

as one of my donkey-men, and had proved the least intelligent of the lot.

Naturally enough, the camel-men felt apprehensive of what awaited them farther on. Remembering how easy it would be to lose one's way completely in that maze of clay terraces and dunes which intervenes between the terminal lake basin of the Su-lo Ho and Besh-toghrak, I congratulated myself at not being one of their party while dust storms of that day's violence were blowing. The whole party looked so forlorn that I forbore to complain about the delay caused to my mail, and only gave them what advice seemed needed to keep the 'guide' to the right track. When they told me that they would halt a day or two at Toghrak-bulak to give their camels a rest, I regretted more than ever to have entrusted my mail to such a terribly slow goods train.

I tried to exact compensation by asking the younger men to come back for that time to my ruin and help in the digging, "just to show those Khitai infidels how Mussulmans could wield their Ketmans." But I was not surprised when even the offer of magnificent wages and the chance of finding hidden treasure did not tempt the way-worn Seven. So I let them pass on with all my good wishes for their own and my mail-bag's safe journey. Two weeks later I found at Toghrak-bulak the carcass of one of their forty camels half devoured by wolves, and wondered how many more these luckless people would lose before reaching the green fields of Charklik. But they struggled through, and by the close of September my letters had safely arrived in England.