HOW KWANG SU WAS BURIED

FRANK G. CARPENTER DESCRIBES THE FUNERAL OF THE LATE EMPEROR OF CHINA.

(Special Correspondence.)

PEKIN, China.—I want to tell you how Kwang Su, the young emperor of China, was buried. His life was a puppet dance with the great empress dowager pulling the string, but his death elevated him to the rank of a god, and the people are now taxed millions to pay his funeral bills. He passed away last November, but it was not until May that he was carried to his last resting place. He reposes in a vault at the western tombs, and his mausoleum, which cost more than a million dollars, is now building.

I was in Pekin when the emperor's coffin was making. It was constructed of cypress planks about 10 inches thick, and it had two coverings of rawhide. The first was of rhinoceros skin, laid on green. When this was well shrunken the hides of water buffaloes were stretched over it, and after his majesty's corpse was put in, the whole was hermetically sealed. It was then beautifully lacquered, so that altogether it has cost thousands of dollars.

The great dowager had a similar coffin. The old lady is sealed up in it in Pekin, and it will be still several months before she is taken to her final resting place at the eastern tombs. She will be about 100 miles away on one side of the Chinese capital, and his majesty is now 80 miles in the opposite direction. The two did not get along peacefully in life, and now that death has claimed them, it is well they lie far apart.

SELECTING THE TOMBS.

The spots for these burial places had to be chosen by geomancers. As soon as the two died the board of rites, one of the departments of the government, sent out the witch doctors to select lucky locations. They were told to pick out sites where the evil spirits could not attack the dead, and where no star on high, nor dragon below, could disturb their repose. These were found between the two currents which, according to the old Chinese belief, are supposed to run here and there through the earth. These currents are along the tracks of the dragon and the tiger, and a lucky grave should have the dragon on its right and the tiger on its left. It takes a scientist to tell just that spot, and hence grave-finding in China is a well paid profession. The geomancers pretend to calculate the stars, and they go forth with books and diagrams. They also carry forked sticks, and try to hunt the spots much as our people hunt places to dig wells. The search begins with prayer, and it is sometimes hours and days before an auspicious location is found.

THE IMPERIAL FUNERALS.

But let me tell you about the imperial funerals. That of the empress dowager has not yet occurred. It will be beyond description grand, and will probably cost ten times as much as has that of the late emperor. Her lamented majesty reveled in pomp, and she decreed that everything concerning her interment should be of the most lavish description. Her mausoleum will cost high into the millions, and her burial march, which will last something like a week or more, will be the most gorgeous ever witnessed in China.

The last funeral procession of the emperor required five days. The coffin was carried on the shoulders of men to a distance 80 miles from Pekin, and an army of officials and other mourners accompanied it. Rest houses were erected along the way; thousands had to be entertained and the expenses were enormous.

The ceremonies at this funeral were about the same, although not so great as those observed when his majesty's body was taken out of the palace and carried to the vault in Coal Hill, where it lay until May. I happened to be there at that time, and was one of the few fortunate foreigners who witnessed the procession. On the day of that funeral the line of march was cleared by the soldiers. It was guarded by policemen armed with black clubs as thick as a broomstick and almost as long, and also by native soldiers who carried Mauser rifles, to which shining bayonets were affixed. In addition there were Manchu warriors of the old style who had scimitars in their hands, and palace officials with long spears. At every cross street blue curtains were put up to prevent ordinary mortals from seeing the procession, and the foreigners were warned that they must not come out of their houses.

Notwithstanding this I decided to see what I could. I rode in a jinrikisha to the gate of the imperial city, and then walked up the broad avenue which leads to the pink forbidden city where the emperor's body was lying. I was stopped at the gate out of which the procession was to come, and made my way over the road built up for the funeral. This led from the gate of the forbidden city, outside its walls, to Coal Hill at the back. The road was about 30 feet wide and a mile or so long. It was 18 inches high, made of dirt carted in from the country, and so packed that it was as smooth as a floor. This road was already crowded. There were soldiers and imperial servants of different kinds, hundreds of Manchus wearing gowns of white sackcloth, nobles in long coats of white lambskin and also the eunuchs of the baby emperor clad in red silk with red tassels upon the crowns of their hats.

