

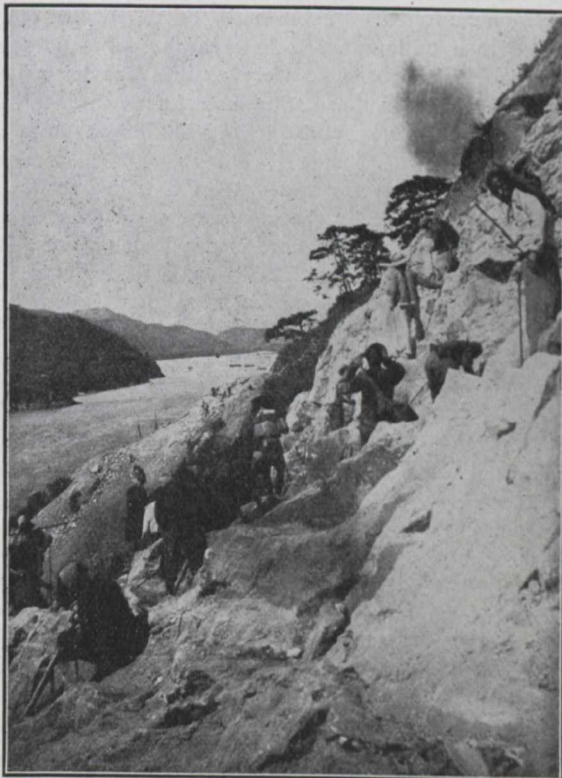
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THE CANTON-HANKOW RAILWAY

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The Canton-Hankow Railway purposes to connect the city of Hankow, on the Yang-Tse, which has already rail connection with Peking and the Trans-Siberian road—with the city of Canton, the greatest port of South China, and the largest city of the Chinese Empire. The length of the main line will be about 720 miles. It will pass through some of the richest agricultural districts in South China, which produce principally, rice, tea and silk, and through a mountainous region in the northern part of Kwong Tung Province, where vast deposits of coal and iron ore lie prac-



Coolies—Men and Women Taking Out An Earth Cut.

tically side by side; the iron absolutely untouched, and the coal used only locally for cooking purposes. Very little is known of the mineral wealth of South China, and very little of what is known has been developed. The opportunities for foreign mining companies are nil, and native enterprise in mining development has, up to the present, principally confined itself to taking over mines already developed by foreigners, and, by mismanagement and corrupt dealing, ruining what had been thriving industries.

To the United States belongs the credit of first seriously undertaking the building of this line. About the year

1902 (?) a concession was granted to an American syndicate, backed by J. P. Morgan, for the construction of the 720 miles of main line, and for a network of branches that would probably equal in length the main line itself. From the American standpoint the concession was, theoretically, an excellent one, including as it did exclusive mining rights for ten miles on either side of the main line.

From the Chinese point of view, one of the principal terms of the agreement was that the line should be owned and operated by the American company. The Chinese were opposed to the railway falling into the hands of the Belgian-Russian-French interests, which controlled the Peking-Hankow line already built; but the Americans got over this by selling a majority of the shares to the Belgians though the company remained American. This, combined with serious local opposition to the work of the survey and construction, led to the repurchase in 1905 of the entire concession by the Imperial Government at Peking. The price of repurchase was six million taels; about \$4,000,000 gold.

At the date of repurchase by the Chinese, considerable work had been done by the American-China Development Company. A reconnaissance of the entire route was made by Mr. Parsons, of New York, consulting engineer of the company. This reconnaissance was more like a royal progress than a railway survey. Parsons travelled in State with a fleet of house boats, and a full regiment of over 1,000 native soldiers as escort. He was not taking any chances. Later, location surveys had been carried out for about 100 miles of the main line north from Canton. A branch of 30 miles from Canton to Samsui on the West river had been built and had commenced operating passenger trains, and about 10 miles of main line at the Canton end were under construction.

The difficulties of construction work were much increased by the bad climate—malaria and dysentery being the chief scourges. Added to this, the constant delay and obstruction over the purchase of right-of-way; and the difficulties in the removal of the graves that are scattered promiscuously in thousands over the country, and the absolute refusal of some communities to allow construction work to be undertaken at all, made progress very difficult. Native opposition became stronger and more widespread until the selling of a majority of the shares to Belgian capitalists gave the Chinese an argument that could not be gainsaid. They claimed a breach of contract, and insisted on the repurchase or the cancellation of the concession.

Thoroughly convinced of the value of and the need for this railroad, the Chinese proposed to build the line themselves. Separate companies were formed in each of the provinces through which the line was to pass, viz., in Kwong Tung, Hunan and Hupeh, and these companies took over