

The Library of Chester Fritz



Brian R. Urlacher

The Library of Chester Fritz

The Library of Chester Fritz

Brian R. Urlacher



The Digital Press at the University of North Dakota
Grand Forks, ND

This book is licensed under a
Creative Commons
By Attribution
4.0 International License.
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



2022 The Digital Press @ The University of North Dakota

Library of Congress Control Number: 9798986890005
The Digital Press at the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota

ISBN-13: 979-8-9868900-0-5 (paperback)
ISBN-13: 979-8-9868900-1-2 (Ebook/PDF)

Cover Design: Brian R. Urlacher and William Caraher

Table of Contents

Geographic References

iii

Introduction

1

Part 1

Correspondence

5

Part 2

China Journey

9

Part 3

The War Journal

41

Part 4

Chester Fritz's Address

59

Part 5

Author's Afterword

61

Geographic References

Note: Many of the smaller towns Fritz stays at are difficult to identify. His notation of Cantonese or Mandarin words occasionally relies on phonetic approximation. Compounding matters, many of the Romanized spellings of Chinese locations in use during the first half of 20th century were changed under the People's Republic of China.

Traditional Name	Modern Name	Note
An-shu-fu	Unknown	
Canton (city)	Guangzhou	See also Kwongchow
Canton (region)	Guangdong	A province bordering the South China Sea. See also Kwangtung
Ch'iung-chou	Unknown	
Changsha	Changsha	
Chengtu	Chengdu	Capital of the Sichuan province.
Chiang-k'ou	Unknown	
Chia-ting	Leshan	The city of Chia-ting has also been known as Jiading.
Chungking	Chongqing	
Haiphong	Haiphong	The city is in modern-day Vietnam.
Hankow	Hankou	
Hanoi	Hanoi	The city is the capital of modern-day Vietnam.
Hanyang		The city was merged with Wuchang to form Wuhan.
Hong Kong		

Traditional Name	Modern Name	Note
Hsin-k'ou	Unknown	
I-ch'ang	Yichang	
Jung-ching	Unknown	
Kuanhsien	Unknown	
Kuan-yin	Unknown	
Kwangtung	Guangdong	A province bordering the South China Sea. See also Canton (region)
Kweiyang	Guiyang	
Kwongchow	Guangzhou	See also Canton (city)
Lang-tai-t'ing	Unknown	
Lin-tsun-ho	Unknown	
Luchou	Luzhou	
Luodian	Luodian	
Lu-ting-ch'iao	Unknown	
Ma-liu-ch'ang	Unknown	
Manchuria	Manchuria	A geographic region in the Northeast of China.
Mongoon	Unknown	
Nan-ch'i-hsien	Unknown	
Nanking	Nanjing	
Omei-hsien	Mount Emei	Omei-hsien is one of the four most sacred sites in Chinese Buddhism and was home to numerous monasteries.
P'ing-ye	Unknown	
Pakhoi	Beihai	The city is in modern day Vietnam.
Romichangku	Romichangku	
Shang-chou	Unknown	
Shanghai	Shanghai	

Traditional Name	Modern Name	Note
Shuang-liu	Unknown	
Sichuan	Sichuan	A province in the South-west of China.
Suifu	Yibin	
Ta-chien-lu	Kangding	
The Tong River	The Dadu River	
Ya-chou	Unknown	
Yan-lin	Unknown	
Yunnan	Yunnan	A province in the South-west of China.
Yunnan-fu	Kunming	

Introduction

February 21, 2022

David C. Albert
North Dakota State Historical Society
612 East Boulevard Ave.
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505

Dear Dr. Albert,

I am writing again regarding my request that the Chester Fritz Library be designated a protected historical site by the North Dakota State Historical Society. In our last correspondence you indicated that the process for review and consideration would take several years. I fear we do not have time for the normal process to play out. As you may have seen recently in *The Grand Forks Herald*, the university is moving forward with its plan to renovate a large section of the library as an e-sports arena! I am writing to you now with greatest of urgency and pleading that the review process be expedited. In the past, I have been hesitant to share the entirety of my motives in making this request. But necessity compels me, and it is finally time to show my cards.

Up until now, I have been hesitant to share the enclosed documents with you or with the State Historical Society board. I've told myself that these documents require a good deal of context to understand. That may be true, but I shied away from offering that context out of a desire to protect my own reputation. I'm certain that there are times you will think to set aside this letter and dismiss me as mentally unstable, or deranged, or merely a sick prankster. I can only trust that as an architectural historian you will recognize the significance of the historical oddities and persevere. After all, we are both academics, trained to ask

questions and to weigh relevant evidence. I am confident that the documents I've assembled here will win the day and spur you to action.

My first indication that something about the construction of the library was unusual came in a telegram sent by Chester Fritz to his wife Vera in 1955. I found the telegram while digging through a box of papers left to me by a retiring faculty member when I took over managing an exchange program with a university in Shanghai.

The telegram is included as one of several attachments to this letter. Perhaps at first glance the scrap doesn't seem like the source of a deep mystery, but something about the telegram gnawed at me. It raised so many questions for such a small bit of yellow paper. Why the urgency? Who was the abbot? Where in the world is Tianshuihai? The last of these I was at least able to answer with a map: Tianshuihai sits on the border between China and India. Today it is controlled by China, but in 1955 it was the site of the last Western Union office in India before crossing into occupied Tibet.

One potential question raised by the telegram—the identity of CF—seemed all too obvious. I simply assumed that the CF in the telegram was Chester Fritz. Given that the man's name is attached to the campus library, it seemed a safe deduction. At the time, I had only a rough knowledge of the university's history, which included a vague sense that Fritz had a connection to China. I know you did not attend university in North Dakota, and I suspect you may not be familiar with Chester Fritz.

Frankly, it is impossible to understate the man's influence as a donor to the university. His name graces two prominent buildings and the distinguished honor of Chester Fritz Professor is granted to only a few select faculty. I asked once where Fritz's wealth came from, and a colleague offhandedly described Fritz as "a global capitalist at the dawn of global capitalism." But did that make him a smuggler, a speculator, a war profiteer, or simply a financier? At this point, it is my view that in the chaos of China between the two world wars these were all one and the same.

Fritz's time in China coincided with a horrific civil war. The Qing dynasty had fallen in 1911 and the Chinese Nationalists (a.k.a the Komintung or KMT) led by Sun Yat-Sen and later

Chiang Kai-shek were struggling to forge the remnants of the Chinese empire into a new republic. In the interim, warlords held sway over much of the land, financing their power with opium and tariffs. It was in the midst of this chaos that Fritz built his fortune in the raucous city of Shanghai. Yet, Fritz cut his ties to China in the late 1940s when Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party took control. The oriental "wild west of capitalism" in which Fritz had thrived was gone. So, what drew him back to China in 1955?

In early 2019 I mentioned the telegram to a friend—an archivist with the library's special collections department. Surprisingly, he had heard of the telegram—or thought he had. His first archival project more than two decades ago had been to catalogue the correspondence of one-time University President George Starcher. He had flagged only a handful of attachments as missing, including a telegram from Chester Fritz to his wife. It took us a long afternoon to track down the relevant exchange of letters. I'm including copies of the letters as part of a portfolio of evidence demonstrating that all is not as it seems with the Chester Fritz Library.

I will confess, David, that after reading the two letters I was not just intrigued but obsessed. I'm sure that as an architectural historian the insistence on the secrecy of the blueprints must strike you as extremely unusual. For me, I wondered at the urgency. Vera's insistence to not delay for even a single day seemed not just dramatic but manic. Strange, that I should now be in the same place as the Fritzes—corresponding by letter, begging for action, and pleading for haste.

As you review the assembled documents, I am sure you will bring a trained historian's eye to the task. I was not trained as a historian, and I've had to learn the basic principles of analysis on my own. To this end, I recognize that the two journals, a travel journal and a war journal, are at best incomplete accounts. People write such diaries for their own reasons, and what they leave out is at least as important as what they put on the page. Frustratingly, what is left out is often lost with no way for it to be recovered. I've done my best to add in footnotes to the journals to provide additional context and supporting documentation

where possible. But even with these supplementary notes, I must concede that the events documented are not necessarily as they were, but as Fritz wished for the world to understand them.

Indeed, I've wondered at times if Fritz could be taken as a reliable narrator of events. A polite way to describe his journals is to note that he was man of his time. His description of China is deeply interwoven with colonial attitudes and the biases of the early twentieth century. I've also considered that Fritz may have had episodes of madness. It is possible, maybe even plausible, but I think it is unlikely. I've come to believe that while Chester Fritz suffered greatly and time after time faced down danger—and even certain death—he retained both his sanity and his humor.

I am providing for your consideration a telegram, two letters, a travel diary by Fritz, and a journal he kept during the Second World War. I've also included a speech Fritz delivered at the dedication of the library. Upon a first reading, the dedication speech seems a charming but milquetoast address. I hope that in the context of the documents I've provided, you will appreciate the deeper meaning to Fritz's words. I think that I have said all that is needed by way of introduction. Time is short, and much is at stake.

Sincerely,

Brian R. Urlacher
Professor and Department Chair
Political Science and Public Administration

Part 1: Correspondence

TELEGRAM FROM CF

SEPT 15 1955

TIANSHUIHAI WESTERN UNION OFFICE

TIME IS SHORT MUST GO EAST AND FIND THE AB-
BOT STOP LIBRARY MUST BE BUILT NOW STOP YOU
KNOW MY MIND AND I TRUST YOU TO SEE IT DONE
STOP HOME FOR THANKSGIVING LOVE CF

LETTER FROM GEORGE STARCHER

October 16, 1955

Dear Chester and Vera,

I hope my letter finds you well. It has been a busy time for all of us here at the university, but I have found that my first semester officially in the role of president has been utterly exhilarating. Indeed, I am finally in a position to move forward many of the items we discussed during my year serving as interim president. The enclosed document lays out the terms for several endowments staggered over the coming years. As you both well know, my predecessor resisted some of your stipulations. While I myself still struggle to understand the necessity of your requirements, I believe the attached agreement honors your wishes, ensures academic freedom, and serves the students of our beloved university.

Most notably, the State Board of Higher Education has agreed to exempt the new library building from the standard bidding processes, allowing for you to personally select the architect and the construction company without an open bidding process.

We have further agreed that the university will only receive exterior architectural drawings of the proposed library and partial blueprints relating to plumbing, electrical, and ventilation. Per your request, the structural blueprints will remain your private property. This was something that greatly concerned our director of campus facilities, but we have agreed that as long as a licensed and bonded contractor is used, the structural details of the building are secondary. As Chester wrote, in our last correspondence, "the proof is in the pudding."

Please know that it is a priority of my administration to see this project through. Chester once described his vision for this new library as a “Tibetan Notre Dame.” I love the poetry of that phrase. It evokes the sacred task of higher education and the monastic nature of our isolation here on the prairie.

It is my hope that we can bring you both to campus very soon. While it may be difficult to leave the warmth of your seaside chateau for our more “continental” climate, I promise you will find a different sort of warmth when you meet with the faculty and students whose lives your generosity will touch. I know Vera is quite the fan of hockey from her childhood in Russia. As Chester can attest, there is no better hockey to be found than here. Go Flickertails!

Yours sincerely,

George Starcher
University President

LETTER FROM VERA FRITZ

November 2, 1955

Dear President Starcher,

I received your letter today. On behalf of my husband, thank you for your hard work. Chester would be very pleased with your proposal were he in Italy. You could not know, but he left in August on urgent business. When I last heard from him, he was in India.

My husband left me power of attorney to conclude his affairs while he travels. The library is never far from his mind. I do not fully understand his obsession, but I accept that he will find no rest until it is done. Please find enclosed the signed agreement, notarized by the office of our personal attorney. You will also find the business card of the contractor Chester has retained to carry out the construction. Last, there is a recent telegram from my husband.

I include the telegram, Dr. Starcher, so that you can know my husband's mind. I implore you not to delay for even a single day. Move with all possible speed. Move the heavens and the earth if you must.

Sincerely,
Vera Fritz

Part 2: China Journey¹

February 23-24, 1917. Friday, Saturday. Today I start my travel journal. My employer, Fisher Flouring Mills has given me three months of leave, which I intend to use traveling to the threshold of Tibet and then to the eastern coast of China. This adventure has been long planned and has been the desire of my heart for many years. As a boy, I read with great enthusiasm and interest the travel books of Harry Franck. I shall set out to cross China, traveling overland by sedan chair, horse, boat, and by foot when necessary. I've resolved to act in the spirit of Franck—eschewing weapons and wealth and trusting in the goodness of my fellow man.

I departed Haiphong in French Indo-China by train, passing through the Red River valley, and arriving at Yunnan-fu in the early morning. My Manchu boy, Suen, helped me locate the office of the Director of Finance, Mr. Wu. Mr. Wu has agreed to help arrange an escort northward and coordinate with various consulates and missions along my planned route. He also invited me for a “Chinese” dinner at the official residence. I pointed out, to great amusement, that the presence of Rose Champagne gave the meal an international character. Other Europeans were present at the dinner, including two Britishers, Mr. Carpenter and Mr. Page, as well as a French doctor, newly arrived from Servia. Also in attendance was the Japanese Consul, a Japanese military attaché, and many other Chinese officials.

¹ As I began my investigation into the life of Chester Fritz, I was trying to understand why he had traveled to Tibet in 1955. Surprisingly a Google search of “Chester Fritz” and “Tibet” turned up a travel diary Fritz had written as a young man. The diary had already been published in the 1970s as *China Journey*. While it was out of print, there were copies to be found among rare book dealers. I've provided notes where I believe additional context might be useful or where I've been able to corroborate a particular detail.

