

closely resembles that of the modern cheap Japanese rug; but no detailed description can be given here. It was the first ancient specimen of a true pile carpet I had so far been able to trace in Chinese Turkestan, and my satisfaction at its discovery was not small. Yet I had scarcely had time to examine it closely before a find scarcely less important for the history of ancient fabrics rewarded the scraping of a piece of ground, adjoining the north side of the ruin and showing no extant remains of superstructure. It was a small bale of yellow silk, lightly rolled and evidently unused, which had become so dry and brittle that when first lifted it broke in two (Fig. 116, 3). Its complete width was just under nineteen inches, its diameter over two.

It was strange thus to light at the very start upon so well preserved a relic of that ancient silk trade from China which, as many considerations had long before led me to believe, moved westwards during the early centuries of our era along the very route marked by this ruined settlement. Small pieces of silk in various colours, undoubtedly shreds from garments, turned up plentifully among the rubbish both at this and some other ruins of the site. But this find alone could show us the actual form in which that most famous product of the silk-weaving Seres used to travel far away to the classical West. It was useless to speculate why it had been left behind when the building was deserted by its last dwellers, or how it had escaped those who during a succeeding period were likely to have searched the abandoned settlement for any objects of value or practical use. But all doubt about the width of the silk being the regular one adopted for China's early export trade was set at rest when, on my return to Miran, I recovered from one of the ancient ruins of that site a large piece of silk preserving its original edges and also measuring accurately nineteen inches across.

I cannot describe here in detail a number of small implements such as spoons, eating-sticks, fragments of dishes in bronze or lacquered ware, which also emerged from among the débris of the first ruin cleared. Nor can I find space for more than a reference to the very abundant