

7 Avenue Petain, Shanghai, March 21.
1939

Dear Family:

It seems to be everyone's ambition out here to get letters out without the Japanese having a chance to read them, and a friend has offered to put some letters for me on the "Asia" on her return trip the first of April. This letter may be slow in reaching you but it is "authentic". No need to read between the lines.

It was very amusing at customs. The inspectors were Chinese under Japanese supervisors and so they were not anxious to collect any more money for the enemy than necessary. A big Italian boat got in just ahead of us so the customs house was full of passengers from that, Jewish refugees from Vienna, so that our things had to be examined out on the dock. There was a terrible crowd and confusion until one's head whirled, but finally the three of us got our various pieces of baggage sorted out of the piles and got an inspector, and he passed them all without even opening them. One had a new typewriter which was dutiable, but he let it go by. Another had four pairs of shoes, and he said, "I'll mark them 'old and used.' "

One requires a special pass to travel inland and I've applied for mine and I hope to get it in time to go on Saturday. It is very difficult to take one's baggage with one, so that I'm having it sent separately and ahead of me. I'm going to take with me only what I can carry myself.

A letter from Nanking said that there are 800 children in our compound. I had pictured it as being completely deserted so when I heard this news, I felt quite cheered up. Somehow it made the whole situation look different. They had adopted a policy of getting as many people to work as possible so they have taken anyone they could get and set them teaching. No pretence is made of keeping to any standards. The workers are given an allowance sufficient to buy food but it is spread out to as many as possible. Some are only junior high graduates or less, but they are set doing what they can. The few schools run by the missions are practically the only ones in operation. There are a few under Japanese control but they are so anti-Chinese that they are not popular. That accounts for the large enrollment. The Methodists have such schools in several centers, in our compound, in two of the city churches, and in two primary school compounds. All have more students than they can handle.

The stories that one hears are of petty tyranny and injustice, and just plain meanness. The latest one here in Shanghai, is the murder of several taxi-drivers in Hongkew, the Japanese controlled district. Now the taxis refuse to go into that district at all. Since the railway station is up there it is very difficult to get out of town. It seems that the Japanese have taxis which charge four dollars for the trip while the accepted rate in the city is \$1.40. Several of these chauffeurs were murdered before the companies made the rule not to go to the railway station. Now they will take one only to the edge of the International settlement, and one has to walk across the bridge and carry one's own things and take a ricksha the rest of the way. We haven't figured out just how we will get to the station.

From Nanking came the story of the evangelist from the University Hospital who was taken by the Japanese on the way to the railway station. He has not been heard of since. No one had any idea that there was any particular reason to fear for his safety.

Methodist Girls' High School
Nanking, China, March 28, 1939

Dear Family:

Well, you see, I have arrived. And such a welcome as I have had. We got here late Saturday afternoon, and the next day being Sunday I started in. There was a larger congregation than was usual before the war, many of them young people. To my great embarrassment, one of the girls came and invited me to come to the Young people's meeting at two o'clock and sing a solo. My protests were in vain as Miss Golisch took her side, and it seemed the only thing to do to let them find out for themselves that I cannot sing. When I was introduced, the young president of the meeting, told all my past history, and after the crowd and I had bowed to each other, he added, "She sings very beautifully and she has promised to sing for us." So that was that.

Yesterday, Monday, I attended five meetings. They are on Miss Golisch's schedule but I thought I would trail along just to get introduced to everyone and to get the hang of things again.

We went first to chapel at our own school, which has become a primary school. The man in charge is Mr. Kiang, a man who has been connected with our school here for many years, and there are about eight hundred children in it. There were only half of them at this chapel, as the room would not hold all of them, these were only the three upper grades. They were singing easter songs, and as I sat on the platform and looked at them, I couldn't help but think that they in themselves were a sort of resurrection. For the most part they were nice looking children, not different from the ones that we have had in our schools in the past. I can't tell you how deeply moved I was to look at them. Somehow it made me feel that bad as the situation is, it is not hopeless.

