

Documents

Young Yankee in China

EDITED BY WARREN B. WALSH

ANSON BURLINGAME, United States Minister to China (1861–1867) and member of the first Chinese Mission to the Western Powers, had three children—two sons and a daughter. During the first years of Burlingame's residence in China, the children stayed in this country, living with their maternal grandparents in Boston. Early in 1866, Mr. Burlingame returned to China after a furlough at home and this time the children went too.

Walter Anson Burlingame, the second son, regularly wrote long letters to his grandfather, Isaac Livermore, describing the trip to the Orient, the visit to Japan, and the life in China.¹ The letters are a curious mixture of precocity and immaturity. Occasionally Walter bubbles over and sounds like what he was—a boy of fifteen, but more often his descriptions and discussions sound like those of an adult. Sometimes, of course, he merely repeats the comments of his elders, but if one can judge from many later letters, Walter was a most precocious and somewhat priggish youth.

Whatever else he was, Walter was a careful observer and a conscientious reporter. In editing these letters (which cover most of the year Walter spent in China), I have tried to interfere as little as possible. Modern spellings are given in brackets, and a few corrections have been made to improve the clarity, but the form, grammar, and spellings are Walter's. I have omitted some paragraphs which were repetitious or of interest only to the Burlingame family.

Syracuse University

WARREN B. WALSH

My dear Grandpa

Shanghai Oct. 23rd [1866]

As I shall not have another chance to write to you for some time, I thought that I would write today and send by the mail which goes tonight. We have been here in Shanghai two or three weeks longer than we intended to stay when we first got here. The principal reason of this delay was that the steamer *Szechuen* [*Szechwan*], which runs between here and Tientsin, was delayed a long while at Tientsin on account of a heavy northwest gale which blew the water off the bar so that she could not get over. We began to think that she would never get here, and the river would be frozen up so that we could not get up this winter, but Sunday morning she arrived here all safe and sound, and will leave again for Tientsin on Thursday, today being

¹ See "Pacific Voyage, 1866," *The Pacific Historical Review*, XV (March, 1946), 85–90. Other recently published Burlingame letters may be found: *op. cit.*, XIV (December, 1945), 452–454; *Far Eastern Quarterly*, IV (May, 1945), 274–277. The original letters are now the possession of the Syracuse University Library.

Tuesday. We shall have to go on board, however tomorrow night as she will start about four o'clock Thursday morning.

I shall be mighty glad to get out of this place for it is the most unhealthy climate here that I ever saw. I have been quite sick for about two weeks with [a] sort of Shanghai cholera. Most everybody has the same trouble when they first come here. I have not been sick enough to stay in the house very much but I have to be very careful of myself. I am at present living on nothing but rice congee. This consists of rice boiled with water for 3 or 4 hours, until it is about as thick as cream. It is very nourishing indeed, but I am very tired of it. I have it for breakfast, for dinner and for supper, and am not allowed to eat anything between meals. I have been well now for 3 or 4 days, but I shall continue my rice congee for two days more so as to get all right again. I am awfully hungry and feel as though I could eat up everything in Shanghai. . . .

Give my love to everybody at home and keep a large share for yourself. From your affectionate Grandson

Walter.

My dear Grandpa

Peking Dec. 12 [1866]

. . . We have got all settled now in our new house. It is [a] perfectly splendid house. It looks ever so much better than we thought it would at first. . . . Last Thursday we celebrated Thanksgiving by inviting all the Americans in Peking to dinner. There were about 16 of them. We had a splendid dinner. We had plum pudding and mince pie for desert, but they did not begin to be as good as those Grandma used to make.

I like Peking ever so much. We have a magnificent place to walk, on the wall. We go there almost every day and walk five or six miles. Some day Ed² and I are going to walk on the wall away round the city, about twenty-three miles. It [the wall] is about 60 feet high and about 40 feet wide at the top. There is a stone balustrade about five feet high built up on each side so there is no danger of falling off. From the wall also you can see the country for miles around. On one side you see the Tartar city and on the other the Chinese. You can also look down on the Imperial city, where all the magnificent yellow tiled palaces are. In the distance you can see the Temple of Heaven, with its stained glass roof. On the pleasant days it sparkles beautifully in the sun. There are no Chinamen allowed on the wall, so the Foreigners have it all to themselves.

The climate here is beautiful. They have nothing but clear weather from the beginning of winter to the end. The weather is about as cold as we have it at home but we do not feel it so much as the air is so dry and clear.

I like the Chinese very much indeed. They are entirely different from the Japanese. They are quiet, peaceable, patient, and are very hard workers. To be sure they are very slow, but they are also very sure. They think it very undignified to get impatient. Instead of pitching into each other, as people do when they get impatient at home, they quietly stop and argue the question, and the one who argues the best, beats. The other day Hatterman Street, (the principal street of the city) was blocked up by wagons for several miles. Just think what a row would have been made if Broadway had been stopped this way. But here they took it as patiently as could be. Instead of getting angry they just took out their pipes and began to smoke, and waited very patiently until their turn came to drive along. I think that was the best way to do. . . .

