

injunctions had really been issued and, perhaps, an official inventory taken, things would necessarily, from our point of view, become far more complicated.

Fortunately Chiang's apprehensions on this score were dispelled by what the priest, turning talkative at times like many nervous people, let drop in conversation. A few rolls of Chinese texts, apparently Buddhist, had, indeed, been sent to the Viceregal Ya-mên at Lan-chou. But their contents had not been made out there, or else they had failed to attract any interest. Hence officialdom had rested satisfied with the rough statement that the whole of the manuscripts would make up about seven cartloads, and evidently dismayed at the cost of transport, or even of close examination, had left the whole undisturbed in charge of the Tao-shih as guardian of the temple.

But apart from this piece of information, the gist of Chiang-ssü-yeh's long report seemed far from justifying great hopes. In spite of the optimistic tinge which Chiang's ever-cheerful disposition was apt to impart to his observations, there was much reason to fear that the priest's peculiar frame of mind would prove a serious obstacle. To rely on the temptation of money alone as a means of overcoming his scruples was manifestly useless. So I thought it best to study his case in personal contact. Accompanied by Chiang I proceeded in the afternoon to pay my formal call to the Tao-shih, and asked to be shown over his restored cave-temple. It was the pride and the mainstay of his Tun-huang existence, and my request was fulfilled with alacrity. As he took me through the lofty antechapel with its substantial woodwork, all new and lavishly gilt and painted, and through the high passage or porch giving access and light to the main cella, I could not help glancing to the right where an ugly patch of unplastered brickwork then still masked the door of the hidden chapel (Fig. 188). This was not the time to ask questions of my pious guide as to what was being guarded in that mysterious recess, but rather to display my interest in what his zeal had accomplished in the clearing of the cella and its sacred adornment.

The restoration had been only too thorough. In the