March 7, 1917. Wednesday. I awoke with crushing intestinal pain. I sent my Manchu boy, Suen, to locate a doctor. After several hours, he returned with the same Dr. Bellamy, who I met the previous week. The doctor does not yet have a formal practice in Yunnan-fu but was nonetheless willing to offer treatment. He prepared a tonic for my pain and sat with me for much of the afternoon. My pain was much lessened by nine o'clock when I went to bed.

March 8, 1917. Thursday. The morning found me much refreshed and pleased to think that I would not need to delay the overland stage of my journey. I was delighted to find that the same Dr. Bellamy who had treated my stomach pain has signed onto my caravan. Several others have joined as well, and I am not unhappy with the size of the party.² Having a doctor, even one as young as Bellamy—for we are almost of an age—at hand can only be to the benefit.

Chair bearers are wonderful. They walk with ease and with speed. My sedan chair is borne by two who have been to Kwei-yang before. Such luck.

The inn at Yan-lin was fair and far better than I was led to expect. I selected a room far away from the common area, providing quiet against the noises of court as well as the many legion of stinks and smells.

I have noted that one soldier providing escort is afflicted with near-sightedness. He holds reading material a few inches from his eyes. At one point he was demonstrating the operation of his gun to one of my chair bearers. The gun was a worn thing, probably a Ming piece. As he demonstrated the gun, he casually pointed it toward me, then without warning he ejected shells. My horror at his casual aim of a loaded gun spurred me to action, and I read him the riot act! Any man brought up

² Much of Fritz's journal suggests he is traveling alone across China; however, references like this one suggest he is actually traveling as part of large caravan. Given the security situation in Yunnan province, and China more generally, military escorts would have been necessary, which would have led to a regular escort schedule facilitating travel for large groups leaving at designated times.

around guns learns this most basic rule of safety: *direct thy aim only at that which thou seeketh to destroy*. I shudder to think of the exhortation I would have received from my stepfather for such carelessness.³

March 14, 1917. Wednesday. Today I left my chair and rode ahead of the caravan. I arrived at P'ing-ye well ahead of the others, taking the time to inspect the quality of the inns. In looking about, I entered a room occupied by a Mandarin official. I sought to politely extricate myself, but he would not hear of it. Instead, he insisted that I stay and rest for a time. We sat around the huop'en (a round fire pit), and we jabbered on—I in English and he in Mandarin. We understood nothing of the other, but we got on like fast friends.

March 18, 1917. Sunday. We put in for the night at Shangchou, a small village. The people are far poorer than any I have seen thus far. We ended up sleeping in a filthy hut in uncomfortable and crowded quarters. And such smells! Suen has taken ill and moaned for much of the night.

The land was only sparsely cultivated, but where we passed fields, I saw a familiar sight—piles of rocks dotting the landscape. Having picked rocks from fields for pocket money as a child, I know the hundreds of hours of labor represented by each of those piles. I am no metallurgist, but I took note of how the stone piles glinted in the sunlight. Intuiting the rocks to be some kind of ore, I sent one of the servants out to collect a sample. The strange cubic structure of the rocks reminds me of Wolframite or perhaps some more iron rich variant of Taconite. With the war such metals are valued almost as much as silver. The logistics of getting the ore to market has me stumped. British ports only allow the export of metal bound for England. Perhaps the French are more forgiving. I shall think on it.

³ The italics are my own emphasis. The way Fritz wrote this suggests that it is a mantra of gun safety. I was not able to locate the phrase in any turn of the century literature, which suggests it was Fritz's adaptation of a basic gun safety principle into something that had the linguistic flare of the King James Bible.

March 20, 1917. Tuesday. This morning Suen was some better. Dr. Bellamy dosed him with aspirin yesterday.⁴ The area we are entering is well named the “Switzerland of China.” The land rolls on in never-ending ups and downs that have greatly tried our pack animals. Yesterday, the road took us through lands both desolate and weird. Villages were few, perhaps only one the entire day. The land is beyond cultivation. The rock mountains affront us with a barren cold. I have never seen such an inhospitable stretch of land. Even the few inhabitants—naked, starved, and haunted—look scoured by the harshness of this place.

March 21, 1917. Wednesday. We awoke with the sun and began a five-hour ascent. By lunch the air had turned cold, and my lungs strained to draw in needed air at such an altitude.

At three o'clock we could see the walled city of Lang-tai-t'ing and its rings of suburbs. We located an inn, and I took a mind to walk through the city while the remainder of the caravan made its way to Lang-tai-t'ing.

I stopped at a temple boasting a garish tableau of bas-relief carvings. Each panel depicted a novel method of torture; the pain extracted from the subjects was conjured from the darkest pathways of human imagining. In the background of each scene, a creature of grotesque horror presided, evidently in judgement or perhaps in celebration. The creature loomed titan with wings of a bat and a maw hung with many tentacles. I had approached the temple eager to learn of its theology and speak with its devout, but upon seeing the celebration of such dark rites I quickly turned aside.⁵

⁴ In general, it is not safe to give children aspirin. The link between Reye's syndrome and aspirin, however, was not understood until the 1960s.

⁵ I've consulted several scholars of Chinese culture and religion to determine what religious practice this might be referring to. There was no consensus. One hypothesis is that this is a localized religious practice inspired by the chaos of the post-Qing period. A second hypothesis is that this is a religious practice that pre-dates the various religious movements that diffused across China: Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. A third hypothesis is that Fritz

I am forced to admit that the scenes of the temple have weighed upon my thoughts. My unease brought to mind a conversation with my aunt when she saw me off in Seattle. Her words were blunt and her meaning clear. A man on his own, alone, in the world will be tested in many ways. His character will be pressed. She declared that men far better than me have imperiled their eternal souls in foreign lands. I asked her what one could do to remain godly—as I sincerely wish to do. Her advice was simple “Mind the company you keep and hold fast to your scripture.”

March 24, 1917. Saturday. Shortly after arriving at An-shu-fu, I called on the China Inland Mission, receiving a money order from Yunnan-fu and a telegram from the Hong Kong office.⁶ I arranged for my belongings to be transferred from the inn at which others from our caravan are staying. I have found the CIM compound better equipped for my needs and hope to spend Sunday here as well.

March 29, 1917. Thursday. After supper tonight a Chinese officer and a squad of soldiers came to my inn. They inspected my passport and were eventually satisfied. They took the names of my chair bearers and other servants and then went on their way.

Suen informed me this evening that he does not wish to make the journey to Chungking and will stay in An-shu-fu. I agreed and arranged what I think is fair payment for his good service. I will miss him, but I have learned much of China and am up to the task! And if I am not, I will seek out another boy in Chungking.

misunderstood what he was seeing on some very basic level. These scenes may not have been associated with a temple or a religious tradition.

⁶ Fritz frequently stayed at China Inland Mission compounds during his 1917 journey. By some estimates there were more than 100,000 Christian missionaries operating in China before World War II.

March 30, 1917. Friday. A fresh change and a hot bath guarantee a fine night of rest. I called on Mr. Liu and sent a telegram to Hong Kong asking that my mail be forwarded to the American Consulate based in Chungking.

I spoke with Dr. Bellamy this morning and we agreed to journey on together at least as far as Chungking and perhaps into Tibet. Together we arranged for five horses to take our baggage on to Chungking and contracted for the same chairs we have had since Yunnan-fu.

The doctor has a colleague in Shanghai, which is my ultimate destination, but has no need to seek a timely arrival. As he and I have quite “hit it off,” I asked if he would accompany me on a most circuitous route to Shanghai. I look forward to his company. The doctor has traveled in the East of Europe and now the East of Asia! While he talks little about his time in the war, he has many other strange and bewildering stories.

Two days ago, the doctor and I shared a sedan chair. He told me of a patient that he treated while in the Balkans. Bellamy heard of the girl’s affliction from her uncle who was traveling east in search of western doctor staying in Bucharest. The girl suffered from weakness and an anemia of the blood. The uncle fretted the girl’s strength would not hold, and Bellamy swore to offer what aid he could to the girl. The girl was near death when Bellamy reached the village. Local herbalists had sought to fortify her with an herbal paste of tormentil and tannin. They had surrounded her with garlic plants to ward off a miasma in the air.

Courageously, Bellamy attempted transfusions of his own blood to strengthen the girl.⁷ While the unorthodox treatment bought her a few days of strength, her health did not hold. In the meantime, both the girl and the doctor were succumbing to extreme fatigue. It was after the third transfusion that a second

⁷The science of blood transfusions was still quite rudimentary in 1917. Karl Landsteiner devised the ABO blood group in 1900. Thus, the science of blood groups would have almost certainly been part of French medical training. One could speculate that Bellamy was aware of his own blood type and knew himself to be a universal donor. Alternatively, the girl’s condition may have been such that a 1 in 10 chance of compatible blood types could be judged an acceptable treatment to forestall certain death.

doctor, a Dutchman, arrived. This new physician proposed a line of treatment aimed not at the patient but at securing the whole of the village against the miasma. He deployed a complex network of twisted silver alloyed posts, each inscribed with various symbols. It was ridiculous superstition, yet the Dutch doctor insisted that the proper arrangement of charged metal could ward an area from the malignance preying upon the girl.

I had quipped that such a treatment sounded like oriental acupuncture applied to the earth rather than the body. I assumed Bellamy would find my joke amusing, but he spoke no more that day. He broods over the oddest things! Today when I asked about the fate of the girl, and he gave a brief reply. She recovered. The Dutch physician's geo-metallurgical treatment served her better than Bellamy's own efforts to bolster the girl through transfusions. As I said, the Frenchman's stories border on the fantastical.

April 2, 1917. Monday. Bellamy and I explored the outer city this morning. As we returned, we encountered a Buddhist priest, his scalp shaved and branded by nine crude marks. The brand is caused by placing a hot coal upon the head. The absence of pain is taken as an indication of the priest's faith.⁸ Bellamy inquired about the practice and was told that nine is the highest number of brands a priest may attempt. I asked about the fate of priests that cry out in pain as I know I surely must under such an ordeal. The question did not seem to be understood, or perhaps it was something shameful and not to be spoken of.

In the afternoon we visited nearby pagodas and stopped at a Buddhist temple. I secretly wished for another look at the monk with nine brands, but he was not to be seen. The temple, however,

⁸ Some Taoist communities in Southeast Asia practice extreme feats of pain management as part of the Nine Emperor Gods Festival, but the practice does not seem to be found in China. After extensive research, I have been unable to identify the religious community that might be associated with this practice. Fritz seems to think the ritual of burning coals is associated with Buddhist priests, but his documenting of Chinese culture suggests he does not have a finely attuned understanding of the various religious practices in China.

was in the best of repair. Bellamy interrogated an elderly monk working on an elaborate mosaic while I sought out the tea rooms where many visitors gathered to take refreshments.

April 4, 1917. Wednesday. The weather today was quite enjoyable and perhaps the finest that we have seen since arriving in Kweichow. As we descended the road, the air warmed. Along the road I have noted many Chinese women smoking pipes. While I have seen many strange things in my travels, it still strikes me as utterly revolting to see a mother nursing her baby and simultaneously sucking upon a long pipe that is belching a foul tobacco smoke.

We stopped early and made camp. I noticed Bellamy reading a book, and I inquired about it, although I now regret having done so. The book, *Le Roi en Jaune*, is widely known to be of an unholy character. The pastor at my local church often denounced the grotesque evil of that play. I asked the doctor how a good Christian could countenance reading *The King in Yellow*, but he brushed away my concerns.⁹

Perhaps, I should not be surprised that one traveling in China might take an interest in matters of the occult. The people of this land frequently practice rites that touch upon death and the manipulation of evil spirits. I have seen houses with a leg bone placed next to the entrance. The practice seeks to trick wandering spirits that might wish to bring death. After all, if the resident is already dead, the demons have no reason to trouble the house.

⁹“The King in Yellow” seems to be a reference to a play that circulated at the end of the nineteenth century. The first printings of the play were found in Paris under the title *Le Roi en Jaune*. Other editions seemed to have been in limited circulation elsewhere. It does not appear that the play was ever performed. Indeed, several countries, including France, make reference to the play in their public decency laws. It is uncertain what Fritz’s description of Bellamy as “a follower of the King in Yellow” might mean. The play was reportedly banal in content and has been described as “devoid of principles or doctrine.” There were indeed editorials denouncing it as “poisonous”, but no specifics are ever offered. The best guess, I’ve been able to make about the nature of the text given these vague denunciations is that its themes were nihilistic.

As darkness descended on our camp, I recalled my scriptures, particularly Mathew 18:20 “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” On this mountainside, the only Christian for untold miles, I feel a frightening loneliness that I have never known before.

April 8, 1917. Sunday. I slept quite well following a hot bath. Such a feeling to have the dirt of the road melt away! We were of great interest to the locals, and I am told that the road brings an average of one foreigner through town per year.

The dogs here are a sad lot—more miserable in appearance than even the haggard ponies of our caravan. The dogs often sport festering sores; their coats are mangy; and to a one they are ill tempered. The chickens appear more healthy!

I pointed out to Bellamy one dog helping a child with his toilet. He observed that even aside from typhoid, rabies is of no small concern with such semi-wild dogs.¹⁰ In France feral dogs would be put down for safety, but France, he explained, is the birthplace of Louis Pasteur. I assured him that in the United States we too understand the importance of basic animal control.

April 11, 1917. Wednesday. This morning we were in for a long slow climb that continued until about two o’clock. At the head of the pass, we were affronted by cold. A layer of mist lay upon everything, obscuring the mountaintops all around us.

