

Prisms of China: Canadian Women Missionaries in China, 1904-1945

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Of History

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## ABSTRACT

### **Prisms of China: Canadian Women Missionaries in China, 1904-1945**

Deborah Shulman, Ph.D.  
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This thesis focuses on three remarkable Canadian women (Lena Jolliffe, Mary Lamb and Agnes Hilliard) who lived and worked in Sichuan, China as Christian missionaries during the chaotic first half of the twentieth century. The thesis is built around three overarching themes: the experiences of these three Westerners in China who were there as missionaries, as women and as Canadians; their contributions to China; and their impact back in Canada.

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter introduces the study, provides an overview of the relevant historical context in China, and surveys the available English-language scholarly secondary source materials. Chapters Two, Three and Four deal respectively with each of the women, beginning with biographical sketches; providing overviews of the available archival materials; piecing together chronologically and thematically their individual China experiences and observations; and concluding with thematically-driven analytical overviews of their China experiences. Chapter Five thematically and comparatively revisits the China journeys of the three women. The sources on which this thesis is based are the letters and diaries of the women which have been deposited in the United Church of Canada archives in Toronto. The recipients of the letters were almost always family members or church friends.

These three heroic Canadian women missionaries were effectively windows on China whose writings extend our understanding of China and its people. The thesis suggests that as missionaries, these women were more highly integrated into China than many other Westerners; that as missionary women, they were uniquely able to have direct and sustained contact with Chinese women; and that as Canadians, they were treated differently from other Westerners, occasionally serving as power brokers at the local level. These three women and their colleagues impacted upon China simply by being there as alternative role models; by their educational activities and public health instruction; and by initiating the liberation of Chinese women from their traditional restraints. They also had a significant impact upon Canada, particularly through their letters and furlough visits, which enhanced Canadian understanding of China.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This is a doctoral thesis about three fascinating Canadian women who lived and worked in China as Christian missionaries during a forty year period at the beginning of the twentieth century. The first section of this three-part introductory chapter sets out the parameters and the focus of the study and then introduces each of three main characters in the narrative and analysis that follows. The second section is designed to provide the non-specialist in modern Chinese history with an overview of the Chinese historical context in which these three women and their colleagues operated as Christian missionaries in China. The third section surveys the available English-language scholarly secondary source materials on the Western presence and particularly the Western missionary presence in China.

#### **The Focus of this Study**

*Prisms of China* explores the quite incredible journeys of three remarkable Canadian women – Lena Jolliffe, Mary Lamb and Agnes Hilliard - who worked in West China (present day Sichuan province) in the first half of the twentieth century. These were years which witnessed the final collapse of the last Chinese dynasty and the imminent victory of the Chinese Communists which would, in turn, signal the departure of virtually all Western Christian missionaries from China. The narratives of the women's lives evoke images of China that are almost tactile in their richness. They encourage the reader to consider the changing perceptions of China that the three women experienced, from each

of their initial perceptions of China to their changing understanding as they learned more about the country and interacted with its people.

The sources from which their lives in China have emerged are their personal papers which have been deposited in the United Church of Canada archives in Toronto. These papers include diaries and letters. The diaries, written by two of the women, have a fairly diverse range of entries, from brief notations to longer stories. The letters, written by all three women, have detailed reports of their experiences and impressions of life in China. The recipients of the letters are almost always family members or church friends and colleagues; the tone and content of the letters are almost always more informal to the former group and somewhat more formal and occasionally more cautious to the latter group.

These three women became members of a very active Canadian foreign mission field. In 1890 the Canadian Methodist General Conference authorized the formation of a China mission field in West China. The first contingent of Canadians, which included seven missionaries (one of whom was from the Woman's Missionary Society), began their work in the summer of 1891. Sichuan province, at the end of the nineteenth century had an approximate population of sixty million in an area that was somewhat smaller than the province of Ontario. It was very isolated from the rest of China, cut off by mountains at its eastern border, and only accessible by the Yangzi River (which was a 2,000 mile trip that took approximately three months at that time). When this first group of Canadian Methodists arrived in Chengdu, West China, they joined other established missionary



groups, among them Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Quaker, Baptist and China Inland Movement missionaries. Despite their seemingly late arrival in the field, Canadian Methodists soon established a significant contingent in the province. They immediately created an institutional presence, as they began the construction of a mission house, chapel, school room and medical dispensary. This sort of construction would be emulated in each city to which they expanded, and eventually their properties included the impressive West China Union University in Chengdu, a project that was initiated by the Canadian Methodists and supported by the Quakers, Baptists and Episcopal Methodists. By 1925, after a surge of mission building in China, the Canadian Methodists had a very considerable presence in the province. The combined annual expenditures (of the Woman's Missionary Society and the General Board of the Methodist Church) were nearly \$400,000; there were thirty-eight Woman's Missionary Society missionaries assigned to the region (including those on furlough) and eighty men (mostly with wives). As well, as the extensive operations in the major West China cities (Chengdu, Kiating, Junghsien, Jenshow, Penghsien, Tzelieutsing, Luchow, Chungking, Chungchow and Foochow) there were also more than sixty district outstations. There were evangelical, educational and medical missionaries. As well, there was an impressive printing and publishing business which produced a range of missionary literature. In the 1910s, their churches in China had a membership of approximately 1,700 and by the 1920s this membership had increased to more than 3,000. However, mission historian Neil Semple advises that although many Chinese took advantage of Methodist facilities, it is less clear how many understood and fully accepted the Christian teachings that they had adopted.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Neil Semple, *The Lord's Dominion: the History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996). The facts and figures in the growth of the Canadian mission are from Chapter 12.

The United Church of Canada Archives has, in its holdings, the personal papers of many of the China missionaries. These three women were chosen for several reasons: they each worked in the same district (so that events, experiences and people would overlap); they had different types of assignments; they had different family responsibilities; and their papers were reasonably legible and filled with content. It was hoped that in this way, the women would be fairly representative of the women missionaries in China during this period and that their stories would reveal new information about the Western experience in China. The papers of Lena, Mary and Agnes fulfilled each of these qualifications, and with the caveat the China that would be recreated in the thesis must be the China in which the women lived (rather than attaching today's prejudices onto yesterday's sources), the *Prisms of China* developed.

Lena (Dunfield) Jolliffe was the first of these women to go to China. Born in 1879, she was just twenty-four years old when she received her appointment to the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church and was assigned to missionary work in its West China (Sichuan) mission field. She lived in China from 1904 to 1944; she married, gave birth to children and raised her family in West China, and only returned to Canada for intermittent furloughs. She and her family lived in several cities in China; however, the work in which she was involved remained quite consistent throughout the years that she was there. Although she was a full-fledged missionary when she left Canada for China, she relinquished her status and resigned from the Woman's Missionary Society when she married fellow Canadian missionary Richard Orlando Jolliffe (1874-1959) a

year after her arrival in China. From that time forward, she became what we might refer to as “a missionary wife.” Her personal papers tell the story of a woman who never really relinquished her commitment to missionary work; rather, she became a partner to her husband in his missionary work. He was appointed as an evangelical missionary, and his wife (and even his children) frequently accompanied him on his travels.

Mary Letitia Lamb, also born in 1879, had a career which in some respects was almost a mirror image of that of Lena Jolliffe. Mary did not go to China until she was forty years old, in 1919, and she remained there for a little more than twenty years. She lived in several West China cities and also only returned to Canada for her furloughs. She had hoped to go to China as a missionary much earlier in her life, but family commitments had kept her in Canada. As soon as she was freed from her familial responsibilities, she contacted the General Board of the Methodist Church in order to find out if she might still have the opportunity to work in China. She was fortunate that there was a position which was offered to her, but disappointed because she was told (and already knew) that she was considered far too old to become a novice missionary. She went to China as the Matron of the Canadian School in Chengdu in Sichuan province; she was put in charge of the boarding school and everything other than academic matters for the children of the West China missionaries. Nevertheless, Mary was unable to abandon her goal of being a missionary, and after her first term in China, she resigned from her position at the General Board of the (by then) United Church and was immediately appointed by the Woman’s Missionary Society. She remained in China for two further terms under the Society and worked with great energy and commitment as an evangelical missionary. She

spent most of her time in West China's cities, but managed to do some country work as well. She moved back to Canada when she was sixty years old, although she might very well have returned to China for another term had she not, once again, been needed by her family in Canada.

Agnes Hilliard was born in 1915 and moved to China at the age of twenty-three. Agnes arrived in China in 1938 as a newlywed. Her husband, Irwin Hilliard (1911-2000), had very recently been appointed as a medical missionary in West China by the United Church of Canada's General Board. This Board had succeeded the Methodist Board under which Mary had first come to China. The couple celebrated their honeymoon aboard the ship that carried them to China. In their eyes, they were beginning two of the most important parts of their lives; they had just been married, and they were about to become missionaries. Agnes, unique among the three women, was never a missionary in her own right; she went to China because she believed that mission work was very important and as well, because the man that she loved had become a China missionary. She not only supported him in his work, but also participated in medical and non-medical mission related activities herself. However, she was consciously focused on a third type of work, being a homemaker. She gave birth to two children while living in China. The Hilliards returned to Canada in 1945 after only one term in China.

These three individual women are representative of, and contribute to our understanding of the Western encounter with China. They provide examples of women's unique perspectives on the changing social situation in China. Canadian missionary women were

particularly valuable to the China missionary enterprise as they alone were able to work directly with Chinese women. Their perceptions of womanhood and women's lives, culturally grounded in the Canadian Christian homes and schools in which they grew up, accompanied them to China and formed the context in which they began their new work. Women missionaries had a particular perspective on Chinese women, and expected to help to change the traditional subservience of the women with whom they interacted. As well, China missionary work was an opportunity for Canadian women to live independently; to experience the adventure of living and working far from their birthplace; to neglect (or ignore) the societal expectation of marriage and children; to contribute to the welfare of others; and perhaps even to play a role in the modernization of another country.<sup>2</sup> As well, these missionary women had the unique opportunity to engage socially with Chinese women: to invite them (and their husbands) to their homes for dinner; to ask them to afternoon tea and entertainment; and even to share in the planning of Chinese Christian weddings. Finally, these three women reflect a particularly Canadian dimension of the Western experience in China; neither Canadians nor Chinese had a particularly strong national identity in the early twentieth century, and the lives of the three Canadian women in China, each of which was a long and open-ended journey rather than a distinct and demarcated destination, are particularly representative of the Canadian experience in China.

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<sup>2</sup> For similar questions about missionaries in the Canadian north, see Myra Rutherdale, *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002). Among the questions that she asks are why the women were attracted to mission work, whether they doubted their religious mission, whether they saw mission work as a calling or were attracted to it for adventure. She also discusses the women's perceptions of the culture of their host society.

The lives and work of these three women also demonstrate the specific contributions of Canadian women missionaries in China. These women were eager to work with Chinese people; indeed, they professed a love for Chinese people. However, they had come to China in order to change it, and the Chinese people with whom they shared their dream, inherently presented the very attributes that the missionary women hoped to change. Each of them contributed to the gradually changing social hierarchy as they encouraged changes to the role and status of women that was grounded in centuries of traditional Chinese society. Bible studies encouraged a revolutionary change to the lives of some of the Chinese women with whom these missionary women worked, as the women learned how to read, and literacy appeared in a previously untouched part of the population. As well, the Canadian women missionaries introduced invaluable household medical awareness; exposed Chinese women to a non-Chinese culture and lifestyle; and, in their independence and determination, provided role models, particularly for the Chinese girls and younger women with whom they worked.

The impact of the work of the three women was felt in Canada as well. The individuality of each woman undoubtedly assured that there was variation in the impact of their work on Canadians. Among the variables were the correspondence they maintained with family and friends; the public speaking tours they undertook while on furlough; their length of service in China; and even the decision whether or not to deposit their personal papers in the United Church archives. Nonetheless, there are few senior adult Canadians, Protestant or Catholic, who do not have childhood recollections of stories about China because of the work of Canadian missionaries. Canadian interest in China ranged from mild interest,

to concern, to the passionate engagement and commitment of more limited numbers of Canadians. The missionaries undoubtedly transmitted some misperceptions of China which became a basis for misunderstanding China. Nevertheless, tracking and examining the genesis and development of misunderstandings is historically useful. Nevertheless, the personal contacts that emanated directly and indirectly from the work of these missionaries helped to shape mutual understanding and communication between Canadians and Chinese because the women (and their colleagues) were effectively windows on China.

The China journeys of our three women had significant impact on China, Canada and themselves. Their accounts of their lives in China were remarkably prism-like; as they gathered new impressions of the people and their surroundings through their daily experiences, their stories altered, sometimes radically, but more often with great subtlety. The prisms reflect and represent the journeys that each of them, and in a larger sense Westerners, took as they lived and worked in China.

This thesis consists of four additional chapters. Chapters Two, Three and Four deal respectively with Lena (Dunfield) Jolliffe, Mary Letitia Lamb and Agnes Hilliard. Each of these three chapters begins with a brief biographical sketch; provides an overview of the available archival materials; pieces together chronologically and thematically their individual China experiences and observations; and concludes with an overview which provides analytical “Perspectives” on their China experiences in light of the themes identified in the introduction. Chapter Five revisits the journeys of the three women in

China. It provides an analytical overview of their combined China experiences and returns, once again, to the themes identified in the introduction and throughout the analytical sections in each of the narrative chapters.

### **The Historical Context in China**

The government of China, which should have been responsible for managing the underpinnings of Chinese life, was in considerable difficulty throughout the years in which these women missionaries from Canada lived in China. The twentieth century was ushered in with events that could be ignored neither by China's leaders nor by Westerners who had any interest in China. The Boxer Uprising of 1900, carried out by members of the *Yihequan* (Righteous and Harmonious Fists) can be seen as a representation of the difficulties that were facing China: flood and famine in northern Shandong (1898 and 1900); the overt and seemingly culturally insensitive presence of foreigners (particularly evident in the construction of railways); the inability of the government to help its citizens; and the resultant upsurge of popular discontent. The Boxers' surge of rage, initially directed at the Chinese government, but which shifted its attention to Chinese Christians and Christian missionaries (particularly Roman Catholics) when the rebels received the support of the Qing officials, resulted in the two-month seizure of the foreign diplomatic legations in Beijing in the summer of 1900. The drama also played itself out beyond China's borders, as international correspondents supplied the news to foreigners who had, by the early twentieth century, a multi-faceted agenda in China. The imperial court declared war on the treaty powers (Western countries which had acquired special privileges in China in the previous century), but the governors of China's



southern provinces refused to support this declaration. An international relief expedition arrived in Beijing, secured the safety of the hostages, and forced the imperial court to flee from the capital. Eventually the international powers, as they had done in the past, imposed a severe settlement which punished and humiliated China and financially benefited themselves. These events occurred in just two months; on June 13, 1900 the Boxers entered Beijing and on August 15, 1900 an international military force entered the legation quarter. Yet these two months encapsulated the difficulties and disarray in which China found itself at the beginning of the century and in the decades to follow.<sup>3</sup>

The Qing dynasty (1644-1912) floundered in its last years, as its leadership tried to respond to the difficulties that it encountered. The Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908), the paramount person in the imperial court, was and continued to be preoccupied with two overarching goals: the preservation of the dynasty and the perpetuation of her leadership of the country. Cixi, a remarkably powerful Chinese woman, surrounded herself with men who supplied her with essentially traditional, conservative suggestions and advice about the issues that confronted the government.<sup>4</sup> It appears to have been a reactive rather than an active government; if placed within the Chinese historical concept of the “dynastic cycle,” the Empress dowager simply did not have the military strength

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<sup>3</sup> For accounts of the Boxer Movement, see Paul A. Cohen, *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience and Myth* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Joseph W. Esherick, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Victor Purcell, *The Boxer Uprising: a Background Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); and Chester Tan, *The Boxer Catastrophe* (New York: Octagon Books, 1967).

<sup>4</sup> For accounts of the Empress Dowager, see J.O.P. Bland and E. Backhouse, *China Under the Empress Dowager, Being the History of the Life and Times of Tzu Hsi* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914); Charlotte Haldane, *The Last Great Empress of China* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965); Sterling Seagrave, *Dragon Lady: The Life and Legend of the Last Empress of China* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992); and Marina Warner, *The Dragon Empress: The Life and Times of Tzu-hsi, Empress Dowager of China, 1835-1908* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

and vision of conquering emperors or the administrative strengths of their successors.

The uprising of the Boxers, the occurrence of floods, droughts and famines, and the lack of support from the southern governors (and their concurrent strengthening of their own provincial armies) all pointed to an imperial government that was in decline. Decisions which were made frequently overturned pronouncements that had been previously made; these policy changes occurred because circumstances were increasingly uncontrolled.

The measures that were taken to save the government frequently contributed to its eventual downfall.<sup>5</sup>

Westerners first began traveling to China with any frequency in the sixteenth century. Early contacts were typically motivated by missionary or commercial interest or by the spirit of adventure. These early contacts were relatively few in number and certainly not very significant from the Chinese point of view. In the late eighteenth century, Britain hoped to rectify this situation, and sent an ultimately unsuccessful official delegation under Lord McCartney to China in 1792 to 1793. The fury that the Boxers had unleashed upon foreigners in China was not without a strong historical context: the determination of the West to engage China in one way or another was impressive. By the early decades of the nineteenth century, as the newly industrialized countries of Western Europe began to

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<sup>5</sup> The abolition of the examination system in 1906 was the most drastic of all the reforms that were passed by the government in the hope of saving the dynasty in the years after the collapse of the Boxers. The civil service examination system was integral not only to the government but also to the Confucian culture of traditional China. For accounts of the Qing reform efforts, see Meribeth Cameron, *The Reform Movement in China, 1898-1912* (New York: Octagon Books, 1963 [c. 1931]); Wolfgang Franke, *The Reform and Abolition of the Traditional Chinese Examination System* (Cambridge: East Asian Research Centre, 1963 [c. 1960]); Hsiao Kung-chuan, *A Modern China and A New World: K'ang Yu-wei, Reformer and Utopian, 1858-1927* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975); and Samuel I. Woodbridge, *China's Only Hope: An Appeal by her Greatest Viceroy, Chang Chih-tung* (New York, Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1900).

look beyond their own borders, they developed a rather proprietary interest in China. Generally speaking, in the nineteenth century three interest groups - business, diplomatic and religious - thought that they would benefit from exchanges with China. Initially, businessmen sought admission to China for mutual gain and they fully expected China to reap some of the benefits of commercial exchanges.<sup>6</sup> Government officials wanted to introduce and welcome China to the relatively new, international family of nations.<sup>7</sup> Christian churches expected to continue their work, which had been interrupted by events such as the Rites Controversy of the previous century, and convert China's masses.<sup>8</sup> China was an impressively large country, both geographically and demographically, and it was assumed by Westerners that it would open itself to their expectations. British attempts to establish mutually beneficial relationships with China failed miserably. The rather astonishing misunderstandings that occurred between the businessmen and government officials who were sent to China by Britain, and the Chinese imperial throne which received (or did not receive) the British visitors, might have been comical if they had not led to devastating results for China. Foreign interest and subsequent presence in China grew remarkably in the hundred-year period that culminated in the expulsion of virtually all international presence in 1949, with the victory of the Communists and the

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the earliest example of Western merchant interest in China, see Chang T'ien-tse, *Sino-Portuguese Trade from 1514-1644* (London: E.J. Brill, 1969).

<sup>7</sup> The Rites Controversy, a conflict between China's emperor Kangxi (1654-1722) and the Catholic church, so alienated Kangxi that he expelled many of the Catholic missionaries in China. The Jesuits, with whom Kangxi had reached an agreement regarding the co-existence of Chinese (Confucian) rites and Christian worship, were overruled by the Catholic church in Rome. See Sir George Staunton, *An Authentic Account of the Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China* (London, Printed for J. Stockdale, 1797).

<sup>8</sup> For readings on early Jesuit contacts, see George H. Dunne, *Generation of Giants: The Story of the Jesuits in China in the Last Decades of the Ming Dynasty* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962) and Arnold H. Rowbotham, *Missionary and Mandarin: The Jesuits at the Court of China* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966 [c 1942]).

restoration of the historically isolationist policies of traditional China. The most notorious change to these age-old policies occurred in the middle of the nineteenth century, when Britain, which had sought to bring China into the newly established international community of nations (with diplomatic, economic and even religious implications), signed the Treaty of Nanjing (1842) with China. This treaty, imposed by Britain at the end of the infamous Opium War (1839-1842), initiated a process which led to the collapse of the old order and the emergence of a new order over time. This settlement, which was the first of many so-called “unequal treaties,” called upon China to alter its cultural identity as well. No longer willing to allow China to consider itself the Middle Kingdom (*zhongguo*), the centre of its own self-sufficient world, the countries of Western Europe and the United States forcefully opened China to the challenges of modernity. Foreign traders became foreign business interests, foreign official presence became foreign consulates and armed forces, and foreign religious interests became foreign missionaries, all on China’s soil.<sup>9</sup>

The outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864) and the fearless march of the millions of followers who joined its armies in south China and marched north to Nanjing, was in large part a result of the internal and external pressures raging in China at the time. A combination of factors had made the southern provinces of China the most vulnerable to rebellion: lingering anti-Qing sentiment in South China (which was the last part of China seized by the invading Manchus in the mid-seventeenth century); the fact that the Opium

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<sup>9</sup> For accounts of the Opium War and its aftermath, see Chang Hsin-pao, *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); John King Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: the Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953); Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951); and Arthur Waley, *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958).

wars had taken place on land and water in South China; the devastating after-effects of the wars (among them the humiliation of loss and piracy on their rivers); and the great distance from the central government (denying them some of the benefits bestowed by the government and allowing rebel groups to grow unheeded).<sup>10</sup> Christian missionaries undoubtedly had an influence upon the Taiping's founder, Hong Xiuquan (1813-1864), and in its early days the movement was of interest to Western missionaries. After all, an organization that could amass a significant following of Chinese Christians could ostensibly have extended the influence of Christianity in China. However, the missionaries and other Westerners in China quickly realized that they were unable to support the Taiping; the missionaries had to admit that the Christianity of the Taiping bore little resemblance to their own religious beliefs, and all of the foreigners realized the importance of a stable China environment in which they might function.<sup>11</sup> The Taiping movement became a widespread rebellion with remarkable although brief success. It threatened to overthrow the imperial government, which would have created an unpredictable situation in China, one in which the recently acquired treaty rights might well have been lost. As well, the Taiping were not particularly interested in Western support. Despite having roots in the unsettled southern coastal areas that had suffered from the events of the Opium War, they were a Chinese movement.

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<sup>10</sup> Vincent Shih, *The Taiping Ideology: its Sources, Interpretations and Influences* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967). The role of Christianity in the Taiping movement is also found in Eugene Powers Boardman, *Christian Influence Upon the Ideology of the Taiping Rebellion* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952).

<sup>11</sup> For accounts of the West and the Taipings, see J.S. Gregory, *Great Britain and the Taipings* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1969) and Teng Ssu-yu, *The Taiping Rebellion and the Western Powers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

The Qing dynasty, and with it the system of imperial government, eventually collapsed under the weight of the challenges that it faced. This happened despite the great efforts of the dynasty and its Confucian officials to reform politically, militarily and intellectually so that the Imperial order might be saved. The Tongzhi Restoration of the 1860s and 1870s was a period in which the government made concerted efforts to “self-strengthen” or revitalize itself using a combination of Confucian morality and Western technology.<sup>12</sup> Two decades later, there was a further effort to save Confucian China with the far-reaching but ultimately inconsequential Reform Movement of 1898.

The revolution of 1911 led to the beginnings of a new form of government which struggled to find its identity until the Communist victory in 1949.<sup>13</sup> The Guomindang (Nationalist) government, first under the direction of Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925)<sup>14</sup> and then under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek (1888-1975) struggled to be the central government of China in the intervening years.<sup>15</sup> However, the demise of the dynasty had left a vacuum that this new government was unable to successfully fill; China, with its strong, geographically-based pull of regionalism, succumbed to an era of warlord

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<sup>12</sup> For readings on the efforts to change China, see Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism; the T'ung-chih Restoration, 1862-1874* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1957); and Joseph Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1964-1965).

<sup>13</sup> The revolution itself was a remarkably un-revolutionary event; arguably it was less revolutionary to China's future than the dissolution of the examination system five years earlier.

<sup>14</sup> For accounts of Sun Yat-sen, see Marie-Claire Bergere, *Sun Yat-sen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Harold Schiffrin, *Sun Yat-sen and the Origins of the Chinese Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Lyman Sharman, *Sun Yat-sen: His Life and Its Meaning* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1965 [c. 1934]); and C. Martin Wilbur, *Sun Yat-sen, Frustrated Patriot* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).

<sup>15</sup> For an account of Chiang Kai-shek, see Loh Pichon Pei Yung, *The Early Chiang Kai-shek: a Study of his Personality and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971).

leadership, in which strongmen with their own armies fought among themselves for control of the regions of China.<sup>16</sup> From 1911 to 1927 these men guided the country through its warlord era, years that saw the country ruled by armed bullies who were motivated by self-interest. The Northern Expedition (1926-1928), the military campaign by allied Nationalist and Communist forces (The National Revolutionary Army) led by Chiang Kai-shek, swept through China from Guangzhou in the south to Mukden in the north, in order to bring the warlords under control and to unify China under one government.<sup>17</sup> In 1928, with China under his nominal rule, Chiang established the capital for his Guomintang government in Nanjing.<sup>18</sup> With the conclusion of the Northern Expedition, Chiang reverted to his focus on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the major challenge to his political success. His efforts to extinguish it eventually provoked the Communists to embark upon the now famous Long March (1934-1935) in which 100,000 men and women attempted to walk approximately 6,000 miles, from their stronghold in Jianxi all the way to northern Yan'an. Only ten percent of the people who set out completed the March; however, these survivors formed the core group of an

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<sup>16</sup> For accounts of China's warlords, see Jerome Chen, *Yuan Shih-k'ai, 1859-1916* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1972); Ch'i Hsi-sheng, *Warlord Politics in China, 1916-1928* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1976); Donald Gillin, *Warlord Yen hsi-shan in Shansi Province, 1911-1949* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967); Edward A. McCord, *The Power of the Gun: The Emergence of Modern Chinese Warlordism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and James Sheridan, *Chinese Warlord: The Career of Feng Yu-hsiang* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1966).

<sup>17</sup> For an account of the Northern Expedition, see Donald A. Jordan, *The Northern Expedition: China's Nationalist Revolution of 1926-1928* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976).

<sup>18</sup> For readings on the GMD government, see Ch'ien Tuan-sheng, *The Government and Politics of China, 1912-1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970); Lloyd Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution: China under Nationalist Rule, 1927-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974); Paul K. Sih, ed., *The Sreuous Decade: China's Nation-Building Efforts, 1927-1937* (Jamaica, New York: St. John's University Press, 1970); and Tien Hung-mao, *Government and Politics in Kuomintang China, 1927-1937* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1972).

immensely self-confident, cohesive movement that, under the leadership of Mao Zedong (1893-1976), eventually became the government of China.<sup>19</sup>

The Chinese people were undeniably affected by the inability of their leaders to effectively manage the country during these years. Their villages, towns and cities were places where the struggles for power were played out. The inhabitants became the victims of armies that marched through their streets; the soldiers required food and housing and families were forced to share their supplies and homes with them. Local young men were unwillingly conscripted into the armies; boys as young as fourteen years old were taken from the streets by the same men who were living in the front rooms of their family homes. It was frequently unclear whom the army represented, as soldiers from one province marched into a neighboring province, and fought their battles in the fields and streets of China. The armies of the warlords, who were barely identifiable, were eventually joined or replaced by the armies of the Communists and Nationalists. Meanwhile, in the large urban centers, other Chinese people, the intellectuals sought like-minded men and women in their efforts to identify new ways to save China. The need to strengthen China was evident; “modernization” became the means to achieve divergent goals for many of these intellectuals. The May Fourth movement (1919) and the New Culture movement are evidence of the struggles of a generation that had received a traditional, Confucian education and then tried to find new ways to approach their

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<sup>19</sup> For readings on the early years of the Chinese Communist Party, see Chalmers Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1937-1945* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1962); Robert North, *Moscow and the Chinese Communists* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963); Mark Selden, *The Yanan Way in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); and Dick Wilson, *The Long March of 1935: The Epic of Chinese Communism's Survival* (London: Hamilton, 1971).



country's problems.<sup>20</sup> They were the advance wave of social, intellectual and political change, and some of them went on to create the central governments of China. As the years without cohesive government continued, the economy suffered; prices rose, food became scarce and all of the Chinese people felt the impact of the loss of strong central authority and were more amenable to revolutionary change.

China was unable to limit its focus to critical domestic problems when it was drawn into a war with Japan in 1937. Six years earlier, in 1931, Japan had seized control of the industrial, resource-rich province of Manchuria. In 1937, having wrested control of Japan from its political parties, the Japanese military began its unrelenting war in China. The occupation of China resulted in the existence of "three Chinas." The Japanese military controlled the largest area of China, Manchuria and the entire eastern seaboard of China and the major cities of eastern China. In 1940 the Japanese established a puppet regime in the Chinese capital city of Nanjing. The Nationalist government abandoned Nanjing in December 1937 following the ghastly events which have come to be known as the Rape of Nanjing and the subsequent fall of the city to the Japanese, and moved to its wartime capital to Chongqing in Sichuan province. Many refugees, among them university professors and students, as well as business people, followed the government to Sichuan,

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<sup>20</sup> For readings on the May Fourth Movement and its aftermath, see Chow Tse-tung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960); John Israel, *Student Nationalism in China, 1927-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966); Joseph Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*; Maurice Meisner, *Li Ta-chao and the Origins of Chinese Marxism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

to the cities of Chongqing as well as Chengdu. Finally, the Communists became well-established in the region surrounding Yan'an in north central China.<sup>21</sup>

With the surrender of the Japanese in August 1945, China was left to face its domestic problems. Chiang Kai-shek had temporarily put aside his campaign against the Communists, whom he had labeled “the enemy within,” and focused on the devastating occupation of the Japanese military. However, with the departure of the Japanese, the Communists and the Nationalists embarked upon a civil war that would take four years to wear itself out (1945-1949).<sup>22</sup> The victorious Communist Party, which inherited the problems that had faced Cixi and her officials at the turn of the century, would follow a course that was almost certainly never envisioned by the Empress Dowager. After 1949 the Canadian missionary enterprise (and indeed the Western missionary effort) in China came to an abrupt halt. Missionaries went home, their Christian followers were left to fend for themselves and their properties in China were confiscated by the Chinese or local governments. For the most part, China, in reasserting its national identity and independence, chose isolation rather than further contact with the Western world

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<sup>21</sup> For accounts of the Sino-Japanese War, see and John Hunter Boyle, *China and Japan at War, 1937-1945: The Politics of Collaboration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972); Gerald Bunker, *The Peace Conspiracy: Wang Ching-wei and the China War, 1937-1941* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972); Lloyd Eastman, *Seeds of Destruction: Nationalist China in War and Revolution, 1937-1949* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1984); and Leon Rosinger, *China's Wartime Politics, 1937-1944* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1944).

<sup>22</sup> For analysis of the Civil War, see Lionel Max Chassin, *The Communist Conquest of China: A History of the Civil War, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); Pichon P.Y. Loh, *The Kuomintang Debacle of 1949: Conquest or Collapse?* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1965); John Melby, *The Mandate of Heaven, Record of a Civil War: China, 1945-1949* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968); and Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945-1949* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1978).

(including the world of Christian missionaries). Western countries, fearful of a Communist China, did little to discourage this isolation.

### **A Review of the Scholarly Literature on Westerners and Western Missionaries in China**

This section reviews the scholarly literature on Westerners and Western missionaries in China from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century, with an emphasis on Western missionaries and more particularly on Canadian missionaries. These works provided the intellectual and historiographical foundation and context for the thesis. The section first looks at the scholarly literature on the Western impact on China from the sixteenth century to the late nineteenth century. It then examines the literature on Christian missionary work in China.

The literature on Westerners in China is well-represented in Jonathan Spence's volume, *To Change China: Western Advisors in China, 1620-1960*.<sup>23</sup> Spence introduces his readers to an array of Westerners who traveled to China in order to bring expertise that was almost exclusively technical. Despite the hundreds of years that separated their lives, these Westerners shared a common understanding that China was in need of their services. These "advisors" each believed that despite the longevity of China, it had become a rather backward and unprogressive country, and that they, as Westerners, could philanthropically and undoubtedly paternalistically help China. They each unquestionably did have expertise that China lacked. Their goals were far less attainable than they had anticipated, however as China was less than eager to receive the help that

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<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Spence, *To Change China: Western Advisors in China, 1620-1960* (Boston: Little Brown, 1969).

was offered by these outsiders. In fact, as Spence suggests, the advisors themselves were the ones who gained the most from their journeys. These were adventurous, rather restless individuals who were curious about the world and ready to experience it. Their China work certainly enriched their own lives, despite the fact that they were not entirely successful in their missions. Over time, the paternalistic attitude of moral superiority that was intrinsic to Spence's early travelers shifted to a sense of entitlement.

The history of the Opium War has been a topic of particular interest for Western historians.<sup>24</sup> Two important books that paved the way for an understanding of this period are John Fairbank's *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: the Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854* and Chang Hsin-pao's *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War*. Fairbank, a seminal Western historian of China, explores the remarkably disconnected activities of the British and Chinese men who were appointed to negotiate a settlement to the Opium War. He not only discusses the activities of the negotiators, he also suggests that China was "responding to the West" throughout this period.<sup>25</sup> It appears that the more the Chinese misunderstood the intent of the West, the more the West pressed for greater presence in China. This idea that China responded to the West became an integral focus of Western scholars' understanding of the history of China during the years following the Opium War, as China entered a series of "unequal treaties" with other Western European countries and the United States. Giving agency back to the Chinese

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<sup>24</sup> See footnote 4 in Chapter One for readings on the Opium War.

<sup>25</sup> This discussion can be found in Teng Ssu-yu and John K. Fairbank, eds., *China's Response to the West: A Documentary Survey, 1839-1923* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

has been difficult for Western historians, as the demands that the West has made upon China since the mid-nineteenth century were almost unrelenting, arguably ceasing only when Mao Zedong forcibly ejected all Westerners from China after the victory of the Communists in China's civil war (1945-1949). The establishment of mutually beneficial and amenable relations between the West and China has been a complex process since that time. Chang, a former student of Fairbank (who made a considerable mark on the scholarship of Chinese history both in his own impressive publications and those of his many students) has a clear and appealing thesis: that the introduction of the opium trade by the British, in an effort to redress the trade imbalance that they had suffered after entering into their highly anticipated commerce with China, precipitated an inevitable conflict. However, opium only hurried along the war; mutual misunderstandings and culturally based clashes were the root causes of the conflict. In response to Fairbank's discussion of China's response to the West, Chang explains that he believes that China was unable, and perhaps but not definitely unwilling, to create a plan for itself. China's imperial government was increasingly weak and within fifty years, it would be unable to sustain itself.

The impact of these pressures spread to two related but distinct venues. Mary Clabaugh Wright discusses the efforts of the Tongzhi government, the throne and the Confucian officials, to restore the strength of their throne. In *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: the T'ung chih Restoration, 1862-1874*, Wright explores the issues that confronted the failing dynasty, the efforts that it made to restore itself, and its successes and failures. Wright not only suggests that at least some of these efforts to "self-strength"

China were successful, but also deftly places agency back into the hand of the Chinese. The efforts of the Chinese to save themselves were precipitated by the Western presence, which ironically helped to give rise to its end and to save it. Nathan Pelcovits situates his study of China in a completely different venue. His text, *Old China Hands and the Foreign Office* leaves China for the halls of the British parliament, to which the British traders returned in order to lobby the parliamentarians. This book, written more fifty years ago, remains a particularly interesting and approachable discussion of the commercial interest group that was determined to develop trade relations with China.<sup>26</sup> The British traders were determined to bring all of their government's weight to bear on China so that China would have to open itself to British trade. However, the merchants had underestimated the mark that their experience in India had left on the halls of parliament; British lawmakers were unwilling to become mired in China as had happened in India. Pelcovits brings the passion and determination of these men to life, and demonstrates once again the staggering lack of awareness of China by foreigners who were fully committed to engaging China in a trading partnership.

The literature on Christian missionary work in China has, to a great extent, explored either the history of missions (worldwide and in China) or the history of China (and its missions). Undoubtedly the most important early text on Christian missions in China was Kenneth Scott Latourette's *A History of Christian Missions in China*.<sup>27</sup> This extensive work has been used as a fundamental source on Christian missions since its publication in

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<sup>26</sup> Nathan Pelcovits, *Old China Hands and the Foreign Office* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1948).

<sup>27</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Macmillan, 1929).

1929. It was reissued in 1974, and although it is not a critical study of missions, it is a highly detailed and valuable source.

The Taiping movement (1850-1864) has been particularly interesting to scholars researching Christian missionary activity in China, undoubtedly in part because of the twist that the Taiping's founder brought to Christianity.<sup>28</sup> Vincent Shih, in *The Taiping Ideology: its Sources, Interpretations and Influences* examines the role that Christianity played in Taiping ideology, the relationship of Christian missionary work to the movement, and the unique interpretation of Christianity espoused by the leadership.

Jonathan Spence's more recent book, *God's Chinese Son: the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan*, is a compelling drama of the years of the Taiping uprising which witnessed the death of twenty million Chinese people.<sup>29</sup> Spence portrays Hong as a charismatic leader, whose visions for China were an outgrowth of the complex period in which Hong lived.

Christian missionary activity in China during the latter half of the nineteenth century has been the focus of significant scholarly attention. Paul Cohen's study on Christian missionaries in the interior of China is fascinating. In *China and Christianity, the Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870*, he tackles the subject of the negative results of Christian missionary work in China.<sup>30</sup> He suggests

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<sup>28</sup> For readings on the Taiping, see Franz Michael, *The Taiping Rebellion*, volumes I-III (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966-1971 and Jen Yu-wen, *The Taiping Revolutionary Movement* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1973).

<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Spence, *God's Chinese Son: the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom of Hong Xiuquan* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1997).

that Chinese missionary work had intentional and unintentional results; one of the latter was the emergence of Chinese xenophobia in this decade, which found an outlet in the Boxer rebellion of the turn of the century. Victor Purcell's *The Boxer Uprising: a Background Study* is an early examination of the unsettling presence of Boxers in the interior of China. In the first half of his text he examines the inter-relationship of missionaries and Boxers and the growth of violent anti-foreignism in the last years of the nineteenth century. Joseph Esherick's revisionist monograph on the Boxers, *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising*, examines the controversial and rather difficult-to-sort-out actions of the Imperial throne towards the Boxers. The Boxers, who were initially anti-dynastic (in the tradition of many secret societies and rebels) as well as anti-foreign and anti-Christian, shifted as they were supported by the throne went as far as to declare war on the foreigners after the Boxers had seized the foreign legation area in Beijing. Esherick's study played an important role in untangling the threads of the role of the imperial throne in the uprising.

For the early twentieth century, Albert Feuerwerker's small volume, *The Foreign Establishment in China in the Early Twentieth Century*, has a particularly valuable chapter on missionary work.<sup>31</sup> He argues that missionary efforts in China were tainted by their association with their governments. He points out that the missionaries were there under the protection of the treaty system. He concludes that Christianity was ultimately unimportant in China: missionaries were unable to affect the forces that were shaping

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity, the Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).

<sup>31</sup> Albert Feuerwerker, *The Foreign Establishment in China in the Early Twentieth Century* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1976).



modern China and the intellectuals who were molding the cultural, social and political shape of modern China were largely untouched by the work of Christian missionaries.

The literature on Canadian missionaries in China is quite sparse. Peter M. Mitchell's essay "The Missionary Connection" in the collection *Reluctant Adversaries; Canada and the People's Republic of China, 1949-1970* is particularly interesting because he identifies the missionaries as the most important Canadian presence in China.<sup>32</sup> Alwyn Austin's *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1888-1959* is one of the few monographs on Canadian missionary work in China.<sup>33</sup> This approachable book spans the years from the arrival of the first Canadian missionaries to the forced departure of missionaries under China's Communist government. Cheung Yuet-wah in his study *Missionary Medicine in China: a Study of Two Canadian Protestant Missions in China before 1937* has a brief but interesting profile of Canadian Protestant missions in China in the introduction.<sup>34</sup> Neil Semple has an excellent factual chapter on the Methodist West China missions in *The Lord's Dominion: the History of Canadian Methodism*.

Research on Canadian women missionaries in China has been undertaken primarily by scholars whose field of interest is Canadian women's history. Rosemary Gagan's, *A*

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<sup>32</sup> Peter M. Mitchell, "The Missionary Connection," in *Reluctant Adversaries; Canada and the People's Republic of China, 1949-1970*, eds. Paul M. Evans and B. Michael Frolic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 17-40.

<sup>33</sup> Alwyn Austin, *Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom, 1888-1959* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

<sup>34</sup> Cheung Yuet-wah, *Missionary Medicine in China: a Study of Two Canadian Protestant Missions in China before 1937* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988).

*Sensitive Independence; Canadian Methodist Women in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925* is a highly readable examination of women who worked for the Woman's Missionary Society of the Methodist Church in its Japan and China mission fields.<sup>35</sup> She brings missionary women into the folds of working Canadian women and explains that missionary work offered Canadian women an alternative to marriage and a chance to have interesting and exciting careers. Her narrative demonstrates that the life of missionaries was not easy; some of the missionaries remained overseas for years, while others returned to Canada because they found the life either physically or mentally too difficult. Ruth Compton Brouwer similarly explores the role of Canadian women missionaries, and extends the scholarship of this area, particularly in her volume, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women in India Missions, 1876-1914*.<sup>36</sup> In my own Master's thesis, *From the Pages of Three Ladies: Canadian Women Missionaries in Republican China*, I suggest that these women's letters and diaries are valuable as sources of Chinese social history.<sup>37</sup> The narratives of Canadian missionary women reveal not only the experiences of Canadian women, but also the impressions that these women have of China, and in so doing, they add to the understanding of events in China as well as the relationships of foreigners and Chinese in China.

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<sup>35</sup> Rosemary R. Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence; Canadian Methodist Women in Canada and the Orient, 1881-1925* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1992).

<sup>36</sup> Ruth Compton Brouwer, *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women in India Missions, 1876-1914* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1990).

<sup>37</sup> Deborah Shulman, *From the Pages of Three Ladies: Canadian Women Missionaries in Republican China* (Master's Thesis, Concordia University, 1996).

Christian missionary accounts of their experiences in China form a significant body of work that collectively can be classified as experiential publications. These are stories in which the authors frequently explain their expectations before leaving Canada and their experiences while they are living in China. They are often written by family members, wives who lived with them in China or children who were “missionary kids” raised in China, in which the life work of the subject is described with unabashed pride. Rosalind Goforth’s book about her husband, a noted China missionary, is a good example of this genre of writing; in her *Goforth of China* the dedication of its author to mission work is evident.<sup>38</sup> Stephen Endicott’s text about his father is similarly the story of a man who was fully dedicated to the Canadian missionary enterprise. In *James G. Endicott: Rebel Out of China*, Stephen Endicott relies upon wide-ranging sources, among them transcripts of CBC interviews and personal correspondence. Although these were not academic texts, they have been popular and widely read.<sup>39</sup> The images that they have brought to their Canadian readership are valuable, and although inherently subjective due to their relationships with the subject matter, these books have been informative for their audiences. Undoubtedly China has been, at the very least, available to Canadians through these stories, which have certainly been more valid sources than, for example, films about China that have emanated from Hollywood. Perhaps they are most interesting to scholars as a genre of literature about China and its Christian missionaries. Biographies of missionaries are still being written by family members; while collecting documents in the United Church of Canada (UCC) archives in Toronto, I frequently shared a table (and a

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<sup>38</sup> Rosalind Goforth, *Goforth of China* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1937).

