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The Temples of the Western Hills

by

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PREFACE.

This is, in the main, a record of Personal impressions and while supplying, or at all events, attempting to supply, the essential information needed by a new-comer, the book aims at giving a general idea. of the character and atmosphere of the temples and their surroundings rather than a tabulated series of facts in the manner of a guide-book. It lays no claim to be a work of erudition, and the reader who, wishes for precise knowledge on topographical and historical aspects is referred to such books as M. J. Bouillard's mono-graphs on the individual temples, with their admirable large-scale maps, in the, series entitled "Pekin et ses environs" which is understood to be about to appear in English translations.

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CHAPTER I. THE WESTERN HILLS.

From the top of the Tartar Wall on a clear day you will see an amphitheatre of mountains twenty miles away encircling Peking on the North and West. They are the outer bulwarks of the great *massif* which separates the plain of north-east China from the Mongolian plateau, and stretch back over a hundred miles to, the Gobi Desert. Seen from the vantage point of the 60-foot wall the nearer hills, especially if the time is towards sunset, stand out with startling distinctness, every ridge and hollow sharply defined in the brilliantly clear atmosphere which we enjoy in North China. Behind them the ranges mount gradually to a, series of peaks of 4000 to 5000 feet, possessed of ruggedness of outline which gives them a. grandeur out of all proportion to their actual height. Along the sky-line, invisible except through powerful glasses, runs the, Great Wall of China.

The fringe of this mountain mass, which rises so abruptly from The flat plain as to give sometimes the impression of cliffs on a seashore, is called by the natives "*hsi shan*" and by foreign residents --- translating literally from the Chinese --- the, "Western Hills." It consists of a jumble of hills rising to heights of five, hundred to a, thousand feet, intersected by one large, and several smaller, river-beds and furrowed and scarred by numerous torrents. Ilex and chestnut grow on some of the slopes and here and there a favoured valley is thickly wooded with pines; but for the rest the, hills are bare of all but scrub, earthy-brown in winter and spring,

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but verdant with grass and flowers during and after the summer rains. The smooth moulding of the lower hills is broken by outcrops of volcanic rock along the crests which often end in precipitous bluffs and screes. The valleys are well cultivated, peopled by an industrious population who make the most of every inch of ground and drag their primitive ploughs hundreds of feet up the steep hillsides to scratch the surface of the tiny pockets of arable soil which occur among the rocks. Wheat and maize on the higher levels, peaches, apricots and the ubiquitous *kao-liang* (i.e., sorghum-millet) on the lower are the fruits of their labours and provide their hard-earned livelihood.

In these surroundings, rich in the romantic mountain scenery which appeals especially to Chinese taste, but at the same time conveniently near to the metropolis, the centre of art and riches, a great number of Buddhist temples have in the course of centuries been built and endowed by emperors of China and the more wealthy and pious of their subjects. The founder often enough was a palace eunuch who having, after the manner of his kind, amassed a substantial fortune which his misfortune debarred him from bequeathing to his lineal descendants, chose this means of spending it, providing himself by the self-same act with a lasting memorial on earth and a safe passport to heaven. Sometimes a tired functionary --- an ex-Viceroy as likely as not --- wearied of this world's vanities, devoted the peculations of a life-time to the building of a temple where he could end his days in peace and safety. Other temples again owe their foundation to a similar religious impulse to that

which accounts for may of the great Christian shrines, erected

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to mark some sacred spot such as a saint's tomb or the site where a miracle was performed. Fortunately for us of to-day, merit could be gained by restoring as well as building, and many existing temples have been saved from decrepitude, as the inscribed stone tablets in their courtyards attest, by the munificence of pious benefactors.

The sites of these temples in the Western Hills are very varied, some nestling close under the foot of the hills or even a little way out in the plain among the corn-fields, some built in the open valleys or in steep ravines, others clinging to the mountain sides, and a chosen few lording the summits. Two motives guided the founders in their choice of a place --- firstly, *feng-shui*, and secondly, their sense for beauty. The keenness of the latter is well enough proved by the superb views which almost invariably greet one from the terraces of the hill-temples, showing the care which was taken to find a spot commanding the best scenery. The other deciding factor, *feng-shui*, or geomancy as it is often translated (though the literal meaning is "wind and water") is a deep-rooted notion which has determined the exact location and orientation of Chinese buildings from the earliest days. Everything in this land is permeated with "influences" good or bad and, like the folk at home who believe in "polar currents" and arrange their bedsteads accordingly, the Chinese --- or such of them as have not yet sacrificed their faith to western skepticism --- regulate their lives and actions in obedience to the dictates of this highly occult science. A good instance of its practical bearing is the height of the gate-towers of Peking, and the great rotunda of the Temple

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of Heaven. They both measure exactly 99 feet, the explanation being that the soaring ambition of the architects was ruthlessly checked at this point by the court geomancer of the day whose researches had revealed the important fact that the plane at which good spirits habitually fly is 100 feet above ground-level, so that, had the roofs been built one foot higher, celestial heads would have bumped and their owners most likely have deserted Peking in disgust. Similar superstitions often intrude themselves in one's own affairs. For instance, when renting the temple which I describe on a later page, we found that no offers of hard cash would bring the priest to agree to making an essential improvement by adding a north window in the stuffy main room; mercenary customer though he was, he was ready to sacrifice a year's rent rather than knock a hole in his wall which might, beside admitting the breeze, let in a stray hobgoblin.

Feng-shui, then, is a very serious matter and one may safely guess that the building of some of the temples was delayed for years by the search for the right combination of influences, just as, in the Chinese fable, the five sons debated so long over the place to inter their parent that the old man was still above ground when the last of the sons was buried.

Before starting on our visits to individual temples, we may perhaps take a survey of Chinese "temples" in general and here I apologize in advance to those of my readers (probably a fair

proportion) whose knowledge of the subject is as deep as, or deeper than, my own.

To begin with, foreigners are apt to make indiscriminate use of the word "temple" to mean monasteries,

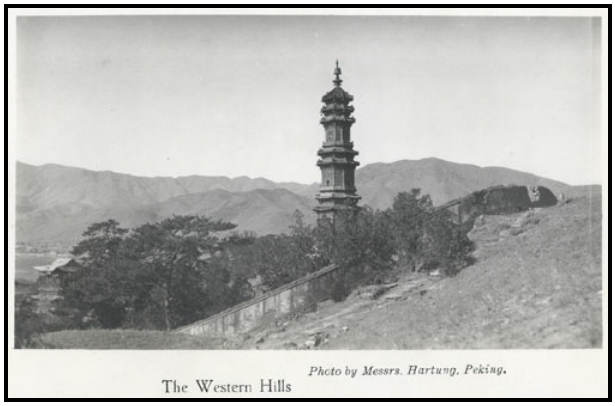

Photo by Messrs. Hartung, Peking.
The Western Hills

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lamasseries, shrines --- Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian tombs and ancestral halls, everything in fact in the way of a, sacred edifice from mere roadside "joss-houses" to the Temple of Heaven itself. Often the name is really a misnomer and this applies to most of the "temples" which figure in the leaves, of this book, but it is so sanctioned by usage that none but a pedant need mind.

The typical temple of the sort, I am writing about bears most resemblance to a, monastery in Christian lands. It is a big walled-in space containing a, number of buildings built for the most part round a series of courtyards arranged in terraces up the, hillside and inhabited by monks (or in rarer cases, by nuns) governed by an abbot. The temple provides, nominally at least, a retreat from the world for persons vowed to a, life of contemplation and worship of the Buddhist deities, whose images always occupy the main pavilions. The monks or priests (to employ again the term in commonest use) freely migrate from one temple to another and owe obedience, only to the abbot of the temple in which they are actually living, whose word is absolute law. The *regime* in the various temples varies as widely as it did in the monasteries, of mediaeval Europe. In some temples it is of the strictest possible order implying a life of extreme austerity oil the part of the monks, while the inmates, of others pass their days in loafing and gambling with the absolute minimum of religions exercises. Drink and opium smoking are by no means unknown in monastic circles and abbots have even been known to die of the latter drug. It is hardly necessary to add that the popular form of Chinese Buddhism is very degenerate and tinged with

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the grossest superstitions. The priests retain a hold over the common people through the belief that they are able to settle accounts with offended gods and avert, lightning and tempest, plague,

pestilence, famine and sudden death; but with comparatively rare, though striking exceptions, they are so steeped in ignorance and materialism that the laity hold them in well deserved contempt.

The doors of a temple are open to, all and sundry and, thanks, to Chinese tolerance, in religious, matters, foreigners can enjoy their hospitality as freely as natives of the country. Guest-rooms, often comprising a whole Courtyard, are a feature of every temple and in these the visitor can install himself and his whole household and live a self-contained existence quite outside the official life of the temple; as in European monasteries, a hospitaller is specially deputed to see to the needs of guests. Besides being, in this way, hospices for travellers, the, temples often take the place of sanatoria; many of them too have attached a so-called "travelling palace" where the old Emperors used to spend a quiet holiday or lodge the night on their Journeys through the country. All sorts and conditions of men are to, be found in temple guest-rooms; pining consumptives, literary hermits or high officials *en villegiature* may equally be your fellow-lodgers and even the strictest type of Christian missionary finds nothing incongruous in recuperating from his labours within these "courts of Baal."

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CHAPTER 2. THE PA-TA-CH'U GROUP.

Of the three main roads which radiate from Peking on the western side, the central one leads due west across the plain through 12 miles, of cultivated fields varied only by a, couple of walled villages, the, famous thirteen-tiered pagoda of Pa-li-ch'uang and sundry tombs and cemeteries till it reaches Pa-ta-ch'u, the "Eight Great Places." The "Places" are in reality a, group of temples which to the given number cluster on the near slope of the hills in a shallow bay beautifully wooded and draining into a rocky torrent. The lowest of the eight lies at, the level of the plain, the topmost six hundred feet higher, near the summit of the range, while the, remaining six are dotted in an irregular pattern over the square mile or so, which forms the bosom of the hill.

Nearly a century ago the members of the Russian Mission, then and for long, afterwards, the only lay foreigners tolerated in Peking, hit on this little colony of temples as a retreat, to flee to, from the heat of the, Peking summers. The earliest British Minister, Sir Frederick Bruce (Lord Elgin's brother), followed their example when he established himself in Peking in 1860 and a series of his successors kept up the custom of renting temples at Pa-ta-ch'u for the hot season. Till the opening up of Peitaiho as a seaside resort accessible by railway, Pa-ta-ch'u continued to play the part of a small hill-station for foreigners, and even now the captivating beauty of the hills, with their brimming streams (after the breaking of the rains) and profusion of wild

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flowers, coupled with the cloistered charm of the temples themselves, rivals the cool waters of the Gulf of Chihli as 't Summer refuge for beat-worn residents in the capital.

HSIANG-CHIEH-SSU.

One of the "Eight Places" was my own home for a summer and thereby claims the first place on my list. It is seventh ill order of altitude, standing over 500 feet above the plain, and is the largest, and probably the oldest, of the group, dating back historically to the 8th century, though, as often the case with Chinese monuments of great antiquity, the existing buildings are a comparatively modern replica of the original structures. Its name is Hsiang-chieh-ssu.

We were tenants only of the topmost courtyard of all which we shared with the three priests who are the only modern representatives of a once flourishing community. On one side our neighbour was an ex-Minister of Finance who lived with his populous family in what was once the "Travelling Palace;"

on the other, a diminutive wing of the temple thrown out over the valley with a marvellous view from its terrace had been converted to a week-end cottage by a compatriot man of business, while the various lower courtyards provided quarters for a considerable missionary population including a distinguished member of the body whom China has known for more than half a century.

It is amusing to look back on the difficulties which beset the negotiation of our tenancy. The defeat of our effort to obtain ventilation through the ineradicable fear of opening a way for hobgoblins has already been men-

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tioned above, and another, typical hitch now comes to my mind. Although our courtyard had housed foreign visitors before --- including two of Great Britain's Ministers to China --- living conveniences were conspicuous by their absence. Among other improvements we bargained for the erection of an outside kitchen, the cost to be shared between landlord and tenant. A price was agreed upon, but still the abbot held back from giving his final assent.

"What is the trouble?" we asked.

"You, agree," he replied, "that the kitchen reverts to the, temple when you depart?"

"Of course," we answered, "and in any case we could hardly take it away with us."

"Well," he insisted, "I should like your agreement in writing."

"Surely that is superfluous; what, could be the use of it?"

"We fear," he said, revealing at last what he had at the back of his mind, "that perhaps in years to come your honourable children or may be your honourable grandchildren may return and may say 'this kitchen was built by our forefathers and we now lay claim to it,' what should we do then?" We solemnly gave the required pledge, but only appreciated the full humour of it when the kitchen, a miserable structure, was found to have three-parts dissolved before the summer rains were over.

A path leads up to the temple from the foot of the hill through pine-clad slopes and gullies and past the gates of three of its sisters. It brings you to a gatehouse with red-washed walls and arched windows filled with fine stone trellis work. Delicate arabesques are

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carved round the head of the arches in pure Saracenic style, a, feature e common in Chinese architecture. The threshold is raised a couple of feet, at the top of a steep incline on both sides, a device to defeat bad spirits in their attempts to enter the temple, as any divergence from the level is well known to hinder their passage. Should an enterprising sprite surmount this initial obstacle, he would, on entering the gate-house itself, be faced with a far more terrible check. Two horrific

"Guardians of the Gate" stand on either side of the entrance, huge, ferocious monsters poising fiery darts above their heads, ready to dash down on trespasser. The creatures are so realistic in the dim half light that one shrinks back instinctively and it is easy to believe that no evil ghost would dare to run the gauntlet.

