

existing conditions, but it is highly improbable. Ancient Neh is one of many places which are hard to understand unless we suppose that some radical change of conditions has taken place.

#### THE MERV OASIS.

In this connection two other places farther north in Transcaspia deserve mention. One of these is the ancient city and oasis of Merv, which I have described in a short report which will be published among the archeological reports of the Pumpelly Expedition to Turkestan for the year 1904. A study of the distribution and extent of the ruins which cover the oasis indicates that in antiquity the extent of land under cultivation and the number of inhabitants were not only greater than at present, but were greater than would at present be possible, even if all the water of the Murg-ab River, which sustains the oasis, were utilized with as much care as is employed upon the experiment station of the Imperial Domain. It is difficult to account for this unless the water-supply was formerly greater.

#### BAL KUWI AND ANAU.

The other Transcaspian example is at Anau, near Askhabad. The main features of this place, both modern and ancient, will be described in the forthcoming archeological reports of the Pumpelly Expedition. At Bal Kuwi, in the desert about 10 miles north-northwest of Anau, lie the ruins of an ancient mud village. The main site consists of a mound perhaps 15 feet high, very broad and flat, and covered with bits of pottery. Where not buried in sand-dunes the surface of the mound shows the rectangular outlines of houses, the roofs of which have disappeared, while the walls have been buried to the top in the pink sand of the desert, and are thus preserved with their tops flush with the surface. Excavation shows that these houses are built without a trace of wood. On the floor of each room is a foot or two of loose clay, half of it in the form of sun-dried bricks, which appears to be the débris of the roof. Apparently the houses were made entirely of mud, with domed roofs, like those of modern Persia. The total number of houses in the main village may be estimated at from 75 to 150, while half a mile away, at Telbeng Berkoh, are 20 more of the same kind. The date of the ruins is unknown, and so far as the style of architecture and the kinds of pottery which are found in the houses are concerned, they may belong to any epoch within the last two thousand years. The Turkoman gray-beards have no tradition on the subject and merely say that when they came to the country fifty years ago the ruins presented the same appearance as now. The inhabitants of the ruins were probably tillers of the soil, for the houses are permanent structures, and their number, at least 75, is so great that they can hardly have been occupied by a pastoral people. At present there are three wells at Bal Kuwi, and 20 families of Turkomans camp there for three months in the spring. They say that there is grass enough for nine months, but as it gets dry they move away. Even allowing for understatement by the Turkomans, it is hardly probable that 75 and probably more families could be permanently supported by flocks in a region which the present inhabitants consider only sufficient to support 20 families nine months out of each year. If the inhabitants of Bal Kuwi were not pastoral, they