

their stately good looks (Fig. 305). The heavy season of traffic to the Indian and Russian sides was approaching, and when the owners of camel caravans had convinced themselves that I was in no hurry to sell, the offers, ridiculously low at first, began to rise steadily.

At last they topped my own estimate, and then with a secret pang I had to let my faithful beasts pass into the possession of an Afghan trader. The price he paid down in hard rolls of silver amounted to 51 Taels, or roughly 130 rupees per animal, and yielded a net profit of 70 per cent on the original cost—for the benefit of the Indian Government. For the last few days my camels had been feasting on bundles of fragrant dry lucerne and on young foliage around 'my' garden palace of Chini-bagh. Now for a farewell treat they had a huge loaf of bread from my own hands, and took it almost as eagerly as when I fed them in the heart of the desert. Have they ever since wished to be back with their master—as I have often wished to travel again with them?