Our path then turned downward, winding toward a small river. The river served as our guide for some distance, revealing a most weird terrain overrun with a wild foliage. It was slow going, but the road turned again toward the mountain, and we left the valley and river behind.

¹⁰ I consulted several public health officials at the university regarding the spread of typhoid. While fecal matter is the primary source of contamination, the disease is exclusive to humans. There are no known animal species that carry typhoid. In fairness, the medical understanding of typhoid was still quite rudimentary in 1917. Only a handful of cities had attempted to chlorinate water to stop the spread of typhoid at the time of Fritz’s account. The US military was using a crude vaccine for typhoid at this time, but it was not widely available, and typhoid remained a significant public health concern.

We stopped for the night at the quaint town of Kuan-yin, which sports a better inn than many I have found. At the entrance of the city, we caught sight of a fresh corpse impaled on a stake. It was a man executed for robbery. At his side his wife sat, weeping bitterly. I have never before seen a public execution, and I turned away not wishing to look long upon the crudeness of human death. Bellamy was merely indifferent. Being a doctor with a year on the eastern front, I suspect such horror presented him neither novelty nor shock.

April 18, 1917. Wednesday. We took to the road by six in the morning, moving with haste to the mighty metropolis of China's west, Chungking. It took us twenty minutes to cross the Yangtze River; the ferry men strained against the swift current, but, even so, we landed much further down the far shore than planned. The American gunboat *Pellos* was preparing to leave Chungking to make its way downriver to Shanghai.¹¹ It was from the crew of this mighty warship that I first learned that America has declared war on Germany. Bellamy greeted this news with joy, declaring that we were now allies as well as friends.

Chungking bustles with many finely dressed Chinese—clothed in black broadcloth jackets and trousers of silk. Silk shops are plentiful here. Yet, the streets also team with beggars, their bodies smeared with filth. There are many injured among the beggars. One man's ear was wholly rotted away, leaving an oddly shaped hole reaching deep into his head. He held his hand over the hole to keep it clear of sand and debris. Such an agony! I know not how he endures it. Another man had a hole running from his lower lip to near his eyes, allowing one to gaze into his throat.

Bellamy observed that he had seen such wounds on the men pulled from battlefields, but that such men nearly always died without the benefit of prompt medical care. He speculated that

¹¹ Fritz is clearly referencing the *USS Palos* (not the *Pellos*), which the US Navy built specifically for the shallow waters of the Yangtze River to support American commercial interests in China. The departure of the *Palos* may have been the result of an agreement with other Allied states to temporarily re-deploy the ship to Shanghai.

for so many here to have survived to bear such wounds in the absence of modern medicine, many thousands more must have perished. Even a crude calculation suggests a staggering scale of carnage.

April 28, 1917. Saturday. We were up early. I dressed and breakfasted, and by five thirty we were off. We hope to see the great salt wells around Chungking. We passed a market city that seemed to serve much of the region. The inn we located could accommodate a small army. Yet nearly every seat was filled.

We managed to secure one room and counted ourselves fortunate. We were approached by an officer. He informed us we would need to procure an escort of at least six soldiers if we wished to depart on the morrow. He said we were entering “bad country” and a smaller escort risked being overrun and robbers would steal the guns of the soldiers.

We retired to our room early. The day was hard. While the roads were well-maintained with flagstones fitted neatly, the terrain required much from us.

May 3, 1917. Thursday. By seven o’clock this morning we had reached the salt and gas wells. We arranged for the chief of the wells to serve as a guide as we studied the setup. It is truly a wonder of industry—the most primitive tools and brute labor applied with a scientific precision. From such a combination has come tremendous wealth for the region. Each well generates between two and four tons of salt. The brine water is pumped by creative means to gas wells where the water is evaporated away. In all there are 10,000 wells but many have run dry and are no longer active.

At the China Inland Mission, I met Mr. McIntyre. His compound has been given over to housing refugees. The people fear Yunnanese troops who have taken control of the town and all approaches. The soldiers refuse to leave until they have been paid and have received promises of continued employment. The result has greatly strained matters in Chengtu where looting and burning has caused great damage. Mr. McIntyre estimates no less than eight thousand have been shot or burned by the renegade soldiers.

Yesterday, we crossed “no-man’s land.” Our escort of six soldiers turned back, abandoning their orders to provide us safe passage.

May 4, 1917. Friday. It was a late start from the mission compound. I pointed out to Bellamy how the topography of the area was similar to the badlands of western North Dakota. While no geologist, I was nonetheless fascinated by the striations in the rock and the erratic, almost alien terrain.

At Tzu-chou, we crossed by ferry. On the far side, we encountered Yunnanese soldiers preparing for deployment. They showed us little respect, being a generally poor lot in attitude and bearing. The whole area feels on the edge of a knife.

May 9, 1917. Wednesday. We made an early start and were able to reach the outer suburbs of Chengtu by three o’clock in the afternoon. We came upon the city through the eastern gate which carried us on a broad road through a commercial district. Shops of every variety were in abundance.

I was greatly pleased to learn that Chengtu has a fine bathhouse! There were many tubs each set in a stall and fed with both hot and cold running water. A large common dressing room made for great relaxation with a cup of tea always at hand. After the bath, I enjoyed steamed towels, perfumed and regularly changed.

I left refreshed, but it was too late to make any calls, so I set off for a short walk about the city. Several of the streets remained barricaded, and as I moved closer to the Imperial city, it was evident that large sections had been recently burned. The talk on the street is of trouble, and many seek to flee. Those with riches are stowing them at the homes of foreigners, should there be more trouble.

I am unclear as to the factions. There are perhaps three thousand Kweichow soldiers supporting the Civil and Military Governor. The leader of the Szechwan force seeks the ouster of the Kweichow and could easily accomplish the task by force. The Szechwan hold back, however, fearing that Yunnan troops

in revolt will take to the field when the Kweichow faction is threatened. It is an uncertain balance, and it may tip toward war at any hour.

May 14, 1917. Monday. I inquired with the Foreign Office regarding our plan to proceed to Ta-chien-lu—and to secure a “hu-sung” (military escort). The office is headed by Mr. Chan, a cordial man educated in England. He had no answer for me this day but promised to notify me tomorrow of the situation.

May 16, 1917. Wednesday. We departed early from the South Gate. The hu-sung was “on deck” as Mr. Chan had promised, and we left the city under an escort of four soldiers. This escort was changed at Shuang-liu. The British consul-general in Shuang-liu was shocked to hear we intended to make for Ta-chien-lu. He warned we would never make it through. We considered turning back, but Mr. Chan had assured us that the way was open. We shall see.

There are rumors that the Lolo people are in rebellion and have set up their own chieftains.¹² Chinese villages have been pillaged along the mountain roads. It is unclear if these are isolated attacks or represent a new side to the upheaval that has taken China since the fall of the Qing dynasty.

Also, we have heard a queer tale, much like fiction. Multiple accounts, however, agree that the aboriginal tribes around Kuanhsien have unified under the banner of a “heaven-sent emperor.” They are moving against the Chinese with speed. Several officials have already been killed.

It is said that this new god is a former beggar boy who was taken in by a wealthy household to act as a servant. In addition to a most peculiar personality, those from his household tell of a “strange light” filling the night when the boy sleeps. A prominent lama found the boy and declared him the “leader” that was foretold in a vision. Many have rallied to this new god-figure, and this has affected some of the neighboring states.

¹²The Lolo are now referred to as the Yi or Nuosu. They are one of the largest “non-state people,” numbering around 9 million.

Much of the area is comprised of semi-feudal states. Some are, for all intents, attached to China, but others are wholly independent, with the rights of a sovereign state. While most maps show these states to be part of Sichuan, maps fail to reflect the reality found on the ground.

May 19, 1917. Saturday. The land has turned more hilly, and the great mountains that once loomed so far-off now dominate the skyline. The road we are on is noted for brigands of the worst sort. The robbers take no care, injuring any they accost, even foreigners! Ch'iung-chou has well earned its evil reputation.

The road from Ya-chou to Ta-chien-lu is estimated at 145 miles (450 li), and it should take our baggage more than two weeks to cover this distance. By chair we can make the distance in eight days.

We paid a toll for the bridge at Lu-ting-ch'iao. The road is torturous, and the mountain passes rise up very high on either side of the narrow road.

Today I worked up the courage to confront Bellamy about *The King in Yellow*. I asked how a Catholic could countenance such blasphemy. He countered that a man of science should never shy away from lines of inquiry simply because religious authorities have judged them to sit beyond the pale. Men of science, he declared, have long pushed into realms that men of faith fear to tread. I countered that a pursuit of knowledge without moral guardrails was folly. He laughed and slapped my shoulder, saying "Chester, you worry too much what cloistered priests have to say about the world." I found his hubris simply too much and declared that such a macabre philosophy would come to no good.

May 22, 1917. Tuesday. The road has turned difficult, rocky, and hard. We endured five hours of rain this morning, and when the clouds dispersed, we were left with a dull gray sky that offered little light or warmth. During the afternoon we were able to make progress in a steady gradual climb.

My chair bearers have been disappointingly surly. They tire quickly and regularly complain about the weight. For several days I shifted my goods to the caravan to lighten the load, but

now I am “fed up” and am having none of their guff. I believe it is the opium that accounts for their poor work effort and disappointing service.

May 24, 1917. Thursday. Off early this morning and after twelve hard hours on the road we arrived at a decent inn at Ni-t’ou. I inquired about the elevation and was told we were at 4,900 feet. To the south and west, the plateau plummets almost perpendicular to the two adjoining rivers below. The city sits like an impregnable feudal castle atop the high cliffs.

I have been disquieted in recent days. My throat and lymphatic glands have swollen, and a bulge of hot angry fluid has formed under my skin. Over the last day this bulbous lump traveled from the top of my forehead across and down my face. It does not hurt but is alarming. Doctor Bellamy assures me it will pass and attributes it to living rough in changing elevations. At his suggestion, I have taken to massaging the stiffness from my neck with kerosene. It is a great help!¹³

May 27, 1917. Sunday. We awoke to a heavy rain at six o’clock. The bearers declared that we would need to wait out the rain. They were overruled, and we departed at six thirty. The rain halted well before nine o’clock. The bearers then insisted on a rest!

Our hotel is located next to the bridge. It is quite the site; a large iron chain is suspended high above the Tung River in a long swooping arch that supports a suspension bridge.

The inn was wild with rumors of the past few weeks. The Tibetan lama has marched the army of the boy-god north of Ta-chien-lu, capturing the tribal capitals of Romichangku and Mongoon. Chinese officials have attempted to flee—but many were killed. The lama has declared that the boy-god has been

¹³ While kerosene was a traditional remedy for muscle pain, the World Health Organization states that frequent exposure can cause skin damage. This entry suggests that Fritz is susceptible to suggestion and his reported improvement may simply be psychosomatic.

sent by heaven to drive the Chinese from Tibet. Speculation is that this new crusader army will set its sights on Ta-chien-lu next. We are in for a real adventure.

May 30, 1917. Wednesday. Our destination today was the Summer Palace of the King of Chiala.¹⁴ The weather was ideal for traveling, and we made good time to the bridge of Tibet—a single span bridge carved of stone.

We arrived at the palace and were greeted by Mr. Coales from the British Consulate. He has been staying at the palace for a couple weeks. The King of Chiala, however, is not presently at the palace. Mr. Coales directed us to a hot bath in King's private bathhouse—the water is heated by a sulfur spring.

A number of years ago, during the revolution, soldiers broke into the temple at the Summer Palace. They looted the idols and broke them open in search of hidden valuables. The idols and other sacred books were subsequently moved to upper rooms. The room that I was assigned had a number of these books.

My curiosity for these artifacts was great, and Bellamy and I spent several hours, aided by wine from the King's stores, sorting through the texts. Most were in Mandarin or the angular and Arabic-looking script of Tibet, but a few were in European languages.

Bellamy was looking for a copy of the *Book of Dzzyan* but failing to locate it declared that Blavatsky and her entire theosophical cult was nothing but charlatanism, for if such a book were truly an account of secret Tibetan lore it would surely be in this trove.

We did find one volume in Latin: a large, leather-bound tome written in a strange, flaking red ink. Bellamy read a passage to me, which he translated into English as best he could.¹⁵ My

¹⁴ Fritz's spelling is unusual; however, Ta-chien-lu (Kangding) was the capital of the kingdom of Kingdom of Chakla. The kingdom had been dissolved in 1911 and incorporated into the Qing Dynasty. Following the collapse of Qing rule, the Chinese Nationalist government supported a restoration of the king in an attempt to prevent the region from slipping entirely from Chinese influence.

¹⁵ I've consulted a number of antiquarians trying to identify the text Fritz discovered. Admittedly, it is impossible to work backward to the original Latin from a remembered translation, but a New England

tastes have never run toward poetry, but such was the intensity of Bellamy's translation that the verses have lodged themselves in my mind:

but even as the stars wane and grow cold, as the suns die, and the spaces between the stars grow more great, so wanes the power of all things—of the five-pointed star-stone as of the spells put upon the Great Old Ones by the benign Elder Gods, and there shall come a time as once there was a time, and it shall be shown:

*That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange eons even death may die.*

June 1, 1917. Friday. Awoke early and made good time in reaching Ta-chien-lu. The city is an important center of commerce and politics on the main highway connecting Peking and Lhasa. It is known as the "Gateway to Tibet." The streets are interesting—teeming with traders, lamas, muleteers, Tibetans and Chinese.

