

Shanghai Impressions.

The International Settlement. 1937.

By Best Overend.

When you arrive, you fall in love with China. The first thing you see is the yellow river swept clean of all floating rubbish by the scavenger boats. It is so clean that even the seagulls leave. There is nothing, even for them. When you wake there is the rising and falling chant of the coolies unloading. Together they chant HAY HO, HO HAY, HAY HAY, HO HAY. In the little Shanghai streets, there is a mixture of smells; the girls, in their long slit Manchu gowns, slide past so sleek and so slim; the cookshops concoct the most peculiar things to eat amid the feet of the passersby; and the men wear nothing but pyjama trousers, cut a little short by western standards. It was disappointing to see so few pigtaails. Evidently, in these enlightened times, only a few ignorant countrymen wear them anyway.

You settle very quickly. If you have a flat, everything is commodious and your boy takes charge of your things. All you have to do is to shave yourself, and perhaps you don't even do that if you like Chinese barbers. With the older established whites, those whose families have been in China for generations, there is a wholly English life led in English houses, English gardens and with Chinese servants. The smell, everywhere, however, is typically Chinese. This is a land that has been fertilized for countless ages by human ordure; and it is unmistakable. For the first few months, the formal white-clad tennis parties and outdoor teas are almost unbearable, but you forget it after a while and when you go away you almost miss the atmosphere.

The Chinese policeman on his beat is very slow and lazy. There is none of the officiousness of the Japanese. The country is infinitely old and humorous, and the policeman blandly smiles as the daughters of joy pass and ply their wares. He gets ten per cent and perhaps more personal favours. It is always good for a girl to seem to know at least one policeman. She is, thereby, protected from the attention of street loafers. Racketeering is as old an art

in China as are their records, and these go back for many thousands of years. The enormous Sikhs - police assisting and separating the white administrative police from the Chinese police - have large brown liquid filled eyes. With their beards and turbans they look peculiar as they go hand in hand like children. Their belief is that Christ will next come to this earth through the union of a Sikh and a small boy, and they all wish to be Joseph. The force of the International Settlement comprises some five hundred Sikhs, three thousand Chinese police and three hundred whites.

For the first few days you don't dine because you can always have something at the bars. These abound, and serve steak to chili con carne, or whatever you wish. Later, when you become friends with the Chinese owner, he will always wish for you to dine with him if you like Chinese food. Later still, he will become so hospitable that it is difficult to enter his bar. Insisting on entertaining you, instead of you spending money, is surely not the way to do business. In his interest, you stay away a little. And there can be nothing quite so charmingly affectionate as the Chinese girls. Their slimly beautiful carriage and perfect bloom put any western woman,

no matter how perfectly groomed, to utter shame. And they know it. The white women look expensive and useless, without being beautiful. They all look class conscious, and race conscious, because the Chinese girls beat them at their own game. All the white's drink too much - enough to kill mere mortals - for they have little to do and hitherto they have been well paid for what they did. They all get stomach ulcers, or some social disease, and have to go home on long leave and die of sheer boredom.

When all of the flags are flying half-mast in Shanghai, and it seems almost every second day, you know that it is some National Humiliation Day. For generations they have commemorated some defeat. The police stand by when the humiliation concerns the Settlement Authorities. At certain times, notably in 1927, strong measures were necessary to preserve law and order in the Concession. But, no matter who the conqueror, it will always be China for the Chinese.

Where is any city quite so gay throughout the whole night as Shanghai? It is the Russian, the French and the English dance 'hostesses' who are hard and want drinks and extra money

and try to clean a man out. They will take any man. The Chinese won't, even if the Japanese-Koreans will, under the direction of their Russian mistresses. If they part-love you, and know you, and have talked with you, they will look after you all night even if you don't want them or have no money. It is this spontaneous affection and charm that so endears them to you. Every male loves flattery of this sort. Life in the bars is wholesome and good. Because you know you can do whatever disgusting evil you wish, such freedom give you balance. With the lack of restrictions you just sit and talk. And in the dying night you go home in a whispering rickshaw and it is good and comfortable and the air fresh.

It is difficult to find precisely what religion the Chinese affect. Your Chinese friends never speak of it, and there seems little public worship of any kind. There were few Buddhist monasteries. I should imagine, though, they will be a people easy to sell insurance. What small steps they take toward religion are to the propitiation of gods. Who knows what spirits might be about in the Middle or Upper Air and who knows where they might carry your messages. This may not have been of the older China, where the belief in

ancestors was so grand and strong a thing. In the enlightened towns, however, it had become a form of realism. The gods are reviled and rebuked if the harvest is poor. If, on the other hand, it is good, then candles will burn and little red flags flutter in the breeze.

