

which enclose nearly a square mile full of imposing ruined structures now scattered amidst cultivation. The areas once occupied by private dwellings have gradually been levelled into fields—a work in which irrigation deposits have doubtless aided. The massive ruins of big temples and monasteries, and of a fortified palace, are steadily being dug down by the villagers for the débris accumulated between their walls, which is much prized as manure. Old 'Khats,' *i.e.* manuscript fragments, are constantly turning up in the course of these operations, which are usually carried on during the winter months, and these used to be thrown away or utilized for papering window screens, until Russian travellers commenced to purchase such 'refuse.'

With so much destruction proceeding, and amidst such an *embarras des richesses* of remains, the archaeological exploitation of these ruins must be confronted by its own particular difficulties. I was not surprised at the number of the structures where it was impossible to distinguish the results of systematic excavation from the burrowings of manure-digging peasants. Nor was it easy to ignore the doubts of a chronological nature necessarily arising at a site which was never completely deserted, and where many of the buildings probably continued to be tenanted in one way or other long after their original use had ceased.

But in spite of these drawbacks the ruined town had proved a very rich mine, and I only wondered how the means might be found to assure the complete clearing of it before it was too late. To me personally, as I remembered the conditions of last winter's campaign in the desert, there was something both alluring and strange in the thought that everywhere about Turfan one's labourers could always return to their homes for a night's meal and shelter. Was it not like excavating in one's own garden or park to be able to carry out the tasks without constant care about food, water, and transport? The same was true of the interesting ruins of Buddhist shrines and cave-temples dotting the sides of the narrow picturesque valleys close above Kara-khoja. There in the recently cleared grottoes of Bezeklik I was still able to study a style of mural