

used as a storage-room, became evident when in succession there emerged from it a bow of roughly-carved tamarisk wood, about 3 ft. long; a curved piece of willow-wood, 3 ft. long and about 6 in. broad in the middle, which looks as if it had once formed a section of an oblong shield; a donkey's saddle-tree; and, besides other broken shafts, a stout walking-stick of apple-wood. The photograph reproduced in Plate IX shows these objects with other ancient wooden implements from ruins subsequently excavated at this site.

Arms and
implements
from N. viii.

The bow was still crisp and capable of use. The wood of what I take to be the section of an oblong shield was remarkably light and tough, about half an inch thick for about 2 feet of its length, and then thickening to $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. in the top part, where it curves inwards so as to offer better protection against downward strokes. Along the inner side edge it bore holes, no doubt meant for fastenings that joined it to another section. The donkey's saddle-tree, made of mulberry-wood, is in excellent preservation, and of practically the same pattern as that still in use throughout Eastern Turkestan. Of the two inscribed tablets found here one is the covering-tablet or envelope of a rectangular document, while the other (N. viii. 1) resembles a label and shows three columns, each with five short lines of Kharoṣṭhī which end with numerical figures and evidently contain some list. All the rooms so far described formed a small block by themselves, separated from the rest of the extant portions of the house by a passage about 4 feet broad. An arrangement similar to this is seen in the ground-plans of the dwellings N. iv and N. vii (see Plates XXXI, XXXII), and may be found reproduced with some modifications in modern residences of the country².

Clearing of
room N. vii.

Next to this block, but south of the passage, lay the room marked N. vii., which formed a kind of ante-chamber to the central hall. It measured 20 ft. square, and showed a raised platform of plaster 3 ft. 8 in. broad and 13 in. high along its north and west sides. By a door 2 ft. 9 in. broad and 6 ft. 4 in. high, which is seen in the photograph (Plate VII), it communicated with the hall. Another door, slightly wider, but only 5 ft. 4 in. high, formed the entrance from the passage westwards. The single wooden leaf which once closed it was found in good preservation, and still on its hinges, leaning against the south wall of N. vii., just as when it had been last opened. Its top is just visible in the photograph (Plate VII). A little to the east of the centre of the room two round posts were found, 10 ft. high, which had probably supported a raised portion of the roof serving as a skylight; for just between the two posts the floor showed a small oblong area sunk 6 in. below the general surface, which had undoubtedly been used as a fireplace. The smoke rising from the latter would thus find above a convenient exit. Within this fireplace lay several small torn pieces of the same fine coloured rug, which I shall have to describe presently in connexion with the central hall. On the west platform, and close to the door, were found the under-tablet of a rectangular document, broken into two pieces but otherwise well preserved, and a carefully-turned stick, probably of sandal-wood, about $11\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, bearing an ivory ferule at one end and fitted also at the other for a ferule or knob of some kind. The small hole bored through the stick below the ferule does not help to indicate its original purpose.

Central hall
of N. iii.

The central hall, the excavation of which had cost so much time and labour, was found to have been cleared completely by the last dwellers or visitors of any movable objects of practical value it might have once contained. Yet the architectural and decorative details revealed in it formed some compensation for the trouble taken. I have referred already to the four massive beams which stretched over the longer side of the hall and once supported

² Comp. the plan of the house of a well-to-do Khotanese which served MM. Dutreuil de Rhins and Grenard as winter

quarters; *Mission D. de Rhins*, ii. p. 99.