

so high a degree of civilization, if they lived as the present inhabitants do, with practically no agriculture. On the one hand, we have the unequivocal statement that "there are few cultivated fields. The country relies on neighboring kingdoms for cereal and agricultural products. It produces jade, . . . and the people manufacture weapons." This may mean little or much. One might say with perfect truth, "England has but little cultivated land. It relies on America and Australia for grain. It produces coal, and the people manufacture iron and steel." This would not mean that there was no agriculture in England. On the other hand, we have the mention of people sent "to cultivate rich and productive land." Again, "seed-corn" and "many farmsteads" are mentioned. Neither Hedin nor I found any trace of canals or of ancient fields, which indeed would hardly be expected. He, however, found some wheat straw, suggesting that agriculture had been carried on; and I found some *eleagnus* trees, and a considerable number of large trunks of the white or cultivated poplar, lying with part of their roots where they had fallen. The timber of the larger houses is white poplar, so the tree must have been common. It never grows wild in the Lop basin, and is sensitive to salt. Its presence is unequivocal evidence that irrigation, and hence agriculture, was carried on continuously in one place for periods at least long enough to allow of the growth of trees two feet in diameter. On the whole, it seems safe to say that, although the river was probably so saline as to make agriculture difficult, conditions were distinctly more favorable than at present. In a case such as this, there is danger that an author's prepossessions may determine his