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Nanking, January 10, 1939

Dear Family:

Here I am safely back in Nanking after a week in Shanghai and my trip was very successful in that it made me very glad that my lot in life was cast here rather than in Shanghai. That is, I suppose the purpose of a trip, to make one glad to get home.

I choose that particular moment to go because Margaret was taking her departure, and since it costs about as much to get from our place to the railway station as it does to get from the station to the Shanghai station, it halves the cost to go with someone, or that part of it. Besides it is more fun to go to Shanghai with someone so that there is someone who is doing more or less the same things which an out-of-town person wants to do. "Up-country" person they could call them here. Or "out-port". I didn't need to be called anything because everybody knew what I was because my skirts were too long. But in Nanking skirts are not to look nice but to keep ones legs warm and so it seems poor sense to cut them off just to please somebody or other.

Conditions in Shanghai are so much worse than they are here, that this seems like a peaceful village in comparison. Getting through the Shanghai station is a nightmare, it is in the midst of the ruins of Chapei and there were no lights (we got in at night and the first thing we did was to get lost from each other, and the place was jammed with people. When finally we got together again, we had to wait nearly an hour for a taxi. It was nearly as bad going back, except that it was in the daytime. But there were about ten red-caps for about five hundred passengers, and I had to carry all my stuff over an overhead pass over the tracks, high up and then down again, and while I didn't have much, I felt all in by the time I had made the climb up and down again. There was a little Japanese attendant at the station who was trying to make people line up in proper civilized fashion, and poor man did he have his difficulties, because when the gates opened, everybody crowded in from the sides. He bravely pushed in and tried to push out the intruders and knocked down a Chinese about three times his size.

The place where Joy lives is about the most thrilling I ever was in. It would be like living in Noman's land with them shooting at one from both directions. Margaret and I went out there to tea, and having been there only once about a year ago, we had trouble finding it again. It is in the so-called bad-lands of Shanghai, that is just outside the Settlement boundary in territory which is contested by the Settlement authorities and the Japanese. Every block or so there would be little sandbag fort filled with British soldiers, with their guns bristling over the sides. Then every few feet there would be some Chinese policemen. They keep them in groups of four or five, as one alone is sure to be disarmed and killed. When we got lost, we stopped and asked these policemen and these soldiers, if they knew of a Bible school in that vicinity, the soldiers knew nothing, but the police pointed the way. I asked Joy how it happened that she was so well known to the police, and she said that if ever they came along there at night, they did not venture off the big street down their little lane alone, but wait until the four or five police came along and then they went home under police escort. It seemed that there had been a couple of armed robberies right at their gate! By this time it was five thirty and getting dark and I remembered that I had no insurance, and I didn't want a total loss, so I insisted that we try to make our escape as soon as possible. It is not necessary to tell you that nothing happened.

will be for the Sunday School teachers, those who are teaching now and those who taught last spring, about twenty five of them. I have a gift for each one a little diary and a calendar and we will serve them "meat" and play games and have a good time. We have a lot of Christmas activities, so I thought it was a good idea to get this over with.

Last Sunday just as church was out, a Japanese woman and a little boy come into the church. She went over to one side and knelt down at a pew and prayed and then proceeded to have a little service there by herself. Everyone had gone except a few of us who were waiting for some guests to get through talking. She sang a song and then read her Bible. I finally decided to go over to speak to her, but we had no common language to use. She spoke a little Chinese but it sounded like Japanese to me. I tried to tell her that we had church at ten o'clock. She told me that she had come from Hankow only three days ago. One cannot help but feel sorry for these Japanese Christians in their effort to bridge the gap caused by the war and the treatment their soldiers have given the Chinese. Some of them feel the burden of the sins of their nation very keenly. A Japanese pastor called on one of the missionaries and before he left, the two knelt down and prayed together. When they finished, the American arose, but the Japanese began to weep and said, "Forgive me for the sins of my people."

It looks as if my work is going to be somewhat different in the future. Miss Brethorst, one of our older missionaries is to go on furlough this summer, and it looks now as if I would have to take over her work, or as much of it as I can. She is one of our most energetic workers and there is no doubt that I shall be trying to fill a pair of shoes much too large for me. Whether I shall be able to navigate in them at all is perhaps a question. Anyhow, she wants me to spend considerable time this winter and spring working with her and getting on to her plans. I shall have to drop my teaching work, or at least part of it, but I hope I can keep on with my Sunday work, for I have just gotten it to the place where I'm not worried to death about it all the time. I'm not too enthusiastic at the prospect because I would prefer to work along as I have been doing, making my own place, expanding this children's work and young people's work. You can see how that would be preferable to taking over someone's job and trying to keep their plans going for a year or two until her return. If anyone should return from furlough, I'd hope they would take the job but there is no prospect of such right now. Well, a job that is too big for one is a good chance to learn a lot of things. So another year may see me wiser (and perhaps sadder) than I am now.

American mail came today which is my inspiration for this letter. A very satisfactory mail it was too, two letters from everybody and one from nearly everybody. Those who didn't write two, wrote one. At least some of them did, as many as I could expect. One nice thing about having a big family is that when mail comes, one gets lots of letters. Not to mention cast off clothes! It's nice to have to many to write to, too. Nothing like being satisfied with what you can't help, but of course I could refuse to write to them.

It is rumored (but not yet officially confirmed) that our salary is to be linked up to exchange, sixty percent of it, which at present rate nearly doubles it. It was much too low before, but this makes it good enough. Other missions mostly get the full rate, but that is too much to expect from the dear sisters. After what we went through last year, we are appropriately thankful. It is made retroactive to October first, really a generous gesture. Hoping you are the same, lovingly, Jessie.