

CHAPTER XXXIV

RECORDS FROM AN ANCIENT RUBBISH HEAP

It is impossible to describe here in detail the progress and results of the excavations which for the rest of December 19th and the next three days kept us all hard at work among the ruins of the little walled 'town.' The remains of the half-dozen dwellings left for clearing varied greatly in extent in accordance with the protection from erosion they had enjoyed. But in almost all of them there was enough drift sand or consolidated refuse to preserve wooden records inscribed in Chinese or Kharoshthi and other interesting relics. In a small but carefully built structure in wattle and timber adjoining the north wall of the 'Ya-mên,' the communication between two rooms showed a very curious feature. The western room had along its east side a broad platform nearly three feet high and approached by three steps from one corner. The wall behind this platform was broken in its centre by a panelled opening, about seven feet wide, which looked into a larger room eastward. Could the platform have been meant to seat a personage holding his court, while the adjoining hall accommodated applicants and attendants? In the latter the timber and wattle of the walls was found charred.

But close to the steps of the platform in the other room a wooden measure, eleven and a half inches long, had survived in excellent preservation, showing a 'foot' divided into ten 'inches' according to the decimal system of Chinese metrology. Taking into account the chronological evidence to be discussed presently, it is certain that we have in this curious relic an exact representa-