

BRON

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**EARLY YEARS OF
ADVENTURE
LETTERS &
JOURNALS**

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The Second Asian Journal

THE SECOND ASIAN JOURNEY—SOME EIGHTEEN MONTHS IN duration and well off the tourist track—commenced in the spring of 1928, or not long after Ron’s seventeenth birthday.

In contrast to the first, he traveled alone, or in the company of such extraordinary figures as the last in the line of Royal Magicians from the

court of Kublai Khan and the regional head of Her Majesty’s Secret Service. Also in contrast to the first, he traveled very deep, effectively to the heart of a genuinely startling China. From his intermittent journal, much of it literally penned at sea or on the road, come his notes in the wake of high winds on the China Sea, impressions from Peking and the fabled Great Wall.

By way of a few supplementary notes, let us add the following: he actually reached the China coast after signing aboard a working schooner bound for the Malay Peninsula; hence, the description of a wind-sheared mast in typhoon weather. From the coast, he moved inland by military transport with a rail pass secured from a nameless American quartermaster. If his notes on local tourist attractions strike us as somewhat caustic, we must understand what China suffered for

those monuments to royal frivolity. Then, too, this was all the China the typical tourist ever saw and he felt it a pity.

His notes from beyond the “rubberneck stations” are likewise significant. Those left to die from exposure on the platforms, for example, were most probably from Nationalist

Below
Longevity Hill
and Kunming
Lake Monument,
Summer Palace,
Peking, 1928;
photograph by
L. Ron Hubbard



Left Memorial Arch, Summer Palace, Peking, 1928;
photograph by L. Ron Hubbard

Below
Mariana Maru,
off Guam, 1928;
photograph by
L. Ron Hubbard

regiments then at war with both Soviet-backed Communists and Japanese-backed warlords. In reference to the Communists comes his very pointed observation regarding the principal target of Communist propaganda, i.e., the coolie who wishes only a full belly “that he may sleep comfortably all night.” In reference to collaborating warlords comes his comment regarding Chang-Tso-Lin, blown

to bits in a railway carriage when his Japanese masters no longer found him useful. Chen Shek is, of course, Chiang Kai-shek, eventual rival of Communist demagogue Mao Zedong and myopic leader of the Kuomintang or Nationalist contingent. LRH references to Japanese brutality are also well taken—and all the more so, given what China would further endure through the Second World War. ■



May 30, At Sea.

Talk about luck! Last night, we had a decided falling off of the barometer. About midnight, just as I went on watch, the typhoon broke. Powerless to do anything, we all held on while the old boat sunfished.

All we could do was hold on because we were rolling 45°.

Water boiled in the scuppers, threw itself over the bow. All ports were battened down as were the hatches.

An hour after the thing started, we heard, between the intermittent screams of the wind through the tortured rigging, a resounding crackle and then a heavy bump on the deck.

The typhoon played with us until three o'clock before the torrents of driving rain became less. Then the wind began to abate.

At dawn, the world was warm and radiant. Light fleecy cirrus clouds scudded on the horizon. The sea was like glass.

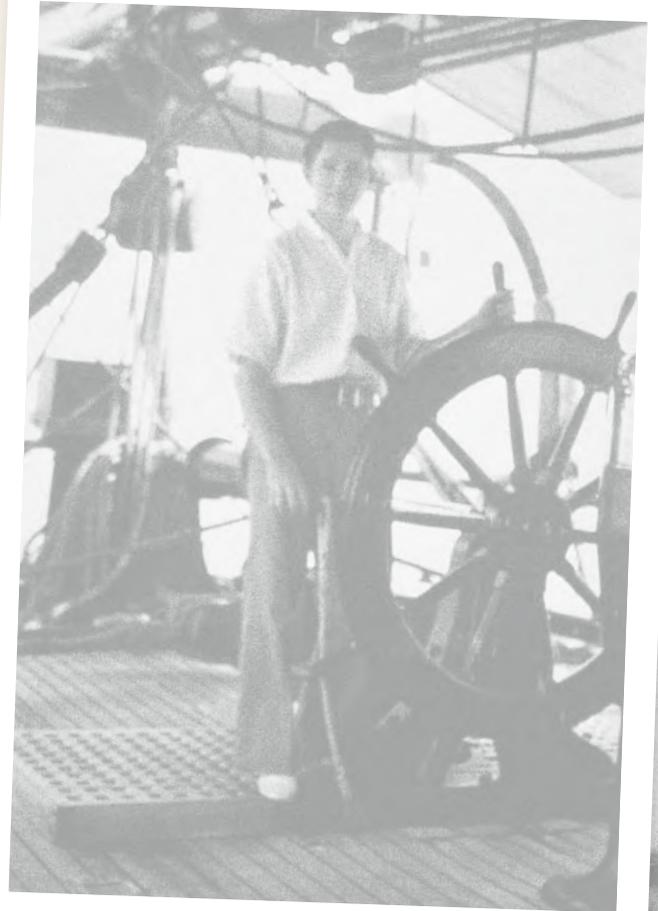
But My God! The upper mast was gone, water buckets were scattered on the deck, the radio antenna and its auxiliary trailed over the side into the blue water, wire lay over everything.

