

Elizabeth Blake Hospital
Soochow, Kiangsu, China
January 25, 1938

Dear Friend:

The last time we wrote you our hospital was full of wounded soldiers and civilians from the war front near Shanghai. As the line of battle advanced towards Soochow, the bombing became much worse and our beds and all floor space were soon filled with patients. Some of them were torn almost beyond recognition. About the middle of November the bombing became almost continuous in Soochow, some days as many as seven hundred bombs being dropped.

When the Japanese outflanked the Chinese army and came in from the rear, it was necessary for us to leave very hurriedly. We were able to send our wounded patients to Nanking by canal boat. Our mental patients and hospital staff left at midnight for a mountain region supposed to be off the main line of advance. Boats were not available so it was necessary to walk. The highway was full of thousands of refugees and many retreating soldiers. As we walked along, the Japanese planes "combed" the road many times with bombs and machine guns. It was necessary to run to the adjoining fields during these attacks. Many were killed about us but God was good in protecting us all along the way.

We were quartered in a little town in the mountain and lake region. All of that section of country was filled with people fleeing for their lives. It is estimated that there were more than fifty thousand from Soochow alone. Our hospital was in a large building that had been used as a silk factory and for beds we used rice straw spread on the dirt floor. The refugees were housed in the many Buddhist temples that are scattered over the mountains.

It was pitiful to see so many people in desperate need. Practically all of them fled with only the clothes they wore on their backs. Our first problem was to find food for them. The Red Cross had supplied us with some funds and we were able to go to the surrounding towns to buy rice and salt. At first we could give only one meal of rice a day. Later, we were able to add turnips, greens and bean sprouts to their diet.

Three epidemics took a large toll. Measles, bacillary dysentery and cholera were all bad and, in our crowded quarters, it was not possible to do much in the way of isolation. As the winter came on, the suffering from cold became more intense. Since it was impossible to secure sufficient quantities of clothes and bedding many patients died and many more will die before the winter is over.

Our area was supposed to be a neutral zone. It was a great disappointment, on our arrival there, to find the whole country side full of trenches. Chinese soldiers appeared two days after our arrival. We were able to persuade them not to stay since their presence would imperil the lives of the refugees. About three days later great numbers of Japanese soldiers began to pour in and we found ourselves in the midst of an armed camp. No doubt you have read of the atrocities inflicted by Japanese soldiers. It reminded one of the war of the middle ages. Looting and raping were terrible beyond description. Our Mission property came in for its share. The woman's hospital and nurses' home were burned and all of our homes and hospital buildings were thoroughly looted.

We came down to Shanghai to get drugs and Red Cross funds. I wish it were possible to describe the country between Soochow and Shanghai. The towns and villages have been laid low and on all sides there are blackened and charred ruins. The roadside was full of the bodies of horses, soldiers and civilians and

dogs were fattening on their flesh. The roads were full of holes caused by the bombs and the constant use of heavily loaded military trucks. In some sections our car could only make four or five miles an hour. The bridges had all been burned, but had been temporarily repaired by using telephone poles.

When we came to Shanghai we had hoped to return within a few days. The military authorities refused to allow us to go back so we are now working in the Shanghai refugee camps.

It seems to be China's strategy to use the guerilla type of warfare, hoping thereby to gradually wear out Japan. It is likely that the struggle will last a long time. Let us hope that this sad and bitter experience will cause many to turn to Him from whom comes new hope and new strength.

Sincerely yours,



Received at Nashville, Tennessee, February 16, 1938

Address: Dr. M. P. Young, Care Associated Mission Treasurers, 169 Yuen Ming Yuen
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Postage: Letters five cents, postcards three cents

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14 Route Winling
Shanghai, China
February 20, 1938

Dear Co-workers in the Homeland:

In a few more days a boat of the Canadian Line will be returning to Canada and I must not miss the opportunity of writing when I can do so with the assurance that the letter will not be censored. I trust that this letter will not be so behind the times that the events of the past few-months will have lost too much significance to you in America, whose cooperation and prayers have helped and strengthened us so greatly out here and whom we are counting on to understand the real situation uncamouflaged by Japanese propaganda. What has happened in Shanghai, Soochow and Nanking is typical of what is going on RIGHT NOW in every city, village, and hamlet occupied by the Japanese. It is a terrible and amazing picture of the absolute depravity of the Japanese militarists and if China is to be delivered, it must be accomplished through the prayers and efforts of Christian people for China.