<sup>39</sup> Stephen Endicott, *James G. Endicott: Rebel Out of China* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

lunch or two) with “mish kids,” now men and women in their sixties and seventies, who are looking back to the careers of their parents, collecting documents about their families, and contributing to their own generation’s experiential literature. Among the holdings of the UCC is a fascinating collection of personal papers of China missionaries. The individual collections vary tremendously in size as well as legibility; however they are easily accessible and offer a richly rewarding experience to scholars.

In the last decade or so, a body of scholarship has emerged which tries to tackle the issue of autobiography, diaries, women and missionary work. In 1993 Helen M. Buss explored the diary as a genre of writing in *Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women’s Autobiography in English*.<sup>40</sup> She divides women’s diaries into two categories, public and private, and explains that in her consideration, a diary was public if anyone other than the author had access or permission to read it. She further suggests that some writers used their diaries as an opportunity to create a version of themselves that they wished to share with the public and were implicitly using their diaries as autobiographies. The ideas put forth by Buss are expanded upon in a collection of essays edited by Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, titled *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women’s Diaries*.<sup>41</sup> The contributors to this volume are concerned with theoretical examination of diaries as writing tools, and what can be learned about cultural assumptions from the careful reading of diaries. Once again, they presume diary writing to be within the realm of

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<sup>40</sup> Helen M. Buss, *Mapping Our Selves: Canadian Women’s Autobiography in English*. (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993).

<sup>41</sup> Suzanne L Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, eds. *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women’s Diaries* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996).

women's writing and identify that diaries will be either be public or private texts. Myra Ruthford, in her book *Women and the White Man's God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field* uses the diaries of Canadian women missionaries in northern Canada in order to ask questions about the Canadian mission experience. Among the questions she raises are why the women joined the Canadian mission field and what perceptions they had of the colonized cultures of the Canadian north. One of the conclusions that she is able to draw from her study of women's diaries is that, at least according to the missionary women, the Aboriginals maintained agency over their own lives. Dana Robert's book, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* also focuses on women in missions.<sup>42</sup> However, her study is highly theoretical, as she examines women's work for women as a theory upon which this particular part of the missionary enterprise was based. She identifies that the underlying conviction in defining American women's work in the mission field in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was that evangelization was synonymous with civilization. Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus edited a collection of essays titled *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice*, which explores, as its title suggests, the need to consider gender in examining the missionary experience.<sup>43</sup> The contributors identify that women's missionary experience cannot be automatically subsumed under that of men's missionary experience, but they also suggest that the missionary experience was different in each location. A prevalent theme that runs

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<sup>42</sup> Dana Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Mason, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996).

<sup>43</sup> Mary Taylor Huber and Nancy C. Lutkehaus, eds., *Gendered Missions: Women and Men in Missionary Discourse and Practice* (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan, 1999).

through the book is that the missionary experience was inherently a colonial encounter. Ruth Compton Brouwer, in *Modern Women Modernizing Men: the Changing Missions of three Professional Women in Asia and Africa, 1902-69* weds the mission and colonial enterprise as well; however, she identifies the controversial nature of the topic of religion, and the even more potentially problematic topic of missions in scholarly writing.<sup>44</sup> She explores the ways in which the women in her study responded to the challenges of twentieth century colonial settings as well as the agency of the missionized with whom the women worked. She explains that the intersection of these talented Western modernizers and the non-Western modernizers (in Asia and Africa) enabled the parties to reach some of their goals. As well, she suggests that the narrative of these three professional women is of human interest and scholarly significance because theirs are stories of international vision, humanitarianism, and the social relevance of Christianity. Together these recent scholarly efforts signal the need for sensitivity and sophistication in dealing with the sources and subject that are the backbone of this thesis.

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<sup>44</sup> Ruth Compton Brouwer, *Modern Women Modernizing Men: the Changing Missions of three Professional Women in Asia and Africa, 1902-69* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002).

## CHAPTER TWO

### LENA (DUNFIELD) JOLLIFFE

Lena (Dunfield) Jolliffe arrived in China in 1904, only four years after the Boxer rebellion, the anguished event that demonstrated the xenophobic, anti-foreign and anti-Christian anger and frustration that had found its way into the hearts of many Chinese people.<sup>1</sup> Although the Boxers' activities had not directly affected Sichuan, the province in which Lena was to make her home for forty years, resident missionaries and newcomers to China were all knowledgeable about the events that had occurred. Missionaries from northern China had been evacuated from their fields, missionary work had been disrupted, and the future of the missionary enterprise in China was being questioned by its members. This was traditional China; Confucian philosophy guided the lives of its people and dynastic rule managed its governance. The years in which Lena lived in China witnessed the fall of the Qing dynasty and imperial rule.<sup>2</sup> The change of governing structure is remarkably missing in Lena's records; however, the presence of the warlords and their struggle for control of Sichuan found its way into her narrative. The vacuum that was created by the demise of the central government was filled, across the country, by individual warlords who grasped at the riches and power that regional leadership would bring.<sup>3</sup> Lena's story, which ends in 1924, does not include any discussion of the fall of the imperial government or the rise of the Nationalist and

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<sup>1</sup> For Boxer literature, see footnote 1 in Chapter One.

<sup>2</sup> See footnote 6 in Chapter One for readings on Sun Yat-sen and the Revolution of 1911.

<sup>3</sup> See footnote 7 in Chapter One for literature on the warlords.

Communist parties.<sup>4</sup> In her personal papers she focused on events and experiences that were directly related to her life, the world of the Yangzi River when she traveled to and from West China, and the events in the cities in which she lived. The politics that interested her were city politics, and the struggles that captured her attention were regional warlord struggles. This chapter, which is structured in an essentially chronological scheme, begins with a biographical sketch of Lena (Dunfield) Jolliffe, which is followed by a brief description of the pertinent archival sources. It continues with two sections: the first is a detailed narrative of her integration into China (1905-1906); and the second is the story of twenty years of her stay in West China (1906-1924). The chapter concludes with thoughts about her experiences and impressions of China, in a section titled “Perspectives on Lena (Dunfield) Jolliffe.”

### **Biographical Sketch of Lena (Dunfield) Jolliffe**

Lena Dunfield was born on April 5, 1879 in Cluyon, Québec, a community on the north shore of the St. Lawrence River just below Québec City, and then lived with her family in Winnipeg, Manitoba. After completing her high school education she taught at a school outside of Winnipeg.<sup>5</sup> She also participated in many church-related activities, among them teaching Sunday school, taking part in church board meetings, and bringing the message of the church to women in need. Accompanied by other women who were also active in church matters, she visited female patients in the city’s hospitals and attended to

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<sup>4</sup> See footnotes 9 and 10 in Chapter One for earlier references on the GMD and CCP.

<sup>5</sup> Lena M. Dunfield Biographical File, held at the United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, hereafter referred to as LMDBF.



young women who were incarcerated in Winnipeg's prisons.<sup>6</sup> The summer before she began her post-secondary education, she and several friends ventured beyond Winnipeg, to small and isolated prairie farming communities where they taught Sunday school classes. Lena's portrayal of the region as "sparsely populated country" is underscored by her account of her trip from Winnipeg, in which she reported that these communities, initially populated by English settlers who were against what they considered the intrusion of the CPR railroad because they believed that it would interfere with their dairy farming, were located more than forty miles from the nearest railway stop.<sup>7</sup> In September 1902 Lena began her post-secondary education at Winnipeg's Wesley College.<sup>8</sup> There, she joined the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM), the Christian organization that was exceedingly popular on university campuses across Canada, and was selected by her peers to represent them at the Canadian conference, which was to be held in Toronto the following February. The conference was undoubtedly a heady occasion for Lena. She and a fellow-student became identified as representatives of all western SVM members and Lena was asked to speak on behalf of Canada's western universities.<sup>9</sup> In her brief diary

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<sup>6</sup> Lena Dunfield Diary, 2 January 1902 (Accession number 86.319C, box 1: file 1, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, hereafter referred to as (LDJ b:f); Lena Dunfield Diary, 11 August 1902 (LDJ 1:1). Subsequent diary entries will be referred to as Diary, rather than Lena Dunfield Diary.

<sup>7</sup> Diary, 2 May 1902 (LDJ 1:1); Diary, undated entry, written in a note at the end of the diary (LDJ 1:1). Lena includes the following explanation regarding the contents of the diary. "This diary covers the period, in brief jottings, over the years from 1898 when I started to teach at Beaconsfield School, near Portage La Prairie – then back to Winnipeg – home – Dec. and in May 1902 – to Seamo..." The dating of the entries in this particular diary are difficult to identify, perhaps because she inserted entries according to the day and month, but not necessarily according to the year of the diary. This may be the reason that her summer work in Winnipeg preceded her university studies, and yet in the diary it appears after her attendance at the Student Volunteer Movement Convention, which was an event that definitely occurred when she was a student at Wesley College.

<sup>8</sup> LMDBF.

<sup>9</sup> Diary, 24 February 1902 (LDJ 1:1); Diary, 1 March 1902 (LDJ 1:1).

entries of that year, Lena described the convention as “a tremendous gathering” and thereby offers the reader some sense of the enthusiasm that it generated for her.<sup>10</sup> This may have been the pivotal experience that encouraged her to decide not to return to college after her freshman year, but instead to go to Toronto in order to enroll in a one-year preparatory course for missionary work.<sup>11</sup> Certainly her interests, training, and experience dovetailed to make her a strong candidate for mission work, and the Woman’s Missionary Society of the Methodist Church (WMS) did not hesitate to assign her to their West China field after her training had been completed.<sup>12</sup>

Lena left for China the following fall, in October 1904. She was twenty-four years old, a young woman who had already demonstrated her ability and commitment to work with people and her enthusiasm for church-related work, and who was now embarking upon a career that would take her even farther away from her home and expose her to even more diverse experiences than she had already accumulated. However, her missionary career did not follow the path that she and the Woman’s Missionary Society had envisioned in that preparatory year prior to her departure from Canada. She did travel to China as expected and planned. She did make her way from Canada to Shanghai, and from Shanghai into West China as other Canadian missionary women did in the early twentieth

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<sup>10</sup> Diary, undated entry, written in a note at the end of the Diary (LDJ 1:1).

<sup>11</sup> LMDBF; Diary, undated entry written in a note at the end of the Diary (LDJ 1:1). This course, which was held at the Methodist National Training School, included academic as well as theological subjects. For further information see Sherri-Lynn McConnell, “Canadian Deaconess and Missionary Education for Women – Training to Live the Social Gospel: The Methodist National Training School and the Presbyterian Deaconess and Missionary Training Home, 1893-1926.” (Master’s Thesis, University of Winnipeg, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> LMDBF. In their personal papers the women refer to Sichuan province as West China, Szechwan and Szechuan.

century, and then she began her assigned period of Chinese language training. Nevertheless, Lena Dunfield was one of the WMS women who almost unaccountably, according to her personal papers, fell in love and found that the pull of marriage was stronger than her commitment to her assignment. She had met Richard Orlando Jolliffe or Orlando as she called him, aboard the ship that brought her to China. He was also a novice missionary who was assigned to West China under the Methodist General Board.<sup>13</sup> They traveled up into West China together, as members of a small group of missionaries who were making their way to their stations. Some of them, including Dr. William Edward Smith, his wife, and their young daughter Minnie, were already seasoned missionaries; others, such as their fellow companion Dr. Mabel Cassidy, were new recruits to the Woman's Missionary Society. It was only a year after their departure from Canada that Lena Dunfield and R.O. Jolliffe were married. Lena had to resign from the Woman's Missionary Society in order to marry, and although she was concerned that her colleagues of almost a year would think badly of her for leaving her work so quickly, she found that they celebrated her marriage and were genuinely happy for her. Perhaps this enabled her to remain as a very active member of the missionary community, and to continue in her ardent commitment to missionary work. From her early days in the West China city of Kiating (*Leshan*), where she focused on language acquisition, to her subsequent time in the cities of Junghsien and Tseliutsing (*Tzeliutsing* and *Zigong*), Lena Dunfield Jolliffe maintained a constant presence in mission work.<sup>14</sup> She accompanied her

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<sup>13</sup> LMDBF.

<sup>14</sup> The current place name of Tseliutsing (also spelled as Tzeliutsing) is Zigong.

husband on many of his “itinerating” travels,<sup>15</sup> and they worked together with Chinese residents of outlying communities. She also engaged in women’s work in the cities, teaching women at Sunday school, holding Bible classes, demonstrating child care practices, and even supporting women who were trying to break their opium habits. She visited Chinese women in their homes and entertained visitors in her own home.

Richard Orlando Jolliffe, born in 1874, grew up in a farming community in Bruce County, near Port Elgin, Ontario. The Jolliffe family also had a strong commitment to the church and church activities. He and his younger brother Charles Passmore both became West China missionaries after they graduated from Victoria College in Toronto, and both were eventually ordained as ministers, Charles while still in Canada, and Orlando during his first term in China.<sup>16</sup>

The Jolliffes lived in China until 1944, when Orlando retired from mission work and they returned to Canada. In the intervening forty years their family grew larger, as Lena gave birth to five children, although their first born died in China during childhood.<sup>17</sup> They

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<sup>15</sup> “Itinerate” is the verb used most frequently by the missionaries to describe their work with people in districts outside the cities. Thus for the Christian missionaries, itinerating refers to the part of their work that included traveling and preaching. The current place name of Kiating is Leshan; a city in southern Sichuan province, approximately 170 km from Chengdu.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Orlando Jolliffe Family Series, Finding Aid 55, Fonds 3309, Series 1 (hereafter referred to as ROJFS); Charles Julius Passmore Jolliffe Series, Finding Aid 55, Fonds 3309, Series 2.

<sup>17</sup> Lena Jolliffe does not record her son’s death in a diary entry; however she does note the anniversary of his birth after he had died; for example, in an entry in 1915 she writes, “John’s birthday. Would have been nine...” in Diary, 14 October 1915 (LDJ 2:1). Similarly, she notes in 1917, “John would be eleven today” in Diary, 14 October 1917 (LDJ 2:3). Neil Semple reports that John was killed by a stray bullet from the shore during the evacuation from the province to Shanghai at the time of the Revolution of 1911. Neil Semple, *The Lord’s Dominion: the History of Canadian Methodism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 327.

lived in Kiating in the year before their marriage, then moved to Junghsien, and finally to nearby Tseliutsing. Tseliutsing was perhaps most famous for its salt wells, and salt, as an important source of revenue during those years marked politically by the gradual collapse of the Qing dynasty and establishment of a new political system, prompted some discord between those involved in the collection of salt taxes and revenue, and others who were competing for political and military power in the region. The missionaries who lived in the city, including the Jolliffes, were at times drawn into these tensions. This Tseliutsing station which, according to the missionary records was only begun with the arrival of the Jolliffes, grew remarkably during their years in that station, and was a very active mission with extensive Chinese participation in church activities.<sup>18</sup> Their children led lives that were fairly typical of children of the Canadian missionaries; they spent their early years at home with their parents, and undoubtedly became comfortable conversing in either English or Chinese. They were schooled within their community until old enough to attend boarding school at the Canadian school for missionary children. However, they were also exposed to missionary work, as they each accompanied their parents on their itinerating travels from infancy. When the family finally returned to Canada in 1944 the Jolliffes settled in Ontario, in the district of Rockwood which was also a farming community in southern Ontario, located near the shores of Lake Huron and Lake Erie. Orlando died in 1959, and Lena died in 1977, at the age of ninety-eight.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> ROJFS.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

### **Archival Holdings**

Lena Joliffe's personal papers are located in the United Church of Canada Archives, in the R.O. Jolliffe Family papers collection. Her collection is fairly sparse in quantity and intermittent in its recording of her years in China. However, it repeatedly reveals a woman who was committed to missionary work, and who became, as a missionary wife, an active member of the community and directly involved in missionary work as a wife, mother and unofficial missionary among Chinese and particularly with Chinese women. The holdings include several letters from her earliest experiences in China in 1904 and the beginning of 1905. As well, there are annual diaries that she kept for some of the years spanning 1904 to 1924. Her personal papers for the remaining years that she spent in China (from 1924 to 1944) are very limited and add little to the narrative of her experiences and impressions in China. The few letters in the collection are full of descriptive detail; the diaries tend to have concise accounts of her daily experiences, although there are entries in the early diaries that appear to be lengthy reports or perhaps even copies of letters about journeys that the couple has taken. In particular, the year 1905 is chronicled in two diaries: the first is a diary that has entries for the years 1904 to 1909 inclusive; the second is a diary that is devoted exclusively to the year 1905 and is titled, "Diary of Trip." It is unclear whether the contents of this second diary, which are almost illegible and on fragile pages, were intended as a remembrance of her trip into China or as a series of letters written to Canadians, as the letters, if indeed they were letters, are without salutations. Intermingled with her diary entries are accounts that seem to have been written by Orlando, and although it is often quite difficult to discern the authorship of a series of entries, a close reading usually reveals the source. The reader

may very well determine that these almost indistinguishable accounts are a fine representation of the couple's shared China venture. As well, it seems that Lena Jolliffe reviewed her personal papers in 1964, twenty years after leaving China, as there are entries that are written in a shaky hand, and in which she identifies as comments that she has added in that year. It is possible that these editorial comments were made for Lena's children, so that they would have a better understanding of her experiences and impressions of China. These particular selections afford the reader her later insights about her China experiences, as she reminisces and clarifies the records that she had kept in those earlier days. The intermingling of authorship and time of writing makes these documents a challenge to work with; nonetheless, as the reader gradually becomes familiar with the participants in the pages of these personal papers, the richness of the documents becomes increasingly apparent. The lengthiest descriptions of her experiences and impressions are undoubtedly in the narratives that she wrote about her trips up and down the Yangzi in the first years of her life in China. These records are particularly fascinating, as she manages to create a world within a world. Life along this important waterway comes alive for her readers, as does the introduction of missionaries to their new homeland.

### **Integration into China (1904-1906)**

This lengthy section is a narrative of Lena's first years in China, a time in which travelled up the Yangzi River and settled into West China's missionary community. During her voyage and settling in period, she was introduced to many facets of life in China: the hardships and harshness of life for people who lived and worked along the river, the

beauty of the landscape and the architecture, and the work of her fellow missionaries. In this first year she was assigned to Chinese language study, and she was very aware that she needed to be adept in the language in order to function well as a missionary. She became an active, involved member of the missionary community and was introduced to work with Chinese women. Finally, before her first year ended, she became engaged and married to one of the men with whom she traveled to China from Canada, a marriage which meant that she had to resign her assignment as a missionary, and become, instead, a missionary wife. It is a year that undoubtedly deserves its own section in her narrative, as her experiences and impressions of China were remarkably rich and rewarding.

*Shanghai, November 1904*

Lena Dunfield recorded her arrival in China with the brief pronouncement, “At last we are in China.”<sup>20</sup> It was November 19, 1904, only a little over a month after she had left Winnipeg, and yet to Lena, the trip seemed to have taken a long time. Perhaps this was due to her eagerness to reach China; after all, she had already spent a year preparing for the mission field and possibly another half year before that planning or at least considering a commitment to spread the teachings of the church to non-Christians. She may have recognized a calling or vocation when she taught summer Sunday school in that remote prairie farming community. It is quite certain that on that momentous day in November, Lena saw herself as a Christian missionary. Her notation, written on her very first day there, reveals a focused and reliant Christian; she was focused on the work that

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<sup>20</sup> Diary, 19 November 1904 (LDJ 1:2); Diary, 27 November 1904 (LDJ 1:2).



she had come to China to do, and reliant on the Bible and its teachings to guide her. As she wrote,

My motto for China  
Phil. 4.13 I can do all things through  
Christ which strengthen me.<sup>21</sup>

Lena and her companions on the ocean voyage spent their first days in Shanghai renewing their ties to Canada and exploring a little of the city. On that first afternoon they each retrieved letters that had been sent to them from Canadian friends and family, and Lena realized that one of her letters had actually made the trip to China with her, in the mail bags stored in the very same ship.<sup>22</sup> By the end of the week she reflected that these had been remarkably uneventful days, spent, as she describes them, occupied with letter writing, knitting and sewing, and shopping.<sup>23</sup> When she did venture into the streets of Shanghai and move beyond the familiarity of the mission properties, she brought along the images of China which she had undoubtedly gathered as part of her preparation for the trip and perhaps even as part of the Toronto training program before she had left Canada. She wrote of her first tour of Shanghai in November 1904,

Yesterday we visited the native city under Mr. Johansen's escort – It is very interesting, very dirty, very crowded. The streets are very narrow no more than six or ten feet wide sometimes. Visited the tea gardens the picture of which so often appears in our China [illegible word]. Visited the temples – in one there were sixty gods – they were burning money to them. We were on top of the wall over the city gate. Many beggars.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Diary, 19 November 1904 (LDJ 1: 2).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Diary, 27 November 1904 (LDJ 1: 2).

Lena's description is quite dispassionate and almost devoid of descriptive words or phrases. The reader learns that she had visited sites that she had thought about beforehand; certainly the tea gardens lived up to her expectations, and perhaps the temples, with their many gods demonstrated the contrasts between China's religions and her own, but she may not have prepared herself for the presence of beggars on the streets. In this fairly brief record, Lena also revealed herself as both observer and tourist. She began and ended her description with herself as a distinct outsider; she was initially situated amidst rather unappealing streets and lastly stood atop the city wall. However, sandwiched in between these two experiences was Lena as a tourist, visiting the tea garden and the temple, and both were sights that she had apparently expected to see when she came to China.

Lena also became actively involved in the life of the Shanghai missionary community in the month or so that she spent in Shanghai. Her records of her outings in the last week of November 1904 reveal almost daily visits with other missionaries to various colleagues, and encourage the reader to consider that this was a closely knit community and one in which she was immediately at ease. As she wrote,

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Nov. 24 | Spent the afternoon at Mrs. Littles.<br>Met Dr. and Mrs. Parrot and two daughters |
| Nov. 25 | Visited Mrs. Hart in hospital.<br>She is very bright and happy.                   |
| Nov. 26 | Spent the afternoon at Mrs. Littles – met Miss Usher.                             |
| Nov 27  | Was the day trip into the Chinese sector of Shanghai                              |
| Nov. 28 | Mrs. Hart has suddenly become worse and the operation                             |

Must take place today. A party of seven or eight missionaries arrived today on a German ship.

Nov. 30      Laura and I came to look after the twins today, Charlie and Arthur Lewis - age sixteen months.<sup>25</sup>

***Journey inland up the Yangzi River: Shanghai to West China, January and February, 1905***

The long Yangzi River trip into West China was broken up into several parts in these early years of the twentieth century.<sup>26</sup> Travelers boarded fairly large steamships in Shanghai, and after stopovers in Nanking (*Nanjing*) and Hankow (*Hankou*), they arrived at the entrance to the Yangzi gorges at the river city of Ichang (*Yichang*).<sup>27</sup> There, they booked passage on boats that were smaller and yet able to withstand the dangers that the upper river presented. When they arrived at the large West China city of Chungking (*Chongqing*), travelers continued on to their final destinations, either overland or, as Lena Jolliffe did, by boat along the Min River, one of the tributaries of the Yangzi, onto the city of Kiating.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Diary, 24 to 30 November 1904 (LDJ 1: 2).

<sup>26</sup> The current place name of the Yangtse River is Yangzi River; in their documents, the missionaries either spelled it Yangtse or Yangtze. This impressive river is the longest in Asia and the third longest in the world (after the Nile and Amazon rivers). It flows from its source in Qinghai province eastward to the East China Sea at Shanghai. In popular culture, it is considered the dividing line between North and South China. The famous Yangzi Gorges have become the site of the largest irrigation project in the world; the construction of the controversial Three Gorges project, originally conceived by Sun Yat-sen in the nineteen-teens was finally begun in 1994 and is expected to be completed within the present decade.

<sup>27</sup> Nanjing is the current place name of Nanking. Nanjing, located on the eastern drainage basin of the Yangzi River, historically has been among China's most important cities. Among the times that it has been the government capital of China, is during the Republican Period under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek. Yichang is the current place name of Ichang. It is located at the eastern end of Xiling Gorge, which is one of the Yangzi River's Three Gorges. The current place name of Hankow is Hankou. Hankou is one of the three cities which make up present day Wuhan.

<sup>28</sup> Chongqing is the current name of the city of Chungking in Sichuan province; the largest city in the province, it is rich in natural resources and a major internal commercial port. It was the capital city of the Chinese government following the occupation of China in the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945).

Lena's activities with her missionary colleagues in Shanghai were a fine portent of her interactions on the trip that she was about to begin into West China, not only with her small group of traveling companions, but also with other missionaries that she met en route. Her records of her trip up the Yangzi River began on January 2, 1905, a day after Lena and her fellow travelers reached the city of Hankow, where they were docking for a day or two until New Year's festivities ended and they could resume their upriver journey. Mabel Cassidy took the opportunity to visit with friends who were living in the city, and the remaining missionaries were able to stay at the city's China Inland Mission (CIM) residence.<sup>29</sup> The foreign connection was a strong one, as they shared common goals with other missionaries and aid workers, such as the YMCA representatives, and forged an immediate and strong camaraderie. As Lena recounted of their stay in Hankow,

We, Miss Hambley, Mr. Jolliffe and Dr. Mabel Cassidy have spent a very pleasant New Year's Day in Hankow. Miss Cassidy is with friends and we are at the China Inland Mission. Many countries are represented around the dining-table here, America, England, Canada, Australia, Germany and yet we all have the bond of a common purpose.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The China Inland Mission, founded in 1865 by English missionary Hudson Taylor, was a non-sectarian Protestant missionary society. It did not solicit contributions, focused on evangelical work in inland China, did not guarantee its missionaries a fixed salary, and encouraged the CIM missionaries to live in close proximity to the Chinese and in a Chinese lifestyle.

<sup>30</sup> Diary of Trip, 2 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4). The papers included in this section, which is titled "Diary of Trip" in the United Church of Canada archives, Finding Aid 55 appear to be a collection of letters that Lena wrote to various Canadians, which have been gathered together under this title. The entry of 3 January 1905, for example, is quite lengthy (perhaps 400 – 500 words) and ends as a letter might end, "We are making history every day as we go up this river but I really must stop writing somewhere so I shall let this be my last page. Alice, Egbert and Louie." Perhaps this was a letter that Lena had written to "Alice, Egbert and Louie." The next "entry" of 4 January 1905 begins as a letter might begin, with "Yangtze, Jan4/05" and concludes "9P.M. Good night! Good night!" once again suggesting that this may have been part of a letter that would have been sent to Canadians. The subsequent entries, of 5 January 1905 and 7 January 1905 do not have any notes of this type at the end, but the very brief entry on 8 January 1905 concludes, "Yours lovingly, Lena" once again suggesting that this so-called "Diary of Trip" may very well be a collection of the letters that she was composing during her travels. She does, in fact refer to an interruption in her letter writing on 25 January 1905; see footnote 57.

Then, she continued by relating a rather light-hearted story of a little escapade that the guests had at the expense of their hosts and servants.

New Year's Eve we spent with Miss Cassidy at Mrs. Frost's. Mr. and Mrs. Clinton, the YMCA workers who also board at the CIM were with us. We had a very pleasant time watching the old year out and sometime before 1 a.m. we wended our way through the Chinese streets home to the CIM.<sup>31</sup>

It is interesting to note that she described the streets as Chinese; perhaps the difference of China was easily and insistently reflected by the streets, or perhaps it was a way of identifying that they were walking outside the compound. She continued,

They had left the door unlocked for us and charged us not to make noise lest we waken the children. We were very weary and the prospect of an 8 a.m. breakfast was not as fascinating as 9:30 so Mr. Clinton removed the clapper from the bell and next morning the housekeeper sent for the servant about 8:10 to know what was the matter – poor fellow he came in distress showing the bell. They immediately suspected Mr. Clinton and secured an awful sounding gong and pretty soon we were all on the scene of action in the hopes the din would cease. We had considerable fun and yesterday the clapper returned to the bell to the great joy and amazement of the servant.<sup>32</sup>

The journey up the Yangzi River, from Shanghai all the way to Kiating in West China found Lena reveling in all of her new experiences and in her fairly lengthy record of this first trip she seems to create a world that is bound by the river banks and driven by the presence of the great river. This China at the turn of the twentieth century is one in which the lives of its inhabitants are both difficult and often shockingly dangerous. The reactions of the Chinese to foreigners along the route were varied; she found that people living in the river cities who had been exposed to many foreigners had different responses

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<sup>31</sup> Diary of Trip, 2 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>32</sup> Diary, 2 January 1905, extract titled "Story of journey, October 1904-5, Hankow" (LDJ 1:4). This appears to be notes and comments that Dunfield wrote about this trip and other events in 1964.

to the travelers than people who had had little contact with foreigners, in their willingness to interact with them and in their curiosity about them. At one stop the city official became concerned about the presence of the missionaries at a festival, as he feared that they could unintentionally precipitate a protest by the celebrants; at another they were forbidden entrance to the city due to nearby violence between rebels and government soldiers; and at other places the local people were so curious about the visitors that they followed them along the riverbank trails or tried to touch the young missionary children. She also finds that the expectation of her companions to include the boatmen and local Chinese in their prayer meetings yielded varied results, sometimes their work was welcomed, sometimes it was rejected, and oftentimes it was completely misunderstood.

The first part of Lena's trip, in which she and her companions traveled from Shanghai to the city of Ichang, was aboard a large Japanese steamship in which the accommodations were very comfortable, and so they had the time to relax and acclimatize themselves to their new lives. There were only four missionaries traveling together at that time, as Dr. and Mrs. Smith who were the senior members of their group had gone on ahead of them in order to book accommodation on two houseboats which would be able to navigate the river after the point at which steamboat travel was no longer possible.<sup>33</sup> The travelers, Lena, Mr. Jolliffe (as she referred to him), Miss Hambley and Dr. Cassidy spent their time walking on the deck, reading, and discussing missionary-related topics. They talked about missionary work in China, studied sections of the Bible, and read aloud to one another, perhaps also from the Bible. It was not until she had spent several days on board

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<sup>33</sup> Diary, 2 January 1905, extract titled "Story of journey, October 1904-5, Hankow" (LDJ 1:4).

that Lena realized that although they were traveling in first class, other missionaries who were already living in China usually traveled in second class. As she advised, “they let us down easy.”<sup>34</sup> Lena identified in her records that although she liked the thought of Chinese (people perhaps), she did not really like the reality of the Chinese lifestyle. “Unless somewhat prepared for it, would not be the easiest thing for a newcomer to have to go down second deck with all the other Chinamen. I like them but not particularly their food or their ways.”<sup>35</sup>

Lena had to reconcile her desire to share the fascinating sights that she saw in China with her family in Canada, with her need to shield them from the harshness of life in China. As she sorted out and selected the stories that she told them, she was also confronting the difficulties that she was having when she endured some of the realities of China. The account of her visit to a second Chinese city, subsequent to the brief description of her earlier day trip in Shanghai, described some of her experiences and impressions and as well reveals this tension that she encountered in selecting information that she wished to share with Canadians. As she initially wrote in this account,

Yesterday we visited Wuchang the Chinese city opposite Hankow. It was a trip full of interest. We went in a steam launch across the river and then rode in rickshas for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour through streets that were simply awful! The first item of interest as we entered the street was a man with a poor old dirty haggard, white haired woman little with age strapped to his back like a baby. She was a most pitiful sight.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Diary of Trip, 6 January 6 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Diary, 3 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4). The city of Wuchang became part of Wuhan in Hubei province in 1950; on October 10, 1911 the first clash of what would become the Revolution of 1911, occurred in Wuchang.

Then, after noting the undoubtedly upsetting sight of this pair, she shifted her focus to the actual street, perhaps in recollection of the sense of congestion that was evident to her, or perhaps because she was impressed by the impossibility of escape from the confinement of the city's streets.

The street was crowded and only about ten feet wide at the widest places, narrowing to five feet at some places. The pavement was of uneven field stone, we rattled over those stones and banged into people and things at a most alarming rate. I trusted to my man to avoid real collision while I took in all I could but there was too much to be seen to get things down pat but I'll give you a few of the pictures.<sup>37</sup>

As she continued, she managed to create images that are picture-like in their description for her readers. She was able to suggest that while the scene that she had witnessed initially appeared to be one of almost random disorderly confusion, in fact there was an order present and that this order was undoubtedly understood by its participants. Lena may have been suggesting that beyond the order these particular people on this street had created, that there was a larger Chinese order that could not be understood by Western standards or in ways immediately familiar to foreigners. In describing the difficult life of China's urban workers at the beginning of the twentieth century, Lena also confirmed her conviction that the work of missionaries was an important component in bettering the lives of the Chinese people.

Men and women bowed down beneath burdens too great for them. The Chinese have a habit of groaning under their burdens that sounds strange. They answer each other and it is not all confusion. The first man says 'Hei Ho! Hei Ho!' and the answer that comes, 'Ho! Ho!' They keep this up all day long. It has no significance other than that of relief from the pressure in expression. The people are beasts of burden here and it would make your heart ache to see them. It is hard to see one's fellow man labour day after day – one questions why it is so and yet I rest in this that if I care how much more does the Father? And a golden day is coming yet for these people, whom I already am learning to love. But I am also to

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<sup>37</sup> Diary, 3 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).



give you some of yesterday's scenes. When we entered the city gate after quite a long ride I thought we might strangle the odours were so terrific. You may have a vivid imagination but I think it will fail you in trying to give you an idea of Chinese odours and noises. Only those who have been there can know. Dogs and degraded piggies were to be seen all along the way – dogs too have lost any respectability they ever could have prided in and are mongrels of most defective kind. There is no privacy in Chinese life, they have their hair combed and faces washed in the street.<sup>38</sup>

She continued with an account of people that she had seen helping each other to unbraided and comb their hair and wash their faces and ears, and then concluded this part of her narrative with a description of someone that suffered from leprosy, and what very well may have been a reassurance to her family, and perhaps to herself, that her own health was not in jeopardy.

One of the burden carriers yesterday was a pitiful sight – his nose and part of his upper lip had disappeared we fancied from leprosy. Chinese leprosy is hereditary and not very contagious so while the foreigner comes in contact with it they never seem to take the disease for which I am devoutly thankful.<sup>39</sup>

Lena's writing is eloquent in its description as she initially drew the reader into the variety and complexity of the street and then distanced the reader with her concluding remark in the following excerpt.

A Chinese street is hard to describe and harder still to imagine so I feel like sparing both you and myself. It is to me a long narrow alley filled with a strange conglomeration of men, women, children, dogs, pigs, hens, dirty water, awful odors, pans of fish, baskets of fruit, silk stores, china stores, bake shops – from which you flee as fast as possible.

And then, she juxtaposed in an abrupt and stark contrast to her recollection of what she had seen on the streets of the city, the sight of the missionary compound. She began with a transitional comment about the rickshaw ride, and then moved on to describe the

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<sup>38</sup> Diary, 3 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

missionary compound, and in doing so she recognized that the missionaries of Wuchang had succeeded in carving out a peaceful oasis that beckoned the visitors.

After a ride of almost an hour we came to a white washed wall and our guide stopped. I was glad enough to descent for the road had been so rough we were fairly shaken to pieces. After settling with our men or rather letting the servant do it and it is no easy job, we entered the compound of the Episcopal mission of Wuchang. What a change! Splendid buildings all in a walled enclosure at the base of a long hill upon which the Chinese will not build.....Inside the wall there were several playgrounds for the pupils of the big brick school that were there also. There were three or four dwelling places and before each home a lovely garden – this is easily had in China – where palms, ferns and flowers abound. Roses and violets were blooming. In contrast with all we had seen, the quietness, the odor of flowers, the loveliness seemed to breathe the peace of God.<sup>40</sup>

Lena and her companions returned to their steamship, and before long, the party was introduced to the dangers of the Yangzi River and perhaps in these dangers, she was exposed to the challenges that China presented and would prove to always present to the health and well-being of everyone who lived there, the Chinese as well as the missionaries. After only a day or two on the river, the little group was distracted from daily activities, actually Mr. Jolliffe was about to read aloud to the women while they sewed, by a report from a distraught crew member that a nearby steamer had run aground. This particular steamer was American owned and officered, although all of the crew members were Chinese. Lena captured the urgency of the situation and the way the ship's officers and crew faced the challenge together in the ensuing rescue operation.

We were on deck at once. At first we could not tell what the matter was. All that was evident was that she was not moving. Signal flags were in evidence. These we did not understand but the captain seemed to which was much more important. As we neared them they called out messages to the other. The result was our anchor was let down and the relief boat of the other steamer put from the top deck

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. Foreign missionaries were able to occupy the site because the Chinese of Wuchang believed that the property was unlucky.

into the water loaded with passengers and baggage for our vessel, and then the fun began. The current of this river in some places is most awfully swift and especially so today, that the little blue rowboat was whisked down the river in a jiffy and some tall rowing was done before they got her back and her contents on our boat – in the meantime the Chinese in the native sandpans came from the shore and in half the time the proper row boat could accomplish it they conveyed the passengers and cargo from damaged ship to ours.<sup>41</sup>

The perils of river travel were clear to her, and the repercussions of even a satisfactory rescue became evident when Lena learned that the American boat and its passengers had been stuck for twenty-four hours before this rescue, and furthermore that it, and perhaps its passengers, would have to wait for ten more days while the damaged shaft was sent down to Shanghai to be repaired. The water level of the river at this time of year, in early or mid-winter, was always very low and so travel was expected to be difficult and dangerous. The threat of running aground had proven real for the other steamer, and Lena watched her own steamship as its crew measured the depth of the water with bamboo sticks, and assessed the possibilities of travel on the river that in some places was only six feet deep.<sup>42</sup>

The second part of their trip to West China would take them a little over a month, and began after a brief stopover in the city of Ichang, where they were to meet the Smiths and transfer their belongings to the houseboats that would transport them through the Yangzi gorges towards their destination. Lena must have found the change from the river to the city remarkable, as in her initial comment about Ichang she focused on the overwhelming noises of her surroundings. She wrote,

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<sup>41</sup> Diary of Trip, 4 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>42</sup> Diary of Trip, 5 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

We are at Ichang. Reached here during the night hours and a perfect din has been kept up ever since. Every Chinaman yells at the top of his voice and no one listens to anyone else because they are busy giving directions to the other fellow.<sup>43</sup>

After a further note in which she merely recorded that they all hoped to receive mail, and they that were stopping at another CIM home, Lena returned to the remarkable noisiness of the waterfront as their new crew prepared to set sail. Once again, it seems that the environment surrounded and pressed in on her; the sounds created a sensation of confinement for her. As she recorded, "We left Ichang last night. For some reason they did not kill the rooster as usual but they whistled for the wind until the din was deafening."<sup>44</sup>

It was only after she continued her river trip that Lena found the time to recall and record some of her experiences in the city of Ichang. She described their night in the China Inland Mission home, and once again portrayed the sense of connection among the various foreign missionary communities in China. That particular night the guests included a woman from Kiating who was en route to the coast where her children were going to attend school and three American missionaries from the Evangelical Association. These three young men were also newcomers to China and were involved in their preparatory language training. The Canadians and Americans joined together for a relaxed and pleasant musical evening; most of them played musical instruments, and the rest were happy to sing along. The following day, undoubtedly after services as it was a Sunday, they went for a two hour walk, and Lena found herself surrounded by an

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<sup>43</sup> Diary, 10 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

unfamiliar landscape and witness to some uncomfortable events. The detail which she included in her account of the outing suggests that the afternoon was quite remarkable, particularly as she recounted the difficulty that she had in understanding and accepting the treatment of a prisoner who was being transported through the city. Lena was not a particularly naive young woman; she had spent time visiting inmates in Winnipeg's prison and she had provided support for women who were ill or injured in that city's hospitals. Despite these experiences Lena was quite unnerved by her exposure to the young man's plight that afternoon. She began her story of the afternoon by describing the adjacent land and her first exposure to Chinese ancestral offerings.

Sunday afternoon we went for a two hour walk and I wish that I could picture to you the sight as far as the eye could reach. To our right stretched graveyards with here and there a rice or vegetable field in their midst. Without knowing what it was, at a distance you would take it to be a thickly covered hay meadow taking in hundreds of acres of both valley and hill. The mounds were all round. In front of some were the ashes of burnt paper houses, carriages, chairs and money to help the departed in their needs. They take precious care they only burn paper affairs. I daresay a spirit could sit on the ashes of a paper chair.<sup>45</sup>

Her impression of the sights appears, up to this time, to have been one of somewhat humorous curiosity, however as the afternoon continued her experience was one of rapidly increasing discomfort.

As we walked leisurely along we noticed coming behind us a group of about six men and one younger than the rest, with very little clothing – just a shadow of what ought to have been on for the day was chilly – in the midst. He was cut across the lip and shoulder and quite bespattered with blood – my first thought was that an accident had happened and all these men were friends or sympathizers but as they came nearer all left but two and we saw that the poor lad's hands and queue were tied together behind his back. But his face. My heart aches when I dare to let it come before me, poor, poor boy. I never saw, though I've seen many faces behind prison bars, so utterly hopeless. It was blank despair. I tried to read it

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<sup>45</sup> Diary of Trip, 10 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

before I knew the cause but it perplexed me more than anything else in China has.<sup>46</sup>

The reader cannot help but think that Lena was identifying the harshness of China: in her recollections of this day in Ichang she had placed her account of the spontaneity and ease of their music-making in such close proximity to her description of this man under arrest. These two scenes, in their undeniable contrast, draw the reader to the disparities that must have seemed, to Lena, implicit in China. As she continued her account, she explained that although she was unable to determine much about the situation, her companions who were able to speak Chinese provided her with an explanation.