After tiffin, I called upon the King of Chiala by way of sending our cards to see if he would receive us at his home. I must say he was far from an impressive man, dull eyed and worn, but courteous and friendly. His secretary was an old man with bright eyes and a kind face. Both men wore Chinese style dress, which struck me as a sign of China's long cultural shadow. At first, I took the King to be of large build with a distended stomach. In reality he hides a bundle beneath his clothes. About his person he always keeps several large charm boxes of engraved silver. The engravings and charms serve as a ward against evil influences.

colleague speculated the passage may have been from a rare book known as the *Necronomicon*. It has been frustratingly difficult to verify this conjecture. I requested permission from Harvard university to review their copy of a 17th century printing. I was denied. Likewise, the British Museum and Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris denied my requests. The rare documents dealer that assisted me in securing Fritz's *War Journal* claimed that the copy at the Paris library has been missing for more than a century. Apparently, the book is widely coveted by collectors.

We were taken to guest rooms and were waited on diligently. Tibetan servants providing to our every comfort by way of tea and cake! The King invited us to stay at his palace for the week, promising to organize a mountain hunt with his retinue. Neither Bellamy nor I believe that such a hunt would be possible given the instability around Ta-chien-lu.

In the not so distant past, the King held great power over an area five-days march in all directions. His control of Ta-chien-lu and the great trade road was a steady source of income. The Chinese have broken his control on the trade route, and his power has waned. Today, he holds the palace but can scarce defend the city.

June 2, 1917. Saturday. It is a short five-minute walk from the King's palace to the main lamasery. There were hundreds of old ladies chanting some mystic prayer while fingers worked at the rosary beads that are so common here. We saw a large altar room where ceremonial scarves were draped across the arms of Buddhas. Butter lamps burned on the altar railing and elaborate paintings covered every wall with designs.

Within the main room, a large Buddha carved from some gray translucent crystal was surrounded by mats. Lamas sat on the mats, chanting prayers. The walls in this larger room were also lined by paintings, but the paintings here were portraits of the more than 550 rebirths of the Buddha.

Because the King arranged our visit to the lamasery, we were introduced to the abbot, Khedrup Je. Abbott Je is a "living Buddha."¹⁶ He seemed to me a content man, serious, but all together comfortable in his own skin. Were I not a Christian, I could imagine seeking out his pastoral counsel. We spoke at great length of our journey from Hong Kong to the threshold of Tibet and our plans to turn east by way of the Yangtze River. He was fascinated by my description of our travels.

¹⁶ Khedrup Je is possibly a misspelling on the part of Fritz or more likely a misunderstanding of religious symbolism and titles. Khedrup Je was a Buddhist abbot and mystic active around 1400 C.E. Nonetheless, based on references in Fritz's *War Journal*, it seems quite likely that this alleged Khedrup Je is the abbot referenced in his telegram.

June 3, 1917. Sunday. I called today on the British consular officer, Mr. Coales. We had a splendid time. He offered me the use of his interpreter to serve as guide as we traversed the city. Mr. Coales's interpreter is a smart-looking young man who presents himself well to both Western and Eastern sensibilities. Mr. Coales's boy assisted me in procuring a prayer wheel. I learned that these are nearly impossible to purchase, as they are passed through family lines for generations untold.¹⁷ I compared the practice to family heirloom bibles, but the boy did not seem to understand the custom.

Preaching in the market was a prophet of the so-called boy-god. Through Mr. Coales's boy, I was able to learn something of this new religious uprising. The lama's vision warned that the Chinese would soon destroy the Tibetan monasteries, but a boy-god could hold back the Chinese until the completion of a great western temple, which would stand for 1,000 years. I thought of the Chinese attire and affect of the King of Chiala and fear for what will befall Ta-chien-lu.

June 5, 1917. Tuesday. Bellamy and I departed at eight thirty. Mr. Coales accompanied us to the edge of the city. Several miles out from Ta-chien-lu, we found Abbot Je waiting for us upon a mule. He asked if he could join us on our travels. I asked about his duties as abbot of the lamasery. He remarked that it was time for another "retreat" to focus his mind on the challenges to come. Bellamy thinks he is fleeing Ta-chien-lu before the city falls to the boy-god's army. We welcomed his company.

We set a good pace—the downward slope being easier. I also have two new bearers for my chair. It was a disagreeable scene, but I steadfastly refused the services of two of the bearers we used on the journey to Ta-chien-lu. The two were both opium smokers and sulked incessantly, causing trouble amongst the

¹⁷ The prayer wheel procured by Fritz was on display in the East Asia Room of the Chester Fritz Library before the library underwent re-modeling in 2021. It is currently held by the University's Special Collections.

good and hard-working servants in the caravan. Furthermore, the two complained of being weak and regularly sought breaks. I say to them “good riddance.”

For supper, I enjoyed mountain trout. The freshwater fish reminded me of an alumni banquet I attended, back in the states. Walleye! Such a feast! I lived in the memory and knowledge of the moment. Such food and such friends are the best a man can hope.

June 7, 1917. Thursday. Such a joy to be on the road! The weather was cool, but the sun poked through clouds of fleece, warming us as we traveled. The Tibetan sky was charged with a blue I had not previously known.

The mountains are undoubtedly Himalayan, averaging between 18,000 and 20,000 feet. Snowy peaks catch the sun and spear it toward that unnaturally blue sky. It is a scene I have committed to memory and will carry with me when I return to the prairie-turned-wheat fields of North Dakota.

Throughout the day, the abbot and I spoke of theology and recent politics. I expected Bellamy to finally share with us his adventures in the Great War, but he was sullen and distant. I have wondered after his health these last few days, as his appetite seems to be flagging.

June 10, 1917 Sunday. We rose at four this morning and made haste to “hit the road.” We have agreed that it should be possible to make the journey to Ya-chou in two days rather than the three that were initially planned.

We made a good pace today, covering a major portion of the route. The bearers have been promised additional “tea money.” This allowance is quite generous (200 cash, per man) but is contingent upon making the journey in two days.¹⁸ The laborers would still be paid for the three days of work, so it should be a good deal all around.

¹⁸ Most of Fritz’s references to prices are in “cash,” which is one one-thousandth of a yuan. Cash was denominated in copper coins and yuan in silver. As best I can tell, the dollar and the yuan were of similar worth (in silver) in 1917. For context, a North Dakota farm laborer in 1917 would have earned about \$3 a day.

At Jung-ching, we selected an inn that was quite spacious. The quarters were warm and comfortable and helped ease the discomfort of a long, wet road.

After supper, I found Bellamy sitting by an oil lamp. He was hunched over a book and seemed largely uninterested in the news and gossip of the inn. Although the light was dim, I recognized the book he was studying. It was the Latin volume we had found at the Summer Palace outside of Ta-chien-lu. I asked him about the book, and he snapped that it would be unconscionable to let any book fall to the looting of illiterate fanatics. I did not press Bellamy further but felt that we had betrayed the hospitality of that still-proud king of Chiala.

June 11, 1917. Monday. The weather was comfortable, and we departed early from Jung-ching. We had to wait for a ferry to arrive to cross a swift stream, which delayed us somewhat.

Rieb of Standard Oil Company met us in Ya-chou. He has arranged a raft and will accompany us down the river.

June 13, 1917. Wednesday. At dawn the raft departed—surging out from Ya-chou. At 80 feet long and a dozen feet wide, we had space to prepare raised beds, stuffed with straw. Our luggage was laid in an untidy pile near the bow. The charter for the trip was 7,000 cash.

We navigated many gorges and kept well clear of precipitous banks. The river jogged at sharp angles, forcing the raft to swing to stern with a frightening speed.

We spent the day lounging upon the straw beds. Abbot Je and the doctor were much taken with a debate of theological import. At the start, their discussion had the character of the Reformation debate over salvation of souls through faith versus works. It is a question every child learns about in Sunday school. Ultimately, however, they diverted down a pathway I did not care for.

Their debate raged for hours and in the end the abbot declared that there is a poison that flows through all things, which could only be drawn from the world by prayer as a poultice draws out the evil from a wound. Bellamy took to this idea with great enthusiasm. Perhaps the Catholic fascination with original

sin made such a notion palatable to his mind, or maybe his interest is related to those vile books he has accumulated. For my part, I found the abbot's description of a malign force twisting at the edges of creation deeply unsettling. I prefer to dwell on other things.

We put down anchor at Lin-tsun-ho in the early afternoon.

June 14, 1917. Thursday. The armies of Lin-tsun-ho have been disbanded and many men were upon the roads in this district. Our raft was hailed by soldiers several times today. Several sought to board our vessel, but we refused. Their intent was not piracy, as we had at first feared, but rather transit to Chia-ting.

Rather than seeking an inn, we made for the fine new quarters of the Standard Oil Company. The local agent greeted Rieb and saw to our needs.

June 15, 1917. Friday. I took tiffin with the China Inland Mission staff and was introduced to Mr. Quentin with the Canadian Methodist office. Mr. Bradshaw with the American Baptists recommended an inn for dinner. The meal did not disappoint, with surprises in every course! By dark we had taken to playing a new game to determine who would pay for each round of drinks. The game is a deceptively complex test of wits in which two individuals square off, simultaneously revealing different hand signs—a fist, or a palm down, or two fingers indicating a scissors. I won more than I lost, which must be beginner's luck.

The evening was altogether quite excellent until around ten o'clock when things went to pot. It happened after I defeated Bellamy in a best out of three hand game. While attempting to hail one of the servers, Bellamy ran afoul of a Chinese ruffian.

I did not see the start of the commotion, but Rieb grabbed my arm and shouted that Bellamy had been thrown to the floor. The attacker—a ship's captain, barrel chested and tattooed—began stomping on the helpless doctor. Rieb and I charged into the fray in an attempt to rescue our friend, but the entire inn was in a frenzy, and we found ourselves pushing against a surly group of sailors. The locals were screaming "laowai" (foreigner).

I began to despair that we would not be able to reach Bellamy, but it turned out to be a blessing. If, by some chance, we had managed to fight our way to the doctor, the explosion would likely have burned us horribly as it did Bellamy's attacker. Most likely one of the kerosene lanterns was damaged in the commotion—the explosion was an oily green fireball. The blast took the ship captain full in the face and stunned many of those aiding him. The explosion was the opening needed for Bellamy to fight his way from the melee.

Rieb took our injured companion to the Standard Oil compound. I ran to warn my friends at the China Inland Mission. The streets were dark save for a few gas lanterns at important intersections. The yellow light was dim, but it was enough for me to find my way to the mission house. Mr. Carscalen thanked me. Mrs. Carscalen hugged me and praised Jesus for my courage. The CIM has fortified areas that can be locked down and they keep horses and wagons ready to carry women and children to safety. Satisfied that they were sufficiently prepared for another anti-foreigner riot, I made my way through the blackness of night to the Standard Oil compound. When I arrived, Rieb hailed me and handed me a Colt army revolver.

We are not sleeping this night. After three hours, the fire at the inn is finally out. The town seems quiet, but if this is to be the start of a second Boxer Rebellion, it will not find our company unprepared.

June 16, 1917. Saturday. We left Chia-ting for Omei-hsien as soon as the light would permit. Our party consisted of Rieb, the abbot, the good doctor, myself, and the two boys, Chang and Teng. We secured two four-man chairs for our journey, prizing speed as we sought to put distance between ourselves and Chia-ting. We made good time crossing the fertile countryside, arriving at the ancient temple of Ome-hsien by mid-afternoon. We put in for the night. The abbot retreated into the inner sanctum of the monastery with the other monks. Rieb and I walked about the grounds, seeking to work from our bodies the stiffness that comes from traveling by chair. Bellamy chose not to join us

but sought out the Temple's archives. He returned to our room at four o'clock in the morning, presumably having scrutinized the entirety of the temple's collections.

June 21, 1917. Thursday. We again took to the road at seven o'clock. Not a one of us relished re-mounting the four-man chairs, the stiffness having settled deep into our bodies. We bid our friends at the Temple "au revoir." A scarce ten li from the temple we met two injured laborers. We stopped, and Bellamy gave what assistance he could. The men had been cut badly by the brigands who had set upon them. The men were carrying silk, which was lost, but with Bellamy's attention they will live. Such an attack was brazen in the extreme!

At Hsin-k'ou we shed our chairs to cover the remaining 30 li by boat. We paid our bearers for the full day's labor for they had made good time and seemed a good sort. We made for the Standard Oil Company's office arriving in the mid-afternoon. Again, the hospitality and largess of Mr. Rockefeller was much appreciated.

Rieb observed that the Yangtze River should be thronging with oil barges bearing Standard Oil's Chinese insignia, Mei Foo. But such river traffic is altogether absent. Mr. Fong, the Standard Oil agent, said that no captain dared send a boat down river. Fear of robbers and pirates has snarled all traffic between Chia-ting and Suifu.

With the Szechwans holding Chia-ting, the Yunnanese have deployed forces to Suifu. The two armies have dug in and fortified both cities against attack. In between, bandits have the run of the country. It truly is a "no man's land."

June 22, 1917. Friday. Mr. Fong served as interpreter when I called today at the home of the magistrate—a friendly elderly man. I took to him. He assured me that he would provide us an escort so that we could depart Saturday. The escort would secure our way only as far as Ma-liu-ch'ang. The magistrate said that he dared not cross into Yunnanese territory and that beyond Ma-liu-ch'ang well-armed and dangerous robber bands held sway.

His offer of escort was apparently made without any attempt at irony; however, it strikes me as such—offering escort up to but not into bandit country!

We discussed how to proceed that night. Bellamy and Abbott Je were uncharacteristically bold and all for trying the river. Rieb and I were less certain, but the abbott's confidence won us over. I thought of the gunboat Pellos, which must have come this way. With such a warship upon the water, even the most rough and desperate of brigands will give a group of foreigners a wide berth.

