

at least the fantastically broken crests of the ridges, the view of rocky pinnacles peeping out above them from the unknown wilderness behind, and the many shades of colour, from light brown to deep purple, to engage the eye and to relieve it from the dreary uniform grey of the Sai and the trying glitter of the salt marsh. No life of the present was there to distract my thoughts of the past; not a sound in the air, nor a thing moving, but the hot air which vibrated above the ground and raised ill-defined wavy mirages on the horizon.

In such solitude it needed no effort to realize the significance of every relic of the distant past when this desert border knew permanent occupation. Undisturbed by man or beast, or those far more destructive agents, moisture and driving sand, there lay at my feet the *débris* of the quarters which the guards had occupied, and often the more extensive rubbish heaps which had accumulated just outside. With the freezing gales which blow over this desert for half the year and the torrid heat which beats down on it for the rest, little wonder that the men stationed here did not feel tempted to move far away from their towers. So whatever they had no further use for found a safe resting-place in odd corners, or by the side of the tower and wall, to be recovered now with an ease such as I had rarely before experienced in my archaeological hunts.

The thinnest layer of gravel—and that, of course, the crumbling masonry supplied in plenty—sufficed to preserve in absolute freshness even such perishable objects as shreds of clothing, wooden tablets, arrow-shafts, straw, and chips. Whatever objects had once passed under this protection were practically safe in a soil which had seen but extremely scanty rainfall for the last two thousand years, was far removed from any chance of irrigation or other interference by human agency, and had suffered on its flat surface but rarely even from wind erosion. 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.

With all the reports, statements, and enquiries which