

CHINA'S WALL A SYMBOL OF THE NATION'S STRIFE

PEIPING, China—Upward goes the train toward Nankow pass and the great wall of China.

It is a four hour trip from Peiping—first across a monotonous flat, then up through the hills. We are on the Peiping-Suiyuan railroad, which leads toward Inner Mongolia.

Leaving Peiping we sit in a cozy car with leather chairs and settees flanking the sides and ends. American tourists are in the majority here, but elsewhere in the train lounge lots of other Chinese and foreign passengers from Peiping. A pretty French girl in riding breeches shares a compartment with friends, a blonde miss from Holland is aboard with her parents; so is a little group of American marines. The great wall trip is a popular Sunday sojourn for Peiping foreign residents.

Before coming to the hard pull the train stops. Passengers who desire open-air observation bundle themselves in sweaters and coats and repair to another car which consists only of a floor, a roof, chairs and railings at the sides. There we sit and the train proceeds.

The railroad in this difficult ascent has been called one of the foremost engineering feats in China. Now and again we dart through a long black tunnel and are thankful in our open car that the locomotive has been put in the rear instead of the front, sparing us billows of smoke.

The hills roll high around us, away to the horizon. Here and there we see curving lines of stone of masonry fore.

among them. A griffin asks if they can be part of the great wall itself. They are not that, but subsidiary walls for military defense.

Little land here is usable for agriculture. But once in a while, upon a flat space among the rugged hills, we pass a tiny farm. In America such an uninviting spot would not be used; in China the pressure for land is so great that where a few square yards can be cultivated they are farmed.

We pass farm butts, donkeys on a road, some camels, a group of smiling children by the track, and, at last, we sight the wall high gray, winding in the hills. We lose sight of it again. Our train glides to a stop. As we step out scores of patient men in padded cotton with chairs for our final ascent are waiting. These chairs are the simplest of conveyances—rude wooden seats supported by two horizontal poles each. The poles extend in front where they are manned by a pair of coolies and behind for another pair of carriers.

So now we ride away, Chinese highlands fashion. A rough, winding path leads upward. The procession of chairs is long. Now and then it is passed by westerners from Peiping who have elected to rent small donkeys instead of chairs. A few Europeans are on foot and at length, we decide that we should have some exercise.

We motion our carriers to let us down. We tell ourselves that we shall pass the other carriers ahead, get to the van of the procession and discover the wall before our fellow passengers, surely it won't be hard to outdistance the coolies, since we have no burdens.

But this assumption leads to a discovery about the strength of the legs of Chinese chair coolies. We do pass a few of them at first. But the path goes up, our legs go wan and our enthusiasm recedes. Chairs begin to pass us. Our own coolies close at hand, are not at all surprised when, after ten minutes of trying to keep up with the procession we slip back into our seats. Doubtless they've learned the limitations of foreign climbers before.

We round a turn and come to the end. There is another rise in the land topped by the great wall of antiquity, dating before the Christian era. We mount stone steps until we are upon the summit the great wall of China is, perhaps, twelve feet wide—narrower than at the base. In its hundreds of miles of winding the barrier varies in height. At this point, as you look to the north, out toward the still distant land of the Mongols, you judge it to be twenty five feet high. At intervals towers of masonry rise in which lookouts against barbarian invaders were kept in centuries past.

Vegetable growth lives in cracks at your feet, but the narrow masonry which reaches up at the sides of the wall, forming a convenient bulwark to lean against, is in good repair, probably you wouldn't find it like that very far from this much-visited segment.

Dows and up goes the wall in either direction from us, following the contours of the hills. In and out it curves like a snake. The wind whirls about us, cold. We are grateful for extra sweaters under our overcoats. Chinese vendors press around us, wanting to sell Mongolian camel bells or pictures.

For 1,500 miles the wall extends from Turkestan almost to the sea. In one locale it is of stone, in another, brick; again it is little more than an eroded earth rampart. How old is this majestic section where we stand in northern Hoped it would be difficult to say.