These, grim figures and the gentler idols inside play so important a part in the economy of the temple that it may not be amiss to say something here about the art and method of their manufacture. The prime material of which they are made is a composition of mud and fibre. From this humble medium the idol maker moulded his figures often with extraordinary skill, though the more modern productions are apt to be very crude. The forms, however, are all conventionalized and while these huge grotesques in violent action are masterpieces of their kind, the placid buddhas and their attendant bodhisats are vapid to the last degree. A proper idol possesses not merely an outward crust but also a set of entrails, represented by a crimson bag inserted in him by the maker, while to endow him with the breath of life, a miserable mouse, or some other animal of suitable size is immured alive in his "innards." The finished

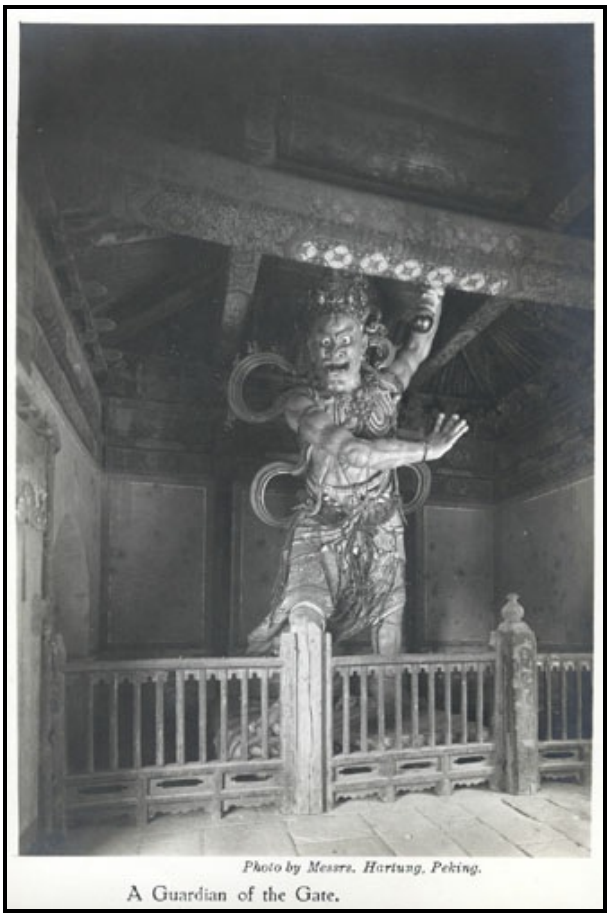

Photo by Messrs. Hartung, Peking.

A Guardian of the Gate.

Drum Tower.

Drum Tower

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article is wonderfully and fearfully painted in vivid hues and intricate designs and liberally splashed with gold. In troublous times the Temple gods have been known to be stuffed with, more precious objects than mice and red bags and the paunch of a fat *Maitreya* has frequently served as a *cache* for treasure to save it from the hands of marauders. God and Mammon thus united have not, however, always proved a happy combination, as you may see if you visit the "Blue Temple," South of Peking where rows of life-sized buddhas all have their backs torn off --- the work of Chinese soldiers who, were billetted in the temple during the civil war and ransacked the place for treasure.

Having braved the "Guardians" and passed the gate-house, we climb a steep stone stair-way on either side, of which is a very lofty mast, stepped in a carved stone socket and topped with a yellow china ball, to the peak of which lanterns are hung on certain saints-days. At the top of these steps we enter the first courtyard, the most, beautiful of all, which contains, on either side of the central path, the conventional drum and bell-towers, two of the most charming features in Chinese architecture. These twin buildings are two stories high, the lower of stone charmingly arabesqued round the arched doorways and windows, the upper plastered in red with great stone corbels and brilliantly painted rafter ends carrying the tilted eaves. Their roofs, flashing with green and yellow tiles, are overhung by ancient pines whose, branches cast shadows on the pavement and fill the whole courtyard with dappled light and shade. Passing through on our way to the upper portions of the temple, we often used to find this courtyard occupied

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by two old carpenters who used the abandoned drum tower for their workshop and were employed in fashioning stools from large baulks of timber stacked inside the temple.

Another lot of steps and we come to the "Hall of the Four Great Kings". These personages, hardly less terrible of aspect than "Guardians of the Gate" are seated in, pairs to right and left of the passage way. Between them the Kings parcel out the four quarters of the universe, according to buddhist tradition, and each has his distinguishing colour and emblem. To Wen, King of the North, is black and holds a snake in one hand and a pen pearl in the other; Kuong Mu, King of the East, is white and brandishes a sword; Tsung Chang, King of the South, is red and bears an umbrella, while the last of them, Chih Kuo, King of the West, is blue and plays a guitar; all of them have one huge foot placed on the back of a writhing demon or mortal out of whom he is crushing the life. Seated on a dais in the middle of the hall, facing you as you mount the steps, is the gross but jovial fellow I have mentioned just above --- *Maitreya* of the enormous paunch, popularly known by the name of the "smiling buddha." He is the buddha of the future according to the buddhist messianic tradition and his well filled belly is a promise of good things to come for this famine land of China.

The next flight of steps (all these steps are needed to equalize the slope of the hillside) leads to the first of the three principal courtyards. It is surrounded by living quarters, like a college quadrangle, and has in the centre a large hall or "*tien*" containing images. This type of building is the most characteristic of

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Chinese architectural forms, possessing, roughly speaking, the proportions of a Greek temple, though quite unsimilar in every other respect. It is a striking illustration of Chinese topsy-turvyism viewed from the Western standpoint, for the roof, instead of being a covering subordinated to the general plan, is here the essential feature and all the art and prodigality of the Chinese builder is lavished on it alone. Supported on massive wooden pillars --- enormous tree-trunks, floated from the Yunnan forests 2000 miles away --- the roofs are made of prodigious weight and solidity and covered with glazed tiles of a semitubular shape which run vertically down the gables giving a corrugated effect. A solid stone coping, a foot and a half deep, and heavily carved with floral designs, crowns the ridge, expanding into a fine sculptured phoenix at the centre and finishing at either end in open-mouthed dragons. The special feature is, of course, the tilt of the gables and corresponding sag of the lower edges of the roof. There is an old theory, which, whether correct or not, explains this peculiar shape. It is claimed that the Chinese roof is directly evolved from that of a nomad's tent. Take a marquee with its two main poles supporting a ridge-piece and four shorter poles lifting the four corners, allow a slight sagging of the canvas between, and you have the exact lines followed by the Chinese architect. In many of the larger Chinese *tiens*, notably these of the Forbidden City, real chains of gilded metal connect the ridges with the eaves, an imitation obviously, if not, an actual relic, of the primitive tent-rope.

The roof is deeply overhung and bells, suspended from its four angles, tinkle in every breath of wind.

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The quaintest feature of the structure are the sets of "roof animals" perched in single file along the lower ends of the diagonals. These creatures of glazed and coloured clay are cast in a single piece with the tiles they sit on. A set consists of anything up to a dozen. The highest on the ridge is an evil-looking dragon with a bushy talk and a fearsome pair of horns, in front of him are eight or ten nondescript beasts, which might be dogs or lions, erect on their haunches and cocking their ears with a comical air of pertness; the last of the row, at the extreme end of the ridge, is a little old man with a long beard sitting astride a hen. The origin of this curious family is given as follows. In the time of one of the oldest of the emperors the land was grievously afflicted by the attentions of a mischievous sprite named Wong, who played all manner of evil tricks on the emperor and his subjects. At the emperor's orders a great hunt was organized for the capture of Wong who was finally run to ground and brought in chains to the palace. But though you may catch a sprite no power on earth can kill him, and the emperor was terribly puzzled to find a prison where Wong could be boxed up for ever without possibility of escape. The Wise Men being called in consultation this is the advice they gave: "Let Wong be strapped to the back of a hen an the bird perched on the corner of the roof at too great a height to fly down; place a row of fierce beasts in her rear to prevent her from climbing up; she will thus be fixed for eternity and Wong will share her fate." The advice of the Sages was taken and all over China to-day you can see the hapless Wong perched up on the roof on the back of his feathered steed.

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The next courtyard holds the main sanctuary, a *tien* similar to that which I have just described, in which live the images of Sakyamuni, the historic Buddha, and his eighteen *arkhans* or "disciples." Back-to-back with the great buddha, facing out of the northern doorway stands that most human of all the buddhist theogony Kuan-yin-p'usa, the "Goddess of Mercy." This is where most, of the temple services are held and the *tien* contains all the paraphernalia of buddhist worship --- the big gong and painted drum, the brass cymbals and heart-shaped block of wood which a monk taps in measure with the chants, the long kneeling benches where the monks occasionally rest front their, long, weary processing to and fro before the altar, and the altar itself with its set of ritual implements, libation bowls, incense urns full of grey ash --- the accumulation of years --- red candles as thick as your wrist and carved all round with dragons, piles of fruit and curious criss-cross towers made of sticks of sugared short-bread. A lacquered wooden reredos forms a background to the buddha; dusty pennants and ancient, lamps hang suspended from the beams, enormously stout pillars, painted a dull red, support the roof timbers lacquered in blue, and gold, while the ceiling above consists of sunk panels beautifully carved and painted.

Of the services which frequently take place in this dim, magnificent setting I will speak in a later chapter. For the present let us finish the, tour of the temple: by climbing to the last and highest courtyard up a stairway of breakneck steepness. It is distinguished from the lower courts by having high two-storied buildings round three of its sides and a fine magnolia and a

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lotus tank in the centre. The middle portion of the upper floor contains the temple library, a famous collection of books, while its eastern wing is a, long unbroken corridor of 50 feet or so. A *hu-hsien* or "fox-ghost" is reputed to inhabit the corridor and did indeed appear, with disastrous results, to a servant of ours who was sleeping below at a time when we were absent. Hearing noises above, the faithful fellow climbed the rickety stairs leading to, our bedroom and at the top came face to face with the ghost who, true to the best traditions, "had eyes the size of saucers," and so terrified the lad that he fell headlong down again to his grievous bodily hurt. We ourselves, however, were spared its visitations, our only unwelcome visitors being the scorpions which abound in the old timbering.

The one devout member of our community was the temple coolie whose piety caused us occasional embarrassment. In the course of building operations some of the gods had been dislodged and a small figure of Kuan-ti, the God of War, a fierce little person in armour, had excited our pity by being left exposed to the elements in one of the lower courtyards. We rescued him at night and installed him comfortably under the broad verandah running along the front of our building. The following morning the coolie came, eyed Kuan-ti and went away, looking very perplexed. When sunset came, the hour for feeding the gods, his sense of duty over, came, his shyness of the foreigner and he reappeared with the usual dish of rice which he planted in front of the image, and from that day on the warrior god, though he continued to share our verandah, never lacked his evening meal. Of official worship there was very little,

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though on one day at the end of the long Spring drought a full-dress service took place at the shrine of the Rain God which stands just outside the southern wall of the temple. Yellow robes were donned, and quantities of paper prayers were burnt in a great brazier in front of the shrine. The country people who had gathered for the occasion were, assuredly deeply impressed when the very next day broke in floods of rain; less so we, who had observed the barometer's steady fall for the previous 24 hours.

LING-KUANG-SSU.

The, Pa-ta-ch'u hill was a Boxer stronghold in the year 1900 and one of the lower temples, Ling-kuang-ssu by name, is permanently linked with the history of the siege of the Legations. It had, before that fatal year, a remarkably fine pagoda which formed a landmark even from the city-walls of Peking. When, after the relief, punitive measures were being taken against the Boxers and their allies, a detachment of international troops was despatched to Pa-ta-ch'u to clear, out the hornets' nest known to have established Wished itself there. A plan was concerted to catch the Boxers living, in the various temples by sending a body of men to gain the ridge above by a circuitous route while the rest formed a cordon in the plain below. The scheme partly miscarried though several Boxers were shot while escaping down the slope from Hsiang-chieh-ssu. It was discovered, however, that the priest of

Ling-kuang-ssu had not only harboured the Boxers but given them active help and, as a form of retribution which should injure only the culprits themselves elves and do no harm to their innocent

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neighbours, the temple was burned to the ground and the pagoda blown up by dynamite. The former has since been restored, but the latter is irreplaceable. Members of the British Legation who, had spent the, earlier part of the summer in the "travelling Palace" attached to Hsiang-chieh-ssu and returned at the time of these events to retrieve the property left behind in their hasty departure for Peking, found their quondam bedroom hung about with Boxer outfits, red sashes, bullet-proof jerkins etcetera, abandoned in their turn by the "Harmonious Fists" in their precipitate flight.

Shorn of its glory, with nothing but the merest stump of the old pagoda remaining, Ling-kuang-ssu is still one of the most attractive of the Eight Great Places. Its charm chiefly resides in the flagged and ferngrown fishpond, which nestles under the steep hillside, rich with green reflections from the overhanging verdure, and in its sunny courtyard full of warm nooks in the early days of Spring.

TA-PEI-SSU.

Ta-pei-ssu, which stands somewhat higher but still on the lower slopes, is well named the "Bamboo Temple." The bamboos face you as you enter the main gate, ranged deep along the opposite side of the courtyard. Their long straight yellow steins, topped by feathery masses of foliage, together with the vine-encumbered balustrades of a flight of steps which breaks through the middle to lead to an upper courtyard, make a semi-tropical picture which carries one's mind to luxuriant southern gardens on the Riviera or along the Italian Lakes. In the month of May the impression is deepened by the blaze of count-

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less oleanders. In another part of the temple grow a couple of "ginkos" (maiden hair tree), the tallest and most beautiful tree of North China, and in odd corners one comes on lotus tanks and pieces of "living rock." This "living rock," specimens of which you meet with in most of the hill temples, comes from. a valley some miles away and consists of a curious sponge-like stone so extraordinarily porous that when it is stood in water the moisture seeps its way upward in sufficient quantity to nourish scores of tiny plants growing from tile holes and crevices. At Ta-pei-ssu the monks plant it with ferns and pink begonias.