Some of our party could understand Chinese so when in passing us the man said 'He stole clothes and is going to the yamen' light was thrown on the suspect but all this had to be retold us and what going to the yamen meant – some faces of China are so ugly it is distasteful to write them but the case was unusual if that poor laddie's head did not hang from the city gates that night as a warning for others – just because he stole clothes – I could hardly blame him – though the flowers are blooming and at times the sun is very hot yet my fur coat or golf cape are not a burden to me and he, poor boy had only a light cotton cloth about his loins – his back bore the welts of the lash. We went on our way but could not help but wonder how his home people felt when he did not return that night.<sup>47</sup>

This stopover in Ichang was concluded as it had begun, with the company and warmth of the China Inland Mission household; Lena and her traveling companions were escorted to the city docks where their new accommodations which would take them the rest of the way to the city of Kiating) awaited them. After they had prepared the boat for their departure, Mr. and Mrs. Roe of the CIM and the young American men gathered around to say good-bye and send them off on their trip. As she described, "We sang the good old

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<sup>46</sup> Diary of Trip, 10 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>47</sup> Diary of Trip, 10 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4). *Yamen* refers to the office and home of provincial officials.

hymns together and with many good wishes for a safe journey they left us and we entered into our new life singing 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow.'<sup>48</sup>

From the moment that she stepped aboard the smaller houseboat, Lena experienced many new aspects of travel and life along this part of the Yangzi River, which would take her through the gorges and into West China. Houseboat travel inherently brought Lena and her companions closer to the Chinese both on the boat and along the shores of the river, as it was a more intimate style of traveling; they lived in close proximity to the crew and they had many opportunities to go ashore and walk along the river banks as the boat made its way through particularly dangerous rapids. The Smiths, who had successfully secured passage on two houseboats, rejoined the party at the start of the trip. Dr. Cassidy, Mr. Jolliffe, Miss Hambley and Lena made up the rest of the group. A woman from England who had planned to join them was unable to make the trip as she had become ill with smallpox.<sup>49</sup> The missionaries, the family of the captain of the boat, and the trackers and oarsmen were all on one boat, although the three groups were well defined and lived quite separately on the trip. The trackers worked, ate and slept in the front part of the boat; this multipurpose area was at times the place where the tracking ropes were manipulated, at other times a feeding station where, as Lena noted, the trackers ate rice four to five times daily and occasionally were given a little meat with their rice in the evening, and then a sleeping accommodation overnight. The curiosity that Lena and her companions shared about these men was so strong that it drove them to try to watch them

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<sup>48</sup> Diary of Trip, 10 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>49</sup> Diary, 11 January 1905 (LDJ 1:3).

unobtrusively as they slept. She was relieved to find that none of them used opium, more because she wanted to be assured that they were hard workers than because she was concerned about the morality of opium usage, but she was quite dismayed about the conditions in which they lived. She found it difficult to ignore the sounds of the men coughing throughout the night, and she had seen that they packed tightly together on the floor of their compartment, protected from the cold only by coarse straw matting and a little bedding. The missionaries, in contrast, were assigned four spacious rooms immediately behind the trackers' area, and perhaps, as Lena suggested, she and her fellow newcomers really did think of this part of the houseboat as their first home in China. However, Lena was almost embarrassed by the comfort that they achieved through their efforts to decorate their quarters.<sup>50</sup>

I must say I am somewhat disappointed in the boat itself – instead of being a hardship it is a luxury; as the customs officer remarked, 'it was like a palace car – the finest fitted up of any boat that had gone up.' Of course this could only be said after the ladies had done their part in beautifying it with all the necessary knickknacks. Strange to say I never got the slightest idea of a Chinese junk or houseboat until I really saw one though I have read and seen pictures of them so often. There are four good big living rooms in this one. On one side of our spacious dining room hangs a snap of China on the opposite side the Union Jack.<sup>51</sup>

One might easily suggest that these women had brought together, in one room although separated by the expanse between the walls, a graphic representation of their new lives, the British and the Chinese, separate yet under one roof.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Diary of Trip, 10 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>51</sup> Diary, 11 January 1905 (LDJ 1:3). Although this is part of her diary, it appears that some of the documents from (LDJ 1:3) are actually letters. This particular document begins, "Houseboat above Ichang Jan 11/05 Dear Mrs. Stephenson," suggesting that at least this particular entry is a copy of a letter rather than a typical diary entry.

<sup>52</sup> The Canadian missionaries seldom refer to themselves as Canadian; rather they appear to consider themselves British, at least according to their personal papers. Lena does not discuss her nationality as she



The captain's family, in its quarters at the back of the houseboat, was separated from the missionaries by the boat's kitchen. Lena had little contact with the captain's wife or three children throughout the journey, a situation that she probably was content to maintain as her impression of the captain's wife was decidedly a negative one. Lena found her to be a shrill, argumentative, dictatorial woman. Although it is difficult to know exactly what she meant in her brief description of the woman, it is certain that she was content to keep her distance. As she wrote, "I am glad we see little of her ladyship – when Chinese wife is a 'new woman' she is a terror."<sup>53</sup> Finally, there was a fairly large freight area below deck, which held all of the missionaries' possessions as well as some cargo that the boat carried into West China.<sup>54</sup>

On the second houseboat were two Chinese language teachers who had joined the trip so that the new missionaries could begin their Chinese lessons. Lena found the appearance of the teachers striking, and her description of them contained a rather disparaging element.

Let me describe them – ours is a tall young Chinaman arranged in long dark padded garments. He wears a formidable hood and the neatest of black velvet shoes. As he walks over uncertain ground he grips his skirt before him like a frightened old lady in one of our city streets.<sup>55</sup>

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tends to talk about foreigners, but Mary Lamb and Agnes Hilliard will both refer to themselves as British (as they were part of the British Imperial Project); Mary in discussion about the national identity of the missionaries and protection of gunboats, and Agnes in reports about the European war theatre.

<sup>53</sup> Diary of Trip, 10 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Lena appears to have identified her teachers with the literati of China, and she portrayed them as weak and limited; she found them negatively effeminate in appearance and had already learned that the literati considered physical exercise degrading. In fact, she hoped that the introduction of physical education to some of the coastal schools, and the influence of western education methodology would contribute to the decline of what she called, “this old namby pamby order.”<sup>56</sup> This second houseboat, on which the teachers lived also housed many more trackers and carried more freight.<sup>57</sup>

In her early days aboard the houseboat Lena found that the scenery absolutely surrounded her and initially the visual impact that the landscape had upon her seemed to surpass all of her other experiences including the excitement that she assuredly held about the dangers of actually making their way through the famous gorges. As she wrote in an early letter,

Ever since leaving Ichang we have been passing through the most wonderfully beautiful country. This morning we found ourselves in a great gorge. The river seemed to narrow at its entrance until we wondered how we could get through it, as we neared it we found it to be only narrow in appearance. I never viewed anything so lovely, the mountains towered above us on every side. I am sure they were 800 or a thousand feet high, the high peaks were away above the clouds and some of them snow capped – stray little fleecy clouds wandered all over the side of the mountains at one place somewhat in the distance there were a number of high peaks together and great dark clouds coiled above them giving them a wild stormy appearance – but you are probably interested to know how we got over the waters rather than what I thought of the clouds.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. Western education is also discussed in Diary, undated entry (LDJ 1:3). For further reading on this topic, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1994).

<sup>57</sup> Diary of Trip, 10 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4). Lena mentions 70 trackers, but it is difficult to determine whether this number referred to the men on both boats or just on the second one.

<sup>58</sup> Diary of Trip, 12 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

Then she did pull herself back – away from the remarkable sights that kept unfolding before her, and refocused on the information which she thought that her readers would find interesting and perhaps more important. The clarity of her writing continued to transmit detailed and undoubtedly satisfying reading for her family, as she captured the heady emotions that she felt, as well as the arduous work that the crew carried out.

The water was a little rough but we did not have to leave the boat until after lunch when we reached the first of the serious rapids. We set our house in order and left the boat hoping that we might return to find it in good condition. It was a bad place – great stones stood in defiance across the river and water rushed down pell-mell...The shores are very rugged and rough and the men have to scramble over rocks and often into the water. The rope gets caught in some bad places and it is remarkable to see how they climb up what looks like perpendicular rock and unfasten it. There is a small boat in attendance to unloose it from any stones that may catch it in the water and also to convey the men backward and forward. All along the line there are men stationed to keep the rope from getting caught and at the end of the rope there is the great force of trackers our own and extras – today there were 70 – there is also the swimmer who is ready at any minute to dive into the water.<sup>59</sup>

Lena's description of the work of the crew, while clear and quite analytical, carried with it a sense of wonderment and perhaps difference and respect. She only drew a parallel to Canada once in this letter, when she suggested that her readers might envision the falls at Niagara in order to gain a sense of the power of the Yangzi rapids; in all of her other descriptions she perhaps unintentionally encouraged them to think about this Yangzi river environment as unique.<sup>60</sup> A few more days would pass before the expertise of the trackers and oarsmen would actually be tested.

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<sup>59</sup> Diary of Trip, 12 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>60</sup> Diary of Trip, 12 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4); Diary, 14 January 1905 (LDJ 1:3).

Their days on the boat were quite organized as daily activities were scheduled, and the newcomers began to shift their focus from being travelers in China to becoming language students, at least until the river proved stronger than their timetable. Each day, other than Sunday which was reserved for prayers, the missionaries rose early in the morning, breakfasted between seven and eight o'clock and then immediately began their language lessons. In the first week Lena was responsible for the housekeeping, and as part of her duties she oversaw the work of the kitchen coolie and the cook. Meals were the only scheduled respite from their lessons, as they studied in the morning and once again throughout the afternoon. After "tea" at about six o'clock, they gathered together for an hour of Bible study which was always followed by informal activities such as letter writing, discussions and singing. Once again, Lena adjusted easily to this communal life, to her preparation for missionary work, and to the comfort that she found in prayer and Bible study. After several days of language lessons she was quite upbeat and confident in the groups' increasing language acquisition, despite the frequent interruptions which caused her to refer to their lessons as "spasmodically carried out in the afternoons."<sup>61</sup> As she reported,

We are with [illegible word] Chinese sounds – we manage to have considerable fun over it. I think we will enjoy the language study very much after we get some foundation work. The sounds at first are strange and hard but if one is not afraid of attempting them and keeps at it they come by and by.<sup>62</sup>

In her subsequent records Lena seldom mentioned anything about the Chinese language, neither the difficulty that the lack of adequate skill presented to her, nor the problems that

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<sup>61</sup> Diary of Trip, 14 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>62</sup> Ibid..

she experienced in attaining a required level of proficiency so that she could live and work with Chinese people. The reader can only speculate that she did not suffer the trauma that some of the other missionaries encountered and which caused them to bemoan the double-edged sword of the Chinese language: if they did not have enough vocabulary and comprehension then they were unable to really live in China as opposed to within the missionary compound, but in order to have this skill they had to diligently pursue their studies of this quite difficult language.

The pilots of their houseboats always tried to keep the boats very close together, and this proximity caused Lena considerable anxiety as she was concerned about the repercussions that she envisioned; perhaps she thought that the boats would smash into each other or that they would be unable to separate quickly enough when unforeseen problems arose. Her readers are drawn once again to the sense of closeness that she had described in the streets of the Chinese section of Shanghai and, as we shall see, that Mary Lamb and Agnes Hilliard described on similar streets in the cities in West China.<sup>63</sup> Lena never minded delays or the slowness of the journey as she was always content, on the boat or ashore, and most certainly preferred caution and safety to speed and progress. As she reported on one particular section of the river,

Yesterday we traveled very few miles but were very thankful we so safely got over the big rapids. The evening before we anchored between the larger rapid and a lesser one – there were a number of boats to go up so we had to wait our turn. It is not very pleasant waiting below a rapid, the boats were all in a somewhat sheltered cove but so close together that in the swift current they pressed one against the other and sometimes the boards crashed together as if the boat was going asunder – the thought that if the ropes fastening us to the shore should break our boat would be hurled into the rapids below was not a comforting one to

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<sup>63</sup> Diary, 27 November 1904 (LDJ 1: 2).

be lulled to sleep with but most evils are imaginary and the morning came and we are still safe. We all stayed on board until after breakfast much to my regret for we got up into rough water and our boat swayed and tossed like the Empress on a Pacific storm – unpleasant recollections and feelings came so strong that I was glad enough when going a short distance the sandpan came for us and from the shore we watched the boats go over the rapids – the first was our cargo boat and happy we were to see our worldly goods beyond danger.<sup>64</sup>

When she concluded her account of this impressive part of the journey, she returned to the beauty that enveloped her and that served to complete this emotion-laden episode for her. “The gorges are too grand for words. On one side the rock towered straight to the clouds, on the other sloped off more gradually making pasture and farm land. Goats, water buffalo and an occasional horse fed among the rocks.”<sup>65</sup>

Lena’s world became the world of the river, as she and her fellow travelers moved easily between the boat and the shore; her attention shifted without pause from light-hearted and appreciative observations of their outings on the shore to adrenalin-driven excitement about events that occurred, almost without warning, on the river. As she wrote,

Whenever we can we walk, run and play on shore. Yesterday we followed a pretty brook in its windings. The vegetation even at this time of the year is quite luxuriant. What is planted here is corn or garden seeds and comes up in separate little tufts.<sup>66</sup>

Her next sentence reveals that unexpected intrusion of the river.

Just as I finished the last sentence Mrs. Smith called us to come quick. A boat had broken rope and was going down the rapid – we all jumped of course. She went whizzing by backwards with one hull badly broken in... We are waiting our turn to get up the rapid.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Diary of Trip, 14 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

Despite the damage that was incurred by the boat, the missionaries' houseboats were unharmed and resumed their journey the following morning. However, that day the houseboats almost immediately confronted more danger, and once again Lena preferred caution to speed. As she advised,

We are again between two rapids. The first is a very small one but the current is swift. There were twelve ahead of us this morning. That is what makes this trip so slow – some days we wait for hours and if it is bad water we are traveling through we may only go five miles a day. So far it has not been tiresome.<sup>68</sup>

A rather simple anecdote that Lena recounted about Mr. Jolliffe reminds her readers that Lena, who was such an enthusiastic traveler in China, was also very much a committed missionary.

I stood looking at the wreck this morning. I noticed on the window little incense sticks and it reminded me of a joke we have on Mr. Jolliffe that I had mentally made a note to tell you. It was I think the first night we were on the houseboat he and Dr. Smith were just coming into our part of the boat when Mr. Jolliffe saw what in his practical Canadian way he took to be a cigarette stub and proceeded at once to stamp it out much to the amusement of Dr. Smith. There are more ways than one of stamping out idolatrous rites.<sup>69</sup>

From this brief account her reader may get a sense of Lena's impressions: Canadians, as represented by Mr. Jolliffe were practical compared to Chinese who were impractical, or less competent or perhaps unrealistic. She had learned, in the time that passed between this incense incident and the recounting of the story that the boatmen burned incense as part of their belief system. As well, she may have chosen to write about Mr. Jolliffe because she particularly wanted to share something of him with her family. And finally,

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<sup>68</sup> Diary of Trip, 14 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4)..

<sup>69</sup> Ibid..

she identified that Jolliffe, as a missionary, had albeit inadvertently, taken a stand against China's belief system.

Lena was introduced to the complexities of proselytizing as the missionaries worked among the local Chinese that they meet every Sunday afternoon; each Sunday brought a unique experience to her, as their varied audiences had varied reactions to the efforts of the missionaries. The missionaries insisted on resting on the Sabbath, and each Sunday they paid extra for stopping Sunday travel.<sup>70</sup> Dr. Smith preached to the people who happened to be available; if the boat was on the river he preached to the boatmen, if it had docked and the missionaries were ashore he spoke to the local people.<sup>71</sup> Lena found that these interactions seemed to have both intentional and unintentional results, and expected and unexpected responses from the Chinese; some were appreciative while others were clearly not, and there was considerable misunderstanding, perhaps by both sides, in these interactions between the missionaries and the Chinese. These activities may, in a microcosmic way reflect the observations of historian Paul Cohen in his early work on missionaries in China, in which he suggested that their work and indeed their presence yielded both intentional and unintentional results.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Diary, 15 January 1905 (LDJ 1:3).

<sup>71</sup> Diary, 15 January 1904 (LDJ 1:3); Diary of Trip, 15 January to 6 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4); Diary of Trip, 28 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4). In Chapter three, Mary Letitia Lamb will unabashedly hand out tracts and discuss Christianity with anyone that she meets in her travels.

<sup>72</sup> For prior reference to this text, see footnote 73 in Chapter One. Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity, the Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).



Lena's reflection on their efforts to preach to their boatmen one Sunday suggests that the interaction between the missionaries and the men was quite unsatisfactory; the lack of focus and understanding displayed by the boatmen is almost absurd in her account, and these men, who were skilled crewmen were quite deficient students of Christianity.

Dr. Smith had a Christian service with the men. We had learned part of 'Jesus Loves Me' and so helped with the singing. It was difficult to talk to these men. They are intensely ignorant and the captain does not favor Christianity. They are Buddhists. While Dr. Smith talked with them one man asked him if Jesus was an Englishman – another broke in upon the discourse wanting to know the price of the Doctor's suit. Another wanted to know how it was he could talk to them and they understood but when he spoke to others they could not understand. Today the captain's son said to Dr. Smith that we were disrespectful to their gods yesterday by telling of ours but Dr. Smith said that so far he had not talked of theirs but only told of ours.<sup>73</sup>

However, the following Sunday Lena recorded that their work was well received, and she suggested that the absence of the captain's son, who had accompanied his family ashore for the day, may have played some part in the heightened appreciation of the boatmen. She noticed that on this particular day, when Dr. Smith had finished his lesson, the men asked him if he could stay longer, and, as she wrote, "continue to tell them about 'the Great Heavenly God'."<sup>74</sup>

As Lena and her fellow travelers moved back and forth from the boat to the riverbank, Lena thought that they were making a considerable impression upon the Chinese; the foreigners assuredly looked different and acted unabashedly differently, and so their presence ashore was undoubtedly remarkable to the people who saw them. She described one of these encounters,

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<sup>73</sup> Diary, 15 January 1905 (LDJ 1:3); Diary of Trip, 16 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>74</sup> Diary, 15 January 1905 (LDJ 1:3).

On shore we do many things that must seem very peculiar to the Chinese. One of our favorite exercises is throwing the shoulder stone. The women as well as the men indulge in this and we have the usual Chinese spectators. Yesterday we offered the stone to some of the bystanders and not only some of the trackers but one of our teachers condescended to throw the stone. They can throw pretty nearly as well as the ladies.<sup>75</sup>

Lena found that the Chinese who encountered them were particularly forthright in approaching children.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps they were less fearful or restrained with children than with adult foreigners, or it may be, as both women suggested, that Chinese people simply had a fondness for children and so they were quite unrestrained when they meet them.

She wrote,

The natives so far are very kind – though they do crowd around us so much. They seem especially fond of little Minnie. They are always persisting in trying to get her into their arms or to hold her hands. They seem to be extremely fond of children. That is one characteristic I presume – a little fellow the other day brought some popcorn and gave it to her, another gave her half of his sweet potato. A man who asked her age, on being told she was 2 ½ years old, remarked that her feet were large enough for a girl of four.<sup>77</sup>

The generosity of Chinese people that Lena extrapolated from their behavior with foreign children was countered by an experience in which she found them lacking in the humanity that she believed was present in Westerners.

I saw an incident that displayed another characteristic not quite so admirable. We were on the banks of the rapids. Our own boat had been carried back into the water below by the force of the rapids, carrying the rope back and tumbling some of the trackers over the tow rope head over heels and some into the river. While watching this we saw a small houseboat dashing down the rapids at a fearful rate and apparently beyond the control of the boatmen...At last we saw the boat was turned on its side but still floating and the two submerged men came into view.

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<sup>75</sup> Diary, 15 January 1905 (LDJ 1:3).

<sup>76</sup> Diary 15 January 1905 (LDJ 1:3); Diary 15 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4). In Chapter Four, Agnes Hilliard will notice this as well.

<sup>77</sup> Diary, 15 January 1905 (LDJ 1:3); Diary of Trip, 16 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

Then followed what was for us and for the men clinging to the wreck a very anxious time. The waves just seemed to delight to play with them and whirl it around and send it first this way and that.<sup>78</sup>

It was the reaction of the onlookers that distressed Lena; hundreds of people lining the shores as well as those aboard nearby boats appeared to be completely unaffected by the seemingly imminent demise of the boat and the drowning of two men. She could not understand their complacency, as she observed that they were neither curious nor interested in the fate of the boatmen.<sup>79</sup> After what seemed an interminable fifteen minutes, one of the government rescue boats arrived and saved the drowning men.<sup>80</sup> Lena's sense of the onlookers was not that they had become immune to the tragedy of river accidents, but that Chinese people were indifferent to the value of life.

Lena's reaction to the death of one of their own boatmen is rather unclear, although she described the event, which occurred the morning after the near drowning of the two river men, with considerable detail. Perhaps Lena was exhausted by her emotions of the day before, or perhaps his death and the subsequent tribute to him was a story that she wished to recount, but one that simply did not provoke an emotional reaction in her. His death was marked by the placing of incense sticks around the boat, and his body was taken to a sandy part of the shoreline, and was also surrounded by incense sticks. Two of the boatmen stayed behind with the body in order to supervise the burial, while the rest of the crew remained on board and the boats returned to their work. Lena had been concerned

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<sup>78</sup> Diary, January 15, 1905 (LDJ 1:3).

<sup>79</sup> Diary of Trip, 16 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>80</sup> Diary, 15 January 1905 (LDJ 1:3).

about the trackers' living conditions and the potential health hazards to them, and in this death it surely seemed that her concerns had become a reality.<sup>81</sup> In Lena's account of these stories she identified the contrast that she found between her own, foreign, humanity and that of the Chinese. Lena suggested that from the experience of the previous day, she has learned that Chinese people did not seem to care much about one another or, more importantly, to value the sanctity of life. This was almost undoubtedly in contrast to her perception of Western missionaries, whose culture according to Lena fostered caring about one another, the type of caring that was implicit in a humane culture. She assumed that the Christianity which the missionaries were bringing to China would undoubtedly foster the values of their own Christian society, among them the concern for individual human life.

As they made their way to the city of Chungking, Lena had many more river stories to share with her family; she was a reluctant witness to more of the perils that other boats encountered, and a participant in some of the very real dangers that her own boat had to deal with on the river. After a particularly harrowing experience, she noted, "Today has been one of deliverance... The trackers have had a hard time."<sup>82</sup> The weather that day was very poor; the rain was heavy, the winds were exceptionally strong and the passengers had not gone ashore.

...for the first time on the trip I trembled. We came sweeping toward it at a tremendous rate and passed it with a margin of three or four feet – both the wind and current changed just at that point and while we were still within a bamboo pole length off the rock our boat swung around and stemmed till the current crosswise. I don't know how the others felt. I grabbed the lamp for it was dark

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<sup>81</sup> Diary, 15 January 1905 (LDJ 1:3).

<sup>82</sup> Diary of Trip, 20 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

inside. Mrs. Smith clutched the baby. Dr. Cassidy said afterwards she had figured out where she would jump – she can swim –...and with full hearts we gave thanks to the Father for all of today's mercies. Some have said God takes particular pleasure in caring for the West China missionaries – this I know neither tide nor wind or current can harm us if we are in the path of duty unless he wills it and we cannot be in a more critical position than we are in today.<sup>83</sup>

In her recounting of the events of that day it seemed that Lena's identity was firmly established, she was a Christian missionary in China. She transported her readers, from her recitation of her first day in China as a newcomer who was inspired by and reliant upon her religion to guide her in her future work, through her descriptions of the wonderment of the countryside as she traveled along the Yangzi, and she fluctuated gently between her roles, as a burgeoning missionary and as a traveler in this fascinating and exciting land. It may be that in the telling of this frightening episode she made a subtle shift, and was first and foremost a missionary who was living through the same experiences, but was firmly fixed in her new identity.

The river trip continued to include its worrisome adventures for the missionaries. In one remarkable episode, their boat was actually perched, seemingly unable to move, upon a rock with little obvious way of freeing it. This dramatic event had begun as others had in past days, without warning; the missionaries had spent a pleasant evening walking up a scenic hillside. They passed through a lovely treed grove, and came upon an unexpected, striking ravine that cut dramatically through the land just before they returned to their boat. Lena reported that although they usually moored overnight, on that particular night the cook had delayed their departure as he had gone into town to purchase supplies, and

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<sup>83</sup> Diary of Trip, 14 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

so they did push on along the river into the darkness, in an effort to reach their planned stopover. They had just sat down to supper when the boat, as Lena explained, “gave two great thumps.”<sup>84</sup> The teachers rushed into the dining area and exclaimed in Chinese to Dr. Smith, “The whole thing is smashed.”<sup>85</sup> The passengers, each of whom rushed to a window to try to estimate the truth of the matter and the damage to the boat, returned to their supper while the crew awaited the arrival of a small boat that would help to resolve the problem. The initial calm that Lena and her companions demonstrated was replaced by a shared, increasing concern, when the man with the required ropes arrived in the little boat, and they could no longer avoid the thought of the gaping hole. The scene seems to have appeared almost surrealistic to Lena, as she described it unfolding.

It was almost a weird sight looking out onto the dark rushing waters – with here and there a bamboo torch lighting up a bald rock – strangest of all was the sound of our pilot’s voice issuing orders in the darkness the meaning of which we so much wanted to know. Just to stay still and wait and not fuss was a lesson worth learning with comforting assurance came that verse to me – ‘The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil.’<sup>86</sup>

Once again, Lena experienced mixed sensations; the sights and sounds surrounded her yet isolated her from the activities, while all the time she was part of them, and the power of and reliance on her religious teachings and beliefs reasserted themselves. China and Christianity once again were tightly drawn together through her. The pilot’s expertise did guide them out of the accident; when he sent all of them to the back of the boat, the front

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<sup>84</sup> Diary of Trip, February 1, 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

tilted off the rock, and with very gradual pushing and pulling of the ropes the boat was released unharmed from the rock.<sup>87</sup>

The days on the river passed by, marked by some regularized activities: language lessons which were only cancelled when the river imposed its will and interrupted them, and prayers and preaching on Sundays. Dr. Smith continued to preach to any available audience: to the boatmen each week, as well as to people who lived along the river whenever possible. A particularly positive Sunday gathering encouraged Lena to consider the implications of literacy to the missionaries' work.

Yesterday we spent a very pleasant Sabbath in a quiet country district in the morning. Dr. Smith preached to some of the farmers about as well as our own men and in the afternoon a bright looking farmer came asking for a gospel telling of what he had heard in the morning. Dr. Smith gave him one of the gospels and he went away happy over it – we hope he may understand. So few of the people we meet along the river can read that it is a great joy to find an interested reader. In the afternoon we all went for a walk.<sup>88</sup>

As Lena continued to describe her experience that afternoon, the reader cannot help but form an image of a fascinating community, as people in the immediate countryside watched for their arrival; China was like a welcoming family member or friend. However, Lena did not simplify it or make it all uniform; rather, China was a complex place for her. This particular account is quite representative of many of her other recollections; her experiences with the Chinese people that she encountered along the river were agreeable. She continued her story about their afternoon, explaining that the local Chinese were very curious about them and as soon as the missionaries completed

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<sup>87</sup> Diary of Trip, 1 February, 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>88</sup> Diary of Trip, 6 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

the semi-formal preaching and began their walk, news of their approach traveled quickly.

As she wrote,

The boys of the place have been watching for us and as soon as we issued forth the cry went for the 'Here they come'... We took a narrow path and had to walk one by one but they dashed over stones and fields to get a near view and walked along by us. You can imagine what fun it was to us and what remarks that we made to one another. There were over a hundred and twenty-five followers.<sup>89</sup>

This passage certainly provokes questions regarding the impact made by the mere presence of missionaries in China, and the display of interest and perhaps even friendliness on that particular Sunday afternoon in a community along the Yangzi River, when more than 125 people dashed over stones and through fields to have a closer look at Lena Dunfield and her companions.

The houseboats docked at Chungking after a month on the Yangzi River, and Lena and her companions were able to join the city's missionary community for a few days, before moving on to their individual assignments. Leaving the river was a jolting change for Lena and in this city she found the harshness of China inescapable. Once again, she identified sharp contrasts between the city in which the Chinese lived and the missionary property which existed behind its compound walls. The community in which Lena had so recently thrived, on the river and its shores, among fellow travelers, boatmen, farmers and other people who lived along the riverbank, was abruptly replaced by the city in which the contrast was strikingly evident. This experience encouraged Lena to hope that Christianity and missionary work would change China. She initially noted, "We arrived here the night of the 11<sup>th</sup> and have been spending a very happy time visiting with the

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<sup>89</sup> Diary of Trip, 6 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4).



missionaries while Dr. Smith attended to the customs demands.”<sup>90</sup> Lena and her companions had first walked from the docks through, as she described, “narrow wet streets” until they finally reached the warm embrace of the local missionary compound. Her description of the following morning, and then of the previous night left little doubt about this sharp contrast.

Sunday morning we awakened to see the sun pouring in our windows and hear the pealing of a church bell over the compound – ‘twas music to our ears and as we drank in the sweetness of it all we imagined we were back in our homeland and all the squalor and filth and misery we had seen the night before faded away in the past and into distant China. Before the day was over it was all painfully real again.<sup>91</sup>

At this time, in the early years of the twentieth century there were approximately 180 Westerners in the city, a number which Lena advised included about 80 British soldiers aboard three warships stationed on the Yangzi, as well as French soldiers of an undisclosed number. However, Lena recorded little more than statistics about this military presence, perhaps because she did not consider it particularly meaningful or more likely because she was particularly focused on the missionary community of which she was a member. She did describe the security and beauty that she found within the walls of the missionary properties.

The missionary compounds in China are lovely havens of rest, after trudging through filthy streets to come upon a high wall and passing through a gateway find within a lovely garden, with palms and ferns, flowers and birds, you rejoice that Christianity brings beauty and rest.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Diary of Trip, 14 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

But the compound could not really protect her from Chungking; in the afternoon she passed through its walls so that she could attend a church service for some of the city's sailors and she was immediately engaged in the life of the city.

The streets of Chungking are narrow and dirty. Chungking is built on ridges so it is a continual going up and down stairs. Either walking or riding in a chair it is unpleasant, walking necessitates splashing through pools of water and filth and rubbing up against all kinds of unpleasant objects – in a chair you look down upon the slippery steps to a slippery base below and wonder what would happen if one of the men should lose his footing whether the chair would break or whether you'd slip out, whether a slip to the bottom of the steps would hurt very much – altogether one's contemplations in a sedan chair are not conducive to perfect enjoyment of the outing.<sup>93</sup>

She not only found it challenging to walk along the city streets, but also witnessed some difficult sights, the worst of which was the transportation of four prisoners, “one in a cage with only his head out, the others had their heads through a hole in a round board, they were all yoked together and had to pass the days of their service standing in some public place.”<sup>94</sup>

Lena and her traveling companions did not linger long in Chungking. They moved onto the last part of their journey along the Yangzi until it branched off at the city of Suifu (*Yibin* or *Ipin*) onto the Min River tributary, which they then followed until they reached their final destination, the city of Kiating.<sup>95</sup> The perils of river travel, which actually had not quite ended, were overshadowed by civil and military conflicts that threatened their safety and provided, undoubtedly totally unbidden, experiences with local government

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<sup>93</sup> Diary of Trip, 14 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Yibin or Ipin is the present place name of Suifu; located in the south of Sichuan province at the juncture of the Min and Chang Rivers; it is the last port for upriver traffic on the Yangzi River.

officials. What would prove to be a series of threats or presumed threats to them simply because they were foreigners, began quite unexpectedly. It was a Saturday evening, and so their boats anchored, as was their habit by now, at a city along the river, and when they realized that the Chinese were observing the “feast of Lanterns,” they decided to go ashore in order to see the celebrations.<sup>96</sup> Lena reported that they enjoyed their outing; they even visited a temple where five or six men and two priests were engaged in prayers, and then they took a leisurely walk through the fields before returning to their boat.<sup>97</sup> They expected to stay over the next day, as they did not want to travel on Sunday, and then resume their trip on the Monday. That evening, they were surprised to find a representative from the *yamen* requesting that they stay away from the town because the townspeople were, as he put it, “unreliable.”<sup>98</sup> They were quite surprised by this warning of potential or indeed anticipated anti-foreign activities, as local people had seemed to be curious about them when they had walked in the streets earlier in the day. The official advised that his concern had arisen directly because of the festival; as Lena recounted, he explained, “people are always more excitable because their loyalty to their gods and country is at its highest pitch and having nothing to do but holiday and feast they get into mischief readily.”<sup>99</sup> His concern did not prove to be supported by the behavior of at least some of the local people, as on the following day which was the Sabbath, Lena advised,

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<sup>96</sup> Diary of Trip, 15 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4); Diary of Trip, 20 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4). In her entry of the 15 February, Dunfield refers to the celebration as “feast of Lanterns” however on the 20 February she returns to her account of the day and refers to the celebration as “feast of the Dragon.”

<sup>97</sup> Diary of Trip, 15 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

“they visited the boat by fifties and hundreds and were perfectly quiet and ordered.”<sup>100</sup>

Lena did recognize and perhaps respect the source of the official’s actions; local government officials were directly and wholly responsible for foreigners’ safety. However, she did not have any response to his implied message, that Chinese were nationalistic, and that their nationalism was fueled by the presence of foreigners and indeed, the presence of people who were challenging or threatening to their religion and country.<sup>101</sup>

Lena’s exposure to government officials continued when they reached Suifu, the last large city between Chungking and Kiating. The city had a fairly significant missionary presence; Lena advised that there were two Protestant mission centers, the CIM and the Baptist, as well as a Roman Catholic mission of which she seemed to have less knowledge, as she wrote almost as an addendum, “The Roman Catholics too have work here.”<sup>102</sup> Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the city for her was the identity of the city magistrate; the man was an ex-Boxer leader. Lena reported that in 1900 he had even had a “price on his head,” gone into hiding for a time and eventually been pardoned and subsequently, although there were, according to the information she elicited, “hundreds of others suited for the job,” he had actually been appointed to his position by the Empress.<sup>103</sup> Seemingly trying to sort out the logic and effect of this odd appointment, she

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<sup>100</sup> Diary of Trip, 15 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>101</sup> See footnotes 1 and 2 in Chapter One for readings on the Boxers and the Empress Dowager, as well as in-text discussion of these topics.

<sup>102</sup> Diary of Trip, 28 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4); Diary, undated entry (1:3).

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

advised that the local missionaries had come to terms with it, perhaps pragmatically because he carried out his duties towards them effectively, no doubt protecting them from anti-foreign threats. However, her questioning of the appointment of this man was apt; the anti-Christian, anti-foreign and xenophobic uprising had been responsible for the deaths and displacement of missionaries, Westerners and Chinese Christians, as well as distress for many Chinese people less than a decade earlier. The appointment of this individual might reflect the controversy and the ambivalence that China's central government, personified by the Empress Dowager, had towards the foreign presence in China and the actions that the leadership might take towards reinstating the country's stability and its own strength.

Lena recognized that "Boxer" had by this time become a rather generic term, probably referring more to armed rebels or trouble makers than to actual Boxers, and that she and her colleagues were about to enter into what she believed in retrospect was a local situation, but one which reflected some of the significant difficulties that China faced.<sup>104</sup> This experience, which spanned several suspense-ridden days, was once again driven by civil unrest and the responsibilities of district officials for the safety of foreigners in their midst. Lena began her account with the words, "We are being initiated into the stirring side of China."<sup>105</sup> In her story Lena almost immediately highlighted the different interpretations and responses that the participants, the language teachers, the missionaries, Dr. Smith who assumed the role of leader, the captain of the boat and the

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<sup>104</sup> Diary of Trip, 23 March 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>105</sup> Diary of Trip, 10 March 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

Chinese officials, had to the armed conflict between government soldiers and marauding Boxers. Their first news of the nearby troubles was brought to the missionaries by the alarmed and fearful language teachers. Dr. Smith advised the teachers and assured his fellow-travelers that they were not in danger despite the fear of the teachers, because their safety was guaranteed by the local officials. He explained that it had been established by the Chinese government that foreigners were under the protection of the officials, as representatives of their government, and that this guarantee was even written in each of their passports which stated that the bearer “must not be detained in any city” and “must be given protection.”<sup>106</sup> Dr. Smith, rather than requesting the military guard that one of the language teachers wanted, allowed the houseboat to moor off shore overnight, and perhaps because they were protected by rain and darkness, the night did pass uneventfully. The following day the boat traveled further along the river; however, at the next stopover it was met by a contingent of soldiers who reported that the official of the city wanted them to stop. There were reports of two or three thousand Boxers a few miles ahead, government soldiers had been killed in the fighting and the local leaders had sent a contingent of soldiers to the distant city of Chengtu (*Chengdu*) to secure further military support.<sup>107</sup> Lena believed that the report was undoubtedly part truth and part rumor, and because they were unable to discern the level of danger they once again packed their belongings so that they could leave their boat if the danger became clear. Lena’s account ended at this point. However, she did return to the narrative two weeks later, and perhaps these intervening days allowed her to complete her story and reflect upon the events. It

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<sup>106</sup> Diary of Trip, 23 March 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>107</sup> The current place name of Chengtu is Chengdu; the capital of Sichuan province.

seems that the missionaries had tried to follow Dr. Smith's plan. They remained on their houseboat, and were in the midst of a Bible study class when they were interrupted by their cook and then by Dr. and Mrs. Smith, all of whom were all concerned about the imminent arrival of the Boxers. The captain moored the boat away from the shore, the missionaries once again ensured that they had a few necessary belongings, and they were all prepared to return to Suifu if the situation worsened. That night there were visible demonstrations at the city wall, and a gunboat drew up alongside the houseboat in order to provide a clearly evident guard to it. Lena's speculation about why they were not attacked considered several possibilities, but she really did not know whether the presence of the gunboat, the darkness, or even the lack of intent of the demonstrators was responsible for their safety. Finally, on the third day they were officially requested to either go back to Suifu, under the armed guard and organization of the government, or into the city. Not wanting to go backwards, they readied themselves to go into the *yamen*, although the captain was ready to return to Suifu. The officials sent three soldiers to the nearby village that had been burned, in order to ascertain whether the rebels had been successfully dispersed and to evaluate the continuing threat to the city. The missionaries remained in the city which was protected by the military, although Dr. Service, a senior missionary in the city of Kiating had sent a note in which he strongly encouraged them to return to Suifu where he believed that they would be safer. However, Dr. Smith held firmly to his own confidence in official protection, and finally after four days of uncertainty, the missionaries resumed their journey with the help of additional trackers who were provided by the city, government soldiers, and foreign gunboats.

Lena took away several new impressions of China from this experience. She recognized the intensity and quite intimate interaction between missionary leaders and government officials, and identified the need for the missionary leaders to understand China's culture. She respected Dr. Smith's behavior with the officials of the city, and thought that his deep understanding and extensive experience in China had proven invaluable. She also recognized how afraid the local people were of the rebels. When the rebels set fire to the village a few miles away, she was unable to ignore the distress of the people on the riverbank who seemed to be inconsolable as they ran back and forth in abject fear. As well, she may have seen that the government used punishment as an example to other Chinese. When some of the rebels were captured, she explained that they would be treated harshly as "a warning to any sympathizers."<sup>108</sup> Her exposure to Canadian prison inmates may very well have encouraged her to compare the goals of the Chinese and Canadian legal systems in their treatment of criminals. As well, she appreciated the presence of the soldiers who guarded each missionary, although she was unable to ignore the way they looked and dressed. "The soldiers were well armed but with their strange womanish dress and carrying their guns wrong end (to our way of thinking) foremost they have rather a lackadaisical appearance."<sup>109</sup> However, she did not consider the imbalance in the large number of soldiers, chairmen and trackers (as they were supplied with fifty extra trackers to get them safely out of the area) and the small number of missionaries and the cost to China implicit in this protection. And finally, perhaps because she had gained some distance between the events and her reporting of them, she

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<sup>108</sup> Diary of Trip, 23 March 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.



suggested that China would continue to experience domestic problems for some time to come.<sup>110</sup> She wrote, in a speculative and thoughtful section of her account,

I have called these uprisers Boxers. They are really not but that is the name we generally give them for want of a better – they are not unlike them but we ought to sympathize with them a little for their cause is akin to the old trouble ‘taxation without representation.’ Chinese government is not just. They are beginning to follow western ways, foreign schools are being built, railroads are being planned for and poor ignorant people are being taxed heavily- it is just as it was in England not so many years ago when a new piece of machinery would any day cause a riot – they can’t see far enough into the future to see that these things are good and so many of these men believe themselves to be fighting a just cause and great dissatisfaction is felt against the government.<sup>111</sup>

Lena explained that these Boxers were not particularly anti-foreign or even anti-Christian, but rather, that they were responding to the intrinsically domestic problems of poor government and modernization. She asserted that foreigners did have a role to play in China, and that they would always be protected by the Chinese government because it was well aware that one of the undeniable repercussions of the Boxer Uprising was that the international community kept a close watch on China, and on the safety of foreign nationals.<sup>112</sup>

The trouble was a local affair and it is said ‘twas due to the error in government of the official of that district. It certainly was not against the foreigners for there were no foreigners where the trouble was... both poor government injustice and cruelty and the innovations that are sure to come we cannot look for internal peace for some years in China. It would be contrary to all past history. We are very glad though that from the 1900 troubles that the officials have learned that at all costs they must protect the foreigners. They realize that the eyes of the world are upon them.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Diary of Trip, 26 April 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>111</sup> Diary of Trip, 23 March 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

Yet it had only been a few weeks earlier that Lena had considered the pressures that the presence of foreigners and their expertise brought to China. Juxtaposed with her consideration of anti-foreignism among Chinese were her actual experiences with Chinese people who were interested in the teachings of the missionaries. Earlier in their trip when they departed from Chungking, many of their boatmen had stayed behind and were replaced with a fresh crew. She found that on their first Sabbath with this new crew, these men were far more interested than their predecessors had been in the missionaries' work, as well as in Dr. Smith's talk and in learning to sing. She contemplated, in the peace of the evening while anchored at a small town, how lovely West China was and considered the complexity and the intrinsic conflict of modernization. Perhaps it was the peace of her surroundings that encouraged her thoughts. She began,

We are anchored at another small town tonight. We had a long walk before dark along the riverside. The air is laden with the sweetest spring odors, everything is fresh and green. At this place the river is truly calm and restful. Truly Sze-Chuan is very lovely – the green fields, the pretty palms, the stately bamboo, the mountains and hills and villages all make it a fair, fair picture.<sup>114</sup>

Despite the obvious serenity and well-being that Lena was experiencing, she shifted her thoughts to the contradictions that the Chinese would have to face if they were to modernize with the help or support of foreigners as she continued,

No wonder Chinamen feel sensitive to the incoming foreigners. I feel very sorry for them. They realize at this late date that they are away behind every nation and that great haste must be made if they are to have any standing and yet cannot hasten – the new railroad to be put through to Sze chuan will be a very difficult undertaking – no Chinaman or body of Chinamen can do it. They know they must call for help for foreigners and that almost entire control must be given them.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Diary of Trip, 20 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

Lena envisioned that foreigners would have to manage all of the projected enterprises, for she believed that Chinese officials were incapable of assuming the leadership. She contrasted the “long robed, long finger-nailed namby pamby little officials” who “have no idea of work” with the “awakened energetic Chinese.”<sup>116</sup> Their cook on the houseboat was apparently one of the latter, “a Christian and a man of ability” who had been working for the Smith’s for quite a few years and who, having been exposed to foreign outside influences, seemed to have been able to conclude that the Chinese needed to improve in order to lead China.<sup>117</sup> Along their journey she had seen large foreign-looking buildings that she learned were supposed to be government schools, but were not being used because there were not yet any qualified teachers.<sup>118</sup> Perhaps she had come upon at least part of the conflict and tension that China faced; even if Chinese agreed that modernization was necessary, there was no single or simple path to achieve it. She told a story that she had heard and found exceedingly pathetic about a man who was a patient in “one of our Christian hospitals (who) while under the influence of an anesthetic kept murmuring over and over, ‘It is our Sze Chuan – it is not the foreigners it is our own.’”<sup>119</sup> Lena’s response to this story was that the people have a reason to love it and that she hoped that they would become capable or as she states, “more fit to hold it and control it.”<sup>120</sup> Less clear is why she mentioned that the man was in a Christian hospital, and whether she thinks that his outcry was as valid as that of the Christian cook, or as

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<sup>116</sup> Diary of Trip, 20 February 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Diary, undated entry (LDJ 1:3).

