

COPY

Please return to Zaffer
Nanking, January 4, 1938.

Dear Ruth: (Chester)

This morning I went to 5 Ninghai Rd., the office of the International Committee for the Safety Zone, to talk to Lewis Smythe, and I found George Fitch writing to his wife. He told me that Mr. Tanaka, Japanese Consul in Nanking, is expecting to go to Shanghai this afternoon and has kindly offered to take personal letters for us. This is the first opportunity I have had to get in touch with any members of my big family since air mail and telegraph services were stopped in December. Neither have I heard from any of you since Elsie left.

All are very well and very busy on the campus. We have had as many as 10,000 women and children at one time, but the number now must be down to between 6 and 8 thousand. Our superintendent of dormitories, in addition to her regular work, is giving much time to sick refugees, especially children, and her presence is a great help. Mary (Mrs. P. D. Twinem) and my personal teacher, who have been persuaded to help and to live on the campus now, have shared and lightened my load, so you need not worry about us.

The academic buildings came through unharmed save for the dirt and refuse brought by the refugee guests. We are almost a complete family again, for our messenger boy returned on December 28th. We are still hoping the son of the head servant in the biology department will return soon.

Mary would appreciate a deferred cable to her only sister in New Jersey as follows: Schulte Trenton N.J. Alright Nanking Mary. This autumn we found the American Embassy very willing to send radiograms for us. I tell you this so you can avail yourselves of the same privilege in getting in touch with our big family both in the east and in the west.

We shall be glad to hear from you and other members of the family whenever possible.

Affectionately,

(Signed) (Minnie (Vautrin))

Thursday, January 6th.

Dear Mrs. Thurston, Yi-fang, Ruth and Rebecca:

Last evening between nine and ten o'clock Lt. Col. Y. Oka came to call, and from him I learned that he was expecting to go to Shanghai today about one o'clock. He very kindly consented to take a letter for me and will call for it at 11 this morning. This is the second letter that I have been able to send out recently, the other one was taken by Mr. Tanaka, the consul in Nanking. I am enclosing a copy of that letter for fear that Mr. Tanaka got away before I was able to get it over to the Embassy. It seems that motor cars are now going between here and Shanghai and also a few trains each day.

Although I know that Ruthie objects strenuously (slightly exaggerated Ed. R.M.C.) to some of the phrases in the Episcopal Prayer Book, yet this morning one of the phrases expresses my condition and state of mind so accurately that I cannot refrain from quoting it. It runs something like this, "That which I would do I do not, and that which I would not do, I

do, and there is no goodness in me." If for the verb of action I could substitute the verb of speech, it would describe me even more exactly.

Although it is almost the end of the first week in January, yet the weather in Nanking has been almost mild at times and we have had very little rain or snow. In fact most of the days we have had sunshine, which has also been a blessing to many people. The only fires we have on the campus are my stove in my sitting room, Mrs. Tsen's stove in her office, Mr. Chen's stove down in his sitting room and a little stove we have placed in Mr. Chen's house where an Embassy police stays each night. Our offices in 300 have no heat whatever.

In my last letter I told you that we were getting ready for neighborhood women and children. I never then dreamed that the deluge would be as great as it has been. We finally opened six buildings for them - could have opened more had we been able to manage them, but the task of management was too great for our staff. We finally had them housed in 300, 200, 100, 500, 700 & 600 (These are Ginling College building numbers, ED.) About December 17th, when we had our peak load, we think that we must have had at least 9,000 or 10,000 people. Blanche thought the attic of 200 had a thousand women and children and the 300 attic about the same. When we first started to take them in, our ideals were very high for we assigned rooms and kept a very careful account of numbers, but when they began to pour in, especially in the mornings, we had no way of counting. In those early days we also had some ideals of cleanliness and sanitation, but we have also lost these, or most of them. We try to adhere to a few elemental rules, but even those are abandoned at times. At first the servants for the various buildings tried to keep things clean, and when they lost all use of their voices and became exhausted in the process of persuading people to be clean, they too gave up in despair.

As to our locations, you will be interested to know that Mrs. Tsen and her daughter-in-law and her four grandchildren are all living in 400; Blanche, Mary Twinem, Miss Wang, Miss Hsueh and Miss Lo are living with me. Down at East Court are Big Wang and his family, Mr. Djao, Eva's teacher and his family, Mr. Chen, the assistant registrar and his wife and two neighbors, whom perhaps you do not know, but whom I have known for many years. All these people in East Court have been a great help to us in many ways. Mr. Wang goes with me on all my official calls in the city, both to the American Embassy and to the Japanese Embassy. His age and dignity are a great help in many situations.

If this letter is too dim for you to read, you will know that it is because I am badly in need of a new typewriter ribbon. I would go to the Educational bookstore for one, but that store no longer exists in any form. Ruth, if you can do so, I would be glad if you would go to the Royal Typewriter agency and get me another. When it comes I will bring that machine down from its safe hiding place and feel that once more I can write a decent letter. We realize now how we lacked foresight in days gone by.

This week Dr. Yuen's goat was sacrificed on the altar for food for ourselves and the servants. Without it we would be reduced to three kinds of vegetables for our noon and night meal. Mr. Riggs sent us three goats several weeks ago which have long since been sacrificed for the same purpose as the white one. I noticed yesterday that people in the safety zone were being sold a "dou" of rice per person at the headquarters of the International Committee for the Safety Zone. Many mat shed villages are growing up in vacant places in the safety zone and people are beginning to buy and sell at little stands. In fact Shanghai Road toward the American Embassy looks very much like Fu Dz Miao at New Year time it is so teeming with people.

As soon as I find the time and energy I am also going up to the South Hill Residence to do a bit of looting for cold cream and soap. I wish that I could find some hair nets also, but none of those residents were as old fashioned as I am, unfortunately for me, but not for them. I shall not attempt to go to the big dining room, for I do not want to disturb the sight there, but I shall feel free to go to the third floor and take away the wardrobes which carefully concealed the attic doors. I should have said successfully concealed, and I am almost sure that I will find soap and cream there. It is strange how free one feels in a situation like the present.

As to exercise for a number of days I received it by running rapidly at times from the South Hill Residence back to the laundry and then to the front gate and later to one of the dormitories. This exercise frequently came at meal times, as well, which was not too good for my health. Mrs. Tsen and I finally persuaded Mary to come over and live with us so that she could take turns with me in the running, and since then life has been somewhat more normal for me. As I said, she lives with me down at the Practice School. One other great help is that she plays for our numerous meetings, and she helped us prepare for a very lovely little Christmas service. We used an upper room down at my home, and she decorated it beautifully. We had a number of groups in for meetings there.

I have not heard from any of you since the time Yi-fang left and know nothing of your whereabouts. The proverb that says, "I live in the heart of a drum and do not know what is going on outside," describes me well. Somehow I feel that you are praying for us here, for a strength beyond our own is given us from day to day. I am sure that Rebecca writes my family.

Faithfully and lovingly,

(Signed) Minnie (Vautrin)