PI-MO-YEN.

A narrow side valley enters the Pa-ta-ch'u stream just below Ta-pei-ssu, and a little way up this valley one comes to Pi-mo-yen. Like the beautiful Shih-tze-wo which stands far above, almost on the crest of the hill, this temple has been partly converted for use as a foreign dwelling, but the chance comer is free to visit its most remarkable feature --- a long covered way running for hundreds of feet along the side of the ravine, dotted with little pavilions and ending in a rock cave still in the occupation of the original idols. The spot is an unusual site for a temple, shut in, as it is, between the spurs of the hill and gives to Pi-mo-yen a special character of its own and an atmosphere of romance which its seven sisters lack.

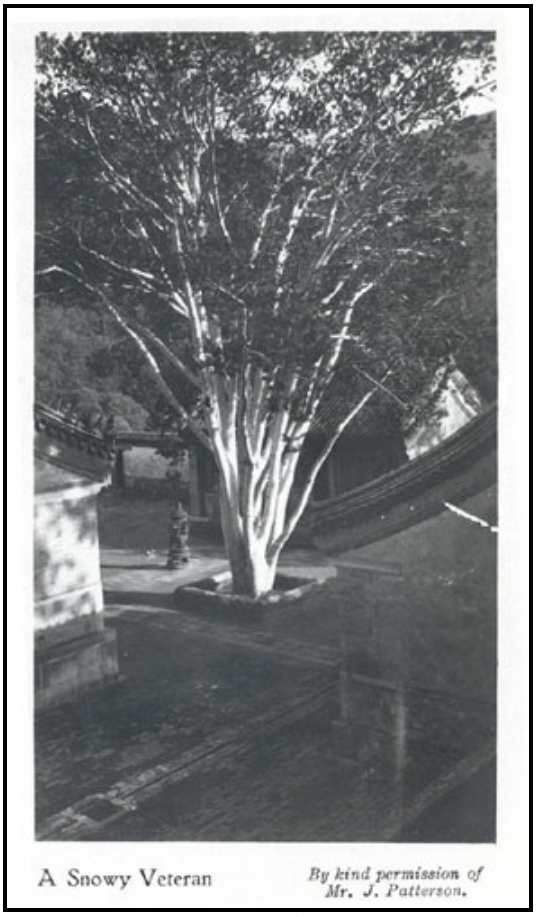
LUNG-WANG-T'AN.

Half way up the hill the path leading to Hsiang-chieh-ssu skills the surrounding wall of a little temple

called Lung-wang-t'an. Its principal charm is its fishpond which, alas! has recently lost a beautiful adjunct in the form of a spreading tree which used to grow at its edge. A picturesque flight, of stairs leads tip to the temple-gate, for the temple is so raised that from the courtyard one looks down ten feet or more onto the path below. For many years Sir John Jordan, when British Minister in China, rented this favoured courtyard and his name bas clung to the place so that one often hears the older Peking resident speak of the temple as "Sir John's."

PAO-CHE-TUNG.

There remains Pa-che-tung the highest temple of all which looks down from a couple of hundred feet straight onto the roof of Hsiang-chieh-ssu. It is generally uninhabited except by an old and loquacious guardian who loves to take the visitor into a cave, at the back and show him with pride the lacquered mummy of a former priest. To one's right as one looks eastward from the terrace of Pao-che-tung, the curve of the great hollow which embraces all these temples ends in a bold bluff known as the Tiger's Head. Climb to it on a summer's evening and you will be rewarded with as fine a view as it is often given one to see --- on the one side over the vast plain, on the other over a network of valleys breaking out through the foothills. But of the view from the hills I shall speak again in the next chapter.



By kind permission of Mr. J. Patterson.

A Snowy Veteran

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CHAPTER 3. THE GRAND PANORAMA, THE JADE CLOUD TEMPLE AND THE TEMPLE OF THE SLEEPING BUDDHA.

The Jade Cloud Temple (Pi-yun-ssu), founded under the Mongol dynasty (1280-1364) but now a mere ghost of its former self, lies at the mouth of a valley some five miles northward from Pa-ta-ch'u. The road connecting Pa-ta-ch'u, with the Summer Palace leads, past it along the foot of the hills, but far more interesting is the mountain track which starting from Hsiang-chieh-ssu and following the ridge at a mean height of a thousand feet, drops down into the valley by way of the old imperial hunting park. Travelling along this path one commands a landscape which for extent, beauty and historical interest may fairly rank among the great panoramas of the world. The mountains after continuing for twenty miles or so, sweep round in a great curve to the eastward encompassing the plain on the two sides. To the south and east, however, the eye roams, over a vast level expanse stretching to air infinitely distant, horizon clean and smooth as the rim of the ocean. The plain lies spread out below like an immense carpet of mottled green with the broad stony bed of the Hun Ho running like a jagged rent across its lower corner. Every inch is in high cultivation and in summer a phenomenal variety of crops, from the giant *kao-liang* with its 15-foot stalks and pale green foliage to the fields of dark-leaved yams and ivy-like peanuts, pattern the landscape with endless shades of colour. Hundreds of mud-built villages and

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solitary farmsteads, half buried in trees, and still greater numbers of white marble tombs and cemeteries shrouded in juniper are scattered over the plain; and lastly Peking itself with its expanse of yellow roofs shows as a splash of gold in the centre of the picture.

An odd site, is one's first thought, for the capital of Gina. Tucked away in this northern corner of the empire, far from sea or river and farther still from the centres of population and wealth which congregate, on the Yangtze, it seems at first a, strange position for the old emperors to have chosen. The key to the mystery lies, however, in the very hills we are standing oil and the mountains lying beyond, which through all the centuries have been the bulwark of China against her principal enemies. The threat of Tartar and Mongol invasion was so persistent till modern times that the only safe place for the sovereign power of China was here close behind the barrier which separated it from the dreaded "hordes." The strategic centre lay at the focal point of the great amphitheatre of mountains which commanded the exits of the various passes and front which the tribesmen, if they broke through, could be attached in force before they were clear of the foot-hills. The Mings, it is true, removed to Nanking for a time, but the threat from the steppes soon restored "the Northern Capital" to its former position.

Peking's essential character as an Emperor's palace standing in the midst of a fortified camp, (Khanbaluk, "the palace of the Khan" was its name in Marco Polo's day) comes out clearly in the

view of the city from our hill-top. A stranger would scarcely guess it to be a city at all --- far less a city of over a million souls --- for all

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one sees is the gleaming mass of the yellow palace roofs sunk in a. sea of green and lying at the centre, of the vast parallelogram formed by the City Walls. These are visible as straight white lines stretching five miles across the landscape and broken only by the, gate-towers and the block houses at the corners of the Tartar City. The only other landmarks are the famous "Coal Hill" capped by its five pavillions, the *dagoba* crowning the artificial mound in the "Northern Lakes" and the wonderful sapphire dome of the Temple of Heaven. The rest of Peking, consisting of one-storied houses backed by extensive gardens and interspersed with numerous parks and temple grounds, is hidden from view in the wealth of luxuriant foliage.

The Summer Palace appears some half-dozen miles to the northward, spreading down the slope of an isolated hill, which forms an island in the, plain. Its series of pavillions mounting one above the other and culminating in a large kiosk are mirrored in the waters of an artificial lake a couple of miles in circumference lying at the, foot of the hill and surrounded by lotus swamps. It rose Phoenixlike, seventy years ago, from, the ashes of the former Summer Palace, built after the, pattern of Versailles by the old Jesuit Missionaries attached to the Peking court, and burnt to the ground by Anglo-French troops to avenge the death and torture of our *parlementaires* in the Second China War. Nearer to where we stand another solitary hill, dotted with graceful pagodas, marks the, source of the Jade Fountain whose waters, of matchless clearness and a curious greenish tint, are carried in a canal across the plain to Peking where they flow through the marble watercourses

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which intersect the courtyards of the Forbidden City.

Close under the hill lie Several clusters of villages ringed by squat, brown towers loopholed and crenelated. These are "banner-man" villages of the Manchu days where a large proportion of the various "banners" (the Manchurian legions which, coming to China with the dynasty, became the Household Brigade) were permanently encamped. Passing through them to-day, you find the Women still displaying the highly painted and extravagant *coiffures* prescribed by Manchu custom. Closer still, on the very skirt of the hills, stand other brown buildings of a puzzling shape, and appearance. They vaguely resemble mediaeval castles in ruins but are grouped together on the slopes in positions which no builder would choose. Their explanation is a curious one. They date back to the days of the great Ch'ien Lung who at one period of his lengthy reign planned a military invasion of Tibet to subdue the tribes living over the border. The Tibetans, as we still found to be the case at the time of the Younghusband expedition, placed great reliance on their *jongs* (a special type of fortress) for repelling an invader. Ch'ien Lung decided to train his army in expert methods of assault beforehand. With true Chinese patience **[1]** he procured Tibetan masons, made them erect a number of dummy *jongs*, then for some months practised his troops in attacks against them. When his men had learnt their lesson

[1] An historic instance of this trait in a Chinese commander is the march of Tso Tsung-tang against Yakub Bey the rebel of Kashgar in the seventies when, to provide food for his army in its 2000-mile march, he proceeded in stages sending detachments ahead to sow wheat in selected districts to be ready for use when the troops reached the spot.

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he marched them off to the Western frontier and carried through his campaign with success. The remains of the *jongs* still stand as a monument to his thoroughness and foresight. Before the revolution, the ground on which we are looking down was a sort of Manchu Aldershot and at no great distance from the ruined *jongs* stands another relic of Manchu militarism, the old imperial review-ground. The troops paraded in a walled-in space of moderate size, the chief feature of which is a replica of a section of the Peking city-walls built for the same purpose as the *jongs*. The royal "stand" from which the Emperor watched his troops is, on the other hand, a most imposing structure consisting of two full-sized pavilions standing forty or fifty feet above the ground on a circular pedestal, an hundred feet in diametre, battlemented and faced with large blocks of stone so as to resemble a huge bastion. From this exalted spot the old Emperors, expert, soldiers themselves, used to watch their favourite regiments practising siege tactics, charging with the lance or shooting arrows at the butts. Alas for the days of romance; the encircling wall now contains in agricultural college!

A poignant momento of Boxer times lies directly below our feet. On a spur of the hill four gaunt skeletons, representing all that remains of the British Summer Legation, rear their crumbling framework. The chimneystacks and a few broken bits of wall are the only remnants of the group of houses which had reached completion only a week or two before the storm broke. From one of them Sir Claud Macdonald's family fled less than twenty four hours before the Boxers sacked and flied the compound. So thorough was their work that no attempt

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was afterwards made to restore the buildings, hut these few acres of bare hill-side with their desolate heaps of ruins, still constitute one of the odd bits of real property owned by His Britannic Majesty's Government in foreign parts.

One remarkable phenomenon deserves a mention before we continue our journey. The soil which composes the landscape which I have just attempted to describe is almost entirely imported, blown here from the Mongolian steppes by the fierce, winter gales. The exploit of Birnam Wood is slight indeed when compared with this feat of the Gobi Desert crossing a barrier of mountains. However strange at first sight, the process will be simple enough to anyone who has had the misfortune to experience a Peking duststorm when the air is so thick with sand that the day is darkened to twilight and the floors of one's house become like a sandy beach. When the storm has passed, the country-side lies under a mantle of sand to be measured in millions of tons and often the roads round the capital are blocked by such mighty drifts that, traffic is stopped for days. So, like the Egyptian Delta with its Nile silt, the Chihli plain is continually adding to, its surface fresh deposits of fertilizing soil.

"Shang na'erh, ah?" ("Where are you off to?") grunts an old peasant, as we pass his home, a single-roomed stone hut perched on the top of a large boulder. The question is merely the ordinary "how d'ye do?" of the country and implies no real curiosity (though I have known an irritable fellow-countryman, after the fourth or fifth repetition, work himself into a fury with "these d----d inquisitive Chinks!") We tell him where

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we are going and proceed on our way beneath the rapt gaze of the old fellow's family assembled in force on the roof. The household consists of several infants in a comfortable state of nudity and some older brothers and sisters with a ragged shirt apiece. A donkey and a couple of goats, evidently lodging with the family, are with them on the tiles, cropping the luxuriant herbage which almost invariably sprouts from the roofs of Chinese dwellings. A mile beyond we reach the wall of the hunting park, which runs like a coil of rope, flung across ridge and valley. The park used to, be well preserved shooting and stocked with deer arid hares for the Emperor's shooting parties, but now the wall is full of breaches and on the lower slopes --- nearly a thousand feet below us --- a sanatorium and a huge Chinese orphanage bear witness to the march of republicanism. Not so long ago the music of drums and hunting horns might have wafted up to the ridge where we stand; to-day you are likelier, to hear the strains of "Onward Christian Soldiers" sung in glorious discord by hundreds of orphan voices.