<sup>120</sup> Diary, undated entry (LDJ 1:3).

meaningful for the future as the boatmen who appeared interested and eager to learn from Dr. Smith's Sabbath teaching.<sup>121</sup>

Lena's journey from Shanghai to Kiating had taken her only two months, and yet it had introduced her to many facets of China. The astuteness with which she encountered each new encounter and event ensured that she carefully considered her experiences, and cautiously formed impressions of China, of Chinese people, of her surroundings and indeed, of the role of missionaries in China. The contrasts that she noticed, from the serenity of the missionary compounds to the intensity of the city streets, from the solitude of the river and its shore to the perils of river life, from the interest that she and her companions generated to the fear and anger that they caused, are all reflective of the reality of China at the turn of the century. Lena's narrative of her journey into West China not only described her own experience, but also raised questions about the Christian missionary enterprise in China. The disparity in lifestyles between the Chinese and the missionaries, and the unintended responses of Chinese to the presence of the individual missionaries appear to reflect Lena's consideration of the presence of Christian missionaries in China.

*Language studies and missionary work in Kiating, spring and summer, 1905*

Lena and her companions finally reached the city of Kiating in March, 1905 and although she had lived on the river for a little over two months, she appears to have had as easy and quick an adaptation to her new environment as she had experienced in her early days

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<sup>121</sup> Diary of Trip, 30 January 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

in Shanghai and again on the Yangzi. The only signal to readers that she had undergone a considerable change is that she did not write any letters to Canada for almost a month. When she did renew her correspondence she told her readers that she had been in the company of other Canadians who had also neglected their letter-writing duties, and although she neither explained why this has occurred nor defended her neglect of her family, she told her parents how meaningful their correspondence continued to be to her. Perhaps in this way she reminded the reader that although she was fitting into her new community very well, and acclimatizing herself to her new life, she was still a very long way from Canada, both in terms of distance and of culture and news. When Lena's correspondence lapsed once again in the summer, she at that time explained to her family that she had fallen and injured her leg; we can only speculate that the lapse of routine resulted in her failing to write her letters, as she did not explain why she was unable to write, particularly when she was confined to her summer house as she recuperated.

Once again Lena enjoyed and was well aware of the privilege of having a special place to live. She wrote about the value of having compound walls to insulate and undoubtedly to distance her from the problems and miseries of China, and she identified very clearly that she wished, once again, to shield not only her family but also herself from the sights that awaited her beyond the walls. It was indeed possible for the missionaries to close off the world outside their compound.

There are a good many beggars in Kiating – I hope you would not like to hear for I don't like to write of the horrible sights we sometimes see. You don't want thrilling letters at the expense of our feelings and when the missionary gets within his own compound he is glad enough to shut out as [illegible word] possible the memory of what he knows too well exists. I am too anxious to preserve my

sleeping ability to harass my mind in recounting the horrible at this time of night.<sup>122</sup>

Perhaps to balance these images that were in her mind, or perhaps to fill this long awaited letter with news, she spent some time describing the beauty of her immediate surroundings. Lena and Mabel Cassidy were living in the WMS missionary compound; Orlando, as she called him by this time, had moved in with Dr. and Mrs. Service, and the Smith family had continued the journey to their home in Junghsien.<sup>123</sup>

Our compound is splendidly situated – we can see the river and hear it rushing by - on a clear morning we have a beautiful view of the Omei range of mountains – they are very high and ‘tis a beautiful sight to see the snow glistening in the sunlight and the palm, bamboo, fruit trees and flowers are most lovely now. We luxuriate in most beautiful roses, I sowed sweet peas and they are coming up beautifully.<sup>124</sup>

It is at that moment, while conveying the beauty of her surroundings, that she felt most positive and hopeful about her mission in China.

Don’t forget we are representing to these people the Christian life – Jesus shall reign. How it gladdens my heart and we shall share in the bringing about of his Kingdom – May God help us that our share may be as large as our opportunities. Remember us in prayer – we pray for the home church – we look to her for strength.<sup>125</sup>

As Lena settled into life in Kiating, she developed some structure to her days; no longer subject to the vagaries of the river, she found that her language studies were always the focus of each day, and that physical exercise and missionary-related work filled in the other hours. Lena remained in close contact with her traveling companions, and managed

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<sup>122</sup> Diary of Trip, 26 April 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>123</sup> Diary, 12 March 1905 (LDJ 6:5).

<sup>124</sup> Diary of Trip, 26 April 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

to either play tennis or go for walks late in the day. That first spring in Kiating was very hot, and the weather undoubtedly encouraged the language students to remain focused on their lessons until the sun had set. However, they had been so accustomed to their walks that Lena knew that they would have missed them terribly had they not continued. She found that these outings in Kiating were similar to other places because she enjoyed and appreciated the beauty of the countryside, but they were also different because people were not really curious about foreigners, and so she and her companions were able to move about freely. As she explained, “this is one of the charms of Kiating and we are free to walk on the wall or go into the country – our compound is near the West gate.”<sup>126</sup> It was perhaps the first time that she revealed some discomfort about her own difference in China, as she explained at least part of the freedom. Lena’s own difference in China was almost certainly a combination of her physical, linguistic and cultural distinctiveness, her special status and privileges and her feelings as an outsider that she had identified, although she did not expand upon her thoughts beyond making a few rather self-conscious comments,

We go over the hills and what is most unusual in China not to be followed by a crowd. The novelty of foreigners has worn off. You would not blame a crowd gathering about us if you could see Dr. Mabel Cassidy and I in our new bonnets – mine is here I’ll measure it – there it is two feet across and almost six feet in circumference. Wouldn’t you like to see it. The sun is getting very hot, my head is very sensitive to it so I take all precautions – We have also to use in real hot weather double covered umbrellas. Then of course we use smaller hats.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Diary of Trip, 26 April 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

Lena's language studies were her priority, and although she found that they kept her from some of the work in which she might have preferred to be occupied, she did in fact settle in almost immediately to do a little missionary work. She happily began to work with adolescent girls when she became a calisthenics instructor, probably at one of the missionary schools. She led an exercise class for about fifteen minutes each day, and although she was unable to converse with her students extensively, she was pleased that between them, (the girls spoke to her in their limited English, she gave them instructions in her limited Chinese and they all supplemented their deficiencies with body language), they managed to convey their intentions very well. This was the first time that she considered the tradition of women's footbinding, as one of the students was a girl of about sixteen years old who had recently had her feet unbound.<sup>128</sup> Lena did not discuss the actual practice of footbinding; rather she focused her impressions upon this particular young woman, advising that she would always be inhibited in her activities because her feet would never return to their natural state. Lena also regularly worked with young children in the Sunday school. She may at first have been a little less enthusiastic about this involvement as she remarked, "Our pastor Dr. Adams would have me go to work at once so I have 16 dear, dirty little bright boys to interest for 20 minutes or so every Sunday."<sup>129</sup> Once again her language limitations affected the depth of the discussions that she could have with the class, but she found that each week the interactions with the children increased her own speaking skills. Although she had been assigned to this work, she did enjoy these weekly lessons and she even found herself becoming attached to one

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<sup>128</sup> For literature on footbinding, see Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) and Wang Ping, *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

<sup>129</sup> Diary of Trip, 26 April 1905 (LDJ 1:4).



particular child; he was a lively little boy, and she found his antics so endearing that she speculated what it would be like if she adopted him.<sup>130</sup>

Their Chinese language teachers, as they had on the river trip, encouraged Lena and her colleagues to experience Chinese cultural events because they believed that exposure to China's culture would undoubtedly enhance their studies. Lena was introduced to the cultivation of silk worms, and although she was reluctant to accept the silkworms that were offered to her, she assuredly enjoyed and appreciated her exposure to silk cultivation. The teachers appear to have also encouraged the students to eat Chinese food, and although Lena admitted that she had some difficulty getting used to it, she did not have any similar difficulty enjoying Chinese street festivities. Her reporting of one celebration revealed a little of the complexity of her experience, as she found the participants odd but interesting. Lena, Dr. and Mrs. Service and some Baptist friends had gathered at the CIM chapel where they were able to see easily the throngs of people from the city and the region who took part in the festival. As she wrote,

A Chinese procession is a strange medley – there were big gods and little gods, gods of war and gods of peace, gods of prosperity and gods of destruction. Long wiggling representations of the dragon flags and banners – grotesquely dressed clowns, beautiful silken robed boys representing women. The people were very quiet and though it is usually at times like these they show their animosity to the foreigner our presence did not irritate them.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> For discussion of the maternal role of women missionaries, see Myra Rutherdale, "Mothers of the Empire: Maternal Metaphors in the Northern Canadian Mission Field," in *Canadian Missionaries, Indigenous Peoples: Representing Religion at Home and Abroad*, eds. Alwyn Austin and Jamie S. Scott (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 46-66.

<sup>131</sup> Diary of Trip, 7 June 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

In this particular account Lena seems to have had more information or at least a different viewpoint about the likelihood of anti-Christian or anti-foreign activities; in the past she had doubted the validity of warnings, and countered the warnings with her own experiences. However, that evening she did accept the possibility of such activities and as she concluded her reporting of the evening, "I hope all the cities have been as peaceful as this one."<sup>132</sup>

Lena was eager to continue to explore China and in her account of a picnic outside of Kiating she returned the reader to her appreciation of the beauty of China and to her concerns about China's religious iconography. She even suggested that she had continued, in some circumstances, to narrow the gap of separation between her own missionary colleagues and some Chinese. Her opening sentence in this narrative may suggest that she considered the missionaries and the Chinese workers as a group, making up a boatload together. As she wrote,

The foreign community and our chairman and coolies make a boatload of 25. The little river ride was very delightful and we went down one small rapid and then landed at the foot of a great flight of stairs leading up to Buddha Hill. The mothers with their little folk rode up in their chairs but Dr. Mabel Cassidy and I walked. We have great climbs here.<sup>133</sup>

As her letter continued we find that she was recounting by now familiar impressions; the landscape around her was very beautiful and the religious iconography of Chinese was very harsh.

It was a delightful day and delightful way for quite a distance the road went around the precipice on our left hand was the steep embankment down to the river

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<sup>132</sup> Diary of Trip, 7 June 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>133</sup> Diary of Trip, 4 May 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

– all along there was a rock protection which was a happy but somewhat unusual precaution on the part of the Chinese. All along the way there were built or rather hewn into the rock horrid little Buddhas, and then at the top in an enclosure was a most hideously grotesque laughing Buddha – oh, he was a disgusting looking thing. Near him was a great god of war, wild eyed, open mouthed, fierce beyond description. I always feel sorry that little children must see these sights. I have a vivid memory of my own childish days and of ‘seeing things at night’ and I wonder often if these poor Chinese youngsters dream of these ugly gods. This Buddha hill is so called because of the great Buddha face carved in the rock facing the river. It is an immense affair. The outline of the face can be distinguished a mile from it. The Chinese have no data concerning it. It must have been many many hundred years ago since it was put there.<sup>134</sup>

Lena’s trip up to the missionaries’ summer residence on Mount Omei (*Mount Emei*) continued her exposure to, and embracing of, China. She seemed to have become part of her community and her record of that summer indicates that she had transitioned easily and was no longer a newcomer in China, but had adapted, once again, to her new life there.<sup>135</sup> She was fascinated by the beauty of Mount Omei, which was the region’s most famous tourist attraction. The fifteen mile trip from Kiating to Omei was the longest overland trip that she had made; their carriers transported the missionaries in open chairs and all of their baggage, which they packed freely with clothes, books, food and other articles that they might need, in square baskets. Her adaptation to missionary life may very well be indicated by her comment about the extra articles, “We carry our beds with us wherever we go. We take our beds with us until our mattresses and blankets seem to become part of life.”<sup>136</sup> One of the missionaries rode his bicycle to Omei, and Lena reported that the people in the countryside, less exposed to foreigners than the residents

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<sup>134</sup> Diary of Trip, 4 May 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>135</sup> Mount Emei is the current place name of Mount Omei, although the latter continues to be used in some of the literature about China.

<sup>136</sup> Diary of Trip, 28 July 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

of Kiating even though there were undoubtedly many missionaries who took this route each summer, found the sight of him compelling.

Dr. Adams rode his bicycle as much as he could and walked the rest of the way. It was most amusing to see the sensation the bicycle caused – people would drop their work and race out to see the ‘devil’ as some of them called it – so Dr. Adams had quite a procession of boys and men most of the time. Some took fright though and would run the opposite direction – one woman became quite frantic...not seeming to know what to do with herself.<sup>137</sup>

After staying at their summer residence for a little over a month, Lena and some companions spent a week at the top of Mount Omei. It was a place that drew visitors to it; 11,000 feet high and visible, when the sky was clear, from all of the nearby cities. She left no doubt of its impressiveness when she wrote, “unless I visit it again, I never expect to see such glory until within the gates of Paradise.”<sup>138</sup> However, once again Lena found that the settings of Chinese religious practice were difficult, although in her description she was not really judgmental; rather, she was perhaps inadvertently comparing Chinese religious practices with her own. She described her visit to one of the temples in the area,

At one of temples where we spent a day and a half there was a great cave. By the light of a lantern we found our way far into it – a dreary, dark, damp place. After picking our way carefully for a time a faint light gleamed upon us and we came upon a nice priest attending to duties before an ugly, ugly god, even as we were there pilgrims came bowing in devotion! I thought it was a fit place for such worship but typical of such a religion, cold, lonely, desolate.<sup>139</sup>

#### *Marriage to Mr. Jolliffe, October 1905*

Lena’s official role in China was about to change dramatically. She had become engaged to her fellow Canadian missionary, Richard Orlando Jolliffe, in May, and on October 3,

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<sup>137</sup> Diary of Trip, 28 July 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>138</sup> Diary of Trip, 8 August 1905 (LDJ 1:4).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

1905 they were married in the West China capital city, Chengtu. This of course meant that she resigned her own appointment as a Woman's Missionary Society worker, and became a so-called missionary wife. Her quite lengthy account of her wedding was somewhat dispassionate; it appears that her greatest excitement was about her ring, which was uniquely Chinese as it was fashioned by a local craftsman and was very distinctive, and about her trip back to Kiating from Chengtu, which was a romantic journey for Lena and her new husband. Her narrative also conveys her heightened awareness about the changes that marriage would mean for her, particularly evident when she considered the implications of changing her surname from Dunfield to Jolliffe, and her concerns about the reactions of her fellow missionaries to her resignation, after such a brief time, from the Woman's Missionary Society.<sup>140</sup> Absent is any sense of the loss that missionary status would mean to her, and it is perhaps this absence that allows us to conclude that she was intent to continue to be very involved in the work that she had come to China to do.

The couple had not intended to go to Chengtu in order to be married, and Orlando had actually made arrangements with an Episcopal minister to come to Kiating to perform the ceremony. However, when they were advised by the British Consul that he would challenge the legitimacy of their marriage if they were married by a minister rather than a government official, they Lena and Orlando considered all the possible implications and decided to forgo the religious ceremony, and go up to Chengtu in order to be married by the Consul. Obviously, they were aware that there was a controversy about marriages, as

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<sup>140</sup> Letter to unidentified recipient(s), dated 18 October 1905 (LDJ 1:3). This is a nine page letter in which she describes in detail the events related to her wedding.

Lena reports, “When the Consul knew he said he would question the right of the Church of England clergy to marry – as much as the right of any other minister.”<sup>141</sup> She advised that other couples had made different decisions; some were married twice, in the morning by the Consul and in the afternoon by a clergyman, and others were only married by a clergyman. However, Lena stated quite clearly that she considers marriage to be a state agreement rather than a church ordinance, and as Orlando was adamant that he did not want to have a second, apparently meaningless, ceremony, the couple decided to have their ceremony in the morning and a reception in the afternoon. Their Kiating colleagues, Dr. and Mrs. Service, planned to have a second reception for them as soon as they returned to Kiating. Perhaps she did convey some dismay about the situation when she wrote, “the more we thought and talked it over the more unfitting it seemed to make the religious service a farce just to make it seem religious.”<sup>142</sup> Not everyone was as compliant with the directives of the Consul as Lena and Orlando; the Episcopal minister planned to send a letter of inquiry to the British government in order to ascertain the veracity of the Consul’s position.

The couple spent a week in Chengtu, completing the plans and preparations for their wedding day, shopping in the large provincial centre, and visiting with the city’s missionary community. Lena spent one night with the WMS women, and although she was almost certainly apprehensive about their response to her premature departure, she found that they welcomed her and harbored no ill-will towards her.<sup>143</sup> She even came to

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<sup>141</sup> Letter to unidentified recipient(s), dated 18 October 1905 (LDJ 1:3).

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

realize that her upcoming marriage was not a surprise to the Chengtu community, and this perhaps helped WMS women to deal with her departure from their ranks. At a dinner engagement one evening, the children of the host family called her Mrs. Jolliffe. The hostess somewhat embarrassedly admitted that they had been calling her Mrs. Jolliffe “all along.”<sup>144</sup>

Lena’s wedding day was a blend of solemnity and celebration, although it was almost certainly not the wedding that she would have had in Canada where her family and friends would have been present at the ceremony. Lena wore different outfits for each part of the day, and perhaps her selection of her clothing reflected the distinction between the ceremony and the party; in the morning she wore a conservative yet sophisticated suit, but in the afternoon she selected a real party dress. The solemnity of the ceremony for Lena is evident in her account of signing the marriage registry. The missionary women calling her Mrs. Jolliffe had been quite surprising to her; however, actually changing her name was a momentous event in her life. As she recorded, “Then we signed our names several places, - and even tho’ the dear old name that I’ve had for twenty-six years was dear to me yet I signed it for the last time with the confidence that with the new name would come also a larger, broader life.”<sup>145</sup> The reception was held in the home of one of the missionaries, and many of the women, both in Kiating where they baked the cake and in Chengtu where they cooked the food, contributed to the celebration. There

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<sup>143</sup> Diary, 18 October 1905 (LDJ 1:3).

<sup>144</sup> Letter to unidentified recipient(s), dated 18 October 1905 (LDJ 1:3).

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

were gifts to open, little delicacies to eat, and many congratulations to share, and as the evening approached, Lena and Orlando prepared to return to Kiating. They changed their clothes, packed up their gifts and made their way to the special boat that had been secured for their journey. In quite typical missionary fashion, they were escorted down to the docks and boarded their boat amidst a roar of fireworks from the Chinese staff and singing and well-wishing from their missionary community. This part of the day may well have been the highlight of her wedding celebrations, as Lena included a description of the boat in her letter, and even had Orlando drawn a diagram of it so that her family could envision it properly.

#### *Missionary work in Junghsien and an unexpected trip to Shanghai, 1906*

Their marriage marked a new beginning and the couple moved to Junghsien, a city to the east of Kiating and in close proximity to Tzeliutsing, where they would eventually spend most of their years in China. By the beginning of January 1906 the couple had settled into Junghsien. Their primary obligation was of course, to complete their language training, nonetheless Lena and Orlando both became involved in the local missionary work. Lena began teaching two classes at the Sunday school; the first was an established women's class, while the second was a new class for young girls.<sup>146</sup> Yet in one of her early Junghsien diary entries, Lena seemed to be far more interested in and enthusiastic about the Chinese community's interest in the church services than about her own classes. As she wrote,

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<sup>146</sup> Diary, 8 March 1906 (LDJ 6:5). This entry, in which Lena quickly moved on from her initial note about living in Junghsien with Dr. and Mrs. Smith and studying Chinese language to the trip that she and Orlando took back down the Yangtze River to Shanghai, appears to have been rewritten by Lena in 1964.



Sun Jan 28. Had a splendid morning congregation. Over 200 present, fellowship meeting and sacrament after. Many testified. Orlando conducted opening services. I had 5 little girls in my s.s. class. Crowded congregation at night.<sup>147</sup>

This enthusiastic report of the impressive success of the Sunday church activities encourages Lena's readers to see her as an true member of the community, one who enjoyed the attention that so many Chinese were giving to the church, not only in attending the services that day, but also in their active participation as they testified to their own Christian beliefs. Orlando, who as Lena reported had also been working in the church that day, seems to have easily assumed an active role in Junghsien missionary work. Lena reported that when he attended a Chinese feast in mid-February 1906, the host confided in Orlando his worries that a city official was going to pressure him to turn over some of his land. Although Lena's brief notation did not identify why the man spoke about his problem to Orlando, it may be that he was consulting him about how he might handle the situation, or perhaps merely unburdening himself of some of his worries.<sup>148</sup> By the end of February Orlando had clearly begun his own evangelical work in earnest, as he journeyed to one of the Junghsien district outstations, and preached to the local people in Chinese.<sup>149</sup>

The Jolliffes were uprooted from their new home in winter 1906 when they were asked, or indeed directed, to help one of the mission doctors take a fellow missionary from his home in Kiating down to Shanghai. Early each winter the missionaries held a council, at

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<sup>147</sup> Diary, 28 January 1906 (LDJ 1:5).

<sup>148</sup> Diary, 12 February 1906 (LDJ 1:5).

<sup>149</sup> Diary, 13 to 25 February 1906 (LDJ 1:5)

which matters pertaining to the administration of the district were discussed. This particular year, one of the West China physicians was suffering from post-typhoid medical problems and the council had decided that he needed to be moved to Shanghai where he would be transferred to the care of a family member. A mission doctor had been appointed to take him and his family down to Shanghai, and the Jolliffes were sent along as well, in order to provide whatever support the doctor and the family of the patient required *en route*.<sup>150</sup> The settling in, in which Lena and Orlando were immersed, both at the Smith's home and in the Junghsien mission work, was unavoidably interrupted by this trip.<sup>151</sup>

Both Lena and Orlando looked forward to returning to the Yangzi River, certainly in part because they expected to recreate some of their earlier experiences and to enjoy them as a couple, and as well because they expected to have some time in which they could simply relax together. Orlando pointed to this trip as an anniversary of sorts. Shortly after they began their actual river trip in March 1906, having joined Dr. Cox, the physician in charge of the trip, and then picked up the family in Kiating, they stopped at a small river town. Orlando wrote in a diary entry that he and Lena had stopped at the same town "exactly a year less than a day" before.<sup>152</sup> Lena's record of the trip suggests that she also considered the trip as an anniversary, as she began her record of the journey by writing, "We left by a comfortable houseboat Mar 8 one year less four days after arrival in

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<sup>150</sup> Diary, 8 March 1906 (LDJ 1:5).

<sup>151</sup> The Smith's home is where the Hilliards would also live when they were language students in Junghsien.

<sup>152</sup> Diary, 11 March 1906 (LDG 1:5). This entry was written by Orlando.

Kiating.”<sup>153</sup> Lena once again described their houseboat, as she had done on her previous river trip, but the comparative brevity of her diary entry may very well reflect a significant difference between the two trips; this was a working trip, and there was little time to linger over long descriptions as there was work to be done. As she wrote,

It was a commodious houseboat – the three men had the front room next the trackers and Mrs. A and two little girls and I in another with dining space between. The days that followed were full of recollections for Orlando and me of the trip up –pleasant scenes and walks and dangers – but we were not able to chat much or reminisce as the patient took Dr. Cox and Orlando’s constant watching and I to entertain the children and comfort the distracted young wife.<sup>154</sup>

Lena’s narrative, rather than returning to the beauty of the river or the challenges of river travel, relates several stories about what may have been to her, unexpected fellow-travelers. Her first account was about a young stowaway from Chungking, whose parents caught up with the houseboat when it was forced to dock for three days due to exceedingly heavy winds. Although it is doubtful that the passengers knew about his presence, it is almost certain that the crew knew that he was aboard the boat, because when the parents arrived and ordered him to leave the boat, the boatmen and trackers apparently intervened on his behalf. The father left the boat, perhaps frustrated or humiliated at the disrespect shown to him, but the mother persisted in her efforts to convince her son to return home with them. The boy did leave the boat, only to sneak

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<sup>153</sup> Diary, 8 March 1906 (LDJ 1:5).

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

back onto it at some time during the night. Lena ended the account with his reappearance, advising that he had “settled in for the journey – a runaway once again to sea.”<sup>155</sup>

Her second story was about the discovery of six young girls who were found aboard one of the small government emergency boats that were stationed at identified danger points along the river. These girls, who were found by a river official at Ichang, (one thousand miles from Kiating, where Yangzi travelers usually changed boats from houseboat to steamer or vice versa), were being illicitly transported to Shanghai to be sold.<sup>156</sup>

Although Lena reported that there was lots of excitement when the official discovered the girls, she was quite unemotional and non-judgmental in her description of both events.

She neither commented upon the boy’s reluctance to show his parents respect and obedience, nor upon the trafficking in young girls.

The third story that Lena recounted about this trip was about one of her fellow passengers and his family. She had already set the stage for her story when she reported that she and Orlando could not relax and reminisce much. In fact, their patient was very challenging and indeed, even wily due to his illness. When Lena was reviewing her papers in 1964, she added some comments to her earlier narrative, and she chose to include some information about typhoid that would help to contextualize their experiences with this particular ill man. She explained that there was little care and certainly no known cure for typhoid in those early years of the twentieth century, and that many people were left with

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<sup>155</sup> Diary, 8 March 1906 (LDJ 1:5).

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

what she termed “brain disorders” if they managed to survive the illness.<sup>157</sup> Perhaps in order to underscore the severity of typhoid, she pointed to one missionary who was an exceedingly fit and active man, but who had died within two weeks of contracting it.<sup>158</sup> She and Orlando would also contract typhoid, and she confirmed that it was very debilitating and that it took each of them a remarkable time to recuperate from it. In the case of their passenger, a man whom she identifies as Dr. A., although he had recuperated physically from his illness it seems, from her description of him, that he continued to suffer from depression and perhaps psychosis. At Ichang it was necessary for all travelers to transfer to a larger boat for the rest of the trip down to Shanghai, and it was as they settled into their new accommodations that Lena was reminded that Orlando and Dr. Cox needed to be very vigilant in their duties. Apparently, their patient had usurped the explanation that they had intended to give to their new Japanese captain about his illness and poor hold on reality. Instead, he had completely convinced the captain that he was escorting, as Lena writes, “an insane man” to Shanghai.<sup>159</sup> Despite the efforts of Dr. Cox and Orlando to convince the ship’s captain that they were the escorts, and that the other man was the patient, it was only when several of the Jolliffes’ friends from Ichang came aboard and confirmed their identities that they resumed their roles, and undoubtedly more rigorously, their responsibilities. Perhaps understandably, Lena commented that Orlando became increasingly exhausted as they made their way to Shanghai, and the patient became increasingly well. By the time that they reached Shanghai his brother, who was

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<sup>157</sup> Diary, 8 April 1906 (LDJ 6:5)

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

also a physician in Canada, suggested that the council and missionary community had overreacted to his brother's illness.<sup>160</sup> However, Lena, neither willing to agree with this perception of their actions, nor seemingly willing to leave her narrative with any doubt about the seriousness of typhoid in the early 1900s, added her own postscript.

Now 58 years later I can finish that case history. Periodically I have been in contact with members of the family or the doctor himself. He died a few years ago having had years of more or less stability – mainly less. In those early years in China typhus fever was fatal or left impairment in some way – very often brain damage.<sup>161</sup>

She suggested that doctors simply lacked knowledge about, and experience with, the treatment of typhoid, and that it was only with their subsequent experiences in the First and Second World Wars that medical personnel developed more effective ways of dealing with typhoid patients.<sup>162</sup>

Lena and Orlando spent a little over a week in Shanghai before they began their return trip to West China. They finally had the opportunity to relax together, and Lena's records convey a sense of leisurely or perhaps even lazy restfulness, although she noted that they were "busy" shopping for items that their colleagues in West China had requested. They simply seemed to be enjoying the company of one another. Interestingly, they each recorded one particular outing in the diary, and in so doing they encouraged the reader to consider the respite that English language activities gave to the missionaries. The couple attended an oratorio service in Shanghai's Holy Trinity Church; this event was not only

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<sup>160</sup> Diary, 2 April 1906 (LDJ 6:5).

<sup>161</sup> Diary, 8 April 1906 (LDJ 1:5). Lena advises that this part of her entry was written in 1964.

<sup>162</sup> Diary, 8 April 1906 (LDJ 6:5). This entry was also written in 1964.

remarkable because the musical presentation was beautiful, but also because, as they each noted, it was the first time that they had attended an English language church service together.<sup>163</sup> Their brief diary entries do not allow the reader to confidently speculate about the role that English language played for Lena and Orlando.<sup>164</sup> It may be that she and Orlando had truly missed worshipping at English language church services, or they may have simply found it remarkable that their romance had allowed little time for them to do things that most young couples would have enjoyed together, among them attending a formal church service or oratorio.<sup>165</sup>

Their trip back to Junghsien proved to be as eventful as Lena's earlier travels had been. In the first few days, whenever their steamer docked the couple took the opportunity to visit with friends or colleagues. At Nanking they spent some time with a friend who had recently arrived in China and was studying Chinese language in preparation for his work with the YMCA.<sup>166</sup> Then at Hankow while awaiting the arrival of their second steamer, they spent the night at a London Missionary Society residence and the following day at the children's schools and medical school that were run by the Society.<sup>167</sup> However, within a week or so of their departure from Shanghai, when they arrived at Ichang where they were to change from steamer to houseboat, Lena reported that Orlando was not

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<sup>163</sup> Diary, 8 April 1906 (LDJ 6:5).

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. In Chapter four Agnes Hilliard will reveal how much she missed participating in English language church services, and that she would quite willfully sing hymns in English while everyone else was singing in Chinese, Letter to Mother and Dad, 17 October 1938 (AH 6:6). See footnote 64 in Chapter Four.

<sup>165</sup> Diary, 8 April 1906 (LDJ 6:5).

<sup>166</sup> Diary 18 April 1906 (LDJ 1:5). This entry was written by Orlando; account of 1906 trip from Shanghai to West China, written by Lena in 1964 (LDJ 6:5).

<sup>167</sup> Diary, 22 April 1906. This entry was also written by Orlando.

feeling well.<sup>168</sup> Although there was a great deal of mail awaiting them at Ichang, a box and many letters, Orlando must have been very ill as he was unable to enjoy these precious items. Lena recorded that he went to bed in the afternoon, had a high fever during the night, and from this point forward, her diary entries were cursory and focused on his health.<sup>169</sup> Orlando was hospitalized for over a month in Ichang; the doctors initially thought that he had contracted typhus, although he was tested for malaria as well. It seems that he probably did have typhoid fever, and he became so ill that he required constant supervision while he was in the hospital. Two women from the missionary community were assigned to nurse him during the day and Lena was asked to watch him every night. Even after he was released from the hospital Orlando required some time before he was strong enough to travel, and Lena ensured that their traveling accommodation enabled him to have the rest that he needed.<sup>170</sup>

The second half of the return trip was much more similar to the trip they had experienced the previous year. The boatmen once again faced the challenges of the gorges, although on this trip Lena witnessed the threats posed to river travelers and shoreline residents by the Yangzi in early summer. The water level was high, the winds strong and the rain heavy, and so the captain, rather than dealing with a worrisome shallow river, responded to and accommodated this mid-June river. Lena's record transmits her sense of the strength of the river when she noted that on one night, a nearby boat was "wrecked" and

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<sup>168</sup> Diary, 26 April 1906 (LDJ 1:5).

<sup>169</sup> Diary, 27 April to 4 June 1906 (LDJ 15).

<sup>170</sup> Diary, 11 June 1906. This is an entry by Orlando, in which he writes, "Got on board after breakfast: Lena fixed up straw bed...."



their own boatmen spent that night and the following day dealing with the repercussions of the rainfall that had come “in torrents.” As she wrote, “...the men had to stay awake all night and every few hours remove the ropes to higher ground swimming where they had previously walked.”<sup>171</sup> Only a few days later she recorded that as the water continued to rise, she saw residents along the river bank actually tearing down their houses, undoubtedly so that they could move them farther away from the river. Lena, as in her earlier trip upriver, enjoyed the time that she spent walking along the shoreline and took full advantage of these walks in order to explore new places. Once again, she easily conveyed the drama of river travel and even in her brief diary entries, as opposed to her lengthy accounts of that first trip inland, she conveyed her sense of a river-centered world which was defined by its shores and its towns.

Orlando, in the tradition of Dr. Smith, held prayer meetings with crew members and local people on their boat. On the trip down to Shanghai Orlando quite naturally assumed the role of a missionary; when they had a Sunday stopover at a small river town, he used the opportunity to preach to the boatmen. The language that Lena used here was remarkably similar to the language that she had used in her record of their first Yangzi trip. Just as Dr. Smith had “talked with” the boatmen and other river people a year earlier, Orlando also “talked with” the boatmen on this trip.<sup>172</sup> Lena’s accounts of Orlando’s work, from that first opening service in Junghsien to his preaching on this trip, convey the ease with

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<sup>171</sup> Diary, 19 June 1906 (LDJ 1:5); Lena also refers to the water level in Diary, 24 June 1906 (LDJ 1:3) and in Account of 1906 trip from Shanghai to West China, written by Lena in 1964 (LDJ 6:5).

<sup>172</sup> Diary, 9 March 1906 (LDJ 1:5).

which he had engaged in missionary work. Perhaps it is this recognition that the couple had easily become China missionaries, which encourage her readers to question whether their trip upriver was in fact unique, or whether it was actually quite representative of missionaries' travels on the Yangzi and their lives in China. On the down-river trip the Jolliffes were focused on their assignment, but Lena also appreciated the new experiences that more China travel afforded her. On their return trip Orlando joined so many other China missionaries who had suffered from serious and indeed life-threatening illnesses. Then, although it was uncertain that he was fully recovered, he returned to his work, preaching to the Chinese people who were around him and had signaled their interest in his preaching by gathering around and listening to him.

They finally arrived back in West China, however Lena spent the rest of the summer and the autumn in Chungking rather than at their home in Junghsien. Initially, Lena and Orlando stayed at the Chungking home of fellow missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Hooker. Lena's notations about their first few days in the city seem to indicate that they planned to stay there for a few days before moving onto Junghsien. Her brief diary entries recorded that she had done some shopping in this larger city, and Orlando had done a little missionary work, preaching at the city's China Inland Mission (CIM) church. Her entries conveyed her sense of well-being; their days were nicely filled and Lena was comfortable within the city's missionary community. However when Orlando departed for Junghsien after those first few days, he left Lena behind in Chungking, and she recorded in her diary that his departure was very difficult for her. This was the first time that Lena wrote about finding something difficult to endure, and her description of their

separation was certainly heartfelt, as she wrote, “Went to the top of the hill to see Orlando on his way and never was a parting so hard. I felt I couldn’t bear it – but I could and did and the Hookers were so kind.”<sup>173</sup> What Lena had not yet recorded was that she was pregnant, and was expecting this first baby in the fall. We can speculate that she may have found the separation so difficult because she was awaiting the birth of their baby, or perhaps because Orlando had recently been so very ill. They had decided that Orlando would return to Junghsien in order to prepare their rooms (in the Smith’s home) for their eventual return, yet once there, Orlando became involved in his work, replacing Dr. Smith (who may have taken a summer holiday when Orlando arrived) at the church and in outstation work.<sup>174</sup> Lena spent the rest of the summer on Chungking hills with her hosts and their colleagues, and then returned to the city, welcomed Orlando back at the beginning of October, and then gave birth to their first baby, John, a week later.<sup>175</sup>

#### **Lena’s stay in China (1906-1924)**

This section weaves together Lena’s experiences, interests and impressions over a period of almost twenty year, years in which she merged her motherhood with her missionary work. After giving birth to her first child, John, at the end of her summer holidays in 1906, she returned to Junghsien and took up these dual responsibilities. It was not long at all before she went out on an itinerating trip with Orlando and baby John, and as well began to re-establish herself as a missionary woman among the Chinese of the city. She

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<sup>173</sup> Diary, 22 August 1906 (LDJ 1:5).

<sup>174</sup> Diary, 16 September 1906 (LDJ 1:5). This entry was written by Orlando.

<sup>175</sup> Account of 1906 trip from Shanghai to West China, written by Lena in 1964 (LDJ 6:5). Diary entries 5 to 14 October, 1906. (LDJ 1:5) These entries were written by Orlando.

became an acute observer of political and civil events around her, particularly as they affected her work with Chinese women; this work included group meetings as well as individual encounters. In the former, she undoubtedly focused on bringing an evangelical message to the women, while in the latter she would have introduced them to skills that they could use in their daily lives. The Jolliffes moved to Tseliutsing, where Lena continued her work in an almost seamless way. The couple's role as leaders in the community grew, and they were relied upon by the Chinese community for advice and even intervention. This section of Lena's narrative comes to a close in 1924, when she and her family were well-known members of the missionary enterprise in China, comfortable in their established relationships with colleagues, Chinese and even other foreigners in China.

*Mothering and missionary work: Junghsien and Tseliutsing, October 1906 to December 1924*

Lena's life did change significantly after she became a mother; however, rather than relinquishing her missionary work, it appears that Lena simply expected to add mothering to her other commitments. After all, she had adapted to her missionary work with considerable confidence and ease, and had resigned from the WMS, married Orlando and become an active "missionary wife" without any evident difficulties. Once again, it was with apparent confidence that she undertook her new activities as a mother, wife and missionary. Lena and Orlando remained in Chungking for a month after John was born and then began their trip back to Junghsien. They celebrated their first Sabbath at a village China Inland Mission church where Orlando was invited to preach at the morning services; in the afternoon he gathered together some of the boatmen and preached again. The following Sunday, which was actually the next time that Lena wrote in her diary, she

and Orlando recorded that he has once again preached to the boatmen. Towards the end of the week Orlando had preached before and after supper, and then again the next morning. Perhaps he was increasingly active as they approached Junghsien because they had reached their own district and he had some familiarity with the outstations. In any case, it was on the following day, when they were just one day's travel from Junghsien, that Lena also began working with the local people who came out to meet them. It is Orlando who recorded their activities on this busy Sunday. He wrote, "Service in the morning. Preached and then had a talk for about an hour. Continuous crowds. In the afternoon heard children recite and gave Bibles." He then continued, and brought Lena into the day as a full participant in their work. "While I conversed with men in the morning Lena held a meeting with women in the guest room to the rear."<sup>176</sup> He completed his account of the day, advising that although he spoke at the beginning and end of the service, two of the men from the community "held forth," seemingly leading the service themselves. Orlando and Lena had, together, worked with the men, women and children of that town.

Upon their return to their home Orlando immediately renewed his work in Junghsien; however, it was not long before the couple once again embarked upon a trip to one of the outstations. Just a few days before Christmas, in December of 1906 (although curiously Lena did not mention that they would be traveling over Christmas) Orlando, Lena and John, who was by then only six weeks old, went off to work in the outlying district. Lena did enter a record of the trip in her diary, but it was only when she reviewed her papers

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<sup>176</sup> Diary, 2 December 1906 (LDJ 1:5). This entry was written by Orlando.

years later that she considered this trip. As she wrote in 1964, “On 22 Dec went on itinerating trip with Orlando – wee John only about 6 weeks old!! Very foolish as I look at it now.”<sup>177</sup> The foolishness that she identified so many decades later must not have been present during her years in China, as Lena continued to take the youngest of her children on some of her travels to neighboring towns, outstations and to the West China cities that hosted the annual council meetings.<sup>178</sup> The year after that first trip with Orlando and John, they all went to council in Chengtu, at which time Orlando was ordained and John was baptized.<sup>179</sup> A decade later, in one of the last entries that she made about itinerating with Orlando and her children, she noted how the people had “pressed in” on Billy, her fifth child, because they were so curious about him and fascinated by his undoubtedly foreign appearance. As she wrote about her day,

38 years old today. Had lovely walk to Lung Lau Chang. 30 li (10 miles). Stopped at half-way inn and had tea, peanuts and piutang (rock candy). The crowd pressed upon us to see Billy Boy who was most serious about it all.<sup>180</sup>

Lena was quite comfortable with their fascination; by then she had shared four children with curious onlookers, and it seems that Billy was merely carrying on an established Jolliffe tradition of “talking with” Chinese people who were interested in their missionary work.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Account of 1906 trip from Shanghai to West China, written by Lena in 1964 (LDJ 6:5).

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Diary, 8 and 9 February 1908 (LDJ 1:6).

<sup>180</sup> Diary, 5 April 1917 (LDJ 2: 3).

<sup>181</sup> John was born in 1906, Alice in 1908, Grace in 1910, Charlie in 1913, Billie in 1916 and perhaps another baby in 1924. Her diary entries make it easier to identify the births of the first four children (John, Alice, Grace and Charlie) as she either records their births and/or their birthdays. For example there is no diary entry that records the birth of Alice, however her entry on 20 April 20 1910 (LDJ 1:8) advises that it is Alice’s birthday. However the 8 September 1911 Diary entry is about the birth of Grace. In 1916 she writes about a baby called Ernest, and yet later writes about her mothering of Billy. Similarly, in 1924 she

Lena's work in many ways reflected the work in which Orlando was engaged. He became the senior missionary in the city of Tseliutsing, where they had moved shortly after their return to Junghsien and the birth of John. As the lead evangelical missionary in Tseliutsing, he was heavily involved in the church-related work of the city, as well as the itinerating work in the district's outstations. Lena similarly became very involved in women's work in the city and, as well, worked in some of the outstations. While she did not accompany Orlando on most of his work in the outlying districts, when she was present she actively worked with the local women, in the expectation of teaching them about Christianity, and as well of encouraging those women from nearby locales to become active participants in the church in Tseliutsing.

In Tseliutsing, as she had done in Junghsien, she had almost immediately begun working with women and holding classes at the church. Initially she held these classes for women twice weekly, on one day during the week and of course on Sundays. Although Lena did not return to the exuberance that we noted in her early diary entry about church attendance in Junghsien, she did intermittently record the number of women in attendance at church events, and these records seem to demonstrate Chinese women's interest in her work. Her women's classes appear to have been very successful, if success can be gauged by the number of women who came to study with her. She recorded

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writes about an infant having a cold, and later describes the lovely responses that a young child called Mary has to an event that they attend in the city. She also records a miscarriage that she had in 1918, perhaps because she had not been feeling well in the days before the miscarriage, and so she had kept a record of her health in her diary. Her records (or the lack of records) of the children's birth undoubtedly has to do with the unevenness of the collection of her diaries – which is why she does record the birthdays of children whose births are not present in the pages of her papers.

steadily increasing attendance, which was interrupted or affected only when important Chinese festivities such as the New Year intruded.<sup>182</sup> By 1914, in their second term in China, Lena was holding four classes each week, presumably because of the growing and sustained interest in her work.<sup>183</sup> One Sunday in 1918 she calculated that at least two hundred women attended their Sunday school; another day she reported that the classroom in which a woman's meeting was held was "full to the doors."<sup>184</sup> The following year, in 1919 Lena once again expanded her work at a new school at a nearby town.<sup>185</sup> Her diary entries continue to encourage us to recognize the number of missionary activities in which Lena Jolliffe was involved, as almost every day she identified experiences or activities that she considered important enough to record.

Lena appears to have been interested in working one-on-one with local Chinese women, and although she enthusiastically recorded many numerical accounts of service and class attendance, she also noted information about individual women.<sup>186</sup> Her notes about one Sunday service succinctly addressed both of these interests, "Good crowd at service. Mrs. Ho began coming"<sup>187</sup> The following Sunday she noted the good behavior of the Chinese worshippers; perhaps this was in contrast to their usual uncontrolled, at least by church standards, demeanor, and also recorded the notable activities of two of the women, "Had

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<sup>182</sup> Diary 7 February 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

<sup>183</sup> The Jolliffe family had been on furlough in Canada in 1911-1912.

<sup>184</sup> Diary 21 April 1918 (LDJ 2:4); Diary, 4 March 1919 (LDJ 2:5).

