

sand-ridges rising to over 250 feet in height. There was the limpid little lake, of crescent shape and about a quarter of a mile long, which has given to the locality its name and its sanctity. Such delicious springs issuing between dunes of huge size and ever safe from being smothered by them, would have been worshipped in India as the residence of some great 'Naga' or spring deity. No doubt, more than one Indian Buddhist passing through Tun-huang to China must have felt strangely at home here.

Near the eastern point of the crescent, where the lake has its outflow, there was room for small meadows where our ponies revelled in juicy grass such as they had never before tasted. The southern shore of the lake was occupied by a number of picturesque modern temples, rising on terraces from the water's edge and decorated with a queer medley of Buddhist and Taoist statues and frescoes (Fig. 185). Just in front of them and across the lake rose the famous resounding sand-hill, often mentioned in old Chinese records, about which the curious may read learned notes in Sir Henry Yule's translation of Ser Marco's book, where it deals with 'the Province of Tangut.'

I had ridden out to this secluded spot to enjoy undisturbed work 'in Purdah,' as our Anglo-Indian phrase runs. But Chiang, my only companion, though he had brought out work too, could not forgo the temptation of climbing to the top of the huge dune in his dainty velvet boots, just to make the sand slide down from there and hear the 'miraculous rumbling' it produced. It was quite in keeping with his usual keenness to get at 'real truths.' We all duly heard the faint sound like that of distant carts rumbling, and Chiang felt elated to put it down in his Journal.

There was no other noise to disturb me all day. In spite of its popular favour as attested by votive inscriptions in plenty, the whole place was deserted for the sake of the 'Thousand Buddhas' fête-day. Only one discreet figure moved about, a quaint, good-natured old priest, who remembered gratefully the little present I had left when paying my first visit here in March. As I sat writing in the shady spacious hall, and watched him