² His older brother, Edward L. Buntingame.

Gertie has two little Japanese dogs, which Gen. Van Valkenburgh⁸ gave her. They are very cunning little things, but they are great nuisances. . . . The other day Mother thought that she would make Hang-Kee (one of the Chinese officials) a present of them. She thought that by doing this, she would not only get rid of the dogs, but would please Hang-Kee very much as all Chinamen are found of dogs. So they were washed and brushed and sent off. But I suppose they are too much even for Hang-Kee's good nature, for the next day who should appear but a Chinaman leading the two small dogs by a string, and bringing a note from Hang-Kee, thanking us very much for them, but saying that he was afraid they would die as he had no room warm enough for them. Of course we knew the reason he sent them back. . . .

I suppose this is the last letter you will get by steamer, the others after this going through Russia. But I must close as it is getting very late. Give my love to all, and accept a large share for yourself. From your affectionate Grandson
Walter

P.S. I forgot to mention that last Monday, the 3rd of December, was my birthday.

On that day I was fifteen years old. I am getting to be a pretty old boy, don't you think so?

W.A.B.

My dear Grandpa

Peking Jan. 18 [1867]

. . . I have to study particularly hard now. I study German, Latin, French and Mathematics, besides chemistry which I study as well as I can by myself. . . . I experiment nearly every day in my laboratory. I have also got to be quite a good carpenter. I have made me some rowing machines, and this week I have been at work making some parallel bars. I am going to put them up tomorrow. I shall have quite a gymnasium by and by.

I go out riding every morning. Ned does not ride much now, as his horse is rather old and is about to fall down, which is not very pleasant either for the horse or himself. Whelan and I, however, ride out every morning. Whelan belongs to the English escort but he has charge of our horses. As soon as we get outside the city walls, we go tremendously fast. I have races with Chinamen, who are mounted on Mongolian ponies. They ride up, and pointing at my little pony, say "Oh: sao mar, mayo qui qui" which means that I have a little horse, which is not fast. So to show them that he is fast, I race a little way with them, and as my pony really is very fast, he generally beats them. If he does they are very much astonished and say "Hung how! Ding how!" which means good, splendid.

Some of the students here once attempted to get up a paper hunt. A paper hunt is like "hare and hounds" except that they ride instead of run. So they spent a long time tearing up paper for scent. At last they got a lot ready and the students who were to be the foxes started off with their horses at the full run, at the same time scattering pieces of paper behind them. In Peking there are poor men who go round with baskets on their back and sticks in their hand. As soon as they come to a piece of paper they whisk it into their bags and they have so much practice that they can pick up a piece of paper as small as it can possibly be.

After waiting some time the rest of the students mounted their horses and galloped

⁸ Robert B. Van Valkenburgh, United States minister to Japan, 1866-1869. He traveled with the Burlingames as far as Yokohama.

off. They galloped for a long time but they couldn't find any scent. At last after they had tired their horses and themselves all out, and not being able to find the scent, they decided to ride home again. But just as they were turning home one of them proposed that they should inquire of the Chinaman. So going up to an old man, who had a basket slung over his back, they asked him if he had seen any paper scattered along the road. "Oh! It's all here" replied the old man, at the same time pointing complacently over his shoulder into his basket in which was all the scent they had had such a hard time tearing up. After some inquiry they discovered that this old chap had followed the foxes and had carefully whisked up the paper into his basket as soon as they dropped it. He was much delighted at his good fortune in finding so much paper. They have never tried any more paper hunts.

A mail arrived [with letters] . . . from Japan which brought very bad news. Just think of it, nearly all of Yokohama is burnt down. Very few of the foreign houses escaped being burnt to the ground. Mr. Walsh's beautiful house and all his new go-downs were completely destroyed. . . .⁴

Give my love to all the folks and accept a large share for yourself. From your affectionate Grandson

Walter

Peking Feb. 24th [1867]

My dear Grandpa

. . . We have been expecting mail from home for the last two or three days. I expect the courier must have been stopped by the snow for we had quite a snowstorm about a week ago. . . .

We are all of us very well, in fact it would be very hard to be sick in such a splendid climate. We have only had one cloudy day (the day it snowed) since we came. All the other days it has been perfectly splendid weather. . . .

I have been making an electric machine out of a pickle bottle. It is a very good one. My laboratory is in good condition, though I have not experimented much yet. The workshop, also, is all right. I have finished my parallel bars, and exercise on them every day. Every morning I ride on the pony. . . .

