

# Anne Vera MacKeith - Letters

## Letters Etc from Anne Vera MacKeith

(1931 Appointed to Mary Farnham School, Shanghai)

Nov 32      General Letter from Shanghai

1936 Summer Trip - Shanghai - US - Grace Darling

7.7.36      General letter RMS Empress of Japan, Nr Honolulu

17.8.36      Letter to Mother from Idaho

22.8.36      Letter on CPR notepaper, written on ferry from Seattle USA to Victoria, Canada

25.8.36 ?   Letter to Eric from Empress of Canada, nr Honolulu

5.9.36      Family letter from ship at Yokohama

1937      Log of journey on Trans Siberian Railway. Travelling from Shanghai - England  
26/6 - 10/7 written from Archers Road, Southampton

Feb 39      General letter and note to mother from Shanghai

Sept 39     General letter from Shanghai

Aug 40 (9th - 14th) Korean Holiday

April 41    Letter to friends - Shanghai

Aug41/Sept 41 letter to Friends - Shanghai

Jan 45      RED CROSS letter to Doris Perry, Australia

1945 - 46 Furlough

1951 -      Left China

1952      Appointed to Ying Wa School, Hong Kong - 1962

This is a typed circular letter she has 'bound' into small booklet form

MARY FARNHAM SCHOOL

via Siberia

South Gate

Shanghai, China

November 11th, 1932

MY DEAR FRIEND

It is strange to be thinking about sending a Christmas letter now and yet I see in the newspaper that the boats leaving here with mail this week expect to reach England on a date well into December. Well then, "A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU!"

That is about the only mention of Christmas herein! The rest will be about - I wonder what!

Wherever shall I begin? Right here in this house would be the best place perhaps. We are a family of three: Miss Hille, Miss Darling and myself. Miss Hille works in the Nantao Christian Institute which is right in the 'Native City' and a very busy centre with boys' and girls' clubs, evening classes, lectures, a play-centre, gymnasium, baths and reading room. They are doing a fine piece of work there in a huge unworked area.

Miss Darling works in the school. She has been here ten years and is the only foreigner besides two newcomers, Miss Espey and myself, so that a very big burden falls on her shoulders. She has charge of the religious education and of the English besides ten thousand and one other things. Miss Espey is the daughter of one of the families on the adjoining compound and has recently come back from college in America. She is 'marking time' till her fiancé has finished his course.

We three have a house in the corner of the school compound. It's good to get into your real Home-house after a while of living in trunks as I did last year. Each of us has a study-bedroom where we spend quite a lot of time. I've just now finished getting mine furnished. It has been fun choosing styles for the furniture and curtains. The piece that was most important in my eyes was the desk and I gloat over it as I sit at it now. I fell for this teak one as soon as I saw it and all the other pieces have been made to match it! Chinese workmen are just wonderful the way they can copy pictures of anything whether furniture or clothes.

My window looks out on the gymnasium building and the end of the Primary-school-and-dormitories block. I wish you could see our compound. It would make a good show if compared with any at Home. You enter by the gatehouse which is in the diagonally opposite corner from us and see a great square, three sides of which are built on while in the centre is an open patch of green with willow trees around. They are a reminder of the canal on whose banks they once stood, for all this district was once just such a network of canals as Soochow still is.

The biggest building is the Administrative and Senior Middle School building opened in 1930. Opposite it is the Primary School, mentioned before, while on the third side is the kindergarten and more dormitories. You don't want to be told how a boarding school is run. There are lots of little things that are very different from a homeside school, of course, but it is amazing how very alike things are, taking them generally.

The running of the school work would be alike, only it is American. Many things seem strange to me at first and not because they are Chinese! It is interesting to compare the methods. The one that I find most different is the arrangement by which subjects are studied consecutively instead of contemporaneously. For example in the Senior School, which is the only one I have anything to do with, they study Biology, Chemistry and Physics for their Sciences, each being studied for one year exclusively. The same holds good for their Maths. In these I think it is quite a good idea but it is awfully difficult not to be able to cross-refer in the others.

We have 600 girls, not counting the kindergarten 70, and a staff of ? I've not seen these all together but I believe there are about forty or fifty. Miss Chang, the Head Mistress was here as a student (the school is 73 years old) and she was telling the girls this morning about some of the funny things that happened here in the 'High and Far-Off Times'. Miss Chang went to America to school and college and last year was over there for a year's study in Educational methods. She is a very efficient Head.

Our School is not in Shanghai, as most folks know that city. You may have heard about the International Settlement during the fighting last February. It is a strip of territory which stretches west from the banks of the Whangpoo which runs north into the Yangste River. South of the International Settlement lies the French Concession, (they kept individual control when the other nations united) and south again from there lies the old Chinese City. We are south of this and therefore about as far from Medhurst, which is on the north corner of the International Settlement as we could be. The old city is an interesting place, I am sure hundreds of the inhabitants of the I—S— have no idea that it exists. If you have any sort of picture about Soochow you should be able to imagine it - only there are no canals now. They have all been filled in and replaced by roads. The last few years have seen many changes. The city no longer has its wall standing. It was torn down and a tram now runs on the site. The gates still stand and those on the side nearest to the French Concession are still used for the city is cut off if there is any sign of unrest. It is rather strange to think you are locked out of the foreign settlement. What did happen to me the other night though was that I got locked *in* there and couldn't get back here! I had been over to the Hospital to tea and on to Jessfield Park to a Municipal Concert and when I came back about eight o'clock it was to be told that the gates were locked and no cars could get through. I just had to go back and beg for a bed in the Hospital. (The Hospital, in case you don't know, means the Lester Chinese Hospital which is the L.M.S. Hospital in Shanghai. It is a marvellous place, *very* well equipped and doing an immense amount of good work particularly casualty work. While I was staying there at the beginning of September I was amazed by the content stream of cases brought in. I don't remember how many cases they treat in a day but it is an enormous number.) Fortunately the telephone was able to be used so I rang up the folks here and told them I'd be over before eight the next morning. There wasn't any trouble that time. It was the 18th of September, the anniversary of the Mukden incident last year and they feared for some. I saw in the paper that they shut the gates day one day this week, on the Soviet Anniversary.

Did you read Mrs Cecil Chesterton's account of Shanghai in the Daily Express? What she says about the city never sleeping is I suppose true for parts of the Settlement. It is as bright as day there for surely never was such prodigal use made of neon lamps. Some one must have made his fortune out of that invention. I think the rather garish brightness must appeal to the Chinese. It is somewhat the same in their decoration for funerals and other special occasions.

It is interesting to see how they have jumped right into accepting electricity with all its ease of use and multiplicity of uses. I cannot get over the way they have accepted it and other things without realising their wonderfulness. They have put them alongside old old conditions and there is a lovely charm of incongruity about the result.

It is a journey full of interest that I make every week over to Medhurst. I can go by tram, bus or rickshaw. The last is a very comfortable way to travel but is not the fastest nor the least expensive. The tram is the one I like best because there is always something going on in it. It is often rather full and that

means *full*. When you think there are a comfortable number on board the tram will stop and load up with another ten or so. One of these may be returning from market with a dozen live crabs or a couple of live fowls! There are three classes on the trams. First class is what we always go and it is so cheap that I wonder what the third class fare is. You pay in coppers which are about the size and weight of a halfpenny. Sixty of them are worth threepence, so that although your fare is ten or twelve coppers the amount is not anything you can grumble at! The tram runs along the Bund which stretches along the Whangpoo's left bank. In the International Settlement this is a fine place with great buildings towering up behind, and an esplanade below but as you pass south in front of the French Concession and on into the Chinese Bund you come to dockland. I go along in the opposite sense from that, past the docks first. I like these. Then comes the more open water with all kinds of vessels on it, junks from Ningpo and Canton, P and O liners, tiny one-man craft that you would think would get swamped and then great warships of every nation that has representatives here in Shanghai. I don't like their being there because they haven't any right to, but it certainly is cheering to see the Union Jack waving and a line-up of Jack Tars on board.

I'm glad I have to go over to Medhurst once a week, where I can feel truly British for a change, and use a knife *and* a fork! I teach in the girls' Primary School there on Friday afternoons. I have the two top classes. I don't do very much and I certainly haven't learned the girls' names but it is supposed to improve their English pronunciation. All the staff there is Chinese. They are a 'feeder' school for this and the fact that their girls come on here for their middle school education is the reason why I'm here representing the L.M.S. on this staff. (In case you wanted to know!)

On the same day I go down to the Hospital and take an English class there. The nurses are all supposed to know some English for the purposes of charting, etc. On that same day too we have our Prayer Meeting which I like to be at. After that I retire to South Gate for another week!

I don't seem to have told you much about my work yet. Well I'm teaching Biology, Chemistry and Maths. I have the Senior Classes only and teach in English, of course. For one thing I don't think there is a Chinese Scientific vocabulary. When they want a word they pick out characters that have the same sound without regard to meaning. Sometimes I'm sorry that I haven't to use my little bit of Chinese in class or somewhere for I do badly need practice. As it is I don't get any except in ordinary language study time with my teacher.

In spite of all that people say about Chinese it is an amazingly interesting language to study, though at times the thought of the never-ending number of the characters overcomes one. It has been advocated that a Romanized *i.e.*, phonetic form of Chinese should be adopted and it has been tried in the teaching of some of the illiterates in some parts of China and, I believe, in Formosa, but there is not much likelihood of its being adopted generally. It would destroy half the charm of Chinese even if it did seem easier.

The characters are written with a brush, though you sometimes see the girls using a fountain pen when they are writing a letter or a notice for the board. They publish a newspaper each week which is pinned up in the corridor. It makes you feel terrible not to be able to read a word of it.

I wish you could see the girls. They are lovely - some very good looking, some with a gracious charm of manner and some just delightfully mischievous.

When you first come into the compound you greeted with a riot of blue gowns. That is their winter uniform colour. In the summer they wear a pale green yellow. I *do* like their gowns. They are very graceful, with the 'straight down to the ground' line. That fashion of dress is satively new. Women used to wear the short coat and long trousers but now that is worn only by the old fashioned and the women in the country. The fashion in these long gowns changes quite considerably. Those of today are split up the

side and a return to the long trousers to be worn underneath the gown is being made. The Chinese have a lovely figure, and the long gown brings out its slimness to perfection. Wait till I come home in one!

It certainly is a joy to teach these girls. They seem very keen to learn, I suppose because they haven't long had the privilege of so doing, and considering that they are having all their lessons in the senior classes in a foreign tongue, English, they are marvellously bright.

It seems that there has been a lot of criticism about the purpose of mission schools and the amount of good they are able to do. I wonder if it would help to clear up any questions if I tell you what we try to do.

You know that the Government has forbidden the teaching of any religion as a part of the curriculum. At first that seemed to hit the mission schools hard but it may prove to be a blessing in disguise. Apart from what we are able to give the girls in out of school time in the way of definite help in learning Christianity we hope that the spirit of this school may help them. The difference in atmosphere between this and a government school is readily sensed and may not its spirit be a pretty big contribution to make to a country you have come to serve? I don't know whether it is easy to understand what a Christian background means in the schools at Home until you see what they are like without that here particularly since they have lost the ethical background with its respect for age and many another sound principle. In the field of moral discipline, character building and in developing a spirit of service we really feel that we are able to do something for China's youth at a time when it is sorely needed.

We feel too that an educated ministry is an absolute necessity especially with the rise in the cultural level of the people of China. At the present time in China education that is non-Christian is pretty sure to be anti-Christian. Where shall we find educated Christian pastors, laymen, doctors and teachers if mission schools are closed? Again, where better can work be done than among students who are vastly more accessible in a school and are by nature much more susceptible to influence than non-Christian adults. The acute need for the guidance of the youth of modern China offers us a peculiar opportunity. Shall we use it?

Yet be it known that we are by no means satisfied with what we are doing. We can only plead that we are ever trying to improve it. The amount of religious work being done is not much less than before the conditions laid down by the Government came into force and in some ways it is of a better quality for teachers are on their mettle. The voluntary Bible Classes show that the students are really asking vital questions. To me it is of interest that the Sunday School classes on Sunday morning which are compulsory (Sunday being a day out of reach of Government regulations) seem to be regarded as an imposition and there is a tense feeling of resentment in the air that means that not very much good can be done in that hour.

The projects that the students run for the children in the homes round the compound, both here on Sunday afternoon and at the Nantao Institute on Saturdays, are to my mind of great importance for they are learning the joy of "passing on," which is, I believe, a very especially Christian trait.

In some cases accepting Christianity involves a lot more than we can realise. If it is to replace an old faith that was real, if mistaken, there must be very real difficulties. Another thing that seems to make it difficult for some of the best of China's young men and women is their strong sense of Nationalism. They are very keenly aware that some of the things that they have adopted from the West have not proved unmixed blessings and they are a little afraid of this. Also while there is the International Settlement in Shanghai and certain economic restrictions holding good between China and western nations there is a strong anti-west feeling and they feel it might be treachery to seem to accept anything from us.

Believe me, work among and for them is joyful and seems worth while.

Some of you will have wondered if I have been able to do any of my beloved Guiding yet. Well I haven't in the school as Guiding and Scouting haven't a very good name among pacifistically minded people here. The Boy Scouts have been able to help their country quite a lot especially at such times as during last January's fighting, but their training is largely military. In this school there is a Y.W.C.A which is an active organ among students in all the colleges and schools. The students run this, and nearly everything else, themselves. They are admirably independent and seem to know just what they want. It really is good to work with them though they are intolerant in some ways and pigheaded in others. Yet if you can get something across to them and they accept what you offer, they do it whole-heartedly. I like them. For the younger girls of Guide and Brownie age we have a meeting that is the equivalent of those. It is called the "Pu Kwung We" which literally means 'Spread the Light Club'. They have been making scrap books for the Lester Hospital and drawing and dressing cardboard dolls. Before that part of the programme they have games and things like that.

It is awfully difficult to help at anything yet, for let alone talking to them I can't get their names. It's the same in class. My first register came to me with names all in character. These I got my teacher to pronounce and I wrote the sounds down and that is the list I carry about with me. Here are the first few names on the list:-

Hoong Sih Kyoen, Zung lu Lieu, Tasing We Fung, Faung Vung Phen .... They don't slip off the tongue very easily.

Apart from Guiding with them, I go over most weeks to the Shanghai Rangers which like the Shanghai Guides and Brownies are composed of foreigners. There is plenty doing over in Shanghai if one had the time and inclination for doing it. One bother is that it is so far over there. Another is that I've plenty to do here.

I haven't told you anything about the other people here, that is the folks in the neighbouring compound who are evangelistic workers in the country and workers at the Nantao Institute and in the Boys' School over the way from us. Nor have I told you about the other L.M.S folks who live at the Hospital and at Medhurst. Miss Clark and Miss Evans are country evangelistic workers. Their work was badly interfered with during the trouble round Shanghai but they and Mr Small, who also works there, are now able to go out once again. I want to go out with them sometime. Then there is the Lester Hospital with its many nurses and doctors. I'll have to take you there on a visit some other time.

Whether you have ploughed through this I don't know. If so you deserve a putty medal. It has been written in more little odd slices of time than I can count; can you tell where they begin and end?

I'd have liked to have had a three days' holiday from school to get a few letters written but our first comes at China New Year which is the beginning of February. We have therefore a two term year, the second term of which should end at the end of June when it is beginning to get really hot.

We had a half term in the middle of October when we went to Soochow and had a glorious time. We went out to the hills. You can imagine how good it was to be going back to a place one knew, instead of having this unceasing string of new places and new folks. Am I not a grumbler? The newness will wear itself off soon enough and I shall be wishing it hadn't, I expect!

Today is Saturday. The sun is shining. We have had a marvellous autumn with sunshine day after day. During the last week it has turned quite a lot colder but you can forgive that if it remains bright. I think this amount of cold feels more after it was so hot in the summer. You would probably say it is still quite warm.

The school chrysanthemums are a gorgeous show of colour. They follow on an equally fine show of dahlias. We also have our little patch of garden and though it is left rather wild it has some lovely bright colours with cosmos daisies, button chrysanthemums, etc. We keep a pet in it, in the way of a stone lion!

At present too we have a Thanksgiving Turkey out there: a present from a Chinese country worker to Miss Hille. Thanksgiving is in a fortnight's time and the station here is having a big dinner then instead of a specially big one at Christmas when we don't have holiday, unless it is from Christmas day tiffin time. The girls are not going home. We want to show them what Christmas really means to us, and in non-Christian homes they would miss all the thoughts it should bring...

Talking about tiffin, one of the Chinese teachers has invited me over to their dining room once a week for Chinese food which I like. You would laugh to see the tables laid there. Just bowls and pairs of chopsticks. A big 'bucket' stands beside the table and contains second helps of rice while in the centre are the bowls of different vegetables and meats that one helps oneself to and which are to add taste to the rice. Foreigners generally eat too much of this while the Chinese will eat two or three bowls of rice with comparatively little of the extras.

I would love to go on and on and tell you about individual girls who are specially interesting and appealing but I really mustn't now. Next time perhaps.

I do hope for you the loveliest, happiest and best Christmastide yet, with an equally auspicious New Year.

A V MacKeith

Summer Trip - Shanghai - US with Grace Darling (referenced at beginning of first letter).

This was typed on sheets of 'airmail' thickness paper and Vera has corrected typos with a pen.

RMS Empress of Japan

nearing Honolulu

July 7th 1936

Dear Friend

Nine days ago we left Shanghai, so at last I must believe that I have really begun on a trip to U.S.A. Time has flown by and we have only seven days more on the Pacific, with almost a whole day spent in Honolulu.

