

occupation had ceased, and the constant digging for soil to be used as manure had laid bare the natural hard clay floor in most of the smaller dwellings. The ruins of shrines usually rose on high bases spared from the original soil (Fig. 263), and still retained a good deal of débris between their walls; among these partial excavations for antiquities had manifestly been effected.

Without systematic clearing it was impossible to make sure how much these ruins still contained, and still less to form any idea as to the chances of interesting finds in the numerous cellars and other underground places which implied centuries of construction on the part of the half-troglodyte dwellers of this town. Nothing but a sacrifice of long months of labour and corresponding expenditure would avail here, and, since even then results would largely depend upon luck, I wondered who would be fortunate enough to command the leisure and means for attacking Yar-khoto on the right scale. But there were plentiful observations of interest to reward the several visits I paid to this fascinating site and to the small rock-cut grottoes in the adjoining ravines. Most of these had evidently served as tombs; and, since the finds of the German expeditions have proved the presence of Nestorian settlements at Turfan, imagination was free to recognize a resemblance between these resting-places and pictures of early Christian tombs in desert valleys of Egypt or Palestine.