

blue, and the effect of all these gorgeous colours was dazzling.

Nowhere in Turkestan had I seen a wood of such size and fruit trees in such delightful luxuriance. For nearly a mile the road turned and twisted among thick clumps of apple, apricot, and peach trees, and stately yellow-leaved walnuts. No landscape gardener in far-away England could have laid out his drive with more cunning, nor could any gardener's art produce such strangely varied fantastic shapes of trees. The handiwork of man seemed completely effaced here. Growing up among the rocks and boulders which some huge flood seemed to have scattered broadcast over the slope, every tree looked as if it had fought its own way down to the fertile bed of earth. Over the whole enticing wilderness of trees lay the peace of the evening, that great beautifier of the shelter awaiting the wanderer.

But the Wang's old country seat, to which this road of glowing colours led, did not need such embellishment. From a wide outer court, lined by a row of majestic elms still retaining their thick foliage, I passed into a smaller one fronted by a large open hall with an abundance of quaint massive wood-carving on roof, pillars, and beams. On either side of this hall there opened terraces with painted screens, and behind them whole suites of apartments which looked airy and inviting. In those to the right the chief was said usually to take up his quarters, and here felts and gay Khotan carpets had been spread out for me. But their northern aspect and shaded position, qualities which doubtless formed their special attraction during the heat of the fruit season, were not exactly suited for a chilly autumn evening. So I set out to search further for an abode in the main block of the building.

Crossing a grand hall, light and airy behind its movable screens of fretwork and paper, I discovered two sets of apartments opening direct on the Wang's private orchard and garden. Their arrangement suggested that they were meant for the ladies of the Zenana. Time and neglect had left their mark here too; the gaily painted panels of the roof, showing roses and flowery twigs in a style half-Chinese, half-Persian, were broken in more than one place, and