

The mass of beautifully figured silks, both polychrome and damasks (Fig. 64), here recovered have since proved quite a revelation as regards the artistic style and technical perfection of the products of Chinese silk-weaving which travelled westwards through Lou-lan while trade still followed this route. These relics of Chinese textile art, from the time of Christ and before, claim special interest because they have been preserved for us on the very route of the earliest silk trade. But equally important is it for the student of those early relations between the Far East and the West to note that among the decorated fabrics there are found fragments of exquisitely worked tapestries in wool which display a style unmistakably Hellenistic. Whether they are of local make or imports from Central-Asian territories farther west, we have in them striking illustration of a cultural influence which that ancient desert route also served for centuries, but in the reverse direction.

The many interesting details revealed by the examination of the technique, material and designs of these specimens, the earliest so far known of China's decorative textile art, have been dealt with in *Innermost Asia*. But among the tapestries showing classical influence I may call attention at least to the fine fragment of a Hermes head quite classical in design (Fig. 65). Another tapestry piece curiously reflects the mingling of Chinese and Western art influences, and obviously was produced in Central Asia. Here decorative motifs in the border, unmistakably classical, are combined with the figure of a winged horse which is well known from Chinese sculptures of Han times (Fig. 64B).

Continuing to the north-east for another twelve miles, we soon left behind the last dry river-bed, once fed by the