We left Shanghai on the day after school finished, in a whirl of packing, setting make-up exam papers and entrance exam papers which are to be set before I get back in September, and getting last minute glimpses of people. Fortunately the boat didn't leave till 3 o'clock on Monday morning, so we had all day Sunday to get on. We left South Gate about 5.30 in four taxis of seniors, old girls, teachers, ourselves, luggage and two servants. They evidently hankered to come and were most helpful when it came to getting baggage on to the boat when coolies on the wharf swarm around and need supervising.

We spent from 5.30 till 7.30 showing parties round the boat. She is a beauty and no mistake. The first class quarters are palatial. I'm sure a number of those who came down, my 'daughter' amongst them, didn't realise we were on a boat. The Empress was up against the wharf side. If we'd had to take a tender down they might have grasped the fact better. Just as well we didn't however. The Company might have objected to our filling up the tender!

About 8 o'clock the last of our friends left and we three, Bess, Grace and I went off to get some supper in the town. When we returned about nine we found other passengers we know embarking and a crowd of people seeing them off. Two of Grace's' Mission were travelling and two London Mission people from Hankow, Central China. They are all 2nd class passengers as are all the other fellow passengers we'd heard of or met. One 1st class one from Shanghai I know. He has a wonderful cabin away up on the boat deck, airy as the open heath, five decks higher than ours. 1st class must however take some living up to. You're much freer 2nd or 3rd. (Sourgrapes?!)

Let me disabuse your mind of any doubt about our comfort. We're doing fine. We're at the tail of the boat and get rather a lot of vibration and certainly feel the rolling and pitching that there is, but thereby we know we are on a boat. They cannot realise it up aloft!

Today we passed the Empress of Canada, our sister ship and the one I'm sailing back on. She looked glorious slipping along. I expect we do too. Grace and I are in a two-berth cabin, a wee place but complete and compact. We dress in relays of one. Suitcases are stored under the bunks, there's a wee hanging wardrobe and hooks for towels and things in present use. Over each berth is a shelf for oddments and a locker stands at the side of the berths. I haven't got much stuff, two suitcases, but I still seem to have more than I need. You don't get very dirty on a boat. It's such a change from Shanghai.

As an additional aid to cleanliness we can bathe as often as we like, and I like twice or three times a day. This really is not a 3rd class privilege but we have discovered during the last week that there are many things that seem to be 2nd class privileges that the powers that be are only too pleased for us to

use, only they cannot actually say so! There is no actual barrier between the 2nd and 3rd class sections of the boat, as there is between 2nd and 1st. The matter of going into 2nd is left to our consciences or rather good sense, and provided they are not using the pool or the ironing room or their games we can fill in the vacant places.

There are excellent facilities for washing clothes, taking showers and playing some deck games in our own quarters, and as I said we can use the others' ironing room etc. I suppose she's a newer boat than the P. & O. that I travelled out on, but she's certainly better fitted.

About our food, always an important question; it's good. It's served from the same kitchen as the next folks' and seems to differ from theirs only in there being a little less choice. That is quite an advantage to my mind! Though you very easily can have things that you want that are not actually down. For instance I very often ask for and get scrambled egg, for I haven't lost my craze for that even yet! I'll send a menu card along for you to get some idea. We were given some tins of fruit juice when we came but we haven't felt in want of them any time. It's job enough to get hungry as it is! One tin we did use after our Japan trip which I'd better tell you of before you get bored with such sordid details as the above.

The Empress boats call at two or three places in Japan, and it's easy enough to leave the ship at the southernmost port and pick her up again at the northernmost. Days in port are apt to be hot anyway.

We therefore got off at Kobe and first hunted out a china shop to order some pieces to replace those broken in the set we are using all the time at South Gate. We found it and told the man we wanted to hunt out a Japanese friend of Grace's, a girl she had taught in the days long ago in U.S.A. who now is married to a professor in a college in Kobe. "he was my teacher", said the boy who was serving us, and he eagerly told us what tram to take and how often to change and so on. We set off and found the place without much bother.

It was a sweet little Japanese house, and what elephants we felt when we stood inside, even without our shoes that we had shed at the door. Somi has two little children and treated us right well. she gave us tiffin Sukiyaki, a Japanese dish that we had had sometimes in Shanghai, and sent us off to Kyoto, the old capital of Japan, a city a few leagues away where we intended to spend a day. Sumi's people are all in America, and are American citizens. She is Japanese, through her husband, and now can never go back to see her parents except for the shortest of holidays because of the strict emigration laws that the States have set up in the last few years. She has lived in U.S.A. so long that she finds it not too easy to get accustomed to her present conditions. She has one room in her house kept foreign and she hankers after many of the things of her youth. It must be hard to make the change.

When we got to Kyoto we set about making plans for the night. The foreign hotels are very expensive so we enquired at the Japan Tourist Bureau as to whether we couldn't sleep in a Japanese inn. They were a little doubtful, especially as we said we wouldn't want breakfast or supper, but they agreed to enquire and indeed they arranged it for us. As it is necessary to register where-ever you stay and as the innkeeper couldn't speak a word of English, we carried our registration, completed by the Bureau, along with us and presented it as credentials. We explored a temple before going to the inn, but owing to its strangeness decided to go there early. Consequently we we arrived there about seven thirty and by eight were in bed!

When we arrived we were shown our suite of rooms, two, covered all over the floor with rush mats. We had shed our shoes at the door of the inn and donned slippers. These we likewise shed at the door of our own rooms about which we padded in bare feet. On the mats were two cushions and on these we sat and drank tea with our hostess. A dressing table and writing table of suitable height were the only pieces of furniture. When we signed for our bed she rose and took mattresses from a cupboard and spread them out. Then she hitched a mosquito net from the roof and we were complete in our needs.

We slept the sleep of the weary, a good ten or eleven hours and woke next morning to more tea, a good wash and then a walk to the station for our breakfast. The place we slept in was the essence of cleanliness. The Japanese are notorious for their love of hot baths, really hot ones, and they certainly have the cleanest domestic arrangements that you could wish to see anywhere. The custom of shedding your shoes at the door is really a fine one. It's only a matter of habit!

After breakfast we set off exploring Kyoto. We got hold of a map of the city with the tramways marked on it and made our way to the two Imperial Palaces, the museum and a famous garden. We were able to do so because of the fact that all the fares are a standard 6 sen so that knowing where we started from we could count the stops till we reached our destination each time. It was good fun getting around on our own like this, besides costing about one n/100 as much as having a taxi!

The Palaces are not now used. The Emperor now lives in Tokyo, though he does visit Kyoto once in a while. To go into any public building in Japan you have to take off your shoes and put on the slippers provided. It is a good scheme and keeps a lot of dirty mud out, but its chief charm to my mind is that it prepares your mind to be impressed before you go in! There is nothing at all of the richness and grandeur of the Chinese palaces in Peking. All these are grey outside and have no furniture at all inside. Their decoration is all mural. They have lovely painted doors, lattice windows and screens with exquisite carving. In the audience chambers the floor had a raised dais at one end. On that the emperor would sit while his noble couriers arranged themselves in correct order down the hall. I put all that in the past tense, but it happens still when his Imperial Highness visits this city.

In the main Palace we had a guide but the other one had no English speaking attendant so they had got someone to type out an account of the palace and this was given us as we went in and we read it ourselves as we walked round. A guide conducted us just to see that we saw the rooms in the correct order. There is no doubt that the people of this land are out to be helpful and they are. We found later in Tokyo, where we couldn't get a good map of the city that the conductors were willing to do all they could to put you on the road to where you wanted to go. I was very impressed with the people but all the time I couldn't get a picture out of my mind, that of the way the Japs have treated the people of China, particularly when they burnt up Chapei near Shanghai in 1932. I suppose it wasn't fair to blame the sins of the governing military leaders upon the people, but it spoiled my joy and wouldn't let me let myself 'fall for' the Japs entirely. I almost felt disloyal to my friends over the water in Shanghai and yet of course the Japanese missionaries who got on the boat at Yokohama think as much of their folks as we do!

The Japanese sprang from the Chinese and it's interesting to see that when they go back to reverence the great sages they turn to Confucius, Mencius and other great Chinese sages. Their architecture obviously is based on the same plan, but it's far plainer. I've mentioned the lack of vivid colouring and the comparative plainness goes into the amount of curve in the roof and that sort of thing too. I can't pretend to say which I like best. They are both glorious.

In the big city temple one of the most carefully preserved relics is a great rope made of human hair. The story goes that when the temple was burned down and required rebuilding no ropes could be found strong enough. The master builder said that ropes of human hair would take the strain so all the women of Japan sacrificed their tresses and there's the proof in a glass case for all to see. In the museum were lots of old armour, the usual museum stuff (we went chiefly because it was raining outside). One of the things they are proudest of was sheets and sheets of old writing. As first Japanese writing was exactly like Chinese but they have changed to a quicker more easy written style for everyday use, leaving the old Chinese character for formal, official occasions. I suppose it was the fact that though we couldn't say a word yet we could read notices and could speak in writing that made me feel not so very much 'in a strange country'. In fact, when we first got to Kyoto we wanted to go to the station to find the Tourist Bureau and it was by writing down 'train' in Chinese characters that we were able to be shown the way there!

Once more 'tis the 7th of July. We have an extra day today. It is Meridian Day. Somewhen in the last few hours we have passed over the 180th line on longitude, so it is still Tuesday.

Last night there was a fancy dress ball up in the 1st class ballroom. The best costumes of all were worn by a couple representing the Emperor of Abyssinia and his wife. They borrowed two children from a Chinese family here and had an airman with them. Really the costume wasn't very elaborate. It consisted of sheets, a sun-helmet, suitcase and dog. That got the first prize. The other costumes were more usual, niggers, Chinese mandarin, Japanese lady, shipwrecked sailors etc/. We didn't hear anything about it till after dinner when we saw these weird creatures wandering about upstairs and followed them up to see the grand march.

"We", that is the people in this part of the boat, are a very mixed crowd. There are about thirty foreigners and fifty Chinese. (as this is a British boat I might have said thirty whites and fifty foreigners!) The dining room holds about fifty so there are two mealtime sittings. The Chinese have their meals at 8,12,5,9; while we sit down at 8.30, 1,4 and 7.

A great many of the Chinese are Honolulu Chinese, living on American territory and therefore had to go to schools where American was spoken. For the most part their ancestors came from Canton, so the brand of Chinese they speak is that unintelligible stuff. One girl among them I know. She is a medical student from Margaret Williamson Hospital in Shanghai, at West Gate, a 1/4 mile from South Gate. She has made up her mind to study and to practice in China as the need for doctors there is so great, but she is finding her lack of mandarin Chinese a big handicap. Another couple with the bonniest, fattest baby are also doctors, both of them. He has been studying in P.U.M.C. the great Rockefeller Hospital in Peiping which is really a London Mission place. It is certainly the best fitted hospital in China and one of the best in the world. We have sent one or two girls there for nurse's training but they are spoiled there for ordinary, hard nursing work that China needs. That is a fear that rather prevents one urging too many to go, but it is also true that leaders in the nursing field are needed and P.U.M.C. trained girls certainly have an ideal to work at in any place they may be given to run. One of our girls, Lieu Zing Woo, has just finished there. She's going back for a year and then she wants to concentrate on mental cases. She is a girl I've mentioned before, a pupil of our Primary School, Mary Farnham Middle School and Ginling College in Nanking, who insists on Christian places of study, has lots of Christian friends, but has not yet stood out as a Christian herself. One reason is, I think, that she feels that Christianity is foreign and she so longs to be and preserve all things Chinese that she won't have anything to do with things foreign. She thought at first of concentrating on Chinese medicine but she got over that. Her sister is librarian at our school. She is entirely different in character and in outlook. You would never believe they were sisters, even from their looks.

To return to our fellow passengers. There is another party that is going to Vancouver to take part in a circus there. I had thought that one girl was very energetic, for each time I went down the corridor she was standing on her hands. Now I understand! Another is to give a demonstration of Diabolo, the Chinese top, that is spun on a string and which hums if you spin it fast enough. I told you, did I not, that I bought one at China New Year time when two of us went to the city temple fair. All I can get out of it is a low toned moan, and it required some work to learn to get that!

We are fairly well off for children. There are half a dozen Chinese young ones and various steps of 'white' ones. I have to call them that for they are British and American and other nationalities. There are four big boys who form a gang for play. They have made themselves a set of a game called Monopoly. I'd seen it in Shanghai but not played it. It sounds most complicated for you buy land and houses, take mortgages on them, and do other such dealings in high finance till at last, if you're unlucky you go bankrupt and drop out. It sounds good. I hope I can get a set to take back.

Yesterday in the midst of our games the Klaxon went and we were due for boat drill. This meant getting our life-jackets on and assembling at a Muster Station. It is the second time we've had it and I was glad as I forgot my camera the first time. I haven't taken many snaps. I'm sorry I hadn't the camera when the Empress of China passed yesterday.

If I'd had the sense to keep to the diary form in this letter I might have been surer of not missing things out. I don't know what I've said and what I've left unsaid. I have a wee diary that I intend to keep all this trip, for I don't expect to be able to remember even all the places we go to once we get started on land journeying.

I see I've made a note of the books I've read. Tess of the D'Ubervilles was the first. Then I tried two or three out of the library but couldn't find anything I liked. Then I read a detective yarn, Benson Murder Case, and after that Clansmen (Ethel Boileau) and Hypathia for the second time and now The Way of a Transgressor, a long autobiography of an American who seems to have done and been most things in a wild way. He has many pleasant things to say about England but the whole book isn't worth more than skimming over.

Talking of detective stories, we went along to see a talkie two nights ago and that was a mystery story with a number of murders in it and so many names that I failed to get the half of them and have been trying to unravel the plot ever since. There is quite a good machine on board. There have been three pictures shown so far and in addition each time they show a film of the place at which the boat will next call. Honolulu looks attractive, sunny, colourful and interesting. Hey ho for the day after to-morrow!

10.7.36

Sufficient unto the morrow was the evil thereof! The morrow gave us the worst weather we had had on this trip. We had been in the trade wind zone for a day or so but then the wind blew stronger and stronger and the boat gave us quite a rough time. I turned up at all meals, all of our table did, but nearly misbehaved at breakfast time when I rashly ordered bacon and eggs the smell of which was almost too strong. I had to tell the boy to take them away quickly!

But HONOLULU I wish I could shew you that place. Everyone got excited as we drew in there. A number were getting off and they were up packing very early. The rest of us had to be up by 7.30 for quarantine inspection by the port doctor. In Japan we had had this too. We had to line up on deck in two lines and the doctor walked down and looked at us and felt our pulses. We wondered what he could tell of our ailments by that but here he left out the feeling of our pulses and contented himself with counting us. It's a bit of a farce if a necessary one. After that we were glad to be allowed down to breakfast which we rushed through so as to be up for the docking. Hawaiians are great singers. They have a special harmony of their own and when we reached the dock lo we were greeted by an official band and party of singers.

We went off with a number of parcels that people in Shanghai had asked us to post to their friends in the States. We hoped that we could get rid of them for room, and wondered if we'd have to pay customs there. We did this however and it took rather an age to get through. When we had done so we met a friend of Grace's and she immediately decked us with 'leis', floral necklets, which all good Honoluluans do to their arriving friends. She has married in the last year and last Friday she and her husband had bought a new car, a Ford V8 in which we spent the day.

At first we went to Pearl Harbour, the naval dockyards where her husband was introduced to us in dungarees. This is a great harbour the centre of the American Pacific Fleet which they have at pretty good strength because of Japan. My camera was taken at the door, but I didn't see anything I could report on intelligently as a spy!

Next we went to a pineapple 'factory'. This is the great 'industry' of Honolulu. There are acres of pineapple plants and these are rushed off to the 'cannery' where they are topped, sliced, graded and tinned, all in double quick time. They have hundreds of visitors to see the work and in the waiting room is a tap that supplies pineapple juice in unlimited quantity for all who care to drink it. We did. It was good. We next went off for tiffin to a Hawaiian restaurant where we tasted several Hawaiian dishes. Of course pineapple figured in this menu but there was also the root of the tera, which seems to be another 'special' product. Really the flowers, fruits and fish of these islands are all wonderful and strange. The loveliest red and golden trees and shrubs line the roads. Green growth is likewise luxuriant and then there are these fruits. Grace's friend gave us a basketful to bring on board and we're still discovering new kinds in it. We had Papaya for breakfast, a kind of tasty melon.

After this we went to Mrs White's school. She still teaches in the school with over 3000 boys and girls. I ought to be more used to hearing of big numbers now, but that just sounds appalling to me. There are excellent opportunities for the children to hear and see illustrations of their lessons for they are taken to the libraries and museums and we saw two of these, good ones. We likewise went to see the Aquarium, full of strange fishes that they swear are common as mud around Honolulu. Some of the colours are unbelievable. You wonder where the painter got the ideas for his stripes and dots and mixtures of colours, but there they are swimming about in water that doesn't wash them off! The little chess-like sea horses and octopuses(?) were most interesting to me.

After these educational excursions we went off for a drive to Diamond Head and the Pali, two of the big headlands that stand out in the ocean and have the loveliest views over the sea and the land. The latter is a little way back from the shore, but is a steep, steep cliff across which the wind whistles with unbelievable speed. We heard that one lady from the boat had her skirt torn into ribbons by the wind, but we missed this sight!

We had one disappointment in the day. I wanted a coconut, but we couldn't find them in any shop. We saw them growing on the palm and had had coconut milk for tiffin, but the nut itself we missed.

We had to be on board by three, but hadn't wasted much of our five hours on shore had we? There were crowds of people on board seeing friends off and decking them out with 'leis' as when landing. Those who really belonged and had perhaps six or eight friends had to wear as many wreathes, but the more the better really!

