

Finding this scene pictured in much the same fashion elsewhere, I could not resist the conclusion that the theme which the artist in each case aimed at emphasizing was the contrast between the Holy One's gentle gesture of fanning and the violent storm shaking the royal tent far away in the distance. Was it a divine warning miraculously conveyed to an erring prince, or some similar legend, and had the wind-swept condition of this Tun-huang region perhaps something to do with the local popularity of the story? Whatever its true interpretation may prove to be, it is certain that the original designer of this composition commanded no small degree of artistic imagination and skill.

During these weeks of uninterrupted strenuous labour it was no small relief from the strain and anxieties which attended my tasks with Wang Tao-shih that there were such works of true art to claim my attention. My sole relaxation between the day's struggle with materials only too abundant and the note-writing which had to follow at night time, were strolls in the dusk up the wild gorge of rock into which the valley of the 'Thousand Buddhas' rapidly narrowed higher up. On my return from there one dust-laden evening a delightful surprise awaited me at my tent. Turdi, my faithful Dak-man, had arrived with two huge bags of mails. From Abdal quaint old Mullah had guided him along the high barren plateaus of the Altin-tagh, where water was almost scarcer than by the desert route, but, of course, no such trouble from heat. By a succession of forced rides on ponies hired from each little oasis Turdi had managed to cover the distance from Khotan within a month and a half.

It was a remarkably quick performance, considering that over most of the ground the ponies had to carry food supplies for themselves and their rider; I could well imagine what Turdi's hardships had been from heat, sand-storms, and the frequent want of water. But stolid and close-tongued as usual, my trusty postman allowed little to be extracted from him besides bare dates and 'Salams' from all the Begs who knew me between Khotan and Charklik. Since the beginning of February I had sadly missed all