

roes, and sundry other kinds, so that many are taken by the people of the country, who make a great profit thereof. So this way we travel over mountains and valleys, finding a succession of towns and villages, and many great hostelries for the entertainment of travellers, interspersed among extensive forests.

NOTE I.—The region intended must necessarily be some part of the southern district of the province of Shen-si, called HAN-CHUNG, the axis of which is the River Han, closed in by exceedingly mountainous and woody country to north and south, dividing it on the former quarter from the rest of Shen-si, and on the latter from Sze-ch'wan. Polo's *C* frequently expresses an *H*, especially the Guttural *H* of Chinese names, yet *Cuncun* is not satisfactory as the expression of *Hanchung*.

The country was so rugged that in ancient times travellers from Si-ngan fu had to make a long circuit eastward by the frontier of Ho-nan to reach Han-chung; but, at an early date, a road was made across the mountains for military purposes; so long ago indeed that various eras and constructors are assigned to it. Padre Martini's authorities ascribed it to a general in the service of Liu Pang, the founder of the first Han Dynasty (B. C. 202), and this date is current in Shan-si, as Baron v. Richthofen tells me. But in Sze-ch'wan the work is asserted to have been executed during the 3rd century, when China was divided into several states, by Liu Pei, of the Han family, who, about A. D. 226, established himself as Emperor [Minor Han] of Western China at Ch'êng-tu fu.* This work, with its difficulties and boldness, extending often for great distances on timber corbels inserted in the rock, is vividly described by Martini. Villages and rest-houses were established at convenient distances. It received from the Chinese the name of *Chien-tao*, or the "Pillar Road." It commenced on the west bank of the Wei, opposite Pao-ki h'ien, 100 miles west of Si-ngan fu, and ended near the town of Paoching-h'ien, some 15 or 20 miles north-west from Han-chung.

We are told that Tului, the son of Chinghiz, when directing his march against Ho-nan in 1231 by this very line from Paoki, had to *make* a road with great difficulty; but, as we shall see presently, this can only mean that the ancient road had fallen into decay, and had to be repaired. The same route was followed by Okkodai's son Kutan, in marching to attack the Sung Empire in 1235, and again by Mangku Kaan on his last campaign in 1258. These circumstances show that the road from Paoki was in that age the usual route into Han-chung and Sze-ch'wan; indeed there is no other road in that direction that is more than a mere jungle-track, and we may be certain that this was Polo's route.

This remarkable road was traversed by Baron v. Richthofen in 1872. To my questions, he replies: "The entire route is a work of tremendous engineering, and all of this was done by Liu Pei, who first ordered the construction. The hardest work consisted in cutting out long portions of the road from solid rock, chiefly where ledges project on the verge of a river, as is frequently the case on the He-lung Kiang. . . . It had been done so thoroughly from the first, that scarcely any additions had to be made in after days. Another kind of work which generally strikes tourists like Father Martini, or Chinese travellers, is the poling up of the road on the sides of steep cliffs† Extensive cliffs are frequently rounded in this way, and imagination

* The last is also stated by Klaproth. Ritter has overlooked the discrepancy of the dates (B. C. and A. D.), and has supposed Liu Pei and Liu Pang to be the same. The resemblance of the names, and the fact that both princes were founders of Han Dynasties, give ample room for confusion.

† See cut from Mr. Cooper's book at p. 51 below. This so exactly illustrates Baron R.'s description that I may omit the latter.