

Anking, Anhwei
October 26, 1932

Dear Folk:

While I feel like it, and things are still new to me, I'd better get another letter off to you. Pretty soon I can see I'll be very busy studying Chinese, but as yet our studies aren't so heavy. Its an awful temptation to me to watch the other boys out on the basketball field and to know that I have to go easy, but to make up for it I take most of my exercise in a walk of an hour or more every afternoon. We are just about a minute's walk from the north gate of the city which leads right out into the country, so that for the last days I've been seeing something of Chinese country life. Several hours away are the mountains, several thousand feet high, perhaps that, perhaps not so high. Meanwhile all around the city are the rolling foothills. Just about a good walk for an hour or so will take me right back to the hills that face the Yangtze so that I can get a clear view of all the surrounding country. What will interest you more than the scenery, though, I am sure will be what I have seen of the people, so here goes. Instead of staring with the children this time, I'll start with the ladies.

Every day just over our compound wall there comes the noise of something being beaten with sticks, and for quite a while I was puzzled until when I asked about it someone told me it was the women doing their laundry. Then, having seen them do it outside the city wall, the reason for the noise was plain enough. In case you want pointers on how to do your laundry, here is the way its done. Get yourself a little bench, perhaps six inches wide on the top, about three feet long, and with legs a foot or so high. Then go find a stream, or pond. Never mind if it isn't clear running water. It may for that matter be full of green scum, but as long as you can make or find a space that looks clear, why go right ahead. Put your little bench down in the water on one end, kneel down on it and then you are ready for work. I might add that you will also need a sort of paddle like thing. About the size of a pie roller, only flattened out, but a good solid paddle anyway. Then just take your clothes, rinse them out, and putting them in a pile on the end of your bench, go to work beating away on them, dip them in the water every once in a while, and when you think you've beaten them sufficiently, rinse them out and put your clothes in the basket you brought along. Of course, I'm not saying what that will do to your clothes, at least the folk around here have told me that when they do your clothes native fashion it sometimes beats holes right in them. If you have ink spots for instance, they'll just beat and beat until its gone, perhaps the cloth will be too, but evidently that doesn't matter as long as the offending spot is gone.

I might mention that I do hope my own clothes will not be done that way. I think I told you of the prices on laundry in Shanghai. Well in Anking they're even more ridiculous. My laundry will cost me 3½ max per piece, two socks counted as one piece. Imagine that when it is reduced to American money. But while things seem so cheap, don't imagine that this a regular paradise of prices. We pay \$4.70 for a tin of kerosene oil, and with no heat in our rooms, I'm just wondering how long a tin will last if we are to get any comfort out of it at all. Then too, while things seem so cheap, of course, our remittances come in max and not in American money. So that evens it up, and the Lord has arranged for the exchange to be so abnormal, so that this last year or so, despite the fact that money from the homelands has been less than normal, when exchanged into Chinese money it has done very well.

But to go back to the women. I thought bound feet were a thing of the past, but the vast majority of women I've seen have bound feet. Its pitiful to see these poor women, some of them under heavy loads trying to hobble along on their bound feet that are little more than stumps. Look up the National Geographic to see what they look like. It surely is a pitiful sight.

Now having spoken of the ladies, I think I'll go back to the children. I mentioned before that the impression I got of China was that every one in it was bearing a burden. Even the little boys and girls. Tonight as I went out on my walk, I met little fellows Paul's size and smaller out in the hills, raking grass together, tying it in bundles, and then swinging it over their carrying poles and away home. Our children certainly ought to be thankful that they were born in America instead of China. Helen would never have the time to herself she has now she's too big and strong to play around. Out in the field with her to find grass to burn. Do you remember what the scripture says about the grass withering and being cast into the oven. Fuel being scarce, that is what is burned in many a home. Hence you see what a good illustration the Lord uses for the fleetingness of life. Grass today, fuel for the oven that last just a minute in burning tomorrow. But with all their heavy loads, and you'll see the little fellows just staggering along in their little dog trot fashion, they are still a cheery bunch. I can almost always get a smile from them. Yesterday I stopped aside in the narrow path between rice fields to let three little lads pass and the last one pulled up his hand in salute. They surely are likeable little people.

I've told you about the graves on the hillsides. The more I go out walking, the more I am impressed with the thousands of graves all around this side of Anking. I haven't seen the other side yet. There must be square miles of grave yards, graves in some places just as thick as you can see. Just little mounds, not that they are well cared for like grave yards at home. Once in a while a fresh one will have the earth carefully patted around it, and many of the mounds have a sort of horse shoe mound around the central part, while many of them also have grave stones, but the hills aren't specially set apart for burying grounds evidently. The paths and roads wind around just the same as ever, and perhaps as you go walking along over a path you will suddenly find yourself and the path walking right over the top of a grave.

Another thing I've been interested in has been trenches. Gen. Gordon, known as Chinese Gordon and a fine Christian man, too, years ago defended some of the Yangtze cities during the Tai ping rebellion at the request of the Empress to the British Government. His old trenches are all about the city. Huge things they are, I can hardly look over the top of some of them, and through these years and years the edges have crumbled away until they are now just great gullies. Some of you younger folk get hold of the life of Chinese Gordon and read about him. It will be well worth your while. Then beside these very old trenches, there are modern ones that were dug just a year or so ago, when they had a landit scare. They too are all over the hillsides, but just little bits of ones these are. But to show you how profuse the graves are, and how little they are regarded, many a time I've seen trenches run right into and through coffins. All along one can see the white plaster remains of the coffins that have been dug into. I haven't seen any bones, perhaps because when the coffins are so far rotted away the bones are all gone. These Chinese coffins are huge things, made of heavy logs two or more inches thick, and put together very strongly with pitch. Beside putting them underground and covering them with a mound, one can often see them standing about the hillsides just covered with a reed mat. The right time for burial hasn't come yet, and Mr. Shepherd told us the other day that you are likely to hear some man wants to bury his wife, and then you'll likely as not find out she has been dead for years. Then too they have little white mud brick houses, like miniature mausoleums, covered with tiles all over the hills where many of the coffins are kept. Somebody said these were Moslem burying places, I don't know whether they are or not. At any rate there they are, just thousands and thousands of graves, and one cannot help but wonder how many will ever see the resurrection of the Just.

