

rapid succession, and it scarcely needed the death of a fifth while on the march to Keriya to convince me that some infectious illness had evidently taken hold of the lot.

Keriya is full of 'Bais' owning camels, and information of my wish to purchase fresh animals there had been duly sent to the Ya-mên weeks ahead. Yet the selection of a suitable set proved a protracted business. Ho Ta-lao-ye, the Amban of Keriya, showed from my very entry into his district all possible attention and willingness to assist. When I paid him my visit on the day following my arrival, I was received in full state and treated to a well-arranged luncheon. I soon realized that my host, in spite of his strikingly young looks, did not in vain enjoy a reputation for learning and a wide mental horizon. He seemed fully aware of the historical interest attaching to the researches which had brought me to these parts, and the many questions he put about my finds, etc., even when interpreted in more familiar terms by my excellent Ssü-yeh, taxed my incipient colloquial knowledge most severely. Ho Ta-lao-ye had been the Urumchi Governor-General's chief secretary, and there was much in his ways and talk which reminded me curiously of clever young Civilian friends in Indian Secretariats. Of his professed desire to protect the people of his district against exactions I had heard at Khotan. But his solicitude in this direction, whether genuine or otherwise, was not likely to stimulate the zeal or strengthen the hands of the local Beggars.

The latter had received explicit injunctions to hunt up and produce camels suitable for my journey. Yet even when the Amban's order was emphatically repeated in my presence during the return visit he paid me, the supply of animals for selection was by no means as prompt and satisfactory as it would have been under a more experienced though, perhaps, less learned district head, such as *e.g.* my old friend Huan Ta-lao-ye, who had helped me so well in 1901 from this very Ya-mên. For two days I was treated to the wearisome inspection of long strings of camels either too young or past work, while it was evident that more serviceable animals were being carefully kept out of sight. To buy camels in the open market would have