

A JOURNEY TO THE SACRED MOUNTAIN OF SIAO-OUTAI-SHAN, IN CHINA.

Two days' journey in a Chinese cart took me to Peking.

To any one who does not know what a Chinese cart is like, this may sound very pleasant; but those who are familiar with the drawbacks of travelling in a conveyance devoid of springs on a road that is no road, would, I am sure, not envy my experience.

Sensible people, as a rule, go to the capital of the Chinese empire by boat up the river, and then by canal; and others prefer to ride the distance, some eighty miles, if I remember right, on horseback; but those who are still more sensible are the ones that do not go there at all.

Either way the journey is dull and uninteresting. The highway between the port and the capital is across a sandy flat country with little vegetation, few villages, and still fewer towns; and the monotony of the journey is only relieved by the large number of beggars and cripples who line the way, especially near villages, and exhibit all sorts of horrid complaints, from leprosy and elephantiasis, down to commonplace blindness, and missing of various limbs of general usage in every-day life. The larger places one passes on the road coming from Tientsin are Peitsang, Yang-tsun, Nan-tsai-tsun, Hoshi-wu, and Tung-chow. The highway follows the river course in a general direction of N.-W. as far as here, then turns sharply to the West, until Peking is reached; and travellers by boat also leave the Peiho River at this latter place to enter the Tung-hui-ho.

I shall not rest at length on this first part of my journey, nor shall I enter into a long description of Peking, for many people have done so before: in fact, for a city of immense size like the Chinese capital, there is, as far as monuments go, indeed but little to interest the general observer, with the exception of the huge wall which surrounds the town, with its enormous and tumbling-down gateways, the old observatory with its wonderful instruments, and the Imperial palace.

I cannot go far wrong in saying that Peking is the dustiest and dirtiest city I have ever been in, yet it is strange that it should be the home of, with no exception, the most wonderful and deeply interesting people in the world. What a pity they are not a little cleaner!

I stayed in Peking some time making preparations for a journey still further in the interior. As a rule, when I travel alone, in so-called uncivilised countries, I never burden myself much with

baggage, provisions, medicaments, &c., preferring to live like the natives themselves; but this time I made an exception, partly as I was to be accompanied the greater part of the way by two Frenchmen, and partly owing to my not having quite recovered of the rough life I had had the year before among the hairy aborigenes of the Hokkaido. Carrying one's money is also a thing to consider in a country like China, where the currency is mainly "cash," a small coin made of an alloy of copper and tin, and of which there are about from a thousand to two thousand to one of our half-crowns, and the coins are perforated in the middle, so as to be strung together with cords of plaited straw. Two muleteers were the only attendants I had, and men and baggage were carried on mules' backs, most of the journey being through the mountainous district of the Petchili and Shansi Provinces. Two donkeys were also taken to carry the lighter packages.

On the 19th of May, 1891, at six o'clock in the morning, I left Peking, moving almost due west, and travelling mostly on barren stretches of flat country, arrived at the village of Palichuan, a quaint little place, enclosed by a high wall. As you enter the gate the temple of Tapei-tsu is on your right, and as you go along a remarkable tower stares you in the face; then, as you leave the village, one cannot but admire the West gate, a most marvellous bit of mason's workmanship.

It was only when Yantia-chuan was reached that undulations in the ground began, extending especially towards the south. Our lunch that day was a memorable one. Towards noon we put up at a little, dirty (for there are no clean ones in China) wayside inn, and one of the muleteers, who, by the way, said he was a Christian, and also a good cook, was entrusted with the necessary preparations for a frugal repast. Fresh meat was purchased at the Frenchmen's request, and the Christian's cooking abilities were put to a test. He turned out a very good lunch, with the exception that he cooked things in vaseline instead of butter, and used Eno's Fruit Salt when he was to use common salt,—which two fatal mistakes nearly led him to be murdered by my two companions from the other side of the Channel.

"Comment!" said one of the Frenchmen as he shook him by the pigtail, "tu es un cuisinier Chrétien, et tu ne sais pas distinguer de la vaseline de beurre?"

"Ils sont épatants, ces Chinois!" retorted the other, all the while forgetting that how was the poor beggar to know, as he had probably never seen either one or the other?

We set out again after lunch, and soon came to the first hills and terraces. On a separate mound stood the pretty little temple of Che-ching-shan. Further on, along the Hunho River, more generally called Yun-ting-ho, I noticed some curious Mahomedan inscrip-

tions engraved on stone, and as we were going on towards Men-ton-Ko the way still rose. At the latter village a fascinating little open theatre, built on the bank of the river, was a delightful spot for playgoers, I should imagine, for it combined all the advantages of listening to a good play with the delight of being in the open air, besides the panorama to gaze upon during the *entr'actes*, which was thrown into the bargain.

