

Christmas he had brought me, when the last cover was opened by the flickering light of my candle and nothing but good news emerged! As usual on such occasions of suddenly resumed touch with a distant world, sleep was slow to come to me that night, and long I lay awake vainly trying amidst my rugs and furs to forget the bitter cold and the discomfort which badly chapped fingers gave. But the absolute peace around was a comfort, and my thoughts were free to visit in turn all the places where I knew dear friends were gathered for Christmas, from Kashgar to far-away Oxford.

Next morning all glamour of his heroic performance seemed to have departed from Turdi. He looked again what he was—an honest, rather stupid and, except when on Dak duty, hopelessly sluggish fellow. But the sensation of a true red-letter day still continued for me in spite of plentiful work, and was fanned afresh by the promising results which it yielded. After finally clearing the remains of architectural wood-carving from the ruined shrine last described, I took the men by mid-day to the ruins of two closely adjoining structures about a mile away to the east-south-east. One of them, by the almost complete erosion of the ground it once occupied, had been reduced to a heap of much-splintered timber. But the remains of decorative wood-carving, including turned balusters, brackets of a small railing and panels of open screen-work, which we picked up on the exposed slopes, made it appear highly probable that a small Buddhist shrine had stood here closely related in type and date to the one previously explored.

Facing it some thirty yards off to the west was the ruin of a much larger building occupying the top of a terrace which fortunately had not been much affected by erosion (Fig. 123). Our subsequent excavation proved that the protection enjoyed by this piece of ground was due to a thick and well-consolidated layer of sheep dung which had accumulated in and around the rooms of an ancient dwelling; evidently for a considerable number of years the abandoned building had served as a shelter for the flocks of shepherds.

That the house had once been occupied by some person