

materials, always layers of gravel and fascines, had secured greater consistency, or the direction, coinciding with the prevailing winds, and a sheltered position on lower ground had reduced the force of erosion. Elsewhere, for some reason or other, the lapse of two thousand years and the violence of the winds, which rarely cease sweeping along this great desert valley, had wrought far greater havoc, and it needed a careful scanning of the ground to discover the low continuous swelling along the line which the wall had followed. But even where the eye scarcely caught the alignment, the ends of the neatly laid reed bundles cropping out from below the gravel would supply a decisive indication; and a single stroke with the Ketman would suffice to unearth the regular 'masonry.' Tila Bai was usually my only companion on these reconnoitring rides, and grateful I felt for his keen eyes and power of intelligent observation which often enabled him to locate these faint traces of the wall from a distance.

Once we had hit the line on a particular plateau section, it was easy to follow it right through; for straight it ran in the direction of the nearest watch-station eastwards. Nor was it difficult to locate these towers, since their position had invariably been chosen with a sharp eye for the advantages of ground commanding the nearest depressions. What had lightened the task of the soldiers who once kept watch and guard here, now proved equally helpful to guide us to their ruined quarters. However much decayed some of the towers were, and however broad the marshy depressions which broke the continuity of the wall and separated us from our next goal, the mass of broken masonry almost always sufficed for a guiding landmark; so well raised above the general level of the plateaus was the ground which it occupied.

Where the extent of wall line to be watched was great and the elevation afforded by natural features of the ground inadequate for the purpose, the towers had been built very massively to heights originally of twenty-five feet or more. Here the carefully set masonry or the hard clay stamped in regular layers was generally solid enough to hold out against all vicissitudes of the ages. The original coating of