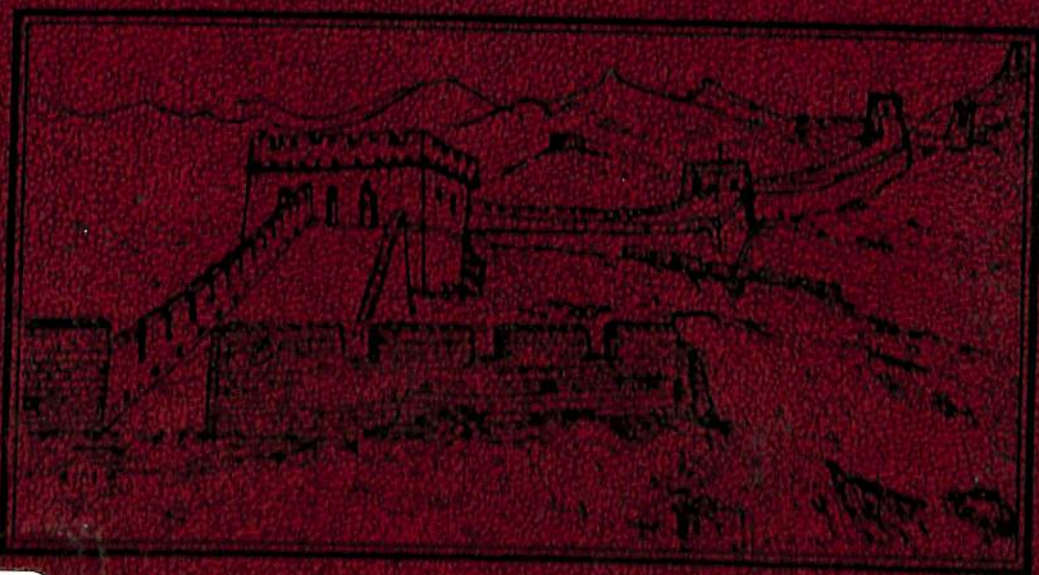


FROM  
PEKIN TO SIKKIM  
COUNT DE LESDAIN

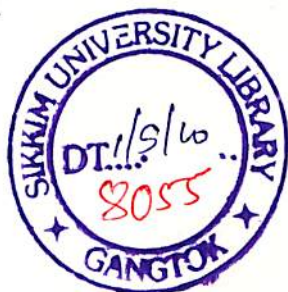


FROM  
**PEKIN TO SIKKIM**

THROUGH THE ORDOS, THE  
GOBI DESERT, AND TIBET

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COUNT DE LESDAIN

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS .....

.....



**ASIAN EDUCATIONAL SERVICES**  
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FROM  
PEKIN TO SIKKIM

THROUGH THE ORDOS, THE  
GOBI DESERT, AND TIBET

BY COUNT DE LESDAIN

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

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TO

J. CLAUDE WHITE, Esq., C.I.E.,  
POLITICAL AGENT IN SIKKIM, BHUTAN, AND TIBET

EN SOUVENIR D'AMITIÉ

## PREFACE

As the sheets of this book are finally passing through the press the author has been unexpectedly called away to South America, and has asked me to write a preface for it.

The journey performed by the Comte and Comtesse de Lesdain was a remarkable one, all the more so from its having been their wedding tour. That a lady of nineteen should have faced and sustained the hardships of travel in a wild and unknown region described in these pages, can hardly fail to arouse a feeling of admiration and surprise in the mind of the reader.

The journey took place in 1904 - 1905, and lasted seventeen months. It "was undertaken to gratify our wish to cross country hitherto unknown, and if possible to increase the geographical knowledge of our day."

Starting from Peking, Count de Lesdain struck west to the Hoang-Ho, in order to explore the little known region of the Ordos Desert, which lies in the almost rectangular bend of that mighty

river. The region is governed by a number of kinglets, forming the Confederation of the Ordos.

Amongst other spots visited in this part of the journey was Edchen Koro, which contains the tomb of Jenghis Khan, so jealously guarded by its custodians that no European has hitherto been able to discover its actual site, much less to see it.

