

# *Across China on Foot*

*Across China on Foot*

EDWIN JOHN DINGLE



Rockville, Maryland  
2007

*Across China on Foot* by Edwin John Dingle copyright © in its current format by Arc Manor 2007. This book, in whole or in part, may not be copied or reproduced in its current format by any means, electronic, mechanical or otherwise without the permission of the publisher. Cover art copyright © Arc Manor. Originally published in 1911.

The original text has been reformatted for clarity and to fit this edition.

Arc Manor, Arc Manor Classic Reprints, Manor Classics, and the Arc Manor logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Arc Manor Publishers, Rockville, Maryland. All other trademarks are properties of their respective owners.

This book is presented as is, without any warranties (implied or otherwise) as to the accuracy of the production, text or translation. The publisher does not take responsibility for any typesetting, formatting, translation or other errors which may have occurred during the production of this book.

ISBN: 978-0-9794154-5-6

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Dingle, Edwin John.

[Borderlands of eternity]

Across China on foot / by Edwin John Dingle.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-9794154-5-6 (alk. paper)

1. China--Description and travel. 2. Vietnam--Description and travel. I. Title.

DS710.D62 2007

915.104'35092--dc22

[B]

2007022846

## IN GRATEFUL ESTEEM

During my travels in interior China I once lay at the point of death. For their unremitting kindness during a long illness, I now affectionately inscribe this volume to my friends, Mr. and Mrs. A. Evans, of Tong-Ch'uan-Fu, Yuen-Nan, South West China, to whose devoted nursing and untiring care I owe my life.

Published by Arc Manor  
P. O. Box 10339  
Rockville, MD 20849-0339  
www.ArcManor.com

Printed in the United States of America

# Contents

AUTHOR'S NOTE	9
<b>BOOK I</b>	<b>13</b>
INTRODUCTORY	15
FIRST JOURNEY: FROM SHANGHAI UP THE LOWER YANGTZE TO ICHANG	
CHAPTER I	21
SECOND JOURNEY: ICHANG TO CHUNG-KING, THROUGH THE YANGTZE GORGES	
CHAPTER II	29
CHAPTER III—THE YANGTZE RAPIDS	37
CHAPTER IV	41
THIRD JOURNEY: CHUNG-KING TO SUI-FU (VIA LUCHOW)	
CHAPTER V	49
CHAPTER VI	59
FOURTH JOURNEY: SUI-FU TO CHAO-T'ONG-FU (VIA LAO-WA-T'AN)	
CHAPTER VII	71
CHAPTER VIII	81
CHAPTER IX—THE CHAO-T'ONG REBELLION OF 1910	91
CHAPTER X—THE TRIBES OF NORTH-EAST YUEN-NAN, AND MISSION WORK AMONG THEM	101
FIFTH JOURNEY: CHAO-T'ONG-FU TO TONG-CH'UAN-FU	
CHAPTER XI.	119
CHAPTER XII	129

<b>BOOK II</b>	137
FIRST JOURNEY: TONG-CH'UAN-FU TO THE CAPITAL	
CHAPTER XIII	139
CHAPTER XIV—YUEN-NAN-FU, THE CAPITAL	153
SECOND JOURNEY: YUEN-NAN-FU TO TALI-FU (VIA CH'U-HSIONG-FU)	
CHAPTER XV	165
CHAPTER XVI	177
CHAPTER XVII	187
CHAPTER XVIII	197
CHAPTER XIX	211
THIRD JOURNEY: TALI-FU TO THE MEKONG VALLEY	
CHAPTER XX	221
CHAPTER XXI	229
FOURTH JOURNEY: THE MEKONG VALLEY TO TENGYUEH	
CHAPTER XXII	239
CHAPTER XXIII	251
CHAPTER XXIV—THE LI-SU TRIBE OF THE SALWEN VALLEY	259
FIFTH JOURNEY: TENGYUEH (MOMIEN) TO BHAMO IN UPPER BURMA	
CHAPTER XXV	263
CHAPTER XXVI	269

