

we now seemed to approach! There was no trace of earlier quarters inside, and only scanty refuse from recent occupation by wayfarers. And yet, when I had climbed to the top by a rough staircase spared from the massive walls in a corner, and looked round over all this desolation, I felt sure that I stood on a structure which had braved man and nature for many centuries past.

The view enjoyed from the top was wide and impressive. To the south I could see the scrubby depression merging in a belt of Toghrak and tamarisk jungle. Beyond there rose an absolutely bare gravel glacis towards the equally barren foot-hills of a great range far away. To the north-east four towers lit up by the sun behind us could be made out echeloned in the distance, silent guardians of a wall line which I thought I could still recognize here and there in faint streaks of brown shown up by my glasses. What a fine position, I thought, this height of the fort wall must have been for a commandant to survey his line of watch-stations, and to look out for the signals they might send along it! But how long ago was that? Those sombre, barren hills of the Kuruk-tagh, now standing out clearly again on the northern horizon, had seen wall and towers first rise, and would see their ruins finally disappear before the blasts of the ages. But it would be like asking Death itself for an answer.

Somewhere between the foot of those hills and the line of towers the old drainage of the Su-lo Ho was bound to have cut its bed westwards. But even from that commanding position I tried vainly to locate it. And yet, as our march continued across a sterile gravel plateau till the evening, I could see that the route was drawing nearer and nearer to a wide marshy basin, stretching east to west and manifestly part of the main Su-lo Ho valley.

We had been skirting its steep clay bank for a mile or so, and were approaching a roughly built tower standing near it, when I saw in the twilight a huge structure rising before me from the low ground which fringed the basin. Hurrying to inspect it before it became quite dark, I found there three palace-like halls, with a total frontage of over 440 feet, and walls of great thickness rising to