As I walked through the crowd the police looked askance at me and the Manchus evidently disliked my presence. I picked out several spots which seemed good places to view the procession, but whenever I stopped a Manchu pointed to me, and a moment later one of the black-clad policemen waved his club at me and told me to move. I at first pretended that I could not understand, but as the policemen approached I went.

All this time the crowd was growing thicker and thicker and the lines of officials more numerous. The policemen became ardent in their attentions to me, and finally one of them gently laid hold of my arm and led me off into one of the side streets and placed me behind the blue curtain which crossed it. The curtain sagged, and I found that I could, by standing on my toes, see over it. A little later this was observed and a policeman was told to tighten the curtain and shut off my view. I then thought of cutting a peephole in the same, when I observed that there was a ledge along the side of the house nearest me upon which I could climb. I did so, and, standing there, with my back to the wall, I was easily able to see all who passed.

THE IMPERIAL PROCESSION.

I wish I could describe the funeral as it moved slowly by me. It was like nothing to be seen in any other part of the world. You must first imagine the crowd of officials, the servants in uniform, the police and the soldiers, and then this wonderful parade moving through them. First came a company of palace servants carrying the curious funeral utensils. They were lined red gowns and huge black hats, on which were red tassels and yellow feathers at least a foot long. Some bore the red poles to be used for the hearses and others carried bundles of different kinds.

Behind these came a caravan of the emperor's ponies, two abreast. Each wore a blanket of the imperial yellow, and I was told that all belonged to the imperial stud, and that some had been ridden by his majesty.

After that 50 magnificent camels came into view. These were of the species found in Mongolia. They are bigger and stronger than Arabian camels and have a fleece of silky brown wool, which was curried and brushed for the occasion. Each camel was blanketed with yellow. It was loaded with funeral trappings and it chewed its cud as it walked sullenly on.

And then there were more ponies, and behind them, on foot, came the imperial band. This was composed of men dressed in uniforms such as were common during the Chinese middle ages. Some carried trumpets and drums as big around as a washtub slung from their necks. The drums had red barrels and their tops were of white parchment. They are beaten with the hand rather than with a stick. Others of the musicians had brass gongs the size of a dishpan, and still others brass horns which looked like gigantic champagne bottles with the corks half out.

FUNERAL MEATS AND FUNERAL MONEY.

The next party carried the meats to be eaten by the ghosts of the departed. These were on trays of yellow wood, which rested at right angles to the breasts of the officials who carried them. The latter belonged to the palace, and were clad in red silk gowns and black hats. Behind them came the standard bearers, with the emperor's flags, which were beautifully embroidered with gold, and one body of men carried gold poles, to which great silk balloons were attached.

It was at this point that a crowd of men high in the government, clad in white sheepskins, began to scatter funeral money to the four winds of the heavens. Each of these had an armful of paper disks of the size of a saucer, with a square hole in the center. The men threw these disks high into the air, so that they fell down upon the procession like a snowstorm, carpeting the roadway. A Chinese at my right told me that they represented money, and another added that they were scattered also that they might delay the evil spirits which hover over every funeral procession working ill will to the corpse. According to the decree of heaven, every such spirit has to crawl through a hole in anything which obstructs its way, or he cannot go on. If the disks with the holes in them are many, the spirits must crawl through one after the other, and the soul of the dead thus escapes. This throwing up paper continued throughout the march, and at its close an army of street sweepers came and cleaned up the roadway.

ENTER—THE DEAD EMPEROR.

