

Return of
Naik Rām
Singh to
India.

I need not here relate the story, already fully told in my Personal Narrative, of the efforts I made to obtain professional examination and help as early as possible. During his brief rest at Khotan he bore himself most bravely, like the true soldier he was, and was full of hope for ultimate recovery. But at Yārkand, where I hastened to send him with all due provision for his comfort, the Rev. G. Raquette of the Swedish Medical Mission diagnosed the incurable disease. His report received three weeks later caused me the deepest distress, but at least assured me that the disease might have come on just as well if Naik Rām Singh had never volunteered for this journey. Nothing but a timely operation could have offered a chance of saving his eyesight—if premonitory symptoms which might remain unperceived even by the medical man had ever been rightly diagnosed. In accordance with Mr. Raquette's advice I arranged to have the poor sufferer conveyed to Ladāk as soon as the Kara-koram route opened, and thence to India. I spared no efforts to make all possible provision for his comfort and safety on the way. He travelled to Ladāk without any mishap. Thence Captain (now Major) D. G. Oliver, the British Joint Commissioner, saw him safely through to Kashmir. When Dr. A. Neve, the distinguished head of the Srinagar Church Mission Hospital and an old friend, could only confirm the sad verdict, there was a brother at hand to take poor Rām Singh home to his native village near Firōzpur in the Punjab. Thence he came to meet me on my passage through Lahore in December, a meeting made doubly distressing by the signs of far-advanced mental decay I then noticed in the sufferer. His substantial pay accumulations were entrusted by me to the safe keeping of his regimental authorities, who showed the greatest solicitude in his case. During my visit to Calcutta I did my utmost to urge the claims of this faithful companion to special consideration. H. E. the late Lord Minto, then Viceroy, showed kind interest in his case, and soon after I learned to my relief that the Government of India had generously granted him a special pension, fully adequate to his and his family's needs. When before the end of 1909 death had relieved him from all further suffering, the greater part of the pension was continued to the widow and son as a well-deserved act of grace.

Chiang Ssū-
yeh's
scholarly
help.

The strain thrown upon me by all these anxieties and exacting tasks was great. All the more I appreciated the comfort of having Chiang Ssū-yeh by my side to share my cares and sorrow. He himself was always hard at work on urgent scholarly tasks that I had set him: the preliminary decipherment and transcription of the ancient Chinese records from the Tun-huang Limes and elsewhere, and the preparation of a rough slip catalogue for at least a portion of the Chinese manuscripts recovered from the 'Thousand Buddhas'. The great value of his work on the former task has been duly acknowledged by M. Chavannes, the most competent of judges. As regards the latter, the mere fact that it has been impossible to secure the complete cataloguing of those thousands of manuscripts, during the years passed since their safe deposition in London, makes me now appreciate all the more what Chiang Ssū-yeh achieved for at least a third or so of their bulk during those weary hot weeks at Khotan.

Prepara-
tions for
K'un-lun
expedition.

In addition to all labours of packing, much care and trouble were entailed by the preparations for my long-planned expedition into the high K'un-lun ranges south of Khotan. My explorations of 1900 and 1906 in the Karanghu-tagh mountains had proved the impossibility of reaching the headwaters of the Yurung-kāsh through the deep gorges in which the river cuts its way westwards. So I had decided long before upon a fresh effort to be made from the east where that as yet wholly unexplored mountain region joins the extreme north-west of the high Tibetan plateaus. Thence I proposed to make my way past the sources of the Keriya River and along the unsurveyed southern slopes of that portion of the main K'un-lun range which with its glaciers feeds the uppermost Yurung-kāsh. In the end this expedition was to bring R. B. Lāl Singh and myself to the south-eastern sources of the Kara-kāsh River. Descending this we were to gain the trade