

with traces of bright yellow or red colour, which might possibly have served as pegs for hanging accoutrements or as handles for boxes; a block of wood for holding lighted tapers; curved pieces of wood which might have formed part of cross-bows or catapults, inscribed with the name of the regiment which had garrisoned this part of the *Limes*; broken shafts of arrows, etc.

That the men stationed here had, after the good Chinese fashion, used their spare time for homely occupations was made clear by numerous wooden combs such as are still employed by rope-makers, by a wooden spindle-like instrument, and similar simple implements. A find, humble in appearance but of great archaeological value, was a foot-measure resembling in shape a bootmaker's foot-rule, and still retaining the string by which it was hung from the wall (Fig. 173, 2). Divided into ten inches, with further subdivisions on the decimal principle, it gives the exact value of the measures in use under the Han dynasty. It consequently enables us to determine accurately the equivalents of measurements given for different objects in records of that period. An interesting instance in which I was able myself to apply the test of this ancient foot-rule will be mentioned hereafter.

There were shreds of bright silk fabrics, perhaps left behind by officers or visitors of superior rank, and rags of coarse woollen stuff such as the soldiers might have worn. That luxuries were few and resources of civilized life carefully treasured was curiously illustrated by the pieces of several jars of hard grey pottery which had been broken, and then patched up again by means of leather thongs passed through neatly bored holes.

Surrounded as we were by these modest but telling relics of the hard life once led along this much-exposed frontier, the briefest information to be gleaned from the wooden records, as they passed from under the labourers' spades into Chiang-ssŭ-yeh's hands, acquired a significance which those who wrote them nineteen hundred years ago certainly never dreamt of. Among our first finds was a label evidently once tied to a bag, referring to a hundred bronze arrow-heads and naming a certain