

application, however, was rejected, and I had to obtain special orders authorising the sale to me of stated quantities of Indian corn and chopped straw. My spare time was taken up with the inspection and doctoring of the ponies. To exercise the ponies and donkeys, especially the donkeys, still seemed beneath the dignity of the caravan men; Raju, now grown surly and troublesome, tried to escape the duty, and others drew the line at the donkeys, which were left to the care of the most newly engaged men. Then Niaz Akun became discontented, for, according to the contract, he was not to be paid for days spent in Khotan. But the contract was nevertheless a very favourable one for him, and his threats to leave me gave place to humble penitence when I made the counter threat of seizing his ponies. The Chow-Kuan, who was well known to be opposed to my journey, had deputed a Beg to attend to my wants, and by promising a reward of sufficient amount I had converted the subordinate official into a useful friend, who assisted me to hire fifteen donkeys as far as four marches beyond Polu. Having in vain waited for eleven days for Macartney's letter, I arranged to leave Khotan on May 22nd. Islam and Ipay, the camelman, I sent with the two camels to make a *détour* by Kara Sai to Baba Hatun, as the Polu route was impracticable for these animals; and Abdul Karim I despatched ahead to Polu with hired animals carrying the corn, for the further transport of which sheep were waiting.

Our advance was difficult owing to the hot and dry weather and the clouds of dust, which, consisting of fine sand and loess, penetrated the gauze of the goggles and temporarily injured the eyes. When we reached Kotaz Langar on the edge of the desert, our first halting-place, the Beg, instead of sending us the usual present of a sheep, provided us with large blocks of ice, which were