The incline was getting steeper and steeper; we passed several other smaller villages here and there on the banks of the stream, joined at long intervals by solid and ancient bridges in masonry, and finally the road became so tortuous and winding like a snake up the hill-side that we had to dismount and walk up, dragging our tired animals after us until we reached the pass on the summit. The view from the top quite repaid us for the trouble we had to get there. To the south the chain of mountains of Miao-fung-shan was resplendent in all its beauty, with its peaks lighted by the last warm rays of the dying sun; and, in the far distance, towards the south-west, the blue Pohowashan made a lovely background to that beautiful picture of mountain scenery.

Nearly at eight in the evening we arrived at Lieunshuan, where the French Roman Catholic missionaries have established a small apothecary shop for the use of the Catholics in the village. As a privilege we were allowed to sleep in the shop.

Near this village there were, I was told, valuable coal beds, but I did not go to visit them.

We proceeded early the next morning down a very slippery road, paved with round pebbles, and we had the greatest difficulty in keeping our mules and ourselves standing on our legs. The people we came across were very polite to us and took quite a fatherly interest in my scheme; they gave me friendly advice as to which was the best way, the best inns to put up at, and they inquired most tenderly after my relations and my friends, and the relations of my companions, and finally asked ten thousand other questions to my muleteers as to our respective ages, nationality, and I do not know what else!

"Your wife," said an old man to me, "must be very sorry that you are so far away from her, and going through the dangers of travelling in these distant provinces."

"I have not got a wife," said I.

"So young," said he, in great astonishment, "and you have not a wife?"

"No; in my country we do not marry when we are so young; we marry when we are older."

"Oh! that is a mistake," said gravely the old man. "It is a great mistake; a man should marry when he is young and strong."

As we were thus entertained by native wayfarers going in our direction and by their curious theories, we sped along and went through the Tai-han-ling Pass (3,020 feet above sea-level); and late in the afternoon we reached the summit of the mountain, where in a small shed, or temple, quite a valuable library of sacred books can be found, some of which appeared to me to be very ancient. There are also two tablets to Kaushi and Tankuang, and a curious small gateway on the very summit of the mountain. The descent on the other side was less interesting, excepting that it afforded some pretty bits of scenery. Then following the valley we finally reached San-lien, a clean little village, 1,000 feet above sea-level. The inhabitants of this village are nearly all Roman Catholics, and, with the aid and advice of French missionaries from Peking, they have built themselves a neat and fine church, in which they have mass and evening prayers every day, with accompaniment of an harmonium, somewhat played upon *à la Chinoise*, but still wonderful considering that the whole service is carried on by Chinese of the very poorest classes.

Here again, however, I could not help remarking, though I admired them much for what they had done, that these converts lacked the repose and stolid, and at the same time gentle, manner of their pig-tailed heathen brethren. They seemed to me unsteady, and at times ill-natured. They had given us the best room they had at first, but during the night, for what reason I was never able to discover, we were roused up and bundled into a dingy room, where we had to spend the remainder of the night.

Following the stream, in which I took a most delicious bath, to the great astonishment and disgust of the unclean Chinamen who happened to pass by, we halted after another long day's journey at Tu-thia-chuang.

The inn at this place was somewhat better than the usual accommodation one gets in the smaller towns in the interior of the Celestial (only to Celestials) Empire. Crowds of people assembled as we arrived just before sunset, and among others I spotted a fine head of an old Buddhist priest. After a long confabulation and a few strings of cash, which passed from my pockets into his hands, I was able to induce him to sit for his picture, and I dashed off a sketch in oils before he had time to change his mind. Unfortunately, the large crowd that had gathered round, especially the women folks, seemed to scold him and talk angrily at him for his silliness in sitting, owing to the strange notion that prevails in China and, in fact, nearly all over the East, that if an image is reproduced a soul has to be given to it, and that the person portrayed has to be the supplier of it at his own expense. The venerable old Buddhist priest, who was nursing his "cash" on his lap while being immortalised on a wooden panel, and had a curious twinkle in his eye, as if he

knew better, resisted bravely for some time and sat like a statue, but finally had to give in.

“You will die,” cried an old woman at him, “I saw your soul coming out of you and go into the picture. I did really, I saw it with my own eyes!”

“So did I,” cried a hundred other voices in a chorus.

By the time the priest had got up, they had half convinced him that at least half his soul had really gone out of him; but had the soul gone or not, he would go and take the cash for safe keeping to his home first, and complain and ask for the restitution of his lost property afterwards. He was a sensible man. So was I, and knowing what was coming, the moment he had gone I went into the room and packed the sketch safely, then took another clean panel and smeared it with the scrapings of my palette to show him instead, in case he would come back and wish the picture destroyed.

Twenty minutes had not elapsed when he was back again, of course without the “cash,” holding his stomach and complaining of internal agonies.

