

of the honour, or for those who have to be put into the right frame of mind. Among scenes of Chinese social life you find many of the company's coloured posters. They are said to be very effective, however, and there are not a few mandarin's dwellings, in which such pictures, suitably framed, adorn the walls.

The population of the town was variously stated to be 22, 33, 40, 50 and 150 thousand. There are said to be a few hundred Mohammedans who have their own mosque. Richard's geography, which is not shy of large figures, estimates the number of inhabitants at 200,000. The two latter figures seem to be greatly exaggerated, while the two first are considerably underestimated. The area of the town is very large, but a very considerable portion is mere waste land. It is surrounded by a fortress wall, dilapidated in some places, about 55 feet high, of a rectangular shape with two gates, one large and one small, facing the four points of the compass. They are protected by not very deep buttresses with double arches built one behind the other. There are many other small buttresses. Very large towers, going to ruin, with innumerable embrasures for guns facing outwards and to the sides, are placed at the corners. A dry moat of appreciable dimensions (35 yards wide and 35 feet deep) completes the antiquated defences.

The problem of communications is at the same stage in Shansi as in the provinces I have travelled through lately. The authorities and notables are anxious that all further railway construction should be carried out by themselves. The French company that recently completed the Chen-ta-lu line, has not only failed to get its concession extended, but the authorities place all kinds of obstacles in its way, evidently with the intention of paving the way for repurchasing the line.

The Chinese scheme is to connect Pu chow fu in the S with Tatung fu in the N by a railway line through Tai-yuan-fu. It is to be called Tung-Pu lu. A preliminary subscription for shares undertaken at the instigation of the last Fantai is said to have yielded 6 million taels, if the money is actually paid up when the authorities seriously begin to carry out the scheme. Foreign engineers will probably be engaged to build the line. The line, however, is said not to have been surveyed yet by specialists, nor, I am told, have definite estimates been drawn up. The calculations are based, as usual, on the same old 10,000 taels per li that haunt the brains of all mandarins who dream of improved means of communication. The cost may well be infinitely higher in reality in such mountainous country, in which the French narrow-gauge line has already involved an expenditure of 180,000 francs per km.

In such a poor province as Shansi this question is connected more closely than elsewhere with the improvement, or rather, the introduction of mining, for what there is at present can scarcely be taken seriously. It seems probable that these questions will have to be solved simultaneously. The »Peiping syndicate» with its large concessions would probably have improved the exploitation of the iron and coal resources of the province with the help of the improved means of communication, if the opposition of the population and the authorities had not forced it to avail itself of the golden bridge provided in the form of an indemnity of over 2 million taels. Now the authorities hold the field in this sphere, too, and the result can scarcely fail to be anything but considerable delay or in the best of cases a process of fumbling without any real system.