

arid. This does not mean that the climate two hundred years ago was drier than now, — it may have been moister, — but at this time the *change* from the moister conditions of mediæval times to the drier conditions of the present produced its maximum effect. The direct cause of the disappearance of the people from the villages of Turfan was the raids of plundering Mongol nomads from the surrounding mountains. To-day there are no Mongols in the mountains. The country is too dry. The nearest are at Kara-Sher, a hundred and fifty miles away. In mediæval times, however, when there was more moisture and vegetation, the mountains appear to have afforded homes to bands of Mongol nomads. So long as they prospered, they lived, apparently, on terms of comparative peace with their neighbors in the plain. When the change from the mediæval climate to that of to-day began to take place, the nomads must have been the first to feel the pinch. Life, we may suppose, became hard as their cattle and flocks began to dwindle, and the bold mountaineers began to plunder their weaker neighbors in the villages. The plain gradually lost a large part of its settled inhabitants, and there was no chance for it to recover while the Mongols remained. The Mongols more than almost any other race despise agriculture. Therefore, though they occupied the plain, they did not cultivate it. They still presumably migrated from the plain to the mountains in summer: and ceased to do so only when the mountains became so dry as to be useless for flocks. Then they migrated farther, perhaps dispossessing some other tribe; and Turfan was left open once more to settlement by Chanto immigrants from the Lop basin. The depopulation was