

of deliciously limpid water. Here at an elevation of over 7000 feet it was still spring, and the bright green of the foliage and young crops had an exquisite offset in the brick-red and purple tints of the low and barren ridges encircling the oasis on all sides. Above those to the south-west and south, which I took for offshoots of the high To-lai-shan range farther east, the whole of the snowy main chain showed in overpowering grandeur (Fig. 218). It was, no doubt, the contrast between the fertile open valley and the towering array of white peaks in the background which helped to recall so vividly my beloved Kashmir.

In the largest of the several walled villages or 'P'u-tzu' (Fig. 221), as we got to know them, a big temple offered comfortable, if dim, quarters (Fig. 219). The magistrate of Yü-mên-hsien, on which Ch'ang-ma depended, had been duly advised of our passage, and had sent up a petty official with some soldiers to receive us. There was no want of attention; but when I insisted on arrangements for guides and transport to take us through the mountains, to the Chia-yü-kuan gate of the 'Great Wall' all knowledge of such a route was stoutly denied. That the Chinese of these parts have no love for the mountains I had learned long before; and when I offered to act as guide myself, the want of ponies or mules which would be needed for any really rough track presented a formidable obstacle. It cost great exertions to secure even camels; and in order not to allow the opposition to the route I had planned to gather strength, I thought it advisable to set out with them at once on the afternoon of July 13th, however unwilling my caravan seemed to leave the flesh-pots of Ch'ang-ma.

I managed to move it that evening to the right bank of the Su-lo Ho, which flowed here as a vehement mountain river in a steeply cut bed some twenty yards wide. The quantity of water carried down was great, as we could see when looking down upon the tumultuous turbid rush from the solid cantilever bridge which spanned the river. But how much greater the river must have been during earlier periods, I could judge from the old bed still well defined across which we moved for fully a mile before reaching the