significant that the majority of such tablets came from the northern section of the rubbish deposits, where, as we have seen, erosion had been at work for some time past and had caused exposure. It is practically only in this section that the few pieces with bleached surface or faded writing were found [8].

Documents incrusted with refuse.

On the other hand, we have the associations of the dustbin and their deleterious effects brought before our eyes in the documents, fortunately not very numerous, which have become partially effaced or illegible through incrustation with dust, straw, and promiscuous refuse [9]. There can be little doubt that the moisture which had caused this coating of dirt to adhere so firmly must have been in most cases poured on to the refuse-heap while it was still accumulating. This accounts for the fact that only particular tablets, probably lying exposed at the time or near the surface, have suffered in this way. It is very probable that the stained or discoloured surface shown by a few tablets and documents on leather has resulted from the same cause [10]. A similar explanation suggests itself for the buckled appearance of some other leather pieces [11]. I also noticed that wherever large pieces of pottery, such as seen in the foreground of Fig. 45, were found embedded in the rubbish, any documents that had come to lie immediately below them were almost invariably found in particularly good condition. Many of the records, though well-preserved and fresh in appearance have, as already noted, since their recovery shown considerable sensitiveness to atmospheric moisture. The salt impregnation thereby indicated points to the plentiful presence of ammoniac, and leads us to suspect that the room filled with refuse was often resorted to by the dwellers for even less savoury purposes. Perhaps it is only because the rubbish accumulation usually offered other and more nourishing food that the number of insect-eaten or mouse-nibbled documents is not larger [12].

Salt impregnation of documents.

## Section IV.—Ancient Documents on Wood and Leather

Technicalities of ancient stationery.

The great collection of documents which came to light from the ancient rubbish-heap just described was as remarkable for the diversity in form and material of individual pieces as for the good preservation of the great majority. This makes it convenient to combine its description with a comprehensive analysis of what the epigraphic finds of the whole site have revealed, as to the outward arrangement of the main classes of documents, and as to technicalities in the ancient stationery of wood and leather used for them.

Kharoṣṭhī documents on leather.

Kharoṣṭhī documents on leather were the first striking novelty which the clearing of N. xv. yielded, and this review may hence fitly commence with them. As among the total of twenty-three pieces recovered not less than eleven are complete and three others almost so [1], the general appearance and arrangement of these documents could from the first be recognized with certainty. Judging from the complete specimens, from which those surviving in a fragmentary condition show no notable deviation, such documents consisted always of oblong sheets of carefully prepared

[8] See N. xv. 20. a, 28, 31, 32, 45, 54, 77, 99, 07.

[9] Such incrusted pieces are N. xv. 135, 138, 146, 158, 159, 160, 162, 165, 177, 320, 323, 347, 352, 361, 06.

[10] Such are N. xv. 51, 79, 114, 149, 182, 340, 350, 355.

[11] See N. xv. 43, 201.

[12] For insect-eaten pieces see N. xv. 66, 88 (leather), 197 (leather). The Chinese tablet, N. xv. 85, shows traces of having been attacked by some rodent.

[1] Complete documents on leather are N. xv. 42, 88, 112, 197, 201, 304, 305, 310, 333, 346, 350; nearly complete are N. xv. 164, 182, 319. Fragments, some of them evidently representing fairly large portions of the originals, are N. xv. 29, 43, 101, 110, 114, 149, 168, 329, 336; for specimens of such fragments (N. xv. 161, 168) see Plates XCI, XCII.