<sup>185</sup> Diary, 25 and 26 February 1919 (LDJ 2:5).

<sup>186</sup> For example, in an entry in 1915, she lists many of the women who were present in class that day. Diary, 7 November 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

<sup>187</sup> Diary, 20 September 1914 (LDJ 1:12).



a communion service after reaching service – a very quiet good service! After the men testified Mrs. Tang and Mrs. Tsen added their testimony to that of the Bible women.”<sup>188</sup>

Why did the women come to the church? What did Lena offer to them? The classes that she led seem to have been the central focus of her missionary work; they allowed her to reach into the Chinese community and to attract some of the women who were interested in Christianity, in its peripheral knowledge or in the companionship that Lena orchestrated. She certainly focused on the teaching of Christianity, although she and Orlando also taught some academic subjects to their classes. At times the women came with other female members of their families; Lena reported that a mother and daughter testified at a Sunday service. This was almost certainly a modest victory for the missionaries with whom the pair had studied, for it signified that a senior member of a family was transmitting her commitment to Christianity to the next generation in her family. Lena’s papers do not identify whether she was particularly pleased about them because they were together or because they made a public declaration of their faith.<sup>189</sup> Lena also recorded one experience that enables her readers to recognize that some women undoubtedly came to the church for protection because they thought that if they associated with the church, it would in some way take care of them. One woman identified her interest in the church, and advised Lena that she wanted to “put her name down as a believer” because someone in the city wanted to “tax” her. Lena’s diary note

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<sup>188</sup> Diary, 4 October 1914 (LDJ 1:12).

<sup>189</sup> Diary, 15 October 1915 (LDJ 2:1). Mary Lamb, in contrast, was very encouraged when congregants stood up and testified, because she knew that it could be dangerous for them to do so. This danger lay in the backlash that they might suffer from other Chinese, or from the ostracism that they might receive within their own families.

suggests that this woman was particularly vulnerable because she was “a spinster of independent means.”<sup>190</sup> Lena’s diary entry was cursory and yet produced a multilayered image, of this older and perhaps quite independent, in character as well as financial matters, woman who approached Lena with a proposition of sorts. She would become Christian and the missionary community would protect her. This was the first but not the last time that Lena and her colleagues were approached by local Chinese who were requesting protection from threats and even offer to become active church-goers in exchange for this protection.<sup>191</sup>

Lena was also directly involved in work that would become known, particularly in the 1920s, as social service work. The mission stations already had hospitals and medical missionaries in China; Dr. Cox was well known to the Jolliffes from their shared expedition to Shanghai and Cox was also one of Orlando’s physicians when he was in Ichang. Lena and Orlando had also visited a mission hospital and observed the training of doctors while they were on that return trip to West China from Shanghai, and Lena had noted that Orlando was particularly impressed with the medical training that the mission enterprise was bringing to Chinese medical students.<sup>192</sup> In Tseliutsing, Lena devoted some attention to the child-rearing skills and standards of Chinese women; undoubtedly she encouraged them to pattern their mothering on western Christian models. Although she did not hold baby welfare clinics or classes in specific ‘mothering’ skills as Mary

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<sup>190</sup> Diary, 1 November 1914 (LDJ 1:12).

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Account of 1906 trip from Shanghai to West China, written by Lena in 1964 (LDJ 6:5).

Lamb would do a decade or so later, she did try to help women to care for their babies, and she did share her skills and knowledge with them.<sup>193</sup> She related one particular intervention and another story, both of which ended in tragedy and loss. In committing these particular stories to her diary, Lena may have been reminding herself about them or recording them because the conflict between old Chinese ways and modern Western knowledge was so strikingly evident, and perhaps as well because of the sadness and frustration that she felt as the old ways had such staying power that families sometimes suffered terrible losses as they clung to them. She described an encounter that she had with a Chinese woman who she identified as having been a Christian for a long time. The woman found, as Lena writes, 'a little castaway baby' who was very malnourished. Although she came to Lena for advice and help, Lena's intervention was not adequate to keep the baby alive. She had given the surrogate mother some milk for the baby on the day that they had visited Lena, and she had advised her that she should return for more milk, presumably when the first supply was finished. Whether the woman was unable to buy milk for the baby herself, or whether Lena was suggesting that she would not feed the baby milk without Lena's recommendation is difficult to determine; however the woman only returned after a week had passed, and by that time Lena found that the baby was far too ill to survive. Lena did once again give her milk to take home, but the baby only survived for one more day.<sup>194</sup> In a second account Lena told the story of an old woman who was known to be a midwife of sorts. The terribly distraught father of a newborn who had recently died had told Lena that despite his wishes, this woman had

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<sup>193</sup> Diary, 14 October 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

somehow managed to slip some supplements to the baby, which had caused its death. Lena noted, in what very well may have been the language in which the father reported the events, that this type of medicine or supplement was something that was part of “old Chinese ways” and that it was the woman’s determination and ignorance that were responsible for the tragedy. Her first notation about this baby was on October 15, 1915, “Mrs. Wang Tso Gan’s little son was born today.” She then continued with the following entry,

Baby Wang and his mother were getting along beautifully but today the baby died. They came for doctor who has been in attendance. He examined the baby and family confessed he had been given medicine by an old ‘taipo’ that is midwife. The father and mother are very incensed. They had watched the baby most carefully but this old midwife got in and with the heathen members of the family conspired to on the sly drive out the spirits – the amount of medicine was altogether too much and the baby died. The father says it is all nonsense about driving out spirits for in this province they say in their incantations for the spirit to go to Shanghai and at Shanghai they drive them to Szechwan so he says it is all a farce. The poor wee babe is only one of a great multitude who suffer at the hands of these ignorant old women.<sup>195</sup>

Her readers can infer that Lena must have been outraged by the death of this infant. Her diary entries during this period were usually complete with a sentence or two, and the contrast with this lengthy entry is remarkable. These sad stories further encouraged Lena’s determination to provide models which could be used as guidelines and even emulated by Chinese women.

The church also played an active role in reducing the number of opium users in the community. It seems that interventions by Lena and her colleagues were directed towards people who were already church-goers. Lena’s first mention of the topic of opium is in

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<sup>195</sup> Diary, 16 October 1916 (LDJ 2:2).

the fall of 1914, when she remarked that a Mr. Chang had entered the hospital, in her words, “to break off opium.”<sup>196</sup> Her cursory note encourages us to recognize that opium usage was a familiar subject for Lena. In fact, the following year, one of her weekly meetings with women was focused on the topic of opium. The attendance at the meeting was excellent; in her records she noted that more than fifty women were present, and she also wrote that all of the church women and as many mothers as could come were there. It is not clear whether the latter group were women who were not among those already active in the church and the women’s classes. There was a guest speaker, a Mrs. Kong, at the meeting that day, and we can speculate that the high attendance that Lena noted indicated a significant awareness of and interest in the topic.<sup>197</sup> This meeting was a special event; it was the highlight for the women in a month that had been set aside as a month of prayer over the “opium problem” as Lena identified it.<sup>198</sup> Perhaps spurred on by the month-long focus, four women came to see Lena, asking for missionary help or intervention in breaking their own opium habits. Although Lena’s note indicated that the women knew that they would have to look after themselves, she seemed to contradict this point as she told the women that they would be accepted by the mission for a three-week treatment session. They arranged a date for the women to begin their withdrawal from the drug, and their treatment presumably began. However, the opium intervention was not an easy one; perhaps the women did need the external support in order to be successful in their efforts. Lena, in an infrequent decision, canceled her plans for a dinner that was

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<sup>196</sup> Diary, 19 October 1914 (LDJ 1:12).

<sup>197</sup> Diary, 23 September 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

<sup>198</sup> Diary, 12 September 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

being hosted by someone in the Chinese community when one of the women became very ill. One day Orlando unexpectedly discovered another of the women smoking opium. Lena's only comment in her diary was that the woman "must begin her course all over again."<sup>199</sup> Lena was, once again, remarkably non-judgmental about the women's opium addiction, and even about the woman who was found using opium while in the midst of her withdrawal program.<sup>200</sup>

These experiences, when taken together, highlight the very individualized work in which Lena and her colleagues were involved, along with the Sunday classes, worship, and weekly classes which she reported were so successful. In the fall of 1916 Lena began a new women's class, advising that she had decided to transfer one of her established classes to Miss Hambley, the woman with whom she had made her first trip into West China. The first day of class, there were five women in attendance and Lena actually recorded the names of each woman in her diary. Once again, the reader can only speculate why she decided to record each name. It may have been so that she could return to her diary at a later date, that she used it as a memo or church record. However, as she infrequently recorded church business, it is more likely that Lena's detailed record of this event suggests that she saw the class attendees as individuals, and that the way in which she approached her work was to deal with each woman individually.

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<sup>199</sup> Diary, 12 September 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

The Jolliffe's were the leaders of their community and their home in Tseliutsing was frequently the centre of community or church activity. The winter and spring of 1915 provide good examples of this type of activity. That January, when the annual council was held in Tseliutsing, Lena was undeniably the leading hostess in the community. At the beginning of January she recorded, "Had the whole council to supper and entertainment after. 38 in all."<sup>201</sup> It seems that having thirty-eight guests to dinner was not a surprising or unexpected event. Then at the beginning of February, she wrote in another diary entry, "Had a church meeting of all the members in our parlour to discuss the work and problems for the coming year."<sup>202</sup> She continued this particular entry by listing each person who had attended; it appears that the church committee was composed of quite a few Chinese adults, three Chinese "school boys," the WMS women, and three fellow missionaries. However, the Jolliffes were certainly not the only ones to host events, as Lena's records inform us; she concluded in her diary entry for this particular day, advising that they had supper at the home of another missionary family, "Had supper at Taylors – whole community."<sup>203</sup> Only two months later she was once again hosting a large gathering in her home. An institute which was being held in the city had drawn at least forty-nine Chinese delegates, as well as an undisclosed number of missionaries. Lena and Orlando host a round of teas and dinners, and then held a formal reception for the Chinese delegates. It is at this gathering that Mrs. Pen reappeared and provided all of the catering for this large group. Lena did not limit herself to hosting the events; her

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<sup>201</sup> Diary, 8 January 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

<sup>202</sup> Diary, 10 February 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

records of this institute give us our only glimpse of Lena as an active participant in mission policy planning. She had an opportunity to have a discussion with one of the women visitors about church-related matters, and she apparently easily and articulately identified her concerns about and interests in many topics, among them her own activities in the district, a school for evangelists' wives, schools for missionary children, and perhaps the topic of most interest to her, women's work. She appears to have been eager to analyze and even mildly critique the missionaries' work with Chinese women.<sup>204</sup>

The only interruption to Lena's missionary activities appears to have been in the summers, when she left Tseliutsing and her work in order to spend a month or two with her children in one of the missionary summer residences. In 1917, in one of the rare times that she identified their summer whereabouts, Lena wrote about their summer in Douglas Heights.<sup>205</sup> Each summer Orlando became a commuter of sorts, as he and other men traveled back and forth to their summer homes, coming and going as he alternated between city church responsibilities, itinerating work and respite with his family and colleagues.<sup>206</sup>

Lena's dedication to missionary work and to her ongoing role as a missionary in China, despite relinquishing her official status when she married Orlando, was lessened by her commitment to the responsibilities that motherhood brought to her daily life. One

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<sup>204</sup> Diary, 10 February 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

<sup>205</sup> Diary, 28 October 1914 (LDJ 1:12). Douglas Heights was the place that Mary Lamb would also write about with great fondness and where Agnes Hilliard spent the summer in 1940. Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 18 March 1940 (AH 6:10).

<sup>206</sup> Diary entries for the summer of 1915 record Orlando's whereabouts (LDJ 2:1).



particular record, written in 1915, briefly describes Orlando, Lena and Charlie on a three week trip, and this particular trip seems to add this dimension to our growing understanding of Lena. She reported that one day Orlando was preaching, but that she was unable to remain at the service because Charlie was too lively.<sup>207</sup> Her record was brief and direct; there was no hint of indecision about leaving the service or regret about the situation as it seemed to have been perfectly apparent to her that her husband must preach to a quiet audience, and that she must take care of her child. This, despite the knowledge we have that she thoroughly enjoyed attending and participating in services, and monitoring the Chinese in attendance. Her patience with her son was undoubtedly rewarded as we see that she truly enjoyed his company. Furthermore, she was able to translate some of her parenting skills and techniques into lectures for Chinese women and on this particular trip she spoke at a women's meeting on the topic, "Responsibility for others – especially mothers for their children."<sup>208</sup> Her enjoyment of her children is articulated in occasional records, in which she displayed her pleasure in simply observing them, and in listening to their ideas about all sort of topics: about their behavior, about people, events and even about life. The following samples of her diary entries about things that her children said certainly demonstrate the unabashed joy that she shared with them,

John:

May 19, 1911 Because Rev. Parker and Mrs. Parker were very proper people I asked John and Alice to be very proper and for John not to talk until spoken to. In

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<sup>207</sup> Diary, 7 March 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

<sup>208</sup> Diary, 16 March 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

a lull during conversation he said “Mama may I say something?” “Yes” “If anyone smells a bad smell it is this peanut!”<sup>209</sup>

Charlie:

May 22, 1919 Charlie is full of questions – Mama what did God make first, the very first? What did God stand on? Etc. etc. etc. Mama how long is grandpa’s moustache? Mama what shape is it? Mama what was grandpa to me when he was a little boy? Whose grandpa am I going to be? Etc. etc.<sup>210</sup>

Billy:

June 25, 1924 ...Grace, Charlie, Billy all had their tonsils removed today by Dr. Peterson. Got along nicely. Came home in evening. When Billy was carried into the operating room and saw the array of doctors and nurses, six or so, he coolly remarked ‘Too many cooks spoil the broth.’<sup>211</sup>

Similar to her enjoyment of her children and their observations, Lena’s concern about her children’s health when they were ill speaks to the reader through her diary entries. Grace was ill with quite severe diarrhea in the fall of 1914, having only recently recuperated from a difficult summer in which she suffered from skin boils. Lena’s diary shifted from a record of various daily events to a medical chart; almost certainly anything other than Grace’s uneven medical condition was of little interest to Lena at the time, and perhaps she was also using the diary as a record that she could return to in order to have accurate information about her child’s progress.<sup>212</sup> It was when her children were ill that her commitment to her children superseded her dedication to her women’s work. Occasionally, in her 1914 diary, she made a brief note that she was unable to attend (in

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<sup>209</sup> Diary, 19 May 1911 (LDJ 1:9). This record was probably added by Lena in 1964.

<sup>210</sup> Diary 22 May 1919 (LDJ 2: 5).

<sup>211</sup> Diary, 25 June 1924 (LDJ 2: 9). This entry was probably added by Lena in 1964.

<sup>212</sup> Diary 5 to 19 September 1914 (LDJ 1:12).

fact lead) the women's class because one or another of the children were too ill for her to either leave them at home or to take them with her. In the fall of 1914 she recorded that she was unable to attend a Thursday night women's meeting because Charlie was sick; only a few weeks later, in November she once again noted that she was unable to attend services because Grace was sick.<sup>213</sup>

In the tradition of all foreign missionary women, Lena was responsible for managing her household which included, as did all of the wealthier Chinese households, a contingent of servants.<sup>214</sup> Lena's accounts of her household servants are limited in number, however they recorded events in enough detail for her readers to recognize that the events that she was describing were meaningful to her. Her records actually set the stage for some of the subsequent concerns of Mary Lamb and Agnes Hilliard, about the misbehavior or dishonesty of servants, and the difficulty that the missionary women had in deciding just how to handle this problem.<sup>215</sup> In one remarkably detached diary entry, Lena noted that she had dismissed all of her servants because someone had been stealing some of the family's belongings. She began by noting that she had planted some flowers, and then abruptly revealed that she has actually fired every servant in her employ. She wrote, "Plant chrysanthemums a ft apart. Dismissed all our servants – Pen, chang, Wang because of thefts. Have missed two pr. Scissors, 3 pr. New socks, 3 pr spectacles and

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<sup>213</sup> Diary, 29 October 1914 (LDJ 1:12); Diary 15 November 1914 (LDJ 1:12).

<sup>214</sup> Diary 5 to 19 September 1914 (LDJ 1:12). Mary Lamb and Agnes Hilliard expended considerable energy in managing their servants; Mary Lamb was particularly aware of the responsibility that she assumed in her early years in China; Agnes Hilliard remained concerned about her relationship with her servants throughout her time in China.

<sup>215</sup> Diary, 1 May 1915 (LDJ 2:1); Diary, 17 October, 1924 (LDJ 2:9).

other odds and ends.”<sup>216</sup> In this detached recording of the day’s events, she continued, “Li Shu Ling began work today, Mrs. Chang and Mrs. Leng a/c clear today.” The next day she recorded that one of the servants had returned; this was Mrs. Pen, perhaps the person most valuable to her as she was responsible for the household’s cooking or catering. Lena did perhaps unintentionally reveal the importance of Mrs. Pen, when she added, “Had all day session of service and dinner all together. Had six tables filled.”<sup>217</sup> Other household responsibilities and activities crept in, almost inevitably, to her daily accounts. In the midst of notations about her church work she inserted small reminders of her housekeeping duties, for example, “canned 30 quarts of peaches” follows immediately after her note that the boys and teachers from the country were in the city in order to write their scheduled examinations.<sup>218</sup> These intermittent notations about seasonal canning and pickling remind the reader that Lena was almost certainly always involved in managing her household, but also, in their infrequency, suggest that she did not identify these activities as necessary to record in her diary.<sup>219</sup>

As the leading Protestant missionary couple in the city, the Jolliffes developed an important relationship with the leaders of the Tseliutsing Chinese community, particularly with the civil, military and business leaders. Their second term in West

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<sup>216</sup> Diary, 1 May 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> Diary, 19 June 1919 (LDJ 2:2).

<sup>219</sup> Diary, 9 June 1915 (LDJ 2: 1). In this entry Lena writes, “Mrs. C. absent. Pickled cucumbers, onions and beans. Went out to Mrs. Tang’s.” Then, on 11 June she records “Mrs. C. absent – also other women. Canned 31 qts peaches – used 10 lbs. white sugar about 4 gin ping tang. Heard today that Mrs. Crawford has smallpox. Our cow died. There is much sickness among animals – one man lost seventy of 100 buffalo.” On June 25 she writes, “Put up 34 qts canned apples.”

China, beginning in 1912 when they returned from their Canadian furlough, was a period of repeated though intermittent civil upheaval or “political unrest” as Lena termed it, in which the Jolliffes and their missionary community were called upon to play an active and at times important role.<sup>220</sup> The fall of the Qing dynasty was complete, and with it came the demise of the old Confucian social order. Although Lena did not make any direct reference to either of these important historical transformations, her descriptions of the reliance that local community leaders placed on the missionary leaders alluded to the significance of the changes. The age-old official and unofficial social structures had collapsed along with the dynasty, and some Chinese turned to foreign missionaries for support.<sup>221</sup>

Over a period of several years, from June 1915 to November 1918, Lena recorded a number of events that referred to difficult situations and experiences with which the city’s leaders and citizens struggled, and which at times caused them to look to the missionaries for protection and leadership. Tseliutsing was the salt centre of West China, and so the leaders of this particular business were undoubtedly influential in the life of the city. On June 17, 1915, the city cancelled the upcoming annual festivities because of “a brooding conflict” as Lena described the situation, which had to do with salt

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<sup>220</sup> Account of 1906 trip from Shanghai to West China, written by Lena in 1964 (LDJ 6:5). This account provides limited information about chronology of their work in China, including the births and/or birthdays of their children as well as their furlough.

<sup>221</sup> In the 1911 Diary there are two entries which were probably added to the diary by Jolliffe in her 1964 review of her documents; she recorded her first specific comment about a special relationship between Orlando and the officials, “During all of the period of life in Tseliutsing Orlando was in close touch with the gentry – they ordered all kinds of materials and things from Shanghai – home furnishings etc., - also from Eaton’s – there were many very wealthy salt-well owners.” Diary entry 29 March 1911 (LDJ 1:9).

production in the city.<sup>222</sup> However, her mention of this event was brief in her diary, simply “No festivities over fear of trouble over salt business” and one that was sandwiched between memos about the heat, missionary committee meetings, prayer meetings at outstations, clothes that needed to be made for the children, a gentry fundraising party, and the family’s upcoming departure for the hills.<sup>223</sup> As Lena did not return to events related to the salt companies for seven months, it is unclear whether the steps that were taken by the officials rectified the problem.

The disorder in the province and the reliance of people upon missionaries for protection was first recorded by Lena in December, 1915, only six months after the cancellation of the festival. Early that month, Lena recorded, “Three robbers were shot by our riverside today by the soldiers.”<sup>224</sup> Once again, she immediately moved onto mission and domestic affairs, when she noted that another missionary had arrived, and that white washers had finished their work on the house and began work on the church. The following day, in her diary entry she returned to the robbers, and noted, “more robbers shot today. Many rumors of trouble at Shanghai.”<sup>225</sup> Over the next several weeks, as the mission properties were called upon to house many of the city’s leaders, Tseliutsing was increasingly thrown into civil disorder. The robbers had undoubtedly been a symbol and reality of this disorder, as they seemed able to roam freely through the province, robbing some people, holding others for ransom, and even having political agendas. It seemed that the only way

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<sup>222</sup> Diary, 17 June 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> Diary, 6 December 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

<sup>225</sup> Diary, 7 December 1915 (LDJ 2:1).

to contain the robbers was the presence of a strong military force, and that presence was itself problematic during these years.

West China and its cities were under threat of attack by the soldiers of neighboring Yunnan and its population looked to the Christian missionaries for help. Lena had suggested that the government soldiers, who ought to have been loyal to the China's government, were likely to abandon it if its leader, Yuan Shih-k'ai (1859-1916), continued his determination to become the emperor of China.<sup>226</sup> When, in January, 1916, only a month after beginning to report on the unresolved threats of robbers, Lena recorded the arrival of the Yunnanese in the province, she captured the importance of this matter to the city's residents. On January 21, 1916 she recorded, "The populace pretty well excited over the news of coming Yunnan soldiers who had broken with Government. Sui Fu has fallen and they are supposed to be marching on this place."<sup>227</sup> This excitement swiftly turned to fear, and the very next day the Salt Inspector and his family sought refuge on the mission's property, "to be safe if the solders came" as Lena recorded.<sup>228</sup> The atmosphere was undoubtedly tense as the inability of the local government and military to protect people became evident. Missionaries who passed through Tseliutsing on their way home from the annual Council meetings were worried about their own safety and so reluctantly, decided to spend only one brief night with their Tseliutsing

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<sup>226</sup> For further reading on Yuan Shih-k'ai see Jerome Chen, *Yuan Shih-k'ai, 1859-1916* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1972).

<sup>227</sup> Diary, 21 January 1916 (LDJ 2:2).

<sup>228</sup> Diary, 22 January 1916 (LDJ 2:2).

colleagues and then continue their journeys.<sup>229</sup> In Lena's records over the next few days, the perceived protection that the mission property offered became clear as the city's leading bankers, officials and even the head of the police force and their families gravitated to its buildings.<sup>230</sup> On January 24 Lena wrote an extended diary entry.

The president of the Bank of China Mr. Wang and his family moved onto the premises today. Also the Song family of the same Bank. They are very much alarmed as report has it that the Yunnan soldiers are due today. Mr. Wang rather trickily got rid of the bank funds. They bank all the salt revenue which last month was a million dollars – after salt office passes it on to the bank their responsibility is at an end but by some means Mr. Wang in Mr. Chang's absence got Mr. Knapple the German to take all the bank's funds – now Mr. K wants to go to Chung King and Mr. Chang refuses to recognize the [illegible word] as returned to the salt office. Mr. Wang is very much alarmed wanted to sleep in a room next to Orlando.<sup>231</sup>

As well as providing refuge, the missionary leaders were asked to assume certain civil responsibilities.

The Civil official of this place has made all arrangements to flee or if hindered to come to our compound. The military official has put a guard over him and is making him stay at his post. He sent to see if Orlando would guarantee that he would not flee if freed. This Orlando could not do.<sup>232</sup>

Beyond this perception of safety on missionary property, city officials and businessmen expected that the missionary leaders would also play an increasingly active role in the management of the city. One military official asked Orlando to watch a civil official, and

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<sup>229</sup> Diary, 23 January 1916 (LDJ 2:2). This meant that they left Tseliutsing on a Sunday, although they would have preferred to rest on the Sabbath.

<sup>230</sup> Diary, 26 January 1916 (LDJ 2:2). Lena recorded the request of the head of the police force seeking shelter and believing that it would be safest for him to stay with the missionaries. Lena advised that he tried to ally himself with them, as she noted, "He was very profuse in his gratitude to God for delivering him from all fear!"

<sup>231</sup> Diary, 24, January 1916 (LDJ 2:2).

<sup>232</sup> Diary, 23 January 1916 (LDJ 2:2).



another subsequently asked him if he and his colleagues would provide medical treatment under the aegis of the Red Cross, as Lena recorded, “if the foreign men would undertake Red Cross work if the anticipated battle takes place.”<sup>233</sup> The request apparently came couched in respect for the Christian church, as Lena explained, “He was very earnest in his expressions of the power of the gospel to help men.”<sup>234</sup> Orlando and a medical colleague did promise to be available to help out, but Lena expected that the conflict would resolve itself before they were needed. Once again, her appraisal of public support for Yuan Shih-k'ai was a negative one: “...as practically each official expresses dissatisfaction with Yuan's actions on becoming king it is likely these government soldiers will all join the Yunnan rebels.”<sup>235</sup> And only a few days later, although three missionary men had gone to do the Red Cross work, Lena reported that the situation did indeed seem to have subsided; the Yunnan soldiers were retreating and although battle reports continued, she wrote that things “looked calmer...the atmosphere seems to have changed...”<sup>236</sup> The disorder did not completely abate and the city's residents were fearful of a renewed presence of Yunnan troops and of “robber bands.”<sup>237</sup> It was in the next month, on March 24, 1916 that the Tseliutsing missionaries received a telegram notifying them, “Yuan had resigned Emperorship.”<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Diary, 28 January 1916 (LDJ 2:2).

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Diary 30 January 1916 (LDJ 2:2).

<sup>237</sup> Diary, 7 to 10 February 1916 (LDJ 2:2).

<sup>238</sup> Diary, 24 March 1916 (LDJ 2:2).

The problems of Tselieutsing and its lack of civil and military order abated but did not end, but the missionaries continued to do their own work. Evidence of the robbers' activities remained, and local Chinese people turned to the missionaries and their buildings for help. In May 1916 Lena described some of the obstacles to the pursuit of their work: all of their buildings were being used as temporary homes, the Sunday school classes were held in rooms in which people were living, and missionary leaders were being called upon to be mediators and members of delegations.<sup>239</sup> A member of the missionary community was kidnapped by robbers and held for ransom before being released.<sup>240</sup> Other missionaries were accosted by robbers, and finally, towards the end of the year, the British consul forbade travel by the missionaries.<sup>241</sup>

Throughout 1917 and 1918, the residents of Tseliutsing continued to live amidst this disorder, and although they hoped that the military would bring them some relief, it seems that the missionaries were a source of a calmness and stability that everyone needed. Soldiers' presence in the city was intermittent but when there, they were a source of safety, particularly from robbers, but also a source of concern because their behavior was never predictable. Their presence threatened to bring military confrontation into the city, and their need for supplies brought pressure upon the residents. The expectation that they could control the activities of the robbers was not really upheld, as the looting continued to be almost out of control. The city's residents seem to have lived in a state of

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<sup>239</sup> Diary, 24 and 29 May 1916 (LDJ 2:2).

<sup>240</sup> Diary, 28 and 29 June 1916 (LDJ 2:2).

<sup>241</sup> Diary, 3 July 1916 (LDJ 2:2).

chronic fear, sometimes somewhat assuaged, but always present. The missionaries appear to have continued to be a source of calm support, perhaps most apparent on November 1, 1917, a confusing day when there were shootings as well as a major fire that threatened the commercial core of Tseliutsing. The male missionaries of the city appear to have played a critical role in bringing the fire under control, and the gratitude of the business community was evident. Lena's usual cursory entries were certainly not in evidence as she wrote about this dramatic episode,

Spent the day at Chang Kialeo in study of miracles (for three days). Disturbed by much passing of fleeing troops. 9 p.m. all evening the Yunnanese have been hustling out of town. Now the remnants are looting. Our refugees are very frightened. Have rushed up from the Church. Two have crawled in over the back wall. They are terrified. 4 a.m. We have had an awful night – constant shooting and several fires raging. About 3 a.m. the shooting ceased and the foreign men are fighting fire. They put out one on the church front. The refugees have behaved marvelously well. We have about 300 in refuge. Considerable rifle shooting this a.m. Szechuanese arrived during forenoon and all day. Many followed after Yunnanese. No mercy is being shown the straggling Yunnanese. Szechuan soldiers also did some looting on arrival but now orders are out that all looters will be shot. The best part of the business street has been burned. Much has been saved by the action of our men.<sup>242</sup>

In fact, Lena suspected that a newfound interest of the men from the merchant class in the church work was directly linked to the role that the missionaries had played in successfully fighting the fire, as she recorded,

Church filled to overflowing although the boys and girls of Junior Church out. As a result of weeks meetings, 155 men have come saying they want to study the gospel. They are largely from the merchant class – a hitherto untouched class. The readiness of this class to hear the gospel is due they say to the work of our men in saving the city the night of the fire.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Diary, 1 November 1917 (LDJ 2:3).

<sup>243</sup> Diary, 2 December 1917 (LDJ 2:3).

Only two days later, Dr. Crawford, a member of the missionary community, became directly involved in local affairs when he participated in a plot directed against the Yunnanese military. This was, according to Lena's records, the first time that a missionary participated in something overtly partisan and potentially problematic to the community. She explained that he was involved in seizing and destroying ammunition that had been left behind by the Yunnanese forces and in mediating with robbers who had kidnapped a Chinese businessman. On November 3, 1918, she recorded this episode in which the doctor had played a central role.

Wang Tso Gau is under arrest today for being friendly with Yunnanese. In leaving the city the Yunnanese left a lot of ammunition on the road by the hospital property. Dr. C. took it in. Turned out to be big shells. Six or so of these. Dr. managed to clean [illegible word] armaments spending care to get all explosives out. Those he could not clean he sunk into the well...Dr. was unremitting in his efforts until he got Wang Tso Gau out of confinement again. Wang had to pay \$5000 ransom.<sup>244</sup>

It was only in the early winter of 1918 that Lena's concern for the safety of her family and fellow missionaries became clear. Her reliance on her faith, reminiscent of her earliest diary entries, was once again present. She wrote,

During the night the Szechwanese soldiers left. The city guard and police have fled. We are absolutely without protection. The people are very apprehensive. Afraid of the coming of the soldiers and afraid of the robbers if the soldiers don't come. The people are crowding in for protection. The church is full, also all out buildings, study and parlor. Hoffmans are coming to spend the night.<sup>245</sup>

Their fear is almost palpable, and in Lena's account of the following day she underscored her sense that any protection that the authorities might have offered them was absent,

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<sup>244</sup> Diary, 3 November 1917 (LDJ 2:3).

<sup>245</sup> Diary, 1 February 1918 (LDJ 2:4).

when she wrote, "Had a good nights rest. Went to sleep knowing only God could keep us."<sup>246</sup> These fears, so clearly articulated in her diary, may have been what prompted her to voice her opinions about handling political and military problems, and the role that missionaries might play. Perhaps she believed that there were limits to be drawn to the activities of missionaries in China, and that their intervention on behalf of individual Chinese might well expose them to greater threats.<sup>247</sup> Her opinion was based upon the events that had occurred several months earlier that involved Dr. Crawford, and when his home was later singled out by vandals, Lena found herself returning to those earlier events, and coming to the conclusion that his behavior had placed him in a vulnerable position. She would hold onto these thoughts and draw the conclusion that he had in fact not acted in the best interest of the missionary community. As she wrote in her initial comments about his intervention,

A messenger came to say it was Dr. Crawford's house that was being robbed. Seemed unbelievable but turned out to be so. A band of about 200 men armed went through town but Dr. C was the only one to suffer loss. Cause of going to Dr. C must have been spite maybe because he had destroyed ammunition left by Yunnanese or maybe over some hospital fracas or maybe because they thought to get money and ammunition.<sup>248</sup>

Apparently Lena decided to voice her concerns and her opinion quite forthrightly, as she recorded,

There is much talk about that our houses are to be searched for ammunition. The gentleman asked the General to send men to do so but he says it is quite unnecessary as his word that we have none is sufficient. Called for a community meeting and we had an unpleasant time for I exposed and related the November 3 and February 1 incidents to the displeasure of Dr. but the community all felt the (illegible word) had come to do something. The remaining ammunition was sent

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<sup>246</sup> Diary, 2 February 1918 (LDJ 2:4)

<sup>247</sup> Diary, 4 February 1918 (LDJ 2:4).

<sup>248</sup> Diary, 2 February 1918 (LDJ 2:4).

to Mr. Chang Salt Commissioner as the only person legally entitled to firearms. It was not decreed wise to hand it over to Yunnanese when it had been withheld from Szechuanese when they had come into the city.<sup>249</sup>

As her records draw to an end, they seem to relive events of her first trip into West China many years earlier. Just as the missionaries had encountered official concerns that crowds would become unruly during festival celebrations, they once again decided that the propensity of crowds to misbehavior must be curbed. Lena once again accepted their judgment as she noted the official's decision, and moved quickly onto more personal events of the day. On June 13, 1918 she wrote, "It is rather a quiet feast day. Crowds not allowed to congregate." And then she continued, shifting from the political disturbances and their repercussions, quite dispassionately once again, to a more personal daily record about the impact of the weather on them, "The day has been so chilly as indeed have all the days of this month that we have to wear extra clothing and at night sleep under three blankets..."<sup>250</sup> There were still threats to missionary property, but these were not at all the same as the marauding robbers who might have been simply a by-product of the inability of the authorities to stabilize the region in the past. On November 28, 1918 she recorded that thieves were, as she described, "put to rout" by one of the missionary women at 4:00 in the morning. They had broken into the study of the woman's husband who was out of town. Lena merely recorded, without comment, on the bravery or even the success of the woman's actions, "The thieves got away with over \$12.00 and 20 taels." She then continued, once again juxtaposing an overtly unrelated topic, about her

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<sup>249</sup> Diary, 4 February 1918 (LDJ 2:4).

<sup>250</sup> Diary, 13 June 1918 (LDJ 2:4).

children, “Alice’s and Grace’s letters this week were the best they have written. Alice for November stood highest in history exam but woefully down in arithmetic. Leonard was head of class last month...”<sup>251</sup> Of course the topics are not unrelated at all, as Lena was demonstrating once again, that all of these larger and smaller or significant and less significant events and experiences were part of her daily life in China.

Lena returned to the heightened military presence in Tseliutsing one last time, in her records of 1924. She chronicled some of their experiences under the governance of General Yang Sen. Lena advised, on January 23, “Considerable activity among soldiers. Yang Sen reported near the city.”<sup>252</sup> The chronology of events was not reported by Lena, but there was enough concern to stop Orlando from going to the annual conference. Lena explained the reason behind his decision, advising that “Yang Sen’s army is drawing near.”<sup>253</sup> It seems from her notations that Yang Sen was the force that could destabilize the area, yet it was his soldiers or military presence that would put an end to the looting being done by the other soldiers. that on February 4<sup>th</sup> the city gates were “still closed.”<sup>254</sup> She was able to hear firing or gunfire throughout the afternoon, but assumed that it was “probably just to intimidate the oncoming army,” presumably by Yang Sen’s troops who had arrived the day before. It was difficult for Lena to sort out what the noise, shooting, yelling and other disturbances really meant, and she apparently has a mixture of fear and apprehension that rose and was depleted, as she noted, “A very uncomfortable night,

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<sup>251</sup> Diary, 28 November 1918 (LDJ 2:4)

<sup>252</sup> Diary, 23 January 1924 (LDJ 2:9).

<sup>253</sup> Diary, 2 February 1924 (LDJ 2:9).

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

much shooting but more yelling than anything else.”<sup>255</sup> However, the acceptance of Yang Sen by the foreign community seems evident, as Lena completed her records of military events by advising that Orlando had attended a buffet dinner at the British Consulate in honor of Yang Sen.<sup>256</sup> However, she did record a postscript to these events, when in mid-June of 1924 she included an update on Yang Sen in her brief record of the day, “Sewing woman not here. G. went to school. Yang Sen’s inaugural ceremonies as military governor.”<sup>257</sup> Lena had neatly juxtaposed the absence of her sewing woman with the undoubtedly rather grand ceremonies that would install the successful warlord as military governor.

Lena’s final entry in her diary fittingly brought several parts of her life in China together in the following very brief notation, “Dec 30 Children’s party at Consulate.”<sup>258</sup> Lena had embraced her mothering and enjoyed her children, and had managed to integrate her role as mother with her activities and commitment to missionary work. She had moved from being a missionary herself to being a missionary wife, who remained actively involved in the work of the West China missionary enterprise, and then apparently seamlessly once again integrated another responsibility (and role) as mother to her growing family. Her diary entries on individual days recorded missionary work juxtaposed with mothering and even with military activities, social events, Orlando’s work and so on. Although the rest

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<sup>255</sup> Diary, 8 February, 1924 (LDJ 2:9).

<sup>256</sup> Diary, 27 March 1924 (LDJ 2:9).

<sup>257</sup> Diary, 12 June 1924 (LDJ 2:9).

<sup>258</sup> Diary, 30 December 1924 (LDJ 2:9).



of the foreign community in China was seldom mentioned in the pages of her letters or diaries, it was doubtless in the farther background as a less important but real presence for Lena. The missionary men were the ones who played the most active role for her in interpreting or representing the foreign, western presence in China, from Dr. Smith's to Dr. Crawford's dealings with officials. Most of Lena's records deal with the work in which she and Orlando, to a lesser extent, were involved, that is missionary work, their success in attracting interest in and then commitment to the missionary venture.

Nonetheless, this final entry in her record reminds the reader that Lena was a mother and therefore a missionary wife, and that the missionary presence was not the only Western presence in West China; and that the missionary community was perhaps or even undoubtedly part of a rather larger and somewhat more complex community of Westerners in China, as her children attended a party at the Consulate.

Although Lena's personal papers do not continue to tell her story in the same detail after 1924, her family remained in China until 1944. The Jolliffes continued their work and Lena and Orlando continued to play a leading role in the Tseliutsing mission in West China until their return to Canada, twenty years in the future.

### **Perspectives on Lena (Dunfield) Jolliffe**

It was Lena Dunfield who arrived in China only a few years after the turn of the century. She was a young Canadian woman who had been appointed to be a foreign missionary and to bring Christianity to the Chinese people. However, after only a year in China, (a year in which she had a remarkable journey up the Yangzi River into Sichuan province,

had made considerable advances in her Chinese language lessons, and had begun to engage in some missionary work), she resigned her Woman's Missionary Society appointment, and married Richard Orlando Jolliffe. It may be because Lena was initially committed to being a missionary, or it may simply be because most wives of appointed missionaries carried out missionary work themselves; it is only possible to speculate that her continued, significant, direct involvement in missionary work had to do with her own, personal commitment to be a missionary. At the time of her marriage, she considered that the biggest change in her life was going to be changing her name; perhaps this was the first indication to her readers that she fully intended to remain an active member of the missionary community. She was concerned that the WMS women would harbor some ill will towards her because she had resigned after such a short time. However, it appears that she easily made the shift to being a "missionary wife" and with that status she remained intimately involved in her own women's work and as well, frequently accompanied her husband when he traveled to outstations in their district.

Lena easily became a member of the China missionary community. From her earliest days in Shanghai, she conveyed a sense that she was a very active member of a community of people who were in China in order to perform good works; its members were not only Canadian missionaries, they were also missionaries, social workers, members of the YMCA and other aid workers, whose homes were in the United States and many European countries. Lena suggested that they all shared "a bond of common purpose," and in that description, she eliminated foreign business men and their wives, foreign gunboat men and perhaps even foreign diplomats. She was, of course, a member

of the larger foreign community in China to which these people belonged, but it was the smaller missionary community, the one with the common purpose, that embraced Lena and made her a member. Her community appears to have reflected her own spirit, serious and playful. On one of her first nights in China, when a new friend removed the bell clapper so that the tired newcomers would not be awakened too early the following morning, the stage seems to have been set for her life in China. She would not worry, as some of her colleagues would, about how much she had changed or whether Canadians would approve of her and her family when they returned to Canada. Rather, she appears to have submersed herself in China and not looked back, to have lived her life as a single woman, as a married woman and as a mother, and simultaneously as a missionary in China.

In her early years in China, Lena recognized and, to some extent struggled with, the differences between Canada and China. It was actually the “difference of China” that was remarkable to her. Lena did not compare the countries directly very often, as we might expect, this happened most frequently when she was still a relative newcomer. However, her concerns were serious, and when she edited her records, twenty years after returning to Canada, she identified that she had misjudged China and its people in some of her earlier impressions. It was only, she advised, that with increased knowledge of China, more experiences in China and the opportunity to reflect upon her impressions, she was able to recognize that she had been missing important pieces of information, perhaps cultural or historical awareness, which she required to make appropriate judgments. She had been concerned about the value that Chinese gave to individual lives. In that regard,

her evaluation of Chinese people was initially harsh and condemnatory. The prisoner being ushered through the streets, whose head might be displayed on a post that very same evening as a deterrent to other potential criminals; the boatmen whose near drowning had not caused any alarm or even concern among curious onlookers; the fire which raged unabated in the city streets yet did not change the behavior of the lackadaisical and uncommitted firefighters; all served to shock and upset her at different times. She suggested at the time that Chinese simply did not care about one another, that the only people they cared about were their immediate families, that the importance of the individual was non-existent in China and that the Chinese lacked something integral to Westerners. Lena determined that the only thing that might be significant enough to cause this vacuity in China was the lack of Christianity. However, twenty years later, Lena noted, either as a thought to herself or a note to later readers, that she eventually learned that the Chinese had a tremendous communal commitment. In retrospect she did not suggest that there was an intrinsic, culturally developed difference in the Western and Chinese understanding of the role and responsibilities of the individual within society.

Lena was fascinated by China and set about learning as much as she could, and taking advantage of every experience that was offered to her while she lived there. Certainly accompanying Orlando on that evangelical trip (with infant in tow) immediately after her first baby was born is evidence of this enthusiasm and commitment. She looked back on that particular event afterwards, when she was reading over her records in 1964, and we can almost see her smiling to herself when she noted that it was a rather impulsive and somewhat crazy thing to do. It was undoubtedly her enthusiasm for life and the

experiences that came her way that encouraged her to go on that trip, and to continue to go on outings and evangelical tours with her young children. She seems to have thirsted for knowledge about China, when she traveled up and down the Yangzi or explored its cities; she was building and storing her knowledge of China. The city streets seem to have been difficult for her to accept, with all of their closeness, heavy smells, constant noise and number of people, congestion and strange, new sights. Her identification of the startling difference between the streets of China's cities and the walls behind which missionaries (and wealthy Chinese) lived is clear; the walls provided safety, peace and cleanliness. Behind these walls, both missionaries and Chinese, plants and trees grew. It was almost as though the walls were a metaphor for life, providing an environment in which living things could grow and flourish. Nonetheless, as she became more acquainted with China, she seems to have needed the walls of the compounds less; she became less separated from China, and her community became one in which Chinese and foreigners co-existed.