3:30 o'clock.

We're 2 hours and a half late because of the typhoon but that same typhoon demands that we turn out all hands and work for about 4 days on this mess.

The only work which Ed, Ray and I will have to do will take an hour. We have to swing the aerial after the masts are put in order. It's a snap.

We are packing up now to take up our residence in the native hotel ashore. It will be sport indeed.



En route to China aboard the *Mariana Maru*, a 116-ton working schooner

Nov. 11, 1928

At Sea.

I have just returned from Peking, the civil center of old China.

The train service is pretty awful as troops commandeer them so often and their supply of rolling stock is practically nil.

Before the soldiers of Chang-Tso-Lin retreated from Peking, the service was fairly good from Tsingtao to Peking by rail, but now, the soldiers retreating from Tsinan (gee-nan) have blown up a section of a bridge on that line and the service now runs from Taku Bar through Tientsin to Peking, a distance of 185 K. which usually takes at least 16 hours.

Peking itself is fairly interesting though it duplicates itself innumerable times.

At this time of year Peking is very chilly and dust is commencing to settle thickly over everything. The winters there are very dry and cold with little snow but a great deal of ice.

The American people there are few but with the members of other consuls, the white population is decidedly greater than Guam. Gossip is snatched upon and enlarged and "fast" though they are, they love to shock themselves with the supposed depredations of someone else.



"Sept. 1928: picture of party at Dowager Empress of China's Marble Boat on lake in front of Summer Palace outside Peking, China. Among the individuals were Lt. H. R. Hubbard, Mrs. H. R. Hubbard, son L. R. Hubbard, Chief Nurse USN Hannah Workman, rickshaw coolie 'Happy,' etc."—LRH

The rubberneck stations of the tourists are:

(1) The Lama Temple

The temples number 16 inner buildings, all very much on the same order. One contains a "God" 75 feet high and carved out of one solitary cypress tree.

The people worshipping beat a drum and play a bass horn to accompany their singing. The entire place was miserably cold and very shabby. (This temple closed by order nat'l gov't. on Nov 9, 1928.) The western hills are filled with these very same temples.

(2) The Summer Palace

A decaying witness to frivolity. \$50,000,000 were given the Empress Dowager by the people to construct a Chinese navy. Evidently in those days, to be honest was to be dishonorable for the Empress immediately drew up plans for a palace which was built about ten miles outside the city of Peking and named the "Summer Palace." To build it she used the money donated to build a navy. When it was finished, she had about \$5,000,000 left. She used this to construct a marble ship which now floats (to all supposition) on the surface of a lake in the Palace grounds.

Now the fact of the matter is, that temple or palace was never worth over \$5,000,000 all furnished with guards hired and servants paid. \$5,000,000 would have been about \$4,000,000 too much. The boat, a haywire contraption, with stone rudders and side wheels and capstan, never cost over \$5,000 all furnished. (It is now used as a tea pavilion.) What happened to the rest of the money? She fooled the taxpayers and then fooled her courtiers and put the rest of the money in her jeans.

The palace is very spacious but very cheap as to workmanship. It has been pretty well looted by the Japanese and it is now unkempt and forlorn. It outlasted its mistress a bare 20 years.

