

CHAPTER XX

DISCOVERY OF DATED DOCUMENTS

CHRISTMAS DAY was spent in clearing a group of ruined structures situated about half a mile to the north-east of my camp, in which I could without difficulty recognise the remains of a square temple cella and of an adjoining dwelling-place, probably a monastic habitation. These ruins had suffered badly from erosion, which, in the unprotected soil immediately to the north and east of them, had produced broad depressions to a depth of about 20 feet below the original ground level. The ruins, owing to this lowering of the surrounding ground, seemed now to occupy a raised tongue of land quite clear of dunes, and nowhere retained more than two or three feet of covering sand. Above this there rose the splintered short stumps of posts that once formed the framework of wattle and plaster walls, their rows clearly marking the original division of the rooms. The exposed condition of these ruins had, of course, attracted the visits of "treasure-seeking" parties, including some Turdi had personally conducted in former years, and the débris of plaster, timber, ancient pottery, &c., scattered about on the surface plainly told of their burrowings.

Notwithstanding the damage thus caused, there remained some very curious relics to reward my careful clearing. In the western part of the quadrangular passage that enclosed the cella we found two painted panels of wood, showing on both sides representations of sacred personages and undoubtedly the votive offerings of some