

seems however to have been a sort of platform about 3 m. up from the ground. The material of which it is constructed is sun-dried brick, of the same kind as that still employed in the country; that is to say the bricks were prepared by being pressed into a square hollow wooden mould, and then taken out and dried in the sun. The skeleton of the tower consists of separate series of beams and posts arranged horizontally, radially, and concentrically, thus materially strengthening the structure. In places the radial beams project fully a meter beyond the wall of the tower. Faggots too placed horizontally were also employed as building material. At the bottom of the tower the bricks for a depth of 3 dm. are coloured red; these consist of thin tiles measuring 20 × 25 cm. A closer examination revealed that they are as soft and brittle as the sun-dried bricks, and consequently very different in point of quality from those we found at the three detached houses. It may be that red was the natural colour of the deposit from which the clay was obtained; it may be also that the bricks were only insufficiently burned. At the very top of the tower there is another similar belt of red tiling, together with some charcoal, showing that a fire had been made on the summit. Very likely this was kindled by a post keeping watch on the tower at some troublous period, when the approach of a hostile force would be announced to the inhabitants by means of signal fires. But it is difficult to make out satisfactorily what purpose it was these towers served. Their irregular positions preclude us from looking upon them as *potajs* of the kind that we find at the present day on the road between Kaschgar and Chotan. Nor may we assume that the tower A (say) is the last surviving portion of a former town-wall of Lâu-lan, the rest of which has disappeared, for if that were the case, we should surely have been able to discover yet other fragments or traces of the wall. It may be said that as a rule there was a tower beside each village, and the most obvious and natural explanation of its purpose is to suppose that it served as the outlook and watch-tower of the inhabitants. If, for example, a fire were lighted on the tower of the village that lay farthest east, it would be at once observed from the other towers, and the entire country would be simultaneously warned of the approach of danger and could prepare to defend itself. This seems to me more probable than any other explanation. When I visited the place I did indeed wonder whether the tower might not be a *stupa* of the kind that is found in other parts of East Turkestan, like those, for instance, which Stein describes. An examination which I began into the interior structure of the tower led however to no positive result. After pulling down two or three pieces of wall that threatened to fall in upon us, we excavated a sort of well 2 m. deep down into the body of the tower, but it was solid throughout; nor could we perceive anything that looked like an entrance, or an interior stairway, or apertures in the side. The impression left upon me was that the tower had been built solely for the purpose of commanding a wide prospect over the tops of the highest trees of the poplar forests in the locality, for these were the sole obstacles to see over in that extraordinarily flat country, where even undulations of the surface do not exist. And how vastly different the view which then presented itself from the summit of that watch-tower from the scene which meets the eye at the present day! Then the country was dotted with lively villages, an active traffic rolled along the great highway, and there were green forests, waving fields of kamisch, and wide expanses of