Along the Soo Chow Creek there is an unfresh smell. The coloured men spit great gouts along the roadways and across the bridges. The dust swirls up into your nostrils, and you hold your mouth tightly closed, trying to breathe when you are momentarily away from passing people. The yellow men and women lean on their long bamboo poles, stuck into the mud, walking back along their barges, as they nose slowly upstream. They carry great balks of timber, sacks of cement and other building materials. Then they come down with the current, loaded with country products to be sold in the Hongkew market. In this market, the other day, a Japanese soldier raped a fourteen year old Chinese child. When a white policeman came up with his revolver to put an end to the business, four other Japanese soldiers appeared and held their bayonets against the white man's back. The public rape went on. Nothing could be done about it. Although

officially international, the territory was controlled by the little yellow people and their military men.

Just below the Garden Bridge, and the grounds of the British Consulate, the Soo Chow Creek runs away into the yellow flood of the Whangpoo. This river sometimes comes down quite quickly, so that you can see a 20,000 ton liner swing almost helplessly in midstream. Then the sampans sweep down very quickly as the boatmen push out and start their twirling sweep. The white grey warships lie just off the Bund, which follows the river. The banks and offices are only separated from these warships by the rickshaws, the old trams, the quickly moving cars and the few yards of yellow water. The Chinese scavenger boats are fond of the warships. These have the habit of saving all their rubbish, for the last few days at sea, in order that they are able to discharge into Shanghai waters for the scavenger men to squabble over. Nothing is wasted in China; even the ragged bits of bamboo floating down provide, when mushed, something for the town chickens. Sometimes, if you think back, the main thing that you remember about China is the inevitable fowl and its product the egg; not forgetting the blown up body of the fox terrier

lying in the terrible indignity of death. Later, of course, in the water beside the British Consulate, there were the bodies of men and women floating and swollen beside the dog. Other times it will be the smell, which the wind sometimes brings, even in the early morning; or else the song of the carriers as they swing down the road with a load of great stones, or plaited baskets of green food, on their shoulders. Round the market in Hongkew these are the first things that you will hear in the very early morning.

Down at the back of the market was the Union Bar. There, Mah Lih would lean her smooth slim body against yours as you sat on a high stool and threw the dice from the leather glass along the counter for the next drink. These were cheap and very cold. With a wide smile, Chan slid the two onto the counter. When he smiled you felt that he thought of nothing but the smile. But sometimes, you saw him from behind the tiny tree against the wall, he seemed to be waiting for something. Business was slack. The district was out of bounds for the American sailors because they were always having, what the officials call, 'incidents', with the Japanese patrols. After all the trouble in Chapei, when it was razed

for the first time by Japanese gunfire, the white man lost face. They just sat around as the Nippon beat up the Chinese. Afterwards, the Japanese patrolmen stood in the middle of the footpath, with fixed bayonets, and when you tried to pass they forced you into the gutter. If you protested you would be taken to their station. Your Consul would merely complain. The Japanese would just laugh. This was before Hongkew was razed the second time. Now you can't even cross the bridge into the district. The Union Bar seemed far away from all that. You took a rickshaw the few hundred yards from Hongkew and you knew that there would be no trouble. All the drunks knew the white police station opposite the Union. They would get very short shift from police quietly drinking and having a good time. Man Lih was being very familiar with you, Sah Lih was learning how to say "You buy me now". Someone had rashly promised her a dress and seemed to have forgotten about it. Then, going home to bed, there would be no trouble with traffic or parking regulations. You didn't have to make conversation with your wife, or to take to supper the girl you had taken to the theatre.

Often you went up to the Russian quarter for Saguska. This was an assortment of tiny dishes, like hors d'oeuvres, which you ate as you took their ice-cold crystal vodka. Tossing back your head, you drained the tiny glass in one gulp, then immediately ate before you had more. There was a remarkably warm feeling in your stomach. The savories were very savory indeed, and their variety pleasing. Then there was tea in tall glasses with silver holders and handles. Some had a sweet jam instead of the more usual sugar. We ate it with a spoon in between sips. This was a safe exploration, like reading a travel book in front of a fire in your own home on a wet night. After you felt that you had enough Saguska you went over and sat at the proper table for soup, fish, the meat and sweets. Wine was served with all these courses. Sometimes they sung their strange songs or had gypsies in to weep and cry over their wild violins. They are all a hopeless people, even when working. Out of work, and most of them are, they are even worse. If only they could get work for three months, assuming their young girls worked in the night clubs and cabarets, they would be able to manage for almost a year.

