

delightfully green and refreshing, and I greeted it like an anchorite set free from another Thebais. There I was kept busy all day with the last settling of accounts and farewell visits to my Amban friends. A pleasant hour was passed at Wang's cool and shady Ya-mên, where I had my last chat about local antiquities with that refined scholar friend. His grey-haired old mother, a dignified matron, had just joined him from Shan-hsi, and with her son and daughter-in-law sat for a peaceful family group (Fig. 209). How could I have foreseen the scenes of bloodshed and pillage which were soon to be witnessed here! Then a small but *recherché* meal united us at Lin Ta-jên's table.

The heat of the day had worn off when I finally rode away from the garden which had served as my Tun-huang camp. At the large temple outside the east gate of the town I found my Mandarin friends assembled with a large array of their officials, all in gala dress, to bid me a hearty farewell. It was a true scene from the ancient East, and the polychrome woodwork of the high temple portico made a striking frame for my last impression of Tun-huang. It was dark before I reached the edge of the oasis, and midnight by the time I rejoined my camp at a solitary road-side station in the desert. So there was plenty of time for thought of all that Tun-huang had yielded up to me. But the strain of these labours had been great, and my relief was equally great at being now free to exchange archaeological work in the torrid desert plains for geographical exploration in the mountains.