

the place was information to be obtained of the route by which we had to go. How different all this is from what one sees in the bazaars of Central Asia, where the merchants—some from India, some from Turkestan, some from Afghanistan, some even from Constantinople and Moscow—meet and talk over the countries they have travelled in and the state of the roads, so that a traveller can always obtain a fair general idea of any caravan route now in use!

At Kalgan I met the ex-captain of a Chinese gunboat which had been engaged in the action at Foochow during the Franco-Chinese war. His was a curious story. The Chinese have a principle that in a battle a commander must either be victorious or else die. This man's vessel had been moored at some distance from the French fleet, and had consequently escaped the fate of the rest of the Chinese ships, and had not been blown out of the water. The captain, seeing the day was lost, and not being able to do anything to retrieve the disaster with his little gunboat, had run ashore and escaped. The Chinese Emperor, however, considered this a most ignominious proceeding.