

Wuhu, China, June 1, 1940

Dear Friends:

I have come up here for a week's rest and am taking advantage of the time to get some letters written. Miss Bretherst is threatening to turn over the books and most of the responsibility to me when I return but she wanted me to get away for a little rest before she goes.

I don't know if I told you that I have moved. My address now is 40 Hwang Li Hsiang, Nanking. A couple went on furlough this spring and offered their house to me fully furnished and equipped if I would agree to live in it while they are away. It was too tempting an opportunity to be turned down although I wasn't sure how I would like living alone. It is nearer my place of work and is therefore more convenient as well as being more quiet. But I decided that since I had many points of contact through my work, there was no chance of my getting lonely. Also I soon acquired a cat, a small kitten named Oscar May Oceanwave who sees to it that I don't get lonely. I gave it the name of Oscar before I discovered its sex, and tried to correct my mistake by adding the May. But the name, I think is rather nice for a cat.

I think I told you about my new appointment to evangelistic work at Wesley Church. I have spent the past three months trying to get acquainted with my job. I decided that I needed to know the members of the church better and so the Bible woman and I have started out to call on all of them in their homes. We are going to go every Monday and Thursday morning for two hours, nine to eleven. We have done it just twice and it has been very interesting. And I believe very profitable. The people are so friendly and are really glad to have us come. Mrs. Yie, the B. W. is an old lady about sixty, very deaf, but very greatly loved by the people.

We called Thursday on an old lady who was very ill and in great pain with what I guess was arthritis. She was very discouraged and when we came in, began to cry. Mrs. Yie started out to comfort her, and before she left the old lady was feeling quite cheerful. The old lady was feeling rather hurt because her sons were not supporting her, and she was dependent on her married daughter, who was incidentally very good to her. Mrs. Yie said, "Well, we all of us have to get along without something. You have sons but no money, and I have money but no sons." She prayed with the old lady and everybody felt better.

Many of these homes are desperately poor. All are poor according to American standards. One thing we always try to do is to help the sick. They can usually manage to get along if they don't get sick, but that little extra is the last straw. Then the situation looks pretty hopeless to them. This old lady above had had a trip to the hospital and some medicine at Miss B.'s expense. They looked at me a little dubiously as to my ability to be the friend to them in time of need that she had been.

Another very interesting project is one provided by relief money for very poor children, to get them in, and give them a good square meal. Ours is held after the day school children are gone, from four thirty to six. We hired a woman to take charge every day as general supervisor, to look after the food, to see that it is cooled, and plan the activities for the

My garden is very beautiful now. It is the sort of garden which I had in mind when I worked so hard in your backyard. The snapdragons are the most beautiful I've seen outside of a greenhouse. None of the credit of course goes to me because Dr. Gale had it all planted before she left with instructions to the gardener what to do through each month. It is especially pretty right now as there are many red flowers in bloom. Her roses are not so nice as those at Hwei Wen but the other flowers are as nice or nicer.

Marie and I visited a couple of the "Homes" classes, which are literacy classes held in several neighborhood homes. It was very interesting to me to go into their homes. Someway I was greatly touched to realize the conditions from which these women whom I see every week come. We are so apt to forget or to realize the discomfort and crowdedness and the bareness and dirtiness of them. We were treated royally however. On Sunday we went to a special service in which a dead church member was put into her coffin. (She had died the day before.) It is customary to have a little religious service in connection with the encoffining. I had never seen one before. Everything was all ready and apparently there were some professional undertakers there in charge. The coffin is filled with packages of lime so that there is just room for the body. She was wrapped in a comforter and there was a red cover to put on top so that only her face showed. After the two men carried her out and put her in her coffin, they had a regular rigamarole which they had to go through. A red string with a cash tied in the middle was stretched across the coffin to see if the body was laid in exactly in the center. Then when they had adjusted the head to their satisfaction, they broke the string. Before that the dead woman's sister had been told to get her the dead's woman's towel and wipe off her face. Then she threw the towel up onto the roof of the house, to indicate that it would not be used again.

