

be the price of the mandarin's luxury if he and his carpet were of our manufacture! Rugs of raw silk, not fine in any way, and about five feet by nine, cost us \$12 each; rather dear, we thought. But if ever there was soreness of heart caused by Khotanese prices there came a day which salved and healed it all, a day when I bought a mass of old paper, mere scraps are many of the pieces, but *so old*, and so miraculously preserved with their messages from the dead!

Dead twelve hundred years ago are they who wrote the strange characters and fashioned the strange clay heads whose images you see in illustrations here. Forgotten are the societies to which those dead belonged. Buried in the desert sands are the cities in which those societies dwelt. Choked and obliterated are the streams which gave to those cities the water of life. Can the busy, noisy present spare a moment to hear the story of the silent past?

In 1895-96 Sven Hedin discovered ruins of ancient dwellings in the Taklamakan desert of Eastern (or Chinese) Turkestan. These ruins are in no sense impressive from the architect's point of view, being quite similar to the ordinary Turkestan dwelling of to-day—plaster or adobe around wooden frames. But historically they are of prime interest. For testimony is thus given that civilisation once existed in regions which are now quite uninhabitable because they are completely without water. As the distance of the ruins from present watercourses is too great to justify the supposition of irrigation ditches stretching from the one to the other, we are