

silk paintings of all sizes, and some beautiful embroidered pieces. One of the latter was a magnificent embroidery picture, remarkable for design, colours, and fineness of material, and showing a Buddha between Bodhisattvas in life size, which I shall have occasion to discuss hereafter (Plate IX.).

Perhaps it was a lively sensation of the toil he had undergone and now longed to see ended, or else the fear that we were now touching those precious Chinese Sutra texts to which alone he seemed to attach any real value. At any rate the Tao-shih at this stage came to business, so to speak, by asking for a substantial 'subscription' (*pu-shih*) to his temple. At the same time he protested that any cession of sacred texts or 'Chings' was impossible. I myself was glad to take up the theme; for I had recognized long before that it was my duty towards research to try my utmost to rescue, if possible, the whole of the collection from the risk of slow dispersion and loss with which it was threatened in such keeping.

But at the same time I could not close my eyes to the serious difficulties and objections. I was quite unable to form any definite estimate of the philological value of those masses of Chinese canonical texts which made up the bulk of the hidden library. Their contents were, no doubt, to be found in the complete editions of the Buddhist 'Tripitaka,' printed for centuries past in China, Korea, Japan. Still less was I able to select those texts which for one reason or other were possessed of antiquarian or literary interest. The removal of so many cart-loads of manuscripts would inevitably give publicity to the whole transaction, and the religious resentment this was likely to arouse in Tun-huang, even if it did not lead to more serious immediate consequences, would certainly compromise my chance of further work in Kan-su.

Nevertheless, I was prepared to face these risks rather than forgo the endeavour to rescue the whole hoard. Chiang-ssü-yeh, in spite of misgivings justified by his knowledge of the local conditions, loyally did his best to persuade the Tao-shih that removal of the collection to a 'temple of learning in Ta-Ying-kuo,' or England, would in