“I am going to die,” he cried the moment he saw me, “you have taken away half my soul!”

“Certainly I have,” said I sternly. “You did not expect me to give you all that ‘cash’ for less than half your soul? Did you?”

“Oh, no! but I wish it back, as I feel so bad now without it.”

“All right,” said I, “I shall go in the room and destroy the image I did of you; will you then be satisfied?”

“Yes.”

Here the other panel, smeared with palette scrapings, was produced after making pretence at destroying it with a knife, and never in my life have I seen an expression of relief to equal that of the priest. He had not felt half his soul so much going out of him, but he certainly had felt it coming back again. He could swear by it. He was now perfectly well again!

This wonderful cure gave us all a very busy evening. All the villagers who had complaints of any sort came to us to be restored to health. A leper who had lost all his fingers, wished me to make them grow again; and a pitiful case of a poor child, only a few months old, was brought up, whose mother, while busy stirring boiling water in a big cauldron, had dropped the child in by mistake. He was so badly scalded that I am afraid, though I tried to relieve his pain by smearing him all over with the vaseline which had been saved in the cooking, the poor child cannot have lived more than a few hours.

We made an early start the next day, and by ten o'clock we passed Shan-lung-men. Going through the pass the scenery was magnificent. I was following the dried river-bed, and on both sides had

high mountains until we came in sight of a portion of the Great Wall. There was a huge tower on one side of the river, and a long stretch of wall built on the steep slope of the mountain; on the other side was the continuation of it. I was still moving in a westerly direction, and from where the tower was the ground rose in a very steep incline. Three hours of very stiff climbing for my animals, my companions, and myself, took us to the top of the mountain; and what a lovely view when we got there! Chain after chain of mountains of a pure cobalt blue on one side, the high Hsi-ling-shan peak and a fertile valley on the other. A long distance away in a southerly direction I could just discern, against the bright sky line, the Towers of Tung-an-tzu and another part of the Wall, while under me, in the fertile valley, I saw signs of agriculture and a large enclosure. On the nearest hills, land-marks in the shape of large crosses had been put up, to show that the ground belonged to a Christian sect, called the Trappists, and to designate the limits of their property. Descending was much quicker work than ascending, and as I drew nearer I found myself among plantations of apricot-trees that the silent fathers have grown in these almost uninhabited regions. The descent from the summit to the monastery occupied two hours.

The Trappists may consider themselves very lucky to have landed upon such a delightful spot for settling in and building their abode upon it. The valley, in the centre of which they are, is divided in two by a limpid stream, and high mountains surround it on all sides. As for their building, it is a solid and simple structure encircled by a high wall, which not only protects the penitent fathers from robber neighbours, but also from the raids of panthers and leopards, which are numerous in that part of the world.

As we went in my friends and I were most kindly received by the Father Superior, Father Maurus, a Frenchman, the only one in the convent who is allowed to speak. I believe that ten or more came out with him from France to settle there, but only four out of that number had survived, the others having succumbed to illness and hardships. Many Chinese and Mongols, however, have joined the Order, and it is partly owing to the manual help received by these Asiatics that they have been able to build themselves the several houses, the church, the wall, and the porticoes all round the premises. Father Maurus spoke in terms of high praise of his Mongolian confrères, and, with the exception of their finding it a little difficult at first to keep perfectly silent from one end of the year to the other, he said that they were good, obedient, and willing. The Trappists are vegetarians, at least those out there were, and their life is cut out as simple as it could be as far as food and worldly habits go. They do nothing that is not a strict necessity of life, yet they make themselves a white wine, rather pleasant to the taste, out of vine-

yards they have imported and grown. On week-days they rise at 2 A.M. by the sound of the church bell, and on Sundays an hour earlier, but they are allowed an hour and a-half's rest in the afternoon. Eight P.M. is their hour for retiring, and they are compelled to sleep in their clothes. Since their settling at Yang-tzia-ku several European customs have been discarded, as, for instance, the wearing of sandals, which are now replaced by Chinese shoes; also the growing of a pigtail is decidedly an adopted Chinese custom.

They have three meals a day, except on fasting days, and lunch is the largest meal they have, consisting of a bowl of soup and two small dishes of vegetables. At dinner they have less!

When they first went out they suffered much owing to the severe climate, their being completely ignorant of the Chinese language, and through the hostility shown to them by the neighbouring villagers and by the Mandarin of the province. They were once accused of concealing fire-arms and ammunition, which were supposed to be awaiting the arrival of a large band of "white devils," who were then expected with these means to conquer a large portion of the "Emperor of Heaven's" dominions. The Mandarin, with a large escort of soldiers and followers, unexpectedly arrived at the monastery and searched every nook within its walls, and, on finding nothing but the kindest reception on the part of the Trappists, his suspicions were dispelled, and he has not troubled them ever since.

