

suitable preparation for the journey. With this custom I was most unwilling to comply, because a transport contractor, knowing that he had little or nothing more to expect, would, in all probability, without hesitation desert me on the slightest pretext of danger or difficulty. After several disappointments I entered into a contract with Niaz Akun, who promised to supply me with twenty ponies at the rate of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  tongas each per march as far as Khotan, and the same rate per day, whether marching or resting, beyond Khotan, provided the caravan marched when I desired. For the return journey the payment was to be at the rate of  $3\frac{1}{4}$  tongas per march from the place (wherever it might be) where he should be discharged. These terms were much higher than those usual in Sin-Chiang, but if the agreement was duly fulfilled, they would not be exorbitant. The contract was signed with much formality in presence of the Aksakal, Sidik Shaye, Pundit Boota Ram, and Munshi Bunyard Ali, who duly affixed their seals and signatures to the document. Then the force of custom constrained me, and I made an advance of thirty days' hire, or 3,900 tongas; but I had Niaz Akun's ponies and two fine donkeys stabled close to my own, so that I could see that they were properly fed and tended till the day of starting.

The old pack-saddles and jhools had to be repaired and new ones made, and the yak dans (mule trunks) and canvas bags had to be carefully overhauled and replenished in the usual systematic manner with provisions for the journey. The men required an outfit of clothes, and to prevent the disappearance of the puttoo, I had personally to supervise the eight tailors whom I employed to construct the garments. Besides the warm and comfortable puttoo suits, each man was provided with a pair of Cawnpore boots of excellent quality, a long sheepskin coat, a flannel shirt, a cardigan jacket, a pair of cherooks or