

which, on the first day of my return to the site, I had extracted three tablets. Its badly eroded remains, which also showed traces of recent burrowing, refused to yield up more than some wooden mouse-traps, carved locks, and similar domestic utensils. But a careful inspection of its surroundings, as shown by the panorama in Plate III., revealed some features of special interest. Only some sixty yards off there still stood a square of dead mulberry trees, raising their trunks up to ten feet and more, which had once cast their shade over a tank still marked by a depression. The stream from which the canal once feeding it must have taken off was not far to seek; for behind the nearest ridge of sand to the west there still lay a foot-bridge about ninety feet long, stretched across an unmistakable ancient river-bed.

The extant parts of this bridge were formed by two sets of roughly smoothed Terek trunks, each over forty feet long and sufficiently broad for foot traffic. Of the trestles which had carried the bridge two still stood upright, half buried in the dune that hid the eastern bridge-head. The trunks lay stretched out in a straight line over the slopes and the bottom of a steeply eroded Nullah some fifteen feet deep—a strange and almost uncanny memento of the distant period when a lively stream had filled the depression. Beyond the left bank stretched shrivelled remains of orchards for upwards of two hundred yards to where deep banks seemed to mark a large square reservoir. For over two miles to the north-west we could follow the traces of the ancient river-bed, in places completely covered up by drift sand, but emerging again at short intervals with steep-cut banks amongst low dunes and patches of dead forest. At times the traces were so faint that without the plain indication of the bearing furnished by the Nullah near the bridge it would have been scarcely possible to recognize them.

Finally, the winding bed seemed to join a broad valley-like depression stretching far away, with living poplars and tamarisks. There the Surveyor on an earlier reconnaissance had come across steep banks like those of a river. From the top of a sand ridge some fifty feet high the view