

able local friends and protectors, Lin Ta-jên and Wang Ta-lao-ye, turned up for a visit. I had little doubt they were both glad to welcome us back at headquarters, and interested, too, to hear from our own mouths the story of our peregrinations and finds. But there was information, too, gathered as we passed through the town, to explain an increased display of official attention and support. It appeared that the telegraphic salutation I had sent to the Lan-chou Viceroy on arrival within the Kan-su borders had promptly been followed up by a telegraphic circular from that high dignitary to the Tao-t'ais of the several provinces, and through them to all the magistrates, strongly recommending me and my researches to official notice.

This explained the embarrassing haste of my friendly visitors. But for the length of their visit I had to hold my own finds to account. With the enthusiasm of a trained scholar Wang Ta-lao-ye could not forgo the pleasure of handling and *impromptu* deciphering those 'wooden letters' of the great Han times. Little problems which had baffled my 'field literatus' only incited his zeal. Tablet after tablet was scanned and commentated with a rapidity and ease which, despite my ignorance of Sinologist lore, enabled me to realize the sound learning of this Kan-su edition of P'an Ta-jên. Lin, his military colleague, wisely refrained from any pretence at equal scholarly qualifications. Yet I could see that his lively interest too was roused by the details of military organization on this ancient frontier, as revealed in those modest records from the posts once guarding it. I did not fail to use the opportunities offered by whetted appetites and by the support from higher quarters in order to impress my friends with the need of effectively combating local *vis inertiae* in the way of labour for excavations and adequate transport arrangements.

I was doubly glad for the diminished cold within the oasis; for it was 3 A.M. before I could close my mail that night, and with an icy gale blowing it would have been impossible to keep my tent warm enough for all the long writing. There was no time to make up for lost sleep; for from an early hour next morning arrangements