

The mules in Sin-Chiang nearly all belong to Chinese and are well looked after, as are all the animals in Chinese ownership.

The natives are about as bad horse-masters as can be imagined. In the course of a march they do not allow their animals to drink lest they should turn lame from water in the feet, and when the march is ended they keep them tied up without food or water with their heads high for several hours. The longer the march the longer the animals are kept hungry and thirsty. I could get no reason for this cruel practice except that it was the ancient custom of the country. If I pointed to my ponies and explained the treatment which kept them in good condition the men admitted that my system was successful, but they would not follow my example. Not only are many ponies of the natives half starved, but they suffer from galls and sore backs to which no proper remedies are applied. Perchloride of mercury and borax are obtainable at small cost in the larger bazaars, and I showed the excellent effect of the former, but the natives would not purchase them. One transport contractor procured the drugs, but he did so only to please me, not for the sake of his ponies. The transport contractors being ignorant of the proper treatment of ponies, improvident, and often burdened with debt, occasionally make contracts which they have not the means of fulfilling. A glaring instance of this was shown by Abdul Khalik, who for a time was my caravan bashi. He contracted with certain traders to carry merchandise sufficient to load eighty ponies, from Yarkand to Leh, and he received full payment in advance. But he only possessed forty ponies, and these he so over-worked and under-fed that very few of the loads reached Leh. The traders could obtain no redress, for the contractor had nothing worth seizing.

Such postal arrangements as exist in Sin-Chiang have