

among wisps of cloud. At their foot, broad, naked slopes of gravel were broken by descending lines of little mounds, the heaps of earth around the mouths of the wells by which the "kariz," or underground canals are entered and cleaned. Nearer at hand, the adobe walls of ruined forts or Buddhist shrines stood white and clear in the bright sunshine; while around them stretched a smooth yellow plain, where the reeds were all dead and broken off even with the ground. Nearest of all, four or five Chantos in sober snuff-colored gowns, and two women in picturesque red jackets worn over blue skirts reaching to the knee, were spreading manure on gray fields. Two men plowed it under with wooden ox-plows like those used from time immemorial all over Asia. A Chinese merchant, clad in pale blue, walked across the field toward the walled enclosure of the Chinese town; a high covered cart set on a long axle between two big cogged wheels lumbered by with one horse in the shafts and three abreast in front, and as it creaked between the high mud walls protecting precious orchards, the lolling driver encouraged his team with shouts of "Owa, owa, owa, *Oh!*" and a wave of his fish-pole whip. Suddenly, not only the distant scene, but the pale gray, almost dazzling prospect of neighboring walls and fields, was swallowed up in dust. A strong northwest wind had sprung up. Soon it increased to a gale, and I had to leave the roof to dust and pattering sand and two merrily rolling gourds. By sitting low on the warm mud oven filling half my room, I could have procured light enough for my work, if the room had not been darkened by the heads behind the dozen or twenty Dungan eyes glued to holes torn or sucked in the paper windows.