

Dated

Jan. 19, 1938

from Shanghai

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*Columbia
only*

Miss Mary N. Mills
1421 Pendelton Street
Columbia
South Carolina
U. S. A.



7 Route Francis Garnier
Shanghai
January 19, 1938

Dear Family,

It has been at least a month since I wrote to any of you, so now I am going to try to tell the tale of our lives during that time and send carbon copies to the different households.

I am not going to try to tell you the story of the development of the war except as it touched us personally, for I know that you get the news in the home papers often before we get it here. Up to about the first of December things went along very calmly with us in Kuling and we were even hopeful that we might be able to stay there all winter. However with the fall of Shanghai and the rapid advance of the armies towards Nanking things began to look more serious for those of us farther up river. I was in communication with Plumer up to the 4th of December. I even had a telephone conversation with him on the morning of the 30th of November, but after that the line was broken, and after the 4th we did not get any letters through at all. From then on we depended entirely upon the radio for all news from the outside. Over the radio we got the word of the fall of Nanking, and then of the sinking of the Panay. Those were indeed black days for the four women on Kuling who had husbands in Nanking - Eva McCallum, Ruth Trimmer, Mardie Smythe and me. We did not know whether the men had stayed in the city or were on the Panay, and in either case we did not know what their fate was. Every one was most kind, and brought us every scrap of news that came, and finally on the 16th of December we got the word that they were not on the Panay, and that all of the foreigners left in Nanking were safe. This was sent to us through the American Embassy. We still knew nothing of what was happening in Nanking, but at least we knew that the men were safe, and nothing else seemed to matter much. You all know the story of the sinking of the Panay, and some of you may even have seen the pictures that were taken, and sent home so carefully guarded. The story of what has happened in Nanking from the 15th of December even until now has not yet been told in its entirety, and it will make revealing if not very pleasant reading when it does reach the world.

But I am now telling only our personal odyssey. On the 19th of December Mr. Allgood told us that he no longer felt that he could carry the responsibility of keeping the American school open in Kuling, because as long as the school stayed other people would stay, and the situation was such that it was probably most unwise for a large group to remain there. Added to this fact the school was running short of coal and supplies, and of course it was all but impossible to get anything sent up. Therefore school was closed, and an international committee began at once to make arrangements for getting the people safely away from Kuling. Our only way out was via Hankow to Hongkong, and that meant that we had to have some sort of guarantee that the road was not to be bombed during the two days that the train was en route. All this meant much negotiation with both Chinese and Japanese authorities, and took more time than we had at first thought that it would. When we first began to pack we thought

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that we would leave Kuling before Christmas and leave Hankow on Christmas day. However as it turned out we had Christmas at school, and it was a very pleasant and fairly normal sort of Christmas everything considered. There were few gifts, and those few of the very simplest as the Kuling shops had little to offer, there were no cards, and no gay parties. Still we had one nice party for the children on Christmas eve, with a Santa Claus and a tree, and small gifts and apples and pop corn balls for refreshments, and on Christmas day we had a very lovely service and Christmas music, and a Christmas dinner too, not such as we would have in normal times but still very nice. Of course Kuling in a lovely place and there was some snow to make it look like Christmas, so altogether it was a very nice Christmas. We would all have been very happy to stay - had that been wise or indeed possible.

The boat that came down from Hankow to take us back up there was to leave Kuikiang the afternoon of the 27th, so some of us went down on the 26th and other went the 27th. The problem of coolies and chairs was a very real one, so it seemed best to divide the group. However everyone got down safely with no special difficulties, and on the afternoon of the 27th about 130 of the Kuling community started for Hankow. We left about 60 people there - those who for various reasons felt it best to stay. The boat was very crowded of course, and the noise was terrific, but we were really quite comfortable, and had an uneventful trip to Hankow. There we had to see about passports, baggage, food, and train accommodations. There was an international train arranged for, and we had special guarantees that it would not be attacked, so we felt fairly safe, though I must say that promises made by a civilian group have not always been regarded by the military. However we all got our tickets, and food for the trip as the diner was not to be relied upon, and left Hankow for Hongkong on the morning of the 30th of December. The Kuling party was only a part of the entire group, as other from Kuikiang and Hankow joined us, so there were about 300 altogether, of all nationalities, except Chinese. The understanding was that it was a train for neutrals, so no Chinese except a few amahs for small babies were allowed aboard.

