

And, indeed, compared to these desert stations the most forlorn outposts on our Indian North-West Frontier, which have become by-words for discomfort, would present themselves in the light of a veritable paradise.

Under such conditions of life, we should scarcely be justified in looking out for any literary remains. Yet there is interesting evidence to show that study of some sort was not altogether neglected. There are fragments of texts dealing with divination. But more numerous and interesting are fragments of lexicographical texts, among them eight pieces, found at different stations, of a famous treatise, the *Chi-chiu-chang*, composed between 48 and 33 B.C. and widely used in primary schools during Han times. They are the oldest manuscripts so far known of any Chinese literary work, and as they include a well-preserved large tablet with the first chapter complete, and showing some textual variation, their critical importance is in M. Chavannes' opinion bound to attract attention among scholars in China. The frequent recurrence of these fragments at various stations is significant of the popularity then enjoyed by that school-book, but it also proves that there must have been plenty of men among the scattered garrisons eager to 'improve their education.' Characteristically enough, there is found also in one tablet a reference to the *Biographies of Eminent Women*, an ancient work which has always enjoyed renown as a moral textbook.

With these literary fragments, modest in themselves yet of historical interest, must be classed the abundant remains of elaborate calendars yielded by the main refuse deposit of the Ling-hu company's station (T. VI. B). Written on tablets of a special size, over fourteen inches long, they indicate the cyclical designations of particular days in the month for each of the twelve months of the year. M. Chavannes, by a careful comparison of these data with those recorded in Chinese chronological works, has been able to prove that the calendars to which these tablets belonged were issued for the years roughly corresponding to 63, 59, and 57 B.C. They were indispensable for the correct dating of official correspondence, accounts, etc.,