

this great expanse of equally desolate marsh and gravel, it was easy to recall the dreary lives once passed here. No life of the present was there to distract my thoughts of the past.

Undisturbed by man or beast for so many centuries, there lay at my feet the debris of the quarters which the men exiled to this forbidding border had occupied (Fig. 76). Near them were the often more extensive refuse-heaps which had accumulated during this occupation. The thinnest layer of gravel sufficed to preserve here in absolute freshness the most perishable objects. Often a mere scraping of the slope with my boot-heel or the end of my hunting-crop sufficed to disclose where the detachments holding the posts had been accustomed to throw their refuse, including their 'waste paper', or rather wood. Thus I soon grew accustomed to picking up records of the time of Christ or before within a few inches from the surface.

Never did I realize more deeply how little two thousand years mean where human activity is suspended, and even that of Nature benumbed, than when on my long reconnoitring rides the evenings found me alone at some commanding watch-station. Struck by the rays of the setting sun tower after tower, up to ten miles' distance or more, could be seen glittering as if the plaster coating which their walls had once carried were still intact. This plaster was meant, of course, to make the towers more visible from a distance. It had been frequently renewed, however, as shown by the many successive layers of white plaster which wall portions protected by debris still retained. How easy it was then to imagine that towers and wall were still guarded and that watchful eyes were scanning the de-