

CHAPTER LXI

THE GREAT MAGAZINE OF THE LIMES

I CANNOT stop to describe here various interesting minor finds which rewarded our laborious clearing of all the layers of ancient débris and refuse on the hillock once occupied by the Gate station. There were plentiful rags of cast-off clothing; remains of iron implements; well-made shoes in hemp and other stout materials; fragments of lacquer bowls showing tastefully designed scroll ornamentation in black on red ground—all relics which, insignificant in themselves, helped me to picture the life once witnessed by this important border post (Figs. 172, 174). A reconnaissance made from this point while the digging was still in progress had revealed extensive rubbish layers at a point about two and a half miles northward and at a short distance within the main line of the *Limes*; and thither I moved camp on the morning of April 24th.

At first sight there was nothing to attract attention to the spot, and without Tila Bai's keen eyes, which noticed a slight swelling on the edge of a bare plateau tongue, I should probably have passed it without heeding. The gravel-strewn little mound, only about two or three feet high and less than forty feet across, proved to contain the débris from some brick-built structure, too much decayed and too scanty for any determination of its original character. The dozen and a half of records on wood which we found in the débris ranged in date from 65 to 137 A.D. At the time I noted this indication of relatively late occupation with special interest; for the ruin lay just within the corner where the line of the secondary wall above mentioned would join the main wall, if continued across an impassable marsh in its direction from south to north.