

locally by certain fiscal measures, which within a month after my departure actually found vent in a serious outbreak, and which it would have been obviously unwise to precipitate by any action on my part.

Attempt to
secure
whole
hoard.

I decided, nevertheless, rather to face these risks than forgo the endeavour to rescue the whole hoard. Though Chiang Ssü-yeh did not conceal from me misgivings justified by his knowledge of local conditions, he loyally did his best to persuade the Tao-shih that removal of the collection to a 'temple of learning' in India, or in the land of those who held sway of the ancient home of Buddhism, would be an act which might well be approved as pious. The big sum I had authorized Chiang to offer for the collection, if ceded in bulk (40 'horseshoes' of silver, about Rs. 5,000, which I should have been prepared to double if need be), was used by him as a powerful argument. It would enable Wang to retire to his native province and a life of peace, if Tun-huang should become too hot for him. Or else he might spend it all on new structures for religious use near the cave-temple, which by his restoration he could claim to have annexed as his own with all its contents known or unknown, and thus secure much-increased merit and glory.

Difficulties
encountered
with priest.

Arguments and pleadings proved vain. Having before resignedly closed his eyes to my gathering whatever I thought of special artistic or antiquarian interest, the Tao-shih now manifestly became frightened by the prospect of losing his precious 'Chings' as a whole. A display of sulky petulance on his part made, for the first time, our relations become somewhat strained, and only by very careful handling did we obviate what threatened to become a breach. The Tao-shih persisted in urging with all signs of sincere anxiety that any deficiency in those piles of sacred texts was bound to be noticed by his patrons, whose publicly recorded subscriptions had helped him to clear and restore the temple; this would lead to the loss of the position which he had built up for himself in the district by the pious labours of eight years and to the destruction of his life's task. Former scruples reasserting themselves, he reproached himself for having given up sacred objects which his patrons had as much right to control as he had, and doggedly asserted the need of consulting them before taking any further step.

Agreement
arrived at
with Wang
Tao-shih.

These discussions, carried on intermittently, helped to gain time for the clearing of the newly disclosed mixed bundles, and by the evening of the second day it was completed. But when I returned early next morning in order to start the close search of the regular Chinese bundles for any remnants of Central-Asian texts or other relics of special interest that might be hidden among their rolls, I found to my dismay that the priest, seized by a fit of perturbation and qualms, had found strength to shift back overnight almost the whole of them to their gloomy hiding-place. The exertion which this *coup* had cost him only added to the sullenness of his temper. But the quantity of valuable paintings, non-Chinese manuscripts, and other relics already removed gave us a material advantage. This, and the Tao-shih's unmistakable wish to secure a substantial sum of money for new building operations that he contemplated, led at last to what I could well consider a substantial success in our protracted diplomatic struggle. The agreement arrived at assured me fifty compact bundles of Chinese, and five of Tibetan, text rolls, besides all my selections from the 'mixed' bundles which had passed through my hands. The payment made for all these acquisitions amounted to four 'horseshoes' of silver, or about Rs. 500. When I now survey the wealth of archaeological materials alone that I carried away for this sum, the bargain may well seem great beyond credence.

Secret re-
moval of
'selections'.

The experience gained of the Tao-shih's pusillanimous frame of mind made me doubly anxious to lose no time in removing the heavy loads of Chinese and Tibetan rolls. So far it had been my devoted Chinese secretary who night by night struggled to my tent with the loads of my daily 'selections'. But the new task being wholly beyond his strength, I sought help on this occasion