(3) Temple of Heaven

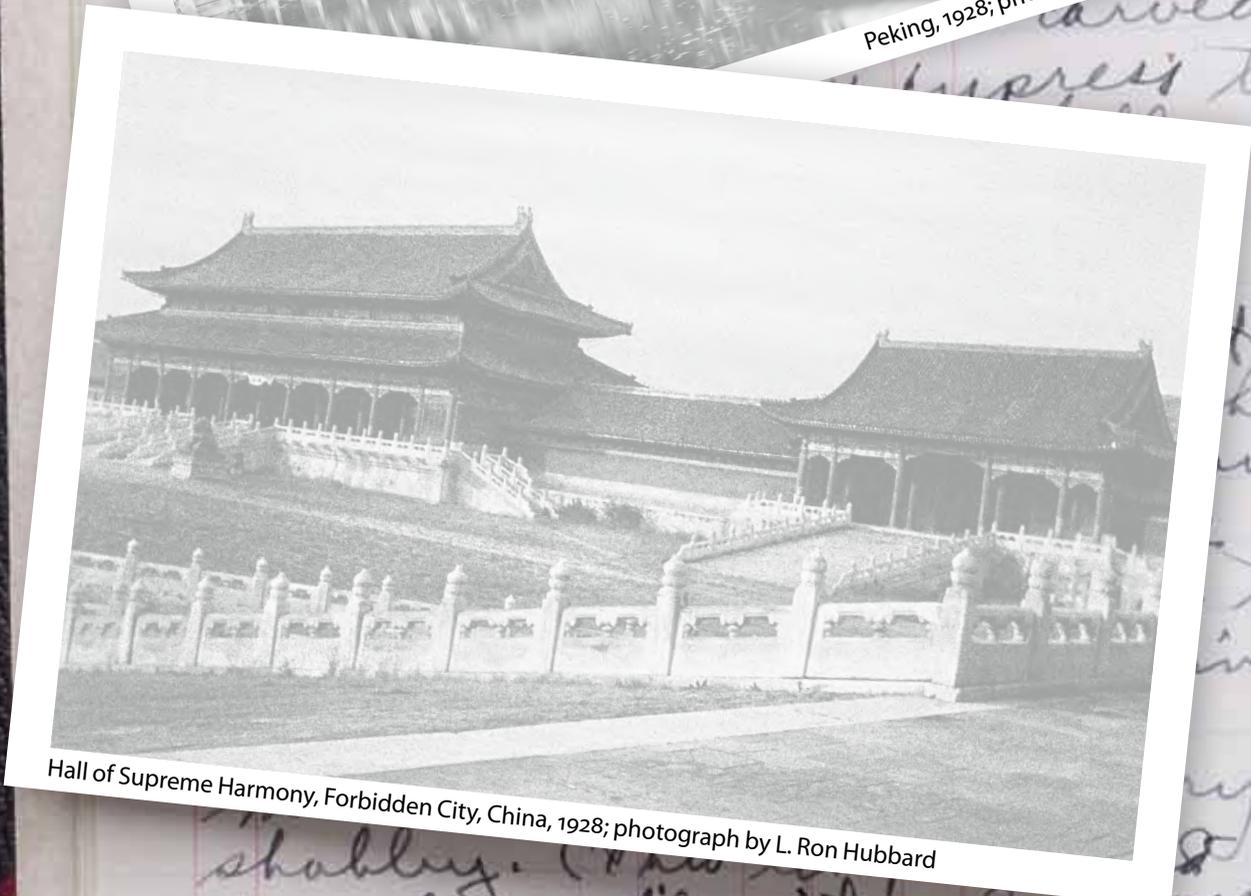
A series of smaller temples denoting the progress of man after death. Very gaudy and more or less crudely done.

(4) The Forbidden City

There are four parts to this. One is the old royal court which is a series of buildings increasing in importance as they decrease in size. These were the reception places of generals when they came to see the Emperor every morning. Three of them are the residence places of royalty. They appear to have been very stiff and uncomfortable.



