

etc., I was busy from dawn until close on midnight. Luckily clouds kept the air cool, and just before my start a two days' intermittent light rain laid the dust of many months and refreshed the air.

But there was a cloud, too, gathering on the mental horizon. One of the camels which I had brought from Kashgar, and which early in August I had sent off to the mountains for a good rest and cool grazing, had then already been ailing. Now when that portion of my transport rejoined me at Khotan I learned with dismay that this as well as another of the camels had succumbed while away on their holiday, and that two more were showing signs of weakness. Hassan Akhun, whose grief at this affliction to the fine-looking beasts put under his care was genuine, ascribed the loss to poisonous plants abounding in the mountains above Hasha which my camels, accustomed to the northern ranges, had not learned to avoid. But I knew well that diagnosis and treatment of camels' diseases was wholly beyond the ken of the most experienced Turkestan camel-men, my energetic factotum included, however great their insight into the mysteries of managing camels while they were well. I had heard much of the rapid spread of infection to which camels seem particularly liable, through a sort of fatalistic inertia, and wondered anxiously whether the true cause of that loss were not some disease, lurking unsuspected, which the hot marches from Kashgar, relatively few as they were, might have sufficed to ripen. There was need for all care—and eventual resignation.