

be navigated by ocean vessels to Hankow; the Hwang-ho, which has already been shown to be of slight commercial value; and the Pei-ho. The last is navigable for small boats to a point opposite the site of Peking, and for coasting steamers to its port—**Tientsin**—save when it is frozen in winter. From Tientsin the **Imperial Canal** runs southward for 700 miles to Hangchow. This was made many centuries ago, and though the southern half is still much used, the northern has fallen out of repair in many places.

The climate of the plain is extreme, even near the coast, and further inland is rendered severe by the prevalence of cold, dry winds from the interior in winter. The rains come with the summer south-east monsoon, and would be generally sufficient for agriculture were it not for the porous nature of the soil. As it is, the region is pitted with wells from which, as well as from the rivers, water can be obtained for irrigation. Agriculture is everywhere the staple occupation, and is carried on with the minute personal care that we are only accustomed to bestow on gardens. The crops are those mentioned above, silk being especially important in Shantung. Large numbers of fish are obtained from the sea, rivers and lakes, and form an important article of diet throughout China. The plain is deficient in minerals, but coal is mined in Shantung, and to the north-east of Tientsin.

Although the plain is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, there are comparatively few towns in it of exceptional size, the most important being Peking and Tientsin in the north, and Shanghai and Hangchow in the south.

Peking, the capital of the country, stands in the centre of a sandy plain, and is the focus of the following routes: (1) Up the Pei-ho; the town stands north of the river. (2) From Manchuria along the coast and via Tientsin, a route now followed by a railway. (3) From Siberia by the caravan route that passes Urga and traverses the Mongolian desert. (4) From the valley of the Wei and along the base of the Shansi plateau. (5) From Hankow northwards by the recently constructed railway. (6) From Hangchow via the Imperial Canal.

Peking is composed of two portions—a square enclosure to the north, which is the Manchu city, and a rectangular area to the south, which is the Chinese city. Both are surrounded by high, massive walls pierced by gates which are surmounted by towers. Within the Manchu city are the Imperial palaces and many magnificent temples. Some of these temples