

him to cross the frontier, and his companions were deserting him, but what matter? "He desired to walk in the footsteps of the saints and sages, to restore the religious laws and convert foreign peoples. He would have braved the winds and the waves without blenching and in the presence of the Emperor himself he would only have become more fortified in the strength of his character." Disdaining human aid, he retired into the seclusion of a sacred tower, "in order to reveal his intentions to the multitude of the saints and to pray to them to surround his faring forth and his return with their invisible protection."

A vision strengthened the apostle in his resolve. One night, in the year 629, he saw in a dream the holy mountain of Sumeru, towering in the midst of the sea. Desiring to reach the sacred summit, he did not hesitate to fling himself into the bosom of the waves. At that moment a mystic lotus appeared beneath his feet, and set him down without effort at the foot of the mountain. The latter, however, was so steep that he would not have been able to climb it. But a mysterious whirlwind raised him aloft and suddenly he found himself transported to the summit. There he beheld a vast horizon with nothing to hinder his view, a symbol of the countless lands that his faith was about to conquer. In an ecstasy of joy he awoke.

Some days later he set out for the Wide West.

Title: Xuanzang's Travels

Grousset, René
In the Footsteps of the Buddha
London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1932

CHAPTER III

THROUGH THE WIDE WEST

THE pilgrim was about twenty-six years old when he set forth. He was very handsome, and tall, like many of the Chinese of the north. "His colouring was delicate, his eyes brilliant. His bearing was grave and majestic, and his features seemed to radiate charm and brightness." There is no doubt that a strong attraction emanated from his powerful personality, which combined strength with gentleness; many episodes of his journey bear witness to the fact. "His voice was pure and penetrating in quality and his words were brilliant in their nobility, elegance, and harmony, so that his hearers never grew weary of listening to him . . . He liked wearing ample garments of fine cotton and a broad belt which gave him the manner and appearance of one of the *literati*."

It may well be that the superiority of his genius consisted in this close association of ancient Confucian wisdom and Buddhist tenderness. He had all the qualities of the Confucian, not only the formal qualities in which lies the charm of Chinese or Japanese society—the hereditary politeness carried, when circumstances demand it, to the pitch of heroism—but also the deeper virtues, such as common-sense, prudence, moderation, discretion in everyday life, infinite delicacy in matters of friendship, and evenness of temperament. "A strict observer of discipline, he was always the same. His affectionate kindness and his tender piety, his steadfast zeal and his unswerving devotion to the practices of the Buddhist Law were unequalled. Moreover, he was reserved in his

friendship and did not lightly form ties." And beneath all this, there was the radiance, the interior joy of the great mystics. "His bearing was mild and easy. He looked straight ahead of him, never glancing to right or left. He had the majesty of the great waters that surround the earth, the serenity and brilliance of the lotus that rises from the midst of the waters . . ."

Determined to fulfil his vow at all costs, he reached the high valleys and gorges of the present Kan-su, the westernmost of the Chinese provinces, which cuts like a wedge into the Land of Grasses, between the Gobi sands and the wild plateau of the Kōko-nor. Liang-chou, the last town of importance in Kan-su, was already what it is to-day, the head of the caravan routes leading to Mongolia and Tarim. It was also a market frequented by all the peoples of the Wide West, from the bend of the Yellow River as far as Pamir. We can picture this cosmopolitan crowd, as it appears in some fresco of Bāzāklik, near Turfān, where in a *pranidhi* scene we see a procession of bearded donors, very varied in type, some rather Turkish, others definitely Iranian, some of them wearing a kind of flat helmet, and all followed by their camels and their mules, "Buddhist Magi-kings," modelled doubtless on the Turkestan or Sogdian caravan traders whom the trade in silk attracted to the Chinese frontiers.

Hsüan-tsang availed himself of one of these fairs at Liang-chou, where so many different tribes thronged together, to begin his preaching. We are told that the worthy caravan traders whom he had converted pressed upon him in their gratitude gold and silver and white horses. He passed on nearly all these gifts to the Buddhist monasteries of the country "to provide for the upkeep of the lamps" and the other needs of the community.

