

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

SIGHTSEEING TRIP

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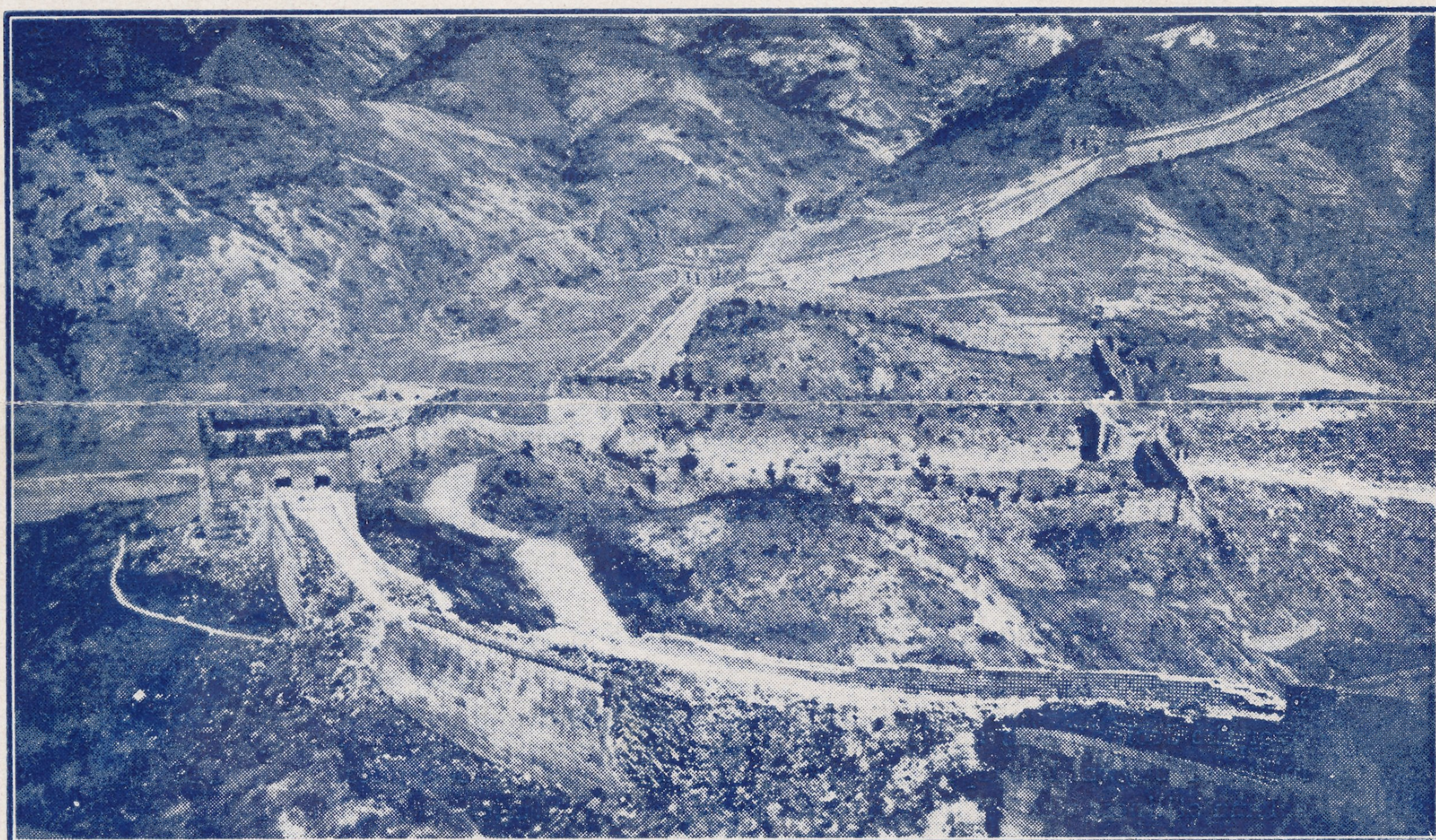
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Peking



The Great Wall

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

The public works of China are probably unequalled in any land or by any people, for the amount of human labor bestowed upon them; the natural aspect of the country has been materially changed by them, and it has been remarked that the Great Wall is the only artificial structure which would arrest attention in a hasty survey of the surface of the globe.