Lena's reports about her journeys on the Yangzi River described, as she suggested, a special place, a place that in a sense, created itself. The boundaries of this world were formed by the distance from one river bank to the other, and the almost endless length of the river itself, and the world was vast and diverse. In one way, it reflected the diversity of China; in another, it reflected its regionalism. The separateness that her records convey reminds her reader of the geographic regionalism that has always been a reality in China, a reality that expresses the diversity and commonality of the regions. Her China contained the river cities (teeming with people, but as well, with industries and

businesses), the farms and all sorts of workers, city officials, boatmen and missionaries, in the river cities and on the boats, and even the stowaways and their parents. It was a rich and varied world, a world that was uniquely itself, even as individual parts of it had matching parts throughout the vast country. This river world had Chinese city officials who were required to enact treaty privileges and protection granted foreigners, as well as robbers who threatened and took the lives of fellow missionaries. The pull of regionalism, so present in this period, was not particularly present on the river, but Lena's readers can, with a little imagination, see the strength of different worlds in China. Lena created images of pieces of China that were unique and cut off from the rest of China, and yet were within China as well. China's realities were the Yangzi realities: peace and civil disorder found their way to the river when they were present in China. Local people at times were curious about the missionaries and at other times, virulently angry at them.

Lena adapted to China, according to her documents and she clearly made China her home from 1905 to 1924 and undoubtedly beyond. Lena and Orlando and their colleagues were certainly members of the larger Tseliutsing city community by 1924. In Lena's narrative her readers find a warm woman; a woman who appreciated (in the full meaning of the word) China, who was worried about the Chinese and in her concern, convinced that Christianity would help them. Her readers learn that in the early years of the Chinese Republic, years of great unrest, the missionary compounds became centres of refuge for many Chinese. They were actually seen as islands of stability by the city's leaders. Missionaries had of course benefited from the extraterritoriality of the treaty system, but they had also become powerful brokers in the politics of China, at least at the local level

in Sichuan province. Salt businessmen counted on the missionaries to help them and when in need of protection, to seek refuge in their homes, and city officials counted on the missionaries to take leadership roles in city projects. These Westerners who had come to bring Christianity to China and to better the lives of Chinese became actively involved in civic affairs. It was a role with considerable status and the West China missionaries appear to have become quasi-city leaders. Lena's narrative is multi-faceted; it tells the story of her daily life, of her daily concerns, and of her dedication to bringing the benefits that she enjoyed in her own life, to the Chinese people with whom she lived and worked. During the years in which Lena lived and worked in China, she developed an increased understanding of China and its people.

In her years in China, Lena developed relationships with the Chinese women in her community; she held regularized meetings with them, almost certainly bringing messages of an evangelical nature and teaching the women about Christianity, and she formed and led women's clubs for them. These clubs provided a centre for Chinese women to share in activities and camaraderie, and undoubtedly a venue in which the women were comfortable. As her city work flourished, it is certain that there were increasing numbers of Chinese women who were interested in Christianity and willing to participate in the events that Lena and her mission centre provided for them. She reached out to the rural women of the mission district as well; although she did not make evangelizing trips on her own (as, for example Mary Lamb, a WMS appointee, did), she frequently accompanied Orlando in his out-station work. In these gatherings, after the preaching had been concluded and the people gathered to learn about Christian teachings, Lena

collected the women and moved into one space while Orlando gathered the men into another area, and together, yet individually, they each dialogued with the people who had come out to meet with them. This was a scene that repeated itself, from Lena's earliest rural meeting en route to Junghsien to her later meetings in the Tzeliutsing district; women continued to be interested in the lessons that Lena Jolliffe brought to them. Undoubtedly, the mere presence of Lena Jolliffe and her female colleagues encouraged the Chinese women with whom she interacted to consider possible changes to their own lifestyles. Lena was a woman who had traveled far from her own homeland, who was married and mothered her children, and was a working missionary. Furthermore, her work with the women, in which she encouraged them and taught them new skills, assuredly impacted upon their lives. Simply put, Lena was among the Western women who contributed to helping Chinese women transition from their traditional subjugation and illiteracy toward greater visibility and eventually equality (at least in principle) in the social hierarchy today.

The impressions of China that Lena conveys to her readers today assuredly evolved over the years in which she lived in China. Her introduction of China to her readers reflected her own experiences and impressions; China was at once a country with a rich history and culture, and a country with an apparent inability to protect its individual citizens from lives of terrible hardship. Her relationship with China was an ambivalent one; the outings in which she participated encouraged her rapture with the country, and yet her observations also encouraged her dismay with the daily lives of the people. The focus of her impressions gradually shifted as the months and years passed; she sent along to



Canadians messages that were increasingly filled with her work and her family. Although there is no clear demarcation when her settling in time concluded, and her “daily life” began, she does appear to have shifted from being an outsider to becoming a woman who lived in China. This change encouraged her Canadian readers to become more concerned with Lena’s daily issues, those of a mother and missionary wife, than with China’s larger issues. Both sets of information are interesting. The former encourages her readers to consider the lives of specific people with whom she interacted, the issues with which they were confronted each day and the resolutions that (together), they hoped to find. The latter enables her readers to understand the magnitude of the country through Lena’s early experiences and impressions. The certainly unintentional misperceptions that she conveyed to Canadians, some of which she carefully corrected in her re-reading of her papers in later years, were perhaps most significant to the extent that she tended to focus on local and regional events rather than those of national import. Perhaps her lack of sensitivity to the importance of the larger political events is actually helpful to her readers. National events, which were so remarkable during this period, have tended to play a central and even a dominant role in observations of China by Westerners. The drastic changes that were occurring, from the demise of the imperial system to the eventual outcome of the civil war, were compelling and newsworthy topics. The information about China that Lena conveyed to Canada, her experiences and impressions of the country and its people from the bottom up, served as a counterpoint to other top down news from and about China. Further, Lena’s interest in local experiences reflect and underline the importance of regionalism in China; the mountains that isolate West

China from the rest of China and the Yangzi that provides the route into and out of West China for travelers were well represented in her narrative.

Lena's contribution to the transformation of China, a country which was in the throes of seeking models for modernization from the West even before she arrived there, was assuredly a rather limited one personally, but quite a significant one cumulatively.<sup>259</sup> The Chinese women with whom she worked were certainly engaged in their shared pursuits. However, the meeting of those Chinese who were searching for external ways to strengthen China, and the missionaries who were living and working inside China is most clearly evident when the Chinese businessmen, bankers and city leaders asked the Jolliffes to join them in resolving a problematic situation. The ambivalence of the Chinese towards all things that were Western is well represented in Lena's narrative of her life in China.

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<sup>259</sup> For discussion of the meeting of Chinese and missionaries, see Terence Craig, Craig, *The Missionary Lives: A Study in Canadian Missionary Biography and Autobiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). He suggests that many people in the "third world" seldom see a tourist or a diplomat, and so the missionaries were representative of the Western world. He also suggests that missionaries did little to change a world that was in the process of change anyway. Nonetheless, as he argues, their literature is an under recognized but valuable genre in Canadian literature.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MARY LETITIA LAMB

Mary Letitia Lamb arrived in China in the spring of 1920. From the deck of her ship, she studied the docks of Shanghai, and was, for the only time in the subsequent twenty years, unaware of the disorder that was a reality in her new homeland. It may have been within hours, and it was certainly within a day or two, that she was introduced to the dangers of China. The missionary homes in which she stayed received reports of the robbing, kidnapping and even killing of fellow missionaries. These were not orchestrated activities of organizations; rather, they were seemingly random events that occurred because there was a lack of order and an underpinning of anger at foreigners in the country. The years in which she was Matron of the Canadian Boarding School in Chengdu (1921-1925) were years in which the struggle for control of Sichuan was particularly evident; Yang Sen, the warlord general played a role in Mary's diaries, and although at times he was portrayed as a rather benevolent and interesting character, at other times her readers recognize the reality that warlords were involved in intermittent but frequent military action so that they could gain or maintain control of the region. When Mary wrote about keeping the children indoors so that they would not see "ghastly sights," it is certain that she did not want them to come across bodies on their outings. When she moved their beds to protect them from "whizzing bullets," it was because she knew that there was armed fighting in the streets on which they lived. However, it was not only robbers and warlords that affected the people of Sichuan. By the mid nineteen-twenties, anti-foreign sentiment was

significant; events in Shanghai led to a boycott of foreign goods in 1926, exacerbating an inflammatory situation that led to the evacuation of all Christian missionaries in China from their posts. As missionaries poured into Shanghai, the most international of China's cities, a city with an established International Settlement and a harbor from which missionaries could most easily leave China, Mary settled down (for approximately eighteen months) to help fellow missionary refugees, improve her Chinese language skills, and learn all that she could about the unfolding events. Mary never referred to the Northern Expedition (1926-1928),<sup>1</sup> although when she returned to Sichuan province she did identify that the warlords had been brought under considerable control by the armies of Chiang Kai-shek. Similarly, she did not discuss the Long March of the Communists (1934-1935);<sup>2</sup> but, by November 1934 she noted the "communists' threats" and "civil war" and identified, for the first time, that Chiang Kai-shek was her, and other missionaries, hope for the future of China. The March 1935 visit of Chiang and Madame Chiang to Chongqing was important not only to the citizens of the city, but particularly to the missionary community. The relationship which they formed is evident in this visit, and it was not too surprising when Chiang and his wife vacationed at the Mount Omei summer missionary residence. Chiang's New Life Movement, which Mary gradually came to respect, was evident in the province by the spring, 1936; Chinese youth and adults were expected to alter their lifestyles according to the teachings of the New Life doctrine, which concurrently asked the Chinese to modernize and to respect simplistic Confucian precepts. Evidence of disorder continued to appear in Sichuan; robbers and

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<sup>1</sup> For in-text discussion and reference to the Northern Expedition, see footnote 8 in Chapter One.

<sup>2</sup> For in-text discussion and accounts of the Long March, see footnote 10 in Chapter One.

soldiers, as well as drought and starving refugees, combined to affect the daily lives of the Chinese living in Sichuan. In 1937 the second Sino-Japanese War began<sup>3</sup> and although Manchuria and the east coast of China were the areas directly affected in the early years of the war, when Nanjing fell and China's central government moved to Chongqing, the residents of Sichuan province became victims of the war as well. The years Mary Lamb lived in China, from 1920 to 1940, were years in which the country was plagued by instability; although from her records it appears that at times the problems did not affect her daily life and work. However, her records also tell the story of a woman whose work was frequently altered in its direction because of the large events in which China was mired. This chapter, which is structured in an essentially chronological scheme, begins with a biographical sketch of Mary Letitia Lamb, and is followed by a brief description of the archival sources pertaining to her. It continues with three sections, each of which is a narrative of her first (1920-1925), second (1926-1933) and third (1934-1940) tours in West China. The chapter concludes with thoughts about her experiences and impressions of China, in a section titled "Perspectives on Mary Letitia Lamb."

### **Biographical Sketch of Mary Letitia Lamb**

Mary Letitia Lamb arrived in China in 1920, a dark-haired and robust woman, at forty years of age. Her serious demeanor signaled that she was finally poised to begin her long-held dream, to be a foreign missionary in a land that teemed with infidels, and which

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<sup>3</sup> For in-text discussion and literature suggestions on the Sino-Japanese War, see footnote 12 in Chapter One.

awaited her work. She had little doubt that she would bring some Chinese into her Christian world.

Mary, who was born in 1879, grew up in St. Andrews, a small town on the western border of the province of Québec.<sup>4</sup> She was raised in a Christian environment and she and her family were active in the Church community.<sup>5</sup> She was interested in becoming a missionary in China and participated in “extra-curricular mission study courses” and summer camp in her high school years.<sup>6</sup> As a young adult she began her studies at McGill University in Montréal, but was able to complete only her first year when she was obliged to return to St. Andrews as her widowed mother was in poor health. Mary then remained at home for the next sixteen years, helping her mother to manage the local post office and subsequently caring for her until she died in 1918.<sup>7</sup>

Mary Lamb was by this time almost forty years old, too old to become a foreign missionary and yet not old enough to have given up her hope of working in a mission field. In fact, her application for mission work to the General Board of the Methodist Church drew the attention of the Board. Although Mary had not completed her university

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Letitia Lamb, Application form for missionary volunteers, 8 August 1919, biographical file, held at the United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto (hereafter referred to as MLLBF).

<sup>5</sup> Mary Lamb, letter to Annie Dewar, 1 July 1923 (Mary Lamb, box 1: file 8, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto (hereafter referred to as MLL box : file); T. A. Halpenny, letter to J. Endicott, 30 September 1919 (MLLBF).

<sup>6</sup> H. C. Priest, letter to J. Endicott, 3 September 1919 (MLLBF); T. A. Halpenny, letter to J. Endicott, 30 September 1919 (MLLBF).

<sup>7</sup> Mary Lamb, Application form for missionary volunteers, 8 August 1919 (MLLBF); H. C. Priest, letter to J. Endicott, 3 September 1919 (MLLBF); T. A. Halpenny, letter to J. Endicott, 30 September 1919 (MLLBF).

degree, which was usually a prerequisite for a foreign mission posting, and furthermore she was far beyond the usual age of appointment to a field, she was in excellent health and appeared to be a suitable candidate for the Matron's position at the Canadian School in West China.<sup>8</sup> This school, located in the city of Chengtu, was a boarding school for children of Canadian missionaries who worked throughout Sichuan province. To Mary, it seemed that her dreams had come true, and she eagerly approached her work in China.

Mary's first term (1920-1925) introduced her to several Chinese cities, as well as to various types of missionary work. She was immediately assigned to a year or two of Chinese language study before she could take up her official position. Even as Matron she would require language capability in order to deal with the servants and to manage the school property. Mary Lamb arrived at the docks of Shanghai on March 9, 1920 and almost immediately traveled upriver, spending the month of April aboard a succession of river boats until her party reached Chungking.<sup>9</sup> After spending a little time in Chungking, she traveled overland to the smaller city of Junghsien, arriving at the end of May 1920.<sup>10</sup> By that time, she had been in-transit for almost six months. She remained in Junghsien, where she lived comfortably and compatibly with the Smith family, who were Canadian Methodist missionaries, until November 1921. She summered with them on the hills above Junghsien, and then returned to their home in the fall. Finally, towards the end of 1921, mission authorities directed Mary to move on, and ready herself for her work in

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<sup>8</sup> Mary Lamb, Diary entry, 11 November 1924 (MLL Box 1:file 5) hereafter referred to as Diary, date (MLL b:f); J. Endicott, letter to Mary Lamb, 9 September 1919 (MLLBF).

<sup>9</sup> Diary, 22 April 1921 (MLL 1:3).

<sup>10</sup> Mary Lamb, letter to Annie Dewar, 1 July 1923 (MLL 1:8).

Chengtu. By this time Mary had, first in private thoughts and then by formal communication, identified her yearning and subsequent determination to work as an evangelist among the Chinese, rather than as a caretaker for Canadian children.<sup>11</sup> She not only doubted her ability and recognized her lack of experience to raise and care for children, but also knew that her colleagues were doing “real work” with the Chinese. Her requests were denied, and she spent the balance of her first term in the post of Matron at the Canadian Boarding School.<sup>12</sup> At Chengtu Mary managed a Chinese staff of fifteen to twenty servants. The missionary property housed Mary, the Canadian children, their teachers, and the principal and his family. Despite her apparent success in her work, by the time that she completed this term in 1925 she was quite determined to leave the General Board and join the Woman’s Missionary Society (WMS).

Mary Lamb did return to China for a second term (1926-1933) in the fall of 1926, as a Woman’s Missionary Society evangelical worker assigned once again to West China. She thought that she was more suited to the WMS, both in her understanding of the components of a religious life, and in her awareness of womanhood as central to her own identity and to her work in China. This second term, in which she was assigned to the Foochow (*Fuzhou*) station, was in many respects perhaps her happiest time in China. This appointment finally enabled her to carry out many of her personal goals. The difficult years in the mid-1920s meant that the West China missionaries became refugees in Shanghai. When she had left for her first furlough, other West China colleagues were

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<sup>11</sup> Diary, 21 April 1921 (MLL 1:3).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*



being sent down to Shanghai due to anti-foreign and anti-Christian activities which threatened their safety. When she returned to China in 1926, Mary was only able to spend a little time in West China before becoming a missionary refugee in Shanghai in January 1927.<sup>13</sup> For Mary Lamb, the eighteen month Shanghai interlude at the beginning of this second term was not wasted; it enabled her to spend extensive time on Chinese language acquisition, something that she knew she would need in order to communicate with the Chinese, and also to watch the events of the “civil war” from a location which provided relative safety and extensive information. Once Mary did reach Foochow she was well-prepared to take up her responsibilities. This was a small mission station and so there were not too many foreigners. Mary felt close to the Chinese women and was able to participate in a variety of tasks, from managing the missionary compound to teaching in the women’s school; from visiting the homes of notable Chinese to managing clinics for poor mothers and their babies. She found that her need for “foreign” companionship and intellectual stimulation was only marginally met in Foochow; however, she satisfied her needs during summer holidays, when she enjoyed the companionship of fellow missionaries and other Westerners either in the metropolis of Chungking or more frequently in the hills above the city where Westerners congregated in order to escape the summer heat. Mary’s second term was concluded in 1933, when she left China for a year’s furlough.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Undated and untitled document (MLLBF). Fuzhou is the current place name of Foochow; in the missionary documents, the city is occasionally spelled Fow Chow and Fowchow.

<sup>14</sup> Undated and untitled document (MLLBF).

Mary represented her church in China through a transitional period in the Church, as the United Church of Canada was formed from several of its previously constituent parts,<sup>15</sup> and as the church in Canada moved from an evangelical leaning towards a social gospel philosophy.<sup>16</sup> Mary had experienced the evangelical Church as a child and as an adult in Canada. She had spent so little time at university that her interaction with Christian student activists and their activities, such as the Student Volunteer Association which attracted many of her future colleagues, was inherently limited more than had she remained at McGill for several years. Yet in her own hometown she was seen as challenging the traditional, conservative Methodist ways. Once in China she was assuredly an evangelist, repeatedly drawn to Oxford Group supporters rather than to the newly mainstreamed social gospelers.<sup>17</sup>

Mary Lamb returned to China for her third and final term (1934-1940) in 1934, once again as an evangelical worker for the Woman's Missionary Society. She was stationed in the familiar cities of Chungking and then Foochow. However, while she had

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<sup>15</sup> See footnote 100 in this chapter for further discussion of the formation of the United Church of Canada.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Allen chronicles the history of the Canadian Social Gospel movement in the early twentieth century in Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971). For a discussion of the similarities between missionary evangelism and the social gospel, see Janet F. Fishburn, "The Social Gospel as Missionary Ideology," in *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914: Theology, Theory, Policy*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 218-242. Fishburn explains that foreign missionaries had been involved in social gospel work, social welfare, medical and educational work, as well as Christian conversion since the establishment of the earliest missions. Nonetheless, Mary Lamb did appear to find herself torn between her perceptions of the two "schools" as she struggled with her own understanding of her work.

<sup>17</sup> The Oxford Group in Sichuan was part of the larger Oxford Group Movement of the time, which Mary Lamb found particularly inspirational and supportive. She relied upon the group for discussion of theological topics and concerns, for guidance in her work, and for support of ideas that like-minded people shared for a return of the church to more conservative but not, in her opinion, overly fundamentalist Christianity.

experienced significant impacts from domestic political and military turbulence in her first and second terms, she now found herself in the midst of the widespread implications of Japanese aggression. And so her activities expanded, as she continued her work with interested residents in the area, and also responded to the many needs of China's war refugees who were fleeing to West China.

By 1940, when she was due for another furlough, Mary Lamb had lived in China for two decades. In a letter written to her cousin in July 1923, shortly after she celebrated her forty-fourth birthday, Mary had written about the changes in herself and her life that she was experiencing.

Do you feel old, my dear? It is very hard for me to realize that I am actually approaching the half century line, on the contrary, I feel as if I were only beginning to live, as if there were long stretches before me to which I am looking forward with keen interest and desire. Of course I can perceive some signs of age, a few more gray hairs, lost two more front teeth the other day at the hands of the dentist, imagine my eyesight is not as good as it was. But the joy of life seems to increase, does it not?<sup>18</sup>

She had gained and lost weight, struggled with some China-illnesses, but had never sustained debilitating ill health. She had tramped through the countryside in order to work at outstations, traveled up and down the Yangtze, been carried in sedan chairs and flown in an airplane. She had witnessed warlords rise and fall, and tracked Chiang Kai-shek's struggle to unite and rule China. She had befriended city officials and generals, defended mission property from the demands of soldiers, and celebrated many Christmases with her Chinese Christian students and friends. She had witnessed her colleagues' successes and failures, and their illnesses and even deaths. And finally, at sixty years old, Mary voiced her ambivalence about returning to China for a fourth term. Only days before her

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<sup>18</sup> Letter to Annie Dewar, 1 July 1923 (MLL 1:8).

scheduled departure for Canada she received news that a family member needed her help, and once again, Mary returned to St. Andrews in order to meet her family obligations. She left West China just before the Christmas celebrations of 1940.<sup>19</sup>

### **Archival Holdings**

The United Church Archives has a fairly extensive file of Mary Letitia Lamb's personal papers. There are more extensive documents from her first term than either her second or third terms despite the fact that she was in China for approximately five years in the first term and six in each of the others. Mary kept diaries and wrote letters to Canada. When she began her first diary, she made it clear that what motivated her to do so was to have a record of her experiences that would allow her to write more meaningful letters to family and friends in Canada. Her diary writing was far more extensive in her first term; however, the fewer diary entries later were balanced nicely by her more frequent letter writing, or at least the inclusion of more letters in her file at the Archives. Her writing is quite tiny in her diaries and lovely and expansive in her hand-written letters. Most of her letters are type-written because she sent multiple copies, usual six or seven at a time, off the "home people" as she called them. These were circular letters, filled with description and information about events in China. As well, she occasionally wrote more personal letter to her cousin, Annie Dewar. In these letters she described recent events, and also answered questions that her cousin undoubtedly posed in her own correspondence to Mary. As well, Mary mentioned friends and relatives from her home town and suggested

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<sup>19</sup> Diary, 8 December 1940 (MLL 1:9); MLLBF.

ways in which the two of them might enjoy themselves together when she returned to Canada from China.

Her collection of personal papers is fascinating; while the diaries are quite difficult to handle and the letters are a little fragile, the content is rich and rewarding. The densely packed pages of her diaries contrast with the broad strokes of her handwritten letters to Annie Dewar. While Mary apologizes for the mistakes in her typing, and the unevenness of the multiple copied pages, the results are almost always acceptable. Very few of Mary Lamb's personal documents are illegible, although her readers will require a good degree of patience. However, when poring over her documents in the quiet of the Toronto archives, her reader is almost inexorably drawn back into China with Mary. Mary Lamb was a fairly prolific writer and the papers that are held at the Toronto archives are certainly worth examining.<sup>20</sup>

### **First Tour in China (1920-1925)**

In this section, Mary Lamb progresses from being a newcomer in Shanghai to becoming a woman who engages in Chinese language studies and enjoys missionary work in the West China city of Junghsien. It follows her as she must, with rather wrenching disappointment, leave her life there, and begin her work as the Matron of the boarding

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<sup>20</sup> The archival holdings for Lamb consist of diaries, correspondence and a scrapbook of newspaper and magazine clippings. Seven small diaries and her personal correspondence is found in two files, arranged chronologically from 1923-1940, and are found at location number 86.308C. The richness and diversity of her personal papers is, in part, almost certainly what drew me to return to the Archives after my Master's thesis had been concluded. Deborah Shulman, "From the Pages of Three Ladies: Canadian Women Missionaries in Republican China" (Master's Thesis, Concordia University, 1996). The limitations imposed by Master's level work seemed at odds with the possibilities that the papers offered. Hence, I embarked upon further research, with the intention of deepening my research on the work Mary Letitia Lamb and other West China missionaries.

school for Canadian children in Chengtu. There, she became a homemaker on a very large scale, responsible for the well-being of all of the children and the management of the boarding school's servants. In the years in which she was Matron, Mary moved from being nervous and questioning of her abilities, to finding her own way of managing the boarding school, and finally, to preparing for her departure from China, with the hope and expectation that she might return and work as a missionary with the Chinese people.

*Shanghai, March 1920*

Mary Letitia Lamb arrived in China on March 9, 1920. As she stood on the deck of the ship, the docks of Shanghai appeared to be a very busy place; they were not particularly overwhelming, but certainly, for Mary, a reminder of New York. While awaiting the signal to disembark, Mary peered down at the dock where people seemed to be scurrying around, doing their work. At that particular moment she was undeniably a missionary. The trip across the ocean had certainly introduced her to the beginnings of a missionary community; she made some contacts and acquaintances, and even friendships with her fellow travelers. These relationships became the starting point of what would become Mary's community: her friends would be her colleagues, her interests very much linked to her work and its focus. Mary recalled gazing down from the deck, amidst fellow missionaries and their children, all eager to disembark. The missionaries had held their last of several meetings just before docking, and by that time she was already part of the community. Mary had packed her belongings, handed out tips to the ship's crew (with advice from her colleagues about how much to tip), had an unexpected further meal aboard ship, and still had to wait another three hours before their transport to the city was arranged and they were finally ready to disembark and be on their way. In the rainy,

overcast day the women and children set off for the city, while the men stayed behind and organized their baggage.<sup>21</sup>

Mary was pleased with the residence in which they were to stay while in Shanghai; although she initially misidentified it as a China Inland Mission (CIM) home, her mistake was of little consequence. Perhaps aware of the lifestyle and philosophy of the CIM, Mary had understandably made the mistake.<sup>22</sup> When she recorded that the home pleased her, she described it as “plain but comfortable.”<sup>23</sup> A little later, as she settled in for her brief stay, she appreciated it even more because it was a place in which she had the opportunity to meet interesting people who were passing through the city.<sup>24</sup> These two attributes remained important to her during the years in which she lived in China. Mary was committed to a simple, serious, and certainly never frivolous, life-style and seemed to have enjoyed and indeed thrived upon stimulating conversations with other Westerners. In the few days that she spent there, she met many missionaries: two American Red Cross workers who had just arrived in Shanghai from Siberia; and a young physician who was born in British Guiana to Cantonese parents, had studied in Edinburgh and was en route to Singapore. It is not surprising that she recorded, “There are many interesting people in this home as they pass through for all parts of the world.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Diary, 9 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>22</sup> See footnote 29 in Chapter Two.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Diary, 16 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>25</sup> Diary, 16 March 1920 (MLL 1:2). Her pith helmet is the first indication that Mary Lamb is not going to easily fit into the type of missionary described by Jeffrey Cox in his recent work on missionaries. She seems, in these early days to exemplify the sort of misleading, pop-culture picture of missionaries, a

Mary was very busy in those first few days: shopping quite a lot, buying items that she would need for the interior, looking around the city and taking advantage of everything that Shanghai seemed to present to her. She noted that on the advice of other women she bought a pith helmet that was, in her words “horribly unbecoming,” a cookbook which contained recipes for “the kind of thing one can buy in China,” and a camp bed which would continue to prove useful in the years to come.<sup>26</sup> She found a shop that would develop the film that she had shot in Japan, and enjoyed tea at the city’s Scotch Bakery on two occasions.<sup>27</sup> She occasionally babysat for colleagues’ children and even borrowed a car so that she could explore a little more of the city; when she and her new companion Miss Scott took a wrong turn while they were looking for a park, she advised that the error enabled her to see a little more of the city, “saw all the beautiful residences on the Bubbling Mill Road – baseball grounds, jockey club etc.” When she recorded “Every day has its own interests,” she was only noting what her readers discover as well, that Mary was eagerly embracing her new surroundings.<sup>28</sup>

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(male) evangelist in a pith helmet. Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> Diary, 12 March 1920 (MLL 1:2). [Her pith helmet is the first indication that Mary Lamb is not going to easily fit into the type of missionary described by Jeffrey Cox in his recent work on missionaries. She seems, in these early days to exemplify the sort of misleading, pop-culture picture of missionaries, a (male) evangelist in a pith helmet. Jeffrey Cox, *Imperial Fault Lines: Christianity and Colonial Power in India, 1818-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Diary, 13 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).



After a week or so in the city, Mary left Shanghai in a bit of a flurry. She had spent a quiet morning, with as she notes, “not much to do.”<sup>29</sup> She entertained the children for a while, took “Baby Morrison” to the park, watched the Brown’s children for an hour, ironed her blouses and wrote (her diary probably) a little. Then, as the time to leave approached, she and Mrs. Brown, who had been her senior traveling companion on the ship, decided to take advantage of the city one last time. She recorded the hurried nature of their trip, “Mrs. Brown and I tore downtown to do some last minute shopping,” and upon their return, they said their prayers, and then their good-byes to the people that she had met, took their seats in the “procession of rickshaws” and ventured off to the next part of their journey.<sup>30</sup> Mary’s initial response to rickshaws had been one of discomfort. She thought that it was a demeaning type of work for the rickshaw men, and she was uncomfortable being carried about. In a little over a week she had enjoyed and adapted to so many new experiences; perhaps the rickshaw was an example of her new life.

*On the Yangzi River: Shanghai to West China, late March 1920*

Mary’s journey from Shanghai to West China was complex due to unsettled conditions on the river. Before departing she and her colleagues had been warned by other missionaries to be cautious in their travel and to book passage on boats that would be safest if they were to be attacked. Mary noted the content of their warning which they received a few days before leaving: “At supper we met the Lorrances on their way home from Chengtu. Advise us to go by steamer. Say there are reports of problems on the way.

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<sup>29</sup> Diary, 18 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

We will soon be away from here now.”<sup>31</sup> They traveled from Shanghai to Chungking, with stopovers in the major river cities of Hankow and Ichang; at each city they changed to successively smaller boats, but each of the boats was a steamer. The first boat must have been quite large as Mary referred to the calves that were below deck, as well as a piano in the common room.<sup>32</sup> Once again, the missionaries formed a companionable group and Mary was undoubtedly at ease. The very first evening on board, they gathered around the piano and entertained one another, as she explained, “So I got out my college songbook and we all had a most uproarious time after dinner until we got two of the babies wakened up.”<sup>33</sup> In the daylight the sights along the Yangzi gradually captured her attention and we have a sense that as the river narrowed, Mary was entering China. She commented on the width of the river at the beginning of the trip, that sometimes she was unable to see any land at all.<sup>34</sup> With little outside stimulation, she focused on things that she might do on the ship; she began to learn a little Chinese from her more experienced colleagues, played with the children, studied and even visited the calves.<sup>35</sup> However, the sights of the river drew her attention; fishing boats and even birds were interesting to her.<sup>36</sup> When the steamer stopped at Nanking, Mary took the opportunity to go ashore for a little while. She was unable to go into the city centre, but did walk along the docks and found a congestion that was remarkable to her. Rather than the workers who had received

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<sup>31</sup> Diary, 17 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>32</sup> Diary, 19 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Diary, 20 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

her attention in Shanghai, it was a mix of children, pigs and dogs that formed a single image at Nanking. She wrote, “found a very poor, miserable collection of straw huts swarming with people. Children, pigs, dogs etc. Saw a pair of Chinese pheasants – very pretty.”<sup>37</sup> When they continued their trip after the stop in Nanking, Mary was completely aware of the river for the first time. She seemed to be enveloped, as Lena Jolliffe had been, by her surroundings; she referred to the river as “the mighty Yangtse,” and noted,

the mountains on the left and the plain on the right with the green fields dotted with straw stacks. The mountains are very fine and it is wonderful to see the picturesque temple perched of the top of a sunny precipice or the towns with miles and miles of walls built all over the mountain ranges – then the fortified rocks are also interesting and the background of range upon range of hills.<sup>38</sup>

Mary Lamb was being drawn into China and seduced by it.

The information and descriptions that Mary had gathered about Hankow had prepared her well; she had been told that the city was known as “the Chicago of China” and noted that it was indeed a great industrial city with miles of industry stretching along the waterfront.<sup>39</sup> When the boat docked, the group was met by a representative of the CIM, and he accompanied them to their lodgings. She noted, almost with a sign of relief, that she was seeing the real China for the first time in the streets of Hankow.<sup>40</sup> She was almost certainly comparing it to her recent experience in Shanghai, where the streets that she visited may have been more international in flavor; the Scotch bakery, a large English church where she attended Sunday services, the YMCA where she attended two events,

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<sup>37</sup> Diary, 20 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>38</sup> Diary, 19 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>39</sup> Diary, 21 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>40</sup> Diary, 22 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

and the missionary residence. Perhaps because she was so enthralled with everything that she was seeing, she did not seem to be particularly concerned for her own safety, when their CIM hosts advised them that a fellow Canadian missionary had recently been killed by robbers. She wrote a cursory note, “met with the news of the death of Dr. Menzies of the Can. Pres. Miss shot by robbers.”<sup>41</sup> Without any further comment or explanation, she continued her notes with a brief detail of her travel plan. “We will be here five days time as there is no steamer going til then.”<sup>42</sup>

In Ichang, the second river city at which they changed boats, Mary had several new experiences. The second steamer, traveling between Hankow and Ichang, was smaller but quite similar to the first one, and the trip up to Ichang was quite unremarkable.<sup>43</sup>

However, when they were taken to the local CIM home, Mary was thrilled with it. She wrote: “Mr. Squires of the CIM met us and we came ashore in small boats. Found a welcome and a comfortable home awaiting us. This seems like real China – coal oil lamps, real Chinese bed and furniture.”<sup>44</sup> In Ichang the British Consul was warning people not to travel upriver on houseboats, because the small boats could not offer the necessary protection from attack. Two missionary families en route to Ichang had recently been attacked. Mary recorded some of the details that they had been given.

At breakfast Mr. Squire announced that the 2 families of missionaries who had been robbed would arrive before lunch. They were Mr. and Mrs. Coleman (quite

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<sup>41</sup> Diary, 22 March 1920 (MLL 1:2)..

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Diary, 29 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>44</sup> Diary, 30 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

old) and Mr. and Mrs. Whiteside – younger with two children. All of the C.M.C. They lost practically everything of value. Mrs. W. said she was glad the children were spared to them, as the brigands discussed the idea of taking them also. The whole party were rather shaken as to nerves but wonderfully calm I think considering the experience.<sup>45</sup>

In Ichang Mary had several new experiences. She had her first Chinese lesson, as she explained, “from a real teacher. A very monotonous job it will be for a while.”<sup>46</sup> Her prediction of the monotony of her language studies was quite accurate; the teacher proved to be a disappointment and a frustration to her. One day he looked bored and fell asleep; another day she noted that his lessons were successively worse.<sup>47</sup> She was stared at by Chinese people for the first time when she and her traveling companion Mrs. Brown, from the ocean voyage, took the children down to the river to play. She also went to the docks with another companion to retrieve her luggage. She wrote:

This morning I went down with Mr. Morrison to see my freight – found all my boxes – half on the street and half on the shore. Opened the largest one and put in my mirror. Opened another and put in some more things. Lots of attention from passers by.<sup>48</sup>

She was shown a little about housekeeping by their hostess Mrs. Squire as she noted, “Mrs. Squire let me go down to the basement with her. Saw how she manages the lamps and the water problem.”<sup>49</sup> She seems to have found it a privilege to be shown some of the intricacies of housekeeping, but found it equally frustrating to be left out when the men went off to take photographs. She found it hard to accept that men were able to be more adventurous than women. She wrote, “Mr. Peat and Mr. Morrison leave tonight for a trip

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<sup>45</sup> Diary, 31 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>46</sup> Diary, 6 April 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>47</sup> Diary, 8, 9, 10 and 12 April 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>48</sup> Diary, 6 April 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>49</sup> Diary, 5 April 1920 (MLL 1:2).

up through the gorges to take photographs – wish I were a man.”<sup>50</sup> It must have been difficult for her to watch them leave on this trip, as we will see that she particularly enjoyed traveling in the countryside, and was an avid photographer who would spend considerable time developing her own film.

The Consul’s warning proved apt on the third and final part of the trip up the Yangzi. They heeded his warning and booked their passage on another steamer. They boarded the boat on the evening before it was scheduled to depart and settled in, but slept very little. At 4 A.M. the cabin boy went into their rooms closing the portholes, and then it was very noisy as the engines started up. Between the noise and their excitement, the missionaries could not sleep, and were up on the outer deck by 5:00, awaiting their first sight of the gorges. Mary’s record summarized her impression, “The scenery was grand beyond description.”<sup>51</sup> But the robbers were undoubtedly very dangerous, and when they went through what was identified as “the robber section” a day later, one of the senior missionaries prevailed upon the others to stay inside. In fact, the boat was fired upon by men on the shore, and the captain responded by trying to frighten them off. “He blew the whistles furiously,” reported Mary. A little later they passed through another place where they were advised that soldiers were actively engaged in trying to control the robbers.<sup>52</sup> Clearly the danger along the river was real.

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<sup>50</sup> Diary, 8 April 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>51</sup> Diary, 28 April 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>52</sup> Diary, 29 April 1920 (MLL 1:2).

*Introduction to West China: Chungking May 1920*

The third steamer docked in Chungking, West China in early May, two months after Mary had arrived in China. She had reached the end to this first part of her travels apparently with some mixed feelings. Until now, she had been traveling with at least some of the same people with whom she had left Canada, and it was here, in Chungking that the little group immediately split up. Perhaps this led her to consider how she was fitting into her new community, and rather than identifying the lifestyle that she enjoyed, it seemed clear and of some concern to her that she was different from some of the people who were also members of the missionary community. Separation from Mrs. Brown, with whom she had formed a close bond, was certainly difficult for her, and this separation may have even provoked her first impression of Chungking, as she was carried up into the city. She wrote,

We have come to a parting of the ways. The Browns went with Mr. E. and Mrs. Peat went to her home and we came with Mr. Jones. My first experience in a sedan chair. I much prefer walking to being lugged by two or three sweating men up hundreds of steps.<sup>53</sup>

However, she did conclude her memo of that first day with something more positive, noting the beauty of the hills.<sup>54</sup> The following day she realized that she missed Mrs. Brown, and it seems that she was having a little trouble settling in.

It was very hot today. Like July at home. They don't call it hot here. Some of us went to a Chinese church...Mr. Brown came over the river to Church and had lunch with us – I wish it had been his wife. I can see where they live from my seat on the veranda. We are going over to see them in a few days. Mr. and Mrs. Jones are most kind and thoughtful for our comfort and everything is very nice. But I'm afraid I'm not going to fit in here very well. A simpler way of life is what I am

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<sup>53</sup> Diary, 1 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

more accustomed to. Mr. and Mrs. Irish came over to call in the afternoon. Everyone is very kind in welcoming us.<sup>55</sup>

Mary undoubtedly had difficulty recording some of her thoughts about her colleagues, even within the private pages of her own diary. Her ambivalence, or perhaps confusion or hesitation, about writing down her thoughts is evident when she continued her early impressions of the city and of her new community on the following day.

The streets are so narrow and so little sky to be seen. It is all steps and stairs. Mr. and Mrs. Jones are very nice I think, but quite too conventional to suit me...Mrs. Morrison and I find life here quite different from what we expected.<sup>56</sup>

This sort of roller coaster of impressions, which was perhaps emotionally driven, continued over the next few days and undoubtedly reflects the speed at which she dealt with new and unfamiliar situations. Whatever preparation she had made in Canada before embarking upon her “new life,” she had perhaps assumed that she would still have her life as she understood it, but would have a new career as well. Instead, it seems that her preparation had left her rather unprepared; her imagination had inadequately equipped her for these new experiences. Mary’s ambivalence pulled her back and forth, between appreciating her surroundings and experiences and finding them difficult, uncomfortable and isolating. She also recorded that week, “The Brown family came over to lunch. It was good to see them again. No hope of staying with them.”<sup>57</sup> In her very next thought she moved onto something unexpected, “There was a meeting of the local ctee here and I got

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<sup>55</sup> Diary, 2 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>56</sup> Diary, 3 May 1920 (MLL 1:2). In fact, Mr. Jones became one of her favorite colleagues in the years to come. He was the most important person (for her) in the Oxford Group. When Jones went on furlough Mary felt his absence, and a year later, noted that their group would once again be stronger because he had returned. See footnote 17 in this chapter for an earlier reference to the Oxford Group.

<sup>57</sup> Diary, 5 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).



my salary – 256.32. I feel quite wealthy. It is more than I had expected.”<sup>58</sup> Then, moving on to her first experience with illness in the China missionary community she recorded, “Poor little Helen Morrison is very ill. I do hope she will be better tomorrow. Dr. Sheridan does not seem to know what the trouble is.”<sup>59</sup> The little girl did not immediately improve and it became evident over the next few days that she was, in fact very ill with a disease that Mary certainly did not expect. She writes, “Helen had a very bad night and the doctor was sent for and pronounced it small-pox!”<sup>60</sup> This diagnosis meant that all of the members of the household needed to be vaccinated, including the servants. It took some time for the child to recuperate; she began improving a little each day, as Mary explained, was “as well as can be expected,” but it was a difficult illness to battle.<sup>61</sup> Beyond the smallpox there were other stressful events: new arrivals to their home brought news that a fellow missionary, Mr. Quentin, had been accosted by robbers and was reported to have been “in a four-hour fight.”<sup>62</sup> A few days later there was a fire in the city. Although it did not affect the mission property, it was of enough concern to Mr. Jones that he would not leave their home to go off on a planned picnic.<sup>63</sup> Another of her new colleagues, Mr. Irish, told them about a new concern, “rather alarming reports of a cholera epidemic in the city” and that in response, some young Christian men were

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<sup>58</sup> Diary, 5 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Diary, 8 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>61</sup> Diary, 10 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>62</sup> Diary, 6 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>63</sup> Diary, 12 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

“organizing a campaign of education on the subject.”<sup>64</sup> All of these events occurred between May 1<sup>st</sup> when she reached Chungking and May 18<sup>th</sup> when she readied to leave, on her way to Junghsien. All of this: illness, fire and epidemic occurred in the context of not yet knowing where she was to live (in Chengtu where she was assigned to be matron, or in Junghsien a little more than half-way to Chengtu), or even how long she would be stopping over in Chungking. All of this uncertainly may very well have contributed to her multifaceted impressions of these first weeks in the province.

Mary suggested that she appreciated women more than men; although it is not quite clear why, she seems to have had less patience for the men.<sup>65</sup> However, as time passed she would have more to say about women as well and indeed occasionally changed her mind from her first impressions of people. Perhaps most important to her of all, she found that she was unable to retreat into a religious atmosphere that would restore her, rejuvenate her and comfort her. On her very first night in Shanghai she decided to miss supper as she was suffering from a cold and feeling tired and unwell, but to attend evening services instead because she knew that communal prayer would be more restorative and important to her than eating.<sup>66</sup> But in Chungking, when looking for a similar experience, she was certainly disappointed. She wrote, “The more I see of people the better I like women. Mr. J. is a nice man but is missing the best out of life from my point of view. There is too

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<sup>64</sup> Diary, 17 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>65</sup> Diary, 9 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>66</sup> Diary, 10 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

little religion in this home to suit me, although plenty of practical works” and on the following day, which was Sunday she recorded,

It does not seem much like Sunday at this house. We sang some hymns after breakfast for about an hour. I don't understand why they don't have a Bible class or something when we are shut in like this. The lack of spirituality of the men of the modern school of thought is certainly to be deplored. Trust the pendulum will swing back in the next generation.<sup>67</sup>

Perhaps balancing out the loss that she identified in her religious experiences in these Chungking comments, she enjoyed the interaction with new people that she met. As well, in Chungking she did much less shopping than she had done in Shanghai. She recorded, “After dinner I went shopping with Miss Cassidy and Miss Thomson. Lots of fun. Bought a little silver pagoda pepper box for Aunt Grace.”<sup>68</sup> This little outing may have opened the way for a pleasant evening and a new companion. “Had a nice talk with Miss Cassidy tonight. I like her so much. I will have lots of fun going overland with her if I go.”<sup>69</sup> The following day she enjoyed more new company at the picnic.

