

The Western Hills  
Near Peking  
Palm Sunday  
March 24, 1918.

Dearest Mother:

Here we are about 15 miles from Peking enjoying a three days' rest in what is known as the Western Hills. We are only on the foot-hills, but it is lovely and quiet after a winter in a noisy Chinese city and very beautiful. All the buds are coming out and many flowers, and the valleys with spots of green here and there are very beautiful indeed. Yesterday, we hired donkeys and went for a tramp of about five miles. We walked most of the way, slid over rocks and steep cliffs, and returned home very tired and sleepy.

I don't know whether I have told you how lacking the trees are on the hills here. There are none, and most remarkable to notice is the fact that they are cultivated by poor Chinese right to the top. Whether they realise anything from the crops or not is another story. Some of them are not over 6' by 3'. It reminded me of the poor farmers in North Carolina, - only these hills have been cultivated so many centuries before ours were. They terrace them up with rough stone, and as you get to the top and look across they look like wrinkles in an old man's brow.

The spring rains began last night, - the 1st since October, - so we had to bring our beds off the veranda to sleep. We had such a lovely night out the 1st night we were out here. We are going back Tuesday A. M.

We brought our cook out with us and left Ting the boy to look after things in the house. Our party is composed of the 3 Canadians, Miss Johnson and I. Miss Dexter has gone to Weichang for the holidays. The new hospital has reached the state in which the lights, water works etc have to be looked after, and she wants to be there to see that they are made convenient for a hospital.

We are renting a small three roomed cottage from a family in the Presbyterian Mission in Peking, 50 cents each for the weekend.

When we return to Peking we expect to enjoy our new home to its utmost. It seems we have hardly been in it since we've been there. And then, the Chinese services we shall attend during Holy Week! There will be a three hour service in the Cathedral, but the Chinese for so long would be awfully tiring, so I think I shall just go to the short eleven o'clock service in the English Legation instead, and be quiet for the rest of the day.

I have missed the lovely Cathedral services of New York this winter more than I ever guessed I would, - especially during Lent.

The political conditions of China are neither worse nor better in fact nobody knows what is going on.

The plague is still spreading, and the flooded districts are still suffering for care. Poor China! Nobody knows nor realises half she suffers until she gets here and sees and hears.

We had a hard week in examinations last week, but they finally ended. The week after Easter we begin again, - this time with one special subject we may choose. I am taking Education as my subject, as a help in my teaching problems in Hankow.

I hope we have a good Chinese teacher for it.

Our hostel is something like a dormitory at home. Our house now is of stone, a real Chinese house has a wooden frame and paper pasted over it on the inside. The side facing the streets or road et cetera usually is made of brick or cement and plastered inside, but the rest is paper.

Yes, we have the same seasons here as any where. The latitude is about the same as that of Penn. I suppose here. The peach blossoms are just coming out now.

I do hope Dorothy is feeling splendidly by now. Dr. Lynn is a good surgeon I imagine.

How is the new baby in Greenville?<sup>2</sup>

I must hustle along and write a few more letters.

With love

Venetia

P.S. Tell Olivea the pictures of the hats and dresses come last week, I'll write sometime before very long.