It was just following these paper-throwers that the imperial hearse came. It was preceded by the highest officials of the government, and by the favorite horses of the emperor, and also by his throne. The high officials carried sticks of burning incense, and a sweet smoke rose over the procession and filled the air with perfume.

I shall never forget the scene as the coffin appeared. As it came into sight a silence that could be felt fell upon the crowd. Not a whisper was heard, not a motion was made. All bowed their heads, and the dead reigned supreme. The bier or hearse was a gorgeous canopy of the size and shape of an old four-poster bedstead. It was of yellow silk, covered with exquisite embroidery, and it shone like gold under the sun. It was carried upon long, heavy poles, supported by other poles, all tied together with ropes of yellow silk, and that in such a way that the weight was distributed over the shoulders of 80 men.

The coffin was almost as big as the hearse. The bearers moved slowly, shifting their poles from one shoulder to the other as a signal from the leader. At the same time the officials kept waving their incense sticks and Kwang Su was carried to his vault amid clouds of perfume.

THE IMPERIAL TOMBS.

The mausolea to be erected at the eastern and western tombs will be grand beyond description. The plans are not accessible to foreigners and it is impossible to describe them. The western cemetery of this dynasty where the emperor is buried was designed to be the last resting place of Tung Chih, his predecessor, who died in January, 1875. The astrologers and geomancers, however, decided that Tung Chih could not be buried there, but that with certain ceremonies he might be interred in the eastern cemetery, where the dowager is to lie, and where is also buried his father, Hsien Feng, the emperor who was the husband of the great dowager. Tung Chih died of smallpox, and his remains were kept above ground for almost 10 months on account of the discussion as to where he was to rest. It is said that it cost $250,000 to settle that question.

THE MANCHU MONUMENTS AT MUKDEN.

For a time some supposed that the empress dowager or the emperor might be carried to the great cemetery belonging to this dynasty near Mukden. It will be remembered that the family which now rules China is Manchu, and that its former capital was the capital of Manchuria. Many of the treasures of the imperial clan are now stored away in the palaces at Mukden, and it is there that Shun-Chih, the first emperor of the present dynasty, was buried. That was 265 years ago, and his mausoleum still stands. I visited it a few months since. It is surrounded by a great park, and it lies inside an inclosure of about two acres, which has walls of brick 36 feet high. There are gorgeous temples scattered through it. All are roofed with yellow tiles; all stand on stone platforms, and all are gorgeous in their carvings. The road leading to them is lined with great animals in stone, and marble warriors, lions, camels and elephants guard the path to the emperor's grave. The park and the mausoleum require 1,000 people to take care of them. The park is six miles in circumference and is filled with pine trees.

During my stay there I asked in which temple the body of the emperor lay. I was told that he was not in the temples at all, but that he was buried in a great mound behind the inclosure and that no one knew just where his bones rested. The empress dowager and the emperor will probably be buried in a similar manner. This mound of Shun-Chih is about 100 feet high, and it has a base of several acres. It is barren with the exception of a few bushes on the sides and a knotty little pine tree on top. This man Shun-Chih is said to have sacrificed 30 people at the funeral of his favorite wife.

THE TOMBS OF THE MINGS.

There is no doubt but that this dynasty will do all it can to surpass the tombs of the Mings, the dynasty which preceded it. These lie in two great cemeteries, one at Nanking on the Yangtse Kiang, and the other far out in the country between here and the great wall. I have visited both, and they are among the wonders of the world.