As I write to you some of the experiences I have been through in the past few months, I rejoice to think of what a wonderful miracle-working Heavenly Father we have. Truly, some of us have gone through and seen most terrible things, yet it has been marvelous to have seen how the Chinese Christians have been protected, not from terrible sufferings, but from bodily injury by the Japanese, time and time again, while non-Christians have gone through unspeakable trials.

Most of the missionaries in the direct area of fighting are now in places of comparative safety. We, who are here in Shanghai, are trying desperately hard to get back to our stations which have already been taken over by the Japanese but our attempts have met with nothing but failure. The Japanese are afraid, for one thing, that we will see and report too much. Moreover, they have been brutally frank in telling us that foreigners are definitely not wanted in conquered territory as they are quite able to carry on the work there without our aid. They are very anti-foreign and seem to be trying to get us out of China. However, we have no intention of leaving and I am sure that God will some day let us get back to our poor suffering people. Sometimes the Japanese try to camouflage their real thoughts and purposes behind elaborate lies and courteous phrases. At other times they are as insulting as can be.

The dreadful experiences of the past few months have been forever seared into my brain and heart and I can only briefly describe to you some of the outstanding incidents that are so typical of what is going on all around us. There has been absolutely no control by the Japanese officers over their soldiers. In fact, it seems to be a part of their desserts as victorious conquerors, to have the privilege of looting everything, destroying what they do not want and raping.

Let me take you back to the month of November, as this is the month of our escape from Soochow. Before this time, even as far back as August 15, bombs had been dropped in Soochow but the situation had not then been alarming. The months of September and October and on thru the first two weeks in November were busy times for those of us who had gone back to our stations. Most of the missionaries' wives and the ladies in school work were still at their various summer resorts due to the unsettled state of affairs. There were only a handful of us left and we had plenty to keep us busy. Soochow was filled with refugees fleeing from Shanghai and nearby areas. Sometimes there would be 4,000 refugees passing thru within a week and they all had to be fed and housed and partially clothed and ways and means found for getting them to further places of safety. Many had nothing except the clothes on their backs - not even a quilt. The homes of thousands had

been looted clean or destroyed by fire. They knew not where they were going nor had they much hope for the future for they had no money and their land had been taken from them and their means of livelihood, yet the fortitude of these people calls for our greatest admiration. Our hospitals were crowded far beyond capacity. The wounded civilians and soldiers occupied even a great part of the floor space for our beds were far from sufficient. Nurses and doctors were far too few. We had sent most of our students away and even some of the staff had fled as the war came closer to us. In November I had only 6 graduate nurses and two aids and two students to care for about 150 patients. I was doing night duty as well as day duty.

In October and November there was practically no day that we were not visited frequently by bombing planes. The horrible brutality of death and injury from bombs and machine-gun fire was intensified by the fact that not only the soldiers but the civilian population of the cities and country were deliberately slaughtered by the thousands, the Japanese policy being that of terrorizing all the Chinese so that victory would be easier. Moreover, not until about the last two weeks in November did Soochow have any anti-aircraft guns or pursuit planes and they were far from adequate as the bombing planes usually were far out of reach and seemed to drop bombs without carefully aiming at any target. Consequently the slaughter of civilians was something terrible.

On the night of November 10, or rather afternoon, leaflets were dropped from Japanese planes to the effect that there would be severe bombing of the city on or immediately after the 13th. (We did not see how it could be much more severe unless they meant to destroy the city entirely.) Even now, I can hardly bear to hear a car going into high gear for it sounds too much like a bombing plane in a dive. Seeing a fleet of them coming low overhead, knowing there were no anti-aircraft guns lying in wait for them; seeing the great "eggs" released or hearing the powerful machines roaring overhead as they circled around and around trying to decide where to "plant" their deadly "eggs" was pretty nerve-wracking to say the least. Often, we thought that they were surely going to drop bombs right on our buildings for the Japanese had little respect for hospitals filled with wounded soldiers. The explosions were terrific and extremely close at times and our buildings shook and windows were broken. Patients that could get out of bed, servants and even some members of the staff would flee to our one poor little dug-out or crouch where they thought they would be more safe. How proud I was of my girls who went quietly about their work in the wards though one could see the terrific strain they were under. It was marvelous to see how well the psychiatric patients reacted to it all. Time and again, I would dash over to the Psychiatric buildings, to find that most of the orderlies had fled, but the patients huddled in quiet groups, not saying a word. Usually, the talking and singing and crying was quite the routine, not to mention smashing of windows and fighting, but when a raid was on they had sense enough to sense and recognize danger that was close.

