



Fig. 37. Small mud fortress

Liangchow was said to comprise 4,080 families, or 25,000 souls. In the whole district there were 32,000 families. 3,000 had lost their lives in the earthquake of 1927.

On the following morning, the 14th, I had a letter from YEW with the good news that he had reached our last camping-ground the evening before on his return from the Edsen-gol. Not quite so cheerful was the news that TSERAT, in crossing the first river, had broken a front spring and then queered the differential, which put his lorry out of action. He therefore wanted various spare parts and tools from us, and GEORG was sent to his help.

Meantime, I drove in a rickshaw with KUNG and CHEN to the eastern gate of Liangchow, and the five li on to the new town. The gate-towers of the old town, which had been a picturesque ornament of the town wall when I visited the place in December 1896, were now missing. There were no houses inside the wall of the new town besides the new barracks and officers' quarters where the general in command, MA PU-CHIN, and his staff were living.

The general received us courteously, asked us about our plans and our mission, invited us to dinner the same day, and rose after half an hour's conversation round his brazier.

We then visited the representatives of the Eurasia Company. They had 3,000 gallons of petrol, and we were able to get our supply renewed without difficulty by wiring to their head office in Shanghai.

On the afternoon of the 16th YEW returned from his trip to the Edsen-gol. The enterprise had been successful. TSERAT was bringing back the lorry, even if knocked about and in need of repair.

We were thus reluctantly obliged to resign ourselves to a few more days of rest at Liangchow while the repairs were carried out. A large part of our time was wasted on dinner-parties with Chinese dignitaries and the missionaries, with calls and return calls. Our room was usually full of visitors.

We heard from several sources that the people were oppressed with unreasonable taxes that they simply could not pay. Many gave up their farms and fields and went to lodge with friends, to escape the tax. Others had to borrow money at the rate of 4 to 10 per cent a month. Well-to-do farmers who owned 400 *mou* (about 40 acres), and who had daughters, had finally to hand over all their land plus their daughters to some rapacious scoundrel who had plunged them into debt.