Peking, 1928; photograph by L. Ron Hubbard



Hall of Supreme Harmony, Forbidden City, China, 1928; photograph by L. Ron Hubbard

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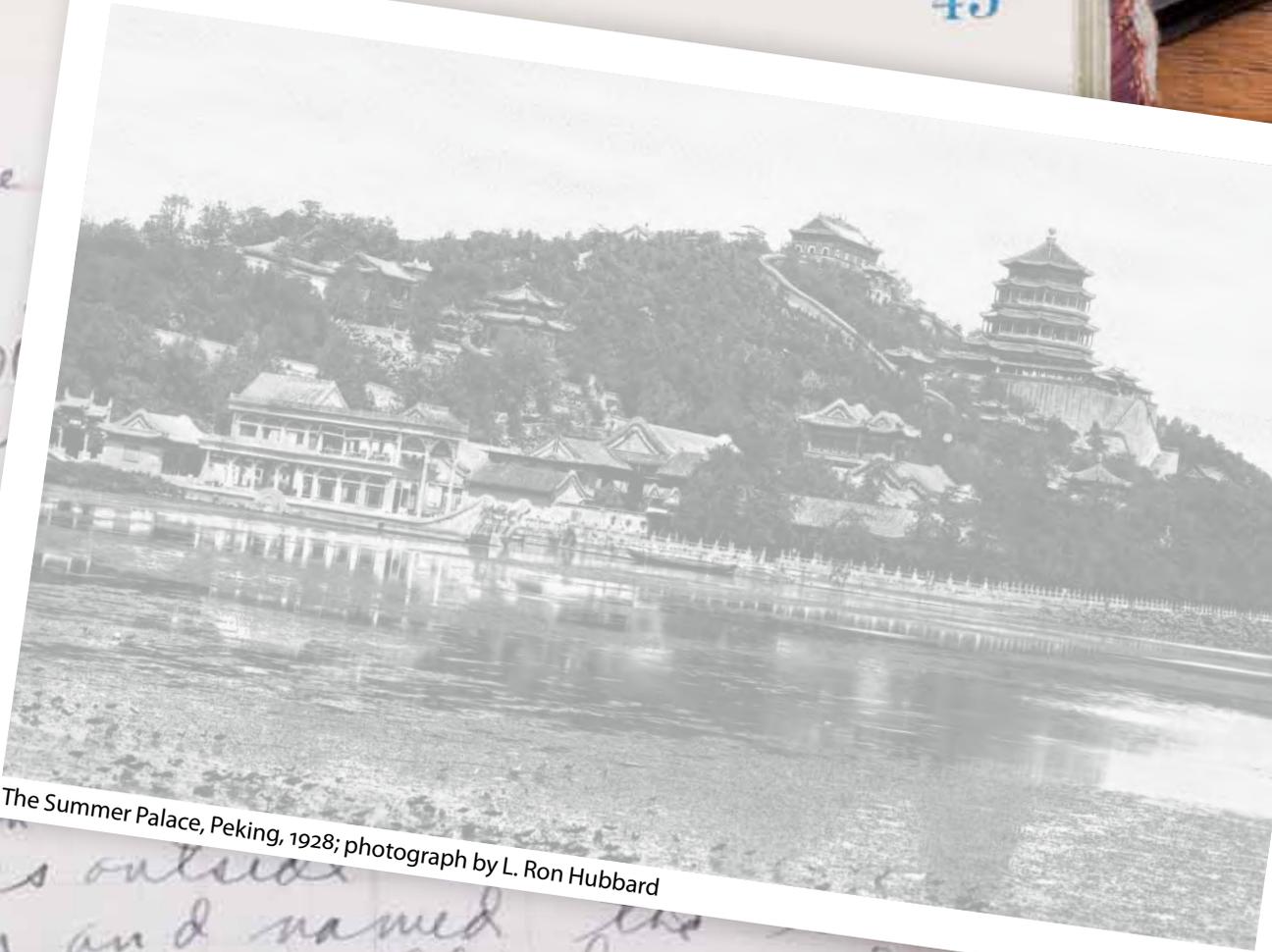
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The Summer Palace, Peking, 1928; photograph by L. Ron Hubbard



Entrance to the Forbidden City;
photograph by L. Ron Hubbard

Another part is the residence of the young imprisoned Emperor who was considered a menace to the Republic. The young man is now living with the Japanese at Tientsin. He is 21 years of age. His quarters in Peking were very trashy looking though they must have cost a great deal. They were infested with clocks. Every series of buildings had a couple dozen clocks within. The young Emperor took a wife in 1925 and they still share their exile.

