

The brilliantly clear atmosphere and the coolness which set in made the next day's march to Chin-fo-ssü, only some sixteen miles away to the south-east, quite delightful. With the exception of two strips of rubble-strewn Sai, the whole of it led through fertile village land, called Hung-shan, 'the Red Hills,' from a low chain of red foot-hills. The abundance of fine old trees, mostly elms, gathered in groves near the hamlets or scattered between the fields, was striking, and the harmonious blending of the colours, the light green in the fields, and the bright red of the bare soil, a constant joy to the eye. In one of the hamlets of Hung-shan I found the walled enclosure of a small and ruinous temple occupied by a perfect bee-hive of students, tucked away in a number of half-decayed temple quarters. Droning sounds of recitation in unison issued from the hovels of the different classes, and made it easy for the simple 'Hsien-shêng' to control their progress without leaving his own little burrow, where a few more advanced students were receiving instruction in Confucian classics. Once again I was struck by the order and neatness which prevailed in this village school. Our intrusion, in spite of all the curiosity it excited, failed to draw the little ones from their writing-desks. The droning, by no means displeasing to the ear, proceeded peacefully to the accompaniment of the small bells on the gate-tower tinkling in the breeze.

The picturesque little fort-town of Kuei-yin-ssü, which we passed some four miles farther on, now completely deserted, will also keep fresh in my memory. The massive clay walls, some 250 yards square, still rose thirty feet high; but only a desolate temple and some old trees were left within. A few acres of ground along the walls were still irrigated; but elsewhere there spread terraced fields abandoned to waste. That cultivation here had considerably receded was certain. But was this the result of diminishing water-supply, or of the devastation which had followed the last great rebellion? Local enquiries, as so often among these secretive people of the border, proved useless.

Across a broad belt of sterile ground strewn with