There were two ladies with us who are very interesting – social service workers from Chicago. One of them also gathers information for a N.Y. newspaper syndicate. We had a wonderful trip over to the mission bungalow on the second range of hills.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Diary, 16 May 1920 (MLL 1:2). Perhaps Mary is referring to the shift in focus and energy to a social gospel church rather than an evangelical church, although she will prove to be interested in social service work. For example, in her third term when she works directly with women and runs a “Baby welfare clinic” which offers bathing facilities to mothers for their babies and instructional help when indicated.

<sup>68</sup> Diary, 11 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Diary, 12 May 1920 (MLL 1:2). This is the place where she would spend many summers, on the hills just beyond Chungking. They were not very high but the temperature was cooler there than in the city. There were two “ranges” of hills separated by a valley. On the first range, which was closest to the city, were the permanent homes of many of the foreign businessmen from Chungking, as well as the temporary homes of some gunboat men. Their wives remained on the hills while they commuted in to work. The city was always dusty and congested. The second range, a little farther away was the summer residence of missionaries from a variety of churches and countries.

And so these few days were packed with an almost kaleidoscopic round of experiences: a rapid introduction to new people, home life and religious practices; to shopping, summer homes, illness and the severity of it; to fire and its danger in China, robbers and the true danger of them; and mixed in among all of this, the introduction to her language study. It was quite a whirlwind of experiences, as Mary might have concluded. Perhaps, as she almost identified, she experienced a sharp awareness of how far she really was from Canada. As she wrote on May 18, "I should not say this was an eventful day for I got a letter!! All the way from France from Margaret Morrison. She is a dear."<sup>71</sup> There is no report of anything that happened in Chungking on that day; simply the recording of the arrival of a letter, a connection to her life in Canada.

The following day, May 19, seemingly without much forewarning, Mary packed up her belongings, and moved on to the city of Junghsien. Despite being in the shadow of military conflict and danger, the trip to Junghsien appears to have been enjoyable. However, the travelers would have made quite an impression upon Canadians back home. Mary described the composition of the group as nine foreigners plus a military escort. Although they were not all going to the same destination, they were all going further inland. There were the two social service workers from Chicago with whom she had enjoyed discussions in Chungking; six missionaries including Mary, most of whom were newcomers as well; and their "efficient, patient, thoughtful personal conductor," Reverend Mortimer.<sup>72</sup> She advised that it was a serious undertaking and that it was a

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<sup>71</sup> Diary, 18 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>72</sup> Diary, 12 May 1920 (MLL 1:2); Diary, 22 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

considerable “strain” to take so many people “on such a jaunt.”<sup>73</sup> Military strongmen who led provincial armies from Yunnan and Sichuan vied for control of the region, and the roads on which they traveled were as likely to be “no man’s land,” and in the midst of an armed conflict, as temporarily under the control of one of the armies. Mary advised that in this unstable environment, foreigners were absolutely not allowed to travel without an escort and so she and her colleagues were assigned four soldiers who, it seems, were called upon to shield the group from the extremes of weather rather than the dangers of marauders or other soldiers. She gave us a glimpse of the trip in which she wound her way through the interior, “...we had about four soldiers armed with umbrellas and fans as a military escort.”<sup>74</sup> This would be the first of many journeys. Later she experienced being dropped by her carrier; walking inland in the dark through unknown pathways; crossing a river after awakening a boatman in the middle of the night; sitting by the roadside awaiting a chairman who was willing to carry her, as she was heavier than many Chinese people; and hiring fourteen chairmen to carry only her own belongings!<sup>75</sup>

*Introduction to missionary work: Junghsien, May 1920*

Mary easily settled into life in Junghsien. Although she had not been told how long she would remain there, she did know that she was to go up to the hills above Junghsien for the summer, after which time it would be decided whether she would return to the city or move on to Chengtu. She lived with the Smiths in Junghsien and was introduced to the

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<sup>73</sup> Diary, 22 May 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

life of missionary women by her hostess. It seems that Mrs. Smith simply took for granted that Mary would accompany her in her community work. It must have been quite an experience for Mary to have been, as she wrote “taken out calling on the Chinese women.”<sup>76</sup> She had already assured herself that she was more comfortable in Junghsien than in Chungking; in the first days there she had attended a prayer meeting (which she enjoyed), visited the Woman’s Missionary Society post, and been invited to tea at the home of Bells, another missionary couple who were “very nice.”<sup>77</sup> And most importantly, she recorded “The spiritual life here is deeper than the other places I’ve been.”<sup>78</sup> It is not unexpected that when she joined Mrs. Smith in her work with Chinese women, she was at ease and very open to the new experience. Her description reveals that she had already understood the reality of class distinctions among the people of China and the women with whom she would eventually be working. Although she did not reflect upon this topic very frequently, she did occasionally note, with apparent relief, that she was interacting with women who were not of the military class, or who were of a better class in society. She recorded her contrasting impressions of the homes of the wealthy and poor, and as well of Christian and non-Christian. She summarized her impression of some of the homes that she visited,

We went to some of the better class houses. So strange they seem to us. So many beautiful things in them, such strange combination of the luxurious and the sordid. Full of rich handsome furniture and yet not even ordinarily clean.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Diary, 3 June 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>77</sup> Diary, 31 May 1920 (MLL 1:2). Mary also advised her readers that Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Jolliffe were sisters.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Diary, 3 June 1920 (MLL 1:2).

The difference between Christian and non-Christian homes was evident yet elusive. She explained after one particular visit to a Christian home,

...went to see Mrs. Djang Si Tai Tai. She is a most interesting woman. They are very wealthy and her house is quite marvelous. So many foreign things in it. She has a beautiful room to be used for Christian worship. She served us tea of course, but the whole atmosphere was so different from the non-Christian homes.<sup>80</sup>

The missionaries' plans to go up to the hills for the summer were somewhat altered by events which might have been forecast; Junghsien found itself the stage of armed conflict that was spreading through the province. Initially, the city was alive with reports that it was in imminent danger of becoming a battle zone. When Tseliutsing, where the Jolliffe family was stationed at this time was affected, she recorded, "Much excitement among the Chinese in the city for the Yunnanese have taken over Tseliutsing and the Szechwanese are retreating."<sup>81</sup> Of more importance to her at this juncture was the effect that this fighting would have on her Junghsien colleagues. The missionary compound became a place of refuge, or at least hoped-for refuge, by many of the city's inhabitants. She reported that people seemed to believe that they would be safe within the walls of the missionary property, and although she was unable to understand what they were saying, or to communicate directly to them, it was clear to her that scores of people were pressuring the missionaries to accommodate them and to protect them.<sup>82</sup> In her notation

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<sup>80</sup> Diary, 20 June 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>81</sup> Diary, 27 June 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>82</sup> Diary, 27 to 29 June 1920 (MLL 1:2).

about the “excitement in the city,” Mary concluded with one final note, “The compound is besieged with refugees.”<sup>83</sup> The next day was no calmer. She recorded,

This has been a very busy day for Dr. and Mrs. Smith. People from the city have been crowding in all day as refugees. The hospital and Dr. Cox’s house are to be filled first. The people are certainly scared and seem to have much confidence in the foreigners. I do hope it won’t prevent the Smith’s from getting to the hills for they need the rest so badly. I spent most of the day packing for they seem to think I had better go up to the hills anyway. It is funny to see the presents that are pouring in. The Chinese are doing their best to persuade them to stay on here and see them through their crisis. Wouldn’t I give a good deal to be able to talk Chinese.<sup>84</sup>

Although Mary spent one more day in Junghsien, the situation in the city remained uncertain, and she left for the country retreat without the Smiths. On that final day in Junghsien, Mary recorded that many local people believed that the missionaries and the mission property would protect them from harm. She began her entry by advising that she was “still here in Junghsien” because she had been unable to hire carriers to take her up into the hills.<sup>85</sup> This absence of available men may very well have been because of the degree of disorder and panic that she went on to describe, and which culminated with the actual appearance of the city militia; these soldiers seem to have been on the streets in order to defuse potential conflicts between the frightened people and the incoming armies.

There was a rumour in the city that the soldiers had arrived and that the enemy was advancing. Wow! From 3:30 until 9 there was a steady stream of people coming up our front walk. Rich and poor, Christian and non-Christian – all kinds. Only women and children are allowed to stay here. Much consternation when we found a unit of the city militia encamped in the church!<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Diary, 27 June 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>84</sup> Diary, 28 June 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>85</sup> Diary, 29 June 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.



And then, we are treated to a glimpse of the old Dr. Smith, still strong and forthright in his interaction with Chinese officials: “Dr. Smith helped them out very forcibly with the toe of his boot in a way that was more effective and amusing than dignified.”<sup>87</sup> Perhaps in this action, he had as accurately selected an effective reaction to the situation as he had done when the river journey with the Jolliffes had been threatened.<sup>88</sup>

The hills outside Junghsien were a place of respite, renewal, and change for Mary throughout her career as a missionary in China. Her hope that the Smiths would be able to make their way to the countryside was undoubtedly because she believed that they were quite exhausted and needed to have a summer holiday. However, the hills were never simply a rest for Mary; soon after her arrival, she voiced her hope that she might become a helpful member of the community. She noted that at the outset, she was the only woman and that she was going to have six men “to look after.”<sup>89</sup> However, the situation in the city must have been resolved as the houses in the hills quickly filled up, and within a short time there were thirty-nine people up there, including sixteen children. It was a lively community and once again Mary sought work so that she was not, in her terms, squandering her time, and found people with whom she could have interesting and indeed stimulating conversations. Theological concerns and opinions were frequently the most stimulating topics, or perhaps simply those to which she was attracted, and of

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<sup>87</sup> Diary, 29 June 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>88</sup> Lena Dunfield Diary, 27 to 29 March 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>89</sup> Diary, 30 June 1920 (MLL 1:2).

course topics which concerned them all to a greater or lesser degree.<sup>90</sup> It seems that she consciously tried to identify, at least to herself, just where she fit into the continuum of religious practice that she found in China: did she share the commitment of her colleagues of what she calls “the old school” of missionaries who were concerned with and committed to evangelism rather than the newer social gospel ways of work?<sup>91</sup>

Although she often was able to identify differences between her opinions and those of her companions, she truly did enjoy being with her colleagues and sharing her ideas with them. Among the exchanges that she recorded are the following examples:

...we had a most interesting discussion about evangelism in China. At least I only listened but was glad to hear the thing thrashed out. I think their point of view is right, but evidently here as at home, the emphasis is laid as much on the spiritual side as the ‘more practical’ forms of work.<sup>92</sup>

I went over to Miss Hall’s to prayer meeting...Miss Hall’s talk on Corea was a most earnest appeal for a deeper spiritual life. The whole time of the prayer meeting was very earnest – more so than any gathering I have attended since coming to China.<sup>93</sup>

Miss Ward and I were invited to have tea with Miss Foster and I called for her at Miss Hall’s where I found Mr. Westin having tea. We got into a theological discussion. Mr. W. of the CIM and Miss Hall both being “old school” and are rather unmerciful to the new one notwithstanding the fact that I cannot accept all the beliefs of the old school. Still it seems to me that we have lost spiritually in many ways. This may be only a temporary loss, the pendulum may swing back again in the next generation.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Diary, 26, 28 and 30 June 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>91</sup> Diary, 30 June 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>92</sup> Diary, 26 July 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>93</sup> Diary, 28 July 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>94</sup> Diary, 30 July 1920 (MLL 1:2).

As the summer drew to a close, Mary became increasingly reluctant about moving on to Chengtu. Although still a language student, she had not yet been advised whether she would continue her studies in Junghsien, or have to move on to her eventual workplace of Chengtu. She shared in the housekeeping duties, and it was during one of her weeks as housekeeper that she identified her concerns about her eventual work and responsibility for the children of the Canadian School. She wrote,

Spent some time in the kitchen finishing up the week's housekeeping. I feel as if I had failed this week. The chief difficulty here is that the children are so very finicky about their food. I will have a bad time at the Canadian school if there are many like that in it.<sup>95</sup>

It seems that when, however infrequently, Mary became worried and then disillusioned, her negativity seeped into other activities. This particular time she became disillusioned about exercise, keeping fit (which would be a constant concern for her) and tennis (which she truly enjoyed.) She continued, "We played some tennis this afternoon. But I'll have to get more exercise than that, as one set is about all each one gets in and that is not enough to keep me in shape."<sup>96</sup> Mary's strong desire to remain in Junghsien where she could continue her language studies and remain involved in women's missionary work must have encouraged her to write to her superiors in Canada, and ask them if they would, as she explained "reconsider my appointment."<sup>97</sup> With only a week remaining in her summer holiday, Mary received a message that she should return to Junghsien and

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<sup>95</sup> Diary, 31 July 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Diary, 9 August 1920 (MLL 1:2).

continue her language studies.<sup>98</sup> Her reports do not clarify whether this decision was taken because she had written to the Executive or because the province was in the midst of a cholera epidemic and it was safer and more logical for her to remain where she was. One of the women up on the hills reported that the missionaries in Tseliutsing were working terribly hard trying to save the lives of local people. When she was there, they had lost “only” twenty-three of the 155 patients in their care. Chengtu reported that approximately four hundred people were dying daily, and it had been decided that the schools would remain closed until the beginning of October.<sup>99</sup>

Mary returned to Junghsien after her summer holidays, and that fall she once again worked alongside Mrs. Smith in their missionary duties. When the annual West China missionary Council was held in January 1921, it appears to have been assumed that Mary would accompany the Junghsien missionaries to Chengtu in order to attend the meetings. It was during these meetings that she returned to her thoughts about the limitations of being a woman. On the second day of Council, she recorded her dismay.

I do not know just how many there are attending – probably 100 or so – we women all sit on 1 side and knit and tat and crochet. The men do the talking. And don't they love to hear themselves. The wives have no vote! How's that for progress in an enlightened age? Each one says it is someone else's fault that this is the case. Dr. Endicott seems partly responsible. As a spinster I have a vote, but have sense enough not to use it until I know a little more about things out here. There is a great deal to learn about everything. Human nature is much the same.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Diary, 23 August 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>99</sup> Diary, 17 August 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>100</sup> Diary, 1 February 1921 (MLL 1:1). James Endicott (1865-1954) was sent to Sichuan's new Methodist mission in 1863, the year in which he was ordained. He and his family remained in China until 1910, when they returned to Canada. He was appointed General Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions in 1913, was actively involved in the creation of the United Church of Canada (from the merger of the Methodist,

The pull of work in Junghsien was seductive, and after Council, Mary knew that she must manage her time carefully so that she fulfilled her language requirements. She knew very well that the time in which she could devote herself to language study was limited, and in a sense was a privileged time that she must not squander. In March 1921 she noted her concern,

My language studies go very slowly. Only 4 chpts of John gone over and I don't feel as if I know them at all. Only got 3 letters written this week – I must give my mind to it next week. I seem to get so little reading done also.<sup>101</sup>

Her diary writing was relegated to a secondary place, simply due to lack of time. “Once a week seems to be all I can manage now in this diary. Each week seems to go more quickly than the last. The days are flying and soon my opportunity for study will be over.”<sup>102</sup> Only one week later she wrote, “It begins to look as if even once a week was too often to write in this diary, however I will try to keep up that much for a while.”<sup>103</sup>

On their return to their Junghsien station, the missionaries were accompanied by many people who had been at Council and were traveling through Junghsien; some were *en route* to their own stations for another year's work and others were preparing for an upcoming furlough. There were also new arrivals to West China, among them Miss

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Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches) in 1925, served as Moderator of the United Church of Canada from 1926 to 1928, and was the head of the Foreign Missions Board of the United Church until his retirement in 1937. For further reading about James Endicott, see Stephen Endicott, *James G. Endicott: Rebel Out of China*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

<sup>101</sup> Diary, 13 March 1921 (MLL 1:1).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Diary, 20 March 1921 (MLL 1:1).

Evangeline Batstone, a new missionary who was going to begin her language studies and who, in Mary's description, was slated to become her "companion"<sup>104</sup> Mary tried to identify some shared interests so that she could find a way of forging a positive relationship with this young woman; however, it seems that Mary had some ambivalence about her when she noted "she brought a horse with her...so we will have a number of points of contact I think."<sup>105</sup>

The lure of working with the Chinese, particularly Chinese women, was strong and Mary found several places in which she might be directly involved in this part of missionary life. Mrs. Smith's continuing willingness to have Mary as her companion and indeed as a fellow worker encouraged Mary to seize the opportunity to dedicate herself to both language studies and missionary work. However, she also undertook some missionary activity on her own; she became involved at a location called East Gate Bridge, a Sunday school which was held in the large home of a Christian woman, and at which one of the Jungshien missionary wives had long been active. Ms. Sibley introduced Mary to teaching her first Bible School classes, which was probably her most independent involvement with the Chinese during her first term in China.<sup>106</sup> She began as a somewhat cautious and insecure missionary who was undoubtedly imbued with a strong connection to the Chinese; moved on to become comfortable and devoted to her work there; and ultimately felt a tremendous sense of loss when she moved on to become Matron in Chengtu. In this last stage she was able to identify that her absence would actually leave a

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<sup>104</sup> Diary, 11 March 1921 (MLL 1:1). Mary does not explain what she meant when she referred to some women as "companions," and so references that were made by Mary to this particular word are identified with quotation marks, whereas usage of the word by the author is not.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Diary, 20 March 1921 (MLL 1:1).

vacuum that would need to be filled. Clearly she had been involved in important work during this time when she was a language student. Her Chinese skills improved dramatically. From her first day, when she recorded, “Poor little kids...of those who heard I don’t believe they understood anything” to her last days when the children of the school chatted to her in the streets, she had achieved a considerable level of competency.<sup>107</sup>

There was a sense of innocence in some of the activities that Mary shared with Chinese women. She seems to have enjoyed rather simple pleasures in her interactions; these were particularly evident when she entertained the women of the Bible School. She called it “play” and it truly was quite simplistic when they had their get-togethers. They played pin the tail on the donkey, had peanut races, and occasionally even dressed up in each other’s clothing.<sup>108</sup> Even in some of the more formal events, there was still an innocence present. These began in March 1921 with series of weddings in which she was a close observer and more or less involved. She was probably most caught up in the first wedding, since it was Mrs. Smith’s kindergarten teacher, Gu Tsi Min, who had become engaged and had asked the Smiths to play an active role in her plans, by ratifying the engagement. Mary was flattered to be included and appreciated that this was going to be “a very interesting experience” for her.<sup>109</sup> The weddings of Gu Tsi Min, with whom she developed a close relationship, her friend Lo Shu Lan as well as others at which she was

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<sup>107</sup> Diary, 20 Mary 1921 (MLL 1:1).

<sup>108</sup> Diary, 20 to 27 March; 8 April 1921 (MLL 1:1).

<sup>109</sup> Diary, 27 March 1921 (MLL 1:1).

simply a guest, allowed and encouraged Mary Lamb to speculate and come to some understanding about Christian Chinese women and their families and perhaps even Chinese society.<sup>110</sup>

Mary also had small tasks, each of which was linked in one way or another to her talents and skill, which eventually made increasing demands on her time. These included taking charge of cleaning the church organ, which was, as she noted “in disgraceful condition.”<sup>111</sup> She played a peripheral role in the women’s school, for example at exam time she and another woman “examined the class in hymns.”<sup>112</sup> She occasionally taught a little music, for example to a young Chinese man who was a teacher in one of the schools.<sup>113</sup> In an observation that she would repeat frequently, she noted that Chinese education in music and singing was severely lacking, and that missionaries brought, and indeed needed to bring, some much needed musical instruction to Chinese youth.<sup>114</sup> Even after a year, the Chinese way of life could surprise her; visiting Chinese women with Mrs. Smith gave her the opportunity to do missionary work with her and gather impressions of how Chinese people lived. When Mrs. Smith made sick calls, Mary was stirred to consider health and recuperation in China:

This afternoon I met Mrs. Smith and we did some shopping and made 3 or 4 sick calls. What a dull lonesome time the sick people have here in China. In dark

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<sup>110</sup> Diary, 1 and 6 May 1921; 1, 2, 4, 22, 27, 29, and 30 June 1921; 1 and 2 July 1921 (MLL 1:1).

<sup>111</sup> Diary, 27 March 1921 (MLL 1:1).

<sup>112</sup> Diary, 1 April 1921 (MLL 1:1).

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*



cheerless bedrooms with very little air and everything dirty and stuffy. It is a wonder they ever recover.<sup>115</sup>

As in past records, she noted that Mrs. Smith's visits cheered them up or made them happier. With Mrs. Smith she seems to have remained an observer, whereas she was an active participant in, for example, the East Gate Bridge work.

Perhaps it was the imminent anniversary date of her language study, she was soon to begin her second year of studies in April 1921, which encouraged Mary to note that she had "begun to write letters again."<sup>116</sup> It seems, with this memo, that she was approaching her correspondence with a more special intent than simply keeping up her letter writing. She reported that she was determined at least in this way to "see" her surroundings. She wrote of various difficulties that she had encountered in fitting in; she was somewhat disappointed that some of her experiences in China had differed from her expectations. However, she had certainly appreciated her experience in Junghsien, particularly her women's work with Mrs. Smith. It was perhaps the coupling of this recognition, that she was a good missionary worker with her awareness that she fit in well with the local Woman's Missionary Society women, with whom she visited daily, that encouraged her once again to request a change in her appointment. After days of thinking about it, she finally wrote her letter to Dr. Wilford. This act appears to have been a cathartic one; she left behind the introspection and worry that had preoccupied her for days, returns to her familiar tasks, and recorded on May 15, 1921, two weeks after she had noted, "I'll have

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<sup>115</sup> Diary, 21 April 1921 (MLL 1:1).

<sup>116</sup> Diary, 9 and 26 April 1921 (MLL 1:1).

to write to Dr. Wilford,” that she has had “a most interesting day.”<sup>117</sup> Dr. Wilford’s response was that she must carry on with the commitment that she had made to become the Matron of the Canadian Boarding School and that there would be no change in her assignment. Mary accepted his decision, in part perhaps because she appreciated the directness with which he responded to her request.

Today I had Dr. Wilford’s reply to my letter. I liked the way he wrote – Frankly I suppose some would say brusquely – but that is so much more satisfactory than ‘camouflage’ – There is no question in his mind as to my duty to the school, so I’ll have to make up my mind to do it. I know I’ll love the children ‘all to pieces’ as far as that is concerned, but whether I can keep them fed and clothed is another concern.<sup>118</sup>

Mary felt more pressured about her language lessons as time passed. At first she had been optimistic about her language teachers despite other people’s negative comments about their effort, commitment, reliability and competence. Miss Batstone was particularly critical of the teachers. Mary eventually became more concerned and less benevolent. She began, “My teacher has not been on duty – supposedly ill – many of the people are suffering from ‘summer complaint’ but I am rather suspicious of his ‘complaint.’ If he were not a drinking man, I’d feel more satisfied about him.”<sup>119</sup> Two days later, when he was once again absent, she recorded, “It is rather trying, as I am anxious to get on with my work – only 6 more months of study.”<sup>120</sup> His behavior continued over the next little while; he was present and absent, and even when he was there, he might not be “up to

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<sup>117</sup> Diary, 29 April 1921; 8 May 1921; 15 May 1921 (MLL 1:1).

<sup>118</sup> Diary, 20 May 1921 (MLL 1:1).

<sup>119</sup> Diary, 24 May 1921 (MLL 1:1).

<sup>120</sup> Diary, 23 and 25 May 1921 (MLL 1:1).

much,” and so of little use to her.<sup>121</sup> However, she had a dual interest in the man, and in this interest she was truly representative of the committed and involved missionary, and undoubtedly similar to what we know of Dr. Smith. Her expectation or at least her hope was that contact with missionaries would help to bring Chinese people into a Christian commitment. She wrote,

This morning my teacher was in such bad shape that I gave him a good talking to and sent him home. He took it good naturedly as he does everything. He is quite too easy going. I like him and wish his soul would get saved – but have not enough language to be able to help him I fear.<sup>122</sup>

However, quite surprisingly, she reported this man was actually baptized less than a month later, although she did complete her note about his baptism by questioning how serious the step was for him.<sup>123</sup>

The months seem to have sped by, and Mary’s return to Junghsien after a second summer holiday on the hills may have been bittersweet; in her records she had already marked off that she had only six weeks left before she must leave for Chengtu in September 1921.<sup>124</sup> She recorded that when she returned to the East Gate Bridge Sunday school, she passed children on her way who called her by her name.<sup>125</sup> She was humble about the appreciation that they bestowed upon her, advising that they probably came to school more for the pictures that she gave to them than for her. But she was pleased at their

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<sup>121</sup> Diary, 27 May 1921 (MLL 1:1).

<sup>122</sup> Diary, 28 May 1921 (MLL 1:1).

<sup>123</sup> Diary, 19 June 1921 (MLL 1:3). For further reading on the conversion experience, see Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility*, 188-89.

<sup>124</sup> Diary, 9 September 1921 (MLL 1:3).

<sup>125</sup> Diary, 11 September 1921 (MLL 1:3).

recognition and welcome and, as well, pleased that her Chinese seemed to improve during the holiday period. She seemed to have more vocabulary and teaching the boys that day was apparently easier. Perhaps it was her work with the mountain children that had improved her ease in conversing.<sup>126</sup> Her thoughts about her departure were clear when she recorded, “How I hate the thought of leaving this lovely city and its friendly people. I wonder if I will ever grow as fond of Chengtu. I’m glad Mrs. Brown is there anyway. Hope she’ll be there as long as I am.”<sup>127</sup> However, she never did settle in nicely and easily with her “companion” Evangeline. She struggled with the intermittent distancing of her by the woman, and although she tried to give her the companionship that she thought the young woman needed, their relationship was subject to highs and lows.<sup>128</sup> Perhaps her records reflect her efforts to capture Junghsien before she left. She reiterated how loathe she was to leave the East Gate Bridge work, in part because of the difficulty in finding a suitable replacement, and later reflected on the city streets. She wrote about walking through the streets at night, so that she might impose her own prism on what she saw, “It was dark when I got home. I like coming through the streets in the evening once in a while. The ugly things are more covered up at night and it is interesting to see the people at their evening occupations.”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Diary, 28 August 1921 (MLL 1:3).

<sup>127</sup> Diary, 18 September 1921 (MLL 1:3).

<sup>128</sup> Diary, 15 September 1921 (MLL 1:3).

<sup>129</sup> Diary, 2 October 1921 (MLL 1:3). After much effort, she finally convinced the WMS to take over the work at East Gate Bridge. 23 October 1921.

The day of her departure from Junghsien, October 30, 1921, arrived and Mary set off for Chengtu. There had been several celebrations held in her honor; however, the light-hearted activities of the last Saturday night were quite absent in her thoughts the very next day. It was her last Sunday in Junghsien. It had been raining hard for several nights and she was suffering from “a bad cold” which she advised she had “taken...in some unaccountable way, probably because I am not getting enough exercise.”<sup>130</sup> Her packing was on schedule and a few days earlier she had hired carriers, seventeen of them. She was dismayed at this, probably the consumerism of it all, but Mrs. Smith, who was more of an authority, found it quite reasonable. Mary created a lovely picture about this part of her move,

I seem to have such a lot of things and still don't know what to dispose of. Surely I'll never have as much again to carry although Mrs. Smith assures me it will get worse instead of better – think of it. 17 men to carry me to Chengtu – we ought to learn some better way.<sup>131</sup>

In her record of that Sunday, a little of her sadness was evident.

My packing is pretty well in hand – it won't take long now to finish it up. I'm trying not to have the loads overweight. After Maw Bell and Miss Marshall both went with me to s.s. which made it easier for me – the Chinese do not ‘get me’ so much when there are other foreigners round and I have to behave myself. I suppose that all heir dear faces will fade from my memory or be crowded out by others. But I am so happy to know that I had even a taste of this kind of work...I must confess it is a great wrench to leave all these Chinese faces that have grown so familiar to me during these months. I am hoping and praying that I may have an opportunity of making Chinese friends in Chengtu. There are enough of the servants if there is no one else.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> Diary, 30 October 1921 (MLL 1:3).

<sup>131</sup> Diary, 24 October 1921 (MLL 1:3).

<sup>132</sup> Diary, 30 October 1921 (MLL 1:3)

Mary's departure from Junghsien and her trip to Chengtu, her first real leaving, were well within the tradition of missionary departures; she was feted with the sights and sounds of a robust send-off. Firecrackers, cheers and shouts of good bye sent her on her way. Mary, her "boy" and all of the carriers formed a procession that brought her and her possessions to Chengtu where she was officially to begin her new assignment on January 1, 1922.<sup>133</sup> On this trip Mary assumed the role of leader, similar it seems to that which Rev. Mortimer had fulfilled only a year or so earlier, when they journeyed overland from Chungking to Junghsien; she encouraged the carriers to get started early in the morning, and to keep on going as far as possible each day. One day, when leaving Jenshow, where she had stayed with a fellow missionary, she wrote,

It was not easy to get off early from Jenshow. Nearly 8 when I got away – so the men did want not to make 105 li. However by dint of much persuasion and much poor Chinese on my part I got them to go on. I walked about 25 li in the dark – I led the procession. My boy next with a lantern, then the chairmen.<sup>134</sup>

*School matron in Chengtu, November 1921 to 1925*

Mary's record of her arrival at the Canadian School on November 5, 1921 was perhaps a forerunner of her views and motivation during much of her stay there.<sup>135</sup> She was a somewhat seasoned missionary, able to lead the way through the countryside with confidence, but a novice matron, and so her record seems to demonstrate her strength of character, but also her reluctance to criticize others even though she was dedicated to her work and held fairly strong opinions about it. As well, she did not return to the sense of

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<sup>133</sup> Diary, 2 November 1921 (MLL 1:3).

<sup>134</sup> Diary, 5 November 1921 (MLL 1:3).

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

loss to which she had fallen victim in her last days in Junghsien, of missing all that Junghsien was to her. Instead, her record began in the spirit in which it would continue, “Reached Chengtu at 6 p.m. A warm and noisy welcome from the children and firecrackers by the servants.”<sup>136</sup>

Mary Lamb had two months in which to acclimatize to the city of Chengtu, to learn about the boarding school, to introduce herself to the children and to make some decisions about the way she intended to run the residence. It was apparently all a little intimidating, particularly when confronted with a school which was under construction, and a matron-in-place who was rather formidable. She turned to Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Wilford for a little mentoring, explored the city, and observed the work of the missionaries, and gradually developed goals and strategies for her work at the boarding school. Perhaps she was unable to leave her missionary experiences behind her in Junghsien, when she speculated about the reasons for the surprisingly poor Chinese attendance at various mission-sponsored events. She asked herself whether the missionaries were doing something wrong, and whether their mission would be sustainable in future years. However, she focused on her own work rather than the evangelical work that she had enjoyed, almost immediately befriended the women teachers at the Canadian school, and furnished her rooms so that they would provide a welcoming atmosphere for staff and students alike. In these introductory weeks, Mary identified her duties and priorities, and decided to focus on improving the children’s meals by varying the menus and

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<sup>136</sup> Diary, 5 November 1921 (MLL 1:3).

standardizing the preparation of the food, establishing good relationships with the servants, and creating a warm atmosphere for the children.<sup>137</sup>

Overall, Mary was by her own accounts very successful in the goals that she had established in those first few months in Chengtu. The quality of the food improved, the children were freer to play and enjoy themselves in the residence, and the servants responded well to her direction.<sup>138</sup> When the children returned to their families for the summer months, Mary introduced more changes to the staff: she taught the cook and coolie how to make different types of food and she instructed the carpenters and handymen to work on jobs that had been neglected during the school term.<sup>139</sup> She found it most challenging to deal with the children's occasional illnesses; whether it was tonsillitis or measles, it seemed awfully difficult to take care of sick children. However, the picture that she drew for us is that of a content, capable and flourishing woman, a woman who found companionship and good conversation with colleagues and satisfaction in her work. She even wrote at the beginning of her summer holiday in 1924, "Imagine having a job that allows you 3 months vacation."<sup>140</sup> That summer she decided to spend a month at the missionary residences on Mount Omei, even though she expected that it would be far too busy, fancy and full of foreign people for her taste. As she wrote, "it was a case of see Naples and die."<sup>141</sup> Omei was undoubtedly the most popular resort

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<sup>137</sup> Diary, 25, 27 and 29 November 1921; 2, 4, and 12 December 1921 (MLL 1:3).

<sup>138</sup> Diary, 6 January 1922 (MLL 1:4).

<sup>139</sup> Diary, 27 August 1922 (MLL 1:4).

<sup>140</sup> Mary Lamb letter to Annie Dewar, 1 July 1923 (MLL 1:8).

<sup>141</sup> Letter to Annie Dewar, 1 July 1923 (MLL 1:8).



in all of West China and it would have been quite unforgivable if she had not visited it at least one time.<sup>142</sup>

Mary very much wanted to be part of China; she wrote that she wished that she could transport China to Canadians so that they might see what she saw every day. And yet Chengtu baffled her a little: there were so many foreign goods evident in the city's stores, yet there was persistent anti-foreign sentiment as well. She knew that it was a major business centre and so there ought to have been lots of foreign goods, yet the anti-foreignism seemed to be a contradiction to her.<sup>143</sup> As well, she found the mixture of old and new quite fascinating. She definitely preferred the old or non-foreign parts of the city, but she never seemed to consider that she, herself, was contributing to the foreign presence in China.<sup>144</sup> The ease and indeed simplicity of her personal life is evident when she described one of the rare weekends in which she did not work. She wrote, in January 1924,

Had a real treat, a weekend off. All the staff shared up my duties and sent me off the place. I went first to Curio St. But did not buy much. Then went to the WMS hospital where I spent the night with Florence Campbell and Miss Foster. Had a lovely rest – then came out and had supper and a great old talk with Muriel Brown.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid

<sup>143</sup> Letter to Annie Dewar, 1 July 1923 (MLL 1:8).

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Diary, 19 and 20 January 1924 (MLL 1:5).

She also did a little work with the Chinese when she was freed from her duties; one particular week she found the time to purchase some Christian tracts and to distribute them to Chinese people the following Sunday.<sup>146</sup>

Local power struggles returned to the region while Mary was living in Chengtu; the places in which the armies fought shifted rapidly and the presence of soldiers always indicated danger to the residents. There were days when Mary seemed to have only moments in which to write brief notations in her diary and each entry included something about the fighting.

Jan. 25, 1924 City gates closed for a time today. No one knows why. The military situation seems very uncertain.<sup>147</sup>

Jan. 28 City gates open. Business as usual. Cold wet disagreeable weather. Children have to stay inside.<sup>148</sup>

Feb. 1 Nothing worth noting today. The children were sent home early in case the city gates should close, which they did not.<sup>149</sup>

It was only on February 4, 1924, almost two weeks after this danger had begun, that she had more details about the situation and was able to identify the military leader as General Yang Sen. She recorded, "Feb. 4 City gates still closed. Yang Sen is pounding at the north gate." Three days later Mary moved the children's beds away from the windows because she was concerned that they might be hit by stray bullets. Her notes about the city gates continued on the February 8 and February 9, but on February 10, the situation

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<sup>146</sup> Diary, 12 and 13 February 1924 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>147</sup> Diary, 25 January 1924 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>148</sup> Diary, 28 January 1924 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>149</sup> Diary, 1 February 1924 (MLL 1:5).

appears to have worsened, as she recorded that she had decided to keep the children inside the residence, because they might come across “ghastly sights” if they went outside to play.<sup>150</sup> The political and military situation continued to be worrisome for Mary; a cessation of fighting did not alleviate her concerns for long, and at one point she asked herself if they “might be living in a fool’s paradise.”<sup>151</sup> However, the general’s armies managed to defeat the opposition and Yang Sen, for a time, assumed the leadership of the region, although his rule was frequently challenged. Mary Lamb was quite pragmatic in her appraisal of Yang Sen.

He is a very progressive man and is very keen to get foreign ideas and apply them when possible to the Chinese conditions. Like all other similar officials, he taxes the people very heavily but some of them say that whereas his taxes are as heavy as those of other officials, still he does not spend the money on himself, but on civic improvements etc. He is very simple in his tastes and temperate in his habits. Begins the day with an hour in the saddle etc. etc. His only indulgence is in the matter of wives, of whom he seems to have quite a number.<sup>152</sup>

With approximately eight months remaining in her appointment, Mary began to think about whether she wanted to come back to China for a second term. Initially, she focused on returning to Canada; she asked herself if the years that she had spent in China had changed her and wondered if she was going to behave, as her relative Lita suggested, “like an escaped missionary.”<sup>153</sup> When she considered returning to China after a furlough in Canada, she envisioned working with the Woman’s Missionary Society as one of its evangelical missionaries. She expected to complete this first term in June 1925; however,

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<sup>150</sup> Diary, 8, 9 and 10 February 1924 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>151</sup> Diary, 26 Marcy 1924 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>152</sup> Letter to Annie Dewar, 7 October 1924 (MLL 1:8).

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

all of the West China missionaries who were due to begin their furlough at that time received instructions from the Home Board in Canada that their terms were being extended by a year, to June 1926.<sup>154</sup> It may have been this news that provoked Mary to advise her superiors that she was unwilling to extend her stay, that she intended to apply to the WMS for an appointment, and that if necessary she would make her own travel arrangements and pay for trip herself.<sup>155</sup> Her thoughts were clear when she declared, “If I am going into Chinese work I cannot afford to lose any more time.”<sup>156</sup> She appeared to think, at least for the moment, that her work as Matron had not really been missionary work at all. Mary’s China colleagues were concerned about her actions, and Lena Jolliffe, who was living in Tseilieutsting at the time, suggested that Mary might be able to reinstitute the “evangelists’ wives school” that had closed down.<sup>157</sup> However, Mary noted that she was not “fit for that position,” and maintained her determination to return to complete her term with the General Board, return to Canada according to the original agreement, and only then, when she was no longer attached to the foreign missionary service, apply to the WMS.<sup>158</sup> She knew that she could not be appointed as a woman missionary under the General Board, and furthermore, she was convinced that she would fit in well with the women of the WMS. By December 1924, after three months of decision-making, Mary was exceedingly unhappy about her struggle. In a brief note, she

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<sup>154</sup> Diary, 5 November, 1924 (MLL 1:4).

<sup>155</sup> Diary, 17 November 1924 (MLL 1:4)

<sup>156</sup> Diary, 5 November 1924 (MLL 1:4).

<sup>157</sup> Diary, 11 November 1924 (MLL 1:4).

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

recorded, “All these days were so unpleasant that it was best not to keep a record of them.”<sup>159</sup>

As in the past when she faced difficult situations, Mary rebounded quickly and refocused on her work. She began recording each day’s events at the boarding school and she did not return to the controversies about her future. At the beginning of May 1925, Mary began to organize herself for her departure. The teachers helped her with her work, bathing the children before bed and taking care of them on the weekend, so that Mary could attend to her own needs. She shopped for presents for people in Canada, and began to pack up her belongings.<sup>160</sup> It was only at the beginning of June, two weeks before her departure, that she realized that she was going to miss the children and that she had become very attached to them.<sup>161</sup>

In the Chinese tradition of grand missionary send-offs, Mary Lamb’s departure from the school was marked with a round of noisy fireworks. Accompanied by her colleagues, she made her way down to the city’s docks and boarded the first of a series of crowded steamships which brought her down to Shanghai. On July 1, 1925 she identified some anti-foreign sentiment, when she recorded “British flag unpopular in China these days.”<sup>162</sup> However, the river was peaceful and other than celebrating her forty-sixth birthday while traveling, the trip appears to have been uneventful. However, she found

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<sup>159</sup> Diary, 1 December 1924 (MLL 1:4).

<sup>160</sup> Diary, 7 and 8 May 1925 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>161</sup> Diary, 3 and 4 June 1925 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>162</sup> Diary, 1 July 1925 (MLL 1:5).

Shanghai to be “under martial law” and the streets filled with “lots of armed men.”<sup>163</sup> Nonetheless, Mary carried on with her plans for Shanghai and managed to visit the city’s shops and its churches. It is only in a brief diary entry that she identified that there were disturbances in West China and that people from Chungking were coming downriver, “compelled to leave due to serious rioting and looting...I pray God the up-river people are safe.”<sup>164</sup> Her trip to Canada was quite different than expected: the Chinese crew and servants were all “stuck” in Hong Kong and so the passengers pitched in to do their work. She found her fellow passengers on the *Empress of Canada* to her liking; they were happily “not a fast crowd.”<sup>165</sup>

### Second Tour in China (1926-1933)

Mary’s second tour of China was undoubtedly not what she had expected when she looked forward to becoming a WMS missionary woman. Although her appointment was to West China, she was unable to begin her evangelical work for approximately eighteen months. Instead, with one brief exception, she lived in Shanghai where she continued her language studies, prepared housing for other “refugee” missionaries, and observed at first-hand, as she explained, the events that kept the missionaries from working in West China. From the moment of her return to China, she was aware that the anti-foreign

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<sup>163</sup> The “Shanghai Incident” to which Mary Lamb refers in one of her narratives, is the unrest in Shanghai in 1925. A demonstration by unarmed students and worker protestors in the Shanghai International Settlement on May 30, 1925, was fired upon by British-led police. Many demonstrators died, and the incident set off a wave of demonstrations and strikes in which protestors expressed their solidarity with the anti-foreign, nationalistic sentiment of the so-called May Thirtieth martyrs.

<sup>164</sup> Diary, 9 July, 1925 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>165</sup> Diary, 16 July, 1925 (MLL 1:5).

sentiment among Chinese was significant. Throughout the country, missionaries were leaving their stations and flocking to Shanghai where, it was believed, they would be safer. Mary was finally able to move up to West China in March 1928; she hoped to begin her women's schoolwork in the city of Foochow, but as women missionaries were only allowed (according to British consulate orders) to live in the two larger metropolitan centers of Chungking or Chengtu, Mary remained in Chungking for eight months, from March 1928 to November 1929. She finally did move on to Foochow, where the dream that she had carried with her for so many months and years was realized; she worked directly with women, both in the Foochow women's boarding school and in the rural outstations of the surrounding district. She remained in Foochow for the duration of her second term in China, until 1933.

