

pebbles and boulders, we reached the long-stretched fields of Chin-fo-ssü. They occupy the central part of the large alluvial fan at the mouth of the valley by which we were to enter the mountains. The small town which gives its name, meaning the 'Shrine of the Golden Buddha,' to this fertile tract showed high and well-kept walls bearing towers and battlements (Fig. 230). Outside its eastern gate I found a posse of petty officials with a handful of red-cloaked soldiers drawn up to receive me. But the squalid temple close by intended for our accommodation looked far from attractive, and still less so the prospect of getting our water from a slimy tank just in front.

Moving up the steadily rising ground towards the debouchure of the valley I soon found a shady camping place in a terraced fruit garden overgrown with luxuriant scrub. A high watch-tower behind, surrounded by a moat, and some farm dwellings adjoining, showed the same picturesque neglect. The canal which passed by the side of this orchard was dry; but assured that water was to be let into it 'presently,' I decided to remain. Here, so close to the mountains, and about 6300 feet above the sea, the air was already much cooler. But the pleasant sensation grew fainter as hour after hour passed without the desired water arriving. When at last a few bucketfuls were brought, smell and colour showed plainly that the water came from a tank and not a running canal.

During this weary wait, which was enlivened only by a good-natured crowd of curious villagers (Fig. 231), I had to receive Chin T'ai-tsin, who had just arrived from town to arrange for my safe start. His misgivings about the pony-men brought from Su-chou were but too well founded. After depositing our baggage they and their animals vanished completely. Next day was to show whether they could be caught again or replaced by transport locally raised. A day's halt was the least allowance I could make to my Mandarin friend for trying his diplomacy and suave pressure on the recalcitrant people from Su-chou. Late at night I heard that they had crowded into his quarters and declared that they were prepared to take the severest beating rather than move into those dread