

the ruined building. Beyond a small room which seemed to have served as an antechamber for attendants, there adjoined a large apartment. It was a room twenty-six feet square with a raised platform of plaster running round three of its sides, very much as in the 'Aiwan' or hall of any modern Turkistan house of some pretension. Remains of eight posts placed in a square indicated a central area over which a raised roof had been arranged to admit light and air just as in large modern houses. Elsewhere, too, the disposition and construction of the ancient dwellings with which I soon became so familiar at this site showed a striking similarity to the domestic arrangements still prevailing in the present oases.

Time and the erosive force of the winds had left little more of the timber-and-wattle walls than broken posts, and the protecting layer of sand was only about two feet deep. All the more delighted was I to find that even this had sufficed to preserve in a more or less legible condition the three score of tablets that were found covering the platform along the southern side of the hall. In some places they were rising in small closely packed heaps, evidently just as left by the last occupants. But a considerable number of other wooden documents showed plainly by their position that they had been disturbed, apparently not long after the building had been deserted. Thus some were found resting on a large piece of strongly woven matting which must have formed part of a roof over the central area. Others turned up near a small open fire-place found beneath the fallen matting. They owed their excellent preservation obviously to this safe covering.

The great number of the wooden documents and the