

ous Mesa fully a hundred feet high and commanding a distant view over the desolate waste around. The elevated position, together with the absolute aridity of the climate since ancient times, had assured here a truly remarkable state of conservation to the bodies of men and women found in graves outside what was evidently a look-out post occupied by indigenous Lou-lan people. Several of the bodies were wonderfully well conserved, together with their burial deposits (Figs. 66, 67). The peaked felt caps decorated with big feathers and other trophies of the chase, the arrow-shafts by their side, the coarse but strong woollen garments, the neatly woven small baskets holding the food for the dead, etc., all indicated a race of semi-nomadic herdsmen and hunters, just as the Han Annals describe the Lou-lan people when the Chinese found them on the first opening of the route through the desert.

It was a strange sensation to look down on figures which but for the parched skin seemed like those of men asleep, and thus to feel brought face to face with people who inhabited and, no doubt, were content with this dreary Lop region two thousand years ago. The characteristics of the men's heads showed close affinity to that *Homo Alpinus* type which, as the anthropometrical materials collected by me have proved, still remains the prevailing element in the racial constitution of the present population of the Tarim basin. The distant view gained from this elevated point made it certain that we were here near the eastern extremity of the ground once reached by life-giving water from the river. Beyond to the east there lay the boundless expanse of shimmering salt, marking the dried-up Lop sea-bed.

Apart from their direct interest, the discoveries briefly