These Chinese houses are built one courtyard behind another and there are always several families living in them. There was a crowd gathered, some of them church members and friends, but most of them outsiders who had come in to see what was going on.

The pastor's remarks were very interesting. First they sang a hymn, and then when that was over, the pastor explained that the hymn was not mourning, or wailing as they perhaps thought. Then he went on to explain the Christian idea of death. He said: "There is a place many times brighter than the sun, and this old "tai-tai" has gone there. We do not weep for her because we know she is much happier than she was here." Then he called on Mrs. Yea the Bible woman to pray. Then the lid was put on the coffin and nailed down. The nearest relative, a woman (a sister or sister-in-law) took the hammer first and hit the nail first. Then the coffin was lifted up off the floor and put on sawhorses in front of a door. The funeral was a couple of days later and I did not go to it.

Afterwards, as we were leaving, some neighbors, who were church-members, begged Marie to come to their house. Marie thought they wanted something from her, but when we got there, we found that it was only that they wanted to give us a cup of tea. It was really very sweet of them. They took us into a crowded little room, and we sat and drank a cup of tea while the people of the house stood around and looked at us. We filled the room, Marie and I and Mrs. Yea, so that the people had to stand in the doorway and look in.

Mrs. Yea wants to take me calling in the homes and I hope I can get

started at that soon for I think it would be very interesting and helpful. In talking to the women on Wednesday, I felt the difficulty of not being near enough to them in understanding to really be able to speak helpfully. It is easy to talk to students, perhaps because I'm used to it, but I feel a little baffled by this group.

I've taken over two of Marie's classes. One of them I had on Tuesday and were boys who work in the clinic which is held in the church. It is a special eye clinic and these boys are given special training in treatment of common eye conditions. There are crowds of people there every afternoon, more than a hundred the boys told me yesterday. They are studying English medical terms. I hope to get a textbook to use after this for the list of words which Marie had given them is rather haphazard. Anyhow there were so many that I did not exactly know the meaning of.

Then on Thursday I have a class~~s~~ of teachers, of about junior high school grade. They will come here. Most of them I already know from other contacts in the Epworth League and elsewhere.

We are also opening soon some children-aid work. Poor children who are getting only one meal a day, are brought in and given a good meal. They are kept for two hours, and taught a little. It is supposed to be for the very poorest, and the pastor and others are investigating them now trying to find the neediest. They will be children who are not now in school. The Social Service Department of the Epworth League is going to help in the management of it. There is a woman in charge who will be there every day and a servant to prepare the food, but with a hundred children they need more help than that. The money comes from the Red Cross I believe. It is being done in all the churches throughout the city. It will be kept up for two or three months, depending on how long the money holds out.

Next week there is a woman from the National Christian Council to be in town in the interest of "Homes" work. The idea is to teach the women easy ways of improving their homes, their responsibility to their families, etc. That is, I suppose that is what it will be, for it is new to me.

This week, on Friday is our local Mother's club. There are about thirty members in it. This is the second meeting. Sunday is Mother's Day but a Chinese version of it in which the father's are also to be honored. I have to get together enough flowers for all the members of the congregation to wear. Marie suggested I could use pansies! I don't have enough roses. Counting the children there will be about three hundred people. The Chinese dearly love flowers. I suppose because they have so few of them. There is nothing that one can give them that they appreciate more. I've kept picking the pansies and giving them to different groups and they always appreciate them. For some reason they especially like pansies.

Hoping you are the same. I once thought of naming Oscar, Pansy, but having gotten a little acquainted with him, I can see that he is no pansy. Oscar just fits him (or her). If he looks like his mother, he will be a handsome cat some day.

Hoping you are the same. I mean it this time.

Lovingly, Jessie