

rulers aloof and inaccessible, it is in that respect bad. But in this particular line of governing the Chinese certainly are at the top of the tree.

The Taotai and I performed the usual civilities to each other. I called on him first, of course, and he returned my visit, accompanied by his usual procession. The visits of Chinese officials are always of considerable length, and the Taotai would remain for a couple of hours or so talking away upon any subject which cropped up. He was an old man, who had done much good service in Chinese Turkestan during the Mohammedan rebellion, but he was now weak and past his best. When we had become more intimate, he told me that he had no very high idea of European civilization, for we were always fighting with one another. We were not bad at inventing machines and guns, but we had none of that calm, lofty spirit which the Chinese possessed, and which enabled them to look at the petty squabbles between nations with equanimity and dignity. We spent all our time in matters which should only concern mechanics and low-class people of that sort, and gave ourselves no opportunity for contemplating higher things. These were the Taotai's ideas on Europeans, and it was interesting to see the calm air of superiority with which these views were given.

The Taotai's secretary—a thorough scamp, who was subsequently removed for gross bribery—was another official with whom we had a good deal of intercourse at Kashgar. He had been at Shanghai, and had some knowledge of Europeans. He used to say that the Chinese could never understand why the Russians went to all the trouble and expense of keeping a consulate at Kashgar to look after the trade there, when in a whole year only as much merchandise was brought into the country as is imported into Shanghai by a single British steamer.

The official, however, whom we came to know the best, was the general in command of the troops quartered in the old or