As the path winds down the hunting park slopes through knee-deep grass speckled with iris and wild red lilies, one catches the first view of the Jade Cloud Temple and its distinguishing feature, a large plinth carrying a central *dagoba*, with six surrounding *stupas* of the shape of giant pineapples. The effect is thoroughly Indian and, in fact, the temple is reputed to have been built by a Buddhist pilgrim from India. Reaching the road in the plain, we skirt the wall of the park and cut into the paved approach which leads up to the principal gate of the temple through a series of archways; and so on past a cluster of fruit-sellers' booths, into the temple

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itself. The plan of all these temples is fundamentally the same and the description I have already given of the general features; of Hsiang-chieh-ssu will serve equally for Pi-yun-ssu allowing for the greater magnificence details which the wealthier monastry could afford and for the fact that it stands on somewhat more level ground. The passage from one courtyard to, the next, for instance, instead of leading up a flight of steps is over a marble bridge or under a sculptured *pailou* and much that at Hsiang-chieh-ssu is faced with red plaster is here of carved stone. The parts of the temple which were built of more perishable material are, however, in the last stages of decay. **[1]** In one of the first courtyards the two flanking halls have utterly crumbled and expose to the light of day the extraordinary freaks of art which they once sheltered. These are no less than models of heaven and hell, moulded of the same composition which is used for the making of images, and portraying rocky scenery of the nature of "montagnes russes," dotted with figures of the damned and the blest. A few split rafters projecting skywards is all that is left of their roofs, while the front walls of the buildings have subsided into heaps of rubble. Thus abandoned to the elements, the regions celestial and infernal

are rapidly going to bits, and it is already hard to distinguish the one from the other. On careful inspection, however, I discovered the key in a figure of a buddhist Prometheus with a jackal grawing his vitals. Another example of the same sort of work exists in the principal *tien*. Here the eighteen "disciples" figures in a fantastic landscape of peaks

[1] Quite recently, since the above was written, repairs have been put under way.

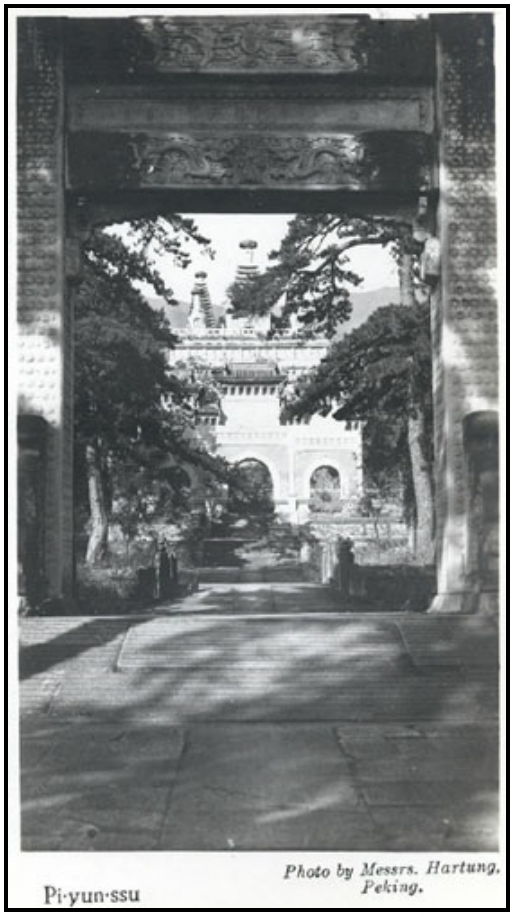

Photo by Messrs. Hartung, Peking.
Pi-yun-ssu

and precipices, eaves and yawning chasms. Goats skip on the heights, fearsome dragons emerge from cracks in the rock, the hollows are full of slinking leopards, and monkeys scramble among the ridges. Apparently oblivious of this exciting environment, the solemn arhats, standing on pinacles or squatting in caves, pursue their devout meditations. As presenting spiritual detachment from material surroundings these models could hardly be rivalled.

"Halls of a thousand buddhas" are common features of Chinese temples. In the poorer temples their place is frequently taken --- as it is Hsiang-chieh-ssu --- by a requisite number of statuettes placed in pigeon-holes round the walls of a *tien*. Pi-yun-ssu, on the other hand, boasts two magnificent halls of life-sized figures, five hundred figures in each. The buddhas, ranged in parallel rows, are eased in

red-gold lacquer and when one stands in the doorway the long ranks glow like fire as the light, shining into the twilit hall through the narrow opening strikes their burnished faces and shoulders.

The valley a little way to the north of Pi-yun-suu harbours several other picturesque temples, among them Wofo-ssu "the Sleeping Buddha temple." A colossal recumbent figure in a painfully uncomfortable pose which is housed in the main pavilion is an object of great veneration. It attracted even the worship of emperors in the good old days and a "travelling palace" was built behind the pavilion. It is in easily accessible temple as a branch road leads to its gates and for the last ten years the temple has been tenanted by the Y.M. C. A. who use it as a holiday camp, when the curious spectacle can be seen of the priests worshipping Buddha

in his ancient shrine while a few yards away in the same precincts a Christian altar is being served in the open *t'ing'erh* which emperors used to inhabit. Besides the "sleeping Buddha," the temple has another treasured possession --- a line of poetry autographed by Ch'ien Lung, the emperor-artist and poet. He wrote the characters on a stone and the lines of his brushwork were afterwards ingraved with a chisel and filled in with red. To honour the slab it was then let in above the lintel of a splendid marble *pailou* which stands to-day in all its beauty at the entrance to the temple grounds.

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CHAPTER 4. THE WHITE PINE MAUSOLEUM.

On a day in August at the time of full moon we set off late the afternoon from Hsiang-chieh-ssu to visit the "Dragon Gate Temple." The path lies for some miles westward along the broad basin of the Hun Ho --- for the moment to a. fairyland by a wonderful sunset glow which flooded the lateral valleys ahead with a purple mist, leaving the, spurs between black and featureless masses. We were several *li* short of the temple when daylight failed and dusk was gathering fast as our donkeys and chairmen stumbled their way up the dry bed of a torrent towards a dark patch on the mountain side which marked our destination. Having reached a point below it, we climbed out of the *nullah* and found ourselves on a broad stretch of turf with the gateway of the temple looming indistinct at the further extremity. Half-a-dozen camels, evidently belonging to a hamlet close by, were camped for the night on this plateau, their uncouth forms dimly lit by fires around, where their masters were sitting and cooking their evening meal. Threading our way through the tethered beasts we came to the gateway which we found locked, and had to muster patience to wait while a bay was sent to fetch the *k'ai-men-ti* with his keys.

The place we had come to visit is, actually, not a temple, though it is commonly known to foreigners as "the White Pine Temple." The temple which stood near the spot --- the temple of the "Dragon Gate" --- has long since vanished in ruins and the name (Lung-men ssu

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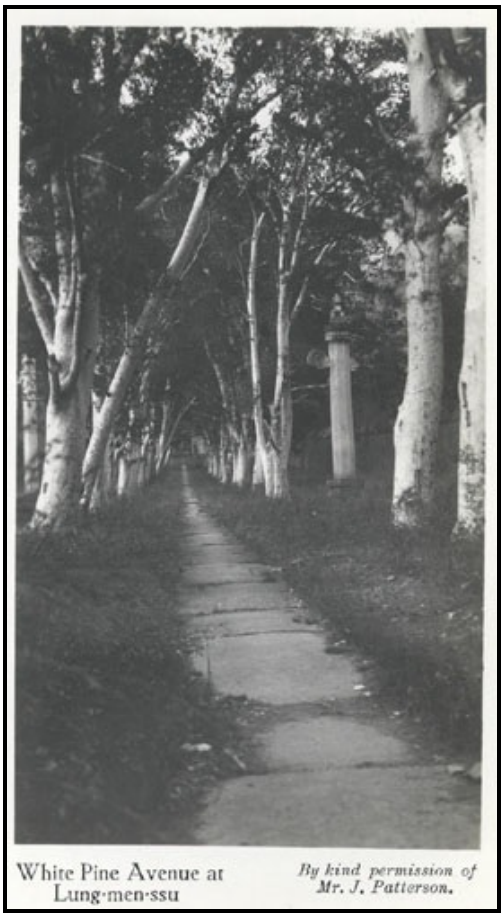
in Chinese) has attached to the mausoleum which we had come to visit. It was built by one of the last of the Mings in the middle of the seventeenth century, but before it was finished the Manchu invasion took place and instead of the builder himself, a prince of the house of Ch'ing was eventually buried there.

The tomb is famous for its remarkable avenue of "white pines" (*pinus bungeana* is, their scientific appellation) **[1]** --- a species of tree indigenous in this part of China and peculiar for the snowy whiteness of the balk of the trunk and the larger branches. The avenue is closely shut in by a high wall on each, side, and it was a truly ghostly experience to walk up it in the dim twilight. The heavy foliage of the trees made a. black canopy overhead shot here and there by the white, lines of the branches like the shroud of a vast catafalque. From the deep grass at the sides of the path white columns loomed up like the pillars of a derelict minister and the weirdness was heightened by colossal figures of men and strange beasts dimly visible in the intervals between the frees. A stone dais at the end of the avenue in front of a second gateway served as a supper table. By the time we reached it the whole of the, infant population of the neighbouring hamlet, with a goodly proportion of its elders, had gathered and we ate our meals surrounded by a deep semi-circle of small brown

bodies and a ring of intent little eyes dimly illumined by the rays of a lamp which the *k'ai-men-ti* had provided.

[1] So named after Dr. Alexander von Bunge, a Russian botanist who discovered it in 1831. It was first introduced into England the latter half of the century.



By kind permission of Mr. J. Patterson

White Pine Avenue at Lung-men-ssu

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The gateway beyond is handsomely carved and holds two large panels of amphibious monsters sculptured in high relief, which took on a strong semblance of life and movement in the flickering lamplight. A query addressed to the assembled audience as to the nature of the beasts drew forth a legion of answers, but, the old *k'ai-men-ti*, to whom we turned in despair, settled the matter authoritatively by pronouncing the creatures pronouncing "water-lions." The description seemed as near the mark than anything one could think of!

After supper we wandered on through the temple by a path leading steadily upwards. There are flights of steps at intervals and several more sculptured gate-ways, flanked by fabulous animals and fitted, in two cases, with door's of solid stone which, though sunk on their hinges and no longer movable, remain more or less erect. The last flight of steps leads to the entrance to a small domed chamber

which contains a magnificent *pei*, that is a memorial slab set up, with its lower edge on the back of a stone tortoise. This particular *pei*, which is nine or ten feet high, is perfectly blank instead of its face being chiselled in the usual manner with Chinese or Manchu inscriptions recording the, dead man's ancestry. It is said that the Manchu usurper who annexed the tomb was seized with belated scruples and left it virgin as he found it.

Beyond the *pei* the path divides at the foot of a high mound. Taking one of the branches we groped our way by the glimmer of the lamp, up a steep, winding ramp paved with sharp-edged stones and came out at last on to the level space which contains the tomb itself, the culminating point to which this long magni-

ficent approach leads up. Here, is an anti-climax; instead of the noble, shrine, which the, size and splendour of all the rest might lead one reasonably to expect, there is nothing to be seen but an ugly, humped-up dome of brick and plaster without the least adornment. But Chinese tombs are always thus. Whatever wealth of embellishment is spent on the accessories --- the *pailous* and *peis* and *t'ing'erhs* --- the bones of the man himself, be they those, of noble or peasant, lie under a bare mound; only the priests, who are buried in cemeteries of their own, have monuments over their actual tombs, generally in the, form of a miniature *stupa*. Confucius' own tomb is surmounted only by a slab although the neighbouring temple erected to his memory is perhaps the handsomest in all North China.

The moon peeped over, the mountains as we rode away homeward and the last impression which remained was the gleam of the temple gateway, which at our arrival had caught the last shreds of twilight, now reflecting the first of the moonrays.

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CHAPTER 5. THE HOME OF THE IMPERIAL MUMMY.

A romantic legend attaches to the history of T'ien-t'ai-ssu, a small temple an hour's journey into the hills from Pa-ta-ch'u. The first of the Manchu emperors, Shun Chih, father of the great K'ang-hsi, died officially in 1661 and his funeral took place with the usual pomp and circumstance at the Eastern Tombs. Years later the following story concerning his real end began to circulate and eventually found its way into a volume purporting to disclose, the "Secret Annals of the court."

Among the imperial concubines at Shun Chih's Court was a, very beautiful lady of the name of Tung Kuei Fu with whom the emperor fell desperately in love. He took her education in hand, being himself an accomplished scholar, and imparted to her his own religious enthusiasms till she became, like him, an ardent disciple of Buddha.

The Manchu system admitted of concubines being promoted to the position of empress and Shun Shih set his heart on making Tung his consort. There was however a fatal bar to his desires for Tung was Chinese born and the dynastic rules of the Manchus sternly forbad the union of an emperor with one of another race. The marriage was therefore vetoed, and Tung suffered disappointment so keen that it killed her. Her death plunged the Emperor in the depths of misery and he determined to abandon not only his throne but the world

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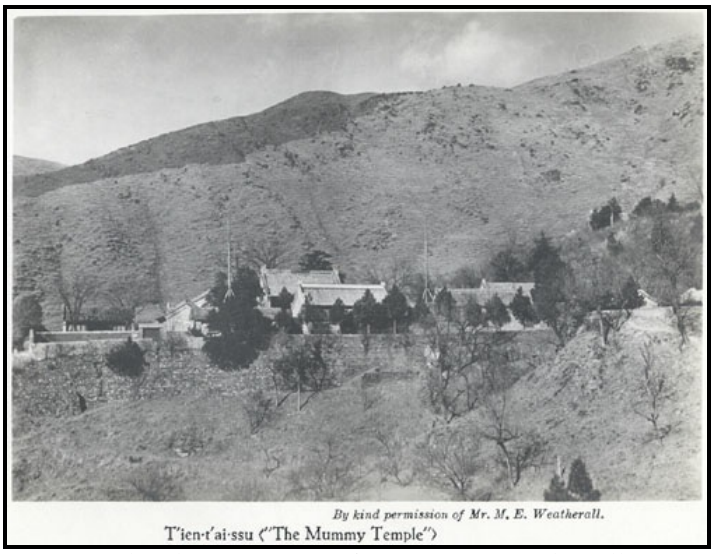
in general and to seek distraction from his grief within m the palace the walls of a monastery. He fled alone from the palace and disappeared, whereupon his ministers, to save the State from confusion, announced his death, performed his obsequies and proclaimed his infant son as Emperor.

