

called his attention to the panel which showed Hsüan-tsang returning from India as he leads his horse heavily laden with sacred manuscripts. It was the most effective parable in support of my plea to be allowed to render accessible to Western students as much as possible of the relics which Wang Tao-shih had discovered, and yet was keeping from daylight.

Chiang Ssü-yeh remained behind and used all the force of his persuasive reasoning to urge upon the priest that continued confinement in a dark hole was not the purpose for which T'ang-sêng had allowed him to light upon these remains of Buddhist doctrine and worship. Since he himself was quite incompetent to do justice to them by study, it would be an act of real religious merit to allow Buddhist scholars in India and the West to benefit by them. That this pious concession would also be rewarded by an ample donation for the benefit of the shrine was an argument which lost none of its force from being advanced with discretion—and supported by a preceding unconditioned gift of silver. It was impossible to feel sure what impression all such talks produced on the mind of the Tao-shih. He seemed constantly to vacillate between fears about his saintly reputation and a shrewd grasp of the advantages to be attained for his cherished task by accommodating me with regard to useless old things.

In any case it was for Chiang Ssü-yeh alone to tackle the question of the best way to secure quietly the manuscripts and paintings selected. As it proved, I had not trusted in vain his zeal and diplomatic ability. It was towards midnight, and I was about to retire to rest, when he came with cautious footsteps to make sure that nobody was stirring near my tent. A little later he returned with a big bundle, and my satisfaction was great when assured that it contained all my 'selections'. The Tao-shih in the end had summoned up courage to fall in with my wishes, but with the explicit stipulation that nobody besides us three was to learn what was being transacted, and that as long as I was on Chinese soil the origin of these 'finds' was to be kept entirely secret. He himself was afraid of being seen at night outside his temple quarters. So Chiang Ssü-yeh took it upon himself to be the sole carrier. For seven nights more he thus came to my tent, with loads which grew steadily heavier and in the end needed carriage by instalments. It was trying work for my slightly built scholar friend, and the cheerful devotion with which he performed it remains, like all his other zealous help, deeply impressed on my memory.

Secret removal of 'selections'.

SECTION II.—FINDS IN A POLYGLOT LIBRARY

The hopes which that first day's successful work had raised were not disappointed by the results of my subsequent labours. Nor did the difficult conditions with which we had to contend in the exploration of the great hidden deposit undergo any essential change. But there is no need to describe in similar detail how the search was continued day after day without remission, and still less to record in quasi-chronological order all the interesting finds which rewarded this 'digging'. That the contents of the walled-up chapel were no longer in the order in which they had been deposited was clear. Any indications that the original position of the bundles might have afforded at the time of discovery had necessarily become effaced when the recess was cleared out in search of valuables and, later again, on the occasion of the removal of the big inscribed slab from its west wall. Even the assortment of the contents in each bundle was likely to have been often disturbed. Besides, it was mere chance in what order the Tao-shih would hand out the bundles.

Continued exploration of deposit.

There was no time during that hurried search to appreciate properly the antiquarian import of all that passed through my hands. Even in the case of the materials which I put aside as of special interest and secured, systematic study was bound to take years of expert labour. A review of what these researches have so far established as regards the main classes of relics must be left for

History of hidden deposit.