Prof. E. T. Williams, one of the foremost present day historians of China, points out that the great wall was not all built by one ruler, but holds that the first attempt at its erection seems to have been around 244 B.C. in what is now northern Shansi province, west of where we are today. Its extension east to the sea came somewhat later. Repairs of course have come since, and one assumes, very modern repairs in the part from which we now gaze out over the wind-swept historic hills near the strategic pass to Peiping.

Of minor military importance today the wall still fills us with awe as one of the structural wonders of the world, as a timeless reminder of the now diminished seclusiveness of the Chinese race; of their ever recurrent attempts, not always successful, to shut out alien invaders from the north.

Japanese imperialism is a plaguing problem of north China and all of China today. China herself is full of domestic ills and hopes, is rocked by tradition-shattering experiments in politics, economics, human relations. Walking here on the mighty wall of old one knows that a new China is being born, in suffering, but, remembering how long the wall has stood through advances and declines—and fresh advances—of Chinese strength, one thinks of the present status as a passing moment in the life of Cathay.

REPORTING THINGS THAT DO NOT HAPPEN

George Ham Wrote Up An Execution That Did Not Take Place — The Daily Mail Editor's Experience With "A Funeral" and with "Ralph Connor."

One of the embarrassing moments in an editor's life is the advance publication of an item with circumstantial detail attached, when something unexpected occurs, and the event never happens. The managing editor of The Ottawa Citizen recently recalled the publication of an address by Nicholas Flood Davin, punctuated by 'Cheers' and 'Loud Applause' which had been given to the paper before he left for the West, which had a 'release date' on it, and which was published, although at the time the wires to the West were down, and it was only learned some time afterward that the speech had never been delivered.

George Ham used to tell a similar yarn about a poor fellow, who was to be hung in some jailyard in the East, while George was 'wire editor' on a Winnipeg Paper.

The paper was prepared to do the hanging full justice, only unfortunately something went wrong with the wires during the night, and the account of the hanging did not come through as expected.

George Ham, being a resourceful sort of fellow, and being familiar with the prison yard through previous reporting experience, sat down and wrote a brilliant 'clothesline dispatch' in which he hung the fellow with great gusto. Unhappily a few hours after the paper had appeared in the street, the wires resumed operation, and it was learned that a last minute reprieve had relieved the need of any hanging at all.

I happened to mention this incident to R. E. Gosnell, who was formerly a historian in British Columbia and later spent some years in the Parliamentary Press Gallery, and it reminded him of a still more remarkable event which I always felt should be saved in some way from oblivion. Perhaps the fact that this column appears on the same day as the Annual Dinner of the Parliamentary Press Gallery gives me license to include it in these personalities:

An Irish sheriff had under his charge a prisoner who was sentenced to die at noon on a certain fixed day. The sheriff, who was master of the local hunt, and had never missed an opening day of the season for forty years, observed, to his great concern, that the day on which the prisoner was to hang coincided with the opening day of the hunt.

The sheriff gave the matter a good deal of thought; and at first he came to the melancholy conclusion that it would be necessary to miss the hunt for once. Then a brilliant idea struck him, and he went to see the prisoner.

"Michael", he said, "would you do me a favor?"

The condemned man was surprised: "Here am I, a poor fellow sentenced to hang next Monday, and here you are, the sheriff of the county, and you come to ask me a favor?" And then, curiously getting the better of him, he asked: "What then might it be?"

"It is like this", said the sheriff. " 'Tis the opening day of the hunt next Monday, and as ye know, I'm the master of the hunt as well as sheriff. I haven't missed the opening for forty years. Would it make much difference to you if instead of holding the execution at noon, we made it six o'clock in the morning?"

Michael was not overly enthusiastic over the suggestion, but the sheriff dilated on the fact that the sad moment would come sooner or later, and that in reality he was offering to do him a favor. "Ye'll have six hours less to be sitting here thinking about it", he said.

Finally Michael agreed that it made very little difference and the hanging was advanced to six o'clock in the morning. Very much to his satisfaction, the sheriff found himself ready to mount his hunter and take a lead-

ing part in the day's sport, as usual, the unpleasant task behind him.

