

that nobody besides us three was to learn of the origin of these 'finds' as long as I was on Chinese soil. Thus Chiang Ssü-yeh had to be the sole carrier for seven more nights, with loads which grew steadily heavier and then needed carriage by instalments.

Those days of anxious work had resulted in the rapid search of all miscellaneous bundles piled up on the top and in the selection of non-Chinese manuscripts, documents, pictures and other relics of special interest. Then we attacked the solid rampart of hard-tied uniform packets containing Chinese manuscript rolls. This was a troublesome task in more than one sense. The mere labour of clearing out the whole closely packed room might by itself have dismayed a stouter heart than that of the Tao-shih. It needed discreet treatment and judiciously administered doses of silver to counteract his relapses into timorous contrariness.

The effort was rewarded by the discovery, quite at the bottom of those piles, of more miscellaneous bundles. From their contents, crushed as they were by the weight above, we recovered among other precious relics a beautiful embroidery picture (Fig. 89) and other remains of ancient textile art. Rapid as our examination of those hundreds of manuscript packets had to be, it led also to the recovery of more manuscripts in Indian and Central-Asian writings which had got somehow embedded among the great array of Chinese rolls. The search of all these could not be completed before the priest, seized by a sudden access of fear or compunction, departed for the oasis overnight, locking up the cave chapel with all its remaining treasures. But by that time most of the 'selections for closer study', as our