The other two parts are not worth mentioning as they are merely more quarters of the royalty.

(5) The Winter Palace

This is not much of a palace in my estimation but the grounds are marvelous though now unkempt.

(6) The Great Wall of China

The only work of man's hand visible from Mars. Come on all of you mountaineers and put on all of your cliff climbing equipment if you want to see the wall.

This wall is very hard to reach. The railroad goes through Nan-k'ou Pass (a most marvelous railroad) and the wall extends both ways from the track to an enormous height. The wall here is 2,600 feet above sea level.

The description is somewhat misleading because it speaks of the walk to the top as being 15 minutes in length. It is an hour's hard climb to the place I went.

(7) Confucius Temple

This is more commonly known as the "Hall of Classics." It is a forest of great stone slabs which are erected in commemoration of those men who passed the examination on the "Book of Confucius" which contains 800,000 phrases, all of which were memorized by a student.

There is a throne in the central building in which the Emperor crowned was made to study. He had a different garb for every motion of his hands it seems.



"The average coolie does not even know who is hiring the soldiers who make him behave"—LRH;
photograph by L. Ron Hubbard

All these stone slabs are placed on the backs of stone turtles and other worshiped denizens of the animal world, as in the “Lama Temple” a great wooden hippopotamus stood ready to snap at trespassers.

All these places were surrounded by supposedly insurmountable walls and wide, deep moats, besides inner walls and moats. I overheard a remark to the effect that “all these kings were sure afraid of their necks.”

But the grandeur of China and even the smoothness of government has departed with the emperors. Then they had unrest, it is true, but to offset it they had peace. Now they have both unrest and war. The average coolie does not know what it is all about anyway. He does not even know who is hiring the soldiers who make him behave.

I saw and admired the “Rockefeller Foundation” in Peking. It is grandly built and painted in intricate designs. But according to the residents of Peking, Rockefeller was foolish to spend \$10,000,000 on such an institution. According to them, he is cutting off the only safety valves China has for her ever increasing population; i.e.: disease, sickness, and flood menace.

Even the great general “Chen Shek” has one idea that cannot be dislodged but his methods are wrong and he cannot get far enough away from his three principles to change his methods. He is having his thoughts done in blue all over the Imperial red walls of Peking. But the average coolie knows not what the characters say nor does he care. He is too interested in getting his belly full that he may sleep comfortably all night.

The very nature of the Chinaman holds him back. If his fellow should fall, John thinks it quite proper that he stamp on the underdog’s face.

On a battlefield, after a battle and the retreating force has left its dead unburied and its wounded to be captured, the opposing army goes among the fallen with a free bayonet and finishes up friend and foe alike. Those that are unfortunate enough to have a rifle burst in their hands or to stop a bullet are shipped away and dumped upon a railway platform to die of their wounds or cold and starvation.



“The smoothness of government has departed with the emperors. Now they have both unrest and war.”—LRH; photograph by L. Ron Hubbard



Peking camels, 1928: “A very mean breed but they resist cold”—LRH; photograph by L. Ron Hubbard

Even the Japanese are monsters as, during the Tsinan affair, the Japanese caught the Chinese Minister to Japan and cut off his nose and ears and then killed him. I had not expected such barbarism of the Japanese. And then too it was the Japanese who dynamited Chang-Tso-Lin's train.

Peking is not a very pleasant place to live. Every year about October, their winter sets in and remains seated until May, without any moisture at all. The dust becomes ankle deep in the roads and gets into everything. It causes a "Peking sore throat" which lasts all winter. It becomes very cold and skating is the order of the day. Every one of the legations has a private rink; all the tennis courts are transformed into ice ponds.