You don't know how I miss playing ball. The other day the two Martin boys came to see me.⁵ They are not much like the boys at home for they have always lived with older people and they talk like old men. I brought out my "pigskin" to have a game of ball with them. I threw it and Claude, the youngest, (ten years old) put up his hand to stop it. The ball was going quite fast but he managed to stop it. So I shouted "Well stopped, bully for you" to which he replied, "I don't quite comprehend the meaning of that slang phrase but that ball excoriated my hand extremely." I was so disgusted that I put up the ball, and I have never attempted to play ball with them since.

The kite season has commenced and all the Chinamen are flying kites. It seems queer to see old men with gray hair, flying their kites. They make the most beautiful kites. Father counted over two hundred flying kites, the other day as he was walking on the wall. . . .

From your affectionate grandson

Walter

⁴ Mr. Walsh was host to the Burlingame party during their stay in Japan. See "Pacific Voyage," *loc. cit.*

⁵ These were the sons of Dr. W. A. P. Martin, a missionary, who acted as Mr. Burlingame's interpreter during most of this period.

Peking April 7th [1867]

Dear Grandpa

... I will begin now and tell you about our trip to the Great Wall of China. We started two weeks ago yesterday in the most fearful dust storm that has blown in Peking for five years. We were very foolish to start on such a day, but never having seen a regular dust storm yet, we thought it would soon blow over. By we, I mean Mr. Baber,⁶ Ned and myself. We were sadly mistaken, however, about the storm for instead of going down, the wind rose and blew most terribly, worse than I have ever seen wind blow except in the Typhoon. The dust was so thick that the whole air was perfectly yellow. At Peking the lamps were kept lighted all day, so thick was the dust. Our horses could hardly keep from being blown over and from the time we left the Legation until we stopped at an inn, outside the city, we never saw each other, and the only way we managed to keep together was by shouting to each other. Once I happened to touch my horse's head, and the minute I did so my arm was jerked back, and I felt a shock run all through me. I shouted to the others for them to try, which they did, and each had the same shock. I couldn't imagine what it was at first, but at last we came to the conclusion that we had been taking electric shocks. There was so much friction in the air that it electrified the horses so that when we touched them it was like touching an electric machine. But going out the gate of the City was worst of all for the wind blew through it terribly. For a little while we thought the horses could not get through, but a lull came and we made a rush, but before we got half way through, the wind came again worse than ever and wheeled our horses round & blew them back again to the place we started from. We managed to get on the sheltered side of the City wall and there gave our horses a slight rest. The next time we tried we were more successful and succeeded in getting outside the City. We went on a little way and met our carts coming back, they not being able to go on. After a long talk we decided to go on a quarter of a mile farther to an inn, and to stop there until the storm went down. So we pushed on and reached the inn where we stopped four hours. We had spectacles, but our horses eyes were very much exposed to the dust and they were almost blinded. We stopped four hours and then pushed on to Char-hai, about 15 miles further on. The wind had gone down a great deal, but it still blew hard and we had a pretty tough ride. We stopped at Char-hai all night, and the next morning early we started for the Ming Tombs. We arrived at Champing-chow [Champing] about eleven o'clock. We left our horses here, and took donkeys to carry us to the tombs, which were about three miles off. We had a splendid ride through a beautiful valley. The donkey that I was on, kicked me off but I was not hurt at all. We rode up the long avenue that leads to the Tombs, and on each side are the immense stone images of horses camels, elephants etc. I shall not try to describe the tombs, for I could not begin to give you any idea of their grandeur and magnificence, and besides mother has given you a splendid description of them already. They certainly are the most magnificent buildings that could possibly be imagined. We got back to Champing-chow about four o'clock, and after taking some tea, we mounted our horses again and started for Coly-ying [Colying], about fifteen miles off. We got off the right road, however, and did not get to the inn 'till ten o'clock. We stopped there over night and the next morning before we started, we had the whole village of Coly-ying out to see our

⁶ E. Colburn Baber was at this time one of the secretaries of the British Legation. Later he took part in several British expeditionary missions through China, including the famous Grosvenor Mission into western Yunnan.