When I visited the monastery they had been there ten years, during which time they had only seen three Europeans. One of the chief features of the monastery was the cook. He was a Manchu, and had been wandering poverty-stricken all through Manchuria until, begging his way south, fate had brought him to the monastery, where the shelter he begged for was immediately granted to him. Their curious mode of living interested him, and he remained with them as a Novice for some years, until, through his perseverance and other good virtues he had displayed, he was elected a father. He seemed to be quite happy with his new creed and his cooking utensils. He had learnt Latin since he had been with the Trappists; and, to my great astonishment, breaking the vows he had sworn to obey, he began a conversation with me one day in that tongue, the subject, if I am not mistaken, being the quality and cooking of some fried potatoes and the bad success of the soup which he had just served me. It was comical to be talking of fried potatoes in the Latin tongue with a Manchu cook in a French Trappist convent in China! The Trappists possess eight hundred hectares of ground, and, though they do not make any converts, their object is apparently to serve as a good example to intending imitators, and

to be the means of getting natives converted to the faith of Christ by showing them how to lead a lazy—I mean a saintly life.

The Trappists sleep each in a small cell, and I did the same during the time I stayed there, only in a separate part of the building. There was a wooden crucifix at the head of my bunk and a hard mattress, and that was all. My paint-box, as usual, answered the purpose of a pillow, and altogether I was really very comfortable.

Not many miles off were the famous towers of Tung-an-tzu, and I started one morning on my way there. Along the stream, on the banks, are the two villages of Shang-wan-tzu and Shia-wan-tzu, meaning the upper and lower windings of the river. Farther down we come to Hu-tzia-ku (translated: valley of the Hu family), on the left side of the river, and an altogether Christian village. It is a pretty place, situated as it is on a high bank overlooking the stream. Its inhabitants are daggers drawn with the villagers of Shang-wan-tzu and Shia-wan-tzu, for neither of these have followed in the footsteps of their Christianised neighbours. In fact, several times they have shown themselves very hostile both towards them and the more distant Trappists. At Hu-tzia-ku, in the house of the village chief, who is the Catechist as well, one room had been turned into a small chapel, and had an altar with a few candles, a crucifix, and on each side of it a large coloured chromo of French production, and illustrative, in extra warm colours, of what becomes in future life to the poor Chinamen who do not accept the Christian creed. The Catechist insisted on accompanying me to the towers, so off we started together. I left my animals at the small temple at the foot of the mountain, and I proceeded to climb to the summit, where the two towers were. The wall began from the first tower we reached, and went across valleys and mountains; at intervals there were other similar towers, with vaulted, but generally tumbling down roofs, the arches having given way and the ceiling fallen in. The outside walls were yet in excellent preservation. In all the towers I entered the walls were double, and access to the upper floor was obtained by going up a small staircase, similar to that of a ship and nearly perpendicular. The upper part of the tower was of bricks, but the lower part and the foundations were made of enormous blocks of granite kept well together by strong cement. Between stone and stone one could see numerous iron bullets jammed in. A tablet, with the number of the tower engraved on it, was placed over the door, and the windows were invariably of a semi-circular shape. A wall, wide enough for several men to walk abreast, from one tower to another, connected all these towers, and the height of that portion of the wall at Tung-an-tzu was not more than twenty-five feet. According to some Chinese authorities, this part of the Great Wall is supposed to be much older than that farther north at Chatao. That the wall

is not continuous can be ascertained here, as no traces can be seen between the tower and wall which I saw at Sia-long-men and this part. One explanation of the problem would be that these fragments of the wall have been built at different epochs, closing more particularly valleys where an invading army could get through. The theory that it was erected with the object of keeping tigers, leopards, and other wild beasts out of the country I am afraid is not a very plausible one, as nothing would be easier for any feline quadruped than to climb over the wall.

The villagers at Hu-tzia-ku were in every way most kind to me, and while staying at the monastery I paid them several visits. A few presents in the shape of needles and cotton-reels were much appreciated by the weaker sex, and a few small silver coins (Japanese) sent the men nearly crazy with delight. They did not even object to be sketched, which is saying a great deal for Celestials.

Bidding good-bye to the Fathers, I proceeded towards Tzie-zia-pu-zu, on the right-hand side of the stream as one faces the towers of Tung-an-tzu, then turning north-west, I found myself in a narrow valley. Here and there a few mud villages were scattered about along a very picturesque road, winding among huge boulders and rocks on both sides, forming beautiful gorges at times. Caverns of large size and a curious hole pierced through by nature near the summit of a mountain made the scenery as I was going along more and more weird and quaint. At noon I reached the top of the Sheu-pa-pan Pass, which translated means of "eighteen terraces." A small temple had been erected here as usual, with five gods and a tablet. Two of the gods were very appropriately the protectors of passes, and the entrance to the holy building looked towards the east. A few yards from it a wall had been built—as is frequently the case all over China—to prevent evil spirits from entering the temple.

