

of a map the men could not have struggled through to Kaurük-bulak, the nearest of the salt springs in the Eastern Kuruk-tāgh, in less than three more days, and their animals must certainly have perished before that. Nor could ice have been found by them in November at Kaurük-bulak or at any of the other salt springs farther north (Map No. 32. A, B. 2) which Lāl Singh explored in the following winter.

Probable
doom of
rogues.

It was thus highly probable that the ill-fated party of thieves had met in this inexorable waste with an end involving far harder retribution than human justice would have inflicted for their misdeed. Abdurrahīm, when accompanying Lāl Singh in January, 1914, to Kaurük-bulak and the northern springs previously known only to a few daring hunters of wild camels, could find no trace of their passage. But we came upon their footprints again on the marches of the next two days, and followed them right through to the point where their track emerged on 'land' after crossing the great bay of the salt-encrusted sea-bed. At two places we found traces of their having camped or halted, and wondered whether the poor rogues had been troubled by any misgivings as to the fate which was awaiting them.

OBJECTS FOUND AT FOOT AND ON SLOPES OF MESA, SIX MILES EAST OF CAMP C. ci

C. ci. 01. Iron dagger blade and tang, with broken cross-piece at top of tang. Edges blunt; point sharp; cross-piece prob. part of guard. Rusted but strong. Length of whole $9\frac{1}{8}$ ", gr. width of blade $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Length of tang 3", thickness $\frac{5}{16}$ " \times $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Pl. XXIII.

C. ci. 02. Link of iron snaffle-bit (broken), with fr. of other link rusted on to it. Ring at end corroded away for nearly half its circumference. Section roughly sq. Corroded but hard. Cf. L.A. 034 (Pl. XXI); T. XXII. f. 01 (Pl. XLVII). Length $3\frac{1}{4}$ ", thickness of rod c. $\frac{3}{16}$ ", diam. of outer ring c. $1\frac{1}{4}$ ". Pl. XXIII.

C. ci. 03. Iron skewer with ring handle, as *Ser.* ii. p. 775, T. XII. a. 0026 (Pl. LIV); see also *ibid.*, T.W. 005, 007; T. XVIII. ii. 9. b; XXVIII. 0019. Broken in two, much corroded. Length $2\frac{1}{2}$ ", thickness c. $\frac{3}{16}$ ", diam. of loop $1\frac{1}{4}$ ". Pl. XXIII.

C. ci. 04. Solid copper ball, pierced with rectang. hole. Well preserved. Diam. $\frac{3}{4}$ ", hole $\frac{9}{16}$ " \times $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Pl. XXIII.

C. ci. 05. Copper hook of graceful curve, spatulate at hookless lower end, on back of which is stud. Recurved end narrower, but slightly thickened. Cast. Corroded through at one edge, or perhaps air-hole in casting; but condition generally good. Cf. *Anc. Khotan*, i. p. 464, D.K. 001; ii. Pl. LI. $2"$ \times $\frac{3}{8}"$ (broad end) $\frac{3}{16}"$ (narrow end). Pl. XXIII.

C. ci. 06. Small fr. of iron, corroded. $\frac{3}{4}"$ \times $\frac{7}{16}"$.

C. ci. 07. Fr. of marble (?), roughly cuboid, veined grey in dark pink and buff. $\frac{3}{4}"$ \times $\frac{5}{8}"$ \times $\frac{7}{8}"$.

C. ci. 08. Glass bead, translucent pale green, roughly rectang. with irregularly chamfered sides. $\frac{1}{3}\frac{3}{2}"$ \times $\frac{3}{8}"$ \times $\frac{1}{4}"$. Pl. XXIII.

SECTION IV.—THE 'WHITE DRAGON MOUNDS'

Probable
continua-
tion of
ancient
route.

When we reached the open plain of clay at the foot of a gentle gravel glacis where our Camp civ was pitched on the evening of March 2nd, I knew that the most difficult portion of our journey in search of the ancient 'Lou-lan route' had been left behind us. We had come upon definite indications of ancient traffic on ground where that route was likely to have emerged from the salt wastes of the dried-up sea-bed. The configuration of the land before us to the south and east left little doubt as to the line it had subsequently pursued towards its goal, the western end of the Tun-huang Limes. From what the plane-table and our mapping of 1907 showed, it seemed certain that the early Chinese pioneers of that route had only to keep to the eastern shore of the dried-up sea, as it stretched away to the south in order to reach the mouth of the wide valley-like depression leading towards Bēsh-toghrak and the terminal basin of the Su-lo-ho (Map No. 32. c, d. 4). However far into this depression the great eastern bay of the salt-encrusted sea-bed might prove to extend—our survey of 1907 along the caravan track towards Tun-huang furnished no definite indication on this point—it was clear, from what I had then observed along the southern edge of the depression, that desert vegetation sufficient for grazing *en route*, and possibly water, might be expected also along the northern edge. It was there, skirting the foot of the barren hill range which from the north