One party consisted of a number of Hawaiian girls who are going to the Vancouver celebrations as the Chinese party are. I'm afraid I may have been a bit insulting when I called them a circus troop. The night before we reached Honolulu they gave us a show, explaining that they were going over to give an exhibition of Chinese art and civilisation and that they had boxes of exhibits that would have been more suitable to show to an audience of the kind on the boat (ahem) but that they would show some of the other, commoner tricks they had. Then in spite of the rolling of the boat, the lowness of the ceiling, and the smallness of the space at their disposal, they gave us a good show of acrobatics, top-spinning with the diabolo, a vase and a saucepan lid, balance-trick riding on a one wheeled cycle, wielding of an unwieldy streamer-whip and other such tricks. We hope very much the Hawaiian people will favour us before we reach Victoria, whence we go by steamer a four-hour trip to Seattle. Grace got letters at Honolulu from her father telling that they might come up to Victoria. Her whole family seems to be coming to meet her, but I don't think they can all come on the road journey. It will be very nice to see the bit of my family that will be there. I only wish it might be a bigger bit!

13.7.36

Today is Monday and tomorrow is Tuesday, July 14th on which day our boat arrives in Victoria; a bare statement of an important fact. We received orders this morning to be packed by the afternoon so that luggage may be prepared for rapid landing. Last afternoon Grace reclined on her bunk while I held

up my dresses and she chose what I should take on the trip, for which we shall use only one suitcase between us, and now I am doing the same for her. I'm getting quite nervous about meeting her family and on Saturday decided that I'd better see what the barber could do with my hair. When in Yokohama I had had it cut to avoid having it done on the boat, but the place where I went didn't understand what I wanted and I couldn't explain so that they did what they liked and made rather a mess of it cutting it too high behind. You should hear the barber's remarks! At any rate he did what he could to shapen it againnow I'm ready for better or worse.

The typewriter must be packed in the luggage that is to be freighted through to Boise, so

Good-bye for the present to it and to you

from

Vera

(Handwritten letter on notepaper, some words abbreviated - so children became 'chrn',  
hopefully I have interpreted them correctly!)

Moscow

Idaho

17.8.36

Dear Mother

Here's yet another address. This place is in Northern Idaho and is the University town (population 4,000 with a student population in term-time of 2,500)-

We came here from Boise where my time just flew by and now I'm "on my way" back to China. We're visiting a family in which Grace lived when she was studying in the University. She looked after children etc for her board and room. I do approve of the way it's taken for granted that many many students need to & should "work their way" through college.

They do all sorts of things in the summer to get money for fees, waitressing in hotels etc, picking fruit etc. It's all very healthy that part.

Yet I do disapprove of their education generally. The thought seems to be to spend so much time in the place where knowledge could be acquired and yet to acquire as little as possible. I hate people asking me my opinions of it 'cos that's it and it's not a very tactful answer to give!

It's easier to answer "How do you like America?" It certainly is a wonderful country physically and the people are amazingly generous and friendly. They've given me a great time and I believe Ronald would say the same.

Have I said anything about the Darlings? Mr D is a wonderful man for 72. He still does full-time work and seems to have an endless supply of energy (albeit of a "nervous" type). He hasn't got over his farmers habits of getting up at dawn and is best pleased if others follow suit, though they don't for the most part! He's been feeling the heat that has held over Boise this summer.

Charles Darling must be 40 and claims to be a confirmed bachelor due to having had to do with so many divorce cases in his law practice. He has a "girl" so Grace says whom he's taken out for umpteen years. She, Grace, is quite fed up with her brother and the sister too - for she maintains the family "single" method of life, in which however Grace, as the oldest, hasn't set a good example.

Grace you ought to know something about. She has some awful nice friends.

Dorothy the baby is in New York. She's artistic - oh ask Ronald about her as he saw her for about 24 hours longer than I did. I liked her though she's as different from Grace as chalk from cheese.

The day before we left Boise we spent the day on a farm with a friend of Grace who has 4 children. Ruth 14, Jean 13, Franklin 10, Hubert 8. I took them some chinese puzzles, (Chinese characters Puzzle name?) (? Eric has it) and they immediately settled down to do them competitively.

We bathed in an irrigation ditch. All this part of the country is naturally dry as dry but there are great irrigation schemes. (Boulder Dam (ask Ronald) is one). This ditch was just like a river and very swift - difficult to swim against and too easy "with".

This evening we dined with another friend of Grace. Opposite her, on a farm, lived an English couple who grew marrows, unknown out here. They cooked me some for my benefit. I went over to see them and found he came from Ilfracombe and she from Paignton. It's kind of pathetic how people who've come out here ache to get back. Yesterday I met a Dorset man who's been here since 1875 and he still hopes to go back again. He was thrilled to hear I knew Worth Maltravers.

This letter should be over just before Ronald. I wish I were he!

With love to my Mums, and Best of Luck for September 4th, if I don't get a note in before.

from

Vera

Handwritten Letter on Canadian Pacific Railway Company Headed paper. This letter has no addressee.

On Board SS Princess Katherine

Aug 22nd 1936

I've left the USA! That beats Ronald by 5 days I believe, but it's in the "wrong" direction.

At the moment we're on the ferry steamer running from Seattle, USA to Victoria, Canada. This PM we should (get on, deleted and replaced with) embark aboard(!) RMS Empress of Canada.

I believe I last wrote from Moscow, didn't I? I had a very enjoyable 3 days there. The Astells (?) are a jolly crowd. The family has 4 girls and a boy. They are spaced over 13 years and 2 are nearer together at the end, "the little girls" as they hate to be called now at 13+ and 15+.

Apparently they're quite bright. Their father's a classics professor at Idaho (State) University. It's difficult not to envy these people the spaciousness of their University Campus. It does mean a building can be seen to advantage and many of the buildings are well worth showing off. The same was even more true of Seattle's University of Washington (State). That is on a hill overlooking Puget Sound.

I left Moscow on 9.40 on Thursday morning. Grace came along too to Spokane (3 hrs) where she has college friends. We took a room for her in the Davenport Hotel, the Hotel of the West, and made it our headquarters for the day while we shopped, sight-saw and went to a show of "Mary of Scotland". This was very good in my opinion. I can't say I agreed with the critics that the setting were too gorgeous outshining the stars. What seemed to me was that the photography wasn't of the very best. (Holyrood Castle looked most unreal and the lighting changed in the middle of scenes) and that's what made one notice the settings more than one should. Elizabeth was glorious and Queen Mary good if a little weak, unqueenly.

I left Spokane on the 9.45 and woke up at 7.30 next morning still in Washington State. The distances of places from each other does get you though China must have broken me in somewhat.

Seattle is a big city but I had a whole day in which to explore it. I went hither and yon by tram. The not moving except in one's host's car has now ceased for me!

That's another interesting point. These folks are getting so lazy. They can't stir without riding. I was for ever hearing about "hiking" but never had a decent walk. Even our hike at camp wasn't more than a 3 or 4 mile stroll to a picnic spot at which most of the girls collapsed and hunted for blisters and reasons why they should not walk back.

In Seattle a last little bit of shopping and the above mentioned exploratory to the Woodland Park and the University took up most of the day.

In the evening I went to a show given by the University Drama League. (Students of Dramatics from the University). It was almost a private show - just 60 seats in a wee model theatre and they served coffee in the interval!

The play was Maedchen in Uniform. I didn't see the film but now I'd like to for it must surely have ended differently. I heard many people saying what joy that was but this ended so tragically and dramatically that it couldn't have caused such undiluted joy. It's the story of a school girl "crush" in a

Prussian militaristic girl's school and the sitting(?) on of the girl by the G.Pee, with the G.Pee committing suicide as a result. Yet what else could she (arrow back indicating she = GPee) have done?

It was awfully well done but it was kind of a shock to run into the players 2 minutes after the end and see just ordinary college girls. The heroine was particularly good. She travelled home in the same tram and was sent be frantically learning a new part!

I've just finished writing a letter to Grace (bread and butter letter!) and though there are 10 writing tables they're all full and other people are looking daggers at me as I keep them out so I guess my turn is over.

I'm glad to be going back though I'm half scared I" be all out of things for a while and I've forgotten all my Chinese. Suppose my first classes are in Biology! Horrid thought!

Goodbye to 'ee

Vera

Typewritten letter to Eric

R M S Empress of Canada

August 25th, 1936

Dear Eric

It always seem's you're the one to write to from a boat, especially one that carries, even if it isn't a R.M.S.P. Co. boat. (What did that one amalgamate with?).

I'm going to post this from Honolulu and I'll be interested to know whether it reaches you before one I'll hope to post from Japan. The latter should travel via Siberia, the former via U.S.A.

I say 'I hope' because one never knows how the sea will treat one at typhoon time. Let's hope above all that we're not delayed. As it is, we get into Shanghai on the day school opens, though I can hardly hope it'll be in time for an eight o'clock chapel attendance.

This boat is an older sister ship to the "Empress of Japan" on which we came over. She's built on entirely different lines. I can't help comparing points in the accommodation, food, service, etc. It's very difficult to say which is nicer. Here we have a better cabin and deck, but no lounge, (only a smoking-room), and not such a nice steward - but goodness! it's mighty comfortable.

As far as motion's concerned, it's hard to believe we're on the sea. I've a top bunk under the port-hole, and it's only be looking out of that as I wake and go off to sleep that I know it!

There are plenty of people travelling this class - a jolly crowd. One girl with her parents is from Shanghai. I knew her slightly before and am glad to have her here to do things with. We visited the 1st Class Gym. today and rode horses and bicycles, and after the exercise weighed ourselves. I'm sure those scales are complimentarily light. I've not lost 3 lbs since leaving China.

Goodness! it's noisy in here - the smokeroom-writingroom-lounge, for at one table someone is typing, at another they're playing 'donkey' and at another 'mahjong', a Chinese game like (vaguely) dominoes which they shuffle round with a terrific din every five minutes. It's after dinner and no longer warm on deck so, having nothing better to do (!), I write letters. Last night we played "monopoly", a game of the moment in the States. Have you had it around? One buys and sells land, mortgages property, collects rent, goes to jail and does everything legitimate and barely so, to ge a monopoly of land and cause the other fellows to go bankrupt. Each game takes 2 1/2 or 3 hours at the least, but it's a good game for board ship (or bored ship).

You won't be interested in what we're eating, as I sent a menu card before. It's rather better, I'd say, than that of the "Japan" but I may just be hungrier. The tea's good, the coffee poor ("British coffee" (!) is the American comment).

We're a very mixed crowd. Several Hawaiians, very cheery, student age, who play baseball and sing to a ukulele all day; numerous Chinese students returning after 1,2 or 3 years study, - a far more serious crowd, but fond of "shuffleboard" and inside games at night; several missionaries returning from furlough, and one from a summer in U.S.A; a few oddments, signed-off seamen and ?'s We seem to have a far livelier time that the snooty first-class and the ordinary 2nd class folk.

Tonight we're "sneaking" into a movie. As before, we are allowed to share 2nd privileges within limits, i.e. where we don't interfere with their enjoyment of the same.

Other “things to do” include, of course, reading. There’s a fairly decent library. I’m now reading a Quiller-Couch, having finished Hall Caine’s “The Bondmen”. Tomorrow I start on “ A Tale of Two Cities,” which I read this time more slowly, preparing for teaching it as soon as I reach Shanghai. Do you think the girls will enjoy reading it? We’ll take 15 weeks over it, but many of them know something of the the story, having read it in Chinese or seen the film of it.

There are not may classics now that have not been translated. What are you reading now-a-days? I’ll leave you thus with a question.

Love,

VERA.

Letter to family

American Mail Line

SS. "President Jefferson",  
at Yokohama

September 5th, 1936

Dear Family

Yokohama is an important port. We can't help knowing that today as our boat lies alongside one wharf while this boat lies opposite and the "Chitral" (P.&O.) from London just up the wharf and the "Taujo Maru", from San Francisco likewise.

We came over to pay this boat a visit and to get a drink of iced water on tap, which our boat hasn't. I also went on the "Chitral" and booked me a passage on that for her return voyage, in my imagination.

We have had a day ashore here. In the morning we went off to see the Big Buddha (48 ft. high) and the Gilded Buddha (330 ft. high, of camphor wood). To go out to Kamamuri where these are we went through pretty treey country with doll-like farms, streams and fields - Japan. Our party contained a Pole, a Russian, 2 Americans and self. I don't mean it superiorly when I say it was interesting to see this first glimpse of the Orient through other purely Western eyes. The Pole is on a 'tour' and was in raptures. I was too, really, but I never did like very fizzy lemonade.

You can go inside the Big Buddha and there you find a notice commending reverence as you are in the "womb of cosmical being".

Now we're passing down the coast of Japan to Kobe, where we'll have 6 hours.

We lost several passengers at Yokohama and we lose still more at Kobe. It's been a very jolly crowd travelling.

The night before last we had a carnival concert. 1st and 2nd Classes get all sorts of things arranged for them and we decided we would have a grand farewell. It was a good concert (though I say it as shouldn't). We decided to "dress" for dinner (a "change" was all we'd risen to before!) but the men couldn't all rake out dress suits. Still a tie was a change for some of them. For entertainment we had six groups providing items:

Hawaiians.	Dancing
Returned (Chinese) Students.	Chinese Music and Opera.
Americans.	Skit.
Japanese	backed out.
Canadians.	Wireless programme. (Good).
Cosmopolitan.	See over.

The last was obviously my group and I was in fact Convener of it. It consisted of an Indian, a Jew, a Russian and self. The Russian, female, sang opera. The first and second did a thought-reading stunt. The Indian, Bedi, was wonderfully impressive and picturesque and though the Jewish boy (19-ish) rather spoiled it through self-consciousness, it went over mighty well. I introduced them!

The Russian lady lives in Tientsin, China, and had been for "residence" to the States, so that next year she and her husband may be able to get their "papers".

Bedi I believe I mentioned is a student (already M.A. from Bombay or somewhere) who planned to go to Europe but turned round at Vancouver and decided to study in Tokyo. He's a very keen student of philosophy though his expressions in their broken English are more vivid than usual. He intends to study Japan's economic life and is very anti-British rule for India. His conversation turned to this most times and it seemed quite an embarrassment to him when he discovered I was British.

The Jewish lad is from Shanghai. He set out as a seaman intending to go to Vancouver, Australia, England and China, working his way, but had a row just off Vancouver and was jailed and then sent back to China forthwith. He has no slur on his name! It was a case of loss of a somewhat violent temper. He has, alas, like many Shanghai people, who know Shanghai alone, a violent hatred of and impatience with Chinese.

We've had so much doing on board that I didn't write before Yokohama, except to the States. This letter will probably go via Siberia so it should be as quick from Kobe. It will go across to North China and thence. (Please verify by postmark if possible, or send me envelope if in character).

We had a shuffleboard tournament between Honolulu and Yokohama. It was the centre of a most enthusiastic crowd of spectators who cheered winner and loser indiscriminately. We are cramped here in 3rd Class but our closeness fortunately meant only more interest in community plans.

We likewise had two days of typhoon weather in the time between Honolulu and Yokohama. I don't mind it except that it means closing of portholes with deadlights, even on "G" and "B" Decks. The place is ventilated all right, but it's uncomfortably dark and seems close.

Our deck on "A" Deck was still open to us and, though very windy and almost cold, was fresh-airy.

Two more days to Shanghai, and so will end a wonderful summer.

Love to all,

V.

Carbon copy? Typed on thin airmail type paper - some hand corrections

1937 Trans-Siberian Railway journey to England

31 Archers Road  
Southampton

12th July 1937

Dear

Presumably a diary of the Trans-Siberian journey should begin with June 26th, the day we left, but it's impossible to sit here and write much without setting down something of the impressions that have thrust themselves on me in the 48 hours since I arrived in Southampton.

It's just terribly nice to be HOME. In all my imaginings I hadn't imagined it as nice as it is. For one thing, talk about "the unchanging East," it isn't a patch on the unchangeability of Southampton and this house. Mother wrote and told me she had deliberately decided not to move from 31 Archers Road until after I had come, and it's scrummy that she hasn't so that I can find the same old cracks in the ceiling, the same drawers for silver or knives, and the same raspberry bushes, etc., in the garden,- then what joy to go out and pick raspberries, red, black, and white currants, apples and peas, and to eat them then and there without washing!

Of course some of the Docks are new, and there are a few(!) new houses, but the butcher, the baker, and probably the candle-stick maker if he'd only appear, have called with the same old horse-drawn carts and the same drivers.

Just so I shouldn't miss Shanghai too much at first, on the first day here, Sunday, I went down to the docks to see Gladys Parker from the boat to the boat-train, and returned to entertain 7 Potatoes (a) and Marjorie Lander to supper. It was good to see her. She was down to meet The "Europa" with Donaldson on board.

Now I'm on the subject of boats I'd better go back and begin our journey from the time when the "Tsingtao Maru" left Shanghai. We got such a pretty picture from the boat with all the Mary Farnham blue gowns and friendly faces, to say nothing of others of other hues.

26th Once the boat had started I felt dead tired. It was a job to stay awake for lunch. Directly that "duty" was over we all retired to bed, from which we managed to drag ourselves for supper on the promise that we would be back there for good at 8.30!

27th The next day we reached Tsingtao where we had four hours. Meredith was going to see a friend at Iltis Hook so Jess and I went along in the same car and lazed on the beach watching fishermen with nets catch 2 small dabs (?). At last we summoned up enough energy to go for a walk through a delicious pine and acacia wood. We just managed to get back to Mrs. McGee's house in time to shelter from a heavy shower in the taxi that had returned for us and incidentally in time to be offered a cheering cup of tea.