On the night of the 10th the electric light plant was bombed and two military hospitals in the city that were filled with wounded. Our patients were getting restless and the Red Cross emergency hospital was already trying to get rid of its 1,000 and more patients and the Methodist hospital staff were doing the same so it was thought best for us to try to get our patients to places of greater safety.

On the night of the 12th we were able to get off a part of our mental patients and staff, by boat to KwangFoh about 24 miles out into the country where we thought we would be safe. We also discharged the patients that were well enough to go but we still had about 300 patients in the Psychiatric and General hospitals. The day of the 13th was certainly a hectic one. We had to get the remaining wounded away somehow but all the boats and trains had been commandeered for transferring of troops or the little row boats had been taken by terrified refugees fleeing for their lives. We could not get a boat for love or money and our own boat had not

yet returned. But God knew our needs and did not fail us, for that afternoon He sent a huge empty military boat our way and we were able to commandeer it for our wounded soldiers. Many of the servants and orderlies had gone so doctors and nurses had to be stretcher bearers but we got them all aboard to be sent to a hospital at Wusih. The nurses were splendid sports, for not only had they acted as nurses and orderlies but had helped me to get the hospital clean and in some decent condition for leaving as well as packing drugs and hospital equipment to take with us. (However, we had to leave practically everything for that night most of us had to make the long trip on foot.)

At 9 p.m. our boat which had left for KwangFoh, returned and we piled on a minimum amount of baggage for the hospital and ourselves and the weakest and most violent of the mental patients and some of the staff. The rest of us started on by foot. As we skirted the edge of the city, we could see the destruction caused by the bombs. The city was practically deserted of people. By midnight, after fast walking, we had left the city behind us and we felt safer. However, without warning, we began to see the flares that lightened up the road and country around us, dropped by silent planes seeking for soldiers and refugees on the road that they might bomb. The moon was full which greatly added to the danger and we began to pass hundreds of refugees and soldiers going and coming on the highway. Every little while we would have to scramble into the ditches and bushes by the side of the road and crouch there until we could see that the planes had passed by. The patients were very quiet and obedient but we often had to scatter in small groups as we ran for shelter and often we did not know whether the rest of our company was behind us or had gone on, some of the patients being able to walk fast and others having almost to be carried from weakness and weariness.

Between two and three a.m. we arrived at a little village called Moh Doh and went to the court of the chief magistrate to rest. It was filled with people and we had no place to sit except on the doorsills or on tables or on the floor. When it became light, around 6 a.m. we went in shifts to a little inn and got a bowl of hot "mien" or dough strings for our breakfast. We were most fortunate, and I think surely God was providing for us, for the inn was just about to close its doors, the innkeepers being afraid to open up much after daylight for fear of being mobbed by starving refugees passing through. Another proof of God working a miracle for us, was the news a few days later that that very inn had been bombed the next morning! After our delicious breakfast, we started again on our weary march feeling strengthened and cheerful. It was a beautiful day and we seemed to have gotten our "second wind" though thru the night it seemed that we could hardly move one foot before the other. The nurses had each strapped a military blanket around and across their shoulders for the use of the patients and it became a pretty heavy weight. Just as we felt that we could not possibly go another step, a flare would appear or a bomber would be overhead and we were so frightened that we were able to cover ground quite rapidly trying to get out of sight. On this beautiful morning, planes again soared around us and we would cover our heads with our blanket like an ostrich and shiver in the bushes.

We arrived in KwangFoh around noon of the 14th and were greatly pleased to find that the earlier group had been able to get hold of a huge barn of a building - a silkworm factory with a second floor or loft, two large rooms, or rather a room and a shed open to the wind on one side, several small rooms and two immense kitchens in the rear. It was very cold with the wind whistling through a thousand cracks and openings and with no heat. The four missionary men - Mr. McDaniel and Mr. McNulty of the Baptist Mission and Mr. McNulty of the Episcopalian Mission who had brought out and were to take care of hundreds of refugees and Dr. Young occupied one room. I was the only other "foreigner" and slept up in the loft with the nurses and about 150 other refugees. A lot of the Christian refugees packed themselves into the shed, stacking up hundreds of silkworm baskets on the open side to keep

out the cold and rain. The patients were in the front of the building. Practically all of us had to sleep on straw on the floors and we were packed in like sardines sharing each others' bedding for warmth. There was hardly walking space left in the loft and we were in constant fear of it giving way beneath us. We nurses put up a few sheets for privacy and were able thus to section off a little place where we could crowd in for a little morning prayer meeting around my bed.

