

the forgers never succeeded in producing a text showing consecutively the characters of any known script, yet their earliest fabrications were executed with an amount of care and ingenuity which might well deceive for a time even expert scholars in Europe. This may be seen by referring to the facsimiles which are given in Dr. Hoernle's Second "Report on Central-Asian Antiquities," from "codices" belonging to the early output, now deposited with so many other products of Islam Akhun's factory in the "forgery" section of the Manuscript Department of the British Museum. The facsimile of an "ancient Khotan manuscript" which appears in the German edition of Dr. Sven Hedin's work, "Through Asia," is a conveniently accessible illustration of the factory's produce in a somewhat later and less careful phase of its working.

Seeing that remunerative prices could be obtained for such articles at Kashgar and, through Badruddin's somewhat careless mediation, also from Ladak and Kashmir, the efforts of the forgers were stimulated. As Islam Akhun quickly perceived that his "books" were readily paid for, though none of the Europeans who bought them could read their characters or distinguish them from ancient scripts, it became unnecessary to trouble about imitating the characters of genuine fragments. Thus, apparently, each individual factory "hand" was given free scope for inventing his own "unknown characters." This explains the striking diversity of these queer scripts, of which the analysis of the texts contained in the "British collection" at one time revealed a least a dozen—not exactly to the assurance of the Oriental scholars who were to help in their decipherment.

The rate of production by the laborious process of hand-writing was, however, too slow, and accordingly the factory took to the more convenient method of producing books by means of repeated impressions from a series of wooden blocks. The preparation of such blocks presented no difficulty, as printing from wooden blocks is extensively practised in Chinese Turkestan. This printing of "old books" commenced in 1896, and its results are partly repre-