June 24, 1917. Sunday. Arrangements in place, we left in the morning aboard a reliable boat equipped with nine rowers. Along the docks wait hundreds of boats on the promise that Kweichow soldiers from the capital will arrive to provide escort. But with no assurances as to when—or even if—such an escort will arrive, we have decided to press on.

June 26, 1917. Tuesday. Before the sun had broken the horizon this morning, we were making for brigand country. At Ma-liu-ch'ang we breakfasted on hard boiled "tea eggs" and took on provisions. We inquired as to the state of the river, speaking with a local head-man—such a strange, sallow look about this chief! He offered assurance that robbers would show foreigners the proper respect, taking silver and firearms, but otherwise not troubling about our personal possessions.

A little over 10 miles from Ma-liu-ch'ang, near a bunching of farmhouses we heard the report and saw the smoke of three guns. We made for shore as the robbers raced along the bank. The current was pulling hard, and the steep banks offered no easy place to land.

I watched the maneuvering of the robbers as they kept pace with us. They utterly lacked discipline, or perhaps just leadership. They were clearly desperate, reminding me of mangy, irritable, half-starved dogs. The robbers were wary of surprise attack, crouching behind rocks with rifles aimed at us. Bellamy pulled his shirt from his body, a white flag, which he waved frantically. We pulled for the shore with all haste, hoping that our signal would stay any further shooting.

We put in at a steep bank and they spread out above us. A few of the bolder robbers came nearer while others stayed at a safe vantage. When at last they could see we had no soldier escort, more came down. They rooted through our cargo and asked us many questions but took nothing saying that they did not want the foreigner's things. We were warned by the robbers about the Yunnan soldiers we would encounter further down the river—a “bad lot”!!

June 27, 1917. Wednesday. The captain of our boat has refused to take us any further. He proposes we wait for a military escort requested by a Japanese merchant with a dozen cargo barges. There is nothing to be done. We are marooned with no option to take passage with another ship.

With no activity to occupy me, I unpacked the prayer wheel I had purchased. It was my first time examining the scepter-like device since Abbot Je joined our party. I feared his displeasure at my procurement of such a sacred object, but if that was his mind, he gave no indication. The prayer wheel is a carved wooden staff about two feet in length and capped by a series of elaborately engraved metal bands. The bands turn freely about the dowel through some ingenious mechanism of clockwork. Turning the bands enables the devout to invoke hundreds of prayers for the purification of the mind and the dissipation of bad karma.

Bellamy, too, took a great interest in the prayer wheel and questioned the abbot at length about the principles of construction. The two have been at their meditations on the nature of “the sleeping evil” for many days—a form of spiritual inquiry my Christian faith renders unnecessary and macabre. This new interest in the wheel is more to my liking, and I hope they will stay upon this course.

June 29, 1917. Thursday. Still at anchor! I feel trapped and “fed up” in this small boat—waiting, waiting, waiting! I wish to be off.

Bellamy has suggested to the abbot a new design for a prayer wheel. However, I pointed out that Bellamy's distended spiral design is in no way a wheel! If I understand the concept, Bellamy has proposed fashioning a mighty coil laid horizontally, allowing many individuals to worship simultaneously from within.

Surprisingly, the two men, who have bickered at length over their occult scholasticism, came to a rapid agreement on the physical properties of this new wheel. By the evening they worked at drawing plans for what Bellamy describes as a “modern cathedral” and a “Tibetan Notre Dame.”

June 30, 1917. Saturday. At six thirty the call for all hands-on deck was sounded, and we were away!! Our small boat now carries twenty soldiers, including the commanding officer. Our boat is flying the Yunnan flag next to the “star spangled banner!” It is a sight. With such a flag upon the mast, I no longer fear pirates or brigands.

Roughly 80 li from Suifu, robbers lying on the bank fired at our flotilla, but our escort was more than they cared for, and they quickly fell back. Soldiers were exchanged at Nan-ch’i-hsien—slow and disorderly.

Bellamy and the abbot seem to have reached a point of philosophical difference in their prayer wheel design. I do not understand their argument. The abbot seems to think individual discipline is necessary for purification. Bellamy by contrast argues that a poison cannot be removed from a liquid, but it can be diluted and thus rendered harmless. The debate left both men screaming at each other, so I took my leave and joined Rieb at the ship’s stern. We baited hooks and passed the day catching weeds and the occasional stick.

July 1, 1917. Sunday. Our flotilla of nine vessels bristles with the guns of over 110 soldiers. I must admit that while there have been some delays, I greatly welcome the Yunnan battalion as we start down a stretch of river infamous for pirates.

We arrived at Luchou as the sun set behind us. We made for the China Inland Mission compound where we shared a meal with eight missionary families. This is the largest mission I have encountered. It is the central office coordinating nearly thirty outstations!

July 3, 1917 Tuesday. By four o'clock this morning, we were moving out of Luchou. We have 450 li to cover and need to make good time.¹⁹ The sunrise was breathtaking—a rich vermilion that lit up the river and sky.

From Kweichow, the Chi Chiang river makes its way to Chiang-k'ou. The scene on the shore was memorable with rugged hills forming the banks of the river. It took us sixteen hours, but we covered the full 450 li. When the walled fortress of Chungking came into view, several of the soldiers let out a cheer.

July 4, 1917 Wednesday. There was a reception at the American Consulate this morning celebrating the American Independence. I invited Bellamy and Rieb to attend, for as Frenchmen they would have a place of honor. The reception drew a mix of foreigners and officials.

Afterward, a group of us retired to a taproom to enjoy champagne. The Americans, boisterous as always, provided entertainment for the other foreigners. I showed my skills as a boxer—Smith and I putting on an impromptu match. We had dinner “on the town” and I toasted to friends, and to adventure, and to the great United States of America. I sang “Little Gray Home in the West,” to the great enjoyment of my new friends.

July 5, 1917. Thursday. I awoke quite late, calling on the American Consulate at two o'clock. I collected my mail—five months' worth. Many of my fraternity brothers and friends from college wrote to tell me of joining the army or entering officer training.

I sat with Bellamy for much of the night. We shared several bottles of wine, though I think I would have preferred a stout bourbon. I finally asked him to tell me of the war.

Bellamy grew up in Sedan, a small town in the Ardenz, and had planned to open a practice there after medical school. But the Sedan was overrun in December 1914. His family died when cannon fire collapsed their home during the attack on the city.

¹⁹ The Li is a unit of distance, sometimes referred to as the Chinese mile. It is approximately half of a kilometer or one third of a mile. The exact length associated with a Li varied over time and from region to region.

Bellamy considered joining the French military, but the balance of his analysis spoke against such a course. The French were, he thought, well prepared to take back Sedan in short order, and they were more than adequately staffed in doctors. The east was a different matter. Serbia was caught in a pincer between the Austro-Hungarians, the Ottomans, and undoubtedly the Bulgarians. Their forces were ill-provisioned and lacked all but rudimentary field medicine to support the war effort.

Bellamy took two books on field medicine from the Sorbonne University medical library and set sail for Greece, making his way overland to newly re-captured Belgrade. For nine months he worked with the Serbian military to establish field hospitals and a system of triage facilities. When typhoid began to spread, he turned his attention to sanitation, quarantine, and the slaughter of dogs and cats.

The October offensive in 1915 overwhelmed all Serbian preparations, and Bellamy marched with Marshal Putnik as the Serbian army fell back through poor weather and across perilous mountains toward a hostile Albania riven by civil war. The Astro-Hungarians harried the retreating body of soldiers and fleeing civilians with mortar fire and gas. There were no provisions, and the mob stripped anything of life from the land: squirrels, moss, even the bark of trees. Bellamy spoke of cannibalism and the smell of flesh after it has frozen and mortified. He told of whole families left to freeze in the mountains when a child took ill or a parent broke a leg. Less than half of the quarter million that followed Putnik's line of retreat survived the journey.

I do not think I will sleep tonight. I am re-reading letters and trying to picture the faces of my friends.

July 10, 1917. Tuesday. We lifted anchor with the dawn. The river all but hurled us down the gray and mournful Kweifu Gorge—cliff walls surging upward like some dark Gibraltar. We reached I-ch'ang well before noon. The city sits at the downstream mouth of the gorge. The captain says we made the run in record time. Indeed, we were the talk of the I-ch'ang waterfront.

July 12, 1917. Thursday. We have arranged passage on the S.S. Mei Foo, a Standard Oil Company riverboat. Rieb will not be continuing on with us, and I will be sorry for the loss of his company. The boat is well-equipped, and Captain Beach seems a solid sort. I was able to secure a state cabin for myself, which should make the two days journey to Hankow more enjoyable.

July 14, 1917. Saturday. I went exploring in the foreign concession. Hankow's Bund is a wide promenade stretching over two miles of riverfront. Police were in evidence. Every nation of import in China, save the United States, has concessions here in Hankow: England, Russia, France, Germany, and Japan. It is the Japanese, however, that hold power in the city. Shipping, trade, and a force of some 15,000 soldiers gives them control of the output generated by the great iron works facilities at Hanyang.

I am unsure how to record the events of tonight. But I fear if I do not now write what I have seen, I will soon attribute it to dream, or more like, to madness. Bellamy and I took to the Bund for dinner and drinks. The hour was late, and as we turned toward our inn, we were set upon by a footpad. The man was gaunt—with few teeth—but he held a knife and barked at us in some local dialect. I began to reach for my wallet, seeking to placate the man lest the situation turn toward violence.

Perhaps in shifting my coat, the man caught sight of the Colt revolver that I now keep at my side. I have heard that in such moments time slows down and details become clear, but for me it was all a rush. The footpad lunged, and I fell to the ground. The cut was shallow, my belt taking a good portion of the force. Still, there was blood, and I screamed out as much from surprise as from fear or pain.

The strike on me spurred André Bellamy to action. He raised his hand; his middle and index finger alighting as a burning torch. He scribed into the air before him a symbol. What it was, I could see only from my position on the ground and out of the corner of my eye, but it hung in the air between Bellamy and the robber for a moment before fading. When it did, the robber's knife fell to the ground.

The fear on the man's face was not the fear that I felt at having been struck by a knife. It was something more. The man fell to his knees and began slamming his head against the flagstones. He struck repeatedly, and I heard the breaking of bone. Even as the man's body began to spasm from his injuries, he continued to throw himself against the stones, to the last of his strength.

Bellamy watched the man writhe in agony and spoke a prayer of thanksgiving to some demon king or dark eastern god. He named it Hastur, but I shudder to hold that name in my mind. Whatever Bellamy is, whatever power he called down upon that man, I want no part of it. Oh, Jesus, king of all that is holy in heaven and in earth, I want no part of it.

July 18, 1917. Wednesday. The boat fought hard against the current. Heavy rains have swollen the rivers. I stayed in my cabin.

July 20, 1917. Friday. As soon as we tied up at the dock in Changsha, I was ashore, making for the Standard Oil office.

A lifetime ago, I arranged to tour the Wah Chong facility, an important firm producing manganese and nearly 60% of the world's antimony supply. The tour was a welcome diversion.

I have not spoken with Bellamy for six days, keeping to my room and to my Bible. I have, however, spoken with Abbot Je. He listened but did not seem surprised by my tale. Indeed, it sits upon me like a great stone that the abbot should accept without doubt or skepticism my accounting of events.

July 23, 1917. Monday. My bags are loaded on the downriver steamer that will take me to Shanghai. It is a fine passenger liner and quite spacious. There is a farewell party tonight, and though I do not feel inclined, I will attend.

July 27, 1917. Friday. Shanghai is a sprawling port city—among the largest in the world. It is the commercial heart of China and my link back to Hong Kong. I arrived today.

July 28, 1917. Saturday. I walked the Bund and enjoyed watching the bustle of ships and cargo moving about the city. The sun has turned blisteringly hot, but it feels less so on the Bund.

Abbot Je and I said our goodbyes this morning. He has found a monastery here in the city that will house him for a time. I wished him well. Bellamy is, I assume, off to meet his colleague.

July 29, 1917. Sunday. Departed for Hong Kong aboard a passenger steamer. As I gathered my personal effects to embark, I found Bellamy standing at the gangway. He offered no apology and in truth no contrition or explanation could alter what I have seen or unmake what I now believe he is. Instead, he clasped my hand in his, saying: "In French, Bellamy means 'beautiful friend.' I name you, Chester Fritz, 'Bellamy.' We will meet again at the end of all things." He then pressed into my hand a small piece of paper:

"Be on your guard, the stars have come right"

Part 3: The War Journal

December 8, 1941. A year ago at a party, Betty Davis told me she was keeping a “war journal.” I found the idea novel and made a point to stop at a stationary shop in Los Angeles, before departing for Mexico. I’ve kept diaries at different times in my life, and in hard times there is some comfort in writing out the events of one’s day. Today I’m starting my “war journal.”

I got a call at around 4:00 AM from my colleague in the Philippines, Ocampo. He warned me that Japanese forces were waging blitzkrieg on sites in Asia. He was clearly scared, even if his information was all mixed up. I rang Ellis, a junior partner, and told him to get the money out of our vault and to recover my private papers. I asked him to stash the money at employee houses, and to bring the papers to me here at Belmont House. Hiding money across all of Shanghai would make cash hard to access in any large quantity, but if the Japanese were moving against the international sector, western firms would certainly be looted.

December 9, 1941. Apparently, the Japanese attacked Hong Kong and the American Naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. I guess it is war now, and we are finally in it.

