

placed face to face, so that the writing of both was concealed. Next, the address was written upon the outside of the concave sheet of the unique letter. Finally, a string was run through a hole in the concave sheet, and brought around through slots to a square depression such as that of D in the convex sheet. There it was sealed with clay, and stamped with a seal like those of the illustrations on the cover of this volume, and was ready for the postman.

According to Stein, the area covered by the ruins of the Niya River site, as he calls it, is eleven miles north and south, and four and a half east and west. I found two houses over two miles south of any seen by Stein, and a large group surrounded by a broad area of pottery about three miles north. This makes the length of the oasis at least sixteen miles. The extreme dimensions of modern Niya are given on Stein's map as eight miles by three. That is, the modern oasis is only a third, or at most half, as large as its Buddhist predecessor of the early part of the Christian era. In more ancient times the cultivated area may have been still larger. Far out in the sand, six miles beyond the most remote ruins, I found some bits of slag from furnaces, and the two meal-stones held by the camel-man at page 257. The guide, old Abdullah, had brought us to see some sort of brick fireplace which he had discovered when he visited the place a year before on a treasure hunt. He described the location with great precision, and led us to a spot where we found traces of his camp, but he could not find the fireplace. We searched in all directions for two hours; and while he was away, out of sight, I found the stones and the slag, which convinced me that the man had not been lying. He searched