Beyond Kan-su China ended and the Wide West began, with the stony or clayish and salt deserts of Gobi. It was a terribly inhospitable country. A century later, in spite of the conquests made in the interval by the T'ang armies, the poets of the court of Ming-huang expressed in their verse the age-old terror of the Chinese soul face to face with these hostile deserts.

"In the autumn," sings Li T'ai-po, "our neighbours of the frontiers come down from their mountains. We must pass the Great Wall and go to meet them. The bamboo tiger is divided and the general sets out on the march; the soldiers of the empire will not halt until they reach the sands of the Gobi. The crescent moon, hung in the void, is all that can be seen in this wild desert, where the dew crystallizes on the polished steel of swords and breastplates. Many a day will pass before they return. Do not sigh, young women, for you would have to sigh too long."

Further on still came the snowy peaks of the T'ien-shan, of the K'un-lun, of the Pamir range, where greater perils still awaited the soldier and the pilgrim :—

"In the fifth month the snow is not yet melted in the T'ien-shan. Not a flower appears in so rigorous a climate. The spring-song of the willows is heard indeed on the flute, but the colours of gay spring-time are nowhere to be seen." (Li T'ai-po.)

Here, on the confines of two worlds, even the armies of the T'angs were never safe :—

"The dawn appears. The hour for battle has arrived, the hasty summons of bell and drum must be obeyed. Night falls, and men must take their sleep in the saddle, holding on to their horses' manes . . ." (Li T'ai-po.) What of the pilgrim who was about to venture into these solitary places, without even

the support of his government, but obliged, on the contrary, to hide from the last Chinese outposts?

Beyond Liang-chou the frontiers were closed, and no one was allowed to pass them without an imperial authorization. Warned of the intentions of Hsüan-tsang, the governor of Liang-chou sent for him and ordered him to return to China. The pilgrim contented himself with showing extra prudence, and left secretly for the west, hiding by day and travelling by night. In this way he reached Kua-chou in the southern part of the oasis of An-si, about $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Su-lo-ho (otherwise Shu-lei-ho) or the river of Bulungir. In order to follow the track for Ha-mi, the first oasis of the Eastern Turkestan of to-day, he had first of all to cross the river. This was a difficult undertaking, for the Su-lo-ho, at one part of its course, was a rushing torrent between steep banks, not navigable by boat, and though it widened out further on, it was only to become a marsh on reaching Kara-nor. It was guarded, moreover, by the Chinese fortress of the Jade Gate or Yü-mên-kuan, which commanded the whole valley. Once on the northern bank, after following the only track which crossed the desert in a north-westerly direction, towards the present-day Ha-mi, it was still necessary to pass beneath the scrutiny of five Chinese watch-towers, the last sentinels on the threshold of another world.

On learning these details, Hsüan-tsang, his biographer tells us, was sorely grieved. His horse had just died, and as a crowning misfortune his departure had been noticed and messengers had just reached the frontier with orders to arrest him. Happily for him, the governor of the district happened to be a pious Buddhist who, instead of carrying out the orders he had received, did away with the official edict, warned the object of it, and urged that

he should depart as quickly as possible. But the two novices who had accompanied him thus far felt their courage flagging. The first took fright and went to Tun-huang, and Hsüan-tsang himself dismissed the second as incapable of enduring the fatigue of the journey.

The Master of the Law now found himself alone. He bought a new horse and besought the Bodhisattva Maitreya to send him a guide, to enable him to pass the last frontier posts. Shortly afterwards a young barbarian, a Buddhist by religion, presented himself and offered to be his guide. The pilgrim, believing in his expressions of piety, joyfully accepted his offer, and before nightfall he and his unexpected guide entered a steppe covered with thick scrub. A meeting with an old man who was a native of the district put his courage to the test. This man forcefully pointed out the whole extent of his rashness: "The roads in the West are bad and dangerous. At one time a man is held up by quicksands, at another by scorching winds; and when these are met with not a soul can withstand them. Often large parties of travellers lose their way and perish. All the more then, O revered master, is it impossible that you who are alone should accomplish this journey. Take care and do not thus risk your life!" As Hsüan-tsang reiterated his unshakeable resolve, the old man obliged him to accept his horse, an old roan who had already done the journey to Ha-mi more than fifteen times.

