

course of centuries so thoroughly tamed and divested of those formidable qualities which once made them the rulers of all Asia and the terror of Europe. But supplies fit for our Chinese were scarcely obtainable, and our much-tried 'senile babies' were ever clamouring for a speedy escape to their beloved slum nursery in the plains.

Late at night on August 23rd we entered the broad Li-yüan Valley, after having in our descent passed rapidly from Alpine verdure into the familiar stony wastes of the foot-hills. Next forenoon we reached the small and pretty oasis of Li-yüan, where even our Chinese felt assured that all troubles and privations were ended. From my tent pitched in a picturesque ruined garden I watched with real relief men and beasts enjoying the great treat I had ordered for them. Not a single animal had been lost in spite of all the hard marching at great elevations, and as the photograph taken of our 'babes' (Fig. 247) shows, they too had not suffered any lasting hurt.

A day's well-merited halt was passed in pouring rain, but was made pleasant by the hospitable attention of the local commandant, a hearty old warrior, who had been expecting us for weeks past. Then on August 26th we started for Kan-chou through a tract studded with oases containing walled villages (Fig. 253). The flooded state of the rivers, which after the heavy rains spread themselves like big torrents across the plains, obliged us to move to the high road, and, causing much trouble there also, delayed our arrival until the next evening. Outside the walls of the large and populous city (Fig. 254) a grand array of Mandarins received me. The honour was somewhat embarrassing, considering the tattered condition of what clothing I had been able to take with me to the mountains.

Naik Ram Singh, who rejoined me before Kan-chou, had prepared quarters for us in a large temple-like structure outside the south city wall, and there I was welcomed by a huge bag of mails which a messenger from Mr. Macartney had brought after a sixty days' ride from Kashgar. A three months' thirst for news kept me awake for most of