

*The Taotai in Aqsu.*

for an hour in the night and this was sufficient to carry me off into the fairyland my imagination had painted.

I spent the day in doing various work, getting some order into the materials I had collected on the journey, collecting information about crossing the Muzart, developing a couple of dozen films and so on.

*March 4th. Aqsu.* Yesterday was taken up by a call on the Taotai and the district mandarin in the Chinese town. The former is a very amiable old man, who has evidently found it easier to restore his beard to its former colour than to replace some of his missing teeth. From Macartney and from Stein's book I had learnt a good deal about him and would have recognised him by an illustration in the book. He invited me to stay to dinner which was served soon after my arrival and fortunately did not last long. We drank very good English port and the old man went so far in his politeness as to eat with a knife and fork in order to make me desist from my probably none too successful manoeuvres with the Chinese chopsticks. After an appetising dinner, tea was served, a thing I had missed at previous Chinese dinners. Ljo had been replaced by a Chinese telegraph official Ma, who spoke a little English and whom I had heard of from the English missionary Hunter. The conversation, however, was more difficult than usual, for my interpreter's English was, if possible, worse than mine and it was impossible to make him understand even half of what I wanted to say. The Taotai spoke of extensive Chinese railway schemes, by means of which Lanchow, for instance, and subsequently Urumchi and Hami would be connected with Peiping and Shanghai by two lines. It was impossible to get any details through my incapable interpreter.