Union Language School
October 28, 1917.

Dearest Mother:

I have had no mail from you or anybody at home this week, and by home I mean the "home-land" - America. I don't see why it is, unless it is "tied up" some-where. Surely everybody hasn't forgotten to write!

Last week was more encouraging in getting the language,- but there are still many things I haven't gotten. I am as tired at night as if I had been grubbing all day. Every muscle is strained in my body just to hear and understand what the teachers say,- it takes all the energy out of a person. It is the most difficult thing I have tried to do in my life, and when I really grasp a thing or am able to make myself understood even in one short sentence,- I feel like flying I am so happy. I had a lovely time today talking to my laundryman about my bills; and he understood all I said, and I a great part of what he said.

Miss Johnson and I have rented a wheel for a month, on condition we have a tire fixed and the saddle spring mended. If we learn, then we are going to buy it together. We tried it this P.M. for the first time, and we surely had some fun. She held me on, and vice versa. It's a wonder we didn't fall and break our necks.

I don't think I wrote you about the child, Lura Aiken, I am helping with a music composition. (?) Miss D.- & miss I- are boarding with her Mother, and I practise on the piano there. Last Sunday P.M. I was invited out there to dinner to meet Lura and in the process of the evening she told me of a piece she had composed and had published last winter, but nobody could read or play it after they bought it. I asked to see it, and seeing that I could help her volunteered to do so. So this week

last, I have gotten it ready for copying in ink to be sent to the publishers. This time it will be done in America,- last time a Chinese publishing press did it,- and it certainly was "botched" up. I suppose they had never done anything like it before. It was impossible to play it.

Lura is only 13,- her Mother teaches in our Language School and her Father is writing some chinese books. So she has good intellectual ability back of her. The piece is very simple, but has a pretty good melody. She can't expect much to come of it, but "little things" grow into "big ones" sometimes,- so I am encouraging her all I can.

I am enjoying my work at the Anglican Mission more & more,- the eagerness with which the girls grasp helps is perfectly pathetic. They work their fingers nearly to the bone, and remember every thing you tell them in a most remarkable way. It is so encouraging to have them and to feel that I can do a little without the language.

I went, as usual, to the legation chapel for services today. Mr. Bentley is so nice, and he gives such splendid sermons. He walked in the chancel this evening and said word had just been received that the organist could not come for the service, and he would be very glad to have someone volunteer to play. So I came forward and did my best. He was so appreciative afterwards. He is trying to organise a small choir, but I am supposed to go to Chinese service at 11 A.M.,- so I can't help him there. I would just love to do it, though.

There is a big choral society composed largely of missionaries organised here, which I have been asked to join. I am going to try to get it in, because I have never had that experience even in America and I feel the need of it. They

generally work up one good oratorio a year and give it in public. I am so eager to get all the helps along that line; because I want to do some of it in Hankow. There is nothing there to give any interest in music, whatever, - so I will have chance to start it.

Thursday is "All Saints" day and the Communion Service at the Legation is to be at 8 o'clock. We can't go at that hour on account of classes, - so Mr. Bentley has consented to have a service at 7 A. M. just for the five of us. That shows how nice he is. "And any time I can give a service in that way", says he, - "don't you just let me know." I will be only too glad to do it."

I am thinking that it will be almost Christmas when this letter reaches you, - so I am going to enclose a small gift from China in this for you. I got the 3½ yds. of lace I am sending you for $1.00 Mex. - which is about 50¢ gold you know. Just think of it! This lovely silk edging. I think it would go nicely on a silk waist. It is entirely hand-made you know, by Chinese women. I have seen them do it. It takes weeks to do a little, but time is no value to them. They do it splendidly as you can see.

I have a few toys to send Grace and the Junior Auxiliary, which illustrate modes of living in China. So be on the look-out for them. I wish I could afford a whole marriage parade, or a ~~wedding~~ funeral parade. I could get elaborate ones of each for one Dollar Mex., but I'm too poor just now. However, I'll send you some pictures of the wedding and funeral I saw in Hankow. Perhaps the children in the S. S. would be interested in them.

With best Christmas love,

Venetia.