

Whether it was mere reluctance to face the rigours of this desert 'spring' any longer, or disgust at the independent bearing of the Chinese labourers who were supposed to make themselves useful about camp fires, etc., but would not stand any of the bullying which my Kashmiri cook liked to indulge in, this worthy thought the time opportune first to go on strike and then to abscond with a pony in the morning. I knew that he could find his way back to Tun-huang, and that he would not fail to be stopped there as a suspected deserter. Still this incident did not add to the amenities of my Easter Sunday.

I used it to explore the remains of the wall as far as they were traceable eastwards. Moving back with my whole camp to the tower where the first tablets had been found, I then marched along the line marked by the four towers we had sighted before. The distances between them varied considerably, from one and one-eighth to three-quarters of a mile, though the ground was throughout a uniformly bare expanse of gravel. On it the line of the wall showed up quite clearly, both in the straight curtains between the towers and in the semicircular bastions by which the line curved round to the north of each tower. In many places the alternating layers of fascines and gravelly clay still rose to three feet or thereabouts. But even where this *agger* was reduced to nearly ground level, the layer of thick tamarisk branches used for a foundation was seen emerging on either side of the low gravel-covered swelling. There could be no doubt that it was the bearing of the line, nearly east to west, though not absolutely straight, which, being parallel to the direction of the prevalent winds, had helped to preserve this unbroken stretch of wall over five miles long.

The towers differed but little in construction, being built of solid layers of stamped clay about twenty feet square at the base and originally over twenty feet high. Those to the east had suffered more decay. Beyond this the position of a fifth tower could be traced only by a low débris heap and the bastion-like projection of the wall. Half a mile to the east of this last tower (T. xxxv.), we lost the line of the wall amidst dunes of drift sand, rising