## *Author's Note*

To travel in China is easy. To walk across China, over roads acknowledgedly worse than are met with in any civilized country in the two hemispheres, and having accommodation unequalled for crudeness and insanitation, is not easy. In deciding to travel in China, I determined to cross overland from the head of the Yangtze Gorges to British Burma on foot; and, although the strain nearly cost me my life, no conveyance was used in any part of my journey other than at two points described in the course of the narrative. For several days during my travels I lay at the point of death. The arduousness of constant mountaineering—for such is ordinary travel in most parts of Western China—laid the foundation of a long illness, rendering it impossible for me to continue my walking, and as a consequence I resided in the interior of China during a period of convalescence of several months duration, at the end of which I continued my cross-country tramp. Subsequently I returned into Yuen-nan from Burma, lived again in Tong-ch'uan-fu and Chao-t'ong-fu, and traveled in the wilds

of the surrounding country. Whilst traveling I lived on Chinese food, and in the Miao country, where rice could not be got, subsisted for many days on maize only.

My sole object in going to China was a personal desire to see China from the inside. My trip was undertaken for no other purpose. I carried no instruments (with the exception of an aneroid), and did not even make a single survey of the untrodden country through which I occasionally passed. So far as I know, I am the only traveler, apart from members of the missionary community, who has ever resided far away in the interior of the Celestial Empire for so long a time.

Most of the manuscript for this book was written as I went along—a good deal of it actually by the roadside in rural China. When my journey was completed, the following news paragraph in the North China Daily News (of Shanghai) was brought to my notice:—

“All the Legations (at Peking) have received anonymous letters from alleged revolutionaries in Shanghai, containing the warning that an extensive anti-dynastic uprising is imminent. If they do not assist the Manchus, foreigners will not be harmed; otherwise, they will be destroyed in a general massacre.

“The missives were delivered mysteriously, bearing obliterated post-marks.

“In view of the recent similar warnings received by the Consuls, uneasiness has been created.”

The above appeared in the journal quoted on June 3rd, 1910. The reader, in perusing my previously written remarks on the spirit of reform and how far it has penetrated into the innermost corners of the empire, should bear this paragraph in mind, for there is more Boxerism and unrest in China than we know of. My account of the Hankow riots of January, 1911, through which I myself went, will, with my experience of rebellions in Yuen-nan, justify my assertion.

I should like to thank all those missionaries who entertained me as I proceeded through China, especially Mr. John Graham and Mr. C.A. Fleischmann, of the China Inland Mission, who transacted a good deal of business for me and took all trouble uncomplainingly. I am also indebted to Dr. Clark, of Tali-fu, and to the Revs. H. Parsons and S. Pollard, for several photographs<sup>1</sup> illustrating that section of this book dealing with the tribes of Yuen-nan.

---

<sup>1</sup> The photographs were included in the original hardcover edition of the book but are not included in this edition —publisher

I wish to express my acknowledgments to several well-known writers on far Eastern topics, notably to Dr. G.E. Morrison, of Peking, the Rev. Sidney L. Hulick, M.A., D.D., and Mr. H.B. Morse, whose works are quoted. Much information was also gleaned from other sources.

My thanks are due also to Mr. W. Brayton Slater and to my brother, Mr. W.R. Dingle, for their kindness in having negotiated with my publishers in my absence in Inland China; and to the latter, for unfailing courtesy and patience, I am under considerable obligation. “Across China on Foot” would have appeared in the autumn of 1910 had the printers’ proofs, which were several times sent to me to different addresses in China, but which dodged me repeatedly, come sooner to hand.

*Edwin Dingle*

HANKOW, HUPEH,  
CHINA.

# Book I

## Introductory

*The scheme. Why I am walking across Interior China. Leaving Singapore. Ignorance of life and travel in China. The "China for the Chinese" cry. The New China and the determination of the Government. The voice of the people. The province of Yuen-nan and the forward movement. A prophecy. Impressions of Saigon. Comparison of French and English methods. At Hong-Kong. Cold sail up the Whang-poo. Disembarkation. Foreign population of Shanghai. Congestion in the city. Wonderful Shanghai.*

**T**hrough China from end to end. From Shanghai, 1,500 miles by river and 1,600 miles walking overland, from the greatest port of the Chinese Empire to the frontier of British Burma.

That is my scheme.



I am a journalist, one of the army of the hard-worked who go down early to the Valley. I state this because I would that the truth be told; for whilst engaged in the project with which this book has mainly to deal I was subjected to peculiar designations, such as "explorer" and other newspaper extravagances, and it were well, perhaps, for my reader to know once for all that the writer is merely a newspaper man, at the time on holiday.

