

tration affects even the irrigation of the land, for the Begs and the Kuk Bashis, the officials whose duty it is to supervise the distribution of the water, use their power to oppress. They make no formal claim to payment, but unless large amounts are forthcoming they cut off the water supply. Besides the instances of such proceedings already mentioned I saw at Karghalik in April, 1899, the fields of Niaz Akun waterless and parched, while those of his neighbours were green and flourishing, the reason of the difference being that Niaz Akun could not or would not pay the amount expected. While in many places water is thus withheld, in others it is wasted, and the canals themselves receive less attention and repair than they require. The dry season is in spring, just before the mountain snows begin to melt, but it would not be difficult to provide a perennial supply. If large reservoirs were constructed and the irrigation system extended, as it might easily be, the arrears of many of the cases might be greatly enlarged. But for any such undertaking recourse would probably be had to forced labour or "hasha," for which payment is made only when it is long continued, and then not more than half the usual rate.

It is not generally known that slavery was abolished in Sin-Chiang so recently as 1897, over two thousand slaves having been liberated during the five years 1893-1897. This course of action was due to representations made by the British agent at Kashgar to the Indian Government, who authorised him to procure, at fair compensation, the release of all slaves who were British subjects. Macartney set about his task with so much zeal that he stirred up local interest in his favour and soon obtained the liberation, not only of slaves of Indian nationality, but of many others. The Chow-Kuan of Yarkand of those years set free about three hundred at his own expense,