

## THE PLATEAU OF EASTERN TURKISTAN.

THIS is another of the Chinese dependencies, and lies between the Tian Shan Mountains on the north, the Kuen Lun on the south, and the Pamirs on the west. Though of considerable altitude, the area is only half as high as the plateau of Tibet, and forms the basin of the **Tarim**. The banks of this river are fringed with poplars, willows, and tamarisks, and the saline swamps of Lob Nor, in which it terminates, are covered with reeds, which form the home of many water-fowl and wild animals.

The region has a continental climate, and is very deficient in rain; the tributaries of the Tarim deriving their waters from the snows and glaciers of the encircling mountains. When these rivers descend to the plateau, their waters can be turned to good use for irrigation; so a series of green oases marks the northern base of the Kuen Lun and the southern of the Tian Shan, contrasting sharply with the expanse of brown, shifting dust and sand elsewhere, and defining the two great trade routes of the country. These meet at **Kashgar**, a walled town that has become an important trading centre, which stands in the midst of a rich oasis, and commands routes by the Terek and other passes across the Pamirs to Western Turkistan.

Two other important places, on oases on the southern route, are **Yarkand**, a great market for live stock and wool, and **Khotan**, where silk and leather are manufactured. South of Khotan the Kuen Lun are rich in gold, and south of Yarkand in **jade**—an ornamental stone which was a very important article of trade in the Middle Ages, and is still in request in China and Japan.

## THE PLATEAU OF MONGOLIA.

THIS falls into two natural regions: (1) The Desert of Gobi, which occupies most of Mongolia, and extends into Eastern Turkistan; (2) the low plateau of Dzungaria. Politically it forms part of the Chinese Empire.

**The Desert of Gobi.**—This is a high, arid region; but, though much of it is a sandy waste in the west, and gravel or barren rock in the east, there are grassy tracts where large flocks of camels, horses, and sheep are reared. It forms a great natural obstacle to trade between China and Siberia, but is crossed by a few regular caravan routes. One of these leads from Peking to Urga for Kiakhta and Irkutsk, and others to Dzungaria.