

high, rising close on the north, had with its concave slope buried part of the building. The farms lay all in one line and had, no doubt, like the final off-shoots of the Tun-huang oasis which stretch finger-like northward, been fed by a single canal. Here recent progress of desiccation seemed clearly established; for the present water-supply from Nan-hu, even if united in a single channel, could scarcely be conducted so far.

All trace of human occupation disappeared beyond on the bare gravel plain. The only things living were scanty tamarisk bushes growing in shallow depressions cut out apparently by rare floods from the mountains. But after we had travelled some twelve miles from Shui-i there rose in this barren plain a tower of stamped clay, much decayed, but still standing to a height of about nineteen feet. Far away to the north my binocular showed another. In construction this 'Pao-t'ai,' or 'Tun' as the Tun-huang people called them, did not differ from those we had become familiar with along the ancient wall. But its position seemed a puzzle, until the subsequent discovery of the subsidiary *Limes* running due south-south-east from the fort of Yü-mên, and bearing just in the direction of this tower, helped to explain it.

As we moved steadily on, a little to the west of north, the low but quaintly serrated hill range forming the eastern extension of the Kuruk-tagh rose clearer and clearer. To us who had seen it for days flanking our route from Lop-nor, it afforded assurance as to the relative proximity of the ancient *Limes*. But I could notice how our Chinese contingent, with the prospect of a camp in the waterless desert and no knowledge of the ground beyond, was getting fluttered and more and more straggling. So I detached Chiang-ssü-yeh and the Naik to form a sort of rear-guard. After a march of some twenty-four miles we struck a broad belt of tamarisk and other scrub; but our map showed that we were still at least twelve miles from the road which skirts the marshes below Khara-nor. To reach it that evening with the tired caravan was out of the question. All I tried to get to was some reed-covered patch which might afford grazing. But after another three or four miles