



C H I N A

TRAVELS AND INVESTIGATIONS IN THE
"MIDDLE KINGDOM"

A STUDY OF
ITS CIVILIZATION AND POSSIBILITIES

WITH A GLANCE AT JAPAN

BY

JAMES HARRISON WILSON

LATE MAJOR-GENERAL UNITED STATES VOLUNTEERS, AND
BREVET MAJOR-GENERAL UNITED STATES ARMY



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TO
COLONEL LEGRAND B. CANNON,
OF NEW YORK,
A LOYAL CITIZEN, A GOOD SOLDIER, AND A TRUE FRIEND
THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE INSCRIBED,
WITH THE AFFECTIONATE REGARDS OF
THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

OWING to the universal depression in trade for the last five years, China has strongly attracted the attention of the whole world, and especially of England, Germany, France, and the United States, as the only great country yet remaining to be provided with railroads. In the spring of 1885 I turned my attention in that direction; but, when I sought to obtain specific information as to the actual condition of affairs in respect to railroads and other modern improvements, and the readiness of the Chinese Government and people for their introduction, I could learn nothing whatever upon which it seemed to be safe to base calculations or draw conclusions. After conferring with a few friends in New York, who had also been impressed with the same general fact, and were looking about to discover new fields for American skill, enterprise, and capital, and who also found themselves utterly unable to get trustworthy information, I resolved for our common benefit to visit the countries beyond the Pacific, and see for myself whether they were ready for railroads, whether, if built, railroads would probably pay, and also whether the construction and management of them could be secured for Americans, under such terms and conditions,

as promised fair returns for the skill and capital employed, and the risk involved.

I saw no other means of satisfactorily solving the questions which presented themselves. The correspondence of our diplomatic and consular agents was silent on those points, or unattainable; and, even if it had not been, it could not have been expected to contain anything more than the most general statement of facts. Hitherto our diplomatic agents, with a few exceptions, in Oriental countries at least, had imitated the traditional diplomatic policy of Europe, and ignored such questions, avoiding as far as possible all official notice and discussion of commerce, manufactures, and the multitude of industries and public undertakings usually carried on by associated capital and labor, and which constitute the chief feature of what we call modern progress. An occasional traveler of a more practical turn of mind, or here and there a still more occasional newspaper correspondent, had called attention to the absence of railroads, collieries, furnaces, and rolling-mills in China, so that the general fact became known; but neither diplomatist, traveler, nor correspondent had yet furnished to the public any information, worthy of the name, bearing on the great question herein alluded to.

Turn which way I might, I could get no adequate account of the real situation in China. I therefore left New York for San Francisco on the 8th of September, 1835, and sailed thence for Yokohama and Shanghai on the 19th of the same month, by the Pacific Mail Company's steamship *City of Peking*, Captain Berry commanding. I had, of course, provided myself with a letter of credit, and such letters of introduction to diplomatic and consular agents, and to American merchants