

the salt springs of Āltmish-bulak, before they could be made to face a succession of long and difficult marches over absolutely unknown ground. Incessant toil in the waterless desert, with constant exposure to its icy winds, had exhausted the Loplik labourers, hardy as they were and pleased with their rewards. My men, too, were badly in need of a short rest before that venture. An immediate return to our base L.A. was therefore inevitable. Coming back to the *castrum* from our successful exploration at L.E., I was able to use the remainder of daylight for clearing the slight layers of refuse near the north gate with the result already recorded.

But the same evening there broke upon us from the north-east the season's first 'Burān' or sandstorm. Raging with full fury all through the night as well as through the forenoon of the next day it rendered rest and work equally impossible. Obstructed by the ancient walls of the *castrum*, the storm developed increased violence within it, where our bivouac lay, and set up regular whirlwinds of sand. They frustrated all attempts to keep fires alight as a protection against the icy blasts and caused us to pass a miserable night in darkness that could almost be felt. The Loplks, though accustomed to face Burāns in their riverside haunts, were much impressed by the violence of this sandstorm encountered in the open of the absolute desert, and attributed it to the wrath of the dead we had disturbed. Sādiq, the young fellow who had so bravely handled their bodies, was particularly overcome by fear. Imagination, aiding the effect of the foul air he had inhaled when opening the coffins, brought on a violent attack of vomiting which greatly frightened not only him but his comrades.

Night passed within *castrum*.

After so trying a night we all greeted the morning with relief, though it brought only semi-darkness. No attempt could be made under such conditions to visit and explore some graves that Afrāz-gul on his first reconnaissance had noticed on the top of a Mesa about two miles off to the north-north-east, together with what he took for the remains of a much-decayed watch-tower. The examination of these remains, marked L.Q. on the map (No. 32. A. 3), had accordingly to be left for a later occasion.¹⁴ Nor was it possible in the dense fog prevailing to take the intended additional photographs of the *castrum*. The early part of the return march to our Lou-lan base camp, in accordance with the previously settled programme, was much impeded by the atmospheric conditions. Had the sandstorm faced us, instead of sweeping at our back, the march would have been stopped altogether. As it was, we found great difficulty in keeping to the intended direction, and constant halts were called for to collect the line of straggling men. Finally I was obliged to make them hold on to a long string in order to prevent any one losing company and straying away into the sand-swept waste.

March in sandstorm.

It was reassuring to come upon the ancient river-bed previously referred to; and shortly after this the violence of the storm somewhat abated, so that we were able, after a five hours' trying tramp, to sight the Mesa on which stands the cemetery L.C., which had been my goal. Three further hours of hard work at that place, though the diggers were worn out and inclined to get out of hand, enabled me to complete the examination of the grave-pits. The rapidly clearing atmosphere once more enabled me to see the landmark of the big Stūpa of L.A. Guided by it, we regained our base by dusk, all of us in a condition of indescribable dirt and my troop of Loplks wellnigh exhausted by the toils of this desert expedition.

Return to base camp L.A.

OBJECTS FOUND AT L.E. SITE

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| L.E. 01. Bronze arrow-head, solid triangular, of type L.J. 01. Length $1\frac{1}{8}$ ". | grey, 04 purple; both with median ridge. Lengths $1\frac{1}{4}$ ", $2\frac{7}{16}$ ". |
| L.E. 02. Fr. of bronze arrow-head, of acute rhombic section. $\frac{5}{8}$ " \times $\frac{3}{8}$ " \times $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Pl. XXIV. | L.E. 05. Jasper arrow-head, leaf-shaped; greenish-grey. Well made. Length $2\frac{1}{2}$ ", gr. width $\frac{5}{8}$ ". Pl. XXII. |
| L.E. 03-4. Two chert blades, long, narrow; 03 light | L.E. 06. Jasper point, rather unsymmetrically made. Bluish-green stone. Length 1", base $\frac{7}{16}$ ". |

¹⁴ See below, Chap. xx. sec. iv.