

it comprised lay scattered about in tiny hamlets, sheltered by fine elms and ashes. All round them extended well-tilled fields with rows of big trees lining the irrigation channels. So carefully was all ground within the oasis utilized that, not wishing to camp in the middle of a ploughed field, I was at last grateful to find room for my tent in a little quiet grove occupied by graves. The good folk of Nan-hu must have thought it a queer taste, but had no objection to offer. They seemed a quiet, thriving set of farmers, endowed with delightful *insouciance* such as their comfortable conditions as regards arable land and water would foster.

About their pious zeal I could entertain no doubt when I found that this little settlement boasted of eight well-kept shrines 'in being' (Fig. 167), not counting the miniature chapels attached to almost every homestead and a number of small temples still in ruins, as the last Tungan inroad had left them. It seemed hard to think of that devastating tornado having swept across a place so placidly secluded as Nan-hu. Yet, according to the information we received, scarcely a man, woman, or child of the old population had then escaped with their lives. However this may be, those who had taken their places were now enjoying the ease resulting from under-population.

But it was the opportunity for archaeological observations of interest, not the rural attractions of this 'sleepy hollow,' which made me extend my stay to four days. At the first reconnaissance, guided by an elderly villager whom Lin Ta-jên's petty officer had secured for us, we found a number of remains throwing light on the history of the oasis. At a distance of only about one mile eastwards from the edge of the present oasis, and approached over ground which manifestly had once been under cultivation, there rose the broken clay walls of a small town built in the form of an irregular rectangle. Of the north face, measuring about 400 yards in length, the greater part still survived, half-buried under high dunes which had afforded protection. Of the east and west walls, too, considerable portions were still extant though cut through and broken up by wind erosion. Yet the 'masonry' of the wall,