28th Twenty-four hours later found us in Dairen. I had not realised what a very Japanese place it is. They are an efficient little people, say what else you will about them. We were met by a man from the

Yamato Hotel and he took our 21 pieces of baggage, put them through the Customs and delivered them to us on the evening train for Harbin, all without involving us.

Meanwhile we were busy getting Manchoukuo visas which you can't get in Shanghai as China does not recognise that country. In our excitement two of us entered "blue hair, fair eyes" as descriptive of ourselves. The photos we presented certainly were awful, but not quite so bad as that!

On the train I found a canary and a small fat man occupying what appeared to be my berth but before bedtime they two gave way and the four of us settled down in our little curtained Pullman beds, 2 up - 2 down. Slippers and a clean kimono were provided and we might have been fast asleep by ten, but stops at stations were too frequent and too interesting. At Mukden at midnight people, who had travelled from Shanghai by train, joined us.

29th Our first big stop of the morning came at 7.00, Hsinking where we'd been told to change. So much for our time-tables, the car-boy refused to let us get off, and doubtless thought us fools to have got up with the lark. Our opinion of ourselves wasn't very different!

About noon we ran into Harbin. Our passports having half-an-hour previously been demanded from us, had now to be claimed by means of a complicated "form". This routine of losing and regaining one's passport soon became too common to cause comment while we became expert in answering questions. The only difficulty arose when the demand came unexpectedly once and my passport had to be produced from the bag in which it lay together with my tickets and money snugly over my right hip, two layers down.

We were due to spend a night in Harbin, so we made for the excellent Yamato Hotel where we enjoyed the first of three baths which we took in the next twelve hours. Let's hope that the prestige of the hotel didn't suffer too much from the washing that hung from its front windows!

Harbin is the last city one stops before entering Russia, so we like many another did last minute shopping. Jess and I got Russian blouses, Meredith a hat box and I a suitcase big enough to hold two little cases of mine, thus reducing our number of packages to a round twenty.

30th Embarking at noon in a compartment for four. A peaceful night passed before

1st We reached Manchouli on the border. Two more examinations of passports were the prelude to a drawn out wait for Customs officials. When they came their thoroughness was admirable, only equalled by that of the officials over the border at OTPUR where all baggage had to be re-examined quarter of an hour after we had safely stowed it in our carriage at Manchouli.

Though they seemed to disapprove of any kind of printed matter "on principle" we were fortunate enough to have no personal papers with us. These would have made the sealing of any case containing them compulsory (the seal to remain intact till the Russian-Poland border be reached). As it was we were left with our books, in which we buried ourselves for the next seven days, coming out for an occasional meal, or for exercise on the platform of each station at which we stopped for any reasonable length of time.

Our home for the next seven days was a 6' x 6' compartment with the usual bunks, two on each side. Most of the baggage was stored on racks beside the upper berths and in a deep well over the ceiling of the corridor reached from the top berths. Two boxes of food stood under the wee table on which stood four Thermos and a bottle of the nectar of the gods, some Welch's Grape Juice treasured and made to provide cocktails before dinner and lunch each day.

Wouldn't you like to know what we ate? True it is that we had each provided ourselves with a few meal-tickets for train meals, but a sample of each of the two meals, tiffin and dinner, made us heartily

thankful we had brought some food. Jess and I were commissariat department. When meal-time came round we turned out the others and spread the table on one lower bunk, opened the necessary tins and then ringing the two-Thermos-lid gong, invited Meredith and Mrs. Smith to come and dine.

Our first formal dinner, on July 3rd, was:

Grape Juice Cocktail.

Chicken Soup.

Asparagus.

Sausages.

Blackberries with Cream, and

Coffee,

while for the previous day's tiffin we had had

Grape Juice Cocktail.

Tomato Juice.

Tongue and a Vegetable salad.

Pears with Cream, and

Coffee.

Obviously doing nothing all day, we couldn't continue to eat such large meals, and the menus were consequently brought more into the compass of our appetites.

The times at which we fed were very varied. For one thing, we had great difficulty in finding out what time it really was. On the Russian/Manchoukuo border we had had to put our clocks so that we caught the Russian train which left by Moscow time. We reached Manchouli at 12 so we thought, and at 2 o'clock after a very unsatisfactory hurried lunch with all the passengers trying to get served at once in the local pub's dining room, found ourselves sprinting for the S.A.M. train.

On the train itself time was "local" and as we passed from one big city to another we continued to alter watches by putting them back till on the sixth day we reached Moscow correctly by Moscow time. The hour for altering watches varied. We sometimes found ourselves breakfasting at eight and sometimes at ten, when we planned to do so at nine!

It was rather too bad for time to go backwards when we were on our ways home!

To get on to our journey. We had heard about the hot water one could get at the stations, so what must Jess and I do but leap out at the very first, complete with thermos and kettles. We had a long way to go for it and found only cold, cold water, from an artesian well I should think. Evidently we were a bit too clever. The hot water supply hadn't started.

After that false start, however, all was well. At each station a great boiler of really hot water was on tap. We soon learned to recognise the sign for hot water in spite of it's being in Russian capitals, curiously different in pronunciation from ours.

I suppose a diary ought to go by dates, but it's not so easy to keep each day's events separate and clear.

Our schedule from Cooks gave us one big station per 24 hours.

Leaving Otpur, the frontier town, on Thursday, we went on and on through grassy plain lands which might have been terribly monotonous if it hadn't been for the beautiful clouds and the sunset.

2nd By the Friday morning we had climbed into wooded fir country, a big change and most attractive with its log cabins, lumber camps and many wild flowers, among which I could spot willow

herb, poppies and lilies. This was the day when we ventured into the dining car for our dinner - fried steak and potatoes with orange as dessert.

3rd Having been promised views of Lake Baikal all the day before, we were glad to find ourselves by it on waking up next morning. Quite big steamers seem to run on it, but we didn't really get much idea of its size till we realised we'd been running by it all night.

Irkutak was our big station for to-day and the only event of great importance was the second shot at train food for tiffin, an awful experiment resulting in salt raw fish, last night's steak reappearing and quite fair ice-cream with punk coffee. The general opinion was that we could beat that and keep our tickets for a shampoo at Moscow. That the shampoo didn't result is a matter apart!

Other important events were that we had clean sheets, and I finished the two books on Hamlet by Dover Wilson. To the donors a hearty vote of thanks should go. They kept me quiet and happy for almost half the way!

4th By this time we had acquired some neighbours - two families with three children, very nice wee mites - most of the time. Our neighbours were Russian Military men, the upper "class" in a classless society. There was, however, a distinct difference between these and those travelling "hard"; The "soft" class was what we were in, and once we'd cleared out superfluous pillows, rugs, a ladder and a lamp was bearable. My chief criticism is the power of such thick cushions and manifold draperies to harbour dust, - and then we were in the class of those who didn't believe in opening windows, and the latter were consequently rusted into immobility. An open window would certainly have made a terrific difference to our comfort of mind and body.

To-day at Krasnoyarsk we crossed the Yenesei River running away to the Arctic. It was there we had our first casualty, a broken Thermos, broken after being filled, much to the little-hidden amusement of our very friendly coach-boy, a true friend to us, patiently explaining in German what we failed to get in Russian and even branching out occasionally into an English word, such as "Ich good-bye Moscow", in which words he told us he would leave us at Moscow before our last night on the train.

The 4th, evening found us at Novosibirsk, the capital of Siberia and recently brought to greater importance by the Turkestan-Siberian Railway which joins it with the Caspian Sea rich area.

5th Our worst fright came to-day when Meredith and Mrs. Smith nearly got left behind at OMSK. I was terribly disappointed we didn't go through Tomsk.

Dusty country, pasture land. Jess was rash enough to look out of the window and - well, we had to let her have dinner with us as water was short, but her face was pretty awful in its blackness.

We might have bought some jam here, but found a wee pot cost seven-and-sixpence. This false exchange for foreigners is curious. I don't really understand it. Why they don't encourage us to spend money I don't know.

6th The Ural mountains. We didn't get up at Sverdlovsk at midnight to buy Ural mountain gems, nor at the next stop at eight o'clock, for we had overslept, - Jess and I at any rate. The others got up for water.

At Perm to-day we got a good long walk and just got back in time to avoid a heavy storm which later struck a house in our view as we drew into the next station. Great excitement prevailed and local people had to decide whether to go and see it, or stay and see what they could of strange travellers in the bi-weekly train!

We're now in Europe and saw a sign or two in English at the next stop.

7th A taste of wild strawberries and the Moscow in an April shower. A great little guide took us down to the precious subway (and a good one too) and over to the hotel. Rotten food here, but we used our extra meal tickets for lemonade and later coffee.

A good tour round Moscow and an evening stroll with Jess when we found ourselves back at the Red Square at the time when we were due to leave the Hotel! All was well. We got back in ten minutes and were almost glad to be taken back to the train and our old "home" for one more night.

8th The Russian border at Niegoreloje, with a beautiful Customs house with "Workers of the World, Unite!" in every language. At Stolpce we changed into the European continental train. What luxurious carriages! "Eat before Warsaw" we had been told, so we went along for ham and eggs.

What a night! Jess and I slept above with suit-cases threatening us from every angle. Constant demands for tickets and passports meant a very disturbed night culminating in a request at 3 a.m., that we get out at the German frontier at Neu Bentsehen and declare the money in our possession. Jess and I did this, but failed to get the nice hot coffee we'd been promised on that station.

9th Berlin - and a hair wash. A beautiful city and too short a time spent there. Did a little shopping and found a quarter of the the Shanghai marks I'd received from the A.M.T. were bad or out-of-date.

Aboard the train for Hook of Holland with fruit that we longed to get at but which we had to wait to eat till the ladies with us (ladies with gloves) had gone to dinner.

11.30 p.m. - in pouring rain transferred to the boat. Fell into bed, too tired to wash, some of us.

10th 6 a.m. Harwich. England, British passports took us through Customs in no time.

7 a.m. Breakfast in train.

8.38. Arrived in Liverpool Street to see Ronald's welcome face on platform.

Mission House and

HOME

(a) Potrats - I'm unsure whether this is the name of family friends or possibly other students/missionaries/teachers attached to another mission in China - there appears to be a compound set up by someone of that name at Harbin so possibly friends from there? If anyone knows please tell me. JJB

Typed booklet style circular letter with handwritten note to Mother at back, no addressee

handwritten note to 'Look on page at back -'

Flat 4  
110 Tsong Chow Road  
Shanghai  
China  
(via Siberia)

February 14th 1939

Saint Valentine's Day seems a good day for me to begin to write a very long overdue letter to all of you. I'm not surprised to have received hints from several people that there's been little news from my part of the world since I came back, and I herewith offer all due apologies together with the hope that you won't quite give me up as a bad job. Your letters are very very welcome, which you don't need to be told, and I'll try to reply to them more promptly in future.

At long last I'm in a more or less permanent home. Since I came back I've lived in two other places, but both were three quarters of an hour from Mary Farnham School so that to get here, within a quarter of an hour's walk of the school, seems very convenient.

Two of us share this flat Miss Bain, who's on the Administrative Staff of the China Field, and I. We were mighty lucky to get it, for Shanghai's population is very much greater now than it is in normal times and accommodation is very hard to find.

We have a good sized sitting room, 20' by 15', and off it an alcove, 10' by 12', which is the bedroom. This has a glorious built-in wardrobe and serves as a dressing room for both of us though I actually sleep in the dining-cum-sitting room on a bed that folds up to make a settee and really does not look like a bed at all. Our spare bedroom is the verandah and we have too a jolly nice bathroom and a kitchen with an electric stove. The flat is one of a block that has been built only three or four years, and it has a delightful situation overlooking a big private park belonging to the Haroons one of the very rich families in Shanghai, who made a fortune out of real estate investments some years ago. Just below us, (we're on the second storey) is our own garden a Chinese style one with rocks, crazy pavement and a little hill with a curved-roofed "ding-tz" on top. Above us is an extensive flat roof which we'll use more later on.

We take turns in housekeeping and in training the domestic staff, a wee Chinese amah who cooks, cleans, washes and mends for us and would probably 'valet' us too if we but said the word. She's a cheery little person, with a little English but she can neither read nor write. I've started trying to teach her to write figures for keeping accounts, but her fingers find it hard to control a pencil.

There's our home life in brief. Will you come and visit us? We can put you up easily!

We are very comfortable here, but now we'll leave the flat and go to Mary Farnham School. You probably realise that our school is in refugee quarters, like so many other schools these days. Shanghai always has been an interesting place, with its 'internationalness', but now it's a doubly wonderful place. It stands like a small island in a sea of desolation and has thousands of refugee people in its 16 square miles. Particularly it has hundreds of refugee schools from other parts of East China, for though medical and to a certain extent evangelistic work has been able to begin again in some of the big cities round,

schools certainly cannot opinion occupied territory where they would have to conform with Japanese regulations, if indeed they were allowed to open at all.

Our own school has its full enrolment of over nine hundred pupils, and we really could have more, if we felt we could accommodate them. Most of the girls are pretty serious about their studies and feel they have a definite relationship to the China of the future, the China that is to rise Phoenix like from the ashes of this conflict. Nearly everyone contributes to a thrift club with the result that they have between two and three hundred dollars each month to send to help care for wounded soldiers, to support some of the relief work among refugees in Shanghai, or to back up some Government plan of relief. The money they give is not easily obtained. It comes from saved bus fares, and we hope from some kind of self-denial among the great number of attractions that are to be found in Shanghai.

It seems strange to me to be living right in the middle of Shanghai after spending the whole of my first period in China in the old native city. Then I didn't come into Shanghai so often, but now I'm here right in the International Settlement and indeed am learning to know my way about it very well, for, besides teaching at Mary Farnham School I've been teaching in the two London Mission primary schools, in the Lester Hospital and in another school whose labs we have had to borrow as we had none in our refugee quarters. Long ago I hankered to be a peripatetic member of a school staff, but the last term's experiences of travelling hither and yon have about cured me of that ambition!

Out in the native city at South Gate the buildings of Mary Farnham school stand undamaged in a sea of destroyed homes. They were occupied for a short while by the Japanese, and plentiful signs of occupation can be seen in scribblings on the wall and broken doors and window frames, but they are now empty and waiting for us.

Meanwhile we have these refugee quarters in the settlement and we are making ourselves pretty comfortable there. Eight classrooms have been made out of the rooms in a big old house, the bathrooms of which have been most natively converted into offices for the principal and the dean, and now we have five more classrooms in a wooden hut in the garden, and one in a greenhouse! This coming term we are very bucked to be having our own laboratory in the school building. It will be much better than going off to the other end of Shanghai as we've had to do to work in a borrowed lab. The lab's been fitted with water and gas, a luxury which we had to do without in our old buildings at South Gate, well equipped as they were.

One cannot claim that school life is exactly normal. These temporary premises have to accommodate 946 pupils and this can only be done by having two different sessions each of nearly five hours, one being for senior girls and one for the juniors. It means that physical training has had to be cut out, and there is a bare minimum of singing and music teaching, but otherwise we seem fairly well up to standard academically.

The school Y.W.C.A. has been flourishing and hardworking this year. It's been the joy of our hearts, for we were a bit worried that we get so little chance to see the girls except in the classrooms now that we have no boarders and that, after nearly five solid hours of class work, the girls can think of little more when the bell goes at the end of the morning than that they want to get home to their lunches! However, on certain days the Y.W.C.A. has arranged a snack lunch, when we've had a bowl of mien or a couple of buns (expenditure being strictly limited to 10 cents, a head) and after this communal meal we've held our meetings which have taken a great variety of forms, discussion of patriotic and spiritual problems (which not infrequently overlap), talks on work among refugees in other parts of China and other subjects, games in the garden and organisation of groups for service, chiefly among the children in some of the many refugee camps in present day Shanghai.

If you want to visit one, come with me as I go off on a Sunday morning. It's to a camp run for three or four hundred orphan children in a great old Chinese house. It's true they get a roof over their heads

and food, but they are sad little mortals that we see there each week, for the light barely penetrates to the courtyard where they spend all their time and it's heartening to see how they seem to look forward to our weekly visit when the girls and boys who have volunteered for this piece of service go in to tell them stories, teach them songs and play games with them. You should have seen us at Christmas time too. These little mites put on their own version of the Christmas story and the special programme for Christmas Day ended with the distribution of precious handkerchiefs, socks and sweets paid for by a collection taken by the Y.W.C.A. at our school Christmas programme.

Yes; in spite of not having a school hall we did manage to have a Christmas programme. The Y.W.C.A. has always used the Church Festival times to show the rest of the school what the days means to them and by borrowing a hall we were able this year to do the same as in the good old days. We had a pretty ambitious programme with three plays. One required the appearance of a vision at the back of the stage which vision was to fade into a scene upstairs to the scene on the stage itself. We were quite pleased with ourselves for being able to get this by means of a flood lighted scene arranged on a table behind a curtain of net, which curtain provided a screen for the vision which was projected on to it by a lantern as the flood lighting on the other scene went off. (Comprenez-vous?!)

This letter isn't really complete without my going very quickly over several months of past history. I'd really really like to tell you lots about the journey back to China and how different everything seemed to be in the Shanghai that I came to last autumn. I'm almost used to it now, which may be a bad thing!, but to see so much trouble as exemplified by the crowds and crowds of refugees on the streets everywhere, by the ruins of homes out in the native city at South Gate, and the wretched conditions under which those who have gone back there are living in the little homes they've built up out of scraps from their old homes, is truly difficult, and one almost has to develop an exterior 'usedness' to seeing it.

