

repast had washing basins produced, with hot water, towels, and soap all complete! He had evidently made it his business to study the needs of the guests whom the great road made pass through his gates. The time passed quickly in talk about the history of these Marches and the vicissitudes to which the last great Tungan rebellion had reduced their people. Shuang Ta-jên had first come here with the forces which Liu Chin-t'ang led to the reconquest of Turkestan, and vividly he described the great efforts it had cost to provide for their passage through the desolate desert region between Chia-yü-kuan and Hami. When after an hour or so I walked back with Chiang to camp in the light of the young moon, I felt that I could not have found a more cheering welcome at the Western Gate of the Middle Kingdom.

My halt on July 20th was to be utilized for a close examination of the old walls. The start was delayed by a very early visit of Shuang Ta-jên, who came himself to bring the requested local guide. The sun had already risen high before I was free to ascend the great tower built over the west Gate, whence a distant view could be gained. From the height of the second story it was easy to follow the line of the much-decayed rampart and adjoining clay towers which stretched away across the vast plain eastwards. Most of the ground it traverses was now seen to be a bare stony Sai, with little patches of cultivation forming a thin chain. Soon I rode off north to survey the actual Chia-yü-kuan defences. That the massive clay wall which now closes the valley from south to north is built on low ground within a furlong or two of the high gravel ridge forming the natural barrier, seemed strange, until I realized to what extent the level of this ridge is broken by steep ravines. Overlooked though the wall is from the plateau crest, it was safe from being commanded in the days of arrows or matchlocks, and there was the supreme advantage of an ample supply of water from springs close at hand.

But the advantage of holding the ridge, too, had not been neglected by those who drew the line of the present wall; for the detached towers of clay surrounded by trenches and earth-walls, of which three rise between the gate strong-