

journey eastwards. How little reliance could be placed on the levies of Tun-huang in particular I was to learn in good time by the tragic *dénouement* to be related hereafter, of which poor learned Wang himself became the victim.

With such cares in the background, avowed or hidden, it was natural that our conversation should turn to the 'New Dominion,' where there were still real rulers of districts, and where a capable Amban need not take too serious count of local opposition. It was amusing to watch how the mental atmosphere of our little official party brightened with this change of topic. Bluff and genial Lin Ta-jên recalled stories of his own happy days of exile in the newly reconquered province where any official of sense could live without worries and make money. Chiang felt at once in his true element, and chattered gaily of all the attractions which his adopted territory offered to men in office and—to others who like his humble self were trying to qualify for it. To Wang Ta-lao-ye and the other Kan-su guests Hsin-chiang, I could clearly perceive, must have presented itself in the light of an Eldorado for literati aspiring to the official's life.

I myself could not help sympathizing with them when I thought what the reverse change would be like for any of my Anglo-Indian civilian friends, say, from the charge of a big district in the Punjab to the magistracy of some slum-ridden Western centre full of highly advanced, though ordinarily tame, Socialists. So I was induced to expatiate upon the many obvious points of contact between British rule over India and the sort of paternal government which Chinese state-craft has exercised since ancient times over the *soi-disant* 'New Dominion' in Central Asia; and I thought I found an appreciative audience in spite of the crudeness of my best Chinese. There could be no doubt that we all felt united by sentiments of some common official bond, and when our little party broke up I retained the impression, not merely of some hours pleasantly spent, but of a gain in good understanding.

I needed this assurance badly when on March 22nd I was making my final preparations for returning to work