The worshippers at, and the builders of these temples, if I was well informed, labour under the impression that evil spirits can only travel in a straight line, and that reaching a spot in a roundabout manner is an impossibility to them, which must make it very inconvenient for them but convenient to others; so that, if you wish to have not only temples but your own house free from the visits of these objectionable callers, all you have to do is to erect a small wall a couple of yards in front of your front door, and they will go bang against it each time they attempt to make a bee line for your home. They must indeed be very honourable spirits, the evil ones in China, for if they cannot go straight for you they despise getting round you! The muleteers, many of whom travel on these roads, are about the only worshippers at these temples, and never did I see them passing one temple that they did not go in to pay their chin-chins to the gods.

South-east from the pass and a long way off I could still distinguish the towers and wall of Tung-an-tzu. The tablet at the temple was of the fifth moon of the fifteenth year of Tzia-tzin, or, in other words, of the present dynasty. Leaving the pack-mules to follow with the muleteers, I started down the mountain on foot, and I was much impressed by the marked change in the type of the inhabitants. They were of a pure Mongol type; they had larger eyes, a flatter nose, with wide nostrils, and were apparently not so intelligent. The dialect they spoke also was incomprehensible even to my muleteers. The valley grew wider as I went along, and late in the afternoon I arrived at Kan-tzia-chuan, the village of the Kan family.

Another village was gone through not very distant from this, after which the hills closed in again, the way being actually walled in between huge rocks perpendicular to the ground.

The village of Mao-mian-tzu takes its name from a perforated and curiously-shaped mountain in its vicinity, and later, towards six in the evening, after having crossed yet another small valley, and gone through another ravine and a narrow pass, we left the circle of mountains where the granite is replaced by yellow earth, and finally reached our halting-place, Sheu-men-tzu (the stone door), where we put up at the quaint little inn.

A Chinese inn is not a paradise of comfort, and less still a model of cleanliness or privacy. They are all more or less alike, though, of course, some are larger than others, but never cleaner.

The ones in towns have separate small rooms, like cabins with paper windows, and a raised portion of the room called "kan," covered with a rough mat, is what one sleeps on. A fire can be lighted in the winter under this "kan" to keep one warm. The smaller inns, as generally found in villages, have only one long room, with a "kan" running the length of the longer wall, or sometimes two "kans" at the two ends of the room, where men of all grades of society rest their weary bones for the night, either sleeping in their clothes or wrapped up in a blanket. I myself had constantly to sleep in a room with a dozen or even more other people, most of the other guests being generally muleteers, as the better classes in the interior of China are not much given to travelling. Each inn, as a rule, possesses a courtyard, or a large enclosure in which the mules and donkeys are kept at night. In most of them they only provide you with sleeping accommodation and tea, and you have to bring your own food, though by making a special arrangement food can always be obtained. There are several Chinese dishes that are not at all bad; for instance, the *laopings*, a cross between an omelette and a tart, were, to my taste, delicious. Great astonishment was caused at the latter village by my showing the crowd that

had collected an indiarubber band, which with its expansive qualities produced a regular panic of terror among the villagers.

How a "ribbon," as they called it, only a couple of inches long, could become a yard in length and *vice versá*, was an astounding mystery to them. They kept discussing about it all night long, and none of them came within a respectful distance of me, or touched any of my traps. They were sure that I was a "white devil."

I made a very early start, as I had a long day's journey before me, and at eight A.M. I had already passed To-cheng-pu and reached the plateau-like stretch of yellow earth on the summit of the hills. About an hour later, in a storm of wind, I began descending towards an immense plain, like a desert, which lay stretched at my feet, while dozens of gigantic dust columns, making so many whirlwinds, were playing about, like huge ghosts, in a fantastic sort of slow dance. Now and then one suddenly disappeared only to see a new one rising from the ground in a cone-like shape, and revolving with incredible rapidity soon reached a great height. As I was crossing the plain I was nearly caught in one of these violent whirlwinds myself, as they travel so quickly and in such a very erratic fashion, that it is not an easy matter to get out of their way. The buzzing, as it passed near, was something awful, and the dust that it raised was blinding.

All along, though travelling through a plain, I was on a high land, and when at Tao-la-tsouei the altitude was over 4,000 feet. The wind grew in intensity during the afternoon, and, as it blew in my face, made the travelling very uncomfortable. At times it was all I could do to hold on to my saddle. A regular dust-storm, like the Simoon in the Sahara, passed over in the afternoon, and for some time my men and myself were at a loss as to where we were going. We lost the track in the blinding dust, and had some difficulty in finding it again.