The Great Wall was built by Tsin Chi-hwangti in order to protect his dominions from the incursions of the northern tribes. Some portions of it were already in existence, and he formed the plan of joining and extending them along the whole northern frontier to guard it. It was finished B.C. 204, having been ten years in building, seven of which were done after the Emperor's death. This gigantic work was probably a popular one in the main, and still remains as its own chief evidence of the energy, industry and perseverance of its builders.

It commences at Shanhaikwan (lat. 40 deg. long. 119 deg.), a coast town of importance on the boundary between Chihli and Shingking. It runs along the shore for several miles and terminates on the beach near a long reef. Its course from this point is west, a little northerly, along the old frontiers of the province of Chihli, and then to Shansi, till it strikes the Yellow River. This is the best built part and contains the most important gates, where garrisons and trading marts are established. Within the province of Chihli there are two walls, inclosing a good part of the basin of the Sangkan Ho west of Peking; the inner one was built by an emperor of the Ming dynasty. From the point where it strikes the Yellow River, near Pauteh, it forms the northern boundary of Shensi, and then touches that stream again when it incloses the country of the Ortous Mongols. Its direction from this point is north-west along the northern frontier of Kansu to its termination near Kiayukwan, through which the road passes leading to Hami.

The entire length of the Great Wall between its extremities, is 1,255 miles in a straight line; but its turnings and doublings increase it to fully 1,500 miles. It would stretch from Philadelphia to Topeka.

The construction of this gigantic work is somewhat adapted to the nature of the country it traverses, and the material was taken or made on the spot where it was used. In the western part of its course, it is in some places merely a mud or gravel wall, and in others earth cased with brick.

The eastern part is generally composed of earth and pebbles faced with large bricks, weighing from 40 to 60 lbs. each, supported on a coping of stone. The whole is about 25 feet thick at the base; and 15 feet at the top, and varying from 15 to 30 feet high; the top is protected with bricks, and defended by a parapet; the thinness of these parapets has been taken as a proof that cannon were unknown at the time it was erected. There are brick towers at different intervals, some of them more than 40 feet high, but not built upon the Wall. These are independent structures, usually about 40 feet square at the base, diminishing to 30 at the top; at particular spots the towers are of two stories.

The impression left upon the mind of a foreigner, on seeing this monument of human toil, is respect for a people that could in any manner build it. Standing on the peak at *Kupeh Kau* (Old North Gate), one sees the cloudcapped towers extending away over the declivities in single files both east and west, until dwarfed by miles and miles of skyward perspective as they dwindle into minute piles, yet stand with solemn stillness where they were stationed twenty centuries ago, as though condemned to wait the march of time till their builders returned. The crumbling dyke at their

feet may be followed, winding, leaping across gorges, defiles and steeps, now buried in some chasm, now scaling the cliffs and slopes, in very exuberance of power and wantonness, as it vanishes in a thin, shadowy line, at the horizon. Once seen, the Great Wall of China can never be forgotten.

At present this remarkable structure is simply a geographical boundary, and except at the Gates nothing is done to keep it in repair. Beyond the Yellow River to its western extremity, the Great Wall is mostly a mound of earth or gravel, about 15 feet in height, with only occasional towers of brick, or gateways made of stone. At Kalgan portions of it are made of porphyry and other stones piled up in a pyramidal form between the brick towers, difficult to cross but easy enough to pull down. The appearance of this rampart at Kupeh Kau is more imposing; the entire extent of the main and cross walls in sight from one of the towers there is over twenty miles. In one place it runs over a peak 5,225 feet high, where it is so steep as to make one wonder as much at the labor of erecting it on such a cliff as on the folly of supposing it could be of any use there as a defence.

The Wall is most visited at Nankou (South Gate), in the Kuyung Pass, a remarkable Pass fifteen miles in length, which leads from the Plain at Peking up to the first terrace above it, and at one time was guarded by five additional walls and gates, now all in ruins. From this spot, the wall reaches across Shansi, and was built at a somewhat later period.

From "THE MIDDLE KINGDOM"

by S. Wells Williams, LL.D.

THE GREAT WALL

Walls curving down into the canon and watch towers standing straight like sentinels give a picturesque sky line to mountain profiles. Scarred with the traces of many battles between the Chinese and the nomads, these subsidiary defences of the Pass, which now seem so purposeless and disconnected, send fancy roaming back to the days when they were vitally important in keeping out the ancestors of the Turks, the Huns, the Khitans, the Nuchens, the Mongols and other barbarians who tried to fight their way into the coveted fertile plains of North China.

