



*The armour of a general from the time
of the Emperor Ming.*

The walls in the latter were hung with Chinese inscriptions and drawings, all on large paper scrolls with a gold ground. The furnishing was the same, as in any other yamen, only rather more refined and neat. There was a brazier of coals in the middle of the room, stiff chairs and small polished tables along the walls and a «kang» in the background with a couple of wolves' heads, between which the customary low table with the tea-cups was placed.

The Viceroy was rather a stout man with the swaying waddle that the Chinese covet so much. He looked as if he had no aversion to wine, cigars and the other good things of life. The questions and ideas of this satrap invested with far-reaching powers to reorganize three enormous provinces were about the same as those of any humble mandarin resident in a remote corner of this huge empire and after a superficial conversation I could form no opinion of him, except from his appearance. It seems as though they suck in these stereotyped phrases with their mother's milk and cannot get rid of them in later life. Shen, however, had seen something of the world, for in his youth he had served in the Chinese Embassy in St. Petersburg. It was not easy either to judge him by his work or what one sees of it, because one could not tell what had been done on his own initiative and what had been due to pressure from Peiping.

It seemed that these high dignitaries were sent to their posts with a cut and dried programme which they had to carry out according to the resources at their disposal and,