opera glass. We let some of the old fellows look through it; they had a great deal of trouble at first to keep from shutting one of their eyes, but at last they succeeded, and expressed their delight by shouting out "How! hung how!" which means wonderful. Some of them produced a spy glass which had been given to them by foreigners, but which they did not understand using. We showed them how to use it, for which favor they thanked us very much. When we left the town the whole population turned out to see us off. The next day we went to May-en-Sham [Miyun], a little village about twenty-five miles off. From May-en-Sham we went the next day to Ku-peh-kow [Kupehchow] about forty-five miles. We had to get up about 4 o'clock, and we rode until about 7 o'clock stopping only once for some lunch. We came in sight of the Wall about 4 o'clock, and from 4 to 7 we were passing through the great Ku-peh-kow mountain pass, where the Tartars used to come pouring down into China. It is certainly very picturesque scenery. The Wall winds along the tops of the mountains like a huge snake. We were riding slowly along when suddenly we turned a sharp corner of the mountain, and right below us was the most picturesque (if not the most beautiful) view that I have ever seen. Right below was a sandy plain as flat as a table, through the center of which ran a large river; the plain was perfectly round, and surrounded on every side by mountains. It was only about three miles in diameter. Almost in the middle was the town of Ku-peh-kow, surrounded by a high stone wall, as all Chinese Cities are. On the mountains opposite ran the Great Wall of China, winding up the sides of the mountains and over their tops. The sun was setting and had gone behind the mountains, but it lighted up their tops so that they shone like gold. It seemed as though nothing was wanting to complete the scene, but just as we were speaking of it, a long train of Mongolians leading their camels which looked to us about as large as those little clay camels, appeared from the opposite mountain pass and began to cross the plain. It was certainly a most complete scene. If a painter had painted it just as it looked, people would have said it was exaggerated and that there were too many incidents crowded into it. I shall never forget it.

The next morning after breakfast we went up on the Great Wall. It is a wonderful affair. It is built of bricks and is still in a very good state of preservation. It is about 30 feet wide and 15 feet high. We went into one of the watch towers; it was built of solid granite and was very picturesque looking. Just think what an immense amount of labor it must have taken to build such a Wall, 1500 miles in length, and that not counting all the windings it makes. We collected quite a number of relics. Mr. Baber found a stone on the top of the watch tower which he is going to have made into a seal. We stopped two or three hours on the wall and then we started back again for Peking. We had a splendid time going back but nothing of importance occurred. We arrived in Peking in two days and a half. We entered the gates of the City about 6 o'clock Friday evening. We were glad to get home, though I don't think I ever enjoyed a journey more in my life. We found that the folks in Peking had been very much worried about us during the dust storm. There were three men blown to death at the same gate that we went out of;—the dust got into their mouths and noses and they fell down exhausted and the wind blew the dust over them so that they were smothered to death. The day before Ned went, we had a Chinese dinner. We ate with chop-sticks. I got so that I could use them as well as a fork. We had about twenty dishes all put on at once. We had duck, mutton, clams, seaslugs, snails, and any amount of other things:—instead of having soup first, they have it at the end of the

dinner. On the whole I liked it immensely. Some of the students, at the English legation dine there every day. It is much cheaper and they like it much better than eating at their mess. Since Ned has been gone,⁷ I have been studying very hard. I am getting on very well with my studies. I study German, Algebra and Geometry. I recite to Mr. Höhing, a little German Gentleman. . . . I take lessons in Gymnastics every day. Mr. Baber teaches me: he used to be a "Turner" in England, and was also stroke of the great Gymnastic Meeting in Germany, so you see I am under a splendid teacher. There is a fine gymnasium at the English Legation.

I read in the California paper the other day that the "Sunny South," our companion ship across the Pacific had gone down in our Typhoon with all on board. We supposed that she had, but we did not know but that she might have turned back. She must have been within 20 miles of us. It seems terrible to think of a vessel going down so near us without our knowing anything about it. I am afraid it is not the only vessel that went down in that Typhoon. I wish the man, who wrote "a life on the ocean wave" had been on board the "Dupleix." I guess it would have cured him of that nonsense. . . . I am getting to be quite tall. I am about half an inch taller than Mother. I weighed myself the day of the races. I weigh 123 pounds. It must be muscle, for it is certainly not fat. I also measure 33 inches around the chest. Pretty good chest for fifteen years old.

I must now close. Give my love to all at home and keep a large share for yourself.
From your aff. Grandson

Walter

Dear Grandpa

Peking April 24th 1867

. . . The hot weather has commenced, and though it is only April it is tremendously hot. It is particularly hot today and all the windows and doors in my room are wide open. We are almost sure not to have any more cool weather for in Peking we never have sudden changes as you have at home. Today, though there is a strong breeze blowing, is so hot that we have to stay in the house nearly all day. I suppose we shall go to the hills by the first of June. . . .

I am doing about the same, as I was when I wrote last, studying, riding, exercising, etc. I study pretty hard now. About twice as hard as I did at home. I ride every morning early. I am also teaching Gertie to ride. . . . You mustn't think because I write so much about riding that I do nothing else but ride for you see riding corresponds to ball at home (though it isn't half as good fun) and it is one of the great amusements in Peking. . . .

But it is almost time to go over to the English Legation to practice gymnastics so I must close. Give my love to all, and accept a large share for yourself.