After traversing the districts of Shansi and Kánsu and the Alashan Mountains, the party skirted the Góbi Desert and the Zaidam district crossing a part of the Kuen-lun range into Tibet and then travelled over the Dangla (where they encamped at a height of 19,300 feet), past the Tengri-nor Lake, to the Lhasa high road.

It will be seen that the route taken, generally, lies parallel to that traversed by Captain Younghusband on the North, and that taken by Mr R. F. Johnston on the South, and that touches on many regions which are unknown or scarcely known to Europeans.

JOHN MURRAY

*January, 1908.*

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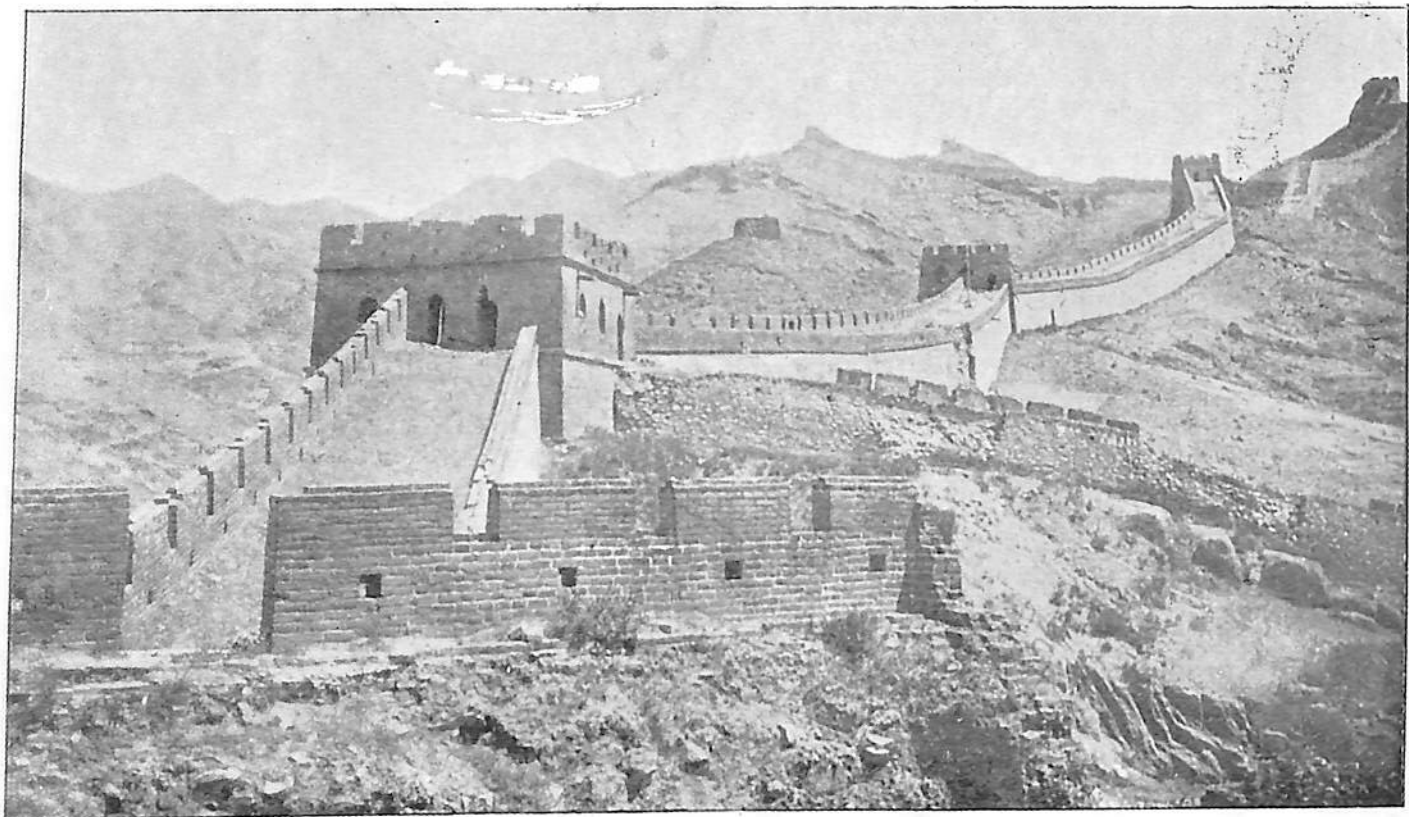


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THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA, NEAR PEKIN.