Hsüan-tsang and his guide thus came in sight of Yü-mên-kuan. Night had fallen. The guide cut down some trees, threw a little bridge across the Su-lo-ho, whipped up his horse, and made him go over it. On reaching the north bank, the Master of the Law, worn out, overcome by fatigue, stretched himself out on a mat on the ground and fell into a doze.

Suddenly he beheld a strange sight—his mysterious companion, who had lain down 100 feet away, was drawing his sword, rising, and coming softly towards him; then, when he was less than ten paces away, he appeared to hesitate, and retraced his steps. As Hsüan-tsang, conscious of danger, also got up, recommending his soul to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, his alarming companion definitely turned tail, lay down again, and went to sleep. There was no doubt that in the shifty and covetous mind of the barbarian the thought of a crime had arisen for a moment; then, either from superstitious fear or from a last remnant of piety, the man had changed his mind; but no one could be less safe as a companion . . . !

With the first rays of dawn Hsüan-tsang, making no reference to this strange nocturnal alarm, ordered the guide to go and find some water. The young man obeyed, with a bad grace. Either from a secret feeling of shame at having been discovered, or because of a real fear of the Chinese outposts, he pleaded the difficulties of the route: "This track is terribly long and fraught with dangers. Neither water nor pasturage is to be found on it. But at the foot of the fifth signal-tower there is excellent water. We shall have to go and get it by night, secretly, and not tarry, for if we are seen from above we are lost. The surest way is to go back." The Master of the Law, however, refused firmly, and they advanced through the steppe, concealing themselves as best they could, now crouching, now raising their heads to get their bearings. Suddenly the young man drew his sword, bent his bow, and requested Hsüan-tsang to go ahead. Hsüan-tsang, who henceforth had no doubt as to his intentions, refused. The guide, frightened by his bold countenance, consented to go off and scout, but after a few miles he alleged his unwillingness

to infringe the imperial commands, and disappeared, abandoning the pilgrim.

Hsüan-tsang went on alone into the stony and argillaceous-salt desert of the Pei-shan and Kuruktagh, into the boundless Gobi that swallows up herds and caravans. Guiding himself by the heaps of bones and piles of camel-dung with which the desert was strewn, he made his way slowly and painfully. Suddenly he perceived what appeared to be hundreds of armed troops covering the horizon. "He saw them at times marching and at times standing still." All the soldiers were clothed in felt and fur, like the barbarians of the Gobi and of the Altaï. "On one side were camels and richly caparisoned horses; on the other, gleaming lances and shining standards. Soon there appeared fresh figures, and at every moment the shifting spectacle underwent a thousand transformations. But directly one drew near, all vanished . . ." The pilgrim believed himself to be in the presence of the army of Māra, the demon of Buddhism. He had been the victim of a desert mirage.

A more real danger was that he was approaching the first of the signal-towers, the extreme guardians of the Chinese frontier.¹ In order to escape the watchmen, he went and hid in a blocked-up canal and did not set out again until nightfall. When he came to the west of the tower he discovered the little spring that he had been told of, and went down to drink at it and to fill his water-skins. But just at that moment he heard the whistle of an arrow, which nearly wounded him in the knee. Then a second arrow followed, and buried itself in the ground beside

¹ This first tower has been located by Sir Aurel Stein at the halt of Pei-tan-chü, marked on Map 38 of the atlas of *Innermost Asia*. Cf. Sir Aurel Stein, "The Desert Crossing of Hsüan-tsang," *T'oung-pao*, 1921-2, p. 350.

him. He realized that he had been seen, and shouted with all his might : " I am a monk from the capital. Do not shoot at me ! " Then leading his horse by the bridle he walked towards the tower. The guard opened the gate to him and took him to their captain. The latter, a native of the town of Tun-huang, professed Buddhism. He, too, pointed out to Hsüan-tsang the perils of his undertaking and tried at first to make him abandon it.