The wonder is that people are able to carry on and even cheerfully under conditions that would knock many of us over quite. Take for instance Medhurst Girl's school. They have one floor of a house, which had a large double room with a verandah, and a kitchen in an outhouse. Miss Loh has walled in the verandah, boarded the floor of the kitchen and removed its stove and sink, etc, and now for the coming term has knocked a passage way wall down to make a considerably bigger classroom out of one of the double ones and has likewise boarded an outside passage way and fitted it with canvas screens that will roll up in fine weather and roll down for wet or wind. Hey Presto - there we have our needed five classrooms! By these means the school carries on its tradition of providing a truly Christian education for some 150 of Shanghai's youthful population. Miss Loh, the Principal, is a great little lady. You can't beat a spirit like hers - but she occasionally loses heart and one of our jobs it to help by backing up efforts like hers and helping over such difficult times.

To tell you something about the journey back to China I might really copy out a long letter that I wrote to all of you last October and which never got sent! It's a bit long however. You'll have to do with those incidents that just now, six months later, stand out in my memory especially clearly. The journey was a wonderful experience and provides many happy memories, but it almost seems now to belong to another existence.

We crossed the Atlantic by the Europa - By 'we' I mean the little Chinese lady, Miss Lieu, whom some of you met, Miss Hutley from Tingchow, and myself. The Europa was a beautiful boat and as steady as a rock.

Then came New York, and I haven't got over the thrill of being there yet. It was wonderful. It's so absolutely different from any other city in the world - says she grandiloquently - and it doesn't pretend to be or try to be the same. I loved all those great building that give you the Manhattan skyline as you go into the harbour and the numbered streets and the traffic and every thing.

Several things I did in New York are still very clear memories. One is having supper in the Empire State Building 81 floors above the street. We went up just before dusk and enjoyed sunset and the lighting up of a fairy city below us. It really baffles feeble description but picture what it must have been like with a mist covering these glow worm lamps and softening them while here and there were wee lighted cars streaking up the fairy aisles and coloured lights flashing on and off.

Another memory of this same Empire State building is of making a gramophone record of my voice. One stood in an all too public room and spoke into a machine for three minutes. Then a record fell out and one was supposed to hear from it all one had said. What with being shy of hearing one's own voice and afflicted with an attack of the giggles the result is far from attractive. I'd like to try again.

Another red letter event of the New York three days was a visit to the Planetarium. That was worth doing indeed. One went into this building where were all sorts of educational exhibits that didn't hold one's attention and then into a room to wait. Suddenly we noticed that the ceiling had a wonderful system of planets rotating round a central sun on circles of appropriate sizes, and by the time we had appreciated the wonder of that it was time to go on to the next thing. We trooped into a large circular room and as we sat music began to play and the light to fade till we sat in darkness.

Suddenly the whole ceiling was filled with stars and after a moment's involuntary murmur we watched these same stars move in the heavens at the will of a voice that talked of some of the wonders we were looking at. It really was an event to go there.

After New York came a day in Philadelphia where I saw some of the bits of historic America, the Liberty Bell, the Declaration of Independence, Betsy Ross' house (who of you knows who she was?) and Benjamin Franklins's grave. It was an awfully hot day for sightseeing. That's my chief memory of it!

Back again to New York for the night and then off to Bath where I stayed with Miss Hille of Shanghai. We set off back to China together after three enjoyable days when I actually slept in the same house for three nights running. Oh no I didn't either, for we spent one night down at the lakeside where Miss Hille's brother had a cottage and where her 'husky' little nephew took me rowing and swimming.

If you've been trying to follow my way on a map you'll have a hard time finding Bath, for it's a wee place. It's not far from Buffalo, a railway junction, and it's in the Lake District of New York State. (Such nice warm water their lakes have!)

At anyrate from there you can follow us to Niagara Falls and Toronto. We got to the falls so late one night that we decided to sleep there though we hadn't any of our things with us. I'm so glad we did for the falls at night disappointed me with their garishness and the way factories using power thence came right up to the edge of the falls. In the very early morning, about five to five thirty when we had to leave, everything looked far softer and more beautiful.

On we went to Toronto and there we were lucky enough to find a friend whom I had met in England a few weeks before. She certainly gave to us return for any kindness that may have been done to her in England, for we went to her home and later saw round the city and its outskirts, and, in spite of a tyre that went flat right in one of the busiest places, got to the station in time for our trans-continental train. It's just as well we did so for it was the last train that we could take to catch the boat we hoped to get across the Pacific! The Empress of Asia was not nearly such a beautiful boat as the Europa, but owing to a specially large influx of 2nd class passengers some of these had to be accommodated in the first class cabins, and we were among those who were. We ate with our fellow 2nd-class mates and weren't supposed to be seen much up above, but it was good to have a cabin on A deck where you can have your porthole open all the time. When we ran into vaccination time and time for cholera injections, both of which we found we must have before we might be allowed to land in Shanghai we found to our dismay

that taking the number of our cabin the doctor was charging us first class fees! However he halved them later when we explained we were only up there on sufferance.

Another beautiful crossing brought us to Shanghai, with a very brief set of visits to three ports in Japan. We didn't have very long in any one place and didn't feel like doing more than walk some little way into the cities visiting museums etc., so there wasn't much we could see of differences due to the war. True, buses were few and patriotic parades many, but menfolk seemed as many as ever and everyone looked well and happy. It is apparently true that the people of Japan are not told the truth of what is happening here. They have been taught that this is a holy war waged on behalf of China, and they seem to send off their men folk in that spirit. Apparently the officials were so confident that the fall of the cities of Hankow and Canton would mean the end of the war that the celebrations in Japan herself were called celebrations of the end of the war. What explanation for the continuation of fighting was given I don't know.

We felt some of the tenseness here in Shanghai when war came so near to Europe. Opinions are divided as to the ultimate good to be expected from Munich and other negotiations.

The papers I see from England are delightfully and refreshingly varied in their comments. It's fun to read the Christian World and then the New Statesman and Nation on the same events - I'm not telling you which I agree with!

And now to come back to Shanghai. We're just now having China New Year holidays. At the end of this week a new term's work begins and for the next five months I'll be back in the midst of classes here and there, refugee work, work and play with girls of many kinds and sizes - and all the routine (if you can call that routine which is ever changing its conditions!) of life here.

Lots of love to each and all of you,

Vera.

Hand-written note on last (blank) page of leaflet letter.

Dear Mums

I hope this isn't all stale news - and yet I hope I've kept you at least informed of most events!

This last week Master Shepherd arrived. He's an optimist if he hopes to get past Hankow, for there are only Japanese boats allowed up the Yangtse and passenger boats are very scarce.

This is the long delayed circular letter. I'm sending it hence. Thank you.

May I have a photo of Granny and her new grand-daughter, please.

Vera

NB Looking on the MacKeith family tree, the new grand-daughter is most probably Kaye's eldest daughter Jacqueline, b.10/2/39 - presumably the news of her arrival must have been sent by telegram to Vera?

Typewritten 'booklet' style general letter - no addressee or signature

4/110 Tsong Chow Rd  
Shanghai  
China

September 5th, 1939

Just back from a holiday in Tsingtao I settled down to write a long letter to all of you when the thunderbolt of war fell. In spite of it I think it best to carry on as I had meant to and tell you something of the last six months' doings.

The most recent of the time was spent in 'The Pines', Tsingtao. Does that not sound a pleasant address and distinctly holidays, reminding you of the old unspoiled Sandbanks near Bournemouth or some such place? Indeed it was not unlike that, for we were in a little house right on the edge of the cliff in a cool pinewood with nothing but miles of sea before us.

Holiday time is always letter writing time and most of us disappeared after breakfast each day to follow our thoughts as they winged their way to various corners of Great Britain with something rather more concrete in the way of a note. It was not an easy matter to get on with writing, for sitting there in the 'ding-ts' I couldn't keep my eyes from wandering out to sea and watching the boats as they passed - steamships heading south for Shanghai or north to Dairen, gunboats, British, American and Japanese leaving for or returning from manoeuvres, fishing junks with their great rectangular sails and the more daintily built yachts from the Tsingtao yacht club. I do like the sea and ships. One of the best things about living in Shanghai is that you feel near the sea and because of the boats you seem to be in quite close touch with home.

Tsingtao was once a German port, but now the population of Tsingtao is very largely Japanese. At least you seem to seem more of them than other peoples. Commercially they have a very strong hold and the place is likewise under their military control. Tsingtao has lovely beaches and has become a very popular seaside place, the nearest to Shanghai, 27 hours by boat away. Out at the Huk, as our section was called, we were quite peaceful, but an influence was felt as soon as we moved out of a certain restricted area. To come back to Shanghai, for instance, a pass in triplicate had to be obtained and stamped by the consular and naval authorities, and to get the stamping done it was necessary to wait for an hour or two in a queue. Then again when we went out for a trip to the Lao Shan mountains we had to have a pass to show to military posts along the road, and we held our breaths each time least for some fooling reason the pass should be considered as not in order and we be stopped.

All these things didn't prevent us having a right royal time. There were twenty of us, including eight children, in our two houses, and Tsingtao is a grand place for them. We had picnics, cooking our supper on the rocks just below the houses, or right out on the Huk rocks when we claimed to be shipwrecked mariners, (but rather of the Swiss Family Robinson type).

In the house were several missionaries from Shantung who were out of their stations indefinitely owing to anti-British movements in various cities in China. In some cases one or two of the men had been able to stay behind; in others the property and work had been handed over, nominally, to Americans but in still others everyone had to clear out in order to safeguard the lives of Chinese christians. You probably have had details of this situation which I would rather not expand upon here. By a curious shift in international relationships this phase of anti-British feeling seems to be passing. Certainly conditions change so rapidly these days that one cannot keep up-to-date when there's as little even as four weeks between writing a letter and its reception.

We in Shanghai are fortunate that we have jobs that have been comparatively little interfered with. The last school year finished up at the end of June with the usual examinations, reports, etc., and it looks at the moment as though this coming school year we will be running in much the same way but with an even fuller enrolment, for 500 children took the entrance exams and our doors that were open to 50 new students have had to be forced to receive a hundred by the creation of a fourth 1st-year class. Of course they want to come to us because we are a fine school (!), but it's true too that almost every school in Shanghai, and there are 200 secondary schools, is full because of the enormous student population of the city.

A lot of them might be called refugees. They have come here from East China and are living with relatives or friends. In consequence of this, very many Chinese homes are fearfully overcrowded. One doesn't hear much of complaint about it, but it does come out now and again when we find how difficult certain girls are finding it to do their homework where six a dozen people are sharing one or two rooms. It is the others, the poorer refugees, who make the streets so fearfully crowded and so hauntingly sad. The refugee problem, complicated by the presence of 20,000 Jewish refugees, who can but compete for a living in an already overcrowded white-Russian labour market, appals one. But here again conditions are changing. Prices in Shanghai have gone up so fearfully that crowds of refugees are being forced out to find their way to north Kiangsu where, this year's harvest having been a good one they will at least be able to get a possible sufficiency of rice to live. They'll be living in an 'occupied area' where they will be at the mercy of Japanese demands for labour, paid, maybe, something in the new 'false' currency, and at the same time will be liable for the afore said currency forcibly removed by 'loyalists' who will scorn them for having accepted it. Even though some go, there will still be thousands left here in Shanghai. Do you wonder that I feel I can truly say that never before have I so appreciated a change as I have just had from 'dear, dirty Shanghai' and its problems to the clear, cleanness of Tsingtao?

Plans for leaving Tsingtao were complicated by irregularities of shipping, due to tiresome regulations laid down in the last few months. When I did get a date for departure, lo, we had to wait two days for a typhoon! I'm glad we did wait, for even the 'tail' of the typhoon proved quite bad enough. For the first time in my life I felt rotten because of the sea. It was pride having a fall, for I had insisted on going down to dinner an hour after we left and there hadn't been any time for me to get sea-legs. The typhoon hit Tsingtao fair and square. Trees and electricity standards were blown down and the accompanying high tides washed the bund away in several places, and the road itself in one. It roared around our house all night, lifted off tiles and revealed weak spots in no uncertain fashion. Some of us went walking in bathing dresses and mackintoshes to see the seas and a famous blowhole that gave a good spout of eighty odd feet. July and August are always the typhoon months. One good thing about them is that they give a spell of cool weather. Because of three that passed near Shanghai in July we had a cool month then, luckily for those of us staying here. One came the day of our entrance exams, and necessitated emergency plans for providing food for the 500 entrants who couldn't possibly have gone home and come back in the afternoon. When they did get away they had to wade through water 9 or 10 inches deep along the lane that leads from our school to the main road.

July was a holiday month as far as school was concerned, but I stayed in Shanghai because in the long summer holidays the girls like to organise and work in a Street-children's School. They have done it for many years now, formerly in our own buildings out at South Gate. This year they decided to run two schools in two parts of Shanghai. They elected a Head and a Dean for each, arranged a day of normal training, distributed invitations on the streets around the schools, fixed on a day for the enrolling of pupils and then got on with the actual teaching for six weeks of their holidays. Two of us staff were supposed to hover round giving advice or coping with emergencies. I enjoyed being around a heap, though there wasn't much to do in a strictly official capacity. It was quite an eye-opener to see some of the girls in action. Some of the meekest turned out to be very strict, and I wonder whom some of them were copying in the tricks they used for getting order. Little street arabs aren't easy to handle.

Would you like to hear of some of these girls?

Waung Kyi-zu was in my Bible class last year. After the beginning of the term she came one day and told about trouble there was in her home where her brother and mother didn't get on very well "Could she do something about it?" "Would following up a feeling she had of wanting to be a christian make here able to help them?" Kyi-zu came each morning to our tiny attic prayer-room and after some time said she was sure now of Jesus and His way of life for He had helped her. Since then she has become a church member and is ever ready to share her experience and to do any piece of service.

Ong S-yui is head of the Y.W.C.A. committee that has to arrange service projects in refugee camps etc. She's a very faithful helper in one of the worst camps we go to, where the girls have had stones thrown at them and where the authorities don't bother to help us at all but rather try to find excuses why we shouldn't come. She talks a rather alarming kind of gospel and her discipline is of the same rather 'fear-ful' type but she loves to do things for the children.

Zien Hyien-zung is a jewel of a helper. She's got a real aptitude for dealing with small children, and, though she has finished her high-school education, she has agreed to go back two years to join a normal class for kindergarten teachers to get the training she wants as she can't find any college standard of normal training in Shanghai at this time. In China to do a thing like that is to 'lose face' but she's stood the teasing of her school-mates very well.

Hyui Wei-tsung is another capable worker. In the summer school she took the bigger children and what is more she roped in her brother for taking drill and games.

Tsang Mei-mei, the littlest helper, I found in the summer school kindergarten one day telling stories to a spell-bound audience. She wasn't even a pupil in our school then but had taken the entrance exam. and "hoped she'd be able to get to Mary Farnham School and help with things like this". You'll be glad to hear she did get in!

As for the mites who come to the school. They are a bit wild but quite keen and lovable. Two tiny tots were brought by their mother who said she couldn't read herself but she'd done what she could for them by learning a few characters each night from her husband and teaching them to the children next day. They remembered them though she didn't.

Some of the girls who are keen on 'first aid' ran a clinic in the summer school and treated eyes, sores and bruises in a most business like manner.

And now here we are at the beginning of a new term and, in spite of a feeling that we never know what may happen next in a world where nations seem constantly to be changing their attitudes, we are making all sorts of plans for the near future. One big one followed a discussion as to whether we couldn't one again have our own student Sunday morning service organised by and for our girls and the boys of our 'brother' school. We decided in the end it would be duplicating services in a small area and so we have gone in with another school and use a hall near our school for the services and our school buildings for Sunday school and Bible classes of various kinds. Since we refueed from our own big buildings this is the first time that we've been able to get a really flourishing Sunday programme going. We are very glad and hope for great things from it.

For ourselves, Miss Bain and I still enjoy our wee flat and have had a lot of fun furnishing it - We each own a bed and a dressing-table while the other things belong to one or the other of us. On the wee verandah we have pots of mint and of parsley, our vegetable garden, and several pots of greenery and a few of flowers. Being as near to the school as I am is a very great convenience and it's possible to have teachers and girls in to meet and to play games. They're keen on guessing games like "black magic". Has "Pick-up-sticks" become a craze yet with you? It has here. It's "spillikins" in a new guise.

Miss Bain is now working with an American Society, taking over responsibility while their treasurer is away. We both are therefore “tarred” with an American brush, but they’ll have a job to change her Paisley speech, and I still struggle not to take on too nasal a tone!

Though I haven’t said it you know how much and how persistently I wish I could do something worthwhile for you all at this time. Meanwhile let me finish with a prayer the peace may be *in* you all.

With love in full measure

August 1940 (9th - 14th) Korean Holiday

Typewritten (good carbon copy?) on thin copy/airmail paper (in some parts of this there were very long (pages) paragraphs and I have taken the liberty of breaking it down to smaller paragraphs in places)

A hike in the Diamond Mountains  
August 9th - 14th, 1940

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It had been drizzling and dull in the afternoon, but in high hopes we set out from Whachinpo Beach at 7 p.m. "WE" were Euline Smith, American Methodist Mission in Korea and who was going to start us on our journey, Pearle McCain and Susie Mayes of the same Mission from Shanghai and who were going with Smith, Ada Lyall English Methodist Mission, Wutingfu Shantung, Hester Stewart, Irish Presbyterian Mission, Kirin, Manchuria, Anne and me. We and all our bundles were duly packed into the motor boat for the journey across the lake, then the half mile walk from the lakeside through the village of Kennai to the Station.

