

both traverse the open plain at first, but later enter gorges, one of which, along the Atrek, is said to be so deep and narrow as to afford magnificent scenery and to be impassable for caravans.

THE KUCHAN EARTHQUAKE.

In connection with the earth-movements by which the Meshed basin has been differentiated from Kopet Dagh and Binalud Kuh it is interesting to note that earthquakes are still common in this region, and are most violent at Kuchan, where the Meshed fault ends in a flexure. In November, 1893, an unusually severe shock destroyed Kuchan, and is said to have killed from 5,000 to 7,000 people. So complete was the destruction that in 1904 the place had almost lost the semblance of a town and was fast becoming a mere shapeless mass of ruins. The surviving inhab-

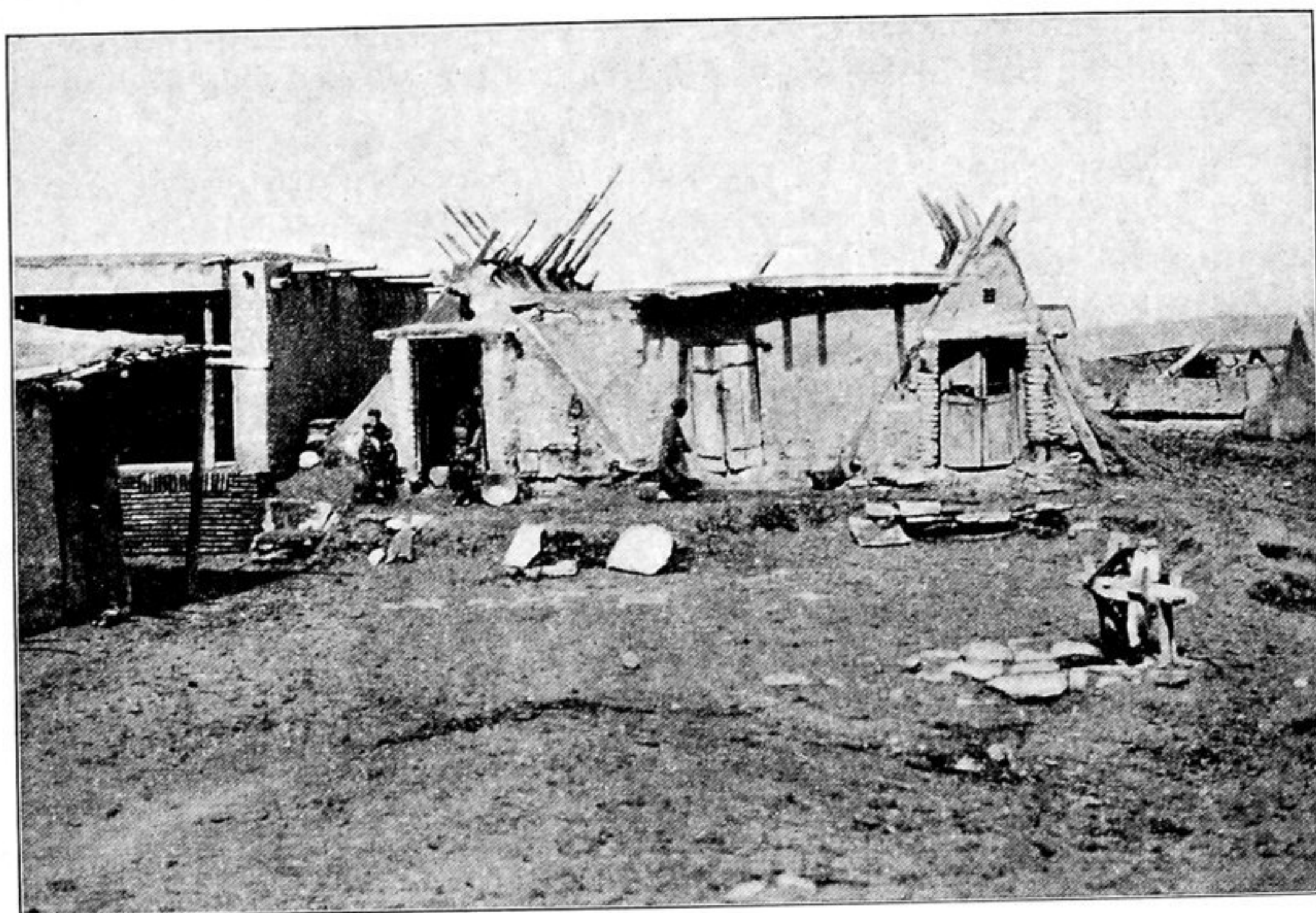


Fig. 153.—The ruins of Old Kuchan.

itants moved to a location about 10 miles farther east and have there built a new town, modeled after the Russian pattern, with broad streets shaded with numerous trees. Earthquakes still occur very frequently, but are reported to be much less violent at New Kuchan than at the old city. A few of the people of Old Kuchan refused to leave the ruins after the great earthquake of 1893. Digging among the shattered houses, they pulled out old timbers and set them up to form houses which should be both rain-proof and earthquake-proof. At first the timbers were merely set up A-shape against a ridge-pole, like roofs without walls, and the interstices were filled with bushes and the whole plastered with mud. When a more pretentious house was desired, a second structure of the same sort was erected parallel to the first, and the intervening space was walled in and bridged with a flat roof. Old Kuchan consists to-day of a heap of ruins on which are irregularly scattered earthquake-proof houses containing from one to three rooms (fig. 153).