

not have done to breathe to him unholy words of sale and purchase; it was equally clear that any removal would have to be effected in strictest secrecy. So when we stepped outside the temple there was nothing in our hands or about our persons to arouse the slightest suspicion.

Then, tired as we all were, I took the occasion to engage the priest in another long talk about our common hero and patron saint, the great Hsüan-tsang. What better proof of his guidance and favour could I claim than that I should have been allowed to behold such a wonderful hidden store of sacred relics belonging to his own times and partly derived, perhaps, from his Indian wanderings, within a cave-temple which so ardent an admirer of 'T'ang-sêng' had restored and was now guarding? Again I let the Tao-shih enlarge, as we stood in the loggia, upon the extraordinary adventures of his great saint as depicted in those cherished frescoes on its walls (Fig. 189). The panel which showed Hsüan-tsang returning with his animal heavily laden with sacred manuscripts from India, was the most effective apologue I could advance for my eager interest in the relics the Tao-shih had discovered and was yet keeping from daylight.

The priest in his more susceptible moods could not help acknowledging that this fate of continued confinement in a dark hole was not the purpose for which the great scholar-saint had let him light upon these precious remains of Buddhist lore, and that he himself was quite incompetent to do justice to them by study or otherwise. Was it not evident, so Chiang pleaded with all the force of his soft reasoning, that by allowing me, a faithful disciple of Hsüan-tsang, to render accessible to Western students the literary and other relics which a providential discovery had placed so abundantly in his keeping, he would do an act of real religious merit? That this pious concession would also be rewarded by an ample donation for the benefit of the shrine he had laboured to restore to its old glory, was a secondary consideration merely to be hinted at.

Whatever impression such and similar talks produced on the mind of the good Tao-shih, constantly vacillating between fears about his saintly reputation and a business-