From your aff. grandson

Walter

Dear Grandpa

Pat-a-chu, May 18th [1867]

As you will see by the date of this letter, I am not in Peking now. I am at the hills with Mr. Höhing, my teacher, and Newell Martin. I have been here about two weeks. I came out here to study because my time was so much taken up in the city that I couldn't get on as fast as I wanted to. I am studying very hard now. It is a

⁷ Ned left for Germany in early April to begin his studies in Heidelberg.

great relief to get out here in the fresh air for the city is beginning to be very hot and unhealthy.

I am writing with a large rock for my table, sitting under a large tree about half way up one of the hills or mountains, as they ought to be called, for they are very high. Before me is the great plain of Chi-le⁸ and on this plain, about 12 miles away, is the city of Peking. I can see the yellow-tiled palaces and pagodas and the blue roof of the "Temple of Heaven" glittering in the sun. The plain looks like a map spread out before me. It is covered with farms and cottages, and roads run through it in all directions. Winding along the roads are long trains of camels laden with all kinds of goods going back again to Mongolia. They come down from Mongolia in the winter bringing coal and lime to Peking. In the summer they go back again, carrying with them dishes and cloth etc. which they get in exchange for their coal and lime. Behind are the hills rising almost straight up. From these hills the Tartars used sometimes to sweep down on the plain, destroying and robbing every thing they came to. There is only one thing wanting to make the scene perfect and that is water. The plain is dry and parched, and we must have rain soon or the crops will be burned up by the sun. The people are suffering badly, and I am afraid there will be a famine if we don't have rain soon. If you could only give the Chinese some of the great rain and snowstorms you have at home, it would be fine.

I can just see the wall of the Emperor's hunting ground winding over the mountains. It looks like the great wall in miniature. It encloses a space about 20 miles square. I wish you and Grandma and Auntie and all the rest at home could be here, seeing all these strange and beautiful sights.

I enjoy being here very much, both on account of my studies and because it is such a pleasant place. I think the rest will come out in two weeks, and then I shall go and stay at our own temple.

We have been living very economically. It has cost only two dollars for the three of us for a week. I will get to be quite a geologist if I keep on for Newell and I go out every night, hunting for stones, crystals etc. We have found some very fine crystals. But I must stop writing now, for it is getting very hot where I am.

Tuesday May 22nd

I have been into Peking since I last wrote. I went in on Saturday afternoon and came out again this morning. I had to go in to get some things we needed. The city was very disagreeable after the hills. The rest are coming out in a week. This morning the weather was fearful it was so dry, but now it has begun to rain and the air is much better. I hope it will be a good rain.

I have brought out a lot of surveying instruments, with which I am going to survey the mountains. I will send you a plan of the temple if I can, when I write again. . . . I don't think we shall stay here very long. I mean in China⁹ not at the hills for I think we shall stay at the hills until cold weather comes again. . . . I must close for it is time for me to send this letter into the city. Give my love to all at home and accept a large share for yourself.

From your aff grandson

Walter

PS. Please excuse bad writing for the ink is terrible. It is full of dust, hairs, etc.

Walter

⁸ Chili Province is now called Hopeh.

⁹ This is the first indication in these letters that Anson Burlingame was considering resigning his post. See "The Beginnings of the Burlingame Mission," *Far Eastern Quarterly*, IV, No. 3 (May, 1945).

Lung-wang-tong
June 20th [1867]

Dear Grandpa

We are all out at the hills now and staying at our own temple. The rest of the folks came out about three weeks ago. This temple is much nicer than Chang-an-tz, the one I was staying at before. It is very high and we have a splendid view. From the terrace can be seen Yuen-ming-yuen [Yuan-ming-yuan], Peking, Lung-chan [Lungchwan], besides two hundred and eighty small villages.

This morning the plain looks fresh and green for it rained all day yesterday. We have had at last the long looked for rain. It rained yesterday, and a good part of last night. I suppose that rain helped more people than almost any rain that has ever happened. There are 35,000,000 people in this one province of Chi-le, and this province is by no means the only one the rain affected, so you can see what an immense amount of suffering there would have been if we had not had rain. Even now it will be a very hard year for the people for the greater part of the crops are already dead.

Newell Martin (son of Dr. Martin the missionary) has been staying with me for two or three weeks. He is a first-rate "chap" about 13 years old although he seems much older. He is rather "soft" but improves everyday and I hope he will be able to stay all summer with us. Claude, his brother, is an awful "scrubby" fellow, and talks like an old man. He remains in the city this summer. He would disgust me with his long words if he should be here. Newell and I go off walking every evening. We make long excursions Saturdays and are gone all day. One Saturday we went way across the valley and climbed an enormous mountain, a feat never before performed by any white man. It seemed strange to us to be on a mountain that no white man had ever been on before. We gave three cheers for the mountain, three more for the United States of America, and three for ourselves (because of our great walk) and then after building a small mound of stones, on the top of which we carved our names, we started back again. On our way back we crossed the "Whan-haw" river.¹⁰ "Whan-haw" means the muddy river. We had to wade across for the bridge had broken down. It was very shallow indeed.

