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Archibald John Little
Frontmatter
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Across Yunnan

Published posthumously in 1910, Archibald Little's memoir of his journey across the Yunnan Province in Southwest China was one of the first comprehensive accounts of the region to be published in English. Little, a skilled linguist, worked as a merchant in China for over fifty years and opened up the Upper Yangtze area to steam-powered commerce. He was well known for his intrepid travels into territories not yet explored by Westerners, and his record of this journey was originally published as a series of letters to the *North China Herald*. This book also contains Little's account of the building of the French Railway Line to Yunnan-Fu, which provided a trade route from India to the Upper Yangtze region. *Across Yunnan* was completed and edited by Little's wife after his death in 1908. The book includes a detailed map of the area and several photographs.

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Across Yunnan

A Journey of Surprises

ARCHIBALD JOHN LITTLE
EDITED BY ALICIA LITTLE



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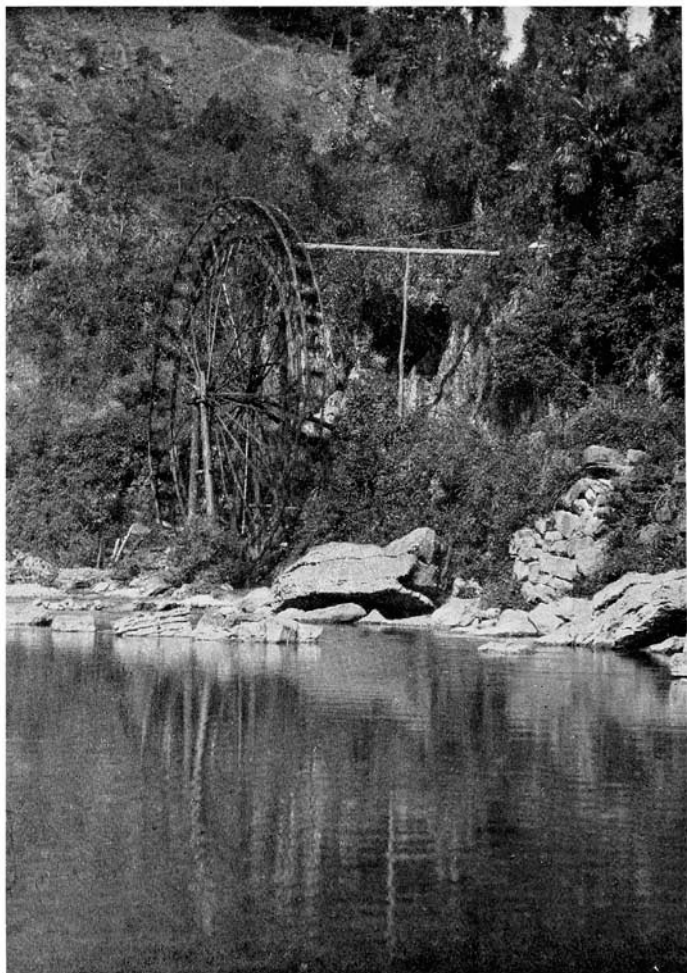
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Irrigating Wheel.

By Mr. Davidson.

Frontispiece.

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ACROSS YUNNAN:

A Journey of Surprises

Including an Account of the
Remarkable French Railway Line
now completed to Yunnan-fu

BY
ARCHIBALD LITTLE

AUTHOR OF

"THROUGH THE YANGTSE GORGES"
"TO MOUNT OMI AND BEYOND"
"THE FAR EAST"

EDITED BY
MRS. ARCHIBALD LITTLE

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS AND MAP

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EDITORIAL NOTE

ORIGINALLY written as letters to the *North China Herald*, of which my husband's brother, R. W. Little, was then the Editor, and now for the first time published in England by the kind permission of the present Editor, this volume lacks the final corrections of the author; although in Shanghai he wrote the introduction here given. Before publishing it in book form he wished, I think, to add to it and somewhat to remodel it. But the time for that never came.

