

Dear Family:

Well, I have gone and come back from the country, the guerrillas looked at us and decided that we were not worth bothering about, and the bandits could see that we had nothing to steal and that nobody would pay any ransom for us anyhow, so we went peacefully on our way.

I enjoyed it all very much although it was a little tiring. We went all the way by ricksha. The weather was perfect, as we struck the first warm days so that we came back just nicely sunburned.

We left Nanking about seven and started for a village called Molingkuan in which we formerly had a primary school and still have some property. The property had been occupied by the village people under Japanese supervision and was being used as a primary school. There was no particular objection to that, of course, except that it was a situation which could not be let go on indefinitely. It was all right for them to occupy it in an emergency, but they had to admit our claim to it and our right to ask them to move out whenever ~~they wanted~~ we wanted the property for our own use.

We picked up a pastor about half way there who had had some dealings with them on the subject. He was a middle-aged man, with practically no chin at all, who rode a bicycle on which he had a flag, a little three cornered banner announcing that he represented the Methodist Church. It had a red cross on it, but apparently he was ignorant of the fact that a red cross always signifies medical work.

You have no idea of the stir the entrance into a country village of a couple of foreigners causes. Children started to follow us as soon as we entered the village and by the time we got to the school building, we had a regular mob of them. The adults also were adequately represented. ~~When it~~ It was already noon when we got there so that school had been dismissed, but after a while, we managed to scare up a couple of teachers. Marie did all the talking, and she asked for the principal, who was sent for. After a while he came, and Marie explained to him what she wanted, i. e. a written statement from them that the property they were occupying belonged to the church and a promise that they would vacate it at any time we wished them to.

Well, the principal said that he had nothing to do with the property, all he had charge of was the school. So he passed the buck to another man, a shifty-eyed individual called the "Village-elder". Then we started in trying to reach an agreement. They had put in some repairs on the building (without our consent) and felt that they should be recompensed for that. Marie offered to let the repairs count as rent and to allow them to use the building for another year. So they palavered and palavered.

In the meantime a young Japanese came in. He could talk a little English, but a very little. He knew even less Chinese. I felt sorry for the fellow because he was simply helpless in the situation. What all the talking was about, he had no idea.

But was he ever an apostle of the New Order in East Asia! Marie gave him her card with her name "Miss Marie Brethorst" written on it, and he studied that a long time, and finally began, "Miss Marie, when my regiment came here, there was no primary school. This building was empty. We used it for a primary school." Ever so often he would begin again: "Miss Marie when my regiment came here the people could not make a living and now every thing is peaceful." He would only get one sentence out when Marie would sort of flood him with words.

I'm sure that he could not understand what she said, because when she finally stopped for breath, he would look bewildered and remain silent and then after a long time, begin again with his "Miss Maire--" He said that he was teaching Japanese in the school there and that he had some students who could make speeches in Japanese. He had been there more than a year. He claimed to be a university graduate.

Finally, the Chinese said that they had no authority to promise anything about the building. They said that the Japanese were in complete control and we would have to deal with them. I hope the Young man did not understand what they said about his ~~mountain~~ country. "You know how it is" they said. So Marie decided that it would be necessary to take up the matter through the consulate.

It was then about three o'clock in the afternoon and we had had no dinner so we hunted up a place to eat and had a bowl of noodles. It was very good too. The place was a mud building without any windows, with an open place along one side covered with matting which let in a little light. As we ate, we had an interested ~~@@~~ would audience be the right word?--around us, mostly women and children.

Then we went with the pastor who had come with us to the village where he lived to spend the night. His wife had recently died so that he was alone there with his oldest son and an old woman servant. But he had arranged for a very good Chinese supper for us. The three of us had a room together. Marie and I slept on two canvass cots set side by side and Miss Choa on another bed.

When one goes into a place ~~might~~ like that, the first thing the host does is to bring in a basin of hot water for one to wash in. There is a small towel in the water. Apparently one is not supposed to wipe. Then we drank tea and ate some light refreshments, cookies, peanuts, etc. You have no idea what a cup of tea (or several cups for that matter) do for one's soul on such an occasion.

The road to this second village and that which we traveled the second day was a dirt road and very rough. It was rutted and broken up and there was not enough vehicle travel on it to smooth it down at all. There was a narrow path on one side where people walked, but that was no help to a ricksha. So we were bumped over those roads for hours at a time. I would have preferred to walk and did walk a lot ~~more~~ the first day, but I did not walk as fast as the coolies so had to ride in order not to delay them. But three or four hours of that was rather tiring.

As we had been on the road that first day about seven or eight hours, we had no trouble sleeping even on our hard beds. Before we went to bed, the neighbors all came in and looked at us. On a trip like that, one is surrounded by curious onlookers all the time.

The next morning, we started out about eight o'clock for the next place. The road that way took us through guerrilla territory but the pastor went along to protect us. He was very insignificant looking but I decided before the day was over that he was not without his good points, one of them being courage. He said he had been wanting to go over there anyhow and it was not wise for one man to go alone, so he took the opportunity to go with us.