# FROM PEKIN TO SIKKIM THROUGH GOBI AND TIBET

## CHAPTER I

### FROM PEKIN TO KWEI-HUA-CHENG

ALL departures from Peking are alike. I had left the capital of the Celestial Empire two years before to make a journey of exploration for some months across the north of Shansi and Central Mongolia. There was then the same scene of animation and bustle in the streets and at the main gates, with a touch of colour here and there to relieve the eyes. Peking, one of the dirtiest towns on earth, is usually only worth seeing just after dawn, when the rising sun imparts a look of freshness to all things, or in the evening, when on the occasion of some feast thousands of paper lanterns are lighted on all sides.

On the morning of 20th June 1904 the heat was overpowering. Not a breath of wind stirred the still and heavy air. The road, well known to tourists, which runs to the Tombs of the Mings and the Great Wall, and which also leads to Kalgan, was, at eight o'clock in the morning, already hidden under a dense cloud of dust.

We took with us only three Chinese springless carts at the beginning of this expedition, which were amply sufficient for our baggage. As a long journey lay before us we had had to give up the comforts which can be taken in an expedition lasting for a few weeks, or only two or three months. We had decided to live on the resources of the countries through which we proposed to pass, and a few bottles of champagne, for the due celebration of supreme events, were almost the whole stock of our provisions. In Chinese travel, moreover, one can always obtain beef, mutton, chickens, an occasional duck, eggs, flour, and a sufficient supply of vegetables. The explorer is consequently not to be pitied overmuch. The main point is to have with one a good cook. The cook, whom we had with much difficulty recruited in Peking, was an Annamite. Very clever at his own business, he proved eventually to be a hopeless drunkard. The other servants were a *mafou*, to look after the horses, and some coolies.

I shall not weary the reader with a detailed account of the five days' journey between Peking and Süen-hua-fu. Many authors have described it. For years diplomatists and tea merchants travelling from Europe to Peking have gone by Urga, Kalgan, and Süen-hua-fu. However, I should advise those who use this road hereafter to stop at the little town of Hang-ling-tse. A temple on the top of a comparatively high mountain commands the whole vast plain, and from its stony

