

in the desert. Men and animals had had a good rest now. Ram Singh, the Surveyor, had completed inking and tracing the winter's plane-table work, while the Naik had made fair progress with the developing of my photographic negatives. I myself had managed to find time for re-arranging the baggage, the bulk of which was to be stored as a depot under Ibrahim Beg's care in quarters hired for the purpose within the city walls. But of the labourers and hired camels I had asked for from the magistrate's Ya-mên no sign appeared. An informal call which he and Lin Ta-jên paid me in the course of the day had given me an opportunity of personally repeating my requests for labourers who could walk on their own feet, and for camels to carry the baggage and supplies for men and beasts. They promised to do their best, but looked much exercised over the problem how to get Tun-huang people to follow me into the desert and work. I had told them that my start was fixed for the morrow. But though I was kept busy until after midnight by many tasks, including the settlement of accounts, which meant endless trouble of weighing hacked silver and adjusting for differences of scales, I waited in vain for either men or camels.

Next morning the wearisome wait continued. But I had decided to make a move in any case, just to show my Mandarin friends that I was in earnest. So my tent was struck and the baggage which was to go with us made ready for our own camels. Hassan Akhun had over-night brought them back safely from what even he, a fastidious critic of all things in this infidel region, acknowledged to have been splendid camel-grazing. By and by there appeared on the scene one of Lin Ta-jên's non-commissioned officers, a quiet, cheerful man, who was to escort us with a mounted levy. The Ya-mên attendants had set out early to bring the promised camels and coolies. But hour after hour passed without their returning, and repeated reminders sent to the magistrate's Ya-mên produced no result but apologies. It was evident that his good intentions were of little avail against indigenous inertia and obstruction. Long years of service in the 'New Dominion' had accustomed Chiang to a different