The worthy man advised the pilgrim to end his journey at Tun-huang, where there dwelt a monk full of wisdom. We can still feel the fire of his reply in the account given by his biographer: " From my childhood I have been a passionate believer in Buddhism. In the two capitals (Ch'ang-an and Lo-yang) the men who are conversant with the Buddhist Law, the most zealous of the monks, have never failed to flock to my lessons, in order to reflect deeply upon them and to gather the fruits of them. I have spoken, preached, argued in their midst. I will confess, though it shames me, that I am the most renowned monk of the day. If I wished to make further progress in virtue, and to work for my reputation, do you think that I should remain under the monks of Tun-huang ? "

After this severe diatribe, in which the celebrated preacher from the capital crushes the worthy provincial officer tucked away in an obscure colonial fortress, Hsüan-tsang appeals to the religious sentiment of his interlocutor :—

" I was deeply concerned to find that the books were incomplete, and that there were regrettable gaps in their interpretation. Forgetful of my own safety, undaunted by obstacles and dangers, I made a vow to go and seek in India the law that Buddha bequeathed to mankind. But you, a benevolent man, instead of encouraging me in my enthusiasm, urge me

to retrace my steps ! Will you dare to tell me, after that, that you share my compassion for the suffering of the world, and that, with me, you desire to help men to attain nirvāṇa ? If you insist on detaining me, I will allow you to take my life. Hsüan-tsang will not take a single step in the direction of China ! "

The captain, no doubt, had never heard such eloquence. Overwhelmed by this address, and touched in his religious feeling, he resolved to aid the pilgrim. After supplying him with provisions, he gave him an introduction to the next frontier station. As for the fifth and last watch-tower,¹ he advised him to avoid it, as the officer in command was hostile to Buddhism.

Here, then, we have Hsüan-tsang obliged, in order to avoid this last frontier post, to leave the Ha-mi route and follow a parallel track to the north-west, plunging into the heart of that desert of Gashun Gobi which the Chinese call the River of Sand ; " There is found neither bird nor four-legged beast, neither water nor pasturage. " And the historiographer adds this admirable touch : " In order to find his way he endeavoured to observe, as he walked, the direction of his shadow, and he read with fervour the book of the *Prajñāpāramitā* (the Holy Wisdom of Buddhism). " Can we imagine this desert, and the man journeying through it alone, facing the unknown with all its perils in order to reach the distant land of India, and there to inquire into certain texts and compare the different metaphysical systems ? This pilgrim with no other guide but his own shadow, the shadow of his faith projected on the limitless sands, and no other comfort beneath the flaming heavens than the mystic flame of the Holy Wisdom ?

¹ The station of Sing-sing-hsia, according to Sir Aurel Stein.

He looked in vain for the fresh-water spring that he had been led to expect—"the Spring of the Wild Horse." "Tormented by thirst, he raised his water-skin, but being very heavy it slipped from his hands, and his whole supply of water was poured out on the ground. Moreover, the track wound about in long detours, and he was no longer sure of his direction." In despair he turned back to the Chinese frontier. This was the pilgrim's only moment of doubt. After retracing his steps for some eight miles he pulled himself together: "At the beginning I swore that if I did not reach India I would never take one step back towards China. I would rather die with my face towards the west than return and live in the east." Thereupon, says his biographer, "he turned his horse's head, and praying fervently to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara he set out towards the north-west. He looked round him on all sides and could see nothing but a boundless plain with no trace of men or horses. During the night evil spirits burnt torches as numerous as the stars; during the day terrible winds raised the sand and spread it out like sheets of rain. In the midst of such cruel onslaughts his heart knew no fear, but he suffered from the lack of water and was so tormented by thirst that he had not the strength to take a single step further. For four nights and five days not a drop of water passed his lips. A burning heat consumed his entrails and he was within a very little of perishing. Unable to go on he lay down in the midst of the sand, and although worn out by weakness he never ceased to invoke the name of Avalokiteśvara."

"On this journey," he prayed, "I covet neither riches, nor praise, nor fame. My sole aim is to go and seek the higher Intelligence and the true Law. Your heart, O Bodhisattva, for ever yearns to deliver the creature from the pains of life. And were any

ever more cruel than mine? Can you fail to perceive them?"