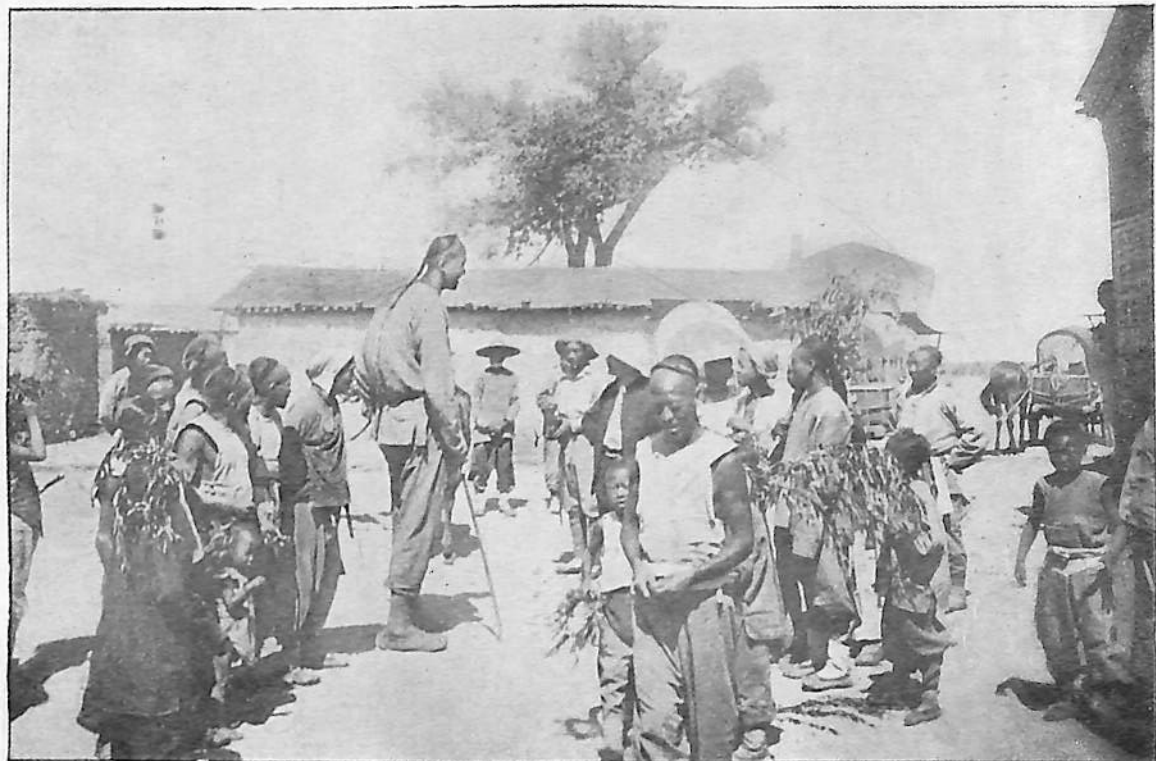
platform one enjoys a magnificent view. In spite of our long day's march we resolved to climb up to it, and with this object sent our men to commandeer donkeys. The temple itself is extremely small, and contains only unimportant statues, but to reach it a wonderful little stony bridge has to be crossed, ornamented with inscriptions and spanning a cleft in the rock. The custodian offered us tea, and refused the small tip which I proffered for his kindness, an experience new to me after Peking. On our way down we stopped for a few minutes at another temple, larger and newer, where forty lamas at prayer made a great noise in the dimness of the chill and lofty hall of worship.

I must not omit to record that the evening before we chanced upon an exhibition worthy of Barnum's circus. In broad noonday our carters, overcome by the heat, had begged for a short rest, and while they lay stretched under the shade of a tree I had made my way towards a group of Chinese peasants at no great distance off. As I approached I saw one of the tallest men conceivable. He was then seated surrounded by a group of laughing and jesting children, but when he saw me he rose, and I could see that he out-topped all present by some two feet in height. I went and fetched my bag of anthropological instruments, and when I returned began to take the measurements of this colossus. But his mother, a wrinkled old lady, intervened. She said she feared that I should cast an evil spell over

her son. The sight of a small ingot of silver, however, successfully calmed her and banished her fears, and I was allowed to proceed with my measurement of her son. His height was fully 8 feet, and a hump detracted from his full measurement in this direction. The circumference of his chest, including the hump, was 58 inches, and the length of his foot 15 inches. Although only twenty-eight years old he had thick white hair, and his whole outward appearance was that of a being whose muscular force and bodily weight were not in proportion.

We reached Suen-hua-fu on the 26th June, and did not stay there long. The town itself has no objects of interest, and the heat had developed in it smells worse than those of Peking itself, and this fact alone was reason enough to hurry on. We had been well received at the *Kon-kuan*, or *yamen*, reserved for Mandarins on tour, but as our arrival was wholly unexpected, we had the pleasure of finding in each of our sleeping rooms beggars, wrapped in noisome rags, who were smoking opium, with the tacit approval of the keepers of the house.

On leaving this prefectoral city, instead of making for Kalgan, we branched off slightly to the left and crossed the river Yung-ting-ho or (Hun-ho), nearly dry at this season, with a bed of enormous extent, and made of fine sand yielding here and there beneath our tread. The country that we now reached, west of the river, has the desolate appearance of a bare plain, in which, however, thanks to



A CHINESE GIANT.

[To face p. 4.]