

Catullus writes in his love poem 'Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus':

Da mi basia mille, deinde centum,  
Dein mille altera, dein secunda centum,  
Deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum.  
Dein, cum milia multa fecerimus,  
Conturbabimus illa, ne sciamus,  
Aut ne quis malus invidere possit,  
Cum tantum sciat esse basiorum.

Which translates as:

Give me a thousand kisses, then another hundred,  
then another thousand, then for the second time a hundred,  
then another thousand more, then a hundred.  
Later, when we gave it thousands,  
we will confuse the bill, for not knowing,  
or why no evil one can envy us,  
knowing that there is such a great gift of kisses.

It took until 1941 before somebody figured out which technical object is referred to in this poem. Can you find it?

In case you can not find it: scroll down.



An abacus.