

I represented to Islam Akhun that, willing as I was to credit him with a reliable memory concerning the methods and materials employed in his factory, it would still be desirable for me to obtain some tangible memento of them. So he at once volunteered to furnish one or more of the blocks employed in printing those precious "books." As all information had by that time been duly recorded, I allowed him to be set free conditionally from the lock-up of the Yamen, and on the following morning he turned up in due course with one of the promised blocks from his own house. The news of his arrest had of course long before spread through the town, and hence it was difficult for him to gain access to the homes of his former associates, where more of these materials may have been retained.

Whether it was from a right perception that his *rôle* was now completely played out, or because he felt that his ignominious collapse in the course of the inquiry had rendered him ridiculous before his old friends, Islam Akhun looked far more cowed in the end, though free, than when first brought up as a prisoner. I had told him before in jest that I thought him far too clever a man to be allowed to remain in Khotan among such ignorant people. A curious incident showed that the remark had not passed unappreciated. Shortly before my departure Islam Akhun presented himself with a petition, evidently meant to be serious, praying that I might take him along to Europe. It was not quite clear in what capacity he expected me to utilise his services *en route*. But I think there could be no doubt that the strange request was prompted by the hope of finding in distant 'Wilayet' a wider sphere for his forging abilities! So I need not regret, perhaps, having shown myself obdurate.