

ceptive depressions northward for that fleet and artful enemy, the Huns!

The arrow-heads of bronze which we picked up in numbers near the wall and towers, as well as references occurring in the records found which Chiang Ssŭ-yeh would read out and interpret, were proof that attacks and alarms were familiar incidents on this border. Unconsciously my eye sought the scrubby ground flanking the salt-marshes where Hun raiders might collect before making their rush in the dusk. Once across the chain of posts, the road lay open for them to any part of the Tun-huang oasis or the Chinese settlements farther east. Not only the notion of time but also the sense of distance seemed in danger of being effaced when I thought how these same Huns were destined some centuries later to shake the empires both of Rome and Constantinople.

But the slanting rays of the setting sun would reveal also things of the past far more real. The line of the wall then showed up quite distinctly for miles and miles even where it was decayed to little more than a low straight mound. It was then that the eye most readily caught a curiously straight furrow-like line running parallel to the wall and at a distance of about ten yards from it. Close examination showed that it was a narrow but well-defined track worn into the coarse gravel soil by the patrols who had tramped along it for centuries. Again and again the men recognized as clearly as I did this strange, uncanny track reappearing along wall sections miles away from the caravan route, wherever the remains of the wall were high enough to offer protection against wind-driven sand and pebbles.

On my first reconnaissances I had already made another