

part by the slope of a high conical sand-hill, and hence comparatively well preserved.

Close to it I pitched my camp, in a position conveniently central for the exploration of the scattered ruins. The ground in the immediate vicinity seemed greatly eroded and, where not actually covered by dunes, displayed in profusion large pieces of broken pottery, withered trunks of poplars and garden trees, as well as much decayed remains of ancient timber that splintered and broke almost as soon as lifted. Even more than this *débris*, the fragments of stone that covered the bare loess, evidently the remains of larger pieces that must have been brought here from the river-bed near the foot of the mountains for use in the houses, attested the destructive force of the desert winds and of the extremes of climate. As I retired to my first night's rest among these silent witnesses of ancient habitations, I wondered with some apprehension whether Ibrahim's story would prove true, and how much of the other precious documents on wood which he declared to have left behind at the time of his "prospecting" visit were still waiting to be recovered by me.