The done thing is to travel 3rd class on the Railway, so we duly purchased our tickets to Tetsugen (Japanese name) or Cholwan (Korean name). We were nicely settled in a compartment not too crowded but we found that this carriage branched off on a different line at Ampen, so had to change to the through coach. This was very crowded and some of us had to sit three on a seat meant for two. Four boys returning to school at Seoul crowded up and made room for Miss Smith and me beside them. They were very interested in us and as Miss Smith could talk their language, they asked us all sorts of questions as is the custom. Then we had a copy of "Time" and they were anxious to try and read the English words, but their knowledge of English was very scanty. At one station an older man came in and took the seat of one of the boys. He also had to ask many even more personal questions than the boys. At one point I saw his eyes nearly popping out of his head and as he was looking at me, I asked what it was all about. He had said to Miss Smith that he couldn't tell the age of foreigners very well but was I nineteen. She replied that she didn't know my age as we foreigners didn't ask each other such questions, but she thought I would be about thirty - then it was I had seen the great look of surprise. At each station along the line more people boarded the train until our carriage was simply mobbed, half as many standing as sitting, and in this uncomfortable manner we had to settle to spend the night. I dozed once or twice, but Anne, who was now beside me having changed places with Miss Smith, didn't shut an eye all the way. It was a most uncomfortable journey, the worst I have ever experienced, and the atmosphere got viler and viler, so that we were much relieved when we reached Tetsugen at 5.30 a.m. It looked quite a bigish place and has a population of 12,000. Whilst we were waiting for the bus to take us to Miss Smith's home, a great many children began to gather in the square. We wondered what was going to happen. It must have been a school as about 6 a.m. what looked like the teacher arrived and after lining the children up began to give them physical exercises. Our bus left them stretching, bending just much the same type of exercises taught in schools at home. We saw other groups of children thus occupied along the route. We were indeed glad to reach Miss Smith's house which she said was elastic. Anyhow, we each had a bed and a good two hours sleep. When we came down to breakfast Miss Smith intimated that we had to report at the Police Station (we had already been questioned by the Police at the Railway Station) before proceeding on our way. However, whilst we were eating, one of their representatives arrived and after questioning each one very politely, went away seemingly satisfied. We therefore didn't need to go to the police station.

The journey by electric train from Tetsugen to Choanji gave us our first sight of what the Diamond Mountains looked like in reality. Up the train would climb, zig zagging up the mountain side, overlooking a lovely valley, well wooded and through a tunnel and zig zagging down the other side where a shallow broad river ran over and around the pebbles glistening in the sunlight. Bits of this river reminded me of the Dee just below Braemar. This was a most enjoyable train run and the laying of the track must have been quite a feat of engineering. We ate our lunch, which we had brought with us, on the train.

At the station we called a "Jiggy" man (i.e. a man who carries luggage which is piled on a sort of triangular wooden contraption strapped on to his back) who took most of our luggage. Then we went to find a place to stay the night. Miss Smith took us to a Korean Inn she knew and they said they could give us two rooms. So we left our bundles, telling them we wanted Sukyaki at 7 p.m. and went off to see the sights.

Choanji lies 600 ft. above sea level and it seems to be surrounded on all sides by mountains and precipitous cliffs. Our walk took us along the banks of a river, I think the same one we had seen from the train, but here it is narrower with many huge boulders, which means that in places the water narrows between the boulders and then forms a deep pool beyond. We followed this river for a bit, then a path through a wood and back again to the river which we crossed and a little further on came to one of the sights of Choanji - Mirror Rock or Meikyodai. This is a gigantic rock, maybe about 500 ft. high standing on end and the surface facing is flat and shiny. It is said to resemble the great mirror in the judgement hall of the King of Hell. There is an interesting legend about this place and the precipitous rocks all around are associated with it and called after various places in Hell. All supposed by be first hand information from some man very many years ago who went to Hell by mistake so was sent back to earth and when he visited this place he recognised it and gave the various rocks names according to memory. On the way back to the hotel we visited the Temple which was founded in the fifth century. It is the largest in Inner Kongo and beautifully situated amidst tall trees, by the side of the river, surrounded by mountains.

We were all ready for and enjoyed our Sukayaki (a certain kind of Japanese food) which we cooked ourselves and ate sitting on a verandah overlooking a stream. Sukiyaki consists of meat and vegetables all cooked together in one pan with eggs put in just before eating. This, of course, is eaten with rice. The hotel was very primitive so we washed in the stream. The Koreans follow the same custom as the Japanese in that no one wears shoes inside the house, but leaves them at the door on entering. We did not have what one would call a particularly comfortable night. Being a Korean hotel, we had to sleep Korean style on the floor with only a thin quilt under us, then the flues of the kitchen fire in a Korean house run under the rooms which is very nice in the winter, but we didn't appreciate the heat on an August night. The floor was so hot that one could scarcely stand on it, so it was as well for us that it was a cool night. In the morning we cooked our own breakfast and ate again on the verandah. Miss Smith had brought with her ham, eggs, bread, butter etc. and we even made toast. She had also brought bread, tomatoes etc. for making sandwiches for our lunch, so we had a busy hour, some cooking breakfast, and some preparing the tiffin. In spite of the uncomfortable night, we all ate a hearty breakfast. Then Miss Smith arranged with the hotel keeper to engage a "jiggy" man to carry our bags through the mountains and we also decided to have a chair with us in case someone would get overtired or sprain an ankle or something. This chair was an ordinary basket chair mounted on two bamboo poles with a man at each end and there was a third man to relieve. By 8 a.m. we had all our arrangements completed and started on the road. I felt very weary at first after our two uncomfortable nights, but it wasn't long until the air and the beauty of the surroundings began to take effect, filling me with energy.

Soon we had left Choanji behind, crossing the river by a red painted bridge and passing the Temple again. The path for some time was along the side of the river and sometimes we seemed to climb away from it then down again. It was a lovely fresh sunshiny morning and everything looked very beautiful. Inner Kongo has of course marvellous scenery, but here more than in Outer Kongo there seems to be more of the works of man to be viewed and we had a most interesting morning. Firstly there was the

Monk's graveyard, where there were a number of sort of stone urns. We were told that one small bone is taken from the body and placed in the urn along with the ashes. Nearby was Sambutsugan or Three Buddha rock. This large rock stands on the pathway along the side of the stream and it has three large images of Buddha carved on one side and sixty small images on the other side. The legend goes that at one time there was a Monk and a Scholar, rivals who grew to hate each other. They challenged each other to a trial of skill and the vanquished was to commit suicide. It was agreed that the work of the three large images carved by the monk was superior to that of the small images done by the scholar, so the latter is supposed to have ended his life by throwing himself into a pool lower down called "Wailing Pool" which no doubt we passed but didn't notice as we did not know the story at the time. A little further on we came to another temple called Hyokunji, also very old having been founded in 677 A.D. I noticed particularly that all these temples in the mountains were beautifully situated commanding a wide expanse of view of the surrounding countryside.

From this temple we did a little detour going away from the main path up a very steep hill, climbing very many steps, to visit another temple called Seiyoji. The special interest at this temple was the view. From here we could see a whole range of jagged peaks of high mountains and there were some also which we could not distinguish very clearly because of the mist. However, the view we did get thrilled us all and here we saw a very interesting device for picking out which peak was which. On a raised wooden platform was placed a lot of little wooden cones, some tall that others. Each represented a mountain and was marked with the name of the mountain and its height. A piece of thread was suspended from above to the middle of the platform and you simply got the thread, cone and mountain in the same line of vision, and then you knew which peak you were looking at, or you did if you could read the characters. This little detour took about 1 1/2 hours.

After quenching our thirst from the spring at the temple at the foot of the hill, we again crossed the stream and wended our way through some lovely wooded paths, glad of the shade the trees gave, till we came to another huge rock with a very picturesque waterfall. This marked the entrance to Bambakudo or Ten Thousand Waterfall Valley. Here we rested for a time on a great flat stone. Above us on the cliffside we could see Futokkutsu or Hanging Temple and it well deserves its name. Part of the building rests on the shelf of the cliff and the other half overhangs and is supported by one pillar resting on a part of the cliff lower down. We did not climb up to this temple as the way up seemed to be almost perpendicular and some of us felt we had to conserve our energies for the real climb up Mt. Biroho, the summit of which was our objective for that day. We then wended our way through this very beautiful valley and although I don't suppose there were anything like Ten Thousand Waterfalls, there certainly were many. The huge rocks and the sparkling cascades of water with the steep mountains and beautiful trees all around made a sight which will remain in my memory for many a day. Our next halting place was at Maka-en or Polished Speech Temple. We sat here awhile just admiring the beauty of the surroundings, then one of the monks brought out a package containing seven books which a monk at one time had written with his blood by pricking his finger. He also brought out another set of 20 books written by another monk, this time in Chinese ink but the penmanship was perfect.

Just a little way from this temple we halted for tiffin under the shadow of a huge flat faced cliff with an image of Buddha carved on it. This image itself is more than fifty feet high and about thirty feet wide. We had just chosen a nice flat rock for a table when from under it crawled a snake, not a very big one it's true, but nevertheless it gave us a thrill and we didn't use that rock for our table. This was also the parting of the ways, the American girls returning to Choanji and Hester, Ada, Anne and I continuing through the mountains. Our tiffin and parting was hurried on a bit as the sun had disappeared and there was a spit of rain in the air. However with many expressions of thanks to Miss Smith for her kindness and valuable assistance in setting us on our way, we started off on our own with the three chairmen and the jiggyman whom Miss Smith had told where we wanted to go.

Very soon we realised we had started on our climb, though for fully an hour longer we still followed a pathway through trees and along the side of the stream. The rain kept away but we could see the

clouds gathering nearer and nearer, and the mountain peaks gradually disappearing and sometimes re-appearing, so we pressed on to try and avoid getting wet. After passing a huge rock standing on its end called, I think, Tiger Rock, we turned into a ravine between Mt. Biroho and Mt. Eiroho, where it looked that at one time there had been a landslide or maybe a very full fast flowing stream. However, now it was practically dry and here started our real climb. First there was the golden staircase, a pathway of steps made by rocks of what could have been called golden colour, hence I presume the name. The next lap was the silver staircase and the steps here were of a granite rock of a different shade and could be called silver colour. I'm sure it would not have been possible for us to climb this way but for the steps. It was very precipitous and each step one took meant an ascent of 12 to 18 inches. This was really the only trying bit of the climb and we were glad the sun was not shining as there was no shade here and the rocks would have been hot.

Still we wound on, round and round all the time ascending and trying to reach the top before the mists closed in on us. Sometimes we could see the summit of Eiroho which is only about 100 feet lower than Biroho. Just as the mist seemed to reach us we came to the top, as we thought, but soon realised that it was the parting of the ways, one for the summit of Eiroho and the other for Biroho. The mists became so thick that our main thought now was to reach our halting place for the night, Kume Hutte, a Japanese Inn near the top of the mountain.

One thing I noticed specially at this point was the profusion of wild flowers. They were very beautiful and some quite new to me. It was surprising to me to see flowers growing at such an altitude, as at home the mountains, though not so high, are quite bare. The rest of the way was not much of a climb, just a pathway along the ridge of the mountain and very soon we reached the top, but could not see further than a few yards in front. There was a little shop at the top, so we went in and bought some picture post cards just to pass the time until our men would make up on us. We had gone on in front at the staircases. Still they didn't come but we managed to make the shopman understand that we wanted the hotel and he pointed us down the hill on the other side. It was quite a way down and one of the men came after us all puffing and blowing and seemed a bit anxious as there had been a short cut which they had taken and had expected us also to take it.

When we arrived at the hotel, about 3.30 p.m. the other three men had already arrived. The mists were now so thick that we were glad to get indoors. The Hotel was a very large wooden hut, said to have accommodation for 100 hikers, but quite evidently only meant for people staying only over night. We had them give us some tea and ate some of the buns we had with us. The room we were given to sleep in was large enough for the four of us to stretch ourselves out in a row on the floor. A blanket covered the floor and there was one folded up and a little hard round Japanese pillow for each of us. The blankets looked none too clean but one couldn't be choosing at the top of a mountain, so no one grumbled. We took the opportunity of the time to spare before supper to write some post cards. We all did enjoy our Japanese supper, mostly rice and vegetables. The rain had ceased, so Anne and I went a little way up the hill before darkness fell. The Japanese were all having a bath and much as we wanted one felt we should refrain, as it was, I expect, Japanese style, all in one tub. However, we managed to get some nice hot water and had a good wash. Then off to bed as we wanted to get up to see the sunrise. I slept almost as soon as I lay down, but others were not so fortunate. Ada is used to sleeping in Chinese Inns which are renowned for their live stock. She had decided that this place was similar and lay down in her waterproof. She woke us up hunting for fleas, but whether there were any or not is doubtful as there was no trace of any in the morning. For myself I slept like a top and was too sleepy to be kept awake by the thought that I would have preferred to be between nice clean sheets rather than the dirty looking blanket which had no doubt been used by dozens of people before me. Hester, Anne and I rose at 4.20 a.m. climbed up the hill by starlight, watched the dawn appearing as we climbed.

It was a beautiful sunrise and well worth the effort made to see it. Firstly everything below was covered in mist, the stars shining brightly above, and the streak of rosy dawn on the horizon. As it grew lighter the mists gradually rolled away and it was interesting trying to distinguish things. For quite a while

we were not sure whether or not it was the sea we were looking at - we hadn't expected it to be so near. Many more people began to join us until there would be about forty of us by the time the sun made its appearance. The rising of the sun was a wonderful sight which I couldn't attempt to describe. I had expected to see many Japanese doing sun worship, but although some took off their hats, I saw only one clapping his hands and bowing. Maybe the majority were Koreans. We were the only foreigners. We were feeling a bit peckish so bought apples and buns in the little shop we had visited the day previously. Now before us in the morning light beyonds some hills and a river looking like a streak of silver, lay the sea, calm and beautiful and by the islands dotted here and there we realised we were looking at Sea Kongo. Then downhill and breakfast. We ate some of our fruit, the rice they gave us as a cereal and they cooked us eggs. So we did not do so badly. By 8 a.m. we were ready to start off again and our men (were) waiting for us.

Hester had been the only one to use the chair the previous day but we decided we would all have a turn, if only to know the feeling of it. Anne started off in style in the chair. Almost at once our pathway led us amongst trees and we started to descend quickly, zig zagging round and round as we had done in the ascent. We passed a very peculiarly shaped huge rock standing upright, it had a name which I forget, then what looked like a monks' graveyard. On and on we went climbing down and then up again, across streams and stopping every now and then to admire the beauties of nature around us. By riding in the chair one could get a better view of the scenery not having to watch ones footsteps, so I thought I would have a try. However, I had just got in when the descent became so steep and the turns so hairpin like that one man would be below, the other above, and me in the middle dangling in the chair over a precipice. I preferred to go on my feet here.

Our plan was to reach the Nine Dragon Falls before tiffen time and the town of Onseiri in the afternoon. It was a glorious morning with very little mist about, so fresh and clear, and on we went singing on our way. At one place we had to crawl through a cliff and just after climb down two iron ladders attached to the face of the cliff, 29 steps in the first and 23 in the second. We began to feel like real mountaineers. Then we continued the descent, and to make it easier steps had been made, so it was like climbing down a long winding stairway. We knew now we were descending to the valley of the Nine Dragon Falls and every now and then we could catch a glimpse of the water gleaming white in the sunlight as it leapt from the top of the cliff, 175 ft. into the dark pool below. It was an awe inspiring spectacle but to me it lost some of its beauty because of the many picnickers we found on the rocks under the falls and there was a quite big shop where cheap looking souvenirs, picture postcards, tea, buns etc. were sold. We drank some tea but decided we preferred some more secluded spot to eat our tiffen. Our men had evidently expected us to eat here, but after some demonstrative explanation we got them to understand we wanted to go on. After looking about we chose a flat stone in the stream bed. We had first of all a small melon each, then a tin of sardines, bigger ones than you get at home, which we ate with chopsticks, then we had some buns and apples. The hotel had given us each a box of Japanese tiffen, but we didn't relish the salted fish, sour pickles, etc. so gave them to the men who were no doubt glad of them.

As in the previous day the sun went down and the clouds began to roll over. All morning we had enjoyed marvellous views of the mountain peaks and the chief characteristic I noticed was that many of them rose almost perpendicular. Many a time climbing down the mountain side a false step would have landed us hundreds of feet below. There was no roundedness about the mountain tops - for the most part they were very pointed and jagged. The trees too were marvellous, standing tall and stately against the sunlight. Some were taking on their autumn tints, and I am now convinced that the highly coloured pictures of the Diamond Mountains one sees are not exaggerated. I had always thought them unnatural. Some of the leaves were a glowing crimson, others a brilliant orange and a month later the colourings must give a wonderful effect. There are a great variety of trees, many I did not recognise, but amongst them maple, oak, elm and a number of the pine variety.

The valley into which the Nine Dragon Falls flow, called Gyokuryudo or Jade Current Grotto, is really I think the most beautiful scenery in the Diamond Mountains. Bambakudo was very very beautiful, but there was grandeur and majesty about Gyokuryudo. On each side were high mountains towering above us, sometimes one felt almost over us, a beautiful rushing stream of water with lots of lovely looking pools of an emerald green colour and many waterfalls of different forms, high and narrow, broad and wide, in tiers and twisted in whatever shape the water could find a way through the rocks. It was magnificent and we had many little rests all the way along. I rode in the chair part of this way and it was lovely sitting back enjoying the scenery to the full without having to look at ones footsteps.

