

the hope of seeing the old man return from the Haj was small.

To all objections of his wife and family Akhun Beg had steadfastly answered that, if death was to come, it might just as well find him on the way to the sacred sites as at home. His own argument was that, having been a Beg for so many years to serve worldly masters, he might now do well to serve God, too, at the close of his life. Remembering his genial ways and unfailing kindness I found it difficult to believe that his conscience could be burdened by any sins needing expiation by such a sacrifice. And the greatness of this I could estimate by all the comforts and possessions on which my old friend had now turned his back.

Sitting in the airy Aiwan of his house, on his favourite carpet, and surrounded by choice fruits from his garden, Akhun Beg had more than once entertained me with a loving account of his cherished possessions: his fat well-farmed lands in Tosalla, his vineyards in Borazan, and the thousands of sheep and cattle he owned in the Hasha mountains. Compared to the honoured ease of his home, a journey to Mecca meant for him hardships such as would never confront the modern European traveller wherever he went for a similar purpose. I had to go back to the Middle Ages and to their Palestine pilgrimages in order to realize what such an undertaking meant for the old Beg. Eagerly I availed myself of the chance of sending by some belated pilgrims, who were just leaving Khotan to catch up the party, my heartiest wishes for his welfare and a sort of recommendatory letter intended to assure him attention at Kashgar and on his eventual return through India. Whatever the effect might be, I had the satisfaction of knowing that the provision of this 'Khat' gave comfort to the disconsolate family.

Multifarious preparations for the archaeological campaign now about to open kept me hard at work from the day of my arrival, and made it rather difficult to spare time for the claims of polite intercourse with my Chinese friends. My visit to Ch'ê Ta-jên's Ya-mên on the first morning was a function as cheerful as it was solemn. The genial