

fineness of the material added to the difficulties of immediate examination and safe transport.

A fair number, indeed, of the narrow painted banners from the 'miscellaneous' bundles which a lucky chance first placed in my hands, were found neatly rolled up, with their silk material still so pliable and soft that they could be unfolded without risk. The masses of ex-voto rags of all sorts and crumpled-up paper amidst which they were embedded had helped to protect the delicate fabric from pressure and consequent hardening. But in other bundles these pictures had fared worse, and those in particular which I was able to pick out from among the heavy Chinese rolls of regular 'library bundles' showed only too plainly under what crushing weight they had suffered. They were pressed into tight little packets, so hard and brittle that no attempt at opening them was possible on the spot.

The big paintings on silk ranging up to over six feet square, had naturally been affected even more by this compression of some nine hundred years. I could not venture to open out even those which appeared to have been folded at the time of their deposition in a more or less regular fashion, from fear of increasing the damage undergone at the creases. But most of these big pictures presented themselves merely as shapeless large parcels of crumpled-up silk, of which it was quite impossible at the time to determine the contents. There was abundant proof in the shape of dirt-encrustation, backings with paper, and other repairs to show that many of them had suffered from long use, incense-smoke, and the like, perhaps for considerable periods before they were put away in such careless fashion within their dark hiding-place.

The task of safely packing these convolutes of often extremely brittle silk gauze was difficult enough. But though they travelled quite safely, the proper opening out and examination in the case of most of these paintings, whether big or small, could not be commenced until they had been subjected to a special chemical treatment under expert hands in the British Museum. Though this labour, requiring extreme care, has now proceeded steadily for over a year in the Department of Prints and Drawings