

Nanking, January 20, 1946

Dear Family:

I will try to take up where I left off. The best news is that my cook is at last well enough to start to work so that I am going to set up housekeeping for myself beginning tomorrow. This is the longest period of eating entirely Chinese food, and I really haven't minded it, but I don't think it is a good idea to continue it indefinitely. For breakfast I eat soft rice, with two fried eggs. That is not typical Chinese breakfast, but just a concession to my foreign tastes. I also mixed up some milk powder and ate some of the rice as porridge. I can't say that I cared much for either combination. Of course I've been invited out a great deal but always to Chinese food. I've eaten only one foreign meal, mm at the American consulate. So much company food has been hard on my digestion, I admit. I probably would do better on regular food. I mean everyday food. I plan to eat two foreign meals, breakfast and dinner, but to make it mostly of Chinese products. The exception is to be some milk, which will be milk powder.

I wish I were doing as well in some other respects as I am in food. For instance in the matter of a bath. If I'd realized how hard it was going to be to get a bath out here, I really would have taken one before I left Spirit Lake. I make a few gestures with a wash cloth every morning, but somehow my p.j. seem to be frozen on me so I don't get very far. I keep resolving that I will do so, but somehow never quite seem to find an auspicious occasion. I see it is getting around to a month or at least three weeks since I got off the boat. I could just as well wait to spring. However I consider myself above the general level of the unwashed in that I occasionally change my clothes.

We are facing quite a serious situation here because of high prices. I expect that even with the most stringent economy, eating only Chinese products having almost no artificial heat, that my living is going to cost me about as much as it did in Berkeley including the rent. I pay no rent here although I have the overhead on a house, such as light and servants.

The funds that were raised for the rehabilitation of our works, such as for repair of buildings are turning out to be very inadequate because of the high prices. It is estimated that in the matter of building and repairs, both material and labor, one American dollar will do only about one-seventh to one-tenth of what it formerly would. I expect that the same thing is going to be true of missionar support. We are adopting the policy for the present that only the most necessary repairs should be made. In this house, I had the broken window panes fixed, but expect to do nothing more to it. It is badly in need of paint, both inside and out, but otherwise is in good condition.

Tell Mrs. Chaffee that I have the three pairs of curtains which she gave me up in my study where I live and work. I expect they are the only curtains in town. They fit the windows very nicely and make the room seem less barren. The Chinese really don't mind if there are curtains or not, so I am not worrying about the rest of the house. I just feel better to have them up in the room where I spend most of the time.

The Church Committee on Relief in Asia sent a case of vitamins with each of us and so whenever I see anyone looking thin, or hear of someone who has had a rather hard time of mm it, I give them a bottle with instructions to take six a day. They are greatly appreciated as it is impossible to buy them here at any price.

I have had a very bad cold but it is at last getting better. I can't decide whether it is better to have a fire or not. I have some wood which is a little damp as it doesn't burn very well and some "coal-balls" i. e. coal dust mixed with clay. They will burn but don't give off much heat. On bright days, the best thing is to find a sunshiny spot. To really keep warm with those coal balls would cost me about 500 a day, and I don't know if I could do it then.

In lots of ways, the work here is very encouraging. In some respects I feel that the church has gone ahead, especially in the matter of self-support.

There was some difficulties with the Japanese, although no actual persecution here. Some people were annoyed by being repeatedly questioned and spied upon, and of course many people left the church as a result. But the sifting out process was all for the good for we know now which ones came for the loaves and fishes as the Chinese like to quote the Bible. In both churches there are new faces and people who came in under such circumstances did not come for any material gain.

The interesting thing about being a missionary in /china is that it is never the same. The period before 1937 and the outbreak of the war was entirely different from the which I faced when I returned in 1939. The situation to day is still different. People are returning from the west and taking their places among the people who stayed here. Both have been changed by the experiences and hardships passed through. Each thinks the other suffered less. I've seen ever so many people whom I have not seen since 1937, students and church people. Many have not yet returned but most of them will come back when they can. I think the period ahead is going to be entirely different from any we have faced. It will have its own peculiar problems and difficulties, as well as its own compensations.

The welcome I have received ~~in~~ has been a very sincere one. ~~Speaking~~ Without meaning to be boastful, I still can say that I think my coming has been good for everyone. There is a great deal of discouragement and disillusionment about the peace. They looked forward so long to the end of the war and freedom from the Japanese that they have forgotten how corrupt their own govt usually is and how inefficient. It is partly that the present is always worse than the past. I think there is some strong leadership in China but a lot of weakness and corruption in the lower ranks, but I have faith to believe that in time things will improve. So I go around exhorting people not to lose hope but to hang on for a while longer.

Everything is very much run down and seedy looking. I went out to Ginling College last week and their really beautiful buildings looked very much neglected and uncared for. Very little repairs have been made on anything for eight years. Places that have been occupied by soldiers look especially bad. It makes one sick to think about how spick and span things once were, but at the same time, we can be glad that our people have survived without any serious consequence. None of the dreadful things that I had imagined are true. I had feared very bad physical condition and while most of them did suffer want, I think it has been without serious consequence. At least that is the way it looks now. I had feared they would be in bad nervous and mental condition, but outwardly so far as I can tell, things are as usual. I was afraid that the strain and stress of living would have caused undue friction to develop between fellow workers, but if it has been so, at least I have not found it out yet.

This house looks very bare and forlorn. There is very little of the original furniture left in it, partly because I sold most of it before I left, and partly it has just disappeared. The kitchen has to be entirely reequipped, although the stove is still good. I am glad for the few things I brought. Even so, the expense of the bare minimum still needed is going to be high. I was given special money to cover those losses of course. Mr. Kiang has loaned me quite a little furniture, a dining room ~~set~~ and chairs and some upholstered chairs, but the upstairs is mostly unfurnished. However I have enough for myself. There is one good bed left.

The weather has been very nice since I came, mostly sunshiny & bright. It is a case of the Lord tempering the wind to the shorn lamb. Every day we expect rain or snow. Things are very dry and the winter wheat is in need of moisture, preferably snow.

Albert Steward, who was interned out here, and the only other Methodist mish here is going home soon and will turn over all the responsibility of the work over to me. I will be treasurer and secretary of the Field Comm. I don't know how much actual work I am going to be able to do as I shall be rather tied up with administrative work. I was the first mish to arrive here from Am. There is another woman here who came in from West China. I expect there will be many from both places before long. Please share this letter