The rather extreme idea of walking across this Flowery Land came to me early in the year 1909, although for many years I had cherished the hope of seeing Interior China ere modernity had robbed her and her wonderful



people of their isolation and antediluvianism, and ever since childhood my interest in China has always been considerable. A little prior to the Chinese New Year, a friend of mine dined with me at my rooms in Singapore, in the Straits Settlements, and the conversation about China resulted in our decision then and there to travel through the Empire on holiday. He, because at the time he had little else to do; the author, because he thought that a few months' travel in mid-China would, from a journalistic standpoint, be passed profitably, the intention being to arrive home in dear old England late in the summer of the same year.

We agreed to cross China on foot, and accordingly on February 22, 1909, just as the sun was sinking over the beautiful harbor of Singapore—that most valuable strategic Gate of the Far East, where Crown Colonial administration, however, is allowed by a lethargic British Government to become more and more bungled every year—we settled down on board the French mail steamer *Nera*, bound for Shanghai. My friends, good fellows, in reluctantly speeding me on my way, prophesied that this would prove to be my last long voyage to a last long rest, that the Chinese would never allow me to come out of China alive. Such is the ignorance of the average man concerning the conditions of life and travel in the interior of this Land of Night.

Here, then, was I on my way to that land towards which all the world was straining its eyes, whose nation, above all nations of the earth, was altering for better things, and coming out of its historic shell. "Reform, reform, reform," was the echo, and I myself was on the way to hear it.

At the time I started for China the cry of "China for the Chinese" was heard in all countries, among all peoples. Statesmen were startled by it, editors wrote the phrase to death, magazines were filled with copy—good, bad and indifferent—mostly written, be it said, by men whose knowledge of the question was by no means complete: editorial opinion, and contradiction of that opinion, were printed side by side in journals having a good name. To one who endeavored actually to understand what was being done, and whither these broad tendencies and strange cravings of the Chinese were leading a people who formerly were so indifferent to progress, it seemed essential that he should go to the country, and there on the spot make a study of the problem.

Was the reform, if genuine at all, universal in China? Did it reach to the ends of the Empire?

That a New China had come into being, and was working astounding results in the enlightened provinces above the Yangtze and those connected with the capital by railway, was common knowledge; but one found it hard

to believe that the west and the south-west of the empire were moved by the same spirit of Europeanism, and it will be seen that China in the west moves, if at all, but at a snail's pace: the second part of this volume deals with that portion of the subject.

And it may be that the New China, as we know it in the more forward spheres of activity, will only take her proper place in the family of nations after fresh upheavals. Rivers of blood may yet have to flow as a sickening libation to the gods who have guided the nation for forty centuries before she will be able to attain her ambition of standing line to line with the other powers of the eastern and western worlds. But it seems that no matter what the cost, no matter what she may have to suffer financially and nationally, no matter how great the obstinacy of the people towards the reform movement, the change is coming, has already come with alarming rapidity, and has come to stay. China is changing—let so much be granted; and although the movement may be hampered by a thousand general difficulties, presented by the ancient civilization of a people whose customs and manners and ideas have stood the test of time since the days contemporary with those of Solomon, and at one time bade fair to test eternity, the Government cry of "China for the Chinese" is going to win. Chinese civilization has for ages been allowed to get into a very bad state of repair, and official corruption and deceit have prevented the Government from making an effectual move towards present-day aims; but that she is now making an honest endeavor to rectify her faults in the face of tremendous odds must, so it appears to the writer, be apparent to all beholders. That is the Government view-point. It is important to note this.

In China, however, the Government is not the people. It never has been. It is not to be expected that great political and social reforms can be introduced into such an enormous country as China, and among her four hundred and thirty millions of people, merely by the issue of a few imperial edicts. The masses have to be convinced that any given thing is for the public good before they accept, despite the proclamations, and in thus convincing her own people China has yet to go through the fire of a terrible ordeal. Especially will this be seen in the second part of this volume, where in Yuen-nan there are huge areas absolutely untouched by the forward movement, and where the people are living the same life of disease, distress and dirt, of official, social, and moral degradation as they lived when the Westerner remained still in the primeval forest stage. But despite the scepticism and the cynicism of certain writers, whose pessimism is due to a lack of foresight, and despite the fact that she is being