This letter is getting very long and I cannot go into all the details of our life there. We were extremely happy. We had put several high flags on the building and on our boats and we felt safe. In spite of cold and physical discomforts and of a limited Chinese diet, we seemed never before so happy. There were over 3,000 refugees in 21 different camps there that we were taking care of besides our mental patients. The wounded refugees were sheltered in our "barn" and those suffering from other diseases were kept in an emergency camp. The doctors and nurses daily visited the sick and saw that the others got something to eat, even if it was only rice and beans or a small portion of greens. Of course it was terrible to see the suffering of the people. None had enough to keep them warm and dysentery, measles and cholera killed off many of them. I, myself, became very ill with dysentery and though the doctors and nurses wanted to get me to Nanking, I preferred to remain. God surely did heal me for there was no serum and the medicine we had been giving to other dysentery patients could not stop their dying.

Soochow was taken by the Japanese on November 19. It did not take them long to bring ruin and desolation to our beautiful city. It did indeed become a city of the dead for all who could flee had gone, leaving only dying and wounded and the old and a few of the most daring. For the Japanese had turned to looting and burning and their search of women. Children of twelve and thirteen and even women of fifty and sixty were not safe from them and the stories of their dreadful suffering came to us in KwangFoh, brought by eye-witnesses who had escaped.

The three Macs and Dr. Young made several trips to Soochow to try to find out about conditions and to bring us back hospital supplies but the trips were almost complete failures, the Japanese suspecting us, and the men could go nowhere without Japanese guards. They refused to grant permission for the men to stay on the various mission compounds and finally prevented them from even seeing the mission residences but not before the "foreigners" had seen enough to make them heartsick. The Chinese dead and wounded were lying uncared for in the streets though the Japanese dead had been cremated. They saw the Japanese occupying our foreign residences and coming out of them loaded with booty. At first the Japanese tried to insist that the looting was entirely done by the Chinese soldiers but the Chinese soldiers had fled and besides how could one believe that when with every visit Japanese were seen loaded with their plunder? All the mission compounds were stripped clean. The heavy furniture was loaded on trucks to be taken to Japan. What was not wanted, was deliberately wrecked beyond repair. Even the benches of churches, and doors, etc., of the Chinese homes were broken up for firewood to keep the soldiers warm. My own home together with the Nurses Home was burned to the ground as well as the homes of other missionaries though we had the American flag not only flying high over the compound but also painted on a number of the buildings on the roofs. The homes of the Chinese with practically no exceptions were also thoroughly cleaned out. One of the methods used by the Japanese was to let the soldiers first bring out the things of most value, then, bring in people from the surrounding country and tell them to finish up the job, meanwhile taking moving pictures of the Chinese looting. It has been reported as a fact that many of the Chinese, after looting what was left, were shot down by the Japanese who had forced them to do it, in order that the world might know that the Japanese were trying to protect Chinese property and restore law and order! This is truly not hard for us to believe for worse than this has been done and is being done every day. In Soochow there is a house where the Japanese have confined 60 girls. Until very recently, they were the only girls that we knew of in the city.

To go back to KwangFoh: Our days of happiness soon became clouded. We had obtained the consent of the authorities in Tokyo to make of our beautiful little hamlet surrounded by mountains and nearly surrounded by lakes, a "neutral zone" since no Chinese soldiers were there and it was not in the line of battle and since we were caring for thousands of refugees. That meant that the Japanese soldiers had no right to disturb our place in any way. However, it was not long before the soldiers came. There was a motor road to it from Soochow and the soldiers came in truck-loads when they were free from duty. They came practically every day and their main object was women. There was some plundering of goods and the farmers coming in to sell their meat and vegetables, never knew when they would be relieved of their produce. A good many of the stores closed. Other shop-keepers hid most of their products and kept very little out for sale. The Japanese later forced these shops to put up Japanese flags. However, there was not much in KwangFoh that the Japanese wanted in the way of goods, having cleaned out Soochow and their main purpose was to rape. A patient was brought to us who had been shot just for target practice! This was a common occurrence for the poor refugees in Nanking so do not think I am exaggerating. A little girl of 13 who had tried to resist the Japanese soldiers by jumping into one of the lakes, was immediately shot in the shoulder and was later brought to us. Mr. McMillan, saw with his own eyes farmers who had been ordered out of their homes at the point of the bayonet while the soldiers took possession of their wives and girls. All who came to our building were safe but those outside were not. Even the girls who sought refuge in the little church there were forced out from under benches and behind doors where they were hiding and made to pose for pictures with the arms of the Japanese thrown around them. These were among our own Christians and had we not come to their rescue there is no telling what more might have happened. On the main street, the Japanese put barricades guarded by soldiers and when unsuspecting people came to buy and sell, the men were not permitted to go beyond the barricade but the women were forced over to the other side and the soldiers threatened to burn the homes of any who reported them to higher authorities.

