

than people, and out again by the east gate. Just within that a beautiful memorial arch in wood, of some age and badly decayed, offered a pleasant relief to the eyes from all the surrounding squalor.

We moved on through a well-cultivated tract with orchards and scattered but substantial homesteads, but had scarcely covered more than three miles when a mounted messenger from the Ya-mên overtook me. He did not bring news of the much-delayed transport and coolies, but, to my great delight, telegraphic messages from Kashgar and Peking. Immediately on my arrival at Tun-huang I had taken care to send off Ibrahim Beg to the town of An-hsi, four marches to the north-east, where I knew the great high road from Turkestan to Kan-su to pass and the telegraph line along it; messages entrusted to him were to announce my arrival by wire both to Mr. Macartney and to the Peking Legation. I was aware how little reliable was that wire linking East and West, with deserts between the rare stations, and with its constant breakdowns lasting at times for a week or two. So my joy at receiving replies within ten days was all the greater.

It was an exciting quarter of an hour as I sat by the road-side deciphering the messages, which, like my own, had, for the sake of reducing cost and risks of distortion, been despatched in the Eastern Telegraph Company's excellent code '*Via Eastern.*' The news proved reassuring from both sides. Kashgar reported all well and a big mail-bag having been started *via* Khotan. From the Legation I heard that arrangements were completed through the Chinese Foreign Office, allowing me to draw 6000 Taëls, equivalent roughly to £1000, from the Tao-t'ai's treasury at Su-chou. It was a relief to have been brought so rapidly into touch with the distant East and West. But what I enjoyed most, perhaps, was the feeling of living for the moment as it were in two widely different periods. For travel or the transmission of letters the distances separating me from Kashgar, and still more from India or Europe, claimed an allowance of long weary months such as Marco Polo would have found natural. And now into this mediaeval perspective of time to which