I am very much torn up about the war. I’ve vacationed in Japan yearly for more than a decade. Last year I climbed Mount Fuji, and I have fond memories of the estates in rural Japan. Things have been quite tense for several years, and I hoped the US would be able to stay out of it. I’m glad that Bernadine is back in the States rather than here with me. We had talked for years about returning home, but it seemed like idle speculation about the future. Shortly after the Japanese military attempted a coup, Bernadine told me she wanted to get clear of Asia. We bought a small chateau in West Hollywood, and she departed in

August of 1936. I know she is among friends and that when all is said and done, it will be for the best. But the ocean that separates us is now a battlefield.

December 12, 1941. No news to report. I joined the Chester's Cowboys for dinner and drinks at the Astor House. The polo season is undoubtably off this year, but there is speculation that the Japanese may permit the track racing season to go ahead. The paper chase is too much to hope.¹ It was good to talk sport with friends. As always, we toasted to Robert Mishler, but scotch was in short supply, and we had to settle for a local vintage—a step down from moonshine.

Even in hard times, the Astor House will always have a soft spot in my heart. It was by the greatest luck that I met Ms. Bernadine Szold at the Astor House in 1929. She was traveling with a friend, Barbara Harrison, from Paris to the Philippines where Barbara's father ran things.² They were only in Shanghai for a couple weeks, but we had a grand time. When the two arrived

¹The paper chase refers to a cross country race that was carried out in the area around Shanghai. The course was marked by colored paper and riders had to traverse field and stream and road with no knowledge of the course before setting out. The race was dangerous, and many riders fell to obstacles or failed to finish due to the demanding nature of the race. The paper chase handicap was highly competitive and was often described as the Kentucky Derby of the orient. Fritz was a regular competitor in these races, placing well on numerous occasions and winning the paper chase handicap in 1927. Fritz was quasi-fanatical in his training for the paper chase. In preparation for the 1927 race, he worked with a Russian cavalry officer to improve his jumping skills. The paper chase was also popular with the Chinese peasantry who would gather at difficult spots along the route to watch racers fall. At other points, the Chinese peasantry would contribute additional obstacles to the course, throwing stones at the racers as they charged through fields.

²I believe this reference to Barbra Harrison's father is a reference to Francis Burton Harrison, the United States Governor-general of Philippines following the Spanish American War. Bernadine Szold may have been accompanying Barbra Harrison as a friend or as an extension of her role as the Paris correspondent for *The New Yorker* magazine.

back in Paris, I sent Bernadine a cable proposing marriage. My offer was met favorably, and she returned to Shanghai by train two months later.

December 16, 1941. The Badlands have been almost completely abandoned. The Japanese have locked down the main access points into and out of Shanghai. With the polo season off, I can't say we are any worse for having that den of vice closed. "Chester's Cowboys" have quite the following in the betting houses. And for good reason! But with gambling comes other vices less suitable for casual indulgence.

This morning I took tiffin with Grensburger at Fiaker Coffeehouse. War or no, the puffed up European is still wearing his monocle and ascot. At least some things never change! He wanted to know if anyone in the broker's association was still able to trade with New York. I told him that as far as I knew, we were all cut off. He grumbled a bit, but I towed the company line and reminded him of the wealth that the broker's association made possible by setting trading prices in Shanghai. No one, even Grensburger, wants to go back to the days when we bribed each other's staff for access to client lists and tried to undercut each other on price. He fell into line. I've licked him a time or two, and he knows I'm his match.

As always, Gensburger has the local gossip. It sounds like the Japanese have taken to score settling. The Kempeitai—military police—grabbed Joe Farren as he left his club around 4:00 in the morning. They took him to Bridge House on North Szechuen Road. The apartment building there is being used for political prisoners.

December 18, 1941. It looks like the Japanese are moving against the Philippines. I got a cable from one of our copper traders in Manila saying the Japanese have a beachhead on Luzon. It's terrifying how fast the Imperial forces are moving. This offensive was a long time in planning.

People are looking to "get out of Dodge," but the ports are closed. The last of the Red Cross evacuation ships left today. I told Culbertson that the Japanese won't shut down business because it would be bad for the city. It may be hard, but we just

need to adapt. I reminded him of how bad things were when China abandoned silver currency. Swan and Culbertson had brought me on as a partner to get a hand on the operation I built for American Metal Company. My contract with AMC was worth nearly ten thousand a year. Everyone thought silver was the whole game in China, and I was—according to the papers—Mr. Silver! Without silver we lost nearly a quarter of our portfolio, but we diversified into copper and started underwriting construction projects. We figured it out and came out on top. Culbertson does not share my optimism. I've noticed he has been drinking more and more. The stress is getting to everyone.

One of Bernadine's friends told me today that some of the Paramount Ballroom crew went to Bridge House to buy Joe Farren's release. Apparently, the Kempeitai had tortured him for days. They used every trick in the book! Farren died in the cab on the way home.

December 20, 1941. Today Japanese forces moved into the international concession and the French concession. There was no real resistance, although they say a French officer blocked the advance single-handedly. He parked a chair in the middle of the street and refused to move until the Japanese came to parlay. He negotiated an honorable surrender, which is more than I can say for us!

It has been harder to get news. It sounds like the Fascists—Germany and Italy—declared war on the United States. Congress responded in kind. That means the US will be fighting a two-front war. I worry that Europe will take the heat first, leaving us out here in Asia to stew.

December 26, 1941. Life has changed in the city. Foreigners are now required to wear armbands with their nationality. In my neighborhood it is mostly folks with the A and B armbands for American and British. My favorite clubs have been taken over by the Japanese officers. It was a sorry Christmas indeed.

The enlisted soldiers seem to prefer the wine sinks and brothels of the Badlands. I didn't think my opinion of that area could sink much lower, but at least before the occupation the opium addicts gambled and whored with their own money rather than money looted from honest Shanghailanders.

January 3, 1942. Got word today that Manila was captured by the Japanese. This comes on the heels of Hong Kong. Some of the stories about the massacres of the British in Hong Kong make me thankful that the fall of the international sector was bloodless. I have many friends in Hong Kong, and I hope they were able to get out.

Foreigners are now forbidden cars, so I'm back to riding my bike and taking rickshaws. Normally, a horse would be my preference, but earlier this week Bismarck was shot for sport by a Japanese soldier. I had heard that some of Victor Sassoon's best horses ended up in Chinese cooking pots when he left Shanghai last year. I didn't want to risk that outcome for Bismarck, but I can't imagine a more ignoble fate.

January 23, 1942. Today I attended a ceremony at the Astor House. It was a revolting display put on by the Japanese and served no purpose but to humiliate Shanghailanders. The ceremony featured the transfer of the ownership of the Shanghai telephone company to the Japanese military administration. Swan, Culbertson, and Fritz had underwritten the whole venture, so my attendance was required. I felt sick, but I dared not make a scene. Yet, my silence only served to legitimize the theft. Culbertson says the Shanghai power plant will be next. I told him that he can attend the next ceremonial pilfering of our life's work. I will have no more of it.

January 25, 1942. There is nothing good to report. The Japanese are unstoppable. They've been pounding at Kuala Lumpur for two weeks now. Apparently, the British are getting it handed to them in Singapore. Singapore! Today, Thailand declared war on the United States and Britain. The whole region is falling to the Rising Sun.

Huge sections of the Badlands were torched yesterday. The Del Monte went up with dynamite. The Japanese say it is to clear room for new construction, but I think they just want to see the world burn.

February 7, 1942. The Kempeitai grabbed me yesterday and took me to Bridge House. I got quite the working over! Apparently one of my Japanese clients is angry that we haven't been able to liquidate his account. I told the police that our firm didn't have any cash, but they said we emptied our vaults and are hiding cash. I denied it! It was "rough going" for a while. They left me in a cell for the night, so I could hear the screams of the poor bastards getting it way worse than me.

In the morning, I told the Kempeitai I could pay out of my personal funds—a little bit a month. I don't like it, but there are things in my papers I'm not willing to hand over to the invaders. Drawing down some of my cash reserves is a good trade to keep [LARGE SECTION OF TEXT BLOTTED OUT] my private papers out of the hands of fascists. The Kempeitai agreed and gave me one more kicking before dumping me on the street. I'll have to find a dentist, but I've had worse. North Dakota kids are tough.

February 8, 1942. Swan, Culbertson and Fritz shut its doors today. I gave a speech. Told my staff that it was only temporary and we would be back on top soon. I told them how the tungsten operation I ran with Richardson collapsed with the end of World War I, so I got into silver. When China dropped the silver standard, that almost broke us, but we came roaring back in commodities. There is no place on earth better for business than Shanghai, and no war—no matter how big—is going to change that. It was a good speech, but my face is not a pretty sight, and the swelling didn't help my diction.

I checked in on Culbertson this evening. He was passed out in his bathroom. I went through the house and poured out as much alcohol as I could find. I worry he is in a bad place. When I was in Mexico, he convinced me to return to China because "you don't just walk away from this sort of thing." But now it is all gone. Everything we built is gone.

February 25, 1942. It has been a bad couple weeks. The British have lost Singapore and the US is pulling out of the Philippines. Rangoon fell early in February. Everywhere the “Red Coats” are on the run. Even Uncle Sam is taking it on the chin. People are desperate for a win, but there’s not much hope.

Culbertson has gone underground. He tried to get into our office at Sassone House. The Japanese are using it as a military communications post. Our cable infrastructure is coordinating operations across all of China. I’m not sure what he was after, but the Kempeitai are hunting him.

March 14, 1942. It goes from bad to worse. I got word last night that Culbertson was being held at Bridge House. I rounded up the last of my cash and went to buy his release. As I walked up to that sunny yellow building, I could feel my heart pounding. My ribs still hurt from steel toed boots. I took three deep breaths and made myself go in. Culbertson sure had it worse than me, but he was able to walk out with some help. The burns on his body were something pretty bad. I try not to look at his hands—his fingers are not a pretty sight.

March 16, 1942. I focused on getting penicillin today. Culbertson has a fever. He is staying with me at Belmont House. The apothekas in the international sector have either been shut down or are out of stock. I tried to pass a checkpoint into the Badlands, but the area has been sealed off. Apparently, a bomb went off underneath the new Japanese army barracks at the site of the old Del Monte.

The bomb killed a whole mess of soldiers. The Japanese are convinced it was the work of the KMT. I think it sounds more like “Dapper” Joe Farren’s goons taking their pound of flesh.

I was able to find penicillin in the French Concession. The price was ten times what I would have expected, but there was nothing to be done.

March 19, 1942. The Kadoorie family was arrested yesterday. I’ve decided it’s time to prepare to go underground, if things should start to go bad. I’ve developed nervous habits—biting at my nails and pulling at my hair. My eyelashes are almost gone!

Both Culbertson and I have “tangled” with the Kempeitai and good folks in the international sector are disappearing all the time. The police come for people in the night, which makes it hard to sleep. I wake in a cold sweat whenever a truck rumbles past Belmont House.

There is talk about foreigners being rounded up and put into camps back in the States. I hope we don’t see that kind of thing here.

Culbertson’s fever is better. I sat with him, talking about polo and jazz and what we should do after the war. He asked me if I would ever return to North Dakota. I said that I don’t see much left for me there. My father wasn’t worth much before the farming accident. After he was laid up, he got by selling our neighbors on fake insurance. My mother eventually ran off. My aunt told me that she had gone west and wasn’t coming back, but we never really figured out what happened. There was no need to send for Sherlock Holmes to get the story. We all just moved on.

April 10, 1942. It is all over in the Philippines. The US has given up the fight. Burma seems on the brink of falling too. The Japanese soldiers strut around like they are kings. I hate them for what they have done to my city.

I got a letter from Bernadine today. Large sections were blacked out, either by the US or the Japanese or maybe by both! She said Groucho and the others asked about me. Everyone is leaning into the war effort back home.

April 20, 1942. Got word today that the Americans managed to bomb Tokyo! I don’t know how they did it but dozens, maybe even hundreds of bombers were close enough to make a run at Japan. The KMT is touting it over the radio. The bombers destroyed all of Tokyo and then turned east for China. KMT forces were waiting to get them to safety.

What a hit! I have been waiting for some news that the United States is on the march. I was starting to doubt that Roosevelt was up to it, but it’s good to know we can give as good as we get!

I told Culbertson that if the US had finally managed to bring General Chang to heel, we might start seeing the tide turn in China. Chang was always at his best when he listened to his advisors, and I found that he was receptive to good ideas when they were broached in the proper way. Bernadine hosted Mei-ling Soong for tea almost every week and Mei-ling very much has her husband's ear. It was through Mei-ling that I recommended former acquaintance—a French doctor—to organize field medicine for the KMT.

Both Culbertson and I agreed that today marks the turning of the tide.

May 3, 1942. Japan is in for it now! The allies have started supplying General Chang's forces. Material is coming in through the British Raj. American pilots are flying fuel from India into China—hundreds of sorties a day!

After Black Saturday, I can't say I have any love for the Chinese Airforce, but it will be good to see what they can do with some real backing.³

Culbertson moved out of Belmont House this week. He still looks a wreck, but he is sober and is sleeping with fewer nightmares. I wish I could say the same! I have had unsettling dreams as of late.

I am not one to dwell on dreams, but this vision has come to me three times. I cannot put it easily from my mind. As of late, I have been reading my bible, and I was struck by the angel's instructions to the Apostle John: "Therefore, write down the things you have seen, and the things that are, and the things that will happen after this."