Then we went to Kuilan church to the chapel of the ^{school} ~~church~~ there. It is in charge of Pastor Shen, the pastor of the church, and is for students of junior high school grade. He has invited me to come three times a week to teach a class in English Bible. There were about two hundred there, about one third of them girls. They were a good looking bunch too. And how they could sing. I wondered how many of them had been in the University Middle School.

The city itself is a pitiful sight, just an empty shell of what it was two years ago. On every side are empty ruined houses and buildings, but the people themselves are wonderful. I could not help but be touched by the courage and optimism with which they are facing very discouraging situations.

To go back to my story of the five sermons I heard yesterday, we went in the afternoon at two o'clock to a Methodist workers' meeting for our Kuilan church. There were two pastors and three Bible women and Miss Golisch and I. Pastor Shen was very hearty in his welcome. He made ~~me~~ talk Chinese and assured me that I would be doing everything I wanted to in a few weeks. Perhaps he is optimistic. I felt much encouraged however to find how much I understood, how little I had forgotten and I believe that by fall I will have overcome the worst of that handicap. My impulse is to return to my former trade and pitch in and help on that Junior High work, but I'm trying to restrain myself. I believe that in the end I will be more useful in the work here, if I do not, but follow my original plan. The situation is likely to be that the native workers are going to be very much limited in what they can do for some time. Therefore they are anxious to have people, missionaries, who by virtue of being Americans can move about and speak more freely.

Sara April 10 1939

I tried to make a carbon of that first page but see I got the carbon in upside down. We have no electric lights and very poor oil lamps. I'm writing this in the semi-darkness, and didn't notice my mistake until I took it out. Will you send this letter on to Ruth and have her send it on to Clara.

Ruth persuaded me to buy myself a pair of snow-pants. At the time it seemed a very silly idea for we have very little snow out here, but yesterday, Miss Golisch got tired of hearing me complain about the cold and said, "Why don't you wear your heavy pants, and so I put them on today. They were the best thing I'd tried yet for they kept me warm down to my ankles. My feet of course stayed cold. The Chinese all looked at me in wonder and amazement. Ruth had an idea that I would need them in case I ever had to flee for my life, but with my propensity for avoiding really dangerous situations, I thought she was getting a bit imaginative. Well, anyhow I've worn them once. I shall put them on again today. I took them off when I went on my bicycle trip this afternoon. Fortunately for I nearly melted anyhow, I got so hot.

Coal is scarce and expensive and very poor. We have a fire in the dining room and I am sitting right up close to it as I write. I thought I smelled popcorn in the kitchen ~~the~~ but the cook has just assured me that it is not. There is a fireplace in my room in which I can have a fire but it doesn't seem to make any impression on the room, at least it is not warm enough to sit there. When the sun shines, I open the windows.

This house had a very narrow escape from being destroyed. Two shells fell very near it, both of them not more than fifteen feet from it, and there are big holes in the garden as a result. The windows in that side of the house were all broken by the concussion (Is that the right word?) and the brick wall is all scared by the shrapnel. One piece hit the window frame and went through it and through the ceiling, through the attic floor and through a partition in the attic and out through the roof. There is also a hole in the parlor ceiling from a shell or something. If those two shells had come much closer, they would likely have wrecked that corner of the house. You see, what I say, nothing ever happens to me. Even my house is safe.

My tulips are here and are just now getting ready to bloom. The servant have the garden planted mostly with their vegetables but the gardener has planted some for us now. In case of emergency, it will be a good idea to have something growing here. I wonder how Dad's came out. If I had thought I were coming back, I would never have given them to him.

There are a number of people living in the dormitory, mostly families who for some reason have no homes, not destitute people, but some whose homes were destroyed and they are living here temporarily. They have what they call "family worship" with them, to which Miss Golisch and I usually go. They have been practicing Easter songs. I did not go to night because I was so tired. The leader this week is a man from Shantung (about forty years ago) but he still has his brogue so that I can understand very little of what he says. When he talks to me directly I do a lot of fancy guessing. He probably has to do as much when I talk to him.

Hoping you are the same,

Lovingly, Jessie