The road that day was very lonely. It was a newly built road which did not pass through many villages. It went along the tops of hills and gave us a wonderful view of the country side. After a while we came to a village where a Japanese flag was flying and we were stopped by sentries in the road who examined our passes. As we started to go on, we were stopped again by some Chinese in plain clothes (my ricksha coolie said they were "plain clothes men" in the employ of the Japanese) who asked where we were going, and when we told them, they advised us not to take that road. The pastor said that he thought it would be all right. Then they advised us to leave our things there because they said the road was not safe, but he replied that we had nothing with us except our bedding.

We went on through the village and when we got to the other side of the village, the pastor went on ahead on his bicycle and consulted some Chinese there about the road and apparently was satisfied that it was safe. He said that the guerrillas a few days before had captured eight of these plain clothes men in that village but one of them had managed to escape. So for the next couple of hours we sort of held our breath and looked with suspicion on every innocent farmer we met. If any of them were dangerous, they were armed with nothing more deadly than a shovel.

When we were within a hour of our destination, we came to a bridge that was out. I noticed that all the bridges which were wooden were covered with earth, and I wondered why. I heard that the G. made a practice of burning bridges. This bridge, while across a very small stream, had to cross a very deep gully. When I saw it, I thought we would have to go back, but someone said a Chinese coolie can do anything and the men picked up their rickshas and carried them across on the little footbridge. The three of them of course helped on each one and it took a half hour or more to get them across.

It was noon when we reached the village. There was a very nice little church and a six room parsonage. The pastor and his wife and the Bible women were living there together. These Chinese houses remind me of our summer cottages for the partitions never go to the ceiling. In fact there is no ceiling, so how could they? I mean just the roof.

We went to look at the girls' school building formerly a nice two story building but with the upper story gone. The windows had been bricked up and so to see what was inside we had to get a ladder and climb up onto the floor of the second story which was still intact. They wanted us to use the material to provide a place for the Bible Woman so that she would not have to live with the pastor. There was a former boys' school building near the parsonage which was well adapted to that purpose, and after looking it all over, we decided to repair that for her to live in and use for her work.

In the afternoon we had a meeting and there was a surprisingly large number of people there considering that they were not expecting us. Marie and Miss Chao spoke for a few minutes each. Then we went to the house of a church member for tea. She had formerly been a teacher in the day school and had a big house which was stripped bare of everything.

Miss Chao is very fond of joking. The Bible woman brought up a bowl of rice gruel while she and I were there alone and offered it to us. After a while Marie came in, and Miss Chao said: "Here is a bowl of Chinese milk which Mrs. Chang has fixed for you." Marie said: "Where is yours? have you eaten it?" Miss Chao said, "Already eaten it." So Marie ate it although with all we had had to eat that day she wasn't hungry. Marie will

never let anyone get ahead of her. Thinking that we had done our duty, she was ready to do hers. I didn't say anything. After she got it down, Miss Chao told her that there had been only one bowl and so we had decided to save it for her.

We had a very nice time there, in fact had a very nice time all the way. The pastor was a younger man than the first one, but ^{both} seemed like a very fine fellow. They treated us very kindly and gave us ~~him~~ presents of a box of Chinese cakes.

The next day we had a long day on the road, ninety Li (about thirty miles) The first third of it was over this bad mud road which we traveled the day before which brought us back to the village where we had spent the first night. We stopped there for two hours and had dinner. A crowd of children gathered to watch us eat and we promised them that if they would go into the church and wait and we would come in and sing for them. Miss Chao's voice is not bad, but you know what mine is like. Marie's is much the same. We had to keep chasing them back into the chapel but finally when we got through we went in there and we had about fifty children and we each performed. I sang "Jesus loves me" in English because they knew it in Chinese and I thought they would be interested in hearing it in English. In fact just to look at us seemed to be enough to make up for the lack of quality in our singing.

After an hour or two we got back on the paved road and in comparison with what we had been travelling over, it seemed smooth going! In fact I laid my head back and took a little nap. We got into the city about a quarter past six. We were on the road that day nine hours and a half. I know to travel thirty miles in that time seems rather preposterous to you, but it has its advantages. You certainly get a change to see the country such as you never get going sixty miles an hour.

Yesterday I went over to the kindergarten to see how things were going and I saw a woman there with a needle through her eyelid. She does a little work for the school in return for the tuition of her three small children, empties the buckets every day. She was the worst bunch of misery that I've seen in a long time. She has trachoma I suppose and her eyelids had gotten so painful that to pull that one up a little, she had a needle stuck through it above the eyeball. I asked her why she didn't go to a doctor and she said it cost too much. Eyes in that condition have to be operated on. So I wrote a note for her and sent her to the hospital. She is a widow with these three small children, the oldest eleven Chinese count. She had to work to support them although I am not sure but what she has relatives who perhaps help her. I said I'd help her get into the hospital and she said, "Ask the Relief Committee to get me some rice." What she needs is of course more food.

Today I asked the social service worker in the hospital about her and she said that she would arrange for her to get free treatment. I offered to help pay for her, but the S.S. worker said: "No, I'll arrange it. If you got gold exchange, I'd say you could do it, but I know you don't." Somebody must have been telling her about our sad condition. It was really very funny. But I said that probably the family would have to be helped in the mother's absence and I would look after that. She will have to have an operation on her eyelids and will be in the hospital ten days or two weeks.

Hoping you are the same, lovingly, Jessie