

seigneur bearing and amiable grace of the latter had then impressed me favourably, in spite of widespread reports of his unabashed exactions and rather unscrupulous ways in general. But then was not his uncle the great Liu Chin-t'ang, the famous general who, after the rebel Yakub Beg's death, had in 1877 reconquered Turkestan, and whose services to the Empire I had on my first visit to Kashgar seen honoured by a stately temple dedicated to his memory?

The family of such an 'organizer of victory' might well claim exceptional privileges under a grateful Government; and indeed I was not surprised to learn during my previous journey that the great Liu Chin-t'ang's relatives, close and distant, held a conspicuous share in the most lucrative official posts of the Province. Much-talked-of reforms had not yet seriously affected the time-honoured state of affairs under which the civil administration of the Province was considered as a kind of reserved ground for the relations of Liu Chin-t'ang and his redoubtable confrère Tso Tsung-t'ang's relations, as well as for their Hunanese friends. Chiang-ssü-yeh's inexhaustible flow of Ya-mên stories and scandals, diverting subjects of talk on our long weary marches, had fully assured me on that score.

But, alas! Liu-chi Ta-jên's official fortune had, through causes which need no relating, suffered serious eclipse. Deprived of administrative functions, he was at this time living in proud retirement at Urumchi, preparing for the long journey back to his native Hu-nan, where he wished to end his days in philosophic seclusion. And through his elder brother's disgrace Liao Ta-lao-ye's official prospects too had been blighted. After various charges in Urumchi and Kashgar his Ambanship of Ê-tun-hsien, as modern administrative nomenclature, reviving a very early Chinese name, designates the Lop-nor tract, spelt nothing less than impecunious exile. The official pay, of course, as throughout the Province and the Empire, would barely provide for the unfortunate magistrate's absolute necessities and the maintenance of a modest but indispensable staff. In this poor and undeveloped tract, still needing all possible administrative nursing, there were absolutely no