But, just as he was putting foot in stirrup a messenger came toward him, post haste from the nearby castle. He carried a big envelope with a red seal. With one foot in the stirrup, one on the ground, the sheriff read the note. It was a reprieve for Michael!

The sheriff jumped on his horse and never stopped until he reached the seaboard". R. E. Gosnell used to say, when he was telling the yarn. "And there's not the slightest doubt about the truth of it, because he made his way to Canada, and in time became sheriff of Chatham, Ontario.

The writer has had a couple of similar experiences in regard to newspaper reporting. One of these was where a number of years ago he wrote up a funeral which was supposed to have taken place on a certain morning from Saint Anthony's Church, Devon. The service, the funeral sermon and all the details were described at length. The only thing wrong about the write-up was that the funeral had been postponed until the following day.

Another day when the writer was on the Manitoba Free Press at Winnipeg he was assigned to report a sermon by Rev. Dr. C. W. Gordon (Ralph Connor). As the weather was very cold and as Saint Stephen's church was a long way out the writer arranged with Dr. Gordon to give the paper and advanced typewritten copy. The copy was printed and after the Free Press had gone on the street it was found that Dr. Gordon had given the writer the wrong copy. It was not the sermon which he had preached on Sunday but one which he intended to preach on the following Sunday at Brandon.

Beatrice Lillie's favorite on herself concerns the time she went in for winter sports in Switzerland. They tried to make her do some skiing. "I would start off at the top of the hill as Lady Peel, but by the time I reached the bottom I was just plain, ordinary Bee Lillie", observes the comedienne.

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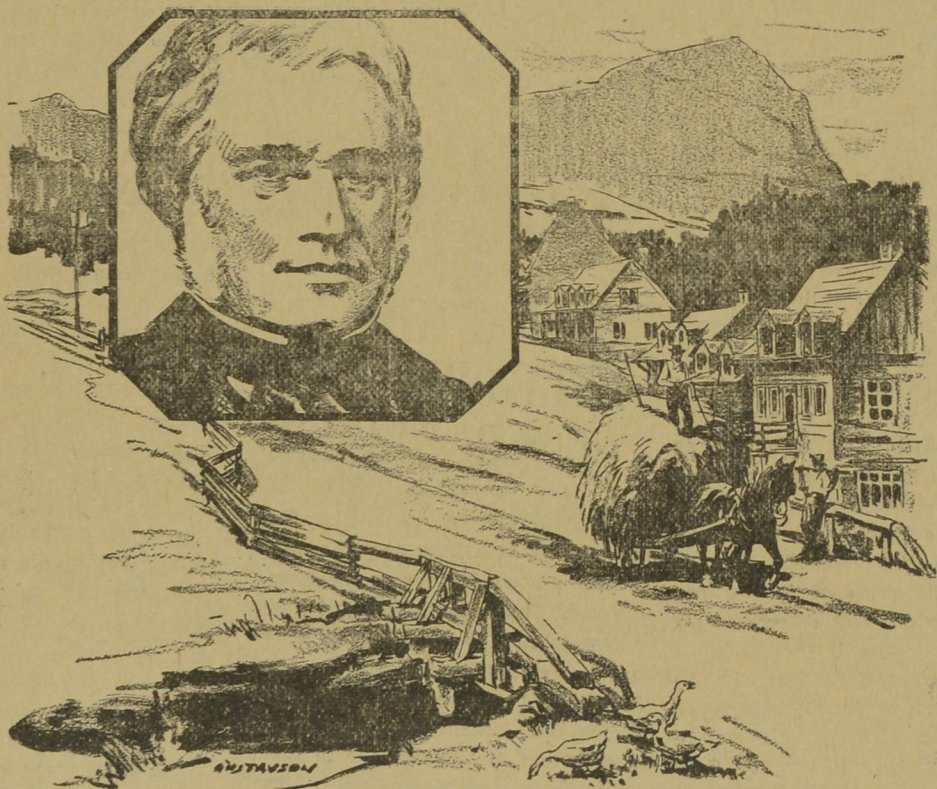
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