

preparations for our respective journeys. On October 3rd I was at last able to let Rai Ram Singh start on his return to India, which he reached safely three months later after rapid and almost continuous travel *via* Khotan, Sarikol, and Gilgit. A little earlier Rai Lal Singh had been sent out to survey the remains of the Wall north of the Su-lo Ho.

He had scarcely returned when there arrived also Chiang-ssü-yeh, whom I had despatched on a secret mission to Wang Tao-shih, bringing with him in the stealth of night four camels heavily laden with more manuscripts from the 'treasure cave.' A written proposal for further 'selections' sent through a trusty messenger had met with a cautious response; but in order to avoid all suspicions I was obliged to remain away from the scene and to entrust the execution to my ever-zealous secretary. How he had managed to secure the timorous Taoist monk, and to induce him for a very reasonable recompense to hand out at night over two hundred additional bundles of Chinese texts, was quite a dramatic story. The whole was managed most discreetly. Ibrahim Beg with Hassan Akhun and his camels, now refreshed by a long holiday in the mountains, furnished the transport. They had carefully kept clear of the high road on their way to the rendezvous at the caves, and marching only at night on their return escaped all inquisitive eyes.

Having secured this addition to my archaeological impedimenta, I was glad to leave behind me by October 8th that dreary *carrefour* of Asia, An-hsi, and to be quit for a time of wearisome report-writing and accounts. Eleven long marches carried us and our big caravan northwards to Hami through the barren hills of the Pei-shan. It was a wilderness of gravel and crumbling rock which we crossed here, a true stony 'Gobi' with a width of over two hundred miles. With none of the successive ranges through which the route leads rising much above 6000 feet, there is little to observe here for the traveller who is not a geologist. But I knew that, ever since Chinese power first asserted itself at Hami, about 60 B.C., this 'Northern road,' with the few alternative