The Nankou Pass, near Peking, has been compared to the Khyber; and in its wilder Parts this Gateway into China does remind one of the Gateway into India. From the little station of Ch'ing Lang Ch'iao, where we leave the train, it is an easy walk of half an hour along the old highway to the Pa Ta Ling gate at the top of the pass (2,000 feet above sealevel). The Great Wall crosses the latter squarely here, and through the massive archway, from which the studded iron gates have disappeared now, we get a magnificent view of the plains of Chihli and of the snow-capped mountains in the distance. On either side, the Wall wanders along the crests of the hills, scaling peaks which it seems impossible even the foot of man could climb. The massive loops of historic masonry classed, and rightly, by the ancients as one of the wonders of the world, are doubly impressive in these mountain solitudes.

To get the prospect in the fulness of its noble grandeur, one must climb the wall to the highest tower on the eastern spur. So steep is this section that the *terre-plein* takes the form of steps of square brick flags, very laborious to mount. But from the casemated embrasures of this huge stone sentry box, 28 other block-houses, each a third of a mile from its neighbor, are visible, and whichever way we turn the Wall itself seems to pursue us, writhing like a mighty dragon as far as the eye can reach.

Two centuries before the Christian era Ch'in Shih Huang Ti (Tsin-Chi-hwangti), contemporary of Hannibal, conceived this giant scheme for keeping the Tartars in their place. For such portions of the Wall as this emperor caused to be built, linking together and extending some previously existing ramparts, he employed 700,000 criminals and prisoners of war. The difficulties at one time seemed so insurmountable that Ch'in Shih Huang Ti consulted a soothsayer. "Never until 10,000 men are buried beneath this wall," he replied "will it be successfully completed." Now even so great an autocrat hesitated to entomb 10,000 of his subjects alive for the furtherance of his scheme. So he effected a compromise with the Supernatural Powers by burying one man whose name contained the character "Ten Thousand", and thereafter the work proceeded smoothly. Other sovereigns of other dynasties carried on or repaired the work of Ch'in. There is a record, for instance, of a Chin monarch who built a section of the wall in ten days by the employment of no less than a million men, numbers of whom died from the results of forced labor. Again there were periods when nothing was done and the barrier fell into disuse.

During the 2,000 years of the huge racial movements which devastated Asia and even troubled Europe from time to time, China was overwhelmed again and again in spite of the Wall. Still as a rampart against raids, it was often valuable and the moral effect on a would-be conqueror must have been tremendous. To invade a country guarded by such a barrier, especially with cavalry, required a stout heart and stupendous preparation. Moreover there was little hope of slipping through by surprise, as the watch towers in important passes were only a hundred yards apart and even in remote districts, free from the chronic raids of the nomads never more than a mile from one another. All of them were manned by small garrisons who had an excellent signal system of beacons by means of which messages could be transmitted from tower to tower for thousands of miles in a remarkably short time. By this means an attack on the Wall at some remote point could be flashed to Peking in a night, and all the resources of large armies summoned to keep pace with the movements of the barbarian reconnoitering along the outside of the barrier in search of a weak spot.

Now that the Tartar menace has long since disappeared, the mighty rampart is useless. Gone are all those doughty warriors who stood against Genghis Khan: rusty their arms, which antiquarians dig out of the towers; crumbling the towers themselves. Even the Wall in places is slipping down into the vallies, stone by stone, and the waterspouts, cleverly placed on the inside of the barrier that thirst might add to the difficulties of the invaders, have fallen among the brambles. But at least the strength and glory of the mighty fortification is yielding before no human foe. Only time, the most powerful and invincible enemy can bring to ruin what no mortal conqueror could destroy.

How often must the northern tribes have poured down this rugged causeway in their unrestricted, rapacious hordes to burn the villages inside the wall, to ransack the towns and steal and kill. And what ghastly struggles must have taken place here before the conquering barbarians defeated the defenders and, pausing only to tie the heads of their vanquished enemies to their saddle bows like garlands bloody and grimacing, rode away into the valleys. But always the "kindly rains came and washed the blood off the stones, and the sun bleached them clean again, and the shy wild green herbs plaited their leaves in garlands to hide the stains and wounds, and the mauntains peeped demurely through the gateways with their hints of mists and clouds and vagabond winds and the exquisite astonishments of their tintings—till it seemed as if sorrow and death could never have come that way."

From JULIET BREDON'S "PEKING"

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