"He prayed thus with unflagging ardour until the middle of the fifth night, when suddenly a delicious breeze came blowing through all his members, making them as supple and as fresh as though he had bathed in a refreshing pool. Immediately his weary eyes recovered their sight and even his horse had the strength to stand up. Thus revived, he was able to have a little sleep. But while sleeping he saw in a dream a tall spirit, several *chang* high, holding a lance and a standard, who called out to him in a terrible voice: 'Why do you still sleep instead of going forward with zeal?'

"Awaking with a start, the Master of the Law set forth. He had gone nearly 4 miles when suddenly his horse turned in a different direction, and no effort of his could check the animal or make it return to its first path."

He let himself be guided by the creature's instinct, and soon caught sight of several acres of green pasture-land; he alighted and allowed the horse to crop the grass as much as it liked. Near by was a shining pool in which the water was pure and clear as crystal. The pilgrim drank long and deep. Having refreshed himself he filled his water-skin, cut some grass for his horse, and started off again.¹

After two days' journey Hsüan-tsang came out of the desert and at last reached I-wu, the present Ha-mi. This oasis, which had long been inhabited by a Chinese military colony, had accepted, during the troubles of the Empire, the suzerainty of the Turks. Some months after Hsüan-tsang's halt there, it went over to China (630). The pilgrim

¹ This stream of water has been located at the outpost of Chang-liu-chuei, 35 miles south-east of Ha-mi, by Sir Aurel Stein (Map 34 of his *Innerness Asia*).

stayed at a monastery there where three Chinese monks still lived. One of these, a poor old man, came to meet the Master of the Law and embraced him with tears. For a long time he clasped him to his breast with cries and sobs; then he said: "Could I ever have hoped to see once more a man from my own village?" The Master of the Law was likewise deeply moved and could not restrain his tears.

However, the king of Kao-ch'ang, the present Turfān, the nearest oasis on the west, had been warned of the presence of Hsüan-tsang at Ha-mi. He sent ten of his officers, mounted on first-rate horses, to that town, to invite the pilgrim to visit Turfān on his way. The invitation somewhat interfered with Hsüan-tsang's plans, for he had intended to go and visit the Turkish town of Beshbaligh or Pei-t'ing further northwest of the present Guchen, on account of the Buddhist *stūpa* which was erected there and which had won for it its surname of Qagan-stūpa. But the king of Turfān was a pious Buddhist and a powerful monarch, with great influence throughout the whole of the Gobi. Hsüan-tsang complied with his request, and after a six days' march through Taranchi, Ch'i-ku-ching, Hsi-yên-chih and Pi-chang, reached Turfān.¹

¹ In order to follow in detail Hsüan-tsang's itinerary in Central Asia, readers are recommended to use the Atlas which forms volume iv of the last publication of Sir Aurel Stein, *Innermost Asia* (Oxford, 1928).

CHAPTER IV

PERSIAN PAINTINGS IN THE GOBI

THE kingdom of Turfān—Kao-ch'ang, as the Chinese used to call it—was in the seventh century one of the most important States of Central Asia not only politically but from the point of view of civilization.

Situated in the central part of the Gobi, and sheltered by the two mountain ranges of Bogdo-Ola and Edemen Daba in the north, and of Chol-tagh in the south, the amphitheatre of Turfān curves round the northern bank of the old, partially dried-up lake of Aïdin-Köl, which is still fed on the west by the river Dabān-ching-su. Around this depression there was at that time quite a group of thriving centres corresponding to the present sites of Toqsun, Yār, Bāzāklik, Murtuq, Sāngim, Subashi, Idikut-Shähri, Khotsho, or Qara-Khoja, and Tuyuq; the capital itself was situated at Qara-Khoja, 25 miles to the east of the present Turfān. These are names famous in the history of archæology since the recent discoveries of the German expedition under the direction of Von Le Coq and Grünwedel. All this region, which is practically dead to-day, had an intense economic, political, and cultural life, as is proved by the magnificent stucco-work and marvellous frescoes which Von Le Coq has brought back to the *Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin.

