

supplies for men and animals had also to be inspected. Four donkeys were provided, in addition, to carry the pony-men's rations. In the midst of all this bustle I almost missed the farewell visit of the attentive Magistrate. The morning was delightfully cool, and as soon as the two miles of bare alluvial slope, with many traces of terraced fields now abandoned, had been crossed to the mouth of the valley, I found myself in refreshing verdure.

A picturesque tower guarded the entrance, and by its side a richly decorated temple, half in ruins, and a hamlet lay ensconced under big trees. A shop newly built by the roadside, and a gaily painted little shrine behind it, were evidently intended for the patronage of the miners who travel by this route to the gold-fields high up in the mountains. The luxuriant growth of grass and flowers which I noticed from the very debouchure was a striking contrast to the barrenness of the mountain gorges about Tun-huang and An-hsi. The far moister climate of this central part of the Nan-shan became evident at the first glance, and I greeted it with delight even though its welcome soon took the form of a steady and plentiful rain. It was so refreshing to see the steep slopes between which the gorge winds upwards clothed with true Alpine verdure, and even our many crossings of the clear stream gave pleasure.

After about six miles we passed the first of the coal-seams so abundant in these mountains. At present only scraped on the surface, they may yet prove for Kan-su the promise of a great industrial future. Two miles higher up the rough track led through a massively built wall, closing the gorge at a point where its precipitous rock sides approach within about 150 yards. A profusion of herbs and mosses covered the wall facing southwards; nowhere since leaving Kashmir had I seen the fertile powers of nature so busy at work in hiding and effacing the labours of man. Yet these remnants of a Klause looked decidedly old. A couple of miles farther on a charming little stretch of meadows, known as Ying-kao-ko, offered an excellent camping-place. The rain had stopped opportunely, and, while the tent was being pitched, I could