Now, however, that the French have so far completed their railway from Hanoi to Yunnan-fu, that it is to be officially opened on April 1st, 1910, I have done my very imperfect best to revise the volume, as I think my husband would have wished, and to bring it out also in April as a tribute to that French enterprise on which he touches so often with warm admiration in these pages. Had he lived, I know what valuable additions they would have gained from his richly-stored memory and original tone of thought; whereas I could but diminish the value of what he has written by additions. Regarded as his freshly-written impressions of our last travel together in China, the following pages will, I hope, convey to the reader something of his intense enjoyment at the time.

I must acknowledge the kindness of Major H. R. Davies in allowing use to be made of a portion of the valuable map at the end of his "Yunnan, the link between India and the Yang-tse" (Cambridge University Press), in place of the rough outline map sketched at the time by the Author, as also of Major L. Fraser's help in the matter.

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ITINERARY

LAND ROUTE FROM SUI-FU TO YUNNAN-FU

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Sui-fu to Szechuan Border	60	4
Szechuan Border to Lao-wa-t'an..	20	2
Lao-wa-t'an to Chao-tung	132	6
Chao-tung to Tung-chuan	107	5
Tung-chuan to Yunnan-seng ..	152	7
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YUNNAN-FU TO HONGKONG

Land journey from Yunnan-fu to Mêng-tse, via the Y-liang defile and the Chen-kiang lake, 720 li, say	215	12
Land journey from Mêng-tse to Man-hao, 130 li, say	39	2
Man-hao to Lao-kai, by Red River..	70	1
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<i>N.B.</i> —The distance by the new direct alignment from Yunnan-fu to Lao-kai is 448.2 kilometers = miles 280.	319	15
Lao-kai to Yen-bay by Red River ..	91	1
Yen-bay to Hanoi do.	115	1
Hanoi to Haiphong by rail	62	1
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<i>N.B.</i> —The distance by the railway direct from Lao-kai to Haiphong will be 395 kilometers = miles 247.	268	3
Haiphong to Hongkong, via Pak-hoi, Hoi-how, and Kwang-chow- wan, by sea	580	4
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	1,167	22

INTRODUCTION

Yunnan is situated in the S.W. corner of the Chinese Empire proper and is a mountain-covered plateau,—not a simple tableland or “Hochebene,” as is the Mongolian plateau in greater part. It averages 5,000 feet above the sea-level in the actual and dried-up lake basins that yield a limited level area between the mountains, and 8 to 10,000 feet in its innumerable mountain crests; whereby is indicated the general ancient level of the whole plateau. It may be classed as a S.E. peninsular extension of the high Tibetan plateau to which it is directly attached on its N.W. border. It is the third largest province of the empire and covers an area of 108,000 square miles. Compare Great Britain with 88,000 square miles and Tonking with 50,000. In situation and climate it bears a marked analogy to that of the high plateau of Mexico, the mean temperature of which likewise ranges from 60° to 70° (the extremes being 50° to 86°). The new French Railway from Haiphong to Yunnan-fu may be compared with that from Vera Cruz to Mexico, which rises 8,000 feet in 263 miles with gradients of 2.51 per 100. The population was estimated by Davenport in 1877 to have fallen, in consequence of the ruthless extermination of the Mahomedans

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and the mutual massacres of the contending parties, from the original estimate in 1850 of 6,000,000, to about 1,000,000. But, owing to the great recuperative powers of the Chinese, as well as by immigration from over-populated Szechuan and from the adjoining province of Kweichow, the population is now believed to have increased, during the generation that has succeeded the suppression of the Mahomedan revolt by the capture of Ta-li-fu in January, 1873, to about 12,000,000,—almost the full number that this rugged province is capable of supporting.