We wanted to reach the village of Onseiri sometime in the afternoon and we planned to spend the night there. Quite near the village is a large monastery, Shinkeiji. We paid a visit here but there was nothing much different from any of the other monasteries we had seen, so didn't waste much time over it except to admire the view. To reach Onseiri we took a road winding over a thickly wooded hill, a most pleasant walk. Some friends had booked a room for us run by a Korean Christian, Pastor Yuin. When we mentioned his name our men knew where to take us and let us straight to the house. Having now completed our hike from the Inner to the Outer range of the Diamond Mountains, we paid our men off, as the next day we planned just to do a hike bringing us back to Onseiri. We arrived about 4 p.m. and were shown a room with four camp beds in it, no other furniture, but what joy to see nice clean white sheets. We had been told that Pastor' Yuin's was very primitive, but this was luxury to what we had had on the three previous nights. First we had tea, then as we had heard there were hot springs in Onseiri, decided on a bath if we could find the place. We were directed to the Bath House, but it wasn't quite to our liking, Japanese style. I went in to see what it was like and there were some women washing themselves or their children outside the tub and a few more women in the tub, which was maybe one and a half yards square. The custom is to wash oneself thoroughly first, then everyone finishes off in the same tub of water. The idea just didn't fit our western mind. However, Anne and I felt we wanted a bath very badly, we hadn't had a real bath since leaving Shanghai, so we went to the Sotokongo Hotel. They didn't seem to take our request as unusual, asked where we were staying, made sure that the foreign guests had finished and showed us to the bathroom. We did revel in the joys of a modern bathroom with plenty nice warm water. It was worth more than the 50 sen we paid for it, and didn't we enjoy our supper. It was a grand meal, so tired but happy we went to bed.

Up again early next morning, breakfast at 7 a.m., then a struggle to get on to the most crowded bus I have ever been in, which is saying a lot when one lives in Shanghai. It was a terrible journey and I had to close my eyes at times. The bus went at a terrific speed round hairpin bends every few yards and I was thrown every way. At one time I couldn't even get room for my two feet on the floor. However, it was only a fifteen minutes run and we arrived feeling a bit shaken but none the worse. The bus discharged its cargo which seemingly had the same objective as ourselves in view, i.e. to climb the Bambutsuso, a great cluster of innumerable rocks of gigantic sizes and fantastic shapes. They are divided into three groups, old, new and inner. We planned to do only the old and the new.

Ada was feeling a bit weary, so our pace had to be slackened somewhat and we had rests very frequently. The Old Bambutsuso seems to be comprised mostly of huge pillars of rock, some hundreds of feet high, sometimes as much as one thousand or maybe more, towering into the sky. We came to one place which looked specially interesting, the rocks all on one side rising like high towers. Cut in the rock was a stairway to the top of one of these towers which was climbed with the aid of a chain handrail. Anne and I decided to go up to see what was to be seen. At the top were more high towers and the view all around was magnificent. We could see ranges of peaks for miles around, but there was nothing lonely about this place. There were almost a many sight-seers as the platform of rock we were standing on could hold, and in addition a Japanese professional photographer, so we perched ourselves on a rock and had our photograph taken with one of the high towering rocks in the background. When I looked down from where I was sitting I felt quite faint - there was a straight drop down a good few hundred feet. However I held on tightly to Anne till the photo was taken.

We gave a good report to Ada and Hester and waited at the foot whilst they climbed up and had their photo taken. I amused myself by watching the lizards here. They were plentiful and came quite close as if they were having a good look at our shoes wondering what strange kind of rock this was before them. The continual stream of people also interested me, Japanese ladies in their kimonos wearing wooden shoes with strap coming between their big toe and the toe next to it, the kind of shoe they always wear, but how they could hike in them was a puzzle to me. Korean women in their Korean dress, a wide skirt cased on to a band, tied around the bust, and on top a little bodice tied at the right side. I noticed two particularly who looked between sixty or seventy years old and there they were climbing with the best of us. They may of course have only been about fifty, as to us they usually look older than they are. Then there was a family, father, mother, two children in their early teens and grandmother, or so I figured it. It was amazing to see such people, not only here, but I noticed similar types further on into the heart of the mountains, in places they couldn't have reached without a few hours hard climbing. It amazed me also to see how some of the men could climb. They wore a rubber soled cloth top short boot and actually ran up and down the mountains. I'm sure they didn't see any scenery all the way up or down, they were in too big a hurry. In the distance away up high in a very rugged range of mountains Anne noticed something white which seemed to sort of flutter. We first of all thought it must be a Korean man with his white dress fluttering in the breeze, but then decided that a man wouldn't stay so long in such a position and we just couldn't figure what it could be. It intrigued us however.

Ada and Hester returned and again we set off climbing more steps up the mountain opposite the towering rocks. We climbed on and on and, as we were mounting one side of a ravine, couldn't see our objective in front of us. The steps seemed never ending. At each turn we looked for a place where we might eat our tiffin, but as no such place seemed forthcoming we decided just to eat it sitting on the steps. It was too dangerous to leave them, in fact almost an impossibility, as the rock rose sheer above them and dropped sheer below. A good part of this way there was a chain hand rail to hold on to. We choose one of the bends leaving enough room for someone to pass. We had been given a tiffin box at the Hotel and imagined it would be Japanese or Korean food which we had seen being made up into similar matchwood boxes, but we had a lovely surprise when we opened our boxes and found a lovely foreign tiffin, cold baked potatoes, meat, tomatoes, hard boiled eggs, etc. We had a lovely view from here looking across to a range of mountains on the opposite side of the steep ravine we had climbed through, and at the end of the valley more mountains in the distance. There were fewer trees in this part than in the places we had passed through the two days previous. Our aim now was to reach the New Bambutsuso.

It was a pretty steep climb and Ada and Hester began to lag behind. Anne and I decided to press on as we had been told it was a six hours hike and we began to wonder if we would be able to complete our objective. Soon we reached a little platform where most people seemed to rest as there were a couple of benches. The view from here was marvellous and as we sat admiring it we noticed that two groups of people who had passed us while we were eating our lunch, repassed us again on their way down, so we knew we couldn't be far from our destination. There was a pathway up a cliff and we decided to climb up it and down again whilst waiting for the other two. This was really the stiffest bit of all our climbing and I just don't know how the Japanese women with their wooden sandals managed it. Yet I saw one coming down. At the end of the climb we passed through a hole in the rock, so small that a very stout person couldn't have got through, on to the other side. There was a pathway on further, but we decided not to investigate but to go back to the other two. The view here was most interesting and the rocks about were all sorts of shapes, but we still could not pick out the cliff face that we had been told of where the shapes were so fantastic that one could pick out shapes of a myriad of things. We climbed down again and the others were waiting waiting on the little plateau we had climbed from. There, opposite, was the range of rugged peaks we had looked at earlier in the day, but now we could distinguish that the little white thing we had seen from lower down was a Japanese flag. The other two didn't feel like doing the little extra climb we had done, but now the question was should we return the way we had come or follow another path which a man we had met who could speak a little English had

said was much longer. After a little discussion we choose the new way and hoped for the best, it was a case of three to one, as Ada would have preferred to return the way we had come.

It seemed all right at firsts, not too stiff and quite a good pathway. As we looked back across the ravine we could see the cliff face we and realised if Anne and I had gone a little further on after the stiff climb we did, we would have had a near view. We used our imaginations a bit and could pick out lots of figures in the shapes of the rocks. Just after this we started to climb again and I began to feel rather worried thinking maybe we had chosen the wrong way and Ada was really a bit tired. When I looked at the steep steps in front of me I too began to feel a bit fagged, so I thought I shall hurry on to the top and it seems to go on like this, will suggest we go back the way we came. But when I reached the top all my tiredness vanished. What a view! There was the sea quite near, bathed in sunlight and as blue as any picture ever depicted it, and the pathway beyond didn't look too difficult. I shouted to the others to come on it was worth the climb, and it seemed as if we had almost reached the end of climbing upwards. We realised that unintentionally we had now come to the third Bambutsuso, the Inner or Mysterious. The way before looked easier than the way we had come, so we decided to carry on. Imagine our surprise when just a little later we reached the Japanese flag we had looked at from a distance twice before earlier in the day. And there right on the top sheltered by a rock two boys had a stall selling aerated waters and fruit, so we had a drink before going on. Our spirits were now as high as the mountain top and we all decided that the beauty around us was well worth the effort of our climb. The path continued along this rugged ridge of mountains, but it was quite well defined and easy. Our high spirits continued all afternoon and we were unanimous in our opinion that we had chosen the easier descent. Though it may be a bit longer it was much more gradual than if we had returned the way we had come and therefore we could watch the scenery more. Also we had the place all to ourselves and did not meet a soul on the way down. There were lots of trippers on the other route. We arrived back at the bus stop quite unexpectedly at about 4.30 p.m. and got back to Onseiri about 5 p.m. tired but feeling we had had a grand day. We had seats in the bus this time and it was not so crowded as in the morning. After a little rest we went out and looked at the shops but their wares were mostly cheap souvenirs.

Next day we did not start off so early and had decided that we would not do anything very strenuous. We took the 9.30 a.m. bus from Onseiri to Umikongo. There did not seem to be such a run on this route, so we were all packed into a large touring car, but we all had seats. The journey was quite enjoyable but of no particular interest. The scenery was quite pretty and we passed through a few villages, Soto Kongo and Kojo the most important both having a railway station. On arrival at Umikongo we were more or less hustled with all the rest of the passengers on to a ferry boat. We did not know what was happening but decided to follow the crowd. On the other side were a number of boats and our fellow passengers started bargaining with the boatmen and we realised that we were to be taken to view the rock formations from the sea. It was a gorgeous morning and the sea was every bit as blue as the pictures depict. We had a lovely sail all round the rocks and little islands. The boat was a real Korean style rowed with one oar by a man standing in the back. The motion was certainly different from an ordinary rowing boat and I rather liked it. The sea too was not too calm. One of the islands looked like a lot of huge boulders piled on top of each other, another group seemed to resemble buddhas, another a lion and the coastline too was interesting. We had our tiffin with us, so we climbed to the top the cliff and ate it in the shade of some trees. All afternoon we just lazed about on the beach. A crowd of small boys, who looked as if they might have come from an orphanage, came down to bathe. It was amusing to watch them. They were mostly good swimmers and they had a grand time. We wandered back to the bus stop at about 4 p.m. It took us as far as Kojo where we took train to Kennai and arrived back at the Guest House, Whachinpo, at 6.30 p.m. just in time and ready for a good supper.

End of letter/diary

Pencil note: Stale news but fresh love

Please let Mrs MacGregor, Mrs Haslet and Aunt May see it. I find I'm running out of copies. I hate to get too many printed and have them floating round!

Mary Farnham School  
Lane 591, Bubbling Well Road  
Shanghai, China  
April, 1941

Dear Friends at Home,

It is many moons since I wrote to you at any length. Somehow in the summer I didn't feel like doing so (what an excuse!), so that you only got a card from Korea. Letters that I have received from many of you recently have made me ashamed of myself. They were Christmas letters, and here it's Easter time before I'm getting a letter off.

Probably my most epoch-making news is that my 'flat-mate' has just got married. She got engaged at the end of November but it took till February for sanction to arrive from home. The wedding was after the manner of the Society of Friends for Leonard is a Quaker. He came to Shanghai from Chengdu last August to do a 'locum' in the Christian Literature Society office, where Janet has been Treasurer since September. Their marriage affects me as it has meant the breaking up of Janet's and my living together in the Tsong Chow Road flat. We were there for two very happy years. In July they may be moved back to Chengdu, so for the present, flats being hard to find, they are staying on in Tsong Chow Road and I've cleared out.

Fortunately a home at South Gate was waiting for me. Miss Darling and Miss Hille have been living in our old house for the last two and a half years. I have lived in town for convenience as I was at first teaching in three other schools as well as Mary Farnham School, but I have given up two of those now, which gives me an easier time, and it won't be difficult to come in from Nantao as the South Gate Station now has a car. It's a great big one that seats eight or ten people, (fourteen students at a squash) and the seats can be taken out to convert it into a goods truck. That is really its biggest value. Up till now it has been necessary to get a permit from Japanese head quarters every time one wanted a lorry to take any kind of load in or out from Nantao, as the native city of Shanghai is called. Now we can sail through with the car loaded without interference, unless the sentry is feeling particularly inquisitive. This part of Shanghai is 'occupied territory', so it's under very different government from the Settlement where our school along with hundreds of others is now refugeeing.

Those in control out here would dearly like to get a hold in the Settlement. Bombings, political murders etc. are horribly common. There is continual and almost continuous underhand working to that end. It makes everything seem very 'insecure'. Each time we finish a term's work, we breathe a heartfelt sigh of relief and then start off to prepare for the next term hoping we shall be equally fortunate. Meanwhile the powers-that-be in schools are planning what to do if an emergency situation arises. One cannot tell all their plans, but my pride in the Chinese executive Heads with whom we work grows and grows.

At the end of this term I shall have been ten years in China. We were asked to write a decennial report this January, and I think it was quite a salutary thing to have to do. The time of course, falls into two quite distinct parts. During the first seven years our school, along with other mission schools enjoyed the effects of what China was doing to unify the nation and progress along all sorts of material ways. As a nation she was rightly proud of all that, though it didn't all spring from the best kind of nationalism. The much more fundamental unity of feeling and of sharing hardships and difficulties that

have come out of three years of trouble ought to have done more for China than anything else. It's easy to sit 'on the side-line' and say things like this, and only the future will show what is to be the outcome, but without being 'trite', this is a great time to be alive in, and whatever we do now ought to affect the future of China. That's our conceit at any rate!

The biggest event of this last year was the celebrating of our 80th anniversary. We claim that the school is the oldest school in this part of China to have such a long continuous history. (There is another that claims to be ninety, but they closed down for a period in the middle.) Last spring we gave the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera, Pinafore, for part of the celebrating, and in the autumn, nearer the correct date, had a thanksgiving service in one of the local cinemas, held an exhibition of school work on the school premises and gave a Chinese play. Naturally 'Pinafore' came more into my line of business. It was a hectic job at the time, though it was fun. I hadn't anything to do with the musical training, as you might guess, but the scenery was my job as was to make suggestions for the dresses. For the sailors we "borrowed" a man from H.M.S. Petrel, then stationed in Shanghai, and measured his stripes and lanyard etc. We hired the Russian Club stage for the performance. The scenery was ordered through a Russian stage hand and set up by our school carpenter. The stage had had a few words of English but no Chinese and halfway through he quarrelled with the scenery-painter and refused to speak to him for us. As the latter hadn't any English we began to be scared we would be stuck, but it all ended all right. The costumes were made with the least possible expense. The ladies' skirts were made of uncut lengths of school uniform, their blouses of odd scraps of material from old dresses. The sailors wore white trousers and drill blouses while their collars and ties were made at the Nantao refugee centre from old blue cotton and black silk slips. It really was a great success and great fun. The girls burst out into the songs now whenever they get together.

We don't manage to get together very often, owing to the same tiresome lack of a hall, but recently we brought the senior class out to Nantao to our former premises. Some of them had never studied here, but those who had were thrilled to wander round and see everything. The next class came on another day and they are tremendously keen to study out here next year. It would be possible to have them here as boarders, though not as day girls as the houses around are all in ruins, but it would be a fearful responsibility too, as here in 'occupied' territory you never know when the powers-that-be might decide to clamp down and forbid all movement in and out. Then too, some of the teachers, who still claim allegiance to the Central Government in Chungking, are liable to questioning by sentries and officials, and political kidnappings are not infrequent. With things as they are it's impossible to hope for any definite decision in this Sino-Japanese war for a long time. The latter certainly have a stranglehold on the coastal areas and along the lines of communications, but they've no more than that, and there's a very live section of China to the west. Four of us went to Hangchow at China New Year time. I used to go in the 'good old days' and I've raved in the past about that lovely place with its mountains, lake, etc. This time the city was wretched with its ruins, its poverty stricken inhabitants and its army of occupation, that is fierce inside the city but doesn't dare to venture outside. The walks through the hills were still as lovely as ever. One never met a Jap out there. We considered ourselves very lucky to get down there for a break. Grace Darling here tried to get her consul to apply for a pass for her but he refused. Americans as you know have been recalled from the interior so he said it was inconsistent to try to go there. Our consul left the decision to us and our applications were successful.

Christmas time was, as usual a pretty busy season. Unfortunately we were not able to borrow the hall next door as we did last year. We used instead the wooden hut that was put up in the school garden a couple of years ago and which divides into five classrooms but can also be converted into a long hall. Using this meant we weren't able to practise on the stage beforehand as the classrooms were in use until an hour before the performance was to be given. This year we did 'A Christmas Carol'. It happens just now that a number of the juniors are specially keen on acting and the ones who took the parts of the Cratchit family were the hit of the evening.

After the 'show', which included as well carol singing and a native play, the seniors were keen to go out carol-singing, so we parted to get supper and meet again later and went round to the head's house and to various friends' houses till about eleven o'clock. Though it had been arranged 'on the hop' it was a great success. The 'foreign' friends were, most of them, busy decorating Christmas trees or filling stockings so the girls were able to see typical Christmas preparations, while 'A Christmas Carol' had told them about puddings etc. I learnt quite a lot the following week about the preparations for Chinese New Year as I set a composition on the subject. It is then we always break between the two terms of our school year. It is, like Christmas, more of a family jollification than a social one.

