

II. JOURNEY TO TA-CHIEN-LU, IN 1878.*

CHUNG-CHING, July 7, 1878.

I HAVE the honour to report my return from a journey which, originally planned as a mere New Year's holiday, extended, from one cause and another, to Ta-chien-lu. I had started with the intention of making a rough survey of the river between Kiating and Sui-fu (Blakiston's Sü-chow), and of crossing the mountains from the former city to Fu-liu, in longitude 103°. On reaching Fu-liu, however, the country further west held out so many attractions, that I was induced to travel on to Tzu-ta-ti, the head-quarters of a Sifan chief styled "Wang Ch'ien-lui" ("Wang of a 1000 families"). Here I heard of the existence of a mountain track to Ta-chien-lu, and it seemed a pity to miss the opportunity of visiting that famous border town; but I abandoned the project on receiving a hint from the chief that he could not guarantee my safety in so wild a region.

Thereupon I turned back; but at the village of Na-erh-pa, the first stage, I was robbed, during the night, of my travelling funds and of several miscellaneous articles of no great value. This placed me in a very awkward position, especially as the sub-assistant magistrate, who resides a day's journey from the place, failed to take any action in the matter. After giving him fair time to put in an appearance, I sent a messenger to the capital with a letter which he was to give to my old Yünnan acquaintance—the Taotai Ting Shih-ping, or to the Governor-General. The messenger returned in eleven days with a very considerate letter and a loan from the Taotai, and orders came simultaneously from, I presume the Governor-General, directing all the officials within four days' journey of the village to apprehend the burglars. The sub-assistant magistrate hurried to the scene, and I soon found that the culprits were well known to everybody in the village. Only one, however, was ultimately captured, the chief of the gang, warned by his wife, escaping over the mountain.

The magistrate had received such stringent orders to make good my losses that a scheme I had formed of deriving advantage from the misadventure by refusing reimbursement, and insisting that I had nothing for it but to go on to Ta-chien-lu and obtain funds, would not even bear proposal. Very conveniently, however, he could not pay me on the spot, but wished me to wait a few weeks until the money arrived from Yueh-hsi-Ting. This I altogether declined to do, and the end of the negotiation was, that I offered to travel on to Ta-chien-lu and to receive payment on my return. This concession to his wishes he accepted with alacrity.

Payments of such indemnities are usually made by permanent Committees established for the purpose; but even if the loss fall ultimately on the natives of Na-erh-pa, I see no objection to their realizing the fact that the burglars whom they house in their midst are likely to become as disagreeable to them as they are to travellers.

So I again turn north-west. On the road to Tzu-ta-ti I met two packs of hounds, and discovered that they were sent by the Sifan chief to hunt any robbers in the event of their taking to the forest. Dramatic justice was dealt out to that potentate for his refusal to protect me, by the plundering of his father's grave; when I repassed Tzu-ta-ti he had gone in pursuit of the marauders.

The country may perhaps be considered unsettled, but the remainder of the journey was impeded by nothing worse than natural difficulties, such as fever's and the extreme ruggedness of the mountain ranges. We quitted cultivation at the

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foot of a pine forest, through which we travelled three days, ascending continually until we came to a snowy pass—the only pass in the country which, as the natives say, “hang jên,” stops people’s breathing. Descending its northern slope we soon found that we had left China behind. There were no Chinese to be seen. The valley was nearly all pasture land, on which were grazing herds of hairy animals, resembling immense goats. These I rightly conjectured to be yaks. On entering a hut, I found it impossible to communicate with the family, even a Sifan, whom I had brought with me, being unintelligible to them; but they were polite enough to rescue me from the attack of the largest dogs I have ever seen, and to regale me with barley meal in a wooden bowl, which I had to wash down with a broth made of butter, salt, and tea twigs. Further on we met a company of cavaliers, armed with matchlocks and sabre, and decorated with profuse ornaments in silver, coral, and turquoise; a troop of women followed on foot, making merry at my expense. A mile or two further, and I came to a great heap of slates, inscribed with Sanscrit characters, whereupon I began to understand that we were in Tibet; for although Tibet proper is many hundred miles west of this point, yet tribes of Tibetan race and language extend right up to the bank of the Tatu river—a fact which I had not been led to expect.

At the foot of the valley we struck the high road from Li-t’ang to Ta-chieu-lu, and I walked into the latter town on the evening of the 23rd April.

I stayed there three weeks, and learned much regarding the condition of the numerous countries included in the general name of Tibet. Inquiries respecting commercial production and distribution occupied most of my time, and I shall have a good deal to report which is interesting and, I think, useful.

We returned to Fu-liu by the high road, and the sub-magistrate of Ta-shu-pu duly paid over the sum of 170 taels, the estimated total of my losses.

From Fu-liu to Kia-ting we followed the by-road by which we had come. I took the opportunity afforded by the arrival of a Lolo chief, who called upon me, to make notes of the customs and language of his tribe. I had previously collected a sufficient vocabulary of one of the Sifan dialects.

From Kia-ting we dropped easily down the flooded current, in six days, to Chung-ching, without encountering a single rapid, and in deep water all the way, making Chung-ching on the 24th June, after an absence of nearly five months.

The information collected during my journeys enables me to report, with some confidence, on the trade and production of Western Ssu-ch’uan, and their bearing on the commercial capabilities of Chung-ching. I am preparing a report on this subject, which I propose to supplement with a full account of my explorations.

III. NOTES ON THE ROUTE FOLLOWED BY MR. GROSVENOR'S MISSION THROUGH WESTERN YÜNNAN, FROM TALI-FU TO T'ËNG-YUEH.*

“WHEN you have left Carajan and have travelled five days westward, you find a province called Zardandan. The country is wild and hard of access, full of great woods and mountains which it is impossible to pass, the air is so impure and unwholesome; and any foreigner attempting it would die for certain.”

Thus Marco Polo, in the fiftieth chapter of his second book.

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