The Yunnan plateau falls abruptly to the valley of the Yangtse to the north, to the valleys of the Mekong, Salween, and Irrawaddy on the west and to that of the Red River on the south ; involving, in each case, a sudden change from a temperate to a tropical climate, which the inhabitants of the plateau (and *vice versa* those of the border lands) are unable to withstand : hence the isolation of its people. On the east an easier gradient slopes to the basin of the West River of Canton ; this gradient provides the most convenient access to the province and a lively traffic by this route formerly existed, until it was practically closed by the long continued disturbances in the province of Kwangsi and the resultant prevailing brigandage. This traffic has now been diverted to the more roundabout route via the Red River and Tonking. When the intervening country shall have again been restored to orderly government, a railway along the West River valley will provide the easiest and most natural means of access from Canton and Hongkong to the Yunnan plateau.

The general trend of the mountain ranges is from north

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to south ; hence the difficulty of entering Yunnan from the Burma side by way of the present trade route from Bhamo to Tali and so on to Yunnan-fu. The intervening rivers run in deep troughs, difficult to cross, while the Tien-shang range west of Tali reaches an elevation of 14,000 feet. The ranges in this north-west corner of the province are, in fact, long spurs running down from the eastern extremity of the great Himalayan range, and alone effectually bar off the province from direct access to the upper valley of the Irrawaddy, and so from Upper Burma. On the other hand, it would appear from recent surveys that, by the line from Mandalay crossing the Salween at the Kun-long ferry, a fairly practicable route, following the north and south trend of the ranges, has been traced up to Ta-li-fu ; and that this western route presents fewer natural difficulties than those which the French are successfully surmounting in the East. But, like the French line, it passes through a very sparsely inhabited country and is thus not likely, for years to come, to pay as a commercial venture ; hence, without some sort of extraneous Government support, there is little prospect of its being built. Yet the supply of Yunnan with the cottons and hardware it now imports in exchange for its opium and mining products, would seem to be worth competing for, even at the cost of some present sacrifice. British manufacturers generally and the merchants of Rangoon in particular, cannot but be interested in the early development of a practicable trade route between Yunnan and Burma ; the only present means of inter-communication being a precarious mule track, dangerous at all times, and impassable in the rainy season, which

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connects Tali with Bhamo by the mountain-barred route via Têng-yueh.

Yunnan lies between the parallels of 21 and 29 latitude north and between the meridians of 98 and 106 of longitude east : across the province, from Indo-China to the Yangtse, the plateau extends for a distance of 600 miles. From Bhamo to Tali the distance is 280 miles, and from Tali to Yunnan-fu 227 miles. Although, as above stated, the mountain ranges of Yunnan,—northern and western Yunnan especially,—run generally north and south ; yet, through the centre of the province, uniting the eastern and western capitals,—Yunnan-fu and Tali,—there runs an ill-defined backbone from which radiate north and south valleys, on the slopes of which the streams watering these valleys take their rise. Hence these 200 miles, separating the two chief cities of the province, can be bridged by a line following this backbone with comparative ease ; and presuming, as is only natural, that Yunnan, the eastern capital, falls within the French “ sphere of influence,” while Tali, the western capital, drops into the British sphere, then a race will ensue to build this connecting link. From Yunnan-fu to Man-hao the distance is 255 miles, thus making the total travel across the province, east and west from Bhamo to Man-hao, by the existing trade route, 761 miles. The general formation of the country, north of Yunnan-fu, as we have told in the account of our travel, may well be described as “ clusters of grey limestone islands emerging from a sea of red clay ”—the product of their detritus.

Yunnan is bounded on the north by Tibet and Western Szechuan, on the east by the provinces of Kweichow

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and Kwangsi, on the west by the Shan States and Burma, and on the south by Tonking, the French Laos States, and the British Shan States of Xientong and Xienhung ; the point of junction where “ three Empires meet,” being on the Mekong river, 30 miles south of the Yunnan-ese town of Kien-hong.

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