The dream always begins with Robert Mischler. We mount our horses and ride out of Shanghai to the district where Robert taught me to ride. Once free of the city, we pound across field and stream. I gain the advantage, outpacing Robert. When my

³ The reference to "Black Saturday" no doubt refers to the accidental bombing of the international concession on August 14 1937 by the KMT air force as it fought against Japanese invasion. Several bombs struck the international concessions, killing an estimated 3,000 civilians.

horse finally tires, I reign in and look for my friend. I call to him, but there is no answer. I make my way up to the crown of a great hill, which overlooks the whole world, where I hope to be able to see Robert. There is a figure off in the distance, and I wave and call out. As the figure comes closer, I realize that this man could not be Robert. It has been more than a decade since cancer took him. He was twenty-nine.

As the figure comes closer, the earth begins to sicken. The vegetation withers and turns to rot. Everywhere, I can hear the anguished cries of those succumbing to famine, pestilence, war, and conquest. The voices are a mad cacophony. I want to turn away—to shut it all out—but there is nowhere that is not afflicted. And through it all, the figure walks on, passing untouched amid the destruction.

In the dream, he strides battlefields in which armies grind each other to nothing, and he is unafraid. André Bellamy's course is fixed upon me. He sees nothing else. It is only when he begins to climb the hill upon which I stand that the man seems to weaken. It is not a physical weakness. He does not slow. Rather, he seems to lose substance—a fading ghost or a radio broadcast eroding over distance. As Bellamy's shade dissipates, he calls out to me, "I will come to you, Chester. At the end of all things."

He is gone, and I am alone in a dying world.

May 22, 1942. I went out on my bike today. It is risky with the check points, but I was sick of lying about. I'm used to having the run of the city—and what a city it was. Bernadine is known to call Shanghai "Sodom incarnate." I think that is both unfair and "on the button." Everyone was in Shanghai in the 1920s—Albert Einstein and Noel Coward. The theater scene was as good as anything in New York or London or Paris.⁴ The greatest horsemen of a generation ruled the Shanghai tracks and the polo fields. With no passport controls, Shanghai was a magnet for

⁴While Shanghai no doubt had a robust theater scene, Fritz is not without bias in making this assessment. Bernadine Szold-Fritz's salon, the International Arts Theater, was the hub of western art and culture in Shanghai for nearly a decade and was the engine driving the theatrical excellence that Fritz is praising.

those on the run and those looking to get rich—criminals, Russians, entrepreneurs, Jews. Sailors from every nation on earth found a home in Shanghai. The city that I saw today is not the same. It has lost its life and its spark. I fear it may never recover. Shanghai—the Shanghai I knew—is gone.

June 7, 1942. The newswire reports a major naval battle between the American and Japanese navies. Maybe as many as four Japanese carriers were sunk. I've been doing some back of the envelope calculations and I think Japan might be stretched thin. I have a pretty good sense of the commodity markets in Asia, and I just don't see how Japan can pull enough oil out of its territory to keep up the pace.

I've been thinking a lot about the American civil war. The combination of the North's industrial might and Sherman's strategy of necessity eventually turned the tide. I've studied enough history to know that everything old is new. I wonder if this last couple months have just been the Union getting up its gumption for the new Overland campaign.

June 12, 1942. Reports came in that Japan fired on Sydney a couple days back. I told Culbertson last week that the US Navy had Japan on the ropes, but it looks like I had it all wrong. Japan is still on the offensive both here in China and in the Pacific.

August 7, 1942. There seems to be a major fight in the Solomons. It is hard to know what is happening. The Japanese sources say they have repulsed an attempted landing. The English newswire says it's a pitched battle, but the US has the upper hand.

Japanese soldiers are getting panicky. There have been bombings in the Chinese parts of Shanghai and the guerrilla operations in the area around Shanghai have created a sense of siege. One of the bridges I built for the paper chase was bombed last week.

August 23, 1942. The Kempeitai came for me three days ago. They got me while I was asleep. I've lived my whole life without a dog or a child—never wanted either—but it would have been nice to have had some warning!

They did let me take my suitcase—after stealing my cash! Small blessings.

The real blessing is that they didn't take me to Bridge House. I was moved to the Chaipei camp. It looks like the Japanese have been setting up camps throughout the city to hold foreigners. There are more than a thousand of us here.

August 26, 1942. A French woman was shot yesterday. I'm not sure what she did or why they shot her. She was pulled out of a line up and executed in front of us all. Everyone is on "pins and needles," as they say.

I've negotiated a sort of tontine with a couple of friends in the camp. We are writing letters to loved ones, wills, and other such documents. The buy in for the agreement is a \$5,000 letter of credit which should ensure that whoever makes it through will have sufficient means to deliver personal effects to family and friends and to carry out last wishes. I've been thinking about how to put my affairs in order, but it is a fine line to walk, and the only viable path is painful. I have resigned myself to the necessity that Belmont House must be destroyed. The tontine will ensure that someone will see it done, no matter the cost.

THE TONTINE LETTER

Note to Bernadine Szold:

I am sorry that we have parted ways. Our differences were deep, but I am grateful for the years we shared together. I wish you all the happiness this life can offer. Do not mourn for me excessively. Rather, fill your days with good cheer and great friends.

Note to Charles D. Culbertson:

I formally name you executor of my estate. Liquidate all my holdings. I ask that you honor the tontine agreement and see the survivors paid accordingly. Of the remainder, half should be delivered to my wife, Bernadine Szold Fritz. The rest shall be donated to some deserving cause, that I might be counted among the ranks of such great philanthropists as Andrew Carnegie and Alfred Nobel.

Note Regarding Final Wishes:

I grew up wanting brothers, and it is no small irony that I should find now the fraternity for which I so long sought. Still, it is bitter that our brotherhood should be born from terror and grief. Still, writing this letter gives me some small joy, as I think that some of our number may endure and one day see freedom. Indeed, knowing that such good and honorable men will see these instructions through gives me heart as I confront the days ahead.

My requirements are simple—see to the destruction of Belmont House. Not one stone atop another. Nothing must survive. I dare not offer a precise statement of my motivation in asking this, but I will give what context I can so that whosoever takes up this task will not stop at a half-measure.

My life has been from my first days in China tied to a man—a man who haunts my dreams—Doctor André Bellamy. We departed on bad terms in 1917 but reconnected a decade later at Chiang Kai-shek's wedding to Mei Ling-soong. My friend Robert and I were serving as ushers. I had risen to be one of the most eligible bachelors in Shanghai—successful in sport and in business! Bellamy was practicing medicine at the Kwongchow Psychiatric Hospital.

The doctor asked for my help in financing a massive new hospital structure in Canton. It was a radical approach that promised to unlock an entirely new field of human knowledge related to psycho-architectural engineering. I was skeptical at first, but the Kwongchow Psychiatric Hospital had reviewed his research and was interested in testing Bellamy's theories at scale. He hypothesized that as much as 60% to 70% of severe psychosis could be treated or even cured through proper architectural principles. Working with Bellamy was not something I had any appetite for, but the project promised an easy profit and Culbertson insisted.

The new hospital compound was completed in June 1936. But even before the ground had been broken, Bellamy had begun plans for a second facility that he claimed would apply a different but related set of principles. I knew too well the source of Bellamy's scientific principles, and I protested to Swan about our continued involvement in every aspect of the planning. Securing financing was one thing. Coordinating metallurgists and construction details was something else! Fortunately, I was able to direct the doctor into other pursuits.

Through Mei Ling-soong, I passed along that Bellamy was an expert in field medicine. Under some small bit of pressure, he accepted a commission as a colonel in the Chinese Nationalist army in 1933. His appointment came as Chang was pouring his forces into the village of Loudian in a hopeless attempt to hold Shanghai. I received a letter by currier from Bellamy in January 1934. To my horror, he had been in the thick of it at Luodian and had fallen back with Chang Kai-Shek to Nanking. The damned fool could have hidden in the concessions, but he fulfilled his commission to the bitter end. His letter contained instructions to keep all knowledge of his research out of the hands of the Fascists lest they decipher the principles behind his work and bend it to dark ends. His warning would have sounded absurd, but for two facts.

First, I traveled with Bellamy for many months, and I know his mind, I know his power, and I know that he is a disciple of the King in Yellow. Second, on a whim I wrote a letter to a friend who had traveled with us back in 1917. Abbot Je shared that he had helped Bellamy with the design of the second building.

He offered little in way of an explanation as to the building's purpose but charged me to guard Bellamy's secrets with my life. This letter seemed to corroborate what I had seen with my own eyes. I had visited the Kwongchow Psychiatric Hospital compound. I spoke with dozens of people who had found a sanctuary in Bellamy's hospital. They described it as a fortress, a shield against the madness.

I considered destroying any trace of my collaborations with the French doctor. In the end, what stayed my hand was not the abbot's words or even what I saw at Kwongchow. Rather, it was my own optimism. I did not believe the concessions would fall. I did not believe it could ever come to this.

From the very start, I have been tied to this thing that I fear and do not understand. Now I see only one way to cut this knot. Let it die with me. Bring Belmont House down.

July 4, 1943 I've lost perhaps 40 pounds. The food is not the best, but at least it is in short supply!

Some of my old clients have been brought to the camp including one of General Chang's concubines. The other day, she asked me to sell her shares in Shanghai's shipping industry. I wanted to shout! Where is my cable to New York? Where is my ledger? Should I conduct her business while peeling rotting yams!

August 16, 1943 I've been assigned latrine duty for two weeks straight. The guards have it in for me. Growing up, my father put me to work "shoveling shit" as a hired farm hand on Olafson's farm outside of Fargo. I thought at the time that there was no future in it. Little did I know!

In truth, I fear this will be my last entry. Soon my legs will give out and I will fall into the muck of the latrine and that will be that. Duncan went that way yesterday. I am now the last survivor of the tontine. There is no one left that I trust. I do not know what to do.

September 27, 1943 I have secured a private room aboard a Red Cross ship headed to the States. It has been a strange few days, and I now feel well enough to record the events.

On September 22, the Red Cross arrived at Chaipei camp with permission from the Japanese government to secure the release of 500 prisoners. An exchange had been negotiated, and 500 Japanese citizens were being traded for Westerners held in Shanghai. We were lined up in the camp yard. No explanation was given as the guards went through pulling us out of the line seemingly at random. When I was tapped, I assumed it was for execution. I squared my shoulders and planned to meet my end with some small bit of dignity.

I was brought into the main security compound. Sitting at a table with the camp commander was Bellamy. He had aged since I saw him last. His hair was now mostly gray and his eyes, which had always been a light blue, had lost all of their color. I watched him with tears in my eyes, but he would not look at me—not a hint of recognition filtered through. They reviewed my file and arranged for my release. My few possessions were brought to me in a cotton sack, and I was shuffled to a line of trucks at the camp entrance. At dark the trucks took us to a Red Cross compound in the French concession.

Red Cross staff scrubbed us and deloused us. Doctors inspected us, documenting scurvy, and infections, and bones that had healed wrong—ailments both serious and small. Afterward we were taken to a hall for a special soup that would help with starvation. Bellamy was waiting for me in the dining hall. He limped toward me, his gait clearly paining him. I hugged him and thanked him. “Chester Fritz” he said. “I named you friend, and I do not forget.”

The next day we took a Red Cross ambulance to my old house in the international sector so Bellamy could retrieve the blueprints and engineering specifications for his project. I felt utterly disoriented as he drove us through the international sector. The city was dead—the life and vibrance squeezed out of it. The greatest city in the east was now just a shabby, decaying maze of cracked stone and shattered glass and exposed skeletal steel and clay brick.

As we closed on Belmont House, a sense of deep dread knotted in my gut. For more than a year, I had agonized daily that I had not destroyed Bellamy's files when I had had the chance. I had tried to mollify my guilt, telling myself that they were in all likelihood trivial. While we drove, I learned that my hope had been unfounded. The Belmont House cache was all that remained of Bellamy's strange science. When Hong Kong fell, his hospital had been burned, and all of his research on metallurgy, architectural design, runic scripts, prayer wheels, and psychology was lost. We were seeking out the last copy of a dark opus.

As expected, Belmont House had been looted several times over. The smell of mold was strong and the plaster on the walls was damp, cracking, and falling away. Both wall safes had been pulled free and split open. The floor safe, however, remained untouched. I pulled away the flooring in the office and spun the dials to open the safe. Bellamy's files were tucked safely away in the same accordion file folder Ellis had brought me nearly two years earlier. When I handed Bellamy the folder, I watched his reaction. I expected to see it, but it still scared me—that fevered spark of madness. I made up my mind and drew my Colt revolver from the safe.

He was facing away from me when I pulled back the hammer. He heard the click. It was loud. "You told me to keep those files safe." I told him. "You warned me that they could work evil in the wrong hands." My body was so weak, and I could barely hold the revolver steady. I was terrified that I would not have the strength to do what must be done.

"Chester," he said—his voice calmer than I had expected. "I didn't come here for the files. I could trace every line in these blueprints from memory. I came for you. I need someone I can trust. I need you." He turned to face me, and I steadied my aim. I was prepared to shoot, but the tears streaming down his face gave truth to his words.

I raged at him. I told him I wanted no part of whatever madness he sought to bring into this world. My words were a slap and spurred him to anger.

"Have you looked at the world, Chester? The madness is already here," he hissed. "All is in ruin. The world is burning. And worse things are coming—a power that can level cities and drive humanity to its knees. It is coming, and we are not ready for what lies ahead."

I did not know what to say. There was the same manic energy in him that I had seen in my friend all those years ago as we traveled the Yangtze River. Yet, there was also desperation and fear.

At last, he found the words to move me. His rebuke cut deep. "I know you would prefer to sit idly by and observe the passing scene, but you need to prepare yourself for the serious work of the future. I cannot see it through, and you may be the only one who can," he paused then, before sharing what I should have seen—what should have been obvious. "I'm dying, Chester. The cancer will take me. I am a doctor, and I know that my time left is measured in weeks not months."