Last Saturday we went to Yuen-ming-yuen. I have been there before. The large and beautiful lake was almost entirely dried up, and the river "Alf" (see Colridge's "Xanadu") had dwindled down into a very dirty and unromantic looking canal. We had a nice luncheon (consisting of lotus plant, honey, dates, apricots, grapes etc) which we bought from a Chinese shop. I like the lotus plant immensely. It tastes a good deal like celery, but is a good deal sweeter. I hope I shall not forget my native land in consequence of eating the lotus. I don't feel much like forgetting it, at present. . . .

I am writing in my room. It is about 1 o'clock and flies are tremendously thick.

This temple is very cool compared with the others but still it is very hot even here. This temple is called the "Hall of the Dragon Prince." Very romantic name, isn't it? But as the "Hall of the Dragon Prince" is getting exceeding hot, and as I have to study for tomorrow I must close my letter. Give my love to Grandma, Auntie, and all at home, and accept a large share for yourself.

From your aff. grandson

Walter.

¹⁰ Hwang Ho or Yellow River.

Lung-wang-tong

July 24th [1867]

Dear Grandpa

I have not written to you for some time, but as I have been very busy for the last three or four weeks, I hope you will excuse me for not writing before.

Newell Martin and I have been making a little vessel, and we have been working very hard on her. She is a brigantine and is a splendid little craft. She is about half as long as the big ship at home, although she is not nearly as deep. She is almost perfectly rigged, at least we think she is, and is a splendid sailor. She has very tall masts, she is painted black with a red stripe running round her. She sets very low in the water, and her name is the "Kambalu." She has two boats hanging from davits, and one long boat between the two masts, under this boat is a long swivel gun, which can be turned in any direction. She has a beautiful little wheel which will really turn her rudder. She has two hatches, which lead down into a real hold. We have made some little sailors out of wax, and we make them go out on the yards and take in sail. She has a lead keel (which we moulded) and it is almost impossible for her to tip over. We sail her in a small pond, which notwithstanding the long and terrible drought, is still full of water. In this pond we have terrible naval battles, with the vessels of Fred. Williams and the other children.¹¹ They have a large fleet of Chinese junks, and we have also lent them that little tin steamer which we brought out to give to the Chinese. Notwithstanding all these vessels, we always beat with our "Kambalu." We put fire crackers in the guns and then blaze away at each other. I am captain and Newell is first mate, and I shout out my orders in great style. I hope you will not be tired of all this talk about our vessel, but I wrote this, to show you what kind of fun we have here.

Of course Mother has written you all about the fearful drought and famine. It is almost too fearful to imagine. We are almost besieged by beggars. We began by giving them two cash apiece, but they came in such numbers that we were obliged to stop giving them anything. At one of the temples farther down the hill, I counted 150 beggars all collected together, fighting for a little piece of meat that some one had thrown to them. It was fearful to see them. At a place about 15 miles from here, the people are living (or trying to live) on grass and the bark of trees. There are 35,000,000 people in this one province, and out of those, I suppose at least 5,000,000 will die. It is by far the greatest famine that has ever happened yet. The famine in India is nothing to it.

I am studying very hard now. I go down to Mr. Höhing's temple to recite, at about 7 o'clock every morning. His temple is about half a mile from here, but it is a very hard walk for it is up and down hill all the way. I get back about 9½ o'clock. At ten o'clock we have breakfast. About 11, I begin to study again, and study until 4 o'clock when we have dinner. After dinner Newell and I take long walks, and get back about 7 o'clock, when we have a light supper. We go to bed about 9 o'clock. You see by this that I am kept busy nearly all the time. I get tremendously tired when night comes but I sleep all the better for it.

¹¹ Frederick Wells Williams was the son of Dr. S. Wells Williams, chargé d'affaires at the American Legation. The elder Williams carried on the legation during Anson Burlingame's furlough and for some months after Burlingame's resignation. The Frederick Williams of this letter was later professor of Oriental history at Yale and was the author of *Anson Burlingame and the First Chinese Mission to Foreign Powers* (New York, 1912), generally considered to be the standard work on the Burlingame mission.

I wish you could see the long walks that Mother takes. She walks at least two miles every evening, and these two miles are up and down hill nearly all the way. We divide into three parties when we go to walk. Mother, Father and Mary go one way. Gertie goes down to the Williams's temple to play with the children, and Newell and I go off by ourselves. We tried walking with the rest, but they took such *short* walks that we had to leave them and go by ourselves. . . .

The thermometer stands up to 95° in my room while I am writing, but it has been so much hotter than this that we consider today as being rather cool than otherwise.

But I must stop now. Give my love to all, at home, and accept a large share for yourself.

