

where we had found the wood-cutter's troglodyte dwelling, and to make my way there myself with the labourers along the line of the wall. It proved a more difficult matter than I had thought under the thick veil of dust which the gale raised. Luckily we had our footprints to guide us across the gravel Sai, and then when we got among the dunes where there was much driving of sand, the remains of the wall served to direct us safely. At each tower we searched whatever remains of quarters or refuse heaps could be traced. But whether it was on account of the greater erosion to which they had been exposed on the open Sai, flat like a billiard table, or for some other reason, they proved decidedly scanty. The finds of wooden records, all fragmentary, scarcely numbered half-a-dozen. However, we picked up several well-made triangular arrow-heads in bronze and a few coins belonging to the Han period.

It was a trying day's work, and I felt heartily glad when the force of the gale abated towards the evening, and we could move to the appointed camping-place in somewhat less discomfort. The footprints of the track by which we had come from there to Tower T. XXVI. on March 27th were still perfectly distinct on the gravelly soil. It was an interesting proof, thereafter often observed in a still more striking fashion, of how little deflation and the movement of fine sand affect the surface of such ground. Nevertheless it was a relief when at last I saw the camp fires and was sure of the night's shelter and food.

The wind had now veered round to the north-west. From midnight until daybreak violent gusts of wind shook the tent, and when I stepped out of it in the morning slight snow-flakes were driving for some minutes. The atmosphere was quite murky with a fog of fine sand, very irritating to throat, eyes, and nose. We were now returning to the oasis, but before we reached it we had to pass through the bleakest and chilliest day experienced since Lop-nor. The blizzard never slackened, and cut through our warmest furs. The landscape was in lugubrious harmony. Following a deep-cut track which