

the somnolent dwellers of An-hsi. The formal receipt drawn up in due style by Chiang on a sheet of brilliant scarlet looked imposing, and when it had been signed by Ên T'ai-tsin and stamped with his large official seal, my conscience could rest satisfied with the precautions taken against human risks.

My visit to the Telegraph Office was a less formal affair. Like the telegraph poles I first came upon here, 'Mr. Li, the Telegraph Commissioner' who looked after the single wire all the way from Su-chou to Hami, had been a novel feature in my stay at An-hsi. His letters received while near Tun-huang had been written in such excellent English that I was much surprised on arrival to find him quite unable to speak it. But his first visit had shown him as a very gentlemanly and scholarly person, and both Chiang and myself had greatly taken to him, especially as he showed keen antiquarian taste and knowledge. So I was eager to thank him once more for the unfailing care and accuracy with which he had managed my intercourse with Kashgar and Peking.

His neatly kept Ya-mên, with flower-beds in its courtyard and young trees in front of the gate, was a pleasing contrast to unkempt and desolate An-hsi. The delightfully clear atmosphere, due to the preceding rain, had exposed still more the utter decay of the place with its wind-breached wall and wide expanse of waste grounds now partly covered by pools. Within Mr. Li's quarters everything breathed an air of well-ordered activity. His modest reception room lined with neat rows of books, painted scrolls, and specimens of Chinese palaeography, as well as some ancient brasses brought from Kan-chou, plainly reflected the studious and artistic habits of this learned and yet business-like official.

His English training under the Lan-chou Mission and in the Telegraph Department's course had been gone through in less than a year. Yet judged by his ability to write a letter in plain English, and still more by the taste acquired for English reading and solid facts of Western knowledge, this very brief training had been attended by results which are rare in the case of Indian students who