

CHAPTER XXXV

DISCOVERY OF ART REMAINS

THE opportune arrival of the camels which I had sent back to our half-way depot for the men's reserve supplies and ice, allowed me to arrange for shifting camp to the western group of ruins by the evening of December 23rd. As the distance was only about eight miles I was able to use the whole forenoon for getting the remains we had cleared buried again by the men for the sake of protection. I myself was busy in taking a careful plan and elevation of the Stupa, which with its height still rising to over thirty feet seemed to stand guard over the scene of our past labours (Fig. 112). The task was not easy, owing to the destruction of surface features caused by erosion and some digging operations of Hedin's men. But in the end I succeeded in determining the dimensions of the three square bases, of the octagonal drum and the dome, all in masonry of sun-dried bricks, which made up this orthodox Buddhist structure.

It was in the course of this examination that I came upon a metal tape-measure lying on the second lowest base just where Hedin had forgotten it in 1901. Of course, there was nothing specially remarkable in its having been left undisturbed on the ruined mound which no human being was likely to have visited in the few years' interval, and where it was out of reach of drift sand and its corrosive action. So when over two years later I had the pleasure of returning the little instrument to its distinguished owner at an informal dinner party of the Royal Geographical Society in London, it caused me some quiet amusement to find that the incident, which to me on