

foot-measure discovered at the watch-station T. VIII. (Fig. 173, 2), the original width of the piece proved exactly two feet and two inches according to the standard of the Han period.

I next applied my ancient measure to the small bale of silk which, as related in Chapter XXXII., I had unearthed at the Lop-nor site, and to a piece of silk found in one of the ancient ruins at Miran. The result tallied again as closely as is possible in the case of fabrics which in the course of seventeen centuries were bound to shrink a trifle. On the other hand, if measured by the foot-measure found at the Lop-nor site and manifestly belonging to the Chin period (3rd-4th century A.D.), all these pieces would show a width of *circ.* one foot and nine inches. Thus, by the evidence of actual silk remains brought to light from three widely distant sites, we can now establish that the silk exported from China to Central Asia and thence to the classical West during the centuries immediately before and after Christ retained a uniform width, corresponding approximately to one foot ten inches British measure, while the measuring standard in China underwent a considerable alteration during that period.

But this end strip was not the only silk remnant of antiquarian interest preserved in the refuse layers of the station T. XV. A. It was there that I discovered a small silken envelope a couple of inches long, which must once have held a letter written on a rolled strip of silk and on which M. Chavannes has been able to read the address. Equally interesting from another point of view is a narrow strip of silk bearing a long line in Indian Brahmi characters of a type associated with the rule of the Indo-Scythian or Kushana emperors. It has not yet been deciphered; so we cannot conjecture how this easternmost specimen of a document in true Indian script found its way to the 'Great Wall.' Of a tablet showing 'unknown' characters by the side of Chinese writing I may make passing mention, as a further indication of the polyglot traffic which is likely to have been brought to the *Limes* by the ancient caravan route.

Among the miscellaneous finds of ancient rags,