I believe that the most startling thing one can see in Northern China is the number of camels. These are of a very mean breed but they resist cold and carry burdens which is all the Chinaman requires of them. Everyday in Peking one can see many caravans in the streets. They have a very stately shamble. They carry their head high; their mean mouths wagging and their humps lolling from side to side. All my life I have associated camels with Arabs and it strikes a discordant note within me to see the beasts shepherded by Chinamen. *for*



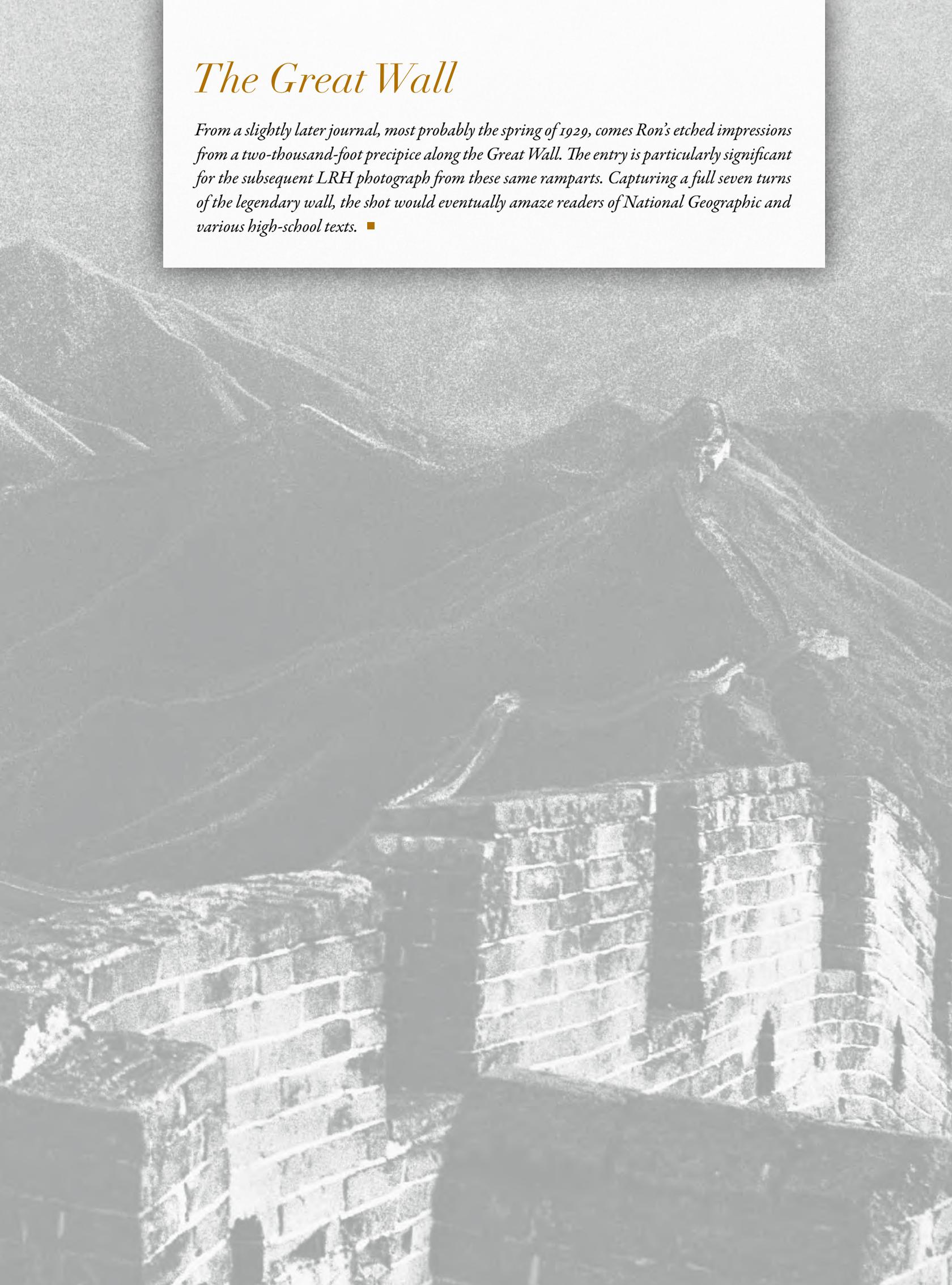
Left Helmet from Ron's collection of Chinese artifacts

