

had shifted back overnight almost the whole of them to their gloomy prison of centuries. His sullen temper gave us further cause of anxiety. But the advantage we possessed by already holding loads of valuable manuscripts and antiques, and the Tao-shih's unmistakable wish to secure a substantial sum of money, led at last to what I had reason to claim as a substantial success in this diplomatic struggle.

He agreed to let me have fifty well-preserved bundles of Chinese text rolls and five of Tibetan ones, besides all my previous selections from the miscellaneous bundles. For all these acquisitions four horse-shoes of silver, equal to about Rs.500, passed into the priest's hands; and when I surveyed the archaeological value of all I could carry away for this sum, I had good reason to claim it a bargain. Of course, after so severe a struggle I lost no time in removing the heavy loads of Chinese and Tibetan rolls. Until now my devoted Ssü-yeh had struggled to my tent night by night with the loads of daily 'selections'; but to this task his physical strength would not have been equal. So help had to be sought on this occasion from Ibrahim Beg and Tila, my trusted followers; and after two midnight trips to the temple, under the screening shadow of the steep river bank, the huge sackfuls were safely transferred to my store-room without any one, even of my own men, having received an inkling.

The Tao-shih's nervousness had been increased by prolonged absence from his clients in the oasis; and now he hastened to resume his seasonal begging tour in the Tun-huang district. But a week later he returned, reassured that the secret had not been discovered and that his spiritual influence, such as it was, had suffered no diminution. So we succeeded in making him stretch a point further, and allow me to add some twenty more bundles of manuscripts to my previous selections, against an appropriate donation for the temple. When later on it came to the packing, the manuscript acquisitions needed seven cases, while the paintings, embroideries, and other miscellaneous relics filled five more. The packing of these was a very delicate task and kept me busy on the days when photographic