

headquarters of the new district carved out some three years before from the eastern portion of the Khotan oasis, I spent a busy day's halt over final arrangements. The Amban, a somewhat heavy dignitary, ponderous alike in mind, body, and manners, insisted on treating me and Chiang-ssü-yeh to a small luncheon party, and though the culinary preparations were fortunately for myself only of a modest type, the slowness of conversation made the time spent over this entertainment appear longer than ever. An initial want of attention on the Amban's part had offended my good-natured and usually so genial secretary, who knew, however, what return to claim for his own punctilious politeness; and the efforts required to make up for the *faux pas* did not exactly shorten the proceedings.

After making up a big mail-bag for Kashgar, I had still to settle accounts with my faithful friend and factotum Badruddin Khan, who had insisted on following me to Lop, and on offering practical assistance to the last. I did not dread those accounts without reason; for honest as they were, my old helpmate's sole scribe and accountant, his boy of some twelve years, invariably managed to present them as a confused and barely decipherable jumble. So that night brought few hours of sleep for both of us.