From your aff. grandson

Walter

Lung-wang-tong

Aug. 14th [1867]

Dear Grandpa

I think it is time for me to write to you again as it is now nearly three weeks since I have written. I have not done anything of importance since I last wrote. Newell and I have exhausted all the walks, so instead of going to walk we stay at home and play ball, sail our ship etc. I suppose Mother has written to you that the great drought was over. There is plenty of rain now. We have showers nearly every day and the country has become very green and beautiful. Last night we had a most extraordinary shower. It came up very suddenly from the west, at about 8 o'clock in the evening. The whole sky was one sheet of lightning, and the thunder roared so that you would hardly hear yourself speak. We began to think that the world was coming to an end. . . . Father offered to give Newell and me a dollar apiece, if we would read the speech of Charles Sumner, upon Russian America.¹² We instantly accepted his offer, and are now engaged in reading it. I must confess that it is rather lengthy. . . .

Mother's horse has been in the stable so long without being used that he is not safe for Mother to ride, he being, as Ah Quang remarked, "All same as one tiger." I wish you could see Ah Quang. No matter what you want he will get it for you. Ned and I used to say that he had a lamp which he rubbed in order to produce things, after the manner of Aladdin. When he goes to get anything, we say he has gone to rub his lamp. He prides himself on his great dignity, and when any of the coolies are impudent he simply "looks at that person" which is sufficient to stop any further impudence.

You would be surprised to know how little the Chinese think of time. The other day Newell came across a man, selling coins 1800 years old for 3 cash (about one cent). Of course he instantly bought them. He is going to give one or two of them to me and I will send them home to some one collecting coins. . . .

I am getting to be quite an athlete. . . . Last night I jumped almost 15 feet, on level ground. I took a run of 30 feet before I jumped. Isn't that quite good? I exercise every night, with dumb bells and clubs. . . .

The mail goes this afternoon, and I shall have to stop now as I have some studying

¹² This was Sumner's famous speech on the purchase of Alaska. This support of Seward's action was largely responsible for the acceptance of the treaty by the Senate. Cf. F. R. Dulles, *The Road to Teheran* (Princeton, 1944), pp. 71 ff.

to do. I will write again soon. Give my love to Grandma and Auntie and all the others at home, and accept a large share for yourself.

From your aff. grandson

Walter.

Lung-wang-tong

Sep 10th [1867]

My dear Grandpa

. . . We had a very pleasant excursion about a week ago, to a pagoda near Yuen-ming-yuen. It was the pagoda where Lord Elgin stood, when the English and French burned the palace. It has never been open to foreigners before this summer and we were the second party that had ever been there. The grounds all around it are perfectly beautiful. In the centre there is quite a large lake which is surrounded by the ruins of beautiful marble palaces. There were also the remains of bathing houses, theatres, etc. These must all have been very fine buildings once and it seems almost a pity that they were destroyed. The pagoda itself stood on a high hill exactly in the middle of the place. The pagoda is seven stories high and is hung all over on the outside with bells which are kept continually ringing by the wind. It is situated on just such a hill and is just about as high as Mount Auburn tower. From the top there is the most splendid view I almost ever saw. On the day we were there it was so very clear that we could distinguish the Great Wall with the naked eye and could see it very plainly with the opera glass. It was not the farther wall, but one which was built inside of the first one. We could also see the valley in which the Ming Tombs were, but we could not see the tombs themselves as they were hid by mountains. I saw the very place where Lord Elgin and his officers stood when Yuen-ming-yuen was destroyed. The soldiers set fire to the palace at fourteen different places, and it being a perfectly still day the smoke rose straight up in fourteen distinct columns, but meeting with an upper current of wind, the smoke was all blown into an immense black cloud which floated off and settled directly over the city of Peking. This alarmed the Chinese very much for they imagined the foreigners had charge of the wind and could blow the smoke wherever they wished.¹⁸

Last Saturday we went to the Emperor's hunting park. This park was surrounded by a wall about six feet high, and was built to prevent the escape of the deer and other animals confined there. The park is on the side of a very high mountain and the scenery is very wild. Hundreds of deer are still there although they are so wild that no one ever sees them. The place is beautifully laid out, with paved walks, pavilions, lakes etc. There is a fine spring of sulphur water in one part, which bounds over a precipice into a beautiful little lake. At the entrance of the park, just before the gate, are two immense bronze lions. They are sitting down with one of their paws resting on a ball which is most curiously figured. The English soldiers carried away the ball from one of the lions as a curiosity, so one of them is now left without a ball. There is one palace which is tiled entirely with bronze tiles. It is very large and the roof glitters like gold. Near this palace is a gorgeous porcelain pagoda, which, although it is not so large as the celebrated one at Nanking, is full as beautiful.

¹⁸ This describes an incident of the Franco-British advance on Peking in 1860 for the purpose of forcing China to accept the Tientsin Treaties of 1858. The burning of the palace was in retaliation for the mistreatment of some European prisoners by the Chinese.

