

*May 27th.* The character of the road eastward is the same — open ground with numerous villages and a grove of trees here and there. The road often leads along the surface of the ground, but occasionally it cuts so deep into the löss that nothing is seen of the landscape. On the right we caught a glimpse of the river from time to time, its shining surface shimmering in the sunshine among trees and yellow and green fields. The wheat was ripe and harvesting was in full swing. Every man, woman and half-grown child was out in the fields. The women, kneeling, cut the stalks with a sickle. Quite close to them it is threshed with a stone cylinder, made to revolve by a pair of trotting donkeys or mules on a level bit of ground, tramped hard. The straw is carted in large, circular baskets with rope netting, placed on a wheel, which is guided in the required direction by a curved handle. Everything is close at hand, buildings, fields, threshing ground, ricks etc.

We passed the following villages, reckoning from Honan-fu: 5 li Tanchia wang 100 houses, 10 li Shihi-pu 100 houses, 15 li Pankatien 50 houses, 20 li Shihtsu 30 houses, 25 li Peima sui 15 houses (a fairly large miao with a high old, column-like tower is seen near it), 40 li Ehrting-pu 20 houses, 45 li Miao uy chung 17 houses, 50 li Ehr-shih-li-pu 2 houses, 55 li Tsu chuang 100 houses. — Here we came to the sandy bank of the Luo ho, which we followed for a time. 60 li Hsintai cheng 200 and 70 li Yenshih hsien after traversing a sunken road of several li.

I spent a very pleasant evening in the house of an engineer, Henri Squilbin, in the little, old town. He was in charge of the work on one of the sections of the new railway and had spent just over a year in this place with his wife, both of them Belgian. — The golden age for foreign railway builders seems to be over in China. At the head of every completed railway or line under construction there is now a Chinese with a large or small staff of his own, composed of natives. Even when a railway is being built by foreigners with their own capital, no order can be carried out, nor anything be done in general without the approval of the Chinese director. Obviously such subordination of specialists to Chinese, who have often no idea of technical training, causes much friction and discord. Whenever Chinese undertake to administer a line or manage its construction by themselves, matters are said to be still worse, at any rate for the present. Chinese are appointed as engineers and chiefs of sections, though often they may have been employed merely as interpreters in connection with some railway construction by foreigners. These men usually copy the plans of the work they have seen being carried out very carefully and make use of them, when they think the circumstances are more or less similar, but calculations are ignored entirely. To these purely technical difficulties the absence of capital must be added. Peiping seems unable to provide the necessary funds, the population, sucked dry by the mandarins, creates disturbances if taxes are raised, and the wealthy people refuse to subscribe to Government undertakings or demand guarantees that the Government seems unable to give. Nevertheless, their motto is: no foreign undertakings and no foreign capital. Lines that are still being exploited by foreigners according to contract, are to be bought up and new lines are to be built by Chinese. The technical problem can easily be solved by appointing foreign engineers in Chinese service. The Chinese are not entirely opposed to this and it should not be difficult to find suitable foreigners, but the financial side presents considerably greater difficulty.