

P. Miller

AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN MISSION
NANKING 7, CHINA



PAQU



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有京美國長老會緘

Dated Jan. 10, 1938

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copied

3 Ping Tsang Hsiang,
Nanking.
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Dear Nina:-

The U.S.S. Saucy, which is carrying on the salvaging operations on the Panay, will not go down to Shanghai before Wednesday, so I still have a chance to get off another letter to you. I am glad of this opportunity for there is much to tell. The only question is where to begin. Since I ended the last letter speaking about property, perhaps I may as well begin there now.

There is scarcely a house or building of any sort in Nanking that has not been entered and robbed by Japanese soldiers. A few foreign houses have escaped, but very few. For some reason our own house fared better than Elmian. As I wrote you in my postscript to the other letter our chief losses there are your wardrobe trunk smashed, the mattress on your bed taken off in a truck by soldiers, and Angie's bicycle. Of course the fact that I had sent you so many things to Kuling helped. Wang-si-fu did his best to protect the place, but a Chinese can do little against a Japanese these days, and of course I couldnot stay on the place all of the time. Three whole beds and mattresses have been stolen from Elmian, one at least of these beds having been taken away over the back wall! As Searle Bates says, "For short people the Japanese are the best wall jumpers he knows." Your mattress also went out over the wall. Don't think for a moment these thefts are due to unguarded properties, to the servants, or to the "lao beh sing". I myself, have caught Japanese soldiers in the attic of Elmian, in Dzang Beh, more than once in the yard of the old Drummond and Elmian houses, in the attic at the Fenhs, upstairs at the Daniels, and at so many other places that I can't recall them all now. On several of these occasions, at the very time I have caught the soldiers, I have been accompanied by a Japanese Consulat Policeman. In fact so open has been the stealing even from foreign houses marked with American flags, American Embassy proclamations, and since the Japanese came in with Japanese Embassy proclamations, that the Japanese do not attempt to deny what has taken place, they merely apologize for it. They have taken everything from phonograph records to motor cars, from eatables left in pantries to beds and bedding. They have also been no respecters of persons, they have stolen from rich and poor alike. They have also been no respecters of nationalities. The Germans and Japanese are both signatories of the Anti-Comintern Pact, but the Japanese have stolen from the ~~Americans~~ Germans just as they have from the Americans. So likewise from the English. Mr. Gaunt's house looks just George Fitch's and these two like many a German residence.

The Japanese Embassy apologizes. It really is sorry, I think. It has been telling us for nearly three weeks that "strict orders have been issued to the troops" even "orders from Tokyo" which seems to be the height of strictness, but the soldiers have taken their own sweet time about obeying them. The situation is better at last, but it has taken a deal of effort and protesting to get even the semblance of order we now have. No Chinese is yet really safe outside the Zone nor is he indeed wholly safe within it. Foreign property is now less troubled than it was, but entry into such property, especially where it lies outside the Zone, is still more a matter of the soldiers' whim than anything else.

In speaking of material losses I do not mean to imply that many foreign houses have been completely looted. This is not the case. In most places the heavy furniture is still pretty largely intact, and for foreign books the Japanese soldiers seem to have no predilection whatsoever, libraries seem to have suffered no loss, but practically every house has been ransacked many times, and small articles that appealed to the soldiers fancy taken away. Sometimes too, as I have indicated, they have not stopped at small articles, but have taken away chairs, rugs, beds, or whatever would make them comfortable during their stay in Nanking. The inconsistency of the Japanese is almost past belief. From the very beginning of occupation of the city they said they wanted to get the water, light and telephone systems running again as soon as possible, and yet they continued their wholesale destruction of the business sections of the city, and at the same time so treated the people that no workmen would dare to come out voluntarily and work for them. They even shot at one time through sheer stupidity and brutality about forty of the electric light workers. Mr. Rabe of the Siemens Company, and Chairman of our International Safety Zone Committee, was certainly angry about this when he heard of it. The Japanese had asked him to assist in getting the power plant started again, since his Company had installed the machinery, so he had a good right to protest on that ground as well as on grounds of humanity.

As I look back over this letter I feel almost ashamed that I have said so much about property as if that were the principal thing, though I know of course how naturally and rightly all of you who may read this letter desire to know something about what has happened to Mission property and to your personal belongings, and yet the chief thing is not property but life. It is the suffering of the people that counts most. Things are better now, at least within the Zone, but your hearts would have been wrung as were ours had you seen some of the early morning crowds of women fleeing from one place to some other where they thought they would be a little safer than they had been from the terror that was theirs the night before. Literally thousands of cases of rape have occurred. Women have knelt to us begging us to help them. Fortunately we sometimes were able to come to rescue them, sometimes we could not.

And so I could go on at length, individual stories, tales of what has happened in the large, but the mail goes in twenty minutes, so I must stop. I say the mail. This goes by hand. We would not trust it to the ordinary mail, and indeed there is no such thing functioning as yet.

With all my love,
Flowers