

April 12, 1939

Dear Ruth:

On Good Friday, I had a brainstorm and wrote a poem, a copy of which I enclose. I know there is a question as to whether it should be considered poetry at all, but at least it is poetry to the extent that it attempts to express human experience. I was greatly moved by it as I wrote it, but now that it is cold, it is hard to evaluate. I still like it. I conceived it as I was going to church and began it during church, wept quite a bit while doing it. Dr. James preached, and was quite touched to see how much I was moved by the sermon. Now I'm wondering if I should confess to him and send him a copy. He is an old man, past seventy, of whom I am very fond. He also writes poetry, so perhaps he could understand, only his poetry has property form, rhyme, rhythm and what have you.

I had expected to be in Chinkiang today but my pass<sup>(from Jap military)</sup> did not come in time to go this morning, and so we are going to-morrow morning. Marie Brethorst is going with me. I shall probably come back on Friday when she does although I may stay over Sunday. They invited me to come to see them on my way here but they were holding evangelistic meetings then so that I knew it would not be a good time to see their normal activities. Anyhow I rather wanted to come directly here and look the situation over, and I'm glad I did.

I'm very busy at work studying Chinese, never had a chance to do as much of it as I craved before. I'm torn between being exceedingly slow and thorough and the other extreme of expanding my ~~mamm~~ vocabulary very rapidly! But I thought I would review for a month the stuff I'm supposed to know. With new teachers, it is a bit hard at first until you get on to each other. They want to just give one lists of new words and let it go at that, but somehow it doesn't seem a very effective method. My teaching, I'm not going to start until I get back from Chinkiang. I'm tempted not to do any of it, except that I know this study will get so monotonous and I need to be spending part of my time doing something I enjoy. It amounts to seven hours a week, but I'm going to do very little written work, so that it will be mostly the time I am actually there. I'll probably weaken as I get interested.

There is not much to say except what cannot be said. We were rather busy last week with Easter preparations. There were 140 taken into the church over here, mostly young people, not children, but the service made me think of the double features at the movies about which someone said that once they had been a time of recreation but now they had become an endurance test. We started in strong with everyone there but it lasted so long that everyone had to get up and go out, but some came back in again of course, but a lot of them didn't. He baptized sixty and that of course took a long time. It is a question in my mind as to whether the service meant more to the new members because it was done on a festive occasion in the presence of a big crowd of people, or if they might not better have been baptized on ordinary occasions. They had about eight hundred primary school children there and of course they got restless and all had to run out several times. Well, you know the Chinese weakness.

But another year, I shall raise the question and see what the pastor thinks. I suppose he has good and sufficient reasons for doing it as he does.

Somehow, it is a sort of a spiritual experience just to be here. I suppose if one could go into Germany and actually see the people, one would feel less discouraged about the situation. There's no use after all in being down-hearted for there is a wonderful lot of resistance in weak humanity. I had expected to find it almost a living death, instead it is almost mocking vitality. I'm exceedingly grateful that I am out here to see it.

I had a visitor this after, a Mrs. Shen, the wife of the director of young people's work here. She came just to talk with me for a while. Unfortunately she is from Wuhu and has quite a little brogue so that I have difficulty in understanding her altogether, but I hope by perseverance to be able to do so. She told me about her war experiences, how they spent ten months and a half wandering about, how they lost everything several times, but she thanked God that everywhere she went they found someone to help them. I wish I could have understood better what she said. With characteristic Chinese common sense, she had time in her wanderings to appreciate the scenery, as she went through some of the most beautiful parts of Kiangsi and Chekiang. She also knew the prices of everything in each place, but regretted that she was unable to buy anything to bring back with her. They ended up finally in Shanghai, she her husband and two little girls. She had become pregnant and had the baby while she was in Shanghai. She said that fortunately in Shanghai, they could go to the bishop and he helped them get back to Nanking.

The weather is much warmer. I've been quite comfortable today in the blue coat of my blue ensemble. I can't wear it with the suit because it is a different color, as the skirt and jacket have faded a little, but I have a dark blue skirt that it looks very nice with. It is loose fitting and is therefore very comfortable to sit around in. Everyone admires my blue suit and my black suit. Its too bad that I don't get a chance to show them off more.

There was a big fire down the street a little ways, two or three blocks away last night about ten o'clock. It was several one story buildings, as I found out this morning. It was raining hard all the time they were burning and it looked to me this morning as if one of them had been an auto repair shop, but I couldn't be sure. I walked down the street to see about trains.

I have not had a letter from you yet. Have you written? There have been two boats in, but I got only three letters, one from Leona, and one from Clara and one from Sara. I should get answers from my Yokohama letters on this next boat, if you are inspired to write immediately.

Hoping you are-----

Lovingly, Jessie