

the Hsi-yü-chi and Fa-hsien's Travels. That the gift had gone to the right man was evident from the profuse thanks now offered and the numerous topics of old geography, etc., which my visitor raised in discussion. His scholarly interest, of course, touched me; yet I should have appreciated better a little business-like decision about the ostensible object of his visit. After confessing that he knew nothing whatever about camels, the well-meaning young Amban lavishly wasted his own time and mine by a personal inspection of all the animals originally brought for selection. Of course, as we stood in the road the opportunity was taken for petitions and complaints of all sorts by the assembled idlers, until the benevolent district head became fairly bewildered. I did not envy the Ya-mên interpreter who had to translate all these clamorous representations. In the end Ho Ta-lao-ye could save himself only by retreating to my tent in the garden and leaving the settlement to be effected by myself, as it was in the end with all fairness.

However, the long visit did not pass altogether without progress in business. For old Mullah Khwaja I managed to secure from the Amban discharge from certain long-standing accounts about petty village dues which had caused much trouble to my honest Domoko guide and threatened to ruin him. Ibrahim Beg, too, whom the Amban had only a few weeks before ignominiously deprived of his office on complaints of a weak nature, saw his case prepared for reconsideration. As I urged my need of Ibrahim's practical help on the onward journey, the Amban readily agreed to let him accompany me in a sort of *sub. pro tem.* function. For efficient services such as I could confidently expect from my old desert factotum, he was to be rewarded thereafter by some suitable vacancy.

Frequent changes in Begships form an essential part in the local administrative system, for reasons which suit equally well Chinese political interests, competition among the local petty aristocracy, and the pockets of officialdom. Hence Ibrahim could start with me confident of a speedy restoration to the place he had gained years ago on my recommendation. An additional piece of business achieved