Last Tuesday we were invited by the great Lady Alcock,¹⁴ to go on a picnic to Yuen-ming-yuen, as it was "her ladyship's birthday." So we all went and had a very good time. You ought to have seen the immense number of people we had. There were fully a hundred of us in all, including servants etc., it being impossible for "her ladyship" to move with less than 40 or 50 servants following after. . . .

From your aff. grandson
Walter.

Peking
Sep. 26th [1867]

Dear Grandpa

We came in from the hills last Thursday, and have now got quite settled again in our house. I was very sorry to leave the hills and come into the dusty city. It is quite cool here however, and the weather has been very pleasant lately. Our house looks very nice indeed. We have opened our new piano and found it to be quite a good one.

Father and I play billiards every night, on our billiard table. We have splendid fun. We play with each other for the championship of the U.S. Legation. I stand one game ahead at the present time. I have also begun my gymnastics with Baber. I practice every day at 5 o'clock. He is teaching me boxing and club exercises. The gymnasium at the English Legation has been torn down, so we can only practice these. I shall get to be quite a "swelly" gymnast, if I keep on. Baber is a splendid fellow, and a magnificent athlete. He never gets impatient with you, or makes you work too hard. . . .

I am very anxious to hear of the Harvard and Yale boatrice. I hope I shall hear by the next mail. . . . The story of "Round the World Joe?" in *The Young Folks* is very good only it is tremendously exaggerated. I don't believe the fellow who wrote it had ever been to China. Some of the Chinese names translated into English sound very grand. The temple Lung-wang-tong means in English, the "Hall of the Dragon Prince." Doesn't it sound splendid? All the books they have at home about China are perfect humbugs. I have never seen a good one yet.

But I must close this letter as it is nearly breakfast time. Give my love to Grandma and Auntie and all at home, and accept a large share for yourself.

From your aff. grandson
Walter.

Peking
Oct. 30th [1867]

Dear Grandpa

. . . Since I wrote to you last, I have accomplished a great feat, viz: I have been inside the "Temple of Heaven." For a long time it has been closed to foreigners and I was afraid I should not have a chance to see it. But the other day Baber and I resolved on a bold attempt to get in. On reaching the grounds, which are of an immense size, we easily got through the first wall by offering the man a few cents. He opened the gate for us and in we went. But when we came to the second, neither love nor money would make the man open the gate. We offered him a dollar, which is a large sum for a poor Chinaman, but he said his superiors would beat him if he

¹⁴ The wife of Sir Rutherford Alcock, British minister to China from 1865-1871.

should let us in. At last he offered to lead us to a part of the wall where perhaps we might get in. So he led us to a part of the wall where there was a little tree growing very near to the top. There were also some little pegs of wood stuck in the wall at short distances from each other. The wall was at least 15 ft. high, and was very rickety at the top. I got on Baber's shoulder and after a tremendous amount of scrambling I managed to get on the top. But the little pegs had broken under me and as there was no one to help poor Baber we were afraid he couldn't get up. But soon a bright idea struck me. I had a long whip with me, and tying on my handkerchief so as to make it longer, I let it down to Baber. I grabbed the whip with one hand while with the other I took hold of the tree, so as to have a firm hold. By means of this rope Baber "shinned" up and there we were on the top of the wall. But how to get down on the other side was the question. It was too far to drop, so Baber took off his coat and tied it round the limb of a tree and letting himself down several feet in this way, he dropped. He thought it would be too far for me to drop, so he found a long pole and leaned it up and I "shinned" down it. So there we were inside at last. We had no difficulty in reaching the dome in the centre of the grounds. Finding a larger hole in the wall of the temple, we managed to creep in and reach the very centre of the sacred "Temple of Heaven," something which has been done only by a very few persons in the World, including Chinamen and all, for the Chinese themselves are not admitted there. I sat in the great chair of the Emperor and looked around me. It seemed strange to be in the most secret place in the empire. I suppose Mother gave you a description of the grounds, etc., so I will not try to describe them. . . .

Three visitors arrived yesterday. One is an American consul, and the other two are young men from Manila. They seem to be very good fellows. One of them is named Huntington. Perhaps you know his father, Ashuel Huntington, of Salem, Father says he knows him very well. But I must stop now as it is getting late. I will tell you about my visit to the "Temple of Agriculture" before the mail goes.

Oct. 31st 1867

Since yesterday I have decided to go to the Great Wall with the visitors. We shall start in about two hours, and probably be gone three or four days. We are going to another Pass, called Nankow, *via* the Ming Tombs. I will write you all about my trip when I come back.

We received no letters by the last French mail. . . . Give my love to Grandma, Auntie and all at home and accept a very large share for yourself.

From your aff. grandson

Walter.