On the very day when the priests of the temple, of which we are speaking were, by imperial order, celebrating a memorial service for the youthful monarch, the news of whose death had been promulgated shortly before, a haggard young man knocked at the gates and petitioned to see the abbot. His request being granted, he told the, abbot that he came as a candidate for admission to the temple brotherhood, and asked that he might be examined at once in his knowledge of the law and the scriptures with a view to entering as a novice. He qualified brilliantly and was accepted on the very same day. Not content with the rigour of the temple *regime*, he soon after retired to a cave in the immediate neighbourhood and lived there as a hermit, never moving again from the spot.

Tradition goes on to relate that some years later the new emperor, having now reached man's estate, and become possessed in some unexplained way of the secret, came to visit the temple to the surprise and delight of the priests who formed an avenue as he entered by kneeling in rows on each side of the temple approach. The emperor's eye keenly scrutinised each face as he passed, and finally, turning to the abbot, he asked if they were all present. The abbot admitted the existence of a defaulter in the

person of the hermit, who even on this great occasion could not be persuaded to abandon his cave. The emperor insisted on seeing him, and though



By kind permission of Mr. M. E. Weatherall.
T'ien-t'ai-ssu ("The Mummy Temple")

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he had to climb on hands and knees to, get there, he reached the cave and after a, glance at the occupant dropped on his knees in front of him exclaiming, to the utter amazement of his monkish guide, "Oh, my imperial father!" The call of filial duty --- perhaps the strongest motive among these people --- had proved too strong for the dictates of discretion and the secret was given away.*

The imperial mummy --- to call it such, though the story, like so many good yarns of the sort, has been picked to hits by ruthless archeologists --- still exists at T'ien-t'ai-shan where the priests at least, for very obvious reasons are hardy vouchers for its truth. To the temple, we therefore went, to see this historic curiosity. It was during the season of the rains and on the day of our trip storms were raging in the distant mountains though the near-lying hills were in peace and sunshine. The path, led over the ridge behind Hsiang-chieh-ssu where the view takes in a long stretch of the Hun Ho valley with the bills on each side and the mountain mass, nearly 6,000 feet high, which eventually shuts it from sight. What a contrast now to the, gentle harmony of delicate pearly tints which had filled the, valley when we journeyed up it some weeks before en route for the White Pine temple! Nature today had painted her canvas from a very different palette --- she might have been trying to set the scene for the Gotterdammerung incessant rumble of thunder came from the distant peaks; Mt. Conolly, the highest of them all, had his summit hidden in wrack, and swirls of rain, like trail-

*I owe most of the details in this story to an interesting article in the "New China Review" for Feb. 1921 by Mr. R. F. Johnston, C.B.E.

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ing puffs of smoke, swept every now and then across the furthest horizon. The block of mountains which closes the valley and is almost dolomitic, in its outline of shaft and spire was a black silhouette, and a murky darkness, filled the valley, broken in places by sheets of while light where the banks of cloud had thinned. The fore-ground to this scene of wrath serene sunshine, led down to by a slope covered in corn and orchards.

Down this hill side we followed our path till we reached a stream at the bottom which is; spanned by what here is known as a camel-back bridge, a not inapt epithet for the high-curved arch which humps up the path to an angle of thirty degrees. A tiny shrine facing the bridge, with a cypress on either side, contains a disreputable deity who no doubt is the genius of the place. Beyond the stream the path turns back up the side of a valley lying between high crests and ending in a pass level with the ridge we had dropped from For a mile we followed a contour of the slope till we came to a small red gateway with a tiny gatehouse atop barely big enough, so it seemed, for the portly doorkeeper who sat up aloft and watched us troop through the gate. From inside the gateway a walled approach leads for a quarter of a mile, to the entrance to the temple, itself. It is quite a small temple, with only a single courtyard and a couple of *tiens*, one containing the usual buddha, the other the famous mummy. After drinking tea in the courtyard, we were introduced to the mummy by a charming, but garrulous, priest who created consternation in the one feminine member of our party of what is termed "uncertain years," by asking her-with what

is perfect manners in China --- "What is your estimable age-" As in this country honour advances with years our friend was placed in somewhat of a dilemma!

His late Majesty --- if it really be he --- sits on a, canopied throne in front of an altar loaded with offerings. His yellow robes are dusty with age, but the face which appears above them is smooth and full-fleshed like that of a living man's. It is the colour of bronzed lacquer and it bears not the slightest resemblance to the, shrivelled mummies of the Pharaohs which one sees in the Cairo Museum. Claiming no knowledge of the embalmer's art, I yet feel, Convinced that the figure we saw was not one of its products. It suffices, however, that the common folk believe it, to be so and flock to the temple to worship the mummy. As a result, no doubt, of possessing so valuable a "relic," the temple has never lacked funds, and is richly decorated inside and out. The altar fitments in the larger *tien*, in which the Buddha resides, are of a wonderful blue porcelain; the bell, standing five: foot, high, a magnificent specimen of chiselled bronze, and the drum which faces it across the altar as fine an example of painted vellum as you will meet with in any of the temples. The chief glory of the temple, in my humble opinion at least, is a frescoed panel at the back of the screen which stands behind the Buddha. It depicts the Goddess of Mercy in the form of a graceful figure floating on a pearly, rippling across which, in accordance with Buddhist mythology, she is shepherding a shipful of souls. A curiously cherub-like being kneels on the waves at her feet and the exquisite, soft tints and delicate drawing one strangely of the Botticelli's "Birth of

Venus." Of the origin of the fresco the priest had nothing to tell us, but whatever its history may be the hand that painted it was certainly that of a master.

Before leaving the temple we were taken by the priest through a door in the wall and led onto a balcony built out from the temple and overhanging the valley. From over, its parapet we looked down on the roofs of a village straddling the bed of the stream and on beyond to the further slope carpeted with fresh green grass and dotted here and there with flocks of grazing sheep. A short way down the valley stands a group of low stupas, the gravestones of past generations of priests, with a few more imposing ones marking the tombs s of the abbots. Bathed in the evening light the thunder clouds hovering still over the distant Hun Ho valley with its gleaming silver thread, it formed an unforgettable scene and we vowed that if ever the Wheel of Life should appoint us Chinese monks we, would follow the example of the lovesick Emperor who, out of all the temples of the Hills, chose T'ien-t'ai-shan for his dwelling.

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CHAPTER 6. CHIEH-T'AI-SSU AND ITS SACRED MOUNTAIN.

All the temples I have so far mentioned are on the left, or northern, bank of the Hun Ho. Now, if I have not wearied the reader already, we may visit a couple of temples of a rather different type, lying south of the river. The first part of the journey can be made by train from Peking, either by travelling four stations down the Peking-Hankow line, or else, by taking the small branch line which runs from the Hsi-che-men station to the mining village of Men-t'ou-k'ou at the mouth of the Hun Ho valley.

My first memories of these two temples --- Chieh-t'ai-ssu and T'an-che-ssu are their names --- are from a visit at the Chinese New Year, the great Chinese holiday. It fell early in February and our trip was rather arctic, the temperature at nights being in the: region of zero, and no fireplaces in the temples. We chose the first of the routes I have, mentioned, which has the advantage of taking one over the river within sight of the, famous "Marco Polo" bridge which carries the great paved highway between Peking and the South. This is what Polo himself wrote of it when he; returned from China:

"When you leave the city of Cambaluc and have ridden ten miles you come to a very large river which is called Pulisanghin (the old name, of the Hun Ho) and flows into the, ocean so that merchants with their merchandise ascend it from the sea. Over this river is a very fine stone bridge, so fine indeed that it has very

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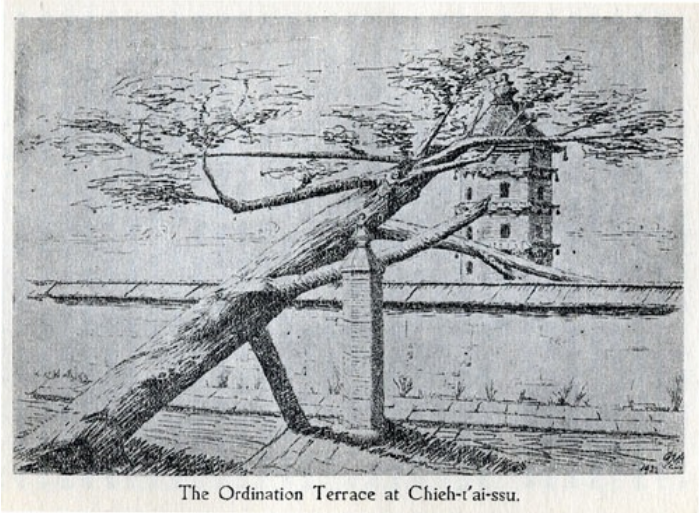
few equals. The fashion of it is this; it is two hundred paces in length and must, have a good eight paces of width for ten mounted men can ride across it abreast. It has twenty-four arches, as many watermills and is all of very fine marble well built and firmly founded, so that altogether it is a beautiful object." He goes on to describe, the sculptured lions which now, as then, surmount the parapet, above each pier and the fine carving at either end. The "very large, river" is much reduced in size, since Marco's day and is no longer navigable for vessels, from the sea, but the bridge, as he describes it still stands, (it was thoroughly restored in Ch'ien Lung's reign) and is clearly in view from the train, which crosses the river by a, steel-girder bridge alongside.

At Ch'ang hsin-tien station, we left the train and, taking to donkeys, headed off for the hills some nine miles away, passing *en route* through a large village sunk in the sabbatical calm of the Chinese New Year but flaring with demon-pictures freshly posted in honor of the season on every door. Towards the end the path enters the bed of a torrent which, skirting the base of a bluff, brings, the traveller to the foot of the mountain on the higher slopes of which Chieh-t'ai-ssu is built.

To borrow a scriptural phrase, the mountain on which we stood was "holy ground," if sanctification, that is, can proceed from the works, of man. Fifty generations of monks from the temple above have, laboured with chisel and mawl fill the mountain is covered with pious inscriptions in the rock, shrines built by the way and chapels carved out of the carves which abound in the local limestone. Our first introduction to these works was a couple of buddhas hewn from the living rock


The Ordination Terrace at Chieh-t'ai-ssu.

The Ordination Terrace at Chieh-t'ai-ssu.

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which we passed as we toiled our way up the stony path through banks bedded with last year's leaves and occasional patches of snow. Against this wintry background the mellow blues and greens of an ancient *pailou* planted across the path suddenly came in view. It signalled the approach to the temple, whose enclosing wall soon afterwards appeared winding like a, great, red snake over the curves and hollows of the hillside, and within a, few minutes we were riding in at the gate.

Throughout all this part of China, and even as far as the Yangtse, smaller temples look to Chieh-t'ai-ssu as their alma mater and a large, proportion of their abbots are drawn from within its walls. Its chief significance, however, lies in the fact that it is here that most of the priests are, ordained and the outstanding feature of the temple, in both an abstract and concrete sense, is its Ordination Terrace. The terrace runs across, the whole breadth of the upper portion of the temple and is some 400 feet long by 20 wide, bounded by an open-work stone balustrade. The, fall of the ground is so, steep that from the edge of the terrace one looks out on the plain over the top of the buildings below except where the view is broken by the ridge of the large central *tien* and by a couple of small pagodas, said to contain the bodies of former abbots, which rear their graceful series of tiers just above the level of the terrace, and make perpetual music, whenever a breeze blows, with the jingle of the bells which hang from each of their balconies. The terrace is backed by a series of courtyards, one devoted to guests, another, inhabited by a princely recluse, son of the famous Prince Kung (who in 1860 signed the treaty with Lord Elgin which saved Peking from the

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invasion of the Franco-British armies), and a third containing the Ball of the Thousand Buddhas. Midway along its length is the principal *tien* of the temple, a magnificent "two-decker" structure raised on a platform three or four steps above the level of the terrace.

Below the end of the terrace onto which the guests' courtyard opens lie the temple kitchens. From here

issues at meal times a procession of cooks each bearing on a sort of milkman's yoke, a couple of wooden pails containing the monks' dinner --- rice and millet pulse. They carry their loads up the stairway and into the: large *tien* where the monks sit ranged along a, row of benches, each with a, couple of bowls on the board in front of him. Into these the cooks ladle the mush from their buckets, walking up and down the line and adding a, spoonful whenever a monk puts his bowl down empty. All day long clouds of acrid wood smoke, rise from the kitchen regions, mingled with familiar farmyard noises in which the ho grunting of pigs, cackle of geese, and yelping of *wonks* predominate.

The terrace is planted throughout its whole length with a double row of pines, many of rare varieties, including a, splendid specimen of the *pinus bungeana* which boasts as many as eight main trunks rising out of a common bole. This and several of its neighbours have a marble grill round the base and a slab inscribed with a record of their planting by some one or other of the emperors, of China- for Chieh-t'ai-ssu was an imperial temple. A few also have been carefully trained, in the manner beloved of the Chinese, to grow at fantastic angles and one in particular threads its trunk through

an aperture in the balustrade and projects its branches far over the courtyard below.

