

Hanking, January 14, 1938.

Dear

Another week has slipped by since I wrote my last letter to some of you. This is just to assure you that I am still well and that I appreciate all your letters and inquiries. Thru the kindness of the American Embassy I cabled you a few days ago. I had just sent the message off when I received several letters from Clarissa stating that she had reached Shanghai safely from Hongkong. That was the first message I had been able to get from her since she left Hankow and it was a big relief to know that she was well and safe among our mission people in Shanghai. She has been very brave thru all the troubles we have been forced to undergo and witness. She wrote me that various letters had arrived from you but that she was holding them in Shanghai for the present until she is sure they will get thru to me in Hanking without difficulty. She did send Father's letter of Oct. 12 and Betty's and Sophie's letters which had arrived for my birthday. Thank you all very much. I think the poems Father wrote are very fine. She also sent me the cablegrams you sent for Christmas. So you see I had quite a grand Christmas present when all these arrived in one batch of mail.

We are still confined to the city limits of Hanking. The river is open to shipping to a very limited extent; we hear the railway is running after a fashion for the military; the J. are using the motor road and also aeroplanes; but one cannot move anywhere without military permission and this is not readily forthcoming. Last week representatives of the American, British, and German Embassies were permitted to come to Hanking. We were certainly glad to see them for now there is somebody official here to deal with. The J. authorities have lost and are losing a great deal of face because of the looting and burning by their soldiers. Despite official notices from the J. and the foreign embassies posted on the doors of foreign residences and property in the city the soldiers still go in to loot etc. Very often they are actually found on the premises when embassy officials are making their inspection of the places, so they cannot claim, as they have tried to do, that the looting and burning has been done by Chinese soldiers and civilians! On the whole, however, the general situation has improved since many of the troops have been removed to other places. But we still do not feel that it is safe for the people to return to their homes, supposing the latter are still left, or to leave our people whom we have been looking after in several residences belonging to the Texas Oil Co. and others. One of us is still on guard during the day, and one of us sleeps in one of the residences at night. Large sections of the city have been burned, fires still being a daily occurrence.

I have had no news as to the fate of Yangchow, except that there was fighting there and the city was supposed to be in Japanese hands. Whether they have treated the civilians there as they have treated them here I do not know. I fear they have had a hard time of it too. Mr. Green, Mr. Fairfield, and Miss Greer were ordered to proceed to Shanghai by the Bishop and they got thru safely toward the end of November. So far as we know only two foreigners were left there, Mr. Stamps and Miss Demarest of the Southern Baptist Mission. They refused to leave.

We have had a fairly moderate winter so far. It was very cold for several days around the 8th, that being, according to the Chinese almanac the time for the 'Little Cold' spell. The 'Big Cold' is due around the 21st. It is amazing how accurate these calculations often turn out to be. After the 'Big Cold' we may expect

300,000
at least
20,000

a gradual diminution of the cold weather and the approach of Spring. We are glad that the weather, on the whole, has been comparatively dry also; for otherwise the plight of the thousands and thousands of refugees here would be even greater. We shall be facing a very big problem this winter and spring until normal conditions can be restored to some extent, as so many persons have nothing but what they could carry away with them; their houses, places of business, their possessions are all gone, and so far there has been very little opportunity for them to do any work or to go back to their old locations and try to get started in business again. There is also a large group of persons who depended on income from rents, etc. to keep them alive. They have had no rents for months and in ever so many cases the houses they had let to others have been destroyed by fire. I have been asked to serve on a Rehabilitation Committee whose object will be to investigate cases of need and so far as is possible supply the people with something to enable them to get started earning a livelihood again. Thousands of men were taken by the soldiers and executed - often in a most barbaric manner - on the suspicion of being ex-soldiers. But since the judge and the jury were the same persons, and they often not more than a corporal or a sergeant, you can imagine that countless innocent people were done to death. There is less of this now than there was when the city fell, but it was terrible while it lasted. Any private seems to have complete authority to determine the life or death of any persons he wants to deal with.

Yesterday I held a preliminary burial service for our Evangelist, Mr. Lu, of Tangshan - one of the country stations of St. Paul's Church. He became very morbid and depressed over what was happening in Nanking and China, and on December 31 he committed suicide by drowning in a nearby pond. We had tried to dissuade him but to no avail. We were able to recover the body a few days ago and later to secure a coffin. It was very sad, and adds one more to the many tragedies we have been called on to witness.

I suppose Clarissa will add to this letter as I intend to send it to her to be mailed from Shanghai. The post office is not functioning here so that is the only way I can get mail to you. She is in good hands in Shanghai, so please do not worry about her or about me. We wish very much that we could be together. I could possibly get down to Shanghai from here, but would not be allowed to return. At present I feel that I am too much needed here to leave. But I am sure that in God's own time we shall get together again. A great deal of relief work is going on in Shanghai also with which she will undoubtedly help. In certain ways our people in Shanghai are as confined as we are here since they are not allowed to venture outside Shanghai into the interior.

I hope this will find you all well. You are all in my thoughts almost constantly. Please do not worry unduly. My best love and lots of it to you all.

Ernest