

I had supposed that in Turfan I should be free from the attentions of officials. It was disappointing, when we were camped far out in the desert, to have some horsemen bring presents of fruit, eggs, milk, ducks, sheep, raisins, dried melon, and little peanuts, the last considered a great delicacy, recently introduced by the Chinese. I did not object to the presents, but it was a nuisance to have to be encumbered with four or five men who had been ordered to search out the stranger in the remotest desert and provide him with all the needed and un-needed comforts of life until they brought him safe to the halls of the officials. At Lukchun, the most prosperous town of Turfan, I dined with the "Wang," or "Tributary King," who with two hundred retainers lives in a colossal cube of mud. He goes up to Peking once in six years to "bow the head to the Grand Khan," as he put it. The Wang was a bright, attractive boy of seventeen, and we had much conversation in his native tongue, Turki. Though he rules but ten thousand people, he exacts absolute and unquestioning obedience with the air of one absolutely convinced of the divine right of kings. He grew confidential during our various talks, and told me how the local Chinese officials were jealous of his hereditary rights in so rich a region. He sometimes wakes at night, so he said, with a nightmare of the grim provincial treasurer, the Fan-tai, clutching at his throat. He proudly asked my opinion about the merits of his twenty rifles, with which, I judge, he vaguely hopes to be a match for the Chinese.

North of Lukchun I ascended a magnificent red canyon in a little range of mountains at the base of the main northern range, and later came down another of the same sort. A