The train was crowded to capacity, and all of us had all the hand baggage we could manage for we had been told that we could have almost no checked baggage, so altogether the two days we were en route were rather ones to be endured than to be enjoyed. Still it was all most interesting, and one part of the trip especially was very lovely. We made good time all the way to Canton, then got behind our schedule a bit, but finally reached Hongkong about eleven o'clock on New Year's day. We found the city already crowded with refugees, and accommodations very limited and poor, or exceedingly expensive and even then limited. Angie and I went to a refugee camp that was housed in a British school, or rather in the building that had formally been used by a school. There life was of the simplest - camp style in every detail. We slept on camp cots, six or eight in a room, and there was literally nothing else in the room but the camp cots, not even chairs for the first few days though we did manage to get those later. We had to go up and down fifty steep steps every time we left our room, and as there was no water on our level we had to make the trip many times a day. We bathed in mat sheds without any heat, we brushed our teeth over the common drain, and ate our oranges around the common garbage pail on the village green as we named it. The food was adequate in quantity, but being British consisted almost entirely of meat and potatoes - plain

boiled potatoes, three times a day, so Angie feels that she never wants to see another potato. I never saw a piece of fruit the whole time I was there except the oranges that I bought for myself. Still we survived even that, and stayed well, which is more than some of our friends were able to do in better quarters. There was a lot of flu in Hankow when we were there and a lot more in Hongkong, so thirteen of our Au-ling group went to the hospital. We were in Hongkong nine days before we could get a boat to Shanghai, and we made the most of our time seeing the sights. The weather there was wonderful, cold mornings and evenings, but lovely and sunny in the middle of the day. We wore coats most of the time, but only light ones in the middle of the day. Most of you know that the Hongkong harbor is considered one of the most beautiful in the world, and the whole country around there is lovely. We were driven around the New Territories, we went across the bay numbers of times from the Kowloon to the Hongkong side, we went up the Peak, out to Repulse Bay, had a grand Chinese Cantonese feast with Lossing Buck, went to the Cathedral, and saw several good movies, and did a very little shopping. As I look back on it I wonder where all the time went, but I seemed to be busy at the time, and really enjoyed it all. When the time came I really hated to leave the warm sunny climate of Hongkong and come into the dreary cold of Shanghai in January. However Angie had to go to school and I hoped too that in Shanghai I would be able to get in touch with Plumer. Remember that aside from the mere fact that I knew he was safe I had had no word from him at all since the 4th of December.

So we took the first passage we could get - the Conte Biancamano - leaving Hongkong January 10th and reaching here the 13th, having spent the best part of the 12th outside the bar waiting for the tide to bring us in. Here again we were fortunate in having very good accommodations and we had a good trip. The Italians do not seem to be very efficient in handling baggage, and so landing was rather hectic. There was no one at the customs jetty to meet me, so I had to tackle the mountain of baggage and dig out my own and get an examiner to pass me through customs. I had gotten everything pretty well in hand when Mr. Walline from the China Council office showed up and helped with the last bits. He then told me that I was to go to Mrs. Arthur Young's home until I could make some permanent living arrangements. Those of you who know Mrs. Young know how very lucky we were to have her lovely home as ours even for a brief time. So here we are, and here we are staying for awhile. Mr. Young is in Hankow with the Ministry of Finance, and the children are all in America, so Nellie May is here alone, and wanted someone to share this big house with her. When she heard that I was coming she asked that I be sent to her, and of course Angie and I are very happy to be here.