Finally we reached Tkou-fo-pu, and soon after I was at the foot of the great sacred mountain of Siao-outai-shan. We did not put up at the village as there were no inns, but, mounting the slopes of the mountain, halted at the temple of Tie-lin-tsen at an altitude of over 4,350 feet. Accommodation for pilgrims is provided at this temple in the temple grounds, but it was no better than that of the commoner inns.

Not far from the temple a curious natural bridge of ice over a stream was quaint and pretty, and the huge Siao towering over my head, with large patches of snow and ice on its slopes, made me long for the next morning to ascend its highest peak. The next morning came, and at 5 A.M. I set out on the steep track, accompanied by a Mongol guide. As I was walking too quickly for him he was soon left far behind, and I proceeded by myself, sure that I could find

my way without him. Things went well until I had reached an altitude of over 9,000 feet, when the track I had followed seemed to branch off, and one branch went to the south-west, the other to the north-west, round one of the smaller peaks. I took the south-west one; it led me to a point where no human being could go any farther. Where I was the slope of the mountain was such that it required a steady foot not to be sliding down into a precipice; a little farther a long glacier extended from top to bottom of the mountain, so I left the track and attempted to climb the lower peak just above me, to see if from that point of vantage I could discover the right trail. It was easier said than done, especially as I was carrying a water-colour paint-box and a block slung to a strap on my shoulders; still, after a good deal of hard work, and going upon my hands and knees, I managed to crawl up to the top. I was so hot, and the view was so lovely from up there, that I sat on a stone on the edge of the slope and opened my paint-box to take a sketch. As I was sorting out the brushes, unluckily the stone on which I was sitting gave way, and I started sliding down the almost perpendicular slope, and no effort on my part to stop my involuntary tobogganing was of any avail. I tried to clutch the ground with my nails, I seized every projecting stone in hopes of stopping my precipitous descent; but, *hélas!* at the speed I was going it was no easy matter to hold on to anything that I even managed to clutch.

There I had death staring me in the face, for another hundred yards would have brought me on the edge of the precipice, and over I would have gone, taking a fatal leap of several hundred feet. My hair stood on end as every second I was approaching the dreaded spot; and how well I remember the ghastly sound of my heavy paint-box which had preceded me in my disastrous descent. How well I remember the hollow sound of it banging from boulder to boulder, echoed and magnified a thousand times from one mountain to another. Then there was a final bang from down far, far below; the echo weakly repeated it, and all was silence once more. Another half minute and the echo would have repeated a hollower sound still! I shut my eyes. . . .

A violent shock, which nearly tore my body in two, made me think that I had gone over; but no . . . as luck would have it I had suddenly stopped. I opened my eyes, but I did not dare move, for my position, though much improved, was far from being safe yet. I was now only about ten or fifteen yards from the edge, and in the most violent state of excitement, partly due to the bright look-out of the delayed leap and at the pleasant hope of saving my life altogether. I was half-unconscious when this happened, and it took me some minutes to realise how and where I was. I knew that I was hanging somewhere, but to what I was hanging, and from what, and

how, I did not know, as I was hanging from my back. It was a state of suspense, but that was all!

As I slowly got my wits about me again, to my great horror I discovered that as yet my life was hanging to a hair like Damocles' sword. My coat and a strong leather strap which I had slung under my arm had just caught over a projecting stone, and that was what had stopped me from proceeding any farther towards certain death; but the slightest false movement on my part, as a jerk, might still place me in great danger. Slowly, as my back was slightly resting on the almost perpendicular slope, I tried to get a footing, and when this was done the great difficulty was to turn round. After several minutes of anxiety which seemed ages, also this feat was successfully accomplished, and there I stood half-lying with my body on the ground, and clutching the rock that had saved my life, until my commotion had entirely passed away, and I began to crawl up as I had done before, as best I could, cat-like fashion.

I reached the treacherous trail again, and followed it back to where it parted, and there I found the guide squatting on his heels and quietly smoking his pipe. He showed me the right track, and away I walked by myself again as he was such a slow walker. I made him give me my oil-paint box, which he was carrying for me, and with it, following a comparatively easy but steep track, I first reached a sort of a small solidly-built shed, and then climbing up the steeper and fairly dangerous part of the track, finally reached the summit of the highest peak. I said "fairly dangerous," for the last few yards before one reaches the top of the pinnacle are not more than one foot wide, and on both sides is a precipice the end of which one can hardly see. In fact, the performance for those few yards was not unlike tight-rope walking, only at an altitude of about 12,000 feet.

The summit of the highest peak is nothing but a huge barren rock, and on the top, only about ten feet in diameter, the credulous pilgrims have erected a small wooden shrine, some three or four feet square and six feet high. The poor bronze images of Buddha inside it were stuffed with bits of paper, for which purpose a special hole is provided at the base of the image, and on which prayers were written, or else "wishes" that pilgrims were anxious to obtain.