The temperature, as I have already said, was not far above Fahrenheit zero and we slept in our unwarmed quarters under mountainous piles of blankets. From the warm recesses of our Wolseley valises we could hear the priests performing their midnight service, the drone of their chantings rising and falling as they passed from tien to tien. They, poor wretches, wore, nothing but their ordinary garments and how they endured the arctic cold in their endless pacings and kneelings on the icy pavements was a perpetual wonder. One cannot but speculate on the, motives which urge these men to submit to such desperate hardships. What lies behind it- Hardly religious fervour if expression of face can be taken as an, index. I have scanned the features of the worshippers in an endeavour to solve, the mystery. One here and there has the wrapt gaze of a visionary; a few, with deep furrowed brows and intent but restless eyes, have the appearance of troubled seekers; the rest --- the large majority --- have a perfectly vacant expression, lacking even the friendly humanity of the Chinese peasant. Possible it is that deadweight of tradition and habit kills -volition in minds chained to the wheel so young that they have hardly had time to conceive, of another mode of existence.

Of the ordeal of initiation, which I have mentioned just above, I can speak only by hearsay and it is indeed rarely, if ever, that foreigners witness the ceremony. It is a very protracted function, lasting for several days, consisting of various stages, and implying, sometimes if not always, prodigious tests of en-

durance. Hours and hours are spent by the novices standing, barefoot on marble pavements in the coldest time of the year, after a long period of starvation, during which time any sign of weakness exposes the candidate to rejection. The supreme test of all and, to a western wind at all events, the most truly terrible, is the practice of slitting the candidate's scalp, and inserting the ends of charcoal

tapers which are lit and left to burn down to the skull. The victims bear the marks till death and a Chinese priest, is always recognizable by the scars on his shaven pate.

I have already made reference to the various implements of noise --- not to call it "music" --- which are contained in a Chinese temple. It was while staying at Chieh-tai-ssu that we first made acquaintance; with their proper use and effect. We were sitting after dinner on the terrace when the rumble of the drum attracted us to the central *tien*. We lifted a corner of the heavy curtain hanging, over the door and went inside. The interior was in quasi-darkness, the enthroned buddha and all his trappings being barely discernable in the guttering light of a wick floating in a dish of oil. At the far end of the *tien* in the narrow circle of light thrown by a single candle we saw the drummer at work. The drum is to all intents a horizontal barrel, raised shoulder-high on a wooden frame, and with one end covered with a very thick sort of vellum. On this uncompromising instrument, the monk was performing a veritable oratorio. Never before had I had any conception of the potentialities residing inside a drum. I have heard a famous regimental band perform a full-dress tatoo and native experts playing on the tom-tom,

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but this Chinese priestly drummer possessed an art and skill of a, totally different order. He stood in front of his drum manipulating with either hand a, plain rounded stick, a foot or so in length. His hands seemed to flutter like great moths over the vellum disk, travelling constantly to and fro from the edge to the centre and back and round about the circumference, each part of the surface responding to his beats with its own distinctive note. His hands worked independently and, the play of his sticks was wonderful to watch. The movements were infinitely varied, sometimes a sharp rat-a-tat, sometimes a long drawn pull like the scrape of a violin-bow, sometimes a rapid vibration, too quick for the eye to follow, with the stick laid flat almost touching the face of the drum and ever and again a powerful thump full in its centre. The great bare *tien* echoed with a thousand different sounds; at times one heard the ripple of flowing water, then an illusion of crackling flames as of fire running through leaves, followed again by the rattle of thunder or the throb of breakers on a shore; now the drumming would die away to an almost inaudible droning and now swell to a roar which would end in a crash ash fit to prelude the Day of Judgment. Once the drummer paused and gave a few unexpected raps on the wooden frame of the drum. From the courtyard below came an answering signal and then the bell in the big bell-tower chimed in with a note the like of which for purity of tone I never heard. Presently the sound of a deep-voiced gong joined in from another quarter of the temple, followed by the dry staccato note of batons beating on a wooden bowl ---a sound like the tapping of a woodpecker, and so the

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orchestra was complete. It is repeated daily three or four times in the 24 hours and, far removed as it is from one's western notions of music, the strange symphony comes in, time to weave a most powerful spell on one's senses.

The hillside on which Chieh-tai-ssu stands is heavily wooded and far more luxuriant in vegetation

than most of the Western Hills.* In autumn its wealth of wild flowers include a large blue campanula, michaelmas daisies, purple scabious and a delphinium of a deep gentian hue-the prevalent colour of wild flowers in this part of China. The trees are mainly oaks of the variety known as *quercus obovata*, which possesses a leaf of phenomenal size, sometimes over a foot in length. A shallow dell some hundreds of yards from the temple contains, hidden in the centre of a group of secular pines, the ancient burial ground of the priests and abbots. An eight-storied pagoda stands at the bottom of the dip, sunk shoulder-high among the free tops and so be grown with the saplings which have seeded themselves in the cracks of the roof and walls as to be hardly distinguishable from its leafy surroundings. A clearing at its foot contains a moss-grown memorial tablet and the broken remains of some stone sacrificial vessels, while all around, losing themselves in a jungle of herbage, are scores of old grey *stupas* in every stage of decrepitude. It is a beautiful little sanctuary and the only movement to disturb its peace when we paid it a visit was the whirr of a flock of pigeons rising from their

* Dr Bretschneider, physician to the Russian Legation in Peking, writing in 1876, speaks of a leopard which at that time haunted the forests round the temple and used to raid the farmyard in winter.

nests in the crumbling masonry of the old pagoda, and the flutter of "meadow blues" and "red admirals" in the sunlit, clearing.

Leading from the temple in the opposite direction runs a sort of via sacra ending a thousand feet higher at a minature temple perched half way up a precipitous peak, and passing on its way a number of shrines carved out of the rock or fashioned from natural eaves. The chief of these latter is in the mouth of a cavern which runs, according to the statement of the guardian, a couple of *li* (two-thirds of a mile) into the side of the mountain. A pedestal has been hewn in the rock to support a central buddha and platforms along the walls hold eighteen life-size *arhats*. In some of the smaller caves black-and-red demons guard the entrance with
spears, and grotesque figures lurk behind, in the shadows. Hidden in a hollow of the hillside below, you will find, if you search, a little tomb looking out, over the valley, with a crescent-shaped seal of carved stone in front of it and a couple of junipers planted on either side. It is the very embodiment of peaceful solitude and might, with its curiously classical setting, have been transported bodily hither from some old Italian garden.

At the point where one tops the brow of the hill a wonderful view opens up. It is one of those vistas which startle the new-comer in China, with the discovery that the work of the old Chinese landscape painters is after all true to nature. The beetling crag ahead rising seemingly out of the void, banded with alternating strata of pines and sheer rock bent to fantastic curves, and harbouring deep in its bosom the two white specks which are all one, sees of the temple buildings, brings vividly

to mind the pictures of Ming dynasty masters. It has just that effect of brooding mystery which they seem to have groped after and which one can only class it with those undefinable elements which make of China such a strange world of its own.

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CHAPTER 7. T'AN-CHE-SSU.

Two classes of travellers wear smooth the road which joins Chieh-t'ai-ssu to its big neighbour --- peasants and their donkeys carrying coal from the mines scattered over the hillside, and priests from one of the; temples journeying on a visit to the other. Of the former we met several trains, each diminutive donkey loaded with one small sack, thickly begrimed with coal dust but gay with his New Year fu (the Chinese character for 'luck') on a slip of bright red paper pasted an the back of his saddle. The only priestly traveller that we happened to run across, was an elderly abbot who, was being borne along in a travelling chair. His chair was of the four-bearer type common in this part of China, in which the occupant sits nearly at the) height of the coolie's shoulders, and shaded by a long blue awning which runs level above his head and rakes at a downward angle fore and aft. It is a picturesque conveyance lending a touch of distinction to the person within, and our abbot, who was a handsome old gentleman of refined features and benign expression, passed with as grand and dignified an air as if it had been the Pope crossing the bridge of Avignon.

From; Chieh-t'ai-ssu the track first drops to the bed of the valley --- a wonderful sight, in April when the peach and apricot blossom casts splashes of pink and white on the black carboniferous soil. It then crosses a 500-foot pass between hills pitted with coalshafts and finally settles down to a level course through fields and orchards

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till it turns into the main valley in which T'an-chueh-ssu lies. Just beyond this point. A passes on the left, a diminutive, temple on a rise, called "Hung-m6n-ssu," the "Temple of the Red Gate." On our journey to T'an-chueh-ssu we called in at this temple, for a cup of tea with the priest whom we found to be just a mere peasant, using the place as a homestead and leaving the gods to look after themselves. He was a cordial host to us, however, and we sat and talked on the heated k'ang while, his small son brewed tea. The process was rather a fascinating one. There is generally a, small hole in the floor lit front of a k'ang, near your feet, as you sit on the edge, and when the furnace is burning a, jet of blue flame shoots, up, through this hole and flickers, and plays in a wraith-like way like a *jin* emerging from a bottle. The water is put in a little cylinder which exactly fit the hole, and holding scarcely more than a gill, boils in a few seconds when let down into the fire.

While we drank cup after cup, as one does when walking the hills, we asked the priest if he were in charge of the gods and what services were held-

"The temple is old," he said, "and there is no money for services; I have to work in the fields."

"Then the temple is no longer in use?"

"Oh yes," he replied "we still store a few coffins!"

And there sure enough in a corner set up on trestles, were the well-known oblong shapes of three or four coffins peacefully waiting, no doubt, till the local astrologer should decide on a date for burial.

The gods looked sadly neglected, hemmed in as they were by enormous baskets of grain and with inches of dust covering them, so before leaving we purchased a

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bundle of incense and regaled their nostrils with the fragrant fumes to which, we felt sure, they had long been strangers.

You often meet, by the way, donkeys loaded with incense in this part of the hills, though I have never discovered exactly the place of its manufacture. The sticks are in rolls of 50 or so wrapped together with yellow paper and the rolls in turn are, made up in big bundles carried one on each side of a donkey. The myriads of little brown rings contained in the, bigger yellow ones, which is all one can see in passing, are a very puzzling sight till one learns what the load consists of.

The road to T'an-che-ssu is devoid of particular features till one come to the last mile, where it follows a winding causeway looking down on a, torrent on the one hand and bordered on the other by the garden wall of the temple, across whose grassy top cedars and junipers stretch out their branches over the pathway. A farm-stead on the further side of the stream, surrounded by white-washed walls, and approached by a paved ascent ending in a shadowed archway, and the herds of black and white goats in charge of bare-legged boys grazing on the slopes complete that curious resemblance to the landscapes of Northern Italy which has impressed not a few writers on this corner of China. Typical local colour is, however, restored when you reach the temple gate. The temple is built in a bend of the stream which forms a moat round two of its sides. The bridge across is flanked by enormous lions and faced by a *pailou* of many lines while a further splash of colour is added by the coping tiles on the temple wall which are of

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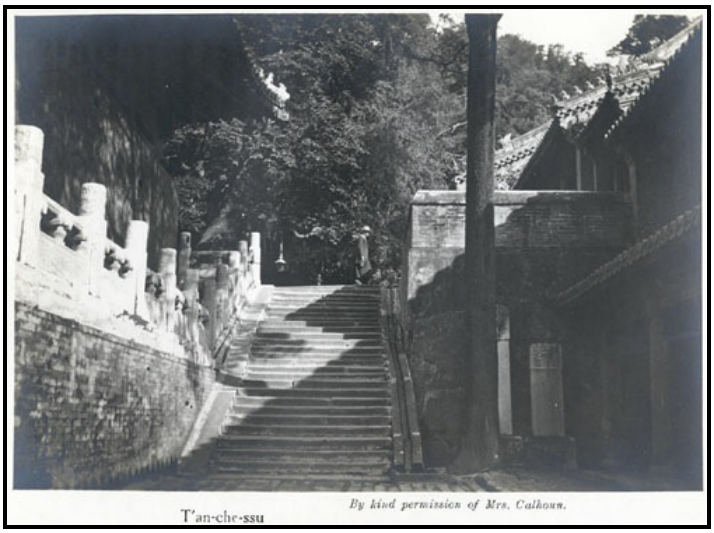
a most unusual sapphire blue. When we arrived rows of carrying chairs, in front, of the gateway proclaimed the presence of other visitors and we soon found that we had happened on the opening day of the annual temple festival.

The temple is one of the, oldest in China dating from the fourth or fifth century of our era, though its name appears to have been changed at least once in the interval and the present buildings only go back to the early 18th century. This was the great building period and T'an-chueh-ssu is one of its notable: architectural products, built in the finest style and lavishly decorated. It is rich in all the accessories of bronze, marble and lacquer which make up so much of the beauty of Chinese buildings, and its roof, copings and banisters show examples of all the five glazes --- black, orange, turquoise, sapphire and green --- which were used in the tile-makers art.* A rotunda with double roof contains the temple treasury. Here, in a vast casket worthy to hold crown jewels, are displayed its choicest possessions of jade, porcelain and the precious metals, including one of those quaint incongruous

relics of the ancient Jesuit days, when European models were for a time imported into Chinese studios, in the shape of a pair of candlesticks,

* The coloured glazed tiles which are so striking a feature in Chinese architecture always have been, and still are made at a factory near Men-t'ou-k'ou (vide infra) owned by a family who are said to be the sole possessors of the secret of manufacture. With the advent of the Republic and the disappearance of their imperial clients, the works are threatened with imminent extinction, an incalculable loss to lovers of beauty. The survival of the factory to the present date is mainly due to the munificence of the Rockefeller Trust which, at enormous cost, has roofed with green tiles the acres of buildings which compose the P.U.M.C. in Peking.



