

the size of the halls quite unsuited for habitation; the choice of a building site conveniently accessible yet well raised above the adjoining ground; the arrangements for guarding the building, not against hostile attack, but against theft, all found thus their simple explanation.

But definite proof was supplied only by M. Chavannes' detailed analysis of the still legible records. One among them is an issue order for grain signed by three officials specifically named as in charge of the granary. Another is still more significant, because it is an acknowledgment for a large consignment of corn delivered from a specified area of cultivation in the Tun-huang oasis, evidently as its contribution towards commissariat requirements of the border. Elsewhere, again, we find an order for twenty suits of a particular sort of clothing such as a military magazine might store.

The advantages of an advanced base of supply on this desert border, both for the troops which guarded it and for the expeditions, missions, and caravans which passed along it, must be obvious to any one familiar with the difficulties of moving large bodies of men over such ground. As I looked towards this ruined magazine from the route edging the plateau, and twenty centuries ago the main artery for Chinese trade and political expansion westward, I could not help turning my thoughts back to the huge sheds and 'commissariat godowns' which the traveller must pass as he approaches Peshawar. They contain the military stores provided for an advance, if ever it be needed, by the one great route which connects India in its extreme north-west corner with Kabul and thence with Central Asia.

And yet what a smiling look even the most barren parts of the Khyber Pass bear when compared with the desert through which the Chinese once moved their troops to Lop-nor! In those days the great magazine must have seen busy scenes, and quarters for guards and administrative *personnel*, no doubt, existed near it. The remains of all such less permanent structures had disappeared before the attack of wind erosion or moisture, except on a clay terrace near the eastern enclosing wall, where we came upon layers of refuse, and below them a room partly dug