

otherwise accepted for official journeyings in the plains as a recognized *corvée*.

During those last days the telegraph had brought grave news from Tun-huang, which made Tao-t'ai, General, and Magistrate inclined to show additional caution. Already at the 'Thousand Buddhas' I had heard of the decision in a long-standing case about certain revenue arrears due from Tun-huang cultivators. Trouble was anticipated on its enforcement; and in order to avoid the risk of its breaking out while I was still within the district, Wang, my considerate Amban friend, and his military coadjutor, Lin Ta-jên, were temporizing. Now news had come that the attempt to enforce the fiscal claims had resulted in a serious riot. After the chief agitator, a literatus, had forcibly resisted arrest and been killed, Wang's Ya-mên was attacked by the populace and partly destroyed, over a dozen people being killed on both sides.

There was much doubt in official circles as to how far the Tun-huang levies had upheld the cause of order. Rumour asserted that they had opened the city gate to the rioters. But there could be no doubt that Wang had faced serious danger, and was asking for armed support from Su-chou. From what Chiang could learn, there was far more disposition at the Ya-mêns to sacrifice him to the inevitable viceregal censure than to vindicate impaired official authority. The General was reported to deprecate the despatch of military aid, on the ground that if he moved out himself the troublesome people of Tun-huang might be driven into desperate courses by fear of the terrible consequences! The old Tao-t'ai, no doubt, could be trusted to shelter himself from any responsibility. Chin T'ai-tsin, the shrewd Magistrate, might well fear that, as a result of his own reputation for administrative perspicacity, he would himself eventually be ordered to undertake the unenviable task of putting things straight at Tun-huang. Was it then to be wondered at if the distant chance of trouble arising from my tour in the mountains weighed heavier on my Mandarin friends' minds than it would otherwise have done?

So my relief was great when on July 27th the longed-