

Fragments
of treatises,
etc.

Apart from three more slips containing fragments of other vocabularies as yet unidentified,⁹⁶ the literary remains among the finds on the Limes are merely a few extracts from treatises on divination⁹⁷ and astrology,⁹⁸ and a fragment, No. 425, containing a passage from a treatise on military affairs, composed in 229 B.C.⁹⁹ That the solace of literature was not altogether absent from this desolate border-line may, perhaps, be concluded also from the fact that a fragmentary slip, No. 622, T. xxviii. 10, quotes the title of the 'Biographies of eminent women', *Lieh nü chuan*, a book composed in 32-7 B.C.¹⁰⁰ There is a brief extract, too, from a medical treatise, together with a few fragments of a probably similar nature.¹⁰¹ Finally, we may mention here the curious multiplication table, No. 702, T. xxvi. 1, though it does not come, of course, under the category of books.

Light
thrown on
ancient
stationery.

It is in this connexion with books that one more point of antiquarian interest concerning the ancient stationery of bamboo or wood may here find convenient notice. We have had above many occasions to discuss various striking illustrations and additions which our knowledge of that early Chinese stationery, as first based on the evidence of my finds of 1901 at the Niya Site, has received from the documents yielded by the ruins of the Tun-huang Limes and, to a smaller extent, of the Lou-lan station.¹⁰² The presence among the finds on the Limes of remains of books and writings which from a quasi-technical point of view, i.e. from that of the bookbinder, to use a modern expression, may claim the same character, now enables us to clear up the question, previously very obscure, how proper cohesion and sequence could be assured for the numerous slips or tablets over which texts of any size written on bamboo or wood must necessarily have extended. M. Chavannes, who in a masterly discussion had previously reviewed the information that can be gathered from Chinese textual sources about the ancient writing-materials used before the invention of paper,¹⁰³ did not fail to observe, when handling my new finds, that a number among the narrow tablets or 'slips' bore one or more notches on one of the edges. As the position of these was uniform on those 'slips' which manifestly belonged to one series, M. Chavannes rightly concluded that the notches were intended to serve the purpose of uniting such slips into one group.¹⁰⁴ But he added: 'Nous ne comprenons pas bien encore comment on assurait l'ordre de succession de ces fiches; il n'y a aucune numérotation pouvant tenir lieu de pagination, et on ne comprend pas comment il était possible de rétablir l'ordre lorsque quelque cause accidentelle l'avait bouleversé.'

Wooden
'slips': how
arranged
into books.

The question thus raised is a very pertinent one, and makes it desirable to examine the materials available for its eventual solution. They are briefly the following: In the set of slips Nos. 9-24, belonging to a calendar of A.D. 63, we find the left edge of each provided with three notches, disposed, as Plate I shows, at exactly uniform distances. Another set of slips, Nos. 25-35 (Plate II), forming part of the calendar for 59 B.C., shows two notches, also uniformly placed, but on the right edge of each slip. A third method of arrangement is found in the set of narrow bamboo slips, Nos. 524-34,¹⁰⁵ making up the medical note-book above mentioned: here we find two notches

Notched
edges of
wooden
slips.

⁹⁶ See Nos. 397, 603 (?), 701.

⁹⁷ Cf. Nos. 59, 448, 638, with M. Chavannes' remarks, p. xvi.

⁹⁸ See No. 182, where the notch proves the slip to have formed part of a book.

⁹⁹ I owe this last reference to M. Chavannes, who was kind enough on Oct. 3, 1917, verbally to indicate the identification made by Mr. Wang Kuo-wei in his *Liu sha to chien*, reproducing a portion of the documents first published by M. Chavannes. The treatise was apparently known as *Li-mo 力墨*.

¹⁰⁰ See *Documents*, pp. xvii, 137. Two records of A.D. 75, Nos. 613, 614, prove that the watch-tower T. xxviii was

occupied towards the end of the first century A.D.

¹⁰¹ See *Doc. No. 395*, a complete slip, with the fragments Nos. 396, 397.

¹⁰² Cf. above, pp. 382, 659, on the use of seal sockets and string grooves; p. 382, on sealed lids closing small boxes intended to hold communications extending over several 'slips'; pp. 382, 597, on the standard size of slips.

¹⁰³ Cf. M. Chavannes, *Les livres chinois avant l'invention du papier*, *J. Asiat.*, janvier-février 1905 (reprint), pp. 13-47, for texts written on bamboo or wood.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Documents*, p. viii.

¹⁰⁵ See Pl. XIV for specimens.