Some nights you went west a little to the house of Hakome to have Sukiyaki. There you left your rickshaw out in a little walled lane. You were met in the hall by the Japanese or Korean hostess. She took you by the hand and led you upstairs. There, you removed your shoes and your jacket and lay like a Roman on the floor of smooth soft rattan with your back against the cushions. Your own girl talked and perhaps played with you, while, on the tiny communal table they placed a shining pan over a small gas jet and rubbed into it a lump of white chicken fat. Next a little sugar melted, and sliced onions added. Then tender pale green bamboo shoots, sliced across like carrots in an Irish stew. Finally, a sort of yolky spaghetti, along with some green spring onions, was placed. When all this was sizzling shreds of beef were placed on top with soya bean sauce. This was a liquid like watered coffee and marmite. The whole dish bubbled and the ingredients slowly subsided below the bulwarks of the pan. There was also added somewhere shredded cabbage leaves. You burnt your tongue every time. It was impossible to wait for it to cool before eating. And while all this was going on your girl tore the wrapper from your chopsticks and broke them apart to show that the wood hadn't been used before. She beat an egg into your bowl and you all ate from the sizzling dish and washed it down with draughts of cold Japanese Asahi beer. As everyone must

know by now, the chopsticks can only be mastered when it is thoroughly understood that the lower unit is kept perfectly rigid and the upper swings down to clench each piece. All Chinese consider it grand manners, however, to hold the bowl to their mouths and simply push the rice in.

After a few months of Shanghai I felt that "Hard Class", over the Trans-Siberian Railway, would be good for me. Excesses were breeding the usual liver. As I glanced over my menu, Foo hovered behind me anxiously. There was to be hors d'oeuvre varies, supreme of halibut Joinville, a creamed fish, lamb cutlets with new green peas, corned ox tongue in aspic-nieva, all followed by roast snipe sur canade with stuffed marrow (very tiny like a young cucumber), spinach sauté, new potatoes with parsley, finished with mousse of fresh strawberries, petits fours, coffee and Dutch cheese. I decided, dreamily imagining Hard Class once again, to build up a few memories upon half a litre of Antinori Chianti. This might wash down, in an extraordinarily pleasant fashion, the colossal meal. Hard Class could restore the balance later For now, the appearance of the snipe conjured my imagination. The tiny brown mangled remnant breathed of

the warm green celestial marshes. The three inch burnt blackness of the slender beak seemed to gasp a frenzied futility. The sturdy brown flesh, so cunningly woven together and distorted for easy handling, complimented the green of the spinach. The carnations on the table took the rosy hue of the wine, so affectionately clad in its woven straw mantle.

Outside the windows of the dining room there were Chinese neon signs - meaningless to the western eye except in their abstract pattern - flipping on and off. The Soo Chow Creek was filled with slowly moving craft, and there were more craft lying in horizontal tiers beside the Garden Bridge. They were alive with Chinese families, all of whom could have been kept in considerable comfort, for a week, by the cost of the wine alone of my enormous meal. And this passing power of money could no better be exemplified than by the attitude of Foo, my table boy, in whose charge the whole of my meal lay. His jealousy of the wine waiter finally drove that man away. A prerogative in pouring the wine was insufficient to overcome the boy's strong sense of personal loyalty. Not that my occasional tips matched this loyalty

in any degree; a smile apparently did more than is usually thought.

Extraordinary Shanghai. Sweating rickshaw coolies, stinking in the sun, soaked in the rain, dying without hope. In halcyon days, they could even serve the wealthy as a personal substitute for execution. Condemned by some high displeasure, the wealthy man could take one of these coolie 'animals', give him one night of paradise - of wine, of food, and his pick of the concubines - in exchange for his place in the final garden of Execution. This one night of complete joy was worth a lifetime of work. Then, in the Chinese manner, everyone was satisfied. The court, that someone had paid the penalty; the police, that someone had died; the coolie, that he had lived but once. After the execution, official photos are taken to ensure that the correct man has died. This is merely insurance. The Chinese are fond of all forms of insurance.

