

unexpected testimony to the powerful influence exercised by Hellenistic art even on the very confines of true China.

After crossing the great desert by the track which Marco Polo, like early Chinese pilgrims before him, had followed on his journey to Cathay, I found myself rewarded by a big and fascinating task after my own heart. It was the discovery and exploration of the long-forgotten westernmost portion of that ancient frontier wall, or *Limes*, with which the Chinese Empire guarded the chief line for its political and commercial expansion towards Central Asia and the West against the raids of the Huns during the centuries immediately preceding and following the time of Christ. The line of the ancient wall, with its watch-towers and stations, found often in wonderful preservation, was explored for over 200 miles. Having remained undisturbed by the hand of man in the solitude of the gravel desert, it yielded a rich harvest of early Chinese and other records of historical interest, along with many curious relics of the life once led along this most desolate of borders.

Not far from Tun-huang, the chief oasis still surviving within this western extremity of the ancient 'Great Wall,' lies the sacred site of the 'Thousand Buddhas.' Buddhist piety of early times has here honey-combed the rock walls of a true Thebais with hundreds of cave temples, once richly decorated with frescoes and stucco sculptures, and still objects of worship. Here I had the good fortune in the spring of 1907 to gain access to a great deposit of ancient manuscripts and art relics which had lain hidden and perfectly protected in a walled-up rock chapel for about nine hundred years. The story how I secured here twenty-four cases heavy with manuscript treasures rescued from that strange place of hiding, and five more filled with paintings, embroideries, and similar remains of Buddhist art, has been characterized by a competent observer as a particularly dramatic and fruitful incident in the history of