"The end of all things," I whispered.

He nodded.

I was utterly torn between grief for a friend—a true friend—and determination to put an end to Bellamy's dark arts once and for all.

"I just need you to read it," Bellamy said to me. "Promise me that, my friend. Nothing more."

I lowered the revolver, and I gave him my word.

October 2, 1943 I have been at sea for eight days now. I have left my cabin only for meals; otherwise, I have been at work on Bellamy's papers. There is more here than I had ever imagined. I once thought I knew this man—his heart and his mind. But so much here is beyond my comprehension, and what little I can grasp leaves me shaking with fear. And yet, I can see the righteous line of Bellamy's reasoning. His equations seem to point to hope, not to despair.

My mind is still undecided as to the course ahead, but I think I now, at long last, understand the problem. The stars may have come right, as they say, but we—not the stars in heaven nor that accursed demon beneath the waves—shall be the masters of our fate.

Part 4: Chester Fritz's Address

President Starcher, Governor Guy, faculty, students, fellow alumni, and other friends of the University:

Your enthusiastic welcome has been heart-warming—in fact, it has been almost overwhelming! It is an interesting experience to come back to the home pasture, and especially after long absences. I have been so busy with my own work elsewhere that this is only my second visit to this University since I left here as a student over fifty years ago, though you may be assured that this University has often been in my thoughts.

In my activities I have not been accustomed to speaking to audiences of this size; so now I am going to turn to what I have written that I may not be tempted to go beyond my allotted time and that my few remarks may at least have the virtue of brevity.

When I left this campus as a student in June of 1910, little did I dream that I would be returning for an occasion like this. And of course then I could not have any idea of the deep satisfaction that this dedication ceremony is giving me today. It is a peculiar kind of pleasure, the kind of pleasure that comes from knowing that a long-term debt is finally about to be paid off.

I shall not dwell now on the high importance of an adequate library for a university dedicated to quality scholastic standards; that is a theme you have doubtless heard many times.

But now that we have the building, I am trusting that from time-to-time alumni and other friends of this University will augment with private funds the regular legislative appropriations to the University for the growth of the library, so that this library will always be kept well-stocked with the type of books, magazines, and other materials needed for scholarly work in every department of the University. For it is my hope that this will

become a library of distinction, a library that will be a working center for ideas—not a place where immature boys and girls may play at studying, or where they may idly sit and “observe the passing scene.” But I hope it will be a center where purposeful men and women do serious work, in preparing themselves for the larger, serious work of the future. The Good Book says we are placed on this planet for “good works.” This includes preparation, and the future belongs to those who prepare for it.

In this divided world, it is of the utmost importance that we prepare to meet our national and international responsibilities. By calmly studying present facts, and by evaluating the lessons of the past, we can then meet with greater confidence, more wisdom, and more courage the increasingly intricate problems of the future. The rewards come to those who think clearly, and who act with courage.

In the autumn days of life, one becomes reflective and even pauses to take inventory, to see what, if anything, he has done to make this a better world. Most of us have started our careers on foundations built by others; and it gives one considerable satisfaction to know that he has helped build foundations from which others may climb higher, have a fuller life—perhaps even “the abundant life.” And in doing this, I have preferred to give my contributions while I am still living; it means more to me to give “with a warm hand.”

The library represents a long reach into the future; and it is my fervent hope that it will bring appreciable benefits to many students, and faculty, and other people throughout my native state. And in giving this building, it has been my thought that this gift should not reduce legislative appropriations for other buildings that this growing University needs.

Finally, the numerous expressions of appreciation that have been coming to me, ever since this building was first announced, have been so deeply gratifying that this afternoon “my cup is full,” yes, running over. I thank you.

Chester Fritz
October 13, 1961

Part 5: Author's Afterword

If you have spent any amount of time on the campus of the University of North Dakota, you are no doubt familiar with the Chester Fritz Library. For more than 60 years it has been a gathering place at the heart of the campus. For those who have had the honor to work, think, and grow in the Chester Fritz Library, there is undoubtedly a deep affection for the building. I hope that in sharing this story that affection has only been deepened and also that perhaps a greater interest in Chester Fritz has been piqued.

In truth, I did not set out to tell this story. I had intended to write a different book—a gritty murder mystery in which the library's construction played a minor role. In plotting this would-be novel, I mapped out a series of letters between President Starcher and Chester Fritz. Ever a stickler for authenticity, I purchased a copy of Chester Fritz's *China Journey* to help get a handle on Fritz's literary style. Within minutes of starting Fritz's diary, I was enchanted, and the story of Chester Fritz quickly supplanted my original plan for a novel.

The method I used in building the story was quite simple. I trimmed Fritz's nearly 200-page travel diary down to the essential elements needed to establish movement across China along with what I considered the most interesting and fantastical parts of Fritz's journey. That essential core was paraphrased, sentence by sentence, resulting in about 15 pages of text. From there, new characters were layered into the narrative—specifically Abbot Je and André Bellamy. Fritz did meet an abbot in Ta-chien-lu, but it was a brief meeting, and the abbot did not follow Fritz to Shanghai. Likewise at a dinner party in Yunnan-fu, Fritz encountered a “French doctor, newly arrived from Servia.” The offhand description sparked my imagination. What had placed

a French doctor on the Eastern front? Why had the doctor left for China rather than returning to France? It was a puzzle that spawned the character of Bellamy.

In the case of the War Journal, Fritz left no template from which to work. Fortunately, at this point I had a sense of Fritz's voice and had learned that a story could be crafted by layering elements into a diary. At the core of the War Journal are the major events of the Second World War as they would have been observed by someone in Shanghai. The events of Fritz's daily life were adaptations of anecdotes from Dan Rylance's interviews with Fritz and the subsequent biography *Ever Westward to the Far East: The Story of Chester Fritz*. The city of Shanghai was also central to the War Journal. For that I drew upon my four visits to Shanghai as well as Paul French's wonderful book *City of Devils: The Two Men Who Ruled the Underworld of Old Shanghai*.

The Miscellaneous Stories

Perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of crafting this narrative was running down offhand references made by Chester Fritz and discovering interesting stories that added richness to my own imagination. There were countless oddities that caught my attention as I worked with Fritz's diary. Discovering the *USS Palos* 1000 miles inland was quite the surprise! I tracked down what information I could on each person Fritz mentioned in his journals. This was not an insignificant task, given Fritz's penchant for name-dropping. Often, name searches led to dead ends, but, more often than would be expected, I found archival breadcrumbs that added meaning to events. For example, a gravestone and an obituary for Robert Mishler told of the premature loss of one of Fritz's closest friends—a tragedy absent from the interviews with Rylance.

I was particularly curious about Fritz's business partners. It took me considerable time to understand the depth of the mentorship Charles Richardson offered Fritz before their falling out. Similarly, it took work to piece together the origins of Fritz's decades long friendship with Harold Hochschild of American Metal Company who was so critical to Fritz's success. It seems fair to say that his success in the Shanghai silver trade was as

much about building relationships as it was about any special business acumen. As I built a psychological profile of Fritz, one element quickly rose to the surface: Fritz was affable. He forged friendships (and a marriage) out of chance encounters.

Fritz mentions the travel writer Harry A. Franck in the afterward to *China Journey*, noting how Franck's writing had fostered in him a desire to explore the world. Fritz's wanderlust is often remarked upon in biographical accounts. For my part, reading several of Franck's books, which could be described as vagabond adventurers, helped me to understand Fritz's decision to traverse an active warzone with no local language or cultural skills.

The Mysterious Stories

As I separate fact from fiction, I want to be absolutely clear that I took no liberties with Fritz's descriptions of the destruction and suffering caused by war. The mundane atrocities, which Fritz documents in either of the journals, are not fabrications, but the real consequences of a horrific series of interlocking wars that brought suffering to real people. Passing along accounts of human suffering in a work of fiction left a bad taste in my mouth, but deleting the reality of the Chinese Civil War from the narrative was by far a worse course of action.

There are also quasi-fantastical events, which a reader could be forgiven for assuming were an author's invention. For example, the description of the monk who was branded by hot coals was pulled from Fritz's diary with no embellishment on my part. The carvings of torture that so disturbed Fritz were likewise real—although I slipped additional details into the description. Finally, the Tibetan uprising led by a “boy-god” plays out very much as Fritz recounts it. I tried for years to track down more information on this crusade but could find nothing to corroborate or supplement what Fritz describes.

There are, of course, fantastical elements that were crafted out of whole cloth. The fight at the Chia-ting inn and Bellamy's stories of treating a sick child in Eastern Europe are fiction of my own creation. Likewise, the ill-fated mugging in Hankow is my own addition, although not entirely my own invention. *The King in Yellow*, which is referenced in the context of the mugging

and elsewhere, has a long literary history. Readers may be familiar with this reference from the HBO series *True Detectives*, but the King in Yellow, be it as a supernatural horror or as the name of a French play, has been a standard element of cosmic horror since Robert Chamber's published his short story "The Repairer of Reputations" in 1895.

Similarly, the book taken by Bellamy from the King of Chi-ala's Summer Palace should be familiar to readers of cosmic horror and weird fiction. The lines that Bellamy quotes are a well-known passage of the *Necronomicon*, a fictional book found in the stories of H. P. Lovecraft. The astute observer will find numerous Lovecraftian references in the story, but not all references require elucidation.

There is one last debt to be acknowledged. The structure of this story—a messy collection of documents—was enabled in no small part by Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Indeed, before reading *Dracula*, I had all but given up on building a collection of diaries into a functional story. Stoker managed it. I hope that I have as well.

The Missing Stories

There were numerous anecdotes about Chester Fritz, Shanghai, and the Chinese Civil War that I wanted to include but simply couldn't shoehorn into a workable narrative. In fairness to my creative skills, Chester Fritz's style does not lend itself to deep introspection. Yet, a reader seeking to connect the dots around Chester Fritz's life may crave a less fantastical rendering of events. Dan Rylance's glowing biography provides a more comprehensive treatment than I could ever offer. Alternatively, the biographical note provide by Kenneth Pyle in *China Journey* is brief but more even-handed than Rylance's account.

One thing that struck me about Fritz's travel diary is how little he references his childhood or his home. Indeed, most of the references that do exist in this narrative were imposed by me. Fritz had a contentious relationship with his father and was estranged from his mother. Fritz's father was injured in a farm machine accident when Chester was 13. His mother left that

same year. Fritz was taken in by his aunt Kathrine Belanger, who, along with her husband Neil Macdonald, was a champion of education reform in North Dakota.

At 16 Fritz enrolled at the University of North Dakota, managing collegiate success while struggling financially. His desire to explore the world beyond North Dakota tipped the scales away from the northern plains, and in 1910 he signed on as a dishwasher on a Seattle bound train. Four years later he cobbled together a B.A. from the University of Washington while working odd jobs. As a drug store clerk, Fritz met Charles Richardson, the China representative for Fisher Flouring Mills. The meeting, which involved the sale of cigars and a good bit of banter, launched a friendship. Richardson hired Fritz on with Fisher Flouring Mills and began mentoring him for work in China.

Almost as soon as Fritz returned from his 1917 trip—documented in *China Journey*—Fischer Flouring Mills pulled out of the Asian market. Fritz was essentially unemployed on the far side of the world. Without missing a beat, he and Richardson launched a Wolframite (Tungsten) metal export business. Their operation, as Fritz described it to Rylance, seems to have involved a fair degree of smuggling to avoid British export controls. When the first world war ended, the price of Tungsten plummeted. Fritz scrambled to salvage something of value from his last shipment of ore, traveling to Washington DC to testify before congress. Fritz pushed congress to raise tariffs on foreign metals. Kenneth Pyle points out that the proposed tariffs, if successful, would have essentially shut the door behind Fritz's last shipment. The Senate was less sympathetic to Fritz's testimony than the House of Representatives, and Fritz was forced to negotiate long-term storage for a near worthless shipment of Tungsten.

Fritz parted ways with Richardson when he returned to Hong Kong but secured a position with American Metal Company (AMC) overseeing the company's silver trade. It is hard to state how important silver was to China. China was the only country in the world that used silver for its currency, and Fritz was the intermediary between AMC and the Canton and Shanghai mints.

His focus broadened in 1928 when he signed on to the new financial firm of Swan, Culbertson, and Fritz. Fritz's role in the silver trade remained the same, but his firm became central to the financing of public infrastructure projects that came with Shanghai's development. When China dropped the silver standard in 1935, it was a major blow to American Metal Company. Swan, Culbertson, and Fritz, however, had diversified into other industries, and the company had positioned itself as the intermediary brokerage firm between China and the New York Stock exchange.

Following the Japanese occupation of Shanghai's international sectors (i.e. the concessions), Fritz was interned at the Chapei camp. The Library of Chester Fritz ends with Fritz's release. In reality Fritz's liberation from Chapei did not immediately result in his freedom, and the route taken by Fritz on his return journey to the United States was long and touched multiple continents. I've scarcely started to explore a failed attempt by Fritz to rebuild his operations in China following the war or his divorce and second marriage.

Clearly there is much more to tell. Perhaps one day I will return to this world and to the affable Chester Fritz and his brooding counterpart André Bellamy. In the interim, I will leave the dedicated reader with a final anecdote. When doing business in China, Fritz frequently ran afoul of soldiers and local officials. To counter this undesired oversight by the remnants of the Chinese state, Fritz kept an Eastman Kodak film package tucked into his passport. Kodak yellow was close enough in color to "imperial yellow" that it was often interpreted as an imperial document by officials with limited literacy. It was a small deception but one that helped Fritz build a life and a fortune in the midst of a broken country and a world that was spinning out of control.