

ground at my tent door, warming my toes at the fire and my inner man with hot grog, which, of course, I shared with others, I listened to the results of inquiries concerning our future course. Mohammed Joo, a wily native of Sin-Chiang, thoroughly acquainted with the people, had been instructed to offer a large reward in money for information concerning the routes in this mountainous region. He now squatted beside me and, sheltered from the cold wind by the tent door, told me what success had followed his efforts. The sum of his news was simply this—that he had got none. Once he had seemed on the point of obtaining information from a Tajik yak-man, but the conversation had been overheard by another Tajik, who promptly ordered his compatriot to hold his peace. Tajiks, from my own sad experience, I knew to be liars, but these yak-men were remarkably true to one another. Evidently there was a compact amongst them, and not even the temptation of a large reward induced them to describe, or even to mention, the direct route from Mariong to the west end of Raskam. Such information as I obtained came from the yak-driver boy, who was not a Tajik. Next morning I had to clear up and settle accounts with the Tajiks, and this I did before the blazing fire while waiting for the Kirghiz to load their yaks. The one debt indisputably due was for the hire of the yaks and yak-men, but besides this I was at liberty to take into account the services which had been rendered by the men individually. On ascertaining the owners and the amount to be paid for the use of the animals, I was surprised to find that not one of the yaks belonged to Yul Bash, who till that moment had asserted that he had supplied several of them. I paid to each owner the full amount due, at the full rate, giving no gratuity, and then handed to the boy, as backsheesh, a sum of money sufficient to purchase two goats. It had