

to this ruin (T. VIII.) that on April 14th I marched out my little band westwards.

The heat of the previous days had roused a violent east wind, and the atmosphere was hazy with dust. Yet as we moved along the low ridge of gravel which hides the remains of the wall, and stretches away quite straight over this barren desert soil, I was surprised to note that the footprints left as I had ridden past more than a month before, looked absolutely fresh. The gravel and coarse sand on the surface was evidently little affected even by such a succession of gales as had blown across the valley since. It was clear that, in spite of all the force of the winds, erosion, that greatest foe of ancient remains in practically rainless regions, could not exert its destructive power on the flat surface of such ground and on what was buried beneath it. I thus ceased to wonder at the remarkable state of preservation which the first two towers on this section of the wall line presented. The soil on which they stood had practically undergone no erosion, and since no undermining was possible, the winds of two thousand years had failed to shake down or seriously injure these heavy masses of brick and stamped clay.

Up to thirty feet or so they still rose, built solid on a base of over twenty feet square and tapering towards their top (Fig. 170). This had once borne a conning-room or a platform protected by a parapet; but the brickwork of the parapet had fallen, and the heavy timber of Toghrak which had been inserted to strengthen the top now lay bare. It was impossible to climb up; for these particular towers appear to have had no stairs, and the ladders or ropes which once may have given access had, of course, disappeared. On the east face of one of the towers I could still make out the holes in the brick-work which probably served as footholds. There were no remains of quarters or refuse indicating occupation near either of them. In order, probably, to command the ground better, these towers had been built on the very edge of tongues of the gravel-covered plateau, and little ravines had formed round them. If any structure less solidly built had ever adjoined them, its débris would inevitably have been