

quite a delightful experience. But it was also a reminder that the conditions of practically unbroken dryness which had favoured my search for antiquities as far as the Tun-huang desert could not be expected to extend much farther east. The carts by which the baggage was to move to Ch'iao-tzū had been promised for that day. But when I saw the water-logged condition of the fields and lanes under a sky of true Europe hue, I was less inclined to chafe at the inevitable Cathayan delay.

At last, on June 24th, I was able to leave An-hsi. The transfer to the Ya-mên of all cases with manuscripts and antiques, as well as of all stores and equipment which could be spared till the autumn, had greatly reduced our impedimenta. Three light carts sufficed for their transport, and by 9 A.M. I saw them safely move off with the majority of my party. I myself with Chiang-ssü-yeh had to pay farewell visits at the Ya-mên, a welcome opportunity to convince myself personally that the place of storage in the magistrate's official quarters was as safe as human forethought could provide in this region. The obliging if somewhat timorous Mandarin had allotted to them a room airy and easily watched within his private courtyard. Large beams had been laid over pillars of bricks to raise the precious cases well above the ground, and Ibrahim Beg was to see to it that once every week they were carried out into the sun to prevent all possibility of damp attacking the contents.

In spite of the exceptional rain which had fallen the day before, there was in truth little fear on this score in wind-swept and sun-parched An-hsi. But it was a convenient means to assure a frequent check by faithful Ibrahim Beg of my precious deposit. The Amban had accepted full responsibility for its safe keeping as far as numbers and seals could show it, and Ibrahim's weekly inspections would help to keep alive this sense of official responsibility. Elaborate fastenings on each case, secured by seals within wooden seal-cases copied from ancient specimens, would effectively prevent 'unauthorized inspection' of the contents, if such an excess of antiquarian curiosity—or greed—could be apprehended on the part of