

ground, the fertile district of Su-chou. Thus at last I was within sight of the westernmost end of the true Middle Kingdom, China 'within the Wall.'

It was getting dark when I approached the little oasis of Ta-han-chuang. Outside its square fort-hamlet two petty officers with half-a-dozen red-cloaked soldiers were drawn up in line to receive me. It was an outpost of the garrison of Chia-yü-kuan, supposed to watch the mountain flank of the 'Great Wall.' Among the 'men' was a nice-looking child of some five years, bravely wearing the red jacket left him by his father, with sleeves almost sweeping the ground. I found my tent pitched by the side of a lively brook, amidst grassy terraced fields where the scent of flowers rose in the cool air of the evening. Many fine trees could be seen in the moonlight lining the bed of the little stream, and I almost felt as if I were pitching camp once more in some quiet nook of Kashmir.