It is curious that the people who in the seventh century still inhabited this district lying so close to the Celestial Empire, and still closer to the Turkish hordes of the Altaï, were neither Chinese nor Turko-Mongol. It was an Indo-European population,

speaking a dialect of that Tocharish language which, among the languages of the same family, revealed unexpected likenesses not only to Armenian and Slavonic, but even to Italo-Celtic. The frescoes of Turfān depict, moreover, many men with blue-grey eyes and red hair, strangely akin to certain European types.

At the same time the people of Turfān, like all the inhabitants of Central Asia at that period, professed Buddhism, and their educated classes were, for this reason, deeply imbued with Sanskrit culture. Recent discoveries have taught us that hundreds of the monks there used to translate the sacred books of India from Sanskrit into Tocharish. On the other hand, their material civilization was largely borrowed from China and also from Persia. Sassanid Iran, through the intermediacy of the Sogdian caravan traders, had already taught the people of Turfān part of their art, an education which was to become intensified in the following century, with the great Buddhist frescoes and the Manichean miniatures of the Uighur period.

Although the majority of the archæological specimens found in the region of Turfān appear to date from the period of Uighur rule, between about 750 and 850, Hsüan-tsang must certainly have met with some of these celebrated works of art in the shrines and palaces of the later Tocharish period: Bāzāklik stucco figurines or frescoes, representing Buddhas or Bodhisattvas, which are the final expression, in the eastern region, of the Græco-Buddhist art of Gandhāra—Idiqut-Shāhri frescoes in which we have at times some feminine divinity with Grecian head-dress, draped in Greek *palla* and *peplum*—lunar divinities of Sängim whose Indian draperies present the happiest combination of Hindu suppleness, Hellenic eloquence, and Chinese charm. By a

spontaneous reaction we are moved by the semi-Grecian faces of the Gandhāran Buddhas, insipid as they are everywhere else. We delight in the still Apollonian purity and sweetness of their oval faces. For we have here what Herr Von Le Coq happily describes as the last "stray antiques", astray in time well into the Middle Ages, and in space as far as the heart of the Gobi. Inspired by an entirely different spirit which is curiously Iranian, the handsome knights of the Bāzāklik frescoes discovered by Von Le Coq are undoubtedly contemporaries or grandsons of those lords of Turfān whom Hsüan-tsang met; the *Parsifal of Bāzāklik* in the Berlin Museum, the charming young knight whom a monk is receiving into the Order, by imposing on him the tonsure, is clearly a compatriot of that king Ch'ü Wên-t'ai who showed such zeal for the Faith that he spent whole nights listening to Hsüan-tsang. A little further on, at Murtuq, we see the faithful likeness of Tocharish or Sogdian caravan traders, with their camels and mules, who must more than once have been the travelling companions of our philosopher; for the pilgrims' route was also the great route of the silk trade.

As for China, she had given the people of Turfān their dynasty, that of the Ch'ü, who had reigned since 507. The king Ch'ü Wên-t'ai, then on the throne (c. 620-40), who is indeed the best known of the family, appears to have had a fairly strong personality. Bearing in mind his Chinese ancestry, or merely realising how the wind was blowing, directly T'ai-tsung ascended the throne he offered the emperor a black fox fur. Whereupon T'ai-tsung offered the queen, his wife, an ornament of golden flowers. In response Ch'ü Wên-t'ai offered T'ai-tsung a little table with a jade top. Soon after Hsüan-tsang had come that way, in December, 630,

Ch'ü Wên-t'ai had to present himself in person at the Chinese court, where he was granted the signal honour of being adopted into the imperial clan. It was only later, at the end of his life, when these honours and the prosperity of his kingdom had made him vain, that he trusted to the support of the Turkish hordes and committed the folly of associating himself with the latter in refusing the homage due to the Empire and cutting off the caravans between China and Kashgaria. Later he died of fright on learning of the approach of the imperial armies (640).

As Hsüan-tsang describes him, Ch'ü Wên-t'ai answers to the character of the proud, imperious sovereign revealed in the T'ang annals. On hearing the news that Hsüan-tsang was staying at Ha-mi, he summoned him to appear before him, and despite the protests of the pilgrim, who would have preferred a different route, he almost had him carried off by force. Hsüan-tsang arrived at Turfān after sunset. In his anxiety to see him the king did not wait for daylight. He left the palace immediately by torchlight, went to meet the pilgrim, and housed him in a magnificently appointed pavilion in a tent made of precious stuffs.

