

The bodies did not seem to have lain in coffins. We found the remains lying all anyhow under their protection of boards. Possibly the grave had been robbed in ancient times, though the boarding suggested that this was not so. We left behind a number of fragmentary skulls in poor condition, but took away everything else, including three skulls.

A SINGLE GRAVE

Two of our boatmen discovered another grave on the top of a quite small *mesa* at the eastern foot of the big one.

Leaving the mass-grave to the peace we had so heartlessly and violently disturbed, we went down to the solitary resting-place; and as I saw that there would be no more paddling that day, I ordered camp to be pitched just to the south-west of grave no. 2.

The small *mesa* with the single grave ran from north-east to south-west. It was only 12.7 by 3.8 m. Its summit was 9 m above the level of the water and 7.5 m above the surrounding ground. A post of tamarisk wood stood on it. This could not be natural, for the tops of *mesas* are always bare and sterile. (Fig. 14).

The clay of this *mesa* was almost as hard as brick. At a depth of 0.7 m the diggers struck a wooden lid. On being exposed it was seen to consist of two very well-preserved boards 1.82 m in length. The breadth of the lid was 0.52 m at the head and 0.45 at the foot. The thickness of the boards was 1½ inches. The head lay towards the north-east. The shape of the coffin itself was very characteristic of that watery region. It was just like an ordinary canoe, with the bow and stern sawn off and replaced by vertical cross-boards.

As the two boards forming the lid were lifted we saw only a piece of felt in which the corpse had been shrouded, and which hid it completely from head to foot. The shroud was so brittle that it crumbled to dust at a touch. We removed the part that concealed the head, and now saw that it was a lady whom death had surprised young. Loving hands had wrapped her and borne her to the peaceful mound within which she was to rest for about 2,000 years, till the children of an age then far distant should wake her from her long sleep.

The skin of the face was like hard parchment, but its shape and features were not changed by time. She lay with eyelids closed over eye-balls that had sunk in hardly at all. About her lips played a smile that the centuries had not extinguished, that rendered the mysterious being still more appealing and attractive. But she did not betray the secrets of her past; and her memories of the changing life of Lou-lan, the spring green about the lakes, river-trips by boat and canoe, she had taken with her to the grave.

She had doubtless seen the garrison of Lou-lan march out to battle against Huns