The Chinese turned to us for protection on every hand and at any suggestion of leaving the whole little village would get into a panic. It was at first planned for us "foreigners" to obtain permission from the Japanese to go to Shanghai for Christmas and then return but the village "fathers" made up a big party and after thanking us for what we had done, implored us not to all leave. We later decided that it would be best for Mr. McMillan and me to remain while the others went to get more funds and hospital supplies. (Dr. Young, Mr. McNulty and Mr. McMillan went but they DID NOT GET BACK! The Japanese saw to that.)

I shall never forget the wonderful Christmas we had. We both felt that we had never spent a happier one. We could almost picture ourselves in Bethlehem. On Christmas Eve, after the soldiers had left, the Christian people, young and old paraded the streets with lanterns singing Christmas carols thru the streets and camps. Christmas Day was given over to two impressive services and camp meetings and the distributing of gifts of candy and oranges to the refugees and of stockings and caps to the patients. The gratitude of the people was most touching. I do not know how to express our own joy in being with them and having the opportunity of witnessing for Christ to them.

We were not able to hear from those who had left as no mail could be sent except by a messenger but we had heard that they had reached Shanghai safely in time for Christmas.

In January the danger from the Japanese soldiers reached the climax. The soldiers, in order to celebrate the New Year, were given three days of absolute

freedom and from the 1st to the 4th it was dangerous for the nurses to go out at all, even to nurse the sick. The emergency camp had to be cared for by the Chinese doctors and myself. Even I did not dare to stay away from the girls for long at a time as the soldiers repeatedly came into the building to see if there were women there. Of course they, the girls would hide up in the loft as soon as the visitors arrived and they did not attempt to inspect upstairs as long as a "foreigner" was around. After that time, though the soldiers came nearly every day, they were not able to stay as long. At this time, God seemed to impress upon us the need for evangelistic and revival meetings and after much prayer we decided to hold a week of special services. The response was most wonderful. To see the sick and wounded refugees, those who had come out with us after losing all they had, stand up and profess their allegiance to Christ, was an experience too deep to ever describe. How they could sing "I need Jesus" and the other choruses! How the children joined in and sang as if their throats would burst! We all felt that we did not care that we had lost most of our worldly goods. How we can cumber ourselves with "things!" We were happy to be together and to be counted worthy to suffer for His sake.

And then - came the darkest days of my life, I cannot go into details of that day when we two "foreigners" were ordered to come out of KwangTeh. The Japanese officers came, with two of our missionary friends who had with extreme difficulty managed to come to us with letters and money for carrying on the work. I was told that if I stayed it would be worse for my girls and though I pled and wept, it was of no avail and like one walking in a dreadful nightmare I left with Mr. McMillan, the Japanese promising to take care of my girls and the hospital and saying that they would bring my girls to Shanghai within the week. They have not yet arrived after over a month and though the Japanese authorities here say they had refused to come out, we heard later that they were forced to sign a paper to the effect that they would take care of Japanese soldiers in Soochow! However, we have heard from them and though the letters may have been written under compulsion, it seems to be a fact, verified by other sources, that our Chinese staff and patients are back in the Soochow (Methodist) Hospital working for the Japanese under contract. We hear they are being treated fairly decently and are getting a salary and all the girls seem to be safe. Do pray for them for they are definite prisoners. It is a miracle to all of us that they have not been harmed but I believe God has put a wall of fire about them and they are as Daniel was in the lion's den. May they soon be released from captivity and brought to a safe and peaceful place and may the time soon come when we can go back to work among our beloved, suffering people.

May we be united in our prayers for China! God bless you everyone.

Your coworker in His service,

Lucy Grier.

Received at Nashville, Tennessee, March 17, 1938

Address: Miss Lucy Grier, R.N., Care Associated Mission Treasurers,
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Postage: Letters five cents, postcards three cents