This king Ch'ü Wên-t'ai was indeed a highly devout person in spite of his violent behaviour. The speech he made to welcome Hsüan-tsang enlightens us as to the fervour of his Buddhist convictions. "Master," his biographer makes him say, "ever since your disciple heard of your arrival, he has been so overjoyed as to forget to eat or sleep. Having calculated the route you had to traverse I was able to ascertain that you would arrive to-night. For this reason my wife, my children, and myself all forbore to sleep, but spent our time reading the sacred books while respectfully awaiting you."

A few minutes later the queen, accompanied

by some scores of servants, came likewise to visit the Master of the Law, and we can well imagine these royal processions as they rise up from the dim past in Herr Von Le Coq's albums, with all the princely donors and fair ladies of Bāzāklik and Sāngim.

Such was the zeal of the king of Turfān that Hsüan-tsang was constrained to grant him an interview which lasted the rest of the night. Day dawned and the pilgrim was overcome by fatigue. He was forced to give the monarch a gentle hint and was at last able to enjoy a little rest.

The first meeting was symptomatic. The devotion of the king of Turfān, indeed, was to prove strangely exacting and his protection somewhat tyrannical. Certainly he showered gifts and honours upon the Master of the Law, and placed the most illustrious monks of his kingdom at his orders. But, happy to have received a visit from so learned a doctor, he was planning to keep him with him as the spiritual director of his family and the head of the Buddhist community at Turfān. In vain did the Master of the Law explain the reasons for his journey: "I did not undertake this journey in order to receive honours! I was grieved to discover that in my country men had but a partial understanding of Buddhist Law and that the sacred texts had become rare and defective. Troubled by painful doubts, I determined to go myself in search of the pure and authentic monuments of the Law. It was for that purpose that I set forth, in peril of my life, to the countries of the West, in order to hearken to unknown doctrines. I desire that by my efforts the divine ambrosia should not only water Indian soil but should spread over the whole of China. How can you think to stop me halfway? I beg you, O king, to abandon your project and cease to honour me with such excessive friendship!"

The king's reply showed that he would never

yield: "Your disciple loves you with a devotion beyond all limit. I insist on keeping you in order to offer you my homage, and it would be easier to shift the mountains of Pamir than to shake my determination!" Hsüan-tsang was dismayed, but his resolve was none the less irrevocable. He persisted in his refusal. "Then the king, reddening angrily and stretching forth a menacing hand, cried in a loud voice: 'Your disciple will now treat you in a different fashion and we shall see whether you can depart freely! I am determined to retain you by force, or else to have you escorted back to your own country. I invite you to think the matter over; it is best to yield.'" The discussion was taking a dramatic turn. "It is for the sublime Law that I have come," replied Hsüan-tsang heroically. "The king will only be able to keep my bones; he has no power over my spirit nor my will!"

The king Ch'ü Wên-t'ai remained obdurate. At the same time he loaded the pilgrim with special honours, even going so far as to serve him at table with his own hands. Hsüan-tsang, seeing that it was impossible to move him, threatened to starve himself to death. "He sat upright and motionless, and for three days not a drop of water passed his lips. On the fourth day the king discovered that the breathing of the Master of the Law was getting weaker and weaker. Ashamed and terrified at the consequences of his severity, he prostrated himself on the ground and offered him his respectful excuses." He swore before the statue of Buddha to let his guest depart; only then did Hsüan-tsang consent to take some nourishment.

At the request of Ch'ü Wên-t'ai, however, Hsüan-tsang agreed to remain one month longer at Turfān in order to expound his doctrine to the court and the people. "The king had a tent put up

in which three hundred people could be seated. The queen-mother, the king, the head of the monasteries of the country, and the chief officials were assembled in separate groups and listened to him with respect. Each day, when the hour for the address arrived, the king, walking in front of him with a perfume box, escorted him to the foot of the pulpit. There, kneeling humbly, he insisted on serving as his footstool, and made Hsüan-tsang get up in this way into his seat."

