

revealed the important chronological fact that, while east of this transverse line the records brought to light proved continuous occupation of the watch-stations, down to about the middle of the second century A.D., the records found west of it stopped short with the reign of Wang Mang, and in the case of the more remote stations with dates considerably earlier.

I was thus gradually led to the conclusion, that in the early decades of our era, during the troubled times of Wang Mang's reign or very soon after, there took place a retrenchment of the border line lying westwards. By abandoning the outlying portion of the wall an appreciable reduction was, no doubt, made in the difficulties about victualling, etc., which must always have been felt most in the case of those detachments pushed out far into the desert. At the same time this retrogression of the guarded frontier line would have been fully in keeping with a contemporary change in Chinese policy. This we know was then no longer concerned about imperial expansion westwards, but until the last quarter of the first century A.D. kept strictly on the defensive. It was for the purpose of replacing the flank protection which the lopped-off western end of the original *Limes* had offered, that I believe the transverse wall to have been built during, or soon after, Wang Mang's usurpation.

In any case it was easy to realize that the station at which the great caravan road passed through this wall must have been a point of importance. In fact, from the reasons above indicated and supplementary evidence which cannot be set forth here in detail, I soon felt convinced that the 'Jade Gate' of the Later Han period, roughly corresponding to the first two centuries of our era, had to be located at this site. So I was most eager to have the remains on that unpretentious hillock cleared with all expedition and thoroughness. But the day was oppressively hot; and in the afternoon a violent gale, sweeping down from the north-east put a stop to further work, the temperature inside my tent rising to ninety degrees Fahrenheit.

But on the morning of April 21st I was able to start