

According to the contract with the Franco-Belgian company that built the railway to Honan-fu, the line over the short distance I travelled recently from Tung Kwang ting to Honan-fu is to be built by Chinese. By the imperial road the distance is about 485 li and the Chinese estimate the cost at an average of 10,000 taels per li, or in round figures 5 million taels. However, about 270 li are very mountainous, at any rate as mountainous as the neighbourhood of Kung hsien, where 1 km is said to have cost 300,000 francs (50,000 taels per li). The cost of constructing the railway will probably amount to 15—20 million taels, a sum which it seems scarcely possible for the provincial administration to provide, as so far it has not succeeded in collecting, by preliminary subscription, the amount it estimates as the minimum required.

Yenshih hsien is said to have a population of about 30,000 tja, the town 800—1,000. The same plants are grown as at Honan-fu, except rice. Average crop 10—12 fold. — In addition to elementary schools the town possesses 1 tsung hsiao tang and kao teng hsiao hsiao tang. No foreign languages are taught in either. — The sale of opium is forbidden altogether. The mandarin issued orders that opium growing was to be reduced by 1/10, but the people have restricted it considerably more of their own accord.

A sunken road starts immediately to the E of the town and in general the 120 li we covered to-day were done, with short intervals, between more or less high walls of earth. *May 28th. Szeshui hsien.* We passed the villages of Sungchia wang with 1,000 houses and Tsi chia chuang with 100 at a distance of 15 and 30 li from Yenshih. Immediately beyond we reached the Luo ho, which flowed between hills of löss. Tombs of the Sung dynasty are said to lie E of Yenshih, but I did not see any, either because of the darkness at 3—4 a.m. or on account of the walls of earth. — We crossed the river on small barges at the village of Hei shih kwang, which also possesses 1,000 houses. Although only a few arbahs had collected on the bank, there was great disorder. The width of the river is about 90 yards and its depth 1 1/2—2 m. A fine railway bridge with 8 stone pillars is being built just below. A sunken road begins on the other side of the bridge and seems unending. Here and there some tables are spread in front of a hollow in the wall of earth and refreshments can be obtained in the shade of a straw mat.

We reached Kung hsien after riding 60 li. The little town looked as though it had lately experienced something like the Dungan revolt. E of it we came to the Luo ho again, the river making a sharp bend here. Some junks were sailing on it in a fresh breeze. Their square sails, of grey cloth with a broad blue band stiffened by numerous parallel ribs, have rather a medieval appearance.

I had hoped to find a freight train at Kung hsien and proceed by it to Chen-chow. After hunting about for some time I found a German, who was in charge of the work there, and was told that no train had arrived. An incredibly high bridge leads across a cleft in the hill there. The excavations in the löss in connection with the railway line reveal an exceptionally regular line. It could not have been cut more evenly in a block of butter. On the other side of Kung hsien the road crosses a huge ridge of löss. We reached the highest point, Feng tsui cheng, a village of 7 houses, after climbing without a break for 15 li, mostly along a narrow sunken road.