At the elevation on which I stood on Siao-outai-shan, and fortunate enough to have hit on a lovely day, I commanded from there the grandest panorama it has ever been my good fortune to gaze upon. Mountain range after mountain range of huge mountains, blending from warm brownish tints into pure blue, encircled me on the south and south-east side, and close at hand towards the north-east.

Mount Show-ho-ling, 6,582 feet above sea-level, looked a mere toy by the side of his gigantic neighbour.

I made a weak attempt at portraying this scene in oils, and another weaker still at a bird's-eye view of the endless stretch of flat land on the north and north-west side, with, to the naked eye, the hardly perceptible chain of the Huang-yan-shang mountain mass forming a high barrier on its northern border.

I re-descended a short way in order to visit the small temple on the side of a precipice, and to which one can only accede through a few planks suspended over the precipice itself, and which, to all appearance, were neither solid nor safe. However, one does a good many foolish things for curiosity's sake that one would not do otherwise, and I did not like leaving that interesting spot without being able to say that I had seen all that there was to see. I, therefore, walked along the narrow and shaky planks, balancing myself as well as I could; but I must confess that when I had traversed the precipice from one end to another, and felt equal to Blondin for going across Niagara on a wire, my patience was rather put to a test when I discovered that the last plank of this primitive scaffolding had either fallen or been removed, and to reach the platform of the temple a jump of over a yard was necessary. This unexpected acrobatic feat, when you know that if by mistake you missed the platform or slipped you would have a drop of three or four hundred feet before you touched ground again, was rather beyond even my usual amount of foolishness; still, I could not resist the temptation, and I jumped. In the temple there was but little to see, with the exception of long rows of small images of Buddha, similar to the ones in the other shrine, and equally stuffed with "wishes" to be granted. They were the offers of pilgrims, and some were gilt, others of bronze colour.

The jumping from the platform back on to the narrow plank was even a more risky performance than the reverse achievement, but with the precaution of taking my boots off so as not to slip, even this difficulty was surmounted, and to my heart's content I now made progressive strides towards descending the mountain. Both on the northern and southern slopes large patches of ice and snow covered the cavities and sheltered nooks of the lofty peak, but the parts more exposed to the sun were free of either.

No incidents nor accidents marked the descent, and late in the afternoon I was again at the temple at the foot of the mountain. The following morning, much before sunrise, one of the muleteers came to wake me up with the startling news that the bonzes or priests of the temple had just attempted to extort money from him, and that he was commissioned to bring me the following message: "Either I paid the bonzes a sum equivalent of £12 for accommodation in the temple compound, or they would do away with me."

"Tell them 'yes,' " was my answer, "but not till sunrise," and at the same time ordered the muleteer to have everything ready to start with the first rays of light.

There was certainly a great commotion in the temple compound, and as I noiselessly made a hole through my paper window, I could see the shaven bonzes running from one room into another and confabulating among themselves. I loaded the five chambers of my revolver, and kept ready for any emergency. At dawn things were ready to start, and the mules were laden under my supervision, while all the bonzes were standing in front of the main gate, probably to prevent my going through. One of them attempted to shut the gate, but I stopped him, and, setting one of the Frenchmen on guard of it with a rifle, I made mules, muleteers, and baggage leave the compound through the violent remonstrations of the bonzes, who had now become like so many wild beasts.

The usual money due to them for two nights' lodging, I think about thirty shillings, was paid to the chief bonze, and as he seemed to give way to his temper, I set my revolver under his nose, which suddenly changed him and the others into a most affectedly civil lot.

Thus we parted friends! We descended the hillside, and as we were some way down I saw one of the young bonzes come out of the temple compound by a back way, and run towards the village of Tkou-fo-pu, probably to rise the natives against us. As I had thought, when, half an hour later, we entered the village, we were met by a very rowdy crowd, and subjected to all sorts of insults, stones even being fired at us, but we managed to pull through all right, and, retracing our steps whence we had come, arrived at Sheu-men-tzu that same night. From this point I decided to return to Peking by a different route, journeying north-east instead of south-east. We were thirteen hours on our saddles between Sheu-men-tzu and the next halting-place, Fan-chan-pu, but nothing happened of very great interest. We went through a curious gorge past Ouang-kia-yao, lined all along with willow-trees, but neither Tasié-yao, nor Mie-tchan, or Tie-na, appeared to be villages of any great importance. Kiem-tsuen had the advantage of being of a much larger size.

The marshes of Chang-Chui-mo, which we passed on our left, were picturesque with their huge willows growing along their borders. Then came in sight the village rejoicing in the name of Chia-chouei-mo, and last, but not least, the town of Fan-shan-pu. We spent the night at this place.