As I had promised, the next evening I went to see Daisy, that girl with the eyes that so intelligently surveyed her particular world. She had a body as slim and as terrible

as a marching army with banners, and in the cool dusk of her room, and in the wide depth of her smile, there was death; one of those lovely deaths only known to carefree travellers. That morning, Ambrose was complaining of the strong control his number one boy was gaining over his affairs. After his general complaint that he felt foul, his boy stated blandly: "Master, you drink too much". At that moment, and for the past few weeks, I had been terribly in love with Daisy. To anyone else the name applied more to savouring the cow yard than of lavender sheets. But Daisy was a delicate and fawnlike combination of lightning upon a spring evening, and a green reed in a morning pool. That she had, beside me, at least seventy lovers a month was as nothing, for she appeared to wait for me alone. Daisy earned a lot for a Chinese girl, two hundred dollars a month. Her manager took two out of the five dollars charged. Her wide bed was covered with a film flex of bamboo sheets. When it is as hot, as only a Shanghai hot season could be, a hard feather bed would have been unbearable. The one fault of this form of sheet was the possible damage to incautious knees. There is a vulgar Shanghai expression for a man who limps during these few months.

Some nights when Shanghai was wet, and when it rained it was wet, there seemed nothing to do. The Chinese boys walk in the rain with large umbrellas. Wearing a pair of underpants and a singlet, they seemed quite clean and sweet. This they are not. Have you ever been behind a sweating coolie in the fairly light garlic laden breeze in a rickshaw? It was on these nights that all the tiny bars down in Hongkew were deserted. The beggars came in and pestered you with their fortune telling and their tiny girls who were suffering from consumption. They told you that all foreigners are plenty rich and they have more money than they know what to do with. And it is on these wet nights that the bar boys forget their stern resolutions to keep the bars free from these hangers on. You can't blame them. Behind the clean brown bar it was dry and there was a comfortable smell of happy humanity that permitted the milk of human kindness to seep out just to that small extent. And it was on those nights that all your friends seemed to be suffering from the night before, or the week before. You went from bar to bar, and from place to place, looking for that little Nippon girl to whom the gods had given the right sort of smile and the right sort of body and the right sort of room to laugh at the rain.

It was her place that the beer was cold and the glasses were long and there seemed plenty to talk about and plenty to do.

The wet canvas cover to the rickshaw swung against your legs and you cursed. That meant your pants would have to be pressed again in the morning, and your shirt would most certainly not last another hour. The brown yellow river swirled past as thick as ever. It was only occasionally that the rain in the summer lifted it to the Bund. Then, in the spring, there is always danger. Yes, she will sleep with you and she will marry someone, in due course, and become the best sort of wife. She will then forget her past. Her husband will be proud to have a beauty for a wife and she will never pretend to be his equal. No matter how poor they will be, there will always be someone poorer to act as maid. And her life will be spent for his pleasure and comfort. At the wedding the guests will drink and will say in their own language "a son soon please". This will happen. Why insure for your old age; you will always be welcome in your son's house.

If you come to China, beware of your boy. If you begin to

bandy words with him, as man to man, he will still call you Master and will look after you body and soul. But he will criticise your underwear and your wardrobe. He won't have your clothes repaired because he wants you to give them to him. He will probably wear all your things while they are at the laundry. He will bring the paper in with the morning, and ask you how the war is going, and he will tell you, with plenty of pantomime, how he has taken his family out of Chapei in case the Japanese guns start again. He will tell you how strong the Chinese are. He will tell you that it is his considered opinion that the Japs are frightened. Why behave as though they want to fight everybody? The white man doesn't show fight because he knows that he can beat everybody. He doesn't have to try. It is then you realise what suave and natural diplomats these people make. This doesn't stop him from being extra sweet towards the end of the month when cumshaw is anticipated. He will hurry to place the small chair in front of the armchair when you get in for your gin and lime at night. When the Master relaxes he will think what a good boy he has.

