

Fig. 42), a covering layer, 1-1½ feet high, formed of consolidated vegetable matter and refuse, could clearly be made out above the soil proper. I observed exactly the same around the small area covered with large fallen trees and originally fenced-in which lay close to the north of the ruin N. IV and almost facing N. III (seen to the right in Fig. 41). It was undoubtedly a detached arbour; and here, too, the weight of the fallen masses of wood was retarding the erosion of the steeply cut loess-banks.

In order to protect the walls of the central hall during excavation from the pressure of the deep sand surrounding it on the east and south, it was necessary to clear simultaneously a broad trench outside the walls,—a task which greatly added to the actual labour. While it was proceeding, I had the smaller rooms of the north side, which held only from 1 to 5 ft. of sand, successively excavated and searched under my immediate supervision. In the room marked N. vi. the first finds were two small inscribed tablets (N. vi. 1, 2) which turned up near the eroded north end almost on the surface. While examining the layer of clay mixed with straw and dung which formed the flooring and which lay exposed on that side, I found imbedded in it three more Kharoṣṭhī documents on wood (N. vi. 3, 4, 5), at what appeared to have been the north-east corner of the room. The three tablets lay close together, about one foot below the plastered top of the flooring, and had manifestly got there before the latter had been laid down or repaired. Scattered over the surface of the actual floor were found the Kharoṣṭhī tablets N. vi. 6-11, while from below a piece of roof-matting which had fallen close to the west wall, there turned up close together N. vi. 12-15, these last all in very fair preservation. The majority of the pieces from N. vi. are covering-tablets of wedge-shaped or rectangular documents, but under-tablets of the same and records on single 'oblongs' (see N. vi. 12 in Plate CII) are also represented. Those which lay imbedded in the flooring had received a strong impregnation with salt, accounted for by the presence of ammoniac, and are hence very susceptible to damp. Seeing that only a few stray tablets were found in the other apartments, I am inclined to believe that N. vi. had served as the office room of this ancient residence.

Finds in room N. vi.

To the east of it, but separated by a narrow passage, lay a room (N. ix.), which had evidently been a kitchen. Along part of its west wall ran a platform of plaster, about 3 ft. broad and 6 in. high, provided all round with a raised rim of an additional 6 in. in height. The men, who seemed acquainted with a similar arrangement from their own houses, at once recognized in it an open kitchen grate, and pointed in confirmation to the semi-circular dip at the south end, clearly intended for the removal of ashes. Remains of several large jars of plain red pottery, and of a wooden trough found close by, supported their conclusion. In the south-east corner the well-preserved under-tablet of a wedge-shaped document, N. ix. 1 (see Plate C) was found; and two more inscribed pieces (oblongs), one of them (N. ix. 2) containing what looked like a list arranged in columns with numerals at the end, were discovered close to the fireplace or grate. Perhaps these wooden documents had found their way into the kitchen, like so much 'waste-paper,' as convenient material for kindling a fire.

Excavation of kitchen, N. ix.

A small room communicating with the kitchen by a door in its south wall proved quite empty, but the narrow closet-like apartment (N. viii.), lying between this and N. vi., yielded a series of very curious relics. In the shallow sand there was found broken in two pieces a carefully-turned shaft of poplar-wood, about 6 ft. 4 in. long and measuring about 1½ in. in diameter. At one end this shaft has a piece of strong camel-skin, about 6 in. long, tightly sewn round it. The shaft looks as if it had been made for a spear or similar weapon, but I am unable to account for the use of the piece of leather. That the closet, measuring 17 by 6 ft., must have been

An ancient store-room, N. viii.