

copy to Aunt, Mrs Kay, Lerma, Dale

Methodist Girls' High School
Nanking, June 6, 1939

Dear Family:

I am very ~~much~~ tired tonight but I shall try to write you anyhow and tell you about the trip I took today.

Katherine Doeye is here now on her way home and one of the men connected with the School of Agriculture offered to show her about in the country a bit, so I went along. I had not been out of the city since I got here, i. e. in the sense of getting out into the rural districts so that I was anxious to see what conditions were like.

We left the house here at seven, Katherine, Dr. Steward, a Mr. Sha (a professor from the school of Agriculture) and myself. Mr. Sha spoke very good English and was one of the first students ever to study agriculture in Nanking University and he is now in charge of some of the experimental work done on the University farm. He was a very interesting man.

While we waited at the gate for the car to come, a note came to Mr. Sha from the car owner saying that he was not sure whether it would be safe for the car to go because several days ago one of his cars had been held by the guerrillas for three days and he was afraid this car might be taken. We were much relieved when the car finally came although we wondered how far we would get. It was a dreadful rattletrap of an old thing and I wonder if even a guerrilla would have wanted it.

We went out the South gate of the city and started out along the road that leads toward Wuhu. It made me recall the journey which I took two years ago in August on my way to the station in Nanking from Wuhu. Now many of the little farm hamlets were in ruins. There was a noticeable lack of livestock, especially the smaller ones, pigs, chickens, ducks, and geese. Dr. Steward said that some land had been left uncultivated because of lack of farm animals, but for the most part the fields were under cultivation.

We turned off of the main road onto a very rough side road which led through a valley which Dr. Steward hoped would lead to some ammunition dumps back in the hills. These were now in ruins of course, but after following the road for a couple of miles mostly in low gear, we decided that it would not lead where we wanted to go and so we had to bump our way back.

The road then led along what is called the "outer wall" which is an dirt wall about twenty feet high and plenty wide for a road which was built in the time of the Ming Dynasty (about five hundred years ago) as an outer wall for the city of Nanking, then the capital of China. The towns we passed through all had "Meng" on the end of them which means gate in Chinese. This wall was all the way from five to ten miles from the real city wall which is made of brick and stone and is forty or fifty feet high. This old wall really made a very good road and was very straight and level. It was rough as all the roads out here are, we travelled about ten miles an hour. It led around the base of a famous mountain here, called "Purple" Mountain. We were headed for the University farm. It took us around the city from the West side to the east.

A mile or two from the farm, we had a flat tire and that was the last we saw of the car. We decided to walk on ahead while they were

changing the tire. There were two drivers with the car, one of whom had to ride outside on the running board. We walked on to the farm which was about a half mile away.

The school is conducting what they call a Farmer's institute. Boys are taken from farms and give a year of study with the idea of putting new ideas into circulation in the villages. They are taught the rudiments of science and especially scientific farming. They studied in the city for two or three months and now they were out on the farm helping harvest the winter wheat. Mr. Sha pointed out his own twin sons there who were working along with these poor boys from the villages. It was hoped that they would not be educated away from their homes but prepared to make their homes better when they went back to them. There are about forty boys altogether in two classes. It is an experiment and one that ~~it~~ it is hoped will help solve the problem of getting a little leaven of new ideas into the lump of agricultural China.

The farm is scattered out over a couple of miles so we walked on hoping the car would overtake us, and when after an hour it had not come, we decided that it would be better to think of some other way of getting home, so we walked across the fields to the side of a lake outside the city wall, got into a flat bottomed boat and were ferried across that so that we could get a carriage and get home. We arrived home again just at twelve.

Mr. Sha told us about some of the work which the school of agriculture is doing. Before the war, they had organized ~~cooperatives~~ cooperatives in many villages and they were allotted a certain amount of relief money to be dispensed through these cooperatives as loans. He said it was given out in small sums sometimes as little as ten dollars, to buy seed or repair or rebuild homes, all of it administered through these local groups. He expected all of it to be paid back. When the local military authorities heard of it, they demanded that the people pay it back. They said "If you need help, we will give it to you." But the enterprise went on secretly in spite of this opposition.

They were harvesting and threshing the winter wheat everywhere, which fortunately is quite good this year. Someplaces they had it lying out on the obblestone paved roads and we drove over it. They thresh it by very primitive methods, of hitting it with flails, or by shaking the bundles and beating them on the ground. The Agricultural farm has a threshing machine, (a very small one it looked to me) run by a gasoline engine which was always breaking down he said.

Now they flood the fields and plant rice for the second crops, but because of the lack of rain, this work was much delayed. Beside every canal and water hold, one would see men on their treadmill pumps pumping water into the fields. But the water was low even there. It was cloudy all day and we hoped it would rain and put an end to such a necessity of toil.

Aside from the ruins here and there, things looked much as usual. Many houses had been rebuilt. They are built with brick walls or mud walls so that rebuilding usually meant merely putting on a new roof. Some of the new buildings had very fine tile roofs which the farmers had looted from a near-by brick kiln the owners of which had fled during the war. It made one think of the story of the sudden rise to prosperity of Wang Lung in the "Good Earth." Out of the ruins of the rich, the poor

are able to move out of straw huts into houses made of bricks. But for the most part the houses were roofed with thatch or the ordinary tile. The opinion has been expressed that that locality had not suffered such a great disaster since the time of the Taiping Rebellion in the middle of the nineteenth century when a severe civil war was attended with very great destruction.

There was no evidence of the guerrillas. Since the circle we made never took us further than a few miles from the city, we were constantly in Japanese territory, but even in these country places, the garrison locked themselves in at night and let the Chinese take over control until daylight. We passed one village where they said that in daylight a few weeks ago Chinese soldiers came and carried off two Chinese photographers sent to take pictures by the Japanese for the passes which every one is required to carry. At the farm, they told us that they were quite safe there but that a village only a mile away had to pay tribute to bandits for protection.

The one thing that struck us over and over, as it has within the city too, of the wonderful come-back which the people have made. There seemed the normal amount of activity everywhere. Last summer only about sixty percent of the land was under cultivation but this year, the usual amount. Burned homes and shops had been rebuilt and business was going on as usual. Yet eighteen months ago they were fighting in this very district, people were driven from their homes and scattered everywhere. In a country with so few roads as there are here, of course a few miles off the main high ways they were quite free from trouble, unless they happened to get into the larger towns.

On Monday, we drove out to the Sun Yat Sen Memorial park to see what was left. The Sun Mausoleum is intact, and most of the other memorial buildings have suffered only relatively minor injury. They have been stripped of everything removable by the "Lao he-sing" (The old hundred names, i. e. the common people) the doors and windows, etc. but the buildings could be repaired for a relatively small sum and put into their original condition.

It is impossible to have a good car these days. The taxis for hire are such rattletraps that one never knows if one will get back in them or not. The one yesterday had to be constantly tinkered with before it would go and of course the one today failed to keep up with us.

Katherine is going tomorrow and then we resume the regular schedule again. I'm going to the station which is about five miles away to see her off since that is a Chinese custom. She is a very popular speaker so that you may get a chance to hear some of these things from her.

I must stop and go to bed because I am very tired, as I said in the beginning.

Lovingly, Jessie