

CHAPTER XIII

DISCOVERIES IN A HIDDEN CHAPEL

IN the end Wang Tao-shih was induced at night-time and in secret to hand out to my zealous assistant some specimens of Chinese manuscript rolls from the hidden store for our examination. And here a fortunate chance came to our aid in a fashion which to the priest was bound to appear like a miraculous intervention on the part of my Chinese patron saint. Even Chiang Ssü-yeh felt impressed by the portent when on close examination those rolls proved to contain Chinese versions of certain canonical Buddhist texts which the colophons declared to have been brought from India and translated by Hsüan-tsang. Was it not the spirit of the saintly pilgrim himself who had at the opportune moment revealed the hiding-place of the great manuscript hoard in order to prepare for me a fitting antiquarian reward?

Under the influence of this quasi-divine hint the priest summoned up courage that morning to open before me the rough door closing the entrance to the rock-carved recess where the great trove had lain hidden (Fig. 86). The sight disclosed in the dim light of the priest's little oil-lamp made my eyes open wide. Heaped up in layers, but without any order, there appeared a solid mass of manuscript bundles rising to ten feet from the floor and filling, as subsequent