

or fruit-trees could be traced almost invariably near these houses (Fig. 45). Where dunes had afforded protection, the gaunt, bleached trunks in these orchards, chiefly mulberry trees, still rose as high as ten to twelve feet.

But what at first fascinated me most was the absolute barrenness and the wide vistas of the desert around me. The ruins at this end of the site lie beyond the zone of living tamarisk scrub. Like the open sea, the expanse of yellow dunes lay before me, with nothing to break their wavy monotony but the bleached trunks of trees or rows of splintered posts marking houses which rose here and there above the sandy crests. They often curiously suggested the picture of a wreck reduced to the mere ribs of its timber. There was the fresh breeze, too, and the great silence of the ocean.

I must forgo any attempt at detailed description of the results here yielded by a fortnight of exacting but fruitful work. Yet a particularly rich haul of ancient documents may claim mention were it only on account of the characteristic conditions under which it was discovered. I was clearing a large residence (Fig. 48) in a group of ruins on the extreme west of the site. It had on my previous visit been traced too late for complete exploration, and I had ever since kept it, as it were, faithfully *in petto*. Fine pieces of architectural wood carving brought to light near a large central hall soon proved that the dwelling must have been that of a well-to-do person. Finds of Kharoshthi records of respectable size, including a wooden tablet fully three feet long, in what appeared to have been an ante-room, suggested his having been an official of some consequence.

The hope of finding more in his office was soon justified