

ridge, accounts for this refreshing verdure as well as for the name of Chia-yü-kuan, 'the Barrier of the Pleasant Valley.'

To this inviting camping-ground I at once led my caravan through a big gap in the wall offering a convenient short cut. I had scarcely selected a shady clump of trees under which to pitch my tent, when Shuang Ta-jên emerged in great style from his stronghold. He proved an extremely pleasant old gentleman, full of genuine kindness. Though the constant flow of officials and others whom he must have seen passing through his Gate since taking charge some twelve years before, ought to have somewhat cooled his hospitable ardour, he would brook no excuse of mine meant to save him the trouble of a collation at his Ya-mên. Soon we were so absorbed in talk about the ancient frontier he was guarding that I forgot my longing for a 'tub' and change, and allowed myself to be carried off without further ado to the Ya-mên of the cheery old major.

The short walk through the gates and streets of Chia-yü-kuan was a treat for the eyes (Fig. 225). The high walls of reddish clay kept in fair repair, with their loop-holed battlements and numerous towers, took one back straight to the middle ages, or the East such as old travellers' sketches show it. Not less than three big vaulted gates had we to pass through before we reached the little *castrum* that hides behind these circumvallations. That the gates were all as wide open as the bars of certain London streets, and the armament of the place made up only of stones disposed in little heaps on the parapet, did not detract from the illusion. Within the second gate I passed a fine temple, said to date from Ming times, with a profusion of excellent wood-carving, and a roof of beautifully glazed green tiles (Fig. 227). The little town within the innermost wall looked sadly decayed, half the houses of its single broad street being roofless ruins. But the Ya-mên of the commandant was still a comfortable abode, and neat flower-beds in the inner courtyard relieved the faded colours of the woodwork.

How grateful I felt for the forethought of our kindly host who before treating us to a simple but neatly served