

Methodist Girls' High School
Nanking, May 29, 1939

Dear Family:

This is a lovely cool day even though it is nearly the end of May. It is threatening to rain and has been quite windy for several days. I hope it succeeds for we are much in need of rain.

Last week was a very busy week. Tuesday was Lulu's birthday and it was such a strenuous day that we spent the week either preparing for it or recovering from it. We had dinner on Monday noon at a Chinese restaurant with Mr. and Mrs. Kiang and some others, and on Tuesday we had guests for dinner at our house and in the afternoon we had a tea-party for the teachers of the school and other friends. She had expected that only graduates and former students of the school would come, but instead everybody came and where we had expected to have fifteen or twenty, there were more than sixty. We ran out of food and chairs and space. But everyone had a nice time. Then in the evening, she gave a party for the children who live on the compound. She gave each child a little gift. It was a very strenuous day, beginning early and lasting late.

Saturday, Miss Florence Sayles of Wuhu arrived to spend Sunday. She left this morning for Shanghai as she is going on furlough. It was her sister who came home with me two years ago, you remember. I took her out to Ginling in the afternoon and to foreign church yesterday.

At noon yesterday we were invited over to the school for dinner, the occasion being Mr. Kiang's birthday. He is now principal of the primary school and is sixty-seven years old and has been living and working in this school for forty-four years. He came here as a young man with his bride when he graduated from high school and has been here ever since. The dinner was a very happy time for it was an expression of genuine affection on the part of everyone. There is a very beautiful relationship between him and his wife, such as one sees sometimes with people who have lived together for so long. Their children are all away now so that they are alone in the house and they are having a good time doing as they please. It is rather remarkable how he has adjusted himself to the new situation and is facing it with courage and faith.

Monday is my day off. I am not even studying this morning but put my teacher to work writing characters for me which I shall ~~memorize~~ study later. I have them written on slips of paper and then write the meaning and phonetic on the back and try to recognize them when I see them. Like some other old friends, I can sometimes recognize them when I cannot call their names.

Sunday is always a great disappointment to me because I always have great plans which fail to materialize, but still I realize that we are making progress. I had one hundred fifty children (or more) in my Junior church, but in spite of the crowd it was much the best service we had had. I'm working in some more helpers and gradually I think we can overcome our lack of certain very necessary things. They were crowded four and five on seats intended for three and they had been at it for an hour already. So they were tired and fidgety, but on the whole well-behaved.

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In spite of certain discouraging odds, everyone here is finding her work very satisfying. Conditions are entirely different from two years ago. Missionary work was largely a matter of finding a qualified Chinese to do the work and in Nanking at least there was little difficulty in doing this. Our junior church at Central Church then was in charge of two students from the Nanking Theological Seminary, young women who were college graduates and experienced teachers and of course they conducted a worship service for the children which any church might well have been proud of. Everything was done in decency and order. Today the workers in the junior church are two girls, very young and inexperienced, with only a primary school education. Add to that the fact that there are three times as many children and you can understand how the result might better be described as a mob scene than a worship. In two months, we have managed to bring a little order out of the chaos but we still finish up the hour all very much exhausted. And yet yesterday, one of these girls told a story which made the squirming tired children, crowded three and four into seats meant only for two, sit up and listen most attentively.

The same thing is true of the Church school. The teachers are for the most part willing and earnest but with rather vague ideas what to do. And sometimes it is hard to tell them. I peeped into the third grade room to find the teacher had more than fifty, with seats for about thirty. She packed them in somehow and did surprisingly well. She loves the children and that seems to help overcome a lot of handicaps in physical surroundings.

But we have an eager group of young people who are turning to the church for inspiration and leadership. The church is the one institution which has managed to keep functioning in the present situation. Every Sunday afternoon they have a meeting in the church, attended by about forty of which they take entire charge themselves. We all act as "advisers" but the department is really in charge of a young Chinese pastor who has done excellent work. It is a real inspiration to go to this meeting. Out of this group and other young people, we hope gradually to raise up a new group who can take responsibility and carry on as a missionary is never able to.

In the past, high school teaching has been my job to such an extent that children's work is pretty much of a new experience. These two months I've spent "breaking in" to the new work. I'm trying to familiarize myself with the material which is already in Chinese, and that is a slow process. It will take me a year at least but I believe it is worth spending the time on. I've spent some time observing the work done with children in other churches, but mostly I've been trying to think of a plan whereby Central Church can do a bit better for its children. Since I seem to have a different plan every Sunday, you can see that this is also a slow process. Lack of space and seats and class material is the worst problem and to give the program the necessary variety to make it interesting and helpful to the children is not easy. Yet every Sunday as I come home tired and discouraged I also realize that we have done a little better than before, even if not as well as I had hoped.

The books that I especially cared for, my reference books and Bibles, and dictionary, are all here. My scrap book which I greatly treasured is also here. We lost so much less than everyone else that we really have little to complain of. Most of the warm bedding and clothing which was here was taken and things of special value such as a good clock were taken, but there were really few things worth taking. I told the servants that it was really very insulting that they found so few of our things worth stealing! The houses of the missionaries in Nanking were far from being "looted" i. e. having everything taken from them. It is hard to estimate one's loss because after two years, one can't remember a lot of things.

On page two I told you about my church work. I realize that there are several other tasks which I have which I omitted to mention, but I guess I told you in my other letters about them. My English classes are "old stuff" to me so that I don't worry about them much, although I enjoy them a great deal, but I lie awake nights thinking about this Sunday work. It gives one a chance to work closely with these girls who are helping. Those helping in my junior church are former students of mine and I realize that they are willing to help mostly because I am their "old" teacher. But I hope in time that they will get a vision of wanting to do something for others. I don't know if one is justified in exploiting their personal affection for one in this manner, but I trust that in the end they will be the gainers by what they have tried to do for these children.

I have felt quite gratified by my progress in Chinese. So many people have remarked about how "suddenly" I started to talk. It is still a great handicap, but I'm working it off, I guess, even though slowly. But the best school in which to learn is the school of life, to have to talk to people. It is easy in a general conversation because one says what one knows how to say, but to be put in a place where there is a definite idea to get across is a real test.

The first of July, I expect to get a very good teacher, called "Big" Wang. He taught me before and I certainly made progress with him. I couldn't get him this spring and have had to get along with some others, who while good, are not his equal. I'm planning to take a week's vacation as soon as my class in the junior high school is over, probably go to Wuhu and visit friends there, and then begin the first of July on my Summer schedule. I'll work only in the morning. I'll keep on with my Sunday work and plan to have about ten hours a week of language study but will have no English classes.

My letters are infrequent, but when I start, I like to make them comprehensive. At that I suppose there are things which you would be interested to know that I have not thought of. Miss Golisch and I are alone in this big twelve room house and get along very nicely. She is very tired as she is on the go constantly and I wish she could get away for the summer. We expect Katherine Boeye here this week, as she is now in Shanghai. I suppose she will sail on the first boat she can get on.

With love,