Right Mariana Maru sails into the sunset, 1928; photograph by L. Ron Hubbard



The Great Wall

From a slightly later journal, most probably the spring of 1929, comes Ron's etched impressions from a two-thousand-foot precipice along the Great Wall. The entry is particularly significant for the subsequent LRH photograph from these same ramparts. Capturing a full seven turns of the legendary wall, the shot would eventually amaze readers of National Geographic and various high-school texts. ■





The plains of Mongolia stretch bleakly, forbidding, yet beckoning, backed again and again by the Great Wall. Granite mountains turn their craven faces to the grey sky and the wind-god chaps their cheeks with icy blasts. The ages past, there stand to await oblivion which never comes. Nothing but thorns and breeding nothing but dust, reminisces the men who have trod before never to trod again.

Far from the sacrilegious bustle of Peking, out of earshot, and eyeshot too, of civilization, I slipped a cautious hand about the watchtower's window and with a last strain of muscle, lifted my body through, to gasp at the proximity of the world's end. The rest of the blockhouse was not there. Dripping from every pore, I curled myself on the broad, lofty ledge and closed my swimming eyes.

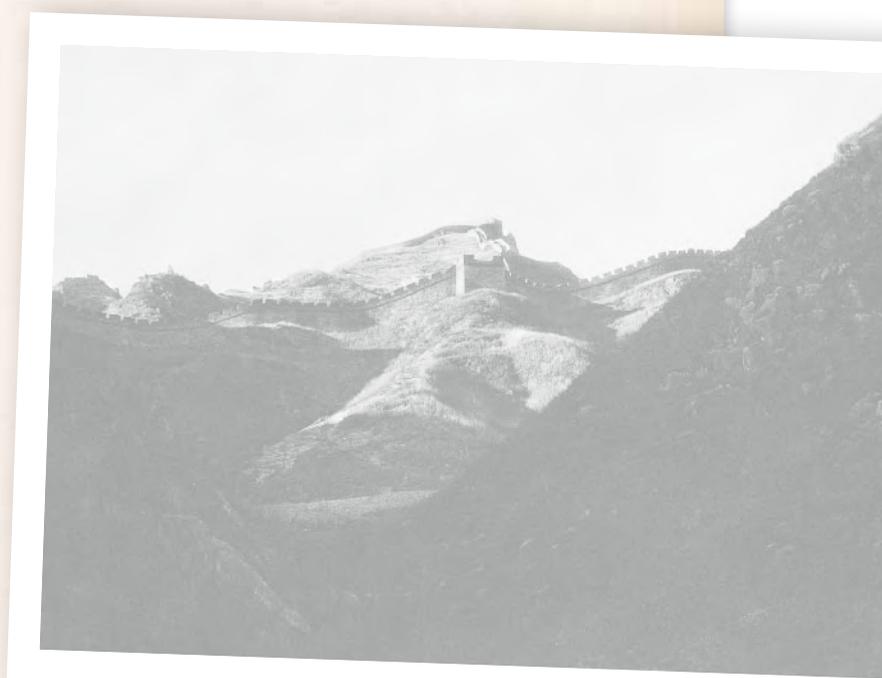
I had climbed for a long, long time over the sharp granite rock chips, which tore my futile shoes to threads. I had burst through tawny thorn trees, onward and upward from Nan-k'ou. The Great Wall was everywhere, but for me, there was only the highest pinnacle.

I opened my eyes and viewed my conquest. The Wall straggled miles before me, broken in places, cut here and there by the sandstorms.

Twisting and turning, even writhing, in the distance, keeping alive the memory of China's glorious past.

The wind whipped through my hair and stung my cheeks with its bitter breath. It shrieked about the lonely tower, screamed to frighten me away from its playthings, the Wall, the mountains and the thorns. And I laughed to match its wildness and opened my blue shirt at the throat to flaunt the wind-god and ridicule his power.

But the laugh died presently, the wall was too stern and frowning. *for*



"The Wall straggled miles before me, broken in places, cut here and there by the sandstorms"—LRH; photograph by L. Ron Hubbard