of the shepherds from the Mazār acknowledged that he had more than once visited flocks grazing