In the shadow of the steep girders of Garden Bridge lurk the

beggar boys. With ragged smiles, ragged flesh and rags, they prey with wile upon the passer by. They rush out into the traffic, hail you with a "Hih Master", and take hold of the rickshaw prongs in front of your boy to help him up the slope to the peak of the bridge. This one for cash, and they didn't mind delayed payment, one bit, if you passed regularly. The coolies pay no attention. I'm sure they get their share, for their stand lay just the other side of the bridge. From that vantage point they shouted and yelled to attract your attention as your legs appeared in view above the steps of the hotel lobby. As you climbed on board they all shouted and yelled again, passing their comments upon your identity and probable ancestors to the lucky puller. The beggar boys are an organized gang - they carry a Thompson Submachine Gun - and woe betide the rickshaw man who tries to get your custom after they had looked after you for some months. The thirty dollars you paid out each month, for the privilege of an armchair to and fro the office each day, was theirs. It would have been cheaper to have your own boy and car - half the cost - but you would have lost the fun of exchanging comments and curses with the different boys. There was also the element of chance as to how fast your man was going to be. That was always one complaint they were never able to

understand. As you began to get under the skin of these people, began to understand their swearing and gutter talk - so filthy and vulgar that only millenniums of culture could have brought it to such a pitch of perfection - you realised it was the loudest man who won the argument. With invective, shouted into each other's eyeballs, the louder and hotter the shouting the more face lost by the one with the least voice.

Your office boy - forty years of age and with four wives - wanted to do things for you because you were who you were, and he liked you that way. And in this zest for service, the number one would show his superiority before the crowds of other office boys - down to the hordes of coolies - by hovering round as you signed your letters. He would open your new ones. He would permit no other person to lick yours shut. For in this business of the Master's well being there was security, and that tremendous thing 'face'. And if you called and he was not there or busy elsewhere and you spoke to say, number two, and gave an order to him, number one would come bustling in later to ask for the order all over again. He would show unmistakably that you might have had the common decency

to wait for him.

Summer, midday. From The Shanghai Club bar we overlook a battleship moving in the current on her mooring. The ordure boats passed as the sampans tipped and swung violently in the little waves, pushed aside by the customs boat. Every now and then there might be that burst of crackers as a crowd send off, in Oriental style, some potentate. The Dollar Line Tenders call beside the Customs jetty. It is usually just after lunch that the tenders leave the jetties along the Bund, with the jolting jerking explosions of hundreds of large cannon crackers. The Central Government had passed the stage of executing recalcitrant generals. They sent them on a world cruise so that when they came back they are nothing. The crackers are strung under the iron roofs of the jetty and as one explodes it starts its neighbour. As background, there is a continuous mat of sound made from the smaller three inch bungers. The noise gives pleasure, occasionally it really startles, and the smell is the colour of the East.

A wedding, or a funeral, was also an occasion for this form

of rejoicing. The small boy on the cymbals, with the larger one on the drums, not a wit exceeded in residual pleasure the elderly gentlemen with the enormous brass gong. These brass things had a note that literally burst within the brain and kept on bursting until it faded slowly away. They loved it, we loved it, everybody was happy. On the other hand, Japanese singing was quiet and was usually of the single note wondering and weaving in a manner that gradually one began to love and expect.

In the dawn, the huge fish lorries came thundering down Broadway with their exhaust sirens screeching. These burst like a shell, and in the slow morning mind, they approached with the whining of a bomb. When they had gone, the coolies began shuffling along to the Hongkew market singing their song of three notes. The variations and breaks that a good man can put into this musical panorama determine his popularity as the leader of the carriers. The loads are swung on a bamboo pole, concave side up, and cut with the grace of an aeroplane propeller. As the rhythms slide with the coolie, the load sprang and lifted and resting on his shoulder, just that period necessary for the carrying of weights over

long distances.

The anniversary of the incorporation of Greater Shanghai is a time of great local excitement. The Chinese celebrated with their various lantern processions through the Settlement. In the Chinese Territory, where the imposing Municipal Chambers were built, the usual Mayoral Parade and reception are held. When the Japanese heard of this, they freely rumoured that the Chinese were to quietly kill some prominent Japanese resident. Naturally there was a concentration of Japanese troops in the area. To start another incident the Japanese sent two hundred ronins, or Korean loafers, to the Municipal reception. Actually the Chinese acted with promptness. Unexpectedly they arrested half of these people before their object was realised. The Japanese then turned up in force with twelve army trucks loaded with armed troops and circled the Municipal Square as a flagrant gesture of insolence. Again, the Chinese scored, for immediately arrived twelve Chinese armoured cars, complete with machine guns and troops. Each parked between a Japanese Army truck. Honour was satisfied.

