

difficulties which interpretation of them was likely to cause thereafter, quite apart from the closely packed writing and the very cursive script. Tibetan literature, while abounding in canonical Buddhist texts and works of a devotional nature, possesses exceedingly few specimens of early secular writing. For the full elucidation of documents such as the fort of Miran has yielded, philological acumen is needed combined with intimate knowledge of the living language and the ways of Tibet. The Rev. Dr. A. H. Francke of the Moravian Mission, Leh, one of my former collaborators and the recognized authority on the antiquities of Western Tibet, is the scholar best suited for the task, and to my great satisfaction he has agreed to undertake it. But obligations arising from recent exploratory tours of his own prevent him for months to come from making a complete examination of my Tibetan records. In the meantime I must content myself here with a brief summary of such indications as emerge from his preliminary scrutiny of some documents on paper and wood, and similar notes kindly communicated to me by my friend, Dr. F. W. Thomas, the learned Librarian of the India Office.

The information so far available leaves no doubt that the great mass of the Tibetan records from Miran consists, as suspected by me from the first, of miscellaneous 'office papers,' reports, applications, etc., addressed mainly to the officers commanding the Tibetan garrison. Topics of a military interest seem to predominate, affording glimpses of the disturbed condition of things in that region. Out of the dozen and a half of documents so far translated in extracts, six distinctly refer to encounters with hostile troops. In one tablet addressed to the chief officer at 'Great Nob' we hear of a convoy having been captured and of troops being ordered to move against the attackers. In another the 'council of the fort of Little Nob' report to 'the great Lord, the general officer' how, while they were engaged in strengthening the defences, the enemy made an attack, killing their families and destroying certain supplies. There is a tablet from some small oasis calling for quick assistance to defend the threatened northern frontier and reporting disturbances in Western