

the spot had seemed rather trivial, supplied matter for newspaper paragraphs.

The tramp to our new camp constantly crossing the ridges and furrows of Yardangs was trying for us all. The labourers were burdened with articles of supplies and baggage which the few available camels had not sufficed to carry, while I myself felt shaken with an attack of malarial fever which the exposure and exertions of these hard days had caused to reappear with fresh force. But early on the morning of December 24th I was able to start work at a small group of ruins, including the Buddhist shrine which one of Hedin's men had accidentally discovered in 1900, and from which he himself had brought away in the following year a number of fine wood-carvings. As his visit then had been paid from the camp established at the eastern site, and had necessarily been confined to the hours available between the tramp to and fro, there was reason to hope for more spoil here. The ruins comprised the badly eroded remains of the shrine already referred to (Fig. 120), and flanking it to the north-east and south-west two larger structures which manifestly had been dwellings. The whole occupied the top of an island-like terrace over 200 feet long, and rising fully twenty-eight feet above the eroded ground immediately at its foot northward (Fig. 121).

The two dwellings which I cleared first proved of interest, mainly owing to the ease with which the constructive details of the timber and wattle walls could still be studied in several large rooms. The walls, originally ten feet high, had at some early period fallen bodily inwards, and lying flat on the floor had thus escaped erosion. Their thickness was made up to eight inches by plaster layers on either side of a wattle, which in its lower portion consisted of horizontal bundles of reeds, and higher up of a sort of tamarisk matting woven diagonally. The buildings must have been thoroughly cleared out soon after their desertion, for in spite of the excellent cover offered by the fallen walls, the 'finds,' apart from some copper coins of the Han period and rags of plain silk, wool, and felt fabrics, were confined to portions of a large cupboard constructed after a model still in common use in Turkestan oases for the storage of