

mountains. So the prospects were decidedly gloomy when I retired to rest about midnight. No water had come down our little stream, and I could not indulge in illusions about the liquor serving for my late tea and dinner.

Next day I lost no time in sending Chiang to the Magistrate's quarters. Long hours passed without either ponies or news turning up to relieve the strain. I used the time busily for a home mail which this time was to go eastwards, to the newly opened Imperial Post Office at Lan-chou, and thence *via* Tien-tsin and the Trans-Siberian railway. That those letters arrived in England by the first week of October speaks well for the working of the modern postal service established by the Chinese Customs Department. While my thoughts were travelling far away, things on the spot had taken a more promising turn. By mid-day Chiang arrived with the news that the Magistrate had managed to retain half of the Su-chou animals, and that great efforts were being made to raise the rest of the transport around Chin-fo-ssü.

But concessions were asked for on my part. It was easy to agree to double the rate of hire we had paid about Tun-huang and elsewhere. But more difficult was it to comply with the demand that each load was to be reduced by one-half. I had already at Su-chou deposited all equipment not likely to be needed for a month or two, and had now little to spare, except the bulk of the silver I had taken from the Su-chou Ya-mên. Fortunately two people of our party could safely be left behind. For Naik Ram Singh's services there was little use in the mountains, and with him I could send to Kan-chou also Ahmad, the interpreter. Assured of the help of a Chinese-speaking companion, the Naik greeted the temporary separation with equanimity if not satisfaction. A few weeks' stay in Kan-chou town would give him a good rest. There was also the attraction of cooking his meals after his own Jat tastes, which different caste rules had not always allowed to be followed in the common *ménage* with the Surveyor. In regard to sugar and clarified butter he had great arrears to make up, and I hoped that the resources of Kan-chou would allow him fully to use his *carte blanche*.