I should have told you that I'm teaching English now instead of Biology. It's principally because Elsa Logan is home on furlough and without her we're short of English staff. It's much easier to get someone to teach Biology as it's done in Chinese and there are plenty of Science graduates fully enough qualified. Also, I ought to admit, I find the marking of Chinese script a definite strain, and I hate to be beholden to someone all the time as I am when I'm given an assistant to help with the marking. To tell the truth I've enjoyed teaching English this year and am pretty well ready to say it doesn't matter what I teach so long as I'm allowed to teach.

Now it's almost Easter time. We are having a series of special services on the four mornings before Good Friday. ((pencil note in the margin) followed by a happy Easter Day). It's the first attempt we've made to have a Religious Emphasis week for all the school since the "incident", again because of the lack of a hall and lack of time when we get the girls coming for only half a day from 8-12:30. the school is fully occupied by the 600 Primary School students for the rest of the day, from 1-5:30. We're managing it now by cutting each lesson period of the morning down to half an hour and by escorting the girls across the main streets to a church about a quarter of a mile away. ((pencil note in margin) Quite a "croc", 600 blue gowned girls).

Of course we've been able to get in less ambitious things - chiefly with the Y.W.C.A. the girls of the Committee that plans its activities have been showing considerable energy and originality of late. They've been more in contact with other school Y.W.C.A.s and have been able to exchange ideas. They have a cycling club, a very popular "visiting" club that has been over a local biscuit factory, refugee camps, the telephone exchange, etc., an English-conversation club and all sorts of other clubs. Then, about once a month they have a general meeting for all the 150 or so members when they invite an outside speaker on a religious subject or one of national interest.

We find, in such a big school, that one of the best ways to work is with just such a group as the Y.W.C.A. Committee who in turn work with and for their schoolmates. For them, and any other who care to come we're able to have morning watch twice a week in our prayer-room, a part of the attic that is also our library and our singing-class room. We're very proud of the way we've used every available space in our building. After all it was only a big old house and it now houses our 1200 girls in morning and afternoon groups of 600 students each. The Y.W.C.A. service projects have continued. Work with refugees is now more officially organized and volunteer working the camps isn't so easy to arrange, but we still run our Sunday School which is attended by children from some police living quarters near the school.

Coming out to live in South Gate is going to let me see more of the very worth-while work done out here among the destitute people who've come back to live in Nantao in spite of lack of any proper means of livelihood, because of rising costs of living in the Settlement. Bess Hille and a Mr. and Mrs. Boone run a work centre there using anything and everything they can get in the way of "junk" — they have bags scattered in homes round the city and these provide material for making slippers, mops, bed covers, rugs and lots else. I'll have to tell you more about this work next time.

So the days rush by in teaching, Y.W.C.A. and club work, doing morning jerks (I being now responsible for such physical training as we can get in our cramped quarters and timetable), and getting my own exercise by playing hockey and taking walks in the Shanghai country side.

“Business as usual” is what we like to report and I know you would like that to be true in your part of the world. Often I think and wonder how and where you all are and I do pray that wherever you are you may feel conscious of God’s peace.

With sincerest love and lots of it,

From

Vera

Typed on thin 'airmail' paper

Mary Farnham School,  
5/591 Bubbling Well Road,  
Shanghai

August, 1941

Dear Friend,

It's absurd to think that a Christmas letter should be written in August, but judging by the delay in arrival of present day mails it will be wise to get Christmas greetings ready now.

At the moment I'm in Kulangsu, Amoy, some miles south of Shanghai, in fact far enough south to have bananas and lemons in the garden. Kulangsu, which is an island in Amoy harbour, is an International Settlement, like Shanghai, but with less than a square mile in area. Though small it has charm, with its rocky hills, twisting lanes and sandy beaches, and the distant mountains of Fukien with the far-stretching coast-line make glorious "views." Amoy, itself and island, is in Japanese hands, while the mainland is still China's. It's rather a complicated state of affairs, for to go up-country to our inland stations you have to pass Japanese naval headquarters on the look out for goods being smuggled to the Chinese and then Chinese headquarters on the lookout for any infiltration of Japanese.

Amoy has a beautiful harbour but we don't enjoy seeing it full of destroyers, aircraft-carriers etc. as we have this last fortnight. We guessed that some place in Fukien was being bombed as the planes set off determinedly each morning and then heard to our dismay that it was one of our own stations, Changchow. The hospital had been hit and 19 people killed. China has no anti-aircraft defence so that bombing planes can fly low and do what damage they like.

One of the doctors from the hospital was staying here on holiday. He immediately felt he ought to go back. It was harder for his wife to decide what she and baby Christopher should do, but she didn't want to be separated from her husband and Changchow is normally as reasonably safe as any place so she decided that if the authorities would allow their tins of milk and of oil to pass they would go. Changchow is well off for fruit and vegetables grown locally but milk for Christopher would have been hard to do without. [A later news bulletin states that they've arrived safely and all is well there.]

You may wonder what I'm doing here. I had really not expected to be able to leave Shanghai this year but this place being an International Settlement like Shanghai one didn't need a 'pass' to come here and as staying on in Shanghai means difficulty in getting anything of a change I decided to come away, and have had a very happy time. It's hot, but on holiday when one just writes letters, reads, sleeps and can wait till after 4 o'clock to go out to tennis or swimming it's easy to feel comfortable and I soon felt refreshed.

I'm staying with an L.M.S family, the Griffiths. There are three bonny children, 7 1/2, 6 and 5 respectively and they are great fun. Though Kalangsu is so wee, the sea and their garden give them endless scope for playing. They've been Indians, pirates and a royal family this week, and each role has meant the making of suitable outfits, copied from pictures in the Children's Encyclopedia. Mary, the

oldest, is supposed to be getting ready to go to school, and I've been trying to help her a little with her arithmetic. It's hard for parents to know what to do about schooling, for there's no school in such a wee place as this and to send her north to Shanghai or Chefoo is hard when it's possible that mother and the other two might have to be evacuated suddenly to Australia. Parents don't have an easy joy just now, here or anywhere else!

I left Shanghai at the beginning of August. School had finished at the end of June and we are mighty thankful to have been able to complete another school year in comparative peace. In July came holiday activities, that always seem almost more worthwhile than the steady plod of teaching English all the year!

The first activity was a Young People's Conference for the churches of the two provinces, Chekiang and Kiangsu. This is the fourth year the Conference has been held. At present we can only arrange for it to be held in Shanghai, but the idea is to let it meet in a different place each year. There are some lovely places near Shanghai, like Hangchow which the Chinese call, 'Heaven Below', and Soochow that I used to write about enthusiastically when I was there for my first year in China doing language study.

The Conference was run rather on the lines of 'Swanwick,' so I needn't describe it in detail. We started off at 5.30 each morning with 'Quiet Time' and went on through the day with three formal sessions, a rest hour, games and singing periods and all the fun that keeps one busy in Conference life.

The formal sessions were under the three main headings, 'Personal Religion,' 'Church work' and 'Problems of Today'. It fell to me to lead a group on, 'How to Run a Sunday School,' under the second of the main headings, and I was lucky enough to get Sing Pao to help me. Do you remember if I've mentioned her before? She is one of two sisters whom Miss Hille has been specially interested in. In 1937 they had to refugee to the country when fighting broke out in Shanghai and the crowded conditions they were in brought on T.B. in Sing Pho's case. She's quite well now but this spring her young sister was found with it and will have to rest up for at least a year. Fortunately for both of them it was found at an early stage. Alas, there is a terrible lot of T.B. about. The conditions under which many families live in these days of rent rackets and high cost of living are appallingly crowded and unhealthy. Sing Pao has been teaching Psychology in the Nantao Bible School and was a big help in speaking of Child Psychology. I didn't mind so much trying to talk about the practical side of running a Sunday school, but to swot up the specialised vocabulary for that theoretical part scared my laziness.

This year we decided to have a Junior Conference too, as applications for this one had been so numerous. The Junior one was limited to 16-20 year olds, and so it included any of our school girls who wanted to go. I was glad to go to the other one myself to see the 'old girls' who came. One called 'Doo Vong-li' was in the Sunday School Section. I remember how keen she always was to help out in the Sunday school we had in her time for the neighbours children. She was always known in school for her two tight little plaits and her ever-ready smile. She helped me too with the Club we used to run on Saturday afternoons for the smallest of the boarders. Now she is a teacher herself in a small school in Shanghai. Her home is in Ningpo but she hasn't been able to get back there since the district became 'occupied territory.' Her sister has trained as a nurse at the Lester Chinese Hospital. They two are typical of what we're glad to find among our 'old girls,' trained Christian workers for the China of the future.

An 'old boy' of our brother school, Mr Zien, was in charge at the Conference of the business arrangements. He and other 'old hands' from previous conferences acted as volunteer coolies on the first day when people were settling in. One big lad, the son of one of the pastors, weighs some 10 stone and claimed he was glad to do it to try to get his weight down!

The Junior Conference was planned to be held in Nantao in our Mary Farnham School buildings. Four years ago when the Sino-Japanese trouble broke out we had to leave those beautiful buildings and

the spacious compound and find refugee accommodation in the International Settlement. It was no easy matter as you can imagine when crowds of other schools were also refugeeing, and our thoughts have often turned longingly to our lovely rooms standing empty in Nantao. During this last year it has been possible to go there without passes and we have lent one of the buildings to the Nantao Bible School whose refugee quarters were just impossible. Their girls are older and the education not under Government control, but of a more informal nature, so they haven't been interfered with.

In fact the compound has become quite a 'resort' for those willing to come out past the sentries at the barriers. There anyone is liable to questioning, and one's parcels to examination, but some people have felt it was worth risking. Many times, to avoid trouble, we have used "Peggy" for taking visitors in and out, especially people with luggage, like students who were coming in to stay for a Conference or for the Neighbourhood Free School. I haven't introduced "Peggy" to you, have I? She's the station car, a big Chevrolet called a 'station carryall' that holds nine people easily and can be changed into a luggage van by the removal of the back seats and the opening of the back of the car. She came out last year with a family returning from furlough, who drove here right across America, and slept in her at times, I believe.

With 'Peggy', whose real name is Pegasus, transport into school is easy. Did I tell you, I am now living out in Nantao once again. At first it seemed inconvenient to have to go three miles to school after living in the flat within 5 minutes of it, but there are advantages, for Nantao's so clean and quiet when compared to Shanghai. Peggy makes the three miles as nothing. We really have to have her for getting into school in the mornings (last term I was due there each morning at 7.30 for drill), but we can do the return journey ourselves if Peggy's busy with some other job. It takes about three-quarters of an hour ordinarily because of the break in communications at the barrier. I've just got a licence to drive Peggy in case of emergency, when as sometimes happens, our Chinese chauffeur is refused permission to go out by the sentries, but driving in Shanghai isn't any fun with all the rickshaws, etc. Peggy too has a left-hand drive that isn't so easy to get use to. Turning to the right the first time I drove her I stuck my right hand out into the chauffeur's face!

We've been awfully glad to have so many visitors out to Nantao and you can imagine our joy when we really had some boarders out there again. To hear laughter and chatter, to see blue gowns against the grey walls and lights twinkling in the dormitories after 4 years of "dead" ness, that has been joyful indeed.

All July we had the teachers of the Free-school there.

I must have told you before how the bigger girls spend six weeks of their summer holiday each year running a school for children who otherwise would have no chance of an education at all. Last year they ran two in the Settlement but they found that actually the children coming weren't the very poorest. Most of them had been to school somewhere. Consequently when the Y.M.C.A. committee met in May to discuss plans they readily responded to the suggestion that the children out in Nantao were desperately in need of help.

We wondered whether the 'army of occupation' would interfere, as they have, of course, control of all education in occupied areas, but we decided to carry on with our planning, and indeed they left us quite in peace. As soon as school finished in June we had a day of training, when the Head, a Business Manager and a Religious Director were chosen out of the volunteers. The rest of the day was spent in giving these volunteer teaches hints on the choice of books, preparing lessons, maintaining discipline etc.

The 'officials' went out a day or two early to see to the getting ready of classrooms for the school and dormitories for themselves. For equipment we used a very miscellaneous collection of tables and benches that we found around. (Most of the useful equipment had been taken over to our refugee school, of course.) Pencils etc. had been collected from fellow students on the last day of term. As everyone left school after the last exam. they were asked to 'stand and deliver' anything they could spare from their pencil boxes. For paper we used old examination books that we found out in Nantao. In the

'good old days' we used one side only of nice white paper for examinations and this folded double sheet by sheet with the written side inside made up into fine little exercise books.

At last the opening day came. The girls and their baggage travelled out in 'Peggy' for we had promised their parents that we would be personally responsible for their safe passing of the barrier, and before long some fourteen girls were settled unmaking the compound look and sound more normal than it had for many a day.

The girls who had come out first had been out into the street and the homes nearby to tell of the proposed school and to invite children to come. They got some 60 tentative registrations and felt that it would be enough to begin on, though they had hoped to have a hundred. They needn't have worried. Next morning a mob of children were at the gate and when the 130th had been registered the girls just had to stop and tell the rest they were sorry they hadn't room for any more. Those who were turned away came back each morning for a few days to see if anyone had dropped out. It wasn't very likely. One boy who was ill after 2 days of school insisted on being brought to the gate on his father's back to show us that he really was ill so that we shouldn't fill his place before he could get back.

The children were divided into classes and school began, but it was soon obvious that many of the children needed more help than with their 3 Rs, so we got a doctor from the Nantao Goodwill Institute (that works for the rehabilitation of the refugee people all around) to come and look over the children. Those with itch, tracheoma (about 90%) or dirty heads the girls then treated. It wasn't a particularly pleasant job, but the families that the children represent are very, very poor and they really seemed grateful for help. Soap is a luxury and some of them have for homes only shelters built up of ruined houses. After due instruction in its use every child in the school was given a tooth-brush - another luxury in many homes. When Miss Hille on another occasion blamed a child who had received such a present for its battered state after a comparatively short time she was told, 'I can't help it. All the family borrow it'.

After they had been teaching for two weeks it dawned on our girls that to come to school for six weeks is too tantalising and not of much permanent value to these children. They couldn't go on with the teaching themselves, but they made up their minds to try to collect enough to pay for an extra teacher in the school that the Goodwill Institute in running already for the children of the families it is helping, and to ask that a class of the brightest and keenest children from this free-school may be allowed to enter. It's been interesting to see the idea grow. The funds will probably come from Y.W.C.A. members and from the other students. Many of the girls do subscribe to a 'cent a day' fund that they vote to use to buy comforts for soldiers, to help support Madame Chiang Kai Shek's Orphanage for War Victims or some other good cause.

Altogether you might gather that we had a good time with the girls this year. The main officers stayed the whole six weeks and others came for two or four weeks. One got so homesick she had to leave and two others got temperatures so that we took them home, not wanting to have anything epidemic on our hands, but the others flourished, put on weight and had a rare time skating on the concrete paths, singing by moonlight, star-gazing and talking far into the night. For most of them it was their first taste of dormitory life and we were glad to introduce them to it and to have the fellowship of play and of family prayers.

Well, I seem to have rambled on at rather great length. Sorry! This should however have given you a little idea of our doings. I apologise once again for the fact that I find it possible to send out news only in a printed form.

Please believe me that the Good Wishes that it brings to each and everyone of you are none the less sincere. Many 1942 bring unexpected good things to you.

with love, from Anne Vera MacKeith

(same letter)

September 1941

P.S. — Having returned to Shanghai I can't resist adding a postscript to this letter. For one thing I wanted to wait long enough to have word that the last circular letter had arrived. I couldn't expect to hear till late August or early September about it, but now I have heard from some of you, so I know that probably they all have arrived, for I rather rashly posted them all together.

It really is good to be back. I felt as happy on the first day as the girls looked. We were greeted by rather bad news for the building in which we've been running for the last four years has been sold and the new landlord has asked us to move out. The lease doesn't fall due till January, and though in Chinese law a tenant cannot be evicted, we shall eventually have to go, but Miss Chang, the Head, wonders if she can't draw out the proceedings for a few months at least so that we could finish the school year in peace. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could then go back to the South Gate premises? We haven't much hope of that, but it's hard to know where we can get any suitable premises in overcrowded Shanghai.

There are now three of the Chinese staff members living out at South Gate as they have difficulty in getting suitable accommodation in the Settlement. There is also an ex-student, Zien Hyien-zung, who is doing voluntary work in the school out there run for the children of workers at the Goodwill Industries. In the morning she is a student at Shanghai University. She is an awfully bonny lass and had an interesting story. When she left our school two years ago she had acquired such a taste for teaching in the free school that I've mentioned often, that she wanted to do kindergarten training. The only way was for her to go to a normal school, but it meant going back two years, as that school, though giving normal training, is only of the same standard as ours. She was willing to 'lose face' to that extent and has just completed that training. Now she wants to go to college, but feels she's got to express herself somehow, and this is the solution. you may be sure that Mrs Boone who has had to run her school with refugee untrained workers is thrilled to get Hyien-zung. We hope that after a year or two more she can go abroad for further experience and training. I'd like her to come to England, for you'd all like to meet her, but I expect it'll be America she will visit first.

She reminds me of a Japanese lady whose autobiography I've just finished. It's called, "My Lantern", by Michi Kawai, and tells of her work as Y.W.C.A. Secretary in Japan and her visiting and studying in America. I wonder if your libraries have it.

We've just had a visitor from Japan a missionary going home on "ante-dated" furlough. Alas, more and more of the workers there are finding it necessary to leave at least for a time, because of the Government's attitude to nationals who work with "foreigners." This worker was telling me how the Japanese women admire Madame Chiang Kai-Shek but the men think she is far too 'capable'!

Goodness what a lengthy P.S. Christmas is, to judge by the weather, decidedly nearer so I off now Sincere Christmas Greetings with the surety that its real message is the only one that is worth having.

AVM