

would be no dependence on grazing for the ponies and donkeys, the only available beasts of burden. Yet none of these would on such high ground be able to carry more than their own fodder-supply for forty days. Thus our seven saddle ponies and the ten needed for our indispensable baggage and food supplies would require to be supplemented by an equal number of animals to carry fodder. These fodder-carrying beasts would again have to be fed with fodder brought by other beasts, and so on and so on. Thus the transport calculations would go on swelling *ad infinitum* until the thought of them oppressed me like a nightmare.

The only escape seemed to lie in the plan to send back the animals in detachments as their loads of supplies became exhausted, and to trust to their making their way back without fodder. For facing great privations on such tracks as we should have to follow in those forbidding mountains, hardy donkeys would prove more suitable, besides requiring a smaller number of men to look after them. So I decided to use donkey transport for the main stores. There were plenty of 'Kirakash' about Khotan accustomed to serve traders with ponies and donkeys on hire. But they dreaded work in the unknown mountains; and in spite of the pressure exercised from the Ya-mên and the lavish rates of hire I felt compelled to offer, the collection of sound and sufficiently strong animals proved a long and difficult business. I had every interest to secure beasts which would last us to the very end of the expedition, whereas the owners of the transport, being paid a hire which practically covered the cost of good animals, would be indifferent to losses if they could but manage to palm off inferior beasts upon us.

In these troublesome transport tasks, which generally filled my weary evenings, I appreciated more than ever the devoted help which my old friend Badruddin Khan, the Afghan Ak-sakal, gave me from his life-long experience as a trader. For weeks he took up his abode in one of the outer courts of Nar-bagh, together with his sons and servants, in order to be near at hand. How he found time to look after his own trade affairs was a mystery to me, just as much as the