Still traversing the country from south-west to north-east, and in a pouring rain, we visited the villages of Si-kou-ying, Hao-kwei-ying, and Sang-yein. Here the women, dressed in their best clothes, stood

watching us on the doorsteps, which would have been quite a pretty sight, with their multi-colour jupons and trousers, had the effect not been partly spoiled by the horrible deformity of their feet squeezed into microscopic shoes. I possess a pair of these shoes as worn by a mandarin's wife, and the length of them is only three inches. Towards noon we reached Ya-lo-wan, on the banks of the Hung-ho River, a miserable village on a minuscule hill of yellow earth. The river had to be waded. A Chinaman—a beggar, I thought—volunteered to take animals and men safely across for a sum of money, for he said there were large holes in the river-bed, in which our animals would have lost their footing had we crossed by ourselves. I would not employ him, as I hate to be imposed upon by humbugs; and knowing the little way which these gentlemen have of digging large holes on purpose in the river bed while dry in summer, so as to extort money from timid travellers, I proceeded to "sell" him. I guided my mules not right across the water, for the holes are generally dug where most unaware people are likely to cross, but a few yards farther up, therefore landing every one safely on the other side, with the exception of one donkey, who, in strict similarity with all the evil spirits of China, insisted on going on his own account in a straight line in front of his nose, with the result, that when he reached the middle of the stream, he fell into one of the holes, and with the weight of the load he was carrying, disappeared. Only the point of his ears could be seen wagging out of the water. The holeman, if I may call him so, who had eagerly been watching for this, ran in the water to his rescue and saved his life, for which act I duly rewarded him.

The next halt we made at Houai-lai-shien, a fairly large town, 1,653 feet above sea-level, and intersected by the highway from Peking to Kalgan, and thence to Siberia. A fine stone bridge is to be found just out of one of the gates. Three hours' journey brought us to Yu-ling-pu, and another hour to Paol-chan. Here we came to numerous towers similar to those described of the wall at Tung-an-tzu, but no signs of a wall could be discerned, which joined these towers, though I am of opinion that in all probability even these square structures were in olden days connected by an earthen wall or possibly even a light stone wall. Many of these towers bear the appearance of having been used for fire-signalling. Not far from these we got to the great wall at Cha-tao, where walls and towers are of much larger dimensions than at any other place I have seen in China.

Chatao (1,470 feet above sea-level) is situated on the small semi-circle described by the Great Wall between this and Cha-sau-ku, therefore making the wall double between the two points, and forming a kind of a huge semi-circular enclosed castle. The Great Wall of China, considering the centuries it has been up, must have been

wonderfully well built, for, as yet, it is in marvellous repair, with the exception of the roofs in the towers that have fallen through.

At this place the wall is enormously wide and imposing as it winds up the barren slopes of the nearer hills. The gate at Tziunkuan was built in the third moon of the first year of Tzin-tai, but a more beautiful one is that at Kin-youn-kuan, with its magnificent stone carvings both under the archway and outside.

Here I saw a strange sight. A number of fat pigs that passed on the road were clad in neat little socks, so that their feet should not get sore in walking long distances.

Following the highway, still passing thousands of camels carrying tea to Siberia, with the monotonous sound of their dingling bells, we came upon the Pass of Nankao; and from here, leaving the highway and swinging sharply to the north-east, we directed our steps to Che-san-ling, where we visited the Ming tombs. The one of Yunloh attracted mostly my admiration, and the tumulus of Chang-su-uen, a simple but stately structure in masonry and red lacquer, with a double roof similar to a pagoda. The stone gateway, surmounted by two animals, was also as graceful as it was simple. I must confess that so much had I heard about the avenue of the gigantic stone animals and figures, that I was much disappointed when I saw them. They did not appear to me to be gigantic at all; on the contrary, they seemed to me very small, and some of the animals, like the elephant and the camel, were, I am sure, smaller than life-size.

We made our last halt for the night at Chang-ping-tchu. In the morning, as we left the town, we saw a number of bodies of men who had died of starvation, and from the stench they had apparently been left there some time. Two or three were half-buried under a pile of large stones. We crossed over the bridge on to Chatouen, a very festive place, where, though early in the morning, a diabolical representation, with accompaniment of excruciating music, was taking place in a large out-of-door theatre, and the houses were decorated with paper flowers and lanterns.

As we were going along the river-course it was amusing to watch the skilful way in which, with a small hand-net, the natives capture a tiny kind of fish, said to be excellent to eat.

Drawing nearer the Chinese capital the habitations increased in number, as well as the villages and towns. The dusty roadway was thronged with people, camels, horses, mules, and donkeys, and now and then a palanquin conveyed a high official to or from the East great centre. Coolies, with their huge pointed round hats, were running with heavy loads to and fro, and everything was life and business.

At sunset we entered Peking by the north gate, thus ending my enjoyable outing to the great Siao-outai-shan.