By kind permission of Mrs. Calhoun.
T'an-che-ssu

fashioned in the figures of men with curled moustaches and dressed in XVII century armour. The chief pride of the temple, however, is a product not of art but of nature --- a truly magnificent "Ginko" nearly a hundred feet high and of proportionate girth. Its age and beauty have earned great veneration which has led to the building of a miniature *pailou* in its honour standing in the shade of its branches. One of the T'an-chueh-ssu "sights" is a sacred snake which is only visible in summer as it disappears every winter, doubtless to hibernate somewhere, while another object which is well worth a visit is the set of Ming effigies in contemporary dress in one of the upper courtyards.

We left T'an-che-ssu by one of the prettiest paths I have travelled in any part of the world. Following the banks of a stream up a beautifully wooded hillside, where shrines and miniature temples cropped up in all sorts of unlooked-for places adding g a brilliant touch with their redwashed walls and tiles of yellow and blue, it climbed to a pass in the range which separates T'an-chueh-ssu from the valley of Men-t'ou-k'ou. A thousand feet from the bottom, we still passed arable patches being ploughed by peasants with oxen and the slopes were ringed with threshing floors where the grain is threshed out in autumn to save transporting the crops. An unusual sight on the further slope was that of dozens of camels squatting in rows by the dump of a coalmine waiting to be loaded with sacks.

The influence of T'an-che-ssu accompanied us over the pass where we met a stream of pilgrims on their way to the temple festival. Most of the pilgrims were elderly dames mounted on donkeys and

accompanied by

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their children or grandchildren. A gay cavalcade they made in their new blue dresses and shawls, with flowers braided in their hair and many of the children carrying flags which they were taking as votive-offerings. They chatted and laughed as we met them and passed merrily on to their fete while we dropped down to the valley with its unromantic atmosphere of coal-mines and rail-ways.

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CHAPTER 8. "THE WONDERFUL PEAK" AND THE "BLACK DRAGON POOL."

Miao-feng-shan, as its name implies, is set on the top of a mountain. It lies deeper in the hills than any of the temples we have yet visited --- a good days journey from the edge of the plain. It is preeminently a pilgrim temple visited every Spring by thousands of devout Buddhists, but in the off-season you will find it occupied only by an ignorant peasant-priest and a handful of temple-coolies.

The time to visit Miao-feng-shan is during the rose season. Pilgrims may be seen in greater or smaller numbers at almost all of the temples, but the roses of Miao-feng-shan are unique. Some of the rose-trees grow wild on the hillsides, others in cultivated plots, but they all contribute alike to the great rose harvest when the petals are plucked and sent in donkey-loads down to Peking for use in blending with tea or flavouring native wine. The beginning of June is the time, before the rains set in.

There are various routes leading to the Mountain and of these we will take the most direct for the outward journey. Leaving the road-head at San-chia-tien, we cross bond of the Hun Ho and then strike straight into the hills over ridges and streambeds fill we drop down into the long broad valley leading to Miao-feng-shan. The narrow track which we follow at first in its switchback course over crest and hollow arrives at a point where one gets a pleasant surprise. After

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winding its way up a fairly precipitous slope it reaches gap at the top which is bridged across by an old and beautiful archway which seems to possess no other function in life than to serve as an exquisite frame for the view on the other side. Such curious freaks of fancy are not uncommon in Chinese landscapes, and their unexpected discovery lends an added zest to one's travels about the country.

It is a fair days march with a, steady pull of 3,000 feet or so up the Miao-feng-shan valley and though it was nearing midsummer when I made the journey to the temple, the shadows were long on the hillsides by the time we reached the village which lies at the bottom of the final ascent. This last bit of climb is up a great rocky bluff on the scarped summit of which the temple actually stands. The surrounding mountains are black and bare, and the temple looked well in keeping with its name, with its high, angular walls grappling the natural rock like some sturdy old stone-pine defying wind and storm. There was little time, however, for stopping to admire the effect, so we urged our donkeys up the winding path and, after climbing the flight of steps which carries one up the last few hundred feet, arrived at the temple entrance.

One enters the temple, as it were, from the rear having made a half circuit of the bluff before emerging onto the paved ramp, which leads up to the courtyard. You then pass right through the temple and out again to a gallery, overhanging the path and commanding a wonderful view down the valley up which you have toiled. There are several rooms giving onto this gallery --- a long narrow affair with just room for a


Miao-féng-shan.

Miao-feng-shan

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camp-bed --- and here the wise guest installs himself. To wake before sunrise in this eagle's eerie and look out over the parapet on the mist-wraiths floating below with hilltops breaking through and catching the glow of dawn is a memory to treasure for a lifetime.

The courtyard behind, at the time of our stay in the temple, was piled knee-deep with rose petals stacked there to dry before being carried to the plain, and the temple was filled with their fragrance. The next day we explored the slopes where they grow. Beyond the bluff on which the temple is perched, the hill rises again to a blunt summit round the shoulder of which a goat track runs between the fields of roses.

The hillside was alight with their little red blossoms and everywhere peasants were busy picking the flowers and filling great paniers with the spoil. On through the roses we followed the path, past a well in a hollow of the hill trampled bare by goats and so on round the corner of the hill where a wonderful view of the Hun Ho bursts suddenly on you. Far, far below we looked down on neat fields and orchards and miniature homesteads, like toys from a Noah's Ark, whence the crow of a rooster occasionally floated up, the only sound, beside the buzzing of insects, to disturb the stillness of the hot June morning. It is certainly a wonderfully peaceful senation to sit thus above the world in a sort of Olympian detachment infinitely remote, as it seems, from the human life passing in the valleys below. Little orange butterflies fluttered round and a cloud of rock-pigeons hovered about a great

outcropping boulder further, down the slope, wheeling round it in circles and flitting in and out of its crevices. A sudden

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clashing report from behind another rock sent our thoughts rushing to the bandits who only a few weeks before had established themselves in the temple and held it against troops, but the sound was followed by nothing worse than the emergence of a peasant boy with a smoking jezail which he had just discharged, without effect, at a couple of grey partridges. We caught sight of the birds themselves skimming down the hillside to fresh cover below where, for the next hour, we watched our sportsman stalk them from rock to rock without once getting within range.

On our way back to the temple we stopped at the well which by now was encircled by hundreds of goats driven in from the hills for their midday watering. They were the grey long-haired species, which yon meet with throughout the hills --- among the handsomest specimens of their kind to be found anywhere in the world. The separate flocks were being watered in turn, the goatherds meanwhile keeping them rigorously apart each on its own bit of hillside and chivying back deserters with volleys of curses and stones. The old stagers patiently waited their turn, stretched on the grass with an air of quiet resignation, but their irrepressible off-spring never ceased from their mad games of "who'll he king of the castle?", jumping from rock to rock and butting each other down incredibly steep places where it looked as if nothing could save them from snapping their wee thin legs.

At the mouth of the well itself there was squatting a little group consisting of three or four goatherds and our friend of the jezail with his spirits apparently quite undamped by a fruitless morning's Work. As we were

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passing the time of day with them and examining the ancient flint-lock with its primitive gaspipe barrel and crook-shaped butt, a coolie arrived from the temple bringing their midday meal. He carried two trays on a pole, each containing a pall of steaming kaoliang mush with a number of little platters full of the dried vegetable chips, which the common Chinese use as a relish. The senior of the goatherds, acting as maitre d'hotel, proceeded to draw from the, well and water the *kaoliang* till it, reached the consistency of soup. Each man was handed a bowlful and, drawing a pair of chopsticks s from the common stock which the coolie had brought with him, fell to with a will. Even the goats' diet of scrub and withered grass appeared hardly less attractive than the lukewarm yellowish gruel which formed their masters' meal, but we left them shovelling it down their throats with such obvious enjoyment that our, pity was clearly uncalled for.

From the look-out point of the little gallery already mentioned above, one can trace the two routes leading towards Peking. One is the valley straight ahead by which we had reached the temple; the other branches off from the village at the base of the bluff and mounts a side valley northward to a pass in the mountain wall which borders onto the plain. We travelled home by the latter, a wide paved muletrack carrying a fair traffic consisting of packmules and donkeys. A long steady rise brings one to

the top of the pass which is marked by a filthy inn whose too well manured courtyard encroaches unblushingly on the road. The further edge of this courtyard is bounded by a low wall over whose top one looks straight out onto the plain below. The hills, at this

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point in the range fall almost vertically to the plain level, a drop of three thousand feet, and the descent looks alarmingly steep as one peers down onto it. The track, however, is well engineered and zigzags down the cliff in regular gradients not too, stiff for the baggage-beasts. As you near the bottom, you come among apricot orchards bearing delicious juicy fruit very different front the tasteless, stringy variety usually met with in North China. Standing among the orchards is the pretty "Gold Fairy Temple" with courtyards planted with shady trees and tanks, fed from bubbling springs --- a welcome haven of rest and refreshment after the arduous descent. On a parchingly hot day, when one's soul is clamouring for liquid refreshment, it is easy enough to condone the act of Vandalism which has turned this charming temple into a mineral-water factory where the water bubbling from the springs is bottled and corked to be carried away to Peking.

Having reached the flat plain, the track diverges from the hills and winds through fields and hamlets till it comes to the temple named Hei-lung-t'an, the Pool of the Black Dragon. Its name evokes a vision of a dark sinister mere in whose slimy depths some dreadful monster lurks watching for human prey. The reality as we found it is very different. In an inner courtyard of the temple, enclosed on three sides by a trellised portico, and by fern-clad rocks on the fourth, we found the home of the dragon --- a sparkling, blue-tinted pool some thirty feet across and three or four in depth. Wisteria clambers all over the portico, but its season was unhappily past and we missed the gorgeous sight of its masses of purple streamers curtaining the edges of the

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pool, which draws pilgrims to the spot in part of the Spring. A little pecuniary persuasion cleared the courtyard of the few persons we found there --- hangers-on of the Chinese General who had pitched his headquarters in the temple --- and left us free to enjoy a bathe in the clear spring water and tea in the shade of the trees which grow at the pool's edge. The temple itself, we afterwards found, was closed to guests by the General, but we secured lodging for the night at another temple near by, which, by an act of desecration much worse than that at the "Gold Fairy Temple," has been converted to a brewery!

From Hei-lung-t'an three hours march in and among the foothills brings one to the Summer Palace and the main road back to Peking.

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CHAPTER 9. TEMPLE WORSHIP.

The daily temple services are usually held in the big central *tien* in front of the great Buddha. This *tien* in all the larger temples is built on a paved platform raised about three feet above the level of the courtyard, and it is here that the priests congregate at the hours of office when the gongs are beating and the big bell tolls. They flock from all sides robing themselves as they come. The officiating robe is an ample orange cloak which is thrown over the ordinary grey smock of everyday wear and worn like a Roman toga draped over the left shoulder and fastened in front with a single largo button or else a wooden ring three inches in diameter. When all the priests are clothed and gathered, they file into the *tien* under the heavy door curtain propped tent-wise on a couple of long poles to allow free entrance.

One feels a natural hesitation to intrude on their devotion as a mere curious onlooker, but the presence of a stranger at the service, (provided of course, that he conducts himself with the decorum proper to the occasion) is never resented by the priests themselves, so we may safely follow inside and take up a stand in some convenient corner.

Our eyes dazzled by the glare of the sun on the stone of the, courtyard outside can see little at first in the gloom of the shuttered, *tien*, and all we discern is a dim row of figures, lined up, in front of the altars which stand at the Buddha's feet. Presently one of the priests intones a note in a high quavering voice and the rest

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strike in in harmony. For the first few phrases the singing is rich and melodious and has quite the effect of a men's chair rendering Gregorian chants. The illusion, alas, is short lived, for almost immediately some of the voices break away from the rest and produce the most terrible discoid, from which point onward it is pain and grief to the ear of the foreign listener. The chanting is purely mechanical for the words are those of the buddhist sutras (the Chinese name for a temple service, by the way, is "*nien ching*" which signifies "reading the scriptures") and are hardly more intelligible to the ordinary Chinese priests than to ourselves.

After a few minutes the worshippers start to process, and file interminably back and forth in front of the altars. They march to a weird music supplied by one of the priests, who remains in front of the altar beating a, hollow block carved in the shape of a crab which gives out a strange resonant note, assisted by three or four of the processing monks who carry small brass cups on the end of sticks, shaped like candle-extinguishers, which they tap with little baguettes. Now and then the procession halts in front, of a row of prayer-desks and the monks bend to the buddha while the chanting drops to a whisper, and the music dies away, only to swell again to full force as the monks resume their march. After twenty minutes or so the *ching* ends abruptly and the priests troop out again to disperse to their separate quarters.

Such is the ordinary office held four or five times a day. There are often special services full of much more interesting features, such as the famous torch-light New-Year celebration at T'an-che-ssu or the

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carrying of the Rain God through the fields in times of drought which can sometimes be seen at Pa-ta-ch'u. Another form of service is a sort of memorial mass which often takes place during a visit to a temple by a *hui*, or Chinese club, the members of which contribute the cost.

