

undertakes the provision of necessaries for both man and woman. I may observe here by the way that young slave girls are very cheap in China; and, indeed, all the Chinese will sell their sons as slaves equally with their daughters, nor is it considered any disgrace to do so. Only, those who are so purchased cannot be forced against their will to go abroad with the purchaser; neither, however, are they hindered if they choose to do so. And if the foreign trader wishes to marry in China he can very easily do so. But as for spending his money in profligate courses that he cannot be allowed to do! For the Chinese say: "We will not have it said in the Musulman countries that their people are stript of their property in China, and that ours is a country full of riotous living and harlotry."

China is the safest as well as the pleasantest of all the regions on the earth for a traveller. You may travel the whole nine months' journey to which the empire extends without the slightest cause for fear, even if you have treasure in your charge. For at every halting place there is a hostelry superintended by an officer who is posted there with a detachment of horse and foot. Every evening after sunset, or rather at nightfall, this officer visits the inn accompanied by his clerk; he takes down the name of every stranger who is going to pass the night there, seals the list, and then closes the inn door upon them. In the morning he comes again with his clerk, calls everybody by name, and marks them off one by one. He then despatches along with the travellers a person whose duty it is to escort them to the next station, and to bring back from the officer in charge there a written acknowledgment of the arrival of all; otherwise this person is held answerable. This is the practice at all the stations in China from Sín-ul-Sín to Khánbálik. In the inns the traveller finds all needful supplies, especially fowls and geese. But mutton is rare.

To return, however, to the particulars of my voyage, I