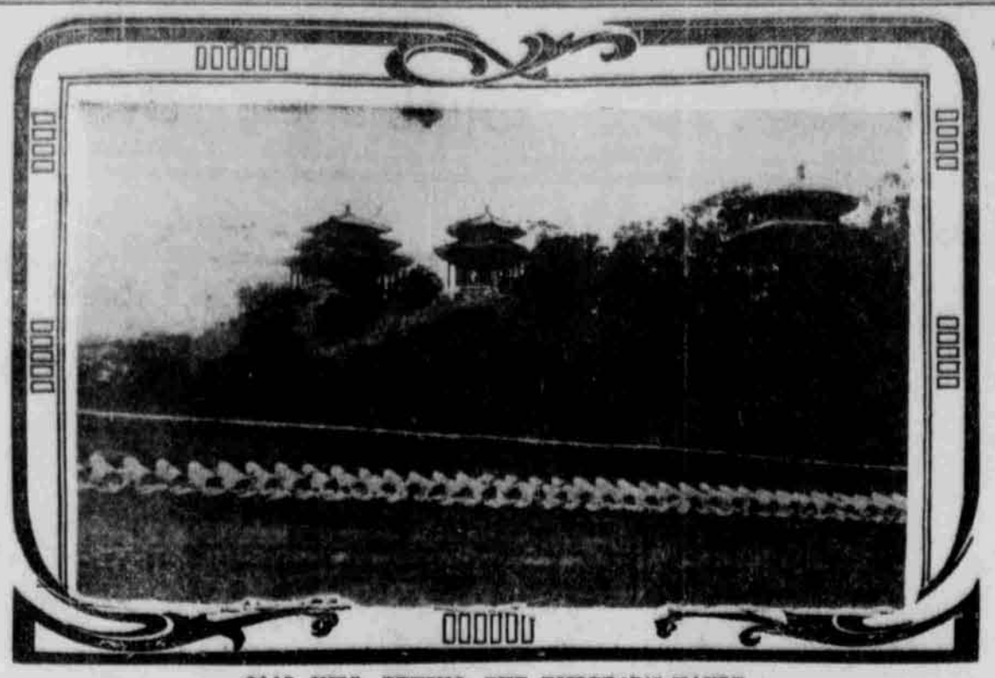
The Ming tombs of North China consist of a number of great Chinese palaces, lying in a beautiful valley, and connected by wide marble roads several miles long. In each side of the roads, upon pedestals, stand gigantic figures of tigers, lions, unicorns, horses, camels and elephants, each cut from one solid block of white marble. The elephants are "jumbos," beautifully cut, and the lions and camels are not at all bad, considering that their sculptors were Tartars. There are 13 emperors buried in that cemetery, and the largest temple is that of the great Lung Yoh. This has a hall 200 feet long, and it covers more than an acre. It is surrounded by a balustrade of carved marble, and in it are immense stone turtles, each as big as a hogshead, out of whose backs rise pink marble slabs inscribed with the virtues of the great emperor. The turtle is one of the Chinese emblems of longevity.

THE TOMBS OF NANKING.

It is near Nanking that the founder of the Ming dynasty is buried, and the tombs there are somewhat similar to these tombs of North China. They lie under the shadow of the purple mountains, and are reached by an avenue a mile long, which is lined with gigantic elephants, camels, lions and tigers in marble. There are also many stone warriors, each 12 feet in height. At the end of this avenue is a great tower with four arched gateways, and this tower covers a circle of black marble. This is so large that it would fill an ordinary city parlor, and it is made from one single block of stone. The animals themselves each weigh many tons, and some of them are beautifully carved. One of the stone horses has been thrown over, and some of the lions and camels are broken, but the most of them are as perfect today as when they were originally made, about 500 years ago.

I ate my lunch sitting on the turtle in the great tomb, and, as I did so, I could look through one of the doorways upon the grave mounds of the Nankings of today, and could hear the wailing of a poorly clad woman who mourned over a small hill of clay. It was the grieving of the poverty-stricken present among the imperial ghosts of the past, and as the sound came to my ears it was forced upon me that of all things upon earth the only king who reigns supreme is death. His scepter sways from age to age, and with his magic wand he makes all men of one size.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.



COAL HILL, PEKING, THE EMPEROR'S VAULT.

Photographed for The Deseret News by Frank G. Carpenter.

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