

the details. Instead of taking the wall towards Toghrakbulak, where the caravan route must have run then as now, the constructors of the *Limes* let it continue due west along a narrow and well-raised plateau tongue up to its extreme point.

There a tower (T. IV. B) built of carefully laid bricks, and still over twenty-three feet high, rose on the brink of steep clay cliffs some 120 feet in height, commanding an extensive view westwards and over scrub and gravel Sai to the north. No better look-out place could have been selected for this exposed portion of the fortified line. But the wall had been carried about one and a half miles farther west to an isolated clay terrace rising from the scrub-covered edge of the basin to a height slightly lower than the plateau end just mentioned (Fig. 181). The top of this terrace was occupied by a much-decayed tower in stamped clay (T. IV. A), which completely overlooked the low-lying ground all round. Here the wall took a sharp turn to the south, and could be traced as a low mound for a mile or so running in the direction of the terrace on which our camp stood. But as the soil there grew more and more marshy, the last faint indication of the *agger* soon disappeared entirely. It was clear that the very nature of the ground to the west, all spring-fed marsh and lagoons, had rendered defence by a wall needless on this flank farther on. But a line of towers visible far away to the south-west, perched at great intervals on headlands of the plateau, showed that the flank had been guarded all the same.

The ruined quarters adjoining the tower T. IV. B yielded a number of well-preserved Chinese records on wood and silk, on one of which Chiang thought he could recognize a date corresponding to the year 94 B.C. So my thoughts were carried back to near the times when this *Limes* had served the first political expansion of China westwards. As I looked round from the commanding position occupied by this tower, I wondered why its builders had not rested content to let the wall make its bend here. Then my attention was attracted by two straight lines of mounds rising above the scrub-covered ground in the direction of