I once happened to stay at Chieh-t'ai-ssu when a *hui*, consisting of some fifty persons, men, women and children, were spending some days at the temple, and on the first evening a big service was arranged at 9 o'clock in the monks' refectory. In the long, low room, lit only by candles, a pair of altars had been installed one at each end with memorial tablets set up on them surrounded by dishes of "chow." The centre of the room was occupied by a dais with a table and chair on it and benches along each side. When we entered five monks were standing round the table, one an elderly man, who took the lead in the subsequent proceedings, and one a lad of not more than twelve. The former held in his hand a long wooden pipe in which a stick of incense was burning, while the others were provided with various musical instruments, a little gong suspended in a frame, a pair of cymbals, a brass cup such as described above and a small wooden "crab." A boy established in a corner with a large drum and bell completed the orchestra.

After a tour of the altars to the accompaniment of chanting, the five priests returned to the dais where the leader seated himself in the chair, in front of the table and his four assistants climbed up on the benches on either side. While they continued to chant, he began a series of mystic passes, dipping his hands into a couple

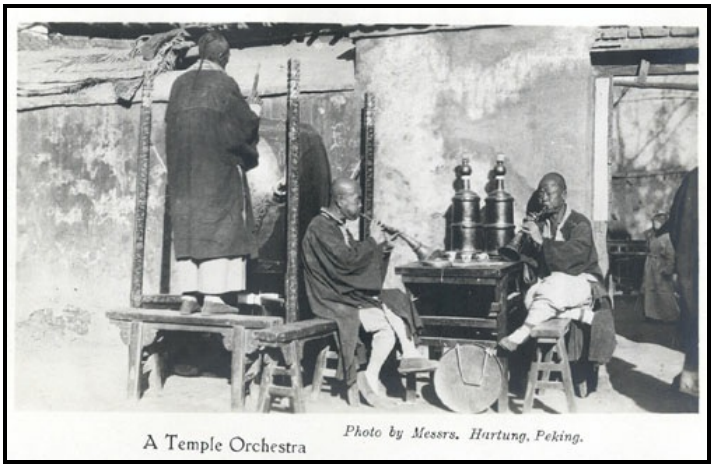

Photo by Messrs. Hartung, Peking.
A Temple Orchestra

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of empty bowls placed on the table and performing the Motion of sprinkling drops from his fingertips

and such-like allegorical actions. Next he picked UP a, peculiar looking object shaped in the form of a clover-leaf and made of red and yellow cloth which, when he opened it out, resolved itself into a sort of coronet with bands hanging from it, covered with Chinese characters. With this he crowned his shaven pate, tying it on with strings, thereby giving himself for all the world the appearance of a city banker wearing a fool's cap to amuse the children at a Christmas party. One could almost have believed that he realized what a comic figure be cut and felt half ashamed, for his next act was to envelop his head in the folds of his ample sleeves and sit with it bent on the table. After this he continued motionless, only emerging once or twice to perform on a bell which stood on the ground by his side.

During these proceedings the room was packed with members of the *hui*, including a good many children. The elders evinced complete indifference, not to say contempt, for the whole affair, talking, laughing and smoking cigarettes as though nothing was happening. The small boys of the party were, on the other hand, thoroughly interested. One insufferable *haitze* had come, armed with an electric, torch and manoeuvred around the whole time so as to flash the light into the priests' eyes; he even went the length of trying to upset one of the rows of priests, hoicking the bench from under them with his father's crooked stick. His iniquitous conduct, which received no reproof from his parents, remained utterly ignored by the victims themselves who were evidently so absorbed in their rites is

to be completely oblivious to whatever went on around them. Only the youngest of them, the little novice of twelve, occasionally shot a furious glance at his small tormentor.

We spent an hour in this strange company before retiring to our campbeds on the Ordination Terrace. The *ching*, however, lasted till well after midnight, steadily gathering noise, and the grand finale was a torch-light procession which came past, our beds at one o'clock in the morning with a terrific ringing of bells and thumping of drums.

Thereafter peace broken only by the normal night sounds of the temple --- the periodical beating of distant gongs, sudden and furious outbursts of fighting among the temple dogs and every now and then the erie cry of a goose who, for as long as I have known the temple, has lived penned in a little enclosure at the foot, of the terrace wall.

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CONCLUSION.

Excepting the lamasseries of Tibet, there can hardly be a region of the world so thickly sown with monastic buildings as this corner of China. The temples of the Western Hills alone are almost past numbering and those I have, described above are merely a few of the best known and nearest to the capital. If space permitted I would write of Ta-chueh-ssu*, of Shih-ching-shan with its robber's castle, of the monastery hidden deep in the hills where Chinese trappists astound the traveller by chanting their services in Latin and of some of the multitude of little way-side temples where often a solitary priest lives simply but cheerfully among the poorest surroundings, his courtyards choked with weeds, his temple-bell rusting to pieces and his buddhas shedding their last flakes of gold. Cheerfulness and hospitality --- not without an eye on the t'ungtzes --- are marks of the country priests, especially in the humbler temples, and you cannot enter offered a bowl of tea and their gateways without being gossip. Few things are pleasanter than, after a long hot walk in the hills, to sit on a bench in a temple courtyard shaded by spreading pines and bright with oleanders and peonies with perhaps a wisp of blue vapour curling up from the incense, brazier and scenting the air with its fragrance, and there to sip jasmine tea and talk with the friendly old men whose quiet philosophy of life is vaguely reflected, in the strings of wooden beads, without beginning or end, which they revolve ceaselessly through their fingers.

*Ta-chueh-ssu is, perhaps, the most important omission. For a full description of it I may, however, refer the reader to pages 338-341 of Juliet Bredon's "Peking."

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Many of the temples are centuries old, some have existed for a millenium and yet one cannot but wonder how long they can still survive in the decadent state of Chinese buddhism. The vital impulse which led to their founding must long since have spent itself and the forces of superstition which keep the temples alive must be slowly but steadily fading before the growth of the "modern spirit."

The metamorphosis two years ago of one of the Ta-ta-ch'u group into a hybrid establishment under the incredible title of "Royal Continental Hotel" was a melancholy sign of the times, and one cannot but fear that many of the poorer temples will in the coming years find some such sale of their birthright the only alternative to falling into utter decay.

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ROUTES TO THE TEMPLES FROM PEKING.

I. --- Within one-day radius from Peking:

Pa-ta-ch'u group, Pi-yun-ssu, Wo-fu-ssu, T'ien-t'ai-shan, Lung-men-ssu.

The first three lie, as the map will show, just off the motor road which runs from Peking direct, to the Western Hills and returns via the Summer Palace --- a round of about 30 miles. Each, or all, of them can easily be visited from Peking in the day by hiring a car at a fixed tariff; while the Pa-ta-ch'u group alone can be visited, though not quite so, conveniently, by taking a return ticket to the wayside station of Huang-ts'un on the Men-t'ou-k'ou railway, which starts from the Hsi-chih-men station in the north-west corner of Peking. From Huang-ts'un station, where donkeys are usually to be found, it is a distance of rather over a mile to the foot of the hill at Pa-ta-ch'u where the motor road ends and there are two small hotels. From this point paths lead to the separate temples as shewn on the inset map. Donkeys and carrying chairs are always waiting for hire at the terminus of the road.

Cars can drive up to the gates of Pi-yun-ssu and Wo-fu-ssu.

T'ien-t'ai-shan lies one and a half hour's walk over the crest from Pa-ta-ch'u. A donkey-boy will show the way.

Lung-men-ssu lies 3 hour's walk from San-chia-t'ien which can be reached either by motor or by travel-

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ling to the station, of the same name on the Men-t'ou-k'ou line (see above).

II. --- Beyond the one-day radius from Peking.

(a) Chieh-t'ai-ssu and T'an-che-ssu (2 or 3 nights away).

Take the morning train to Ch'ang-sin-tien on the Peking-Hankow line (35 minutes), hire donkeys or chairs and ride to Chieh-t'ai-ssu, about 3 hours with a stiff climb at the end. Sleep at Chieh-t'ai-ssu and, if you have the time, spend a whole day there visiting the surroundings and seeing the eaves, the cliff shrine to the north-west, the priests' burial ground and the Kung family tomb in the valley below. Next day early travel on to Van-che-ssu (3 hours).

See over the temple and sleep there, and, on the following day ride over the pass (about 3,000 feet) to Men-t'ou-k'ou in time to catch the train back to Peking. The climb up to the pass behind T'an-che-ssu is through exceptionally beautiful scenery.

An alternative but less attractive route to Chieh-t'ai-ssu is by the track from Men-t'ou-k'ou, about 4

hours.

(b) Miao-feng-shan, returning by Ta-chueh-ssu and Hei-lung-t'an (2 or 8 nights away).

Go by train or car to, San-chia-tien (see above), or by train to Men-t'ou-k'ou. Hire donkeys (procurable on the spot at Men-t'ou-k'ou but less easily at San-chia-tien where it is better to arrange for their hire in advance; if chairs are needed it is in all cases advisable to send a boy ahead to make arrangements) and ride to Miao-feng-shan (5 hours). The path, after crossing the Hun Ho by a ferry, surmounts a low, but steep, pass

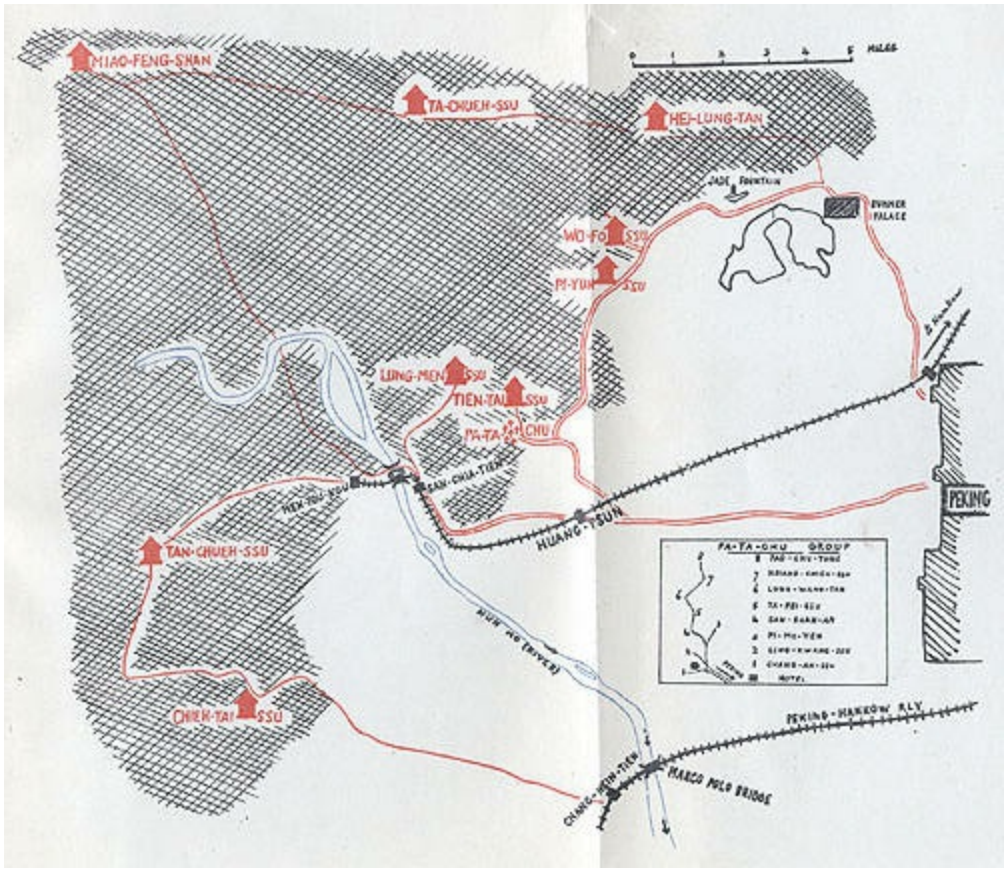
named Shih Pa P'an before entering the branch valley off the Hun Ho which leads right up to the large village of Chien-kou at the foot of the mountain. The village can provide, carrying chairs for the 1,000-foot climb up to the temple.

Sleep at the temple and, if possible, spend a, day on the hills around. Proceed on the following day to Ta
-chueh-ssu by the Lo-po-ti pass to Ta-chueh-ssu (3 hours). See the temple and sleep there. On the morrow ride on to Hei-lung-t'an across the plain and thence to the Summer Palace where, in case you have not arranged to be met by a motorcar, you may count upon finding a ricksha prepared to take you back to Peking --- a couple of hours run.

An alternative return route is the road from Miao-feng-shan to Hei-lung-t'an by a, more northerly pass, taking you past the "Gold Fairy Temple," described in chapter 8 of this book. It is slightly inferior as regards views to the Lo-po-ti route and has the disadvantage of missing Ta-chueh-ssu. The descent by it onto the plain is a little less precipitous than by the Lo-po-ti route.

The temples mentioned above provide for visitors, besides the actual guest-rooms, tables and benches, a kitchen with fuel, tea and, almost always, chickens and eggs. Everything else, including bread and, of course, beds and bedding, must be taken with one. The recognized return for hospitality takes the form of a parting present of one or two dollars to the priest in charge of the guest-room and small "cumsha" to the temple coolies who have rendered service in any way.

INDEX TO NAMES OF TEMPLES.


MIAO-FENG-SHAN
TA-CHUEH-SSU
HEI-LUNG-TAN
JADE FOUNTAIN
SUMMER PALACE
WO-FO SSU
PI-YUN SSU
LUNG-MEN SSU
TIEN-TAI SSU
PA-TA-CHU
SAN-CHIA-TIEN
HSI-HUANG-SSU
HUANG-TSUN
PEKING
TAN-CHUEH-SSU
CHIEH-TAI SSU
KUN-MO (RIVER)
PEKING-HANKOW RLY
MARCO POLO BRIDGE
CHANG-SHIH-TIEN
PA-TA-CHU GROUP
MILES