We got in on Thursday, Jan. 12th, and on Friday morning I went up to the school to get Angie started. She did not actually go to classes till Monday, but we got all the preliminaries done on Friday. Late Thursday evening I had a telephone call from Mrs. Morris at the school asking me to take a class in arithmetic. I told her I would do it and arranged to go up the next morning to talk it over with her. The result is that I have taken the seventh grade arithmetic, two divisions, and one conference period a day, making two hours that I am teaching each morning. I don't seem to be able to keep out of the class room, even in a year like this one when I really have no

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personal responsibility for keeping a school going as I have in Nanking. However I like to teach and am glad to have some definite work to do that I feel I can do, for otherwise my time would go into something else that I may not do so well as teaching. I started in teaching on Monday and Angie started to school that same day, so now we are well into a regular routine. I am afraid that Angie is going to find the beginnings a little difficult as she does not know many people here, and also I fear that the Nanking school was not the best preparation for her work here. I am glad that I can be here with her and help her get started.

Shanghai is very crowded with refugee from all the cities in the occupied areas, so it is very difficult to find a place to live. The American school is not running a boarding department this year, but has let the rooms ordinarily used for this department out to a refugee committee who are running a sort of communistic boarding house. Many of my friends are there, and I could have a room there if I wanted it, but I had a fair amount of institutional life in the Nanking school, and I would rather have my own place if possible. I think it is going to be possible too. Mrs. Young wants to give up this big house as she is all alone in it, and take a small apartment until the summer, when she thinks she will be going to America. The present plan is this. She is giving up the house the first of February, packing up the things that she expects to take to America, and furnishing an apartment which we found the other day with what she has left. Then she is going away to Ankor for a month, and Angie and I are to have the apartment. When she comes back we will all three be there together till she goes home, and after that I will either continue on there or go into the school, or find a cheaper apartment. Of course if in the meantime she decided not to go home we will make some sort of adjustment when she comes back. But in any case I am very comfortably and conveniently housed for the next two months, and in the meantime can be looking about for something that I could afford for a permanent thing. I expect to be in Shanghai till the end of the school year anyway. After that I simply do not know where we will be.

I have had no mail from any one for weeks and weeks, so I feel completely cut off from all of you. I finally got letters from Plumer soon after I got to Shanghai. I do not feel that I can repeat much of what he has sent me here. Some day we will find a safe channel for such news. He is well, he says, and very busy. I had hoped that he would be able to come down here soon but he seems to think there is no chance of that for some time to come. He has sent me letters to mail to Mary and Harriet, and in them I suppose he tells what he dares to trust to the mails. I am so anxious to hear from all of you, but I fear that much mail has been lost and that I will never get the letters that have been sent during the last few weeks, if indeed any have been sent. After you get this please write to me in Shanghai, not Nanking. There is no postal connection between Nanking and the outside world, and has not been since the Japanese entered the city, and no one knows how long it will be before it is re-established. The address of the apartment we have taken is Apt. 16, 346 Route Cohen, Shanghai. Anything that has a reasonable chance of getting here by April 1st could be sent to that address. After that I hardly know what address to give, though I suppose the best would be C/o American School, 10 Ave. Petain. I will be there every day whether I move up there to live or not. That would be more convenient than the office address down town as I never go there un-

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less I just must. The main thing is Please Write. It is terrible not to hear from any one. The last letters I have had from any of you were written before November, or rather about the first of November.

This is the barest outline of our wanderings, but will serve to bring you up to date on our movements. There is no time now to tell of all the changes that we see about us everywhere, of the calls that come to us everyday for help of some sort, of the sad sad plight of many of our friends, and of the city we love so dearly. Every one in Shanghai is busy with some sort of relief work, and of course I am already getting in on some of that work. What the end will be, or how it will affect our future work I do not know. One day at a time.

I hope you are all well. And how I hope that I will get some word from some of you soon.

Much love to each and all,

Dear Mary,

I haven't heard from any one in America since some time early in December when I got a letter from you dated about the end of October and one from my home dated Nov. 2. I have not heard from Harriet since a bare paragraph which she wrote Oct. 14th and which reached me in December. Mail sent to Hanking is probably gone. Do not send anything there, either for me or for Lumer. It simply will not be delivered. There is nothing there. Most of the city has been burned, and there is no postal connection with the outside world at all. I will be here till into June anyway, so better send everything here.

There is a boat tomorrow so I am anxious to get these letters off then. I hope you are all well, and living a more normal life than has been my lot for the last few weeks. Please share this letter with any members of the family who may be interested. I am sending a copy to Harriet and one to my home.

Much love,

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