This was the day after the Japanese had sunk a Soviet gunboat on the Amur, and had forced, by diplomatic measure, the Soviet troops to evacuate the Amur Islands. After continual friction, bickering and actual fighting, the Japanese staged 'night manoeuvres' around the Chinese fort on the Marco Polo Bridge outside Peiping. Of course there were ample apologies, as mere politeness required. And it was during this evening, as we were sitting in the cocktail bar on the third floor of the Park Hotel overlooking the Racecourse and Shanghai, that the two million dollar godowns went up in flames. It commenced at eight, as we were sipping the Brandy Special with olive. The red glare seemed just across the Racecourse. The windows were rattling in the gentle evening breeze, and it looked as if the Shanghailanders were in for another grand dress-circle play. It seemed an omen, the shooting flames foretold of shell fire. Events were moving slowly and majestically to war, and we were the audience. Belligerent and confident, in the afternoon the Japanese demonstrated their force with troop-loaded army trucks. One soldier swung his loaded rifle at the head of my rickshaw coolie. The coolie ducked, for his head, if not his life. The troops on the truck were amused. We waited at the side of

the Bund, in the International Settlement, for the Little Yellow Prussians to pass. And we were angry at them. It was some weeks before we saw actual fighting and killing.

They never pestered you. This was unlike the whining half white fortune tellers, who stood at your elbow if the boss was out and there was only a boy behind the bar. They talked to the air about their starving sick children, the wealth of the gentleman drinking and that the cost of the drink would provide his whole family with food for a day. While he whined he didn't look at you and you didn't look at him. You began to feel that you hated him because, what he said was all very true, if only he had a wife who was ailing and a little daughter in the hospital. So in the end you threw him twenty cents, without looking, and he fawned away to the next bar. It would be unwise to bawl him out, for he would be well in with the ronins and the loafers, who were ganged into territories. If late one night you were drunk, or asleep, in the rickshaw it might be just too bad what sort of accident happened. That is why it is illegal for a rickshaw man to be seen with a man sleeping in his carriage. He must wake him up or tip him out.

Leaving Shanghai was as dramatic as arriving. Those heading for Japan gathered in Nanking Road, joined a Japanese bus which travelled through their lines in Hongkew, down the River Whangpoo, to where the Nagasaki Maru was berthed. This district had born the fighting of the first few weeks, and there was little left to see except a red road threaded through heaps of debris. This had once been buildings. There were bodies burning in piles too; the flies had been terrible, and gallons of Shelltox were used, but they liked it. Footpaths, for a mile or so, were covered with horses, and the gutters were used as a continuous depository for grass hay. The motorized units of this modern army were useless in the mud of China and the crossword puzzles of her canals. The fires smoked all round the Bund and you could hear and see the shells bursting. Japanese planes droned round in their endless circles dropping bombs, always at the same point of the circle. You could see them leave the plane, and most certainly hear them explode after the little mushrooms of fire and dust shot into the sky. Down in my cabin, the worst in the ship because all the best were naturally devoted for Japanese Nationals, was a

neatly printed notice in both Japanese and near English. Passengers were cordially requested to present, within five hours of the ships departure, a stool for examination. It was official. Shanghai was now a cholera district.

This is an edited extract from a larger work by Best Overend and Tronn Overend entitled **Tramp to Shanghai: a young man's tale before the war.** (available as a free *iBook* from the *iTunes* store) **Shanghai Impressions. The International Settlement. 1937.** was first published in **Quadrant** Vol. 56(11) November 2012. A companion piece - **Prelude to War: On Duty with the Shanghai Police Force, 1937** - appeared in **Quadrant** Vol. 57(6) June 2013.

As an early Modernist Architect in Melbourne, Best Overend had also been the architectural critic for *The Argus*. Aged twenty seven, in March and April 1937, he travelled, as the Third Watch Officer on a steam ship to Osaka, and then took a job with the British Architectural practice of Lester, Johnson and Morriss in Shanghai. His project was the design of a thirty story building for the Japanese shipping company N.Y.K. Sited on the Bund, 400 flats were to occupy the top twenty floors. The Japanese invasion terminated the five million pound project, and Best Overend joined the Shanghai Volunteer Police Force. This time as a correspondent

for The Melbourne *Herald and Sun*, he sent regular reports and stories as the hostilities began. On 2nd October 1937 he left Shanghai for London on the Tran- Siberian Railway. Drawings, photos and illustrations can be viewed in the *iBook*.