Not having succeeded in attaching Hsüan-tsang to his person, king Ch'ü Wên-t'ai, with the same touching devotion and the same impetuosity, made all the necessary arrangements to facilitate his journey. He had prepared for him, for the crossing of the T'ien Shan and Pamir, all the clothing required to withstand the cold—masks, gloves, boots, etc. He showered gifts upon him—gold and silver, satin and silk, every kind of provision for his needs during the journey he was planning. He gave him thirty horses and twenty-five servants. As a climax he commissioned one of his officers to conduct him to the residence of the Great Khan of the Western Turks, with whom he was on terms of intimate friendship, being almost his vassal. This was an invaluable service, as we shall see, for the empire of the Western Turks at this time, when their power was at its zenith, extended from the Altai Mountains to Bactriana, and the success of Hsüan-tsang's pilgrimage depended on their goodwill. Ch'ü Wên-t'ai, for the same purpose, gave the Master of the Law twenty-four letters of recommendation, with an equal number of presents, to the princes of Central Asia, beginning with his neighbour, the king of Kuchā. But it is evident that at this date Turkish protection was the most important thing, and outweighed everything else. Accordingly Ch'ü Wên-t'ai, in order to ensure

for the pilgrim the favour of the Great Khan, sent the latter on the same occasion what was a veritable tribute. "He loaded two chariots with five hundred pieces of satin, intended for the Khan. These gifts were accompanied by a letter which said: 'The Master of the Law is the younger brother of your slave; he intends to go in quest of the Buddhist Law in the country of the Brahmans. I eagerly desire that the Khan should show the Master of the Law the same benevolence as he would to the slave who writes these respectful lines.'"

From this moment Hsüan-tsang's journey was destined to be carried on under quite different conditions from those that had obtained heretofore. Having left China against the will of the Court, without any political support and without any kind of help, he was at the mercy of the smallest obstacle. On the other hand, the personal protection and diplomatic intervention of the king of Turfān gave him an official standing. It meant that all the petty courts of the Gobi were open to him. It meant above all that the power of the Western Turks was at his service, for the letter of the king of Turfān to the Khan leaves us in little doubt as to the nature of the relations between these two monarchs. The former was the vassal of the second, and it was in virtue of this vassalage that he had a right to claim help and protection for his friend. This protection, moreover, would take the pilgrim up to the very gates of India; for the monarch who ruled over Bactriana was both the Khan's son and Ch'ü Wên-t'ai's son-in-law.

Hsüan-tsang, whose journey had nearly ended in Turfān, had instead found there unexpected possibilities to lead him to success. On the day of his departure Ch'ü Wên-t'ai accompanied him out of the town with the whole of his court, all the monks of the country and the bulk of the people. With tears

he took leave of the Master of the Law; the latter promised to come and spend three years in Turfān on his return, and we know that this was to be Hsüan-tsang's first thought fourteen years later on entering Kashgaria from India. But the tragic death of his benefactor which occurred in the interval was destined to bring the pilgrim's gesture to nought.

From Turfān, Hsüan-tsang turned his steps towards the town of Yen-ch'i—the modern Qarashahr—crossing a range of mountains celebrated for its silver mines. Although Turfān and Qarashahr were at this period both States possessing a very old civilization, and formed important halting places for the caravan trade—or rather because of the latter circumstance—the tracks connecting them were often cut by bands of brigands. Hsüan-tsang noticed the corpses of several rich foreign merchants who, in order to steal a march on their rivals, had parted from the main body of their caravan. He himself fell in with a party of brigands who held him to ransom.

After these dangers he reached a remarkably prosperous country. The pilgrim describes Qarashahr as a fertile oasis which was made easy of defence by its girdle of mountains and the gorges which gave access into it. "Several rivers, which unite into one, form a sort of girdle round it." The oasis is actually watered by a picturesque river, the Qaidu-gol or Yulduz, which comes down from the chain of the Boro Khoro in a closed-in valley, in a north-westerly direction—what is called the Little Yulduz—then makes a sharp turn and flows in a parallel line in the opposite direction towards the south-east—what is called the valley of the Great Yulduz—