

denoted by a number, so that Chinese messages have to be "coded" at the station of despatch, and to be "decoded" at the receiving station. All the telegraph operators are familiar with English, which is used in conjunction with Chinese on the telegraph forms, but the system as regards Chinese messages is cumbrous, and there is a possibility of frequent mistakes. Moreover, as each step in the process has, of course, to be paid for, the cost of telegraphing is high, the rate having been twice raised during 1898-99. The telegraph forms at the time of my visit bore the words, "Messages received for all parts of the world," but up to March, 1899, no interchange of messages with foreign countries had been sanctioned.

All things considered, it is not wonderful that the Peking-Kashgar line is rarely used except by the highest Chinese officials, the Russian Consulate, and the British Agency.