*Shanghai interlude, October 1926 to March 1928*

Mary Lamb was successful in her application to the Woman's Missionary Society, and she returned to China in October 1926. She spent part of her furlough in Canada in mission-related work; she attended the School of Missions in Toronto and afterwards joined what she affectionately referred to as "the missionary circus" for a few weeks. This "circus" was the round of visits that returned missionaries made to their Canadian churches so that they could bring news of China to the home congregations. Mary had carefully selected Chinese items that she thought would be of interest to Canadian women, and she attended informal meetings in which she displayed these objects. She hoped to enlighten her audiences about Chinese civilization and culture, to share her

experiences with them and to encourage them to continue to support China mission work.<sup>166</sup>

Mary's arrival at the port of Shanghai in October 1926 was definitely one of a returning missionary; she was no longer the newcomer who stared down at the docks of Shanghai in wonder. Rather, she disembarked from the *Empress of Asia* and she knew that she was arriving in a country that was plagued by civil disorder and armed conflicts. The day before the ship docked in Shanghai, Mary recorded in her diary, "We will all be glad to reach our destination altho' we cannot see what is ahead of us there. Looks as if things were rather dark."<sup>167</sup> Once in Shanghai, she assessed the situation and noted some of the most obvious changes in the city; previously a stop-over for missionaries *en route* to or from their mission fields, Shanghai had become a haven for so-called refugees, missionaries who had fled their stations in the interior of China because of local anti-foreign activities.<sup>168</sup> The people who had come from West China reported that river travel had become dangerous.<sup>169</sup>

Mary's days in Shanghai, immediately after her arrival and for sometime thereafter, appear to have centered completely on the missionary community; she met people when they arrived in the city and organized housing for her WMS colleagues who were

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<sup>166</sup> Diary 13 to 26 April, 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>167</sup> Diary October 1, 1926 (MLL 1:5). Mary may have known that there were overt protests and even boycotts directed at foreigners, however she does not identify the source of disorder at this time.

<sup>168</sup> Diary, 2 October 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>169</sup> Diary, 8 October 1926 (MLL 1:5).



expected to arrive in Shanghai from mission stations across China.<sup>170</sup> She attended weekly Sunday services, events that were organized by her own community and many other Protestant organizations. Some of the events were held in English; others offered simultaneous Chinese translation, usually by missionaries who were particularly skilled in Chinese language, so that Chinese Christians could attend as well.<sup>171</sup> She spent a considerable amount of time shopping with her WMS colleagues for furnishings and supplies for their new residences, including curtain fabric, dishes and cutlery, and even cots for newcomers. In the months to come, this Shanghai interlude became a costly venture for the home churches; although Mary planned to take some of her purchases inland with her, such as the dishes she planned to use in her own home in West China, there was the continuing cost of renting an increasing number of residences for women who were not really doing their expected missionary work.<sup>172</sup>

Mary was almost certainly frustrated that she could not begin her true missionary work immediately, but she decided to use this time wisely, and arranged to take Chinese language lessons within a few days of her arrival in Shanghai. She recognized that her language skills had languished during her furlough year, and she knew that her successful interaction with Chinese women would depend upon her ability to communicate effectively. The teacher that she hired was particularly good, and although Mary was

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<sup>170</sup> Diary, 2 to 12 October 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>171</sup> Diary, 8 October 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>172</sup> Diary, 6 and 18 October 1926 (MLL 1:5).

reluctant to share his time with other students, she was unable to keep him to herself as there were other missionary women who required language lessons as well.<sup>173</sup>

Missionaries continued to arrive in Shanghai from the interior of China, and yet it appeared to Mary that a comprehensive response to the presence of foreigners in the city did not exist. Mary was invited to dine at the home of an American Seventh Day Adventist missionary. She was somewhat surprised to see, during a tour of the property, that the missionaries had taken steps to protect themselves, as she noted, “barbwire entanglements all around the outside of the place on account of fighting there last week. St. Catherine Road.”<sup>174</sup> However, events seem to have been confusing; the missionaries were cautious and needed to protect themselves with barbwire fence from threats one day, but the Shanghai police force went out of its way to safeguard the missionaries on another. A week or so after the dinner engagement, Mary was out on the street watching a funeral procession and was surprised to observe the behavior of the police who were attending to crowd control. She found them particularly conscientious about the safety of the foreigners, and came to the conclusion that actions of the police could have been interpreted negatively by Chinese onlookers. She wrote,

Went to watch the funeral procession of Chu Pao-san, a prominent businessman in Shanghai. Stood at the corner of the Bund and Foochow Road. A dense crowd – was impressed with the partiality shown to foreigners by police. Little wonder the Chinese do not like us.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Diary, 11, 12, 28 and 29 October 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>174</sup> Diary, 27 October 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>175</sup> Diary, 6 November 1926 (MLL 1:5).

It was not until the middle of November 1926, after spending almost a month and a half in Shanghai, that Mary thought that the likelihood of uninterrupted travel from Shanghai to West China was good. As late as November 9, she noted that colleagues were still arriving in Shanghai, and yet, the situation in the provinces appeared to be setting down. As she recorded in her diary that day, "The people from up river look very worn and strained and glad to be here. But the reports continue to be more encouraging."<sup>176</sup> Mary was more reluctant than some of her colleagues to leave the safety of Shanghai' at least until she was quite certain that she could travel all the way up the river to Chungking. The discussions in which she engaged with these West China colleagues are perhaps the first signal of the opinions, strong will and individuality among the missionaries, as they voiced their own opinions and lobbied one another regarding their plans for upriver travel. Mary continued her notes of November 9, writing, "Dr. K and Cora and Miss Swann are busy packing to leave. I would go if it seemed wise, but am waiting for better news from Chengtu."<sup>177</sup> The following day the discussion apparently became more heated. She recorded,

Spent the afternoon shopping for Dr. K. I think she thinks some of us ought to go with them up river. We had quite a difference of opinion about it. I am opposed to sending the new workers – am willing to go if we can get there, but would rather stay here than in Ichang indefinitely.<sup>178</sup>

Mary's decision to leave was made quickly and without hesitation just two days later; she had undoubtedly been waiting for a first-hand report about travel on the river and the

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<sup>176</sup> Diary, 9 November 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Diary, 10 November 1926 (MLL 1:5).

situation in West China. As she described her decision, “Chengtú situation settled - am going with the others. Carscallens came to tea. They report a fine trip down river, which is very encouraging. They look much better, less tired than the former arrivals. Am busy packing as fast as possible.”<sup>179</sup>

As each of the three boats on which she traveled made their way up the Yangzi into West China, Mary left behind the world of Shanghai and returned to the China of her experiences. The cities and the banks of the river were familiar to her, and when she reached the upriver gorges, their majesty and their challenges were memorable as well.<sup>180</sup> She was most certainly returning home, to the places in which she had already lived for more than five years. She began her trip aboard a British steamer; this part of the journey, from Shanghai to the city of Hankow was uneventful and as she had expected, the river was quiet.<sup>181</sup> However, the second steamer, once again a British-owned boat, was captained by a man whose concerns about safety were evident; he had improvised a way in which steel plating could be held in place, as she explained, “on piles of lifebelts” up on the bridge. Her description evokes the makeshift precautions that were in place and the reality that the travelers relied upon these measures when under attack. In fact, on this part of the trip there was only one occasion when the passengers did need to stow themselves inside this small protected area, as there had been a report of a possible attack in the area. The attack did not occur, and throughout this part of the trip Mary found it

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<sup>179</sup> Diary, 12 November 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>180</sup> Diary, 30 November 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>181</sup> Diary, 15 and 16 November, 1926 (MLL 1:5).

difficult to reconcile the quiet that they were experiencing on the river with the reports and concerns that were reaching them about a country, as she describes, “torn by civil war.”<sup>182</sup> The city of Ichang, where she changed to the third steamer, had more evidence of civil war. Mary saw Swiss soldiers on the streets, and reported that the city has “turned over to the south.”<sup>183</sup> She and her traveling companions had to wait five days before booking passage on a boat that would take them on this final part of their journey to the city of Chungking. This delay may well have been due to unsettled and dangerous conditions on the river, but it was at least partially due to a connection that the boat had with some sort of smuggling venture.<sup>184</sup> Mary’s companions were increasingly eager to be underway and evidently less patient with the wait; the weather had become cold and rainy, and although they organized outings and activities to keep themselves busy, they were definitely becoming frustrated. As Mary noted,

Everyone is getting fed up on waiting so long in port. They told us we would sail at dawn and then at noon – now it is to be 2 p.m. Miss McKillan showed us her trousseau – very dainty but rather fine for China I think. We left Ichang at 4:30 after quite a struggle with would be smugglers.<sup>185</sup>

Certainly the disturbances were multi-faceted, and together they combined to create upheaval and disorder for river travelers. However, once their boat had entered the gorges, the river and its presence helped to blot out any of the discontent of the previous days. She wrote,

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<sup>182</sup> Diary, 22 November 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>183</sup> Diary, 26 November 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>184</sup> Diary, 28 November 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

One is more and more impressed with the grandeur and force of the Yangtse each time one travels on it. We got up early again and went through the Wind Box gorge before 9 a.m. The scenery in some of these spots is awe inspiring.<sup>186</sup>

The following day their departure from their overnight stop at Wushan was delayed because their boat came to the aid of another steamer. Mary's good mood, and it seems that of her companions, had returned and their sense of camaraderie emanates from her diary entry when she recorded the day's events.

Did not leave Wushan until 2:30 today. Spent the forenoon watching our steamer pull the "Chi-Li" off the shore where she had been stranded 38 days. In the evening had much fun playing games. Even the gun boat captain seemed to enjoy the fun.<sup>187</sup>

The boat finally docked at Chungking on December 3, 1926. Mary had been in China for exactly two months.<sup>188</sup>

Mary's arrival in Chungking was that of an old-timer; easily at home in the missionary community, she immediately undertook activities that were familiar to a returning missionary. As she recorded the events surrounding their arrival at the dock, we can see her assuming an active role which is quite similar to that taken by the senior missionaries back in 1920, "...after a while the crowd went ashore and Dr. Wilford and I stayed behind to look after the baggage."<sup>189</sup> Mary had enjoyed a quick stopover at Foochow the previous day, when she took the opportunity to accompany one of her traveling companions who was assigned to work in that city. In a scene that would become very

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<sup>186</sup> Diary, 30 November 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>187</sup> Diary, 1 December 1926. (MLL 1:5).

<sup>188</sup> Diary, 3 December 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

familiar to her when she was assigned to Foochow, Mary wrote at this time, “We reached Fow Chow just at dusk. Got Miss Swann’s things loaded onto a small boat before dark.”<sup>190</sup> Mary and several other missionaries slipped over the side of the large steamer into the small boat that had been sent for Miss Swann, and spent the evening with their Foochow colleagues before returning to their steamer late that night.<sup>191</sup> Once again, similar to her first arrival in Shanghai in 1920, Mary returned to the docks the day after her arrival to pick up her trunks. With absolutely no advance notice, she found out that she was to stay in Chungking at least, as she explained, “till after Council.”<sup>192</sup> It is likely that she assumed that her permanent posting would be decided at the Council meetings, which were typically held in mid to late January. Mary, in her usual manner, immediately became part of the missionary community activities; on that first day in Chungking, she joined in the wedding celebrations of one of her traveling companions, Miss McKellar, who had come out to China in order to be married to one of the West China missionaries. Mary’s record of that day conveys a very busy day, as well as a woman who had immediately become a member of her new community.

First the Kilborns and I went over to the agency. Then down to the boat to get my trunks as I am to stay here till after council. It took us until noon to get the trunk up. Then we scrambled into our best clothes and went over to the Smiths across the river to the wedding of Dr. Williams and Miss McKellar. The sun shone and everyone had a happy time.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Diary, 2 December 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Diary, 4 December, 1926 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

The focus of the missionary community in West China changed in the next few weeks; by early January 1926 they were being encouraged by British officials to abandon their West China work and return to the refuge of Shanghai. Once again, there was an extraordinary amount of discussion among the missionaries as they tried to decide whether or not to follow the advice and leave Chungking. Perhaps the advice of their governments should not have come as a surprise; the celebrations of the Christmas season had been disturbed by some anti-Christian student demonstrations, yet Mary seems to have been quite surprised that they were being asked to leave. It seemed to her that the British and American governments had some sort of agenda that favored business and military interests rather than the interests of the missionary community.<sup>194</sup> One can imagine a group of determined individuals who were set quite apart from the rest of the foreign community. However, other missionaries did respond more immediately to the Consul's directives: Foochow was successfully evacuated, and Miss Swann and her colleague Miss Brimstin who had gone to Foochow, arrived back in Chungking, "both tired and worried and glad to find things peaceful here" noted Mary.<sup>195</sup> Sorting out what was really going on, and making their decisions about staying or leaving became the preoccupation of the missionaries. A final note, pleading in tone, seems to have finally moved most of them to decide to leave. As Mary described their days,

We spend much time discussing the situation and changing our minds at least three times a day. Except Miss Jack. She remains absolutely firm in her decision to remain no matter what any one says. It seems to be some international

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<sup>194</sup> Diary, January 7, 1927 (MLL 1:5); Letter from R.S. Pratt, British Consul in Chungking to Mr. Frier, Mission Business Agent in which Pratt urged the Mission authorities to encourage the missionaries to evacuate their stations and advised that the American Consul was making a similar request. He also asked for a list of those missionaries who had booked their river passage down to Shanghai. Letter from R.S. Pratt to Mr. Frier, 13 January 1929 (MLL 1:8).

<sup>195</sup> Diary, 8 January 1927 (MLL 1:5).



complications that are making the Consul so insistent on getting us out. Everything is quiet in the city – we wonder how much the people on the street know of what is going on.<sup>196</sup>

Her contact with Chinese people had become more and more limited and she remarked that her Chinese teacher “does not come any more.”<sup>197</sup> Although each one of them hated to do so, a small group of missionaries, including Mary, finally decided to leave West China. There were two from the China Inland Mission, several from the WMS and perhaps a couple from the General Board of the United Church of Canada. They returned to the *Iping*, the steamer that Mary had so recently traveled on, with business help and military protection. They were, as she explained “taken across the river in the Standard Oil Boat” to the *Iping* which was “lying between two gunboats.” Their departure was subdued; this time they were being sent off by only one person, Mr. Frier.<sup>198</sup>

The situation on the Yangzi and indeed in China had worsened; the steamer now had two captains because river travel had become much more dangerous and individual captains were reluctant to make the trip through the gorges, a trip that was dangerous enough without any external threats, with their Chinese crews.<sup>199</sup> Her note about boarding the steamer has a surreal tone to it; “the servants grinned when we came aboard – they recognized us as the passengers they had brought up such a short time before.”<sup>200</sup> That

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<sup>196</sup> Diary, 11 January 1927 (MLL 1:5); Letter from Consul R. S. Pratt to the Mr. Frier (Mission Business agent), 13 January 1927 (MLL 1:8).

<sup>197</sup> Diary, 12 January 1927 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>198</sup> Diary, 14 January 1927 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>199</sup> Diary, 12 January 1927; Letter to Annie Dewar, 3 February 1927 (MLL 1:8).

<sup>200</sup> Diary, 15 January 1927 (MLL 1:5).

first day they received a dose of reality; they were fired on even before they had awoken in the morning. Mary noted, “no one was hurt. Mrs. McA took refuge under the bed.”<sup>201</sup> Their journey to Shanghai continued in this spirit; fear of attacks, speculation and reports about dangers, news from people they encountered along the river and, mixed into all of these concerns, periods in which everything was so comfortable that the bad news seemed to have been exaggerated. However, they were under fire at various points in their journey and they could very well have been hurt or killed. The danger was certainly clear in one of the incidents that she described, “Today we were fired on quite unexpectedly. Miss Swann and I were promenading on the back deck and really got ours. A bullet hit the first officer’s window and splintered glass in his face.”<sup>202</sup> If anything, the situation worsened. As they neared the other major river cities, it became apparent that foreigners were very frightened. Businessmen had left their homes and taken refuge on the river, moving from boat to boat as they arrived and then left the port. Dock and port workers refused to deal with foreign boats and so the missionaries and their own coolies had to move their baggage, under armed guard, when they changed from one steamer to another. In order to accommodate foreigners who were making their way to the ports from inland cities, their boats were held up until each of the steamers seemed to be filled beyond its capacity.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Diary, 15 January 1927 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>202</sup> Diary, 29 January 1927 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>203</sup> Diary, 23 to 24 January, 1927 (MLL 1:5).

Mary and her group reached Shanghai on January 28, 1926, they had been traveling for fourteen days, and were now concerned that Shanghai would be so stressed by incoming refugees that it would be difficult to find accommodation in the city. However, they were once again greeted by Mrs. MacGillivray, who was not only gracious and welcoming, but also brought a sense of clear headedness and control to the day. As Mary continued her report of these days, she seemed finally able to acknowledge the danger that they had just lived through. Immediately upon completing her notes, she was able, in a manner reminiscent of her first week in Shanghai a couple of months earlier, to turn to the work at hand. She committed herself to preparing for the expected influx of missionary refugees to this city which had, at that time, limited accommodation for them. She wrote,

For two or three days we did very little. I had a wretched cold –the same one I got in Chungking and the others seemed just like me. I think they must have been under more nervous steam than they realized coming down river and sort of flopped when the tension was relieved. Mrs. McG is up to her eyes in work for the refugees.<sup>204</sup>

Mary became devoted to preparing accommodations for the refugees. Together, Mrs. MacGillivray, Mary and various other missionary colleagues found housing, cleaned the rooms, bought furniture and as the days and weeks passed, established a sort of refugee missionary community in Shanghai. As Mary noted in her diary at the beginning of February, “From now on time was taken up with refugee work.”<sup>205</sup> The houses that they rented were certainly not glamorous, and even with all of their work, the missionary accommodations were barely acceptable. Mary describes her own residence a little,

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<sup>204</sup> Diary, 28 to 31 January 1927 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>205</sup> Diary, 3 February 1927 (MLL 1:5).

I have a big map of China all over one wall to cover up unsightly spots in my room. Incidentally it also teaches me Chinese geography. Most of these older Shanghai houses are built after English fashion and not very convenient homelike types we have in Canada and the U.S.<sup>206</sup>

Mary also decided that she needed to find some work that would help to support her financially. She was concerned that Canadians continued to support missionaries who were unable to do their jobs, and that living in Shanghai was quite expensive. She became a replacement teacher at one of the Chinese high schools in the city, and taught English language lessons to private students. She could not resist speculating about the interest that Chinese have in learning foreign languages in the midst of the anti-foreign movement that has rocked the country. "...one of the inconsistencies of this anti-foreign movement seems to be an increasing desire on the part of young Chinese to know more English!"<sup>207</sup> As well, she advised that she spent five to six hours each day on her own language studies.

The fear that had overtaken Mary and her traveling companions before they settled in Shanghai seemed to have abated; they became focused on day-to-day matters and quite accepting of their situation. Once again, they were unlikely to become agitated or distressed. As she reported in a letter in early April, 1927 when writing about the events that had occurred the month earlier,

Then the war clouds began to gather. We did not worry much about the threatened 'Attack' on Shanghai, for we had lived in China long enough to see how little excitement was caused when a city turns over from one form of government to

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<sup>206</sup> Letter to Annie, 4 September 1927 (MLL 1:8).

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*

another, a few shots are fired and one kind of flag is rolled up and put away, and another hung in its place.<sup>208</sup>

Perhaps her experiences with the artillery of Yang Sen and his challengers had built up this rather lackadaisical and fearless exterior. However, a March episode did provoke them to respond to it. She explained that there had been about thirty-six hours of continuous gunfire. The missionaries were then advised that they must leave their home because that particular part of the city was being evacuated. They immediately responded by packing up some of their belongings, but before they walked very far, they realized that other women in nearby houses had no intention of leaving. As she suggested, “what was the use of worrying over a few stray bullets flying around? We were just as safe there as anywhere.”<sup>209</sup> However, when they returned home, they discovered that their hasty departure had frightened the servants, and so they had little choice but to pay them their wages and allow them to leave. A series of misunderstandings ensued, involving the women, other missionaries, Russian-sounding policemen, taxi-drivers, and an explosion which rocked their home. The explosion, which was actually a mine that had been set off at the railway station located about half a mile away, was almost certainly the catalyst in their decision to finally follow the instructions that had repeatedly ordered them to move out of their house. The threat proved to be serious but none of the missionaries was harmed.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Letter to People, 15 April 1927 (MLL 1:8).

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

As time continued to pass and a solution to the situation remained elusive, increasing numbers of missionaries left their work in China and either went to other countries (frequently Korea or Japan) or more often, home to Canada. Mary voiced her concerns about the Chinese Christians who lived in West China, and although she thought of them as “sheep without a shepherd,” she knew that with the anti-foreign feeling so strong, the missionaries would actually be more of a threat than a protection. Perhaps her real concern was that the mission enterprise was threatened; she has been devoted to it for so many years and so the thought that it might completely collapse was almost too much for her to bear. She wrote,

The outlook for mission work is certainly not very bright just now, nor was it at the time of the Boxer movement, but a great deal of good work has been done in this country since then and we hope that this may also be one of the ‘all things that work together for the good’ for both the Chinese people, the missionary himself and the Church at home. We would indeed be very weak creatures if we let the first big thing that hit our mission enterprise a hard knock, put us out of business altogether. We’ll just have to ‘up and at it again’ and if we have not done it in the best way the last time, we will have to try and find a better way next time.<sup>211</sup>

That spring, Mary had the opportunity to hear a first-hand report on the situation in West China, and it provoked her to return to her conviction that the gulf between missionaries and Chinese was not only dismaying, but also at the root of many problems. The report was presented by Mr. Dye, who was probably the husband of the woman with whom the Jolliffes had gone bird watching, at one of a series of special meetings for missionaries. His lecture undoubtedly provoked her to become engaged once again in the welfare of the

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<sup>211</sup> Letter to People, 15 April 1927 (MLL 1:8).

West China Chinese Christians. In an extract from her account of the lecture, we can see how impressed she was with the information that he imparted.

From Mr. Dye's remarks I gathered a few things or impressions, which I want to jot down here. First that the people in Chengtu are devoting themselves principally to establish on a firm basis friendly relations between Chinese and other foreigners. That all work is secondary and subsidiary to this. Second that none of us need consider returning to West China unless we are willing to mix more with the people than we have done. 3. That the Chinese are showing themselves worthy of the responsibility thrust upon them.<sup>212</sup>

However, she also considered the responsibility of the Chinese themselves to improve their country. She looked particularly to the issue of disorder and the leadership vacuum that had existed in China, and asserted that without strong and reliable Chinese political leadership, it would be impossible for the missionary enterprise to function. In a letter to Canada in September, 1927 she advised that although her friends almost certainly want to receive information about the political situation in China, she is unable to give them any substantive news. She wrote,

I wish I could tell you but am rather in the dark myself as to what is happening or is likely to happen... The past few months have shown that the Chinese can disregard all their foreign treaties with absolute impunity, and how it is going to be possible to live and do business of any kind in a country that is as disorderly as this one without any foreign protection at all is quite a problem. Personally I am opposed to the so-call 'Gun-boat Policy' that maintains order in port cities at the point of the gun, but I cannot see how we are going to be able to live here unless some kind of a bargain is made between China and the powers, nor do I see how any kind of a bargain can be made when there is no recognized governmental authority with whom to make it!<sup>213</sup>

Mary was certainly willing to assign responsibility where she believed that it lay; the foreigners had made mistakes in the past, but the Chinese were certainly not blameless. Despite her warning that she had little information of importance, she had evidently spent

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<sup>212</sup> Diary, 9 and 10 May 1927 (MLL 1:5).

<sup>213</sup> Diary, 4 September 1927 (MLL 1:5).

considerable time thinking about the situation and the ramifications of the events of the past year or so. In fact, when she wrote about her experience in Shanghai two months after her return to West China, she shifted from identifying her language acquisition as the greatest benefit of the time spent in Shanghai, to the experience of seeing politics or “the revolution” as she calls it, unfold in front of her eyes. She wrote, “...the year and a half in Shanghai has been a very interesting and in many ways I would not have missed it for a good deal. It was great to be able to watch this revolution from where one could gather much first-hand information and I enjoyed that part of it very much.”<sup>214</sup>

*Return to West China: Chungking, March 1928 to November 1929*

When Mary was finally permitted to return to West China in March 1928, it was with the stipulation that, as a woman, she would consent to work in either Chungking or Chengtu. Women missionaries would not be allowed to go to the smaller cities until the British Consul determined that they would be safe. The treaty protection that Dr. Smith and the Jolliffes had looked to in their travels was insecure at this time; local officials could no longer be counted upon to act as representatives of a Chinese government and to ensure the safety of foreigners in their regions. When Mary left for Chungking, she was not at all certain whether she would remain in that city for the balance of her term, or be relocated to one of the smaller centers. Her work in Chungking began rather slowly; she was called upon to nurse two ailing missionaries. First, James Endicott contracted typhus fever and was terribly ill. As Mary was the only Canadian woman in the city, it became her responsibility to “nurse him through it.” Soon after he recuperated, the American

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<sup>214</sup> Letter to Annie Dewar, 17 May 1927 (MLL 1:8).



physician who had treated him became very ill with malignant malaria. Once again, Mary was involved in the nursing that he required. In August 1928, she also had the opportunity to spend some time up on the Chungking hills. Mary was relieved to be in the country, and noted that it was quite wonderful after two years of what she called “city life.”<sup>215</sup> Even in the country, the question of the future of mission work returned to her thoughts. Her concerns were stimulated when she visited some of the other homes on the hills, homes that had been empty since the evacuation were evidence of the disrespect that people had had for the missionary properties. The houses had been emptied and torn apart. She said that it made her heart ache to see the destruction. She blamed it on everyone, “the mob egged on by the students, the local militia taking a share and the mountain folk getting anything that was left.” The only items that were left behind from one particular house were books, presumably of little interest to the people who had taken everything else. Once again, Mary worried about missionaries who had left and would never return, about missions that would never reopen, and about Chinese people who would miss their presence.<sup>216</sup>

*Women’s work in Foochow, November 1929 to 1933*

Another year passed before Mary was moved from Chungking to Foochow, the small station in which she knew that she would have the opportunity to work directly with Chinese women. In Chungking she had begun to reestablish the WMS work with Chinese women, and it was in Foochow, in the fall of 1929, that she finally was able to carry out

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<sup>215</sup> Letter to People 1 August 1928 (1:8).

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

her dream. Before her women's work could begin, she and her colleagues had to take their properties back from the military general who had occupied them. They cleaned everything and vowed never to allow the buildings to slip back into the hands of the military. However, the presence and threat of soldiers moving back into their homes was, in a sense, a barometer of how settled the political situation was in the region. At this time, after they had reclaimed their properties, Mary Lamb began her work: for the duration of her second term in China, she headed up the women's school, which served day students and boarders, and traveled through the district in order to evangelize.

The political situation in the area was highly unstable. The warlord who controlled the district was one of the many military strongmen who controlled most of China, and it was his brother-in-law who had occupied the WMS property while the women were absent. In their efforts to regain their property, she became quite familiar with these men, and advised that because Foochow was a major opium centre, the men who controlled it were very powerful indeed, with a vested interest in maintaining their seat of power. She observed that "every year tons of the stuff are taken down river from here and smuggled to other parts of China...and said general has certainly squeezed the people here out of every last dollar he can get out of it."<sup>217</sup> She explained that the central government in Nanking had tried to exert some control in the district, but the success they had had was limited, merely making the local warlord move his troops a little farther down river and then shift them back up to Foochow when the government pressure was relieved. Essentially, the situation was one of chronic armed battles.

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<sup>217</sup> Letter to Folks, 17 November 1929 (MLL 1:8).

Mary's women's school work was actually evangelical work; because she was not teaching a fixed curriculum as she would have done at the girls' or boys' schools, she was able to talk to the women individually. She called the school "my little school of women," and it was quite a small venture. She explained that she had a limited number of students, but that they were interested in, focused on and satisfyingly dedicated to their schoolwork. That first year there were only two boarders in residence, and so rather than living in the WMS home, Mary Lamb decided to live with the boarders; in that way she hoped that they would be less lonely and that other Chinese women would feel less inhibited about dropping in to visit her.<sup>218</sup> She also visited women in their homes as she had done with Mrs. Smith so many years earlier. She planned to do home visits every day, but she was only able to keep up this rigorous schedule for a week. However, she was certain that her visits helped to develop a rapport and a connection with the women. This was, of course, one venue in which she would evangelize.<sup>219</sup> As well, she finally was able to do some rural work. Although her trips were scheduled in response to specific requests rather than regularized visits to country towns, she developed a rapport with the Chinese preachers who were in charge of the outstations in the district. She managed to supply them with their needs, usually Christian literature and lessons for the women and girls, and satisfied her own need to work in rural China. Whenever possible, a Chinese Bible woman or trained evangelist accompanied her in this work.

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<sup>218</sup>Letter to Folks, 16 November 1930 (MLL 1:8).

<sup>219</sup>Ibid.

Mary's account of one particular journey, in July 1931, illustrates the expected and unexpected situations that arose when she was on itinerating trips. She explained that the pastor of Changshee, a city located between Foochow and Chungking, had contacted the WMS several times with a dual request, to send someone who would organize a Christian women's program, as well as a girls' school. Mary and her WMS colleague, Nellie Graham made the trip together, and Mary reported that she was impressed with the welcome that they received from the congregation and with the responses of the women and girls with whom they met. The pastor's goals apparently were well thought out, as the community was receptive and motivated to expand their programs. However, when the pastor's wife took them on a walking tour of the surrounding countryside, the women became the targets of what appears to have been an anti-foreign attack. In her thoughts about the events of the day, Mary remained uncertain whether the local people were unused to seeing foreigners or whether there were still vestiges of anti-foreignism in China. Mary explained that she did not actually see the incident, in which a soldier suddenly, and apparently without any provocation, spit on Miss Graham because she was towards the back of the row of people who were making their way along a path. Nellie was much taller than most Chinese women, and so it was evidently easy to see her and to single her out. The incident, which was undoubtedly upsetting to Miss Graham, was particularly offensive to the pastor's wife. In response to her complaint to the local authorities, the missionary women received a formal letter of apology the following morning. In the letter, the official explained that the soldier had been "severely punished" for his actions.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> Letter to Folks, 5 July 1931 (MLL 1:9).

Mary continued to enjoy her work at the Foochow women's school, and she was pleased to note that each term the number of her students increased. She taught them what she calls "an all around education." Many of the subjects were more vocational than academic: baby care which including learning how to bathe infants, healthcare, fitness, games and cooking lessons. As she noted, "they are learning a little of everything."<sup>221</sup> She advised that they loved playing games, but that their favorite subject undoubtedly was foreign cooking. "They are all crazy to learn how to cook foreign food, and so on Saturday mornings I bring two of them up, and teach them how to do some things."<sup>222</sup> Her kitchen lacked western appliances and her pantry lacked western ingredients, but Mary's students enjoyed their cooking classes and experimented with some western-style recipes.

Mary's time in Foochow seems to have passed very quickly, and towards the end of her term, she once again considered her return to Canada with some ambivalence and apprehension. She had become immersed in her life and work in China, and although she looked forward to seeing her Canadian friends, she recognized that she would miss her work and wondered whether she would reintegrate into her old home. She had made her home in China for more than six years; she had lived and worked in three of China's cities (Shanghai, Chungking and Foochow); and she planned to return after her furlough

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<sup>221</sup> Letter to Folks, 16 November 1930 (1:8).

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

year for a third term in China and her second term as a WMS missionary. As she explained in a letter written from Foochow in February 1933,

One feels very ancient and out of date after having lived up here for five years, and it needs someone from the homeland to freshen me up in many ways. Still, I have not yet gotten a permanent wave, or a dress that reaches the ground! I'll wait til I get to Shanghai, to see what things look like there. I am not at all anxious to leave all these nice people here, but I am looking forward to the home journey, and then to seeing all your dear faces again.<sup>223</sup>

### **Third Tour in China (1934-1940)**

This period finds Mary devoted to her missionary work for the entire term. Almost immediately after arriving in Shanghai from Canada in 1934, she travelled to the West China city of Chungking, where she was appointed, once again by the Woman's Missionary Society. Involved in a wide range of work, including women's educational studies, women's clubs and baby welfare clinics, Mary could not fail to notice that the civil disorder present in her earlier terms in China was once again evident. When Chiang Kai-shek spent increasing periods of time in West China, and with members of the missionary community, Mary considered his potential to lead China, and China's need for Chiang Kai-shek. After three years, which she spent at work in the city, and on holiday up on the Chungking hills, Mary was advised that she was to move to the smaller West China city of Foochow. From 1937 until the end of her term, in 1940, she worked in Foochow and its outlying district. In these latter years, her work shifted in order to accommodate the refugees who were arriving in West China from the war torn cities of eastern China. As her acquaintance with down-river (eastern) Chinese extended and deepened, she was introduced to different types of missionary work.

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<sup>223</sup> Letter to People, 2 February 1933 (MLL 1:9).

*Women's Work in Chungking, 1934 to 1937*

Mary Lamb returned to China for her third term as a seasoned missionary worker. She experienced little transition from her Canadian furlough to her work in China. Rather, it appears that her life continued quite seamlessly. It was almost as though she had left China one day, spent an unremarkable year in Canada, and returned to her life in China another day. She remarked, in her first letter to Canada, written from Chungking on October 11, 1934, just two days after her arrival in the West China city, and a month after her departure from Vancouver, "It hardly seems possible that I am really 'back home' again."<sup>224</sup> Mary seems to have been encouraging her Canadian friends to think about her attachment to China when she inserted the quotation marks around 'back home' and to ensure that she and they were aware that she has two homes by this time, Canada, where her friends lived and China, where she was so easily reestablishing herself. She began this letter by alluding to the ease with which she had traveled up to Chungking, a remarkable change from her earlier adventurous and worrisome trips into West China, as well as the changes that had occurred. As she continued in her description of her return to China, "To think that we left Vancouver on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September and reached here on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October seems almost too good to be true, but of course travel conditions are improving all the time."<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Letter to Friends, 11 October 1934 (MLLL 1:9).

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

China had experienced some changes while Mary was in Canada, changes which she recorded against a background of things that, as she noticed, had remained the same. Her reintroduction to Shanghai was much the same as her first experience at the city's docks fourteen years earlier. As she wrote,

We arrived in Shanghai on a Sunday afternoon, and were met by the representative of the Missionary Home there, who helped us to get our trunks through the customs. Without such assistance, one would be almost a nervous wreck, trying to bring order out of the confusion that prevails on the dock when a trans-pacific liner comes into port.<sup>226</sup>

Once again, the few days that she spent in Shanghai, awaiting a riverboat to take her up into West China, were packed with activities. However, river travel had changed: not only were some steamers traveling the length of the Yangzi from Shanghai to Chungking, but also riverboat companies were encouraging foreigners to consider a trip on the Yangzi as a tourist attraction. Mary and her colleague, who booked passage on one of these non-stop boats, discovered that many of their fellow passengers were tourists. In the past, her fellow travelers would far more likely have been either businessmen or missionaries. It was not only the realization that visitors would pay to see the river's gorges, but also that the civil disorder that had intermittently made river travel so dangerous, had seemingly resolved itself. Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition of 1926-1928 had been quite successful in ending the clashes between the regional armies of China's warlords and the virulent anti-foreign demonstrations of the mid-nineteen twenties had subsided. When Mary recorded in her letter, "For the first time, in my experience, we were not fired on by stray bandits," she reminded her readers of the

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<sup>226</sup> Letter to Friends, 11 October 1934 (MLLL 1:9).



harrowing trips up and down the Yangzi in past years.<sup>227</sup> Evidently with the exception of harassment by overly vigilant customs officers both at the docks of Shanghai and again at the gates of Chungking, she was not exposed to any type of anti-foreign activity, and she was not at all certain of the reason for the behavior of the customs agents, as she wrote about her experience in Shanghai,

I have almost come to the conclusion that the Chinese Customs department is about 50% curiosity, 30% distrust of the word of the traveler, and 20% necessary inspection. I was fortunate in being one of the last to be examined, so that the officer was awfully fed up, by the time my turn came, and only gave a cursory glance at the surface of the inside of one of my trunks and did not even lift the lids of the others. Not so good with the boxes I had sent from St. Andrews, and which had preceded me to Shanghai. They had not waited till I arrived to inspect them, and I am hoping that my victrola will be none the worse for the ruthless way it had been 'broken into' before I was there to tell them what it contained. But of course, I should be thankful that they took my word that it was not new and did not charge me any duty on it at all.<sup>228</sup>

Mary's sensation that she had returned to her home was almost certainly helped along by her decision to have a short visit to Foochow before she began her work in the much larger city of Chungking. As she explained,

The first few days after arrival, I was busy getting my belongings into our home here from the steamer, and as soon as that was done, before the week was out, I went down to Fow Chow, my former station, partly to get the things I had left there, and partly to have a little visit with my old friends, both Chinese and Missionary. With one day each way for travel I was away six days, and had a wonderful time. It felt like getting back home, and it was great to see all the folks I had known and worked with.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Letter Friends, 11 October 1934 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>229</sup> Letter to People, 23 November 1934. (MLL 1:9).

Perhaps the large city of Chungking had changed more than Foochow, or perhaps Mary's observations were simply comments about the city in which she was about to settle. In these early days, she seemed to suggest a sort of harshness in the city, particularly in an introductory note to her readers, when she wrote, "This city of Chungking is a city of contrasts, terrible slum conditions and much wealth. Quite a lot of motor cars on some streets and sedan chairs and rickshas all mixed up together."<sup>230</sup> However, she may have simply intended to point out that the results of modernizing efforts were coexisting with a traditional lifestyle. Although travel had changed, ineffective scheduling had remained the same. When Mary returned from Foochow, she found that her upriver traveling companion who was supposed to have gone on to Chengtu was still in Chungking. As Mary recounted this particular experience in some detail, she easily conveyed the coexistence of contrasts,

We tried everyway to make other arrangements for her to go on to Chengtu, but the only way seemed to be by aeroplane, so I had the thrill of taking her to the airport on Friday.... The Aeroplane that flies from here to Chengtu three times a week, carries four passengers only, and is always booked up ahead; one had to ask for passage about a week ahead to get a seat....I had to pinch myself, to realize that I was really in China as I watched them climb into the plane and fly away. I was soon brought back to the orient when I got into my sedan chair, and realized that it would take me more than half as long in that chair to get back to my home in Chungking city from the airport, as it would take my friends to reach Chengtu, three hundred miles away! For it only takes them two hours to cover the distance that has always taken us ten days in sedan chairs, or thirty days by boat! What about the bus route? you will be asking. Well, it is still there, but the road, which was never properly built, is so bad when it rains, that it really is not very safe, and there have been some very bad accidents, which make people afraid to use it in bad weather.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Letter to People, 23 November 1934. (MLL 1:9).

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

The WMS missionary home, in which she was going to live in Chungking, also benefited from some of the modernization that had taken place in the city. As Mary advised, the amenities and comfort of her new home created a true disjuncture with the city of Chungking itself, a difficult city but one in which she knew that she had an important role to play. She wrote,

On my arrival here, when I suggested purchasing a lantern and lamp, Miss Coon assured me that we would have electric lights in the house in a few days – but it was only last night that they really were connected and tonight we are rejoicing in light that is as good as you have at home. Moreover, there is now a city water supply, and we have taps upstairs and down, and are going to have a waterfront put on our stove next week so we will have hot water when we want it. Besides this, the school of which our home is a part, all the same building, has just purchased a piano. It is a good one too, and one of the Chinese teachers has a lot of musical training. The piano was bought very cheaply from a ship's captain who was going home. So that really, I don't feel as if I were in China at all, except when I go out on the streets, where I am constantly reminded of the hymn "Where cross the crowded ways of life". It is such a big city, they claim that with all the suburbs, it has a population of about a million, the throngs that press us on every side when we are out make us realize something of the task that is facing us here.<sup>232</sup>

Mary's work in the Chungking missionary community was undoubtedly stimulated when, soon after her arrival, the community held a series of very successful evangelical meetings. It is not difficult to imagine the depth of "the thrill" that she felt when she reported that more than twelve hundred young men and women attended the lectures. It was in these particular meetings that the missionaries recruited large numbers of new young non-Christians; more than two hundred people signed up for Bible classes. After one of the meetings, when Mary had the opportunity to speak privately to some of the attendees, she was impressed by their interest; one young woman advised her that she had

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<sup>232</sup> Letter to People, 23 November 1934. (MLL 1:9). Marion Coon was the other WMS worker in Chungking at the time.

missed a day of school in order to be present, but that after attending the meeting, she too had decided to join Mary's new Sunday Bible class.<sup>233</sup>

Mary's own individual work began right away; she had been appointed by the Woman's Missionary Society to undertake evangelical work in and around Chungking. Her first undertaking was the Bible class, which was actually part of a fairly large English Sunday school that had been started a year earlier by her colleague who was the city evangelist, and had a student body of approximately one hundred young adults. Mary and the evangelist, Reverend Irish, apparently shared the concern that the students claimed to be interested in studying Christianity, but actually were interested in learning English. When Mary joined Irish in his project, they were able to offer additional instruction, and asked the students if they were interested in attending a Chinese Bible class. The student response was overwhelmingly positive, and the two missionaries were enormously relieved to know that their young adults were dedicated to studying Christianity.<sup>234</sup> As she had done in her previous term in China, Mary spent time becoming acquainted with the students; once again, she created a comfortable, welcoming and less formal environment for after-school activities. One of these activities was particularly evocative of the "missionary circus" of her first furlough in Canada; she organized the photographs that she had taken on her trip up to Beijing (before she left China for her recent furlough) so that the students could see other parts of their country, and she hoped to collect

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<sup>233</sup> Letter to People, 23 November 1934. (MLL 1:9).

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

photographs from her colleagues, so that she could show the students images of Canada as well.<sup>235</sup>

Mary began her rural work with women as well. She was fortunate to have the assistance of Mrs. Way, a Chinese “Bible woman” whom she had met in the past. Bible women were Chinese Christians who were trained in Bible studies and assisted the missionaries in their work. The term “Bible woman” was gradually replaced with evangelical worker, almost certainly in order to afford them greater respect. The women began their work at an outstation in the city of Dan Shi Si which was situated “across the river” from the city of Chungking. Perhaps because of its close proximity, Mary planned to spend one full day each week to the Dan Shi Si work.<sup>236</sup>

Within several months of her return to China, Mary had organized her work and joined Chungking’s foreign missionary community. The city was situated at the crossroads for travelers entering or leaving the province, and Mary found that the missionaries were an energetic and active lot. She relished the opportunity to meet all sorts of visitors, and her Chungking appointment allowed her to enjoy some of her favorite pastimes, renewing friendships, meeting new people, hearing about other people’s experiences, and engaging in stimulating theological discussions. She noted the brief visit of one group:

Ten days or so ago, we had more thrills when four of our WMS ladies arrived from Canada. Misses Sparling, Swann, Talman, and Dr. Helen Lousley, the latter a new worker. It was lovely to see them all, and of course, I specially enjoyed

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<sup>235</sup> Letter to People, 23 November 1934. (MLL 1:9).

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

Miss Sparling, although she was so rushed we really did not have much of a visit.<sup>237</sup>

The centrality and importance of Chungking to West China's missionaries was also because many of them traveled to the city in order to be married. The province's British Consulate was located in Chungking, and so many missionary couples arranged to have the Consul perform their wedding ceremonies. Shortly after her visit with the WMS ladies, Mary was a guest at one of the missionary weddings. In her account of the day, she evoked an image that is reminiscent of the wedding of Lena and Orlando Jolliffe.

We first went to a wedding in the British Consulate, where Dr. Ralph Hayward, who came out under our mission a year ago, was married to Miss Eggleton, who arrived from Canada yesterday. It was for this reason that we were so glad to have a nice sunny day 'happy is the bride that the sun shines on.' Only a small group of our missionaries gathered to see the ceremony performed, it was all very simple, the bride looking very sweet in a plain brown suit, and carrying a wonderful bouquet of golden mums. The bride and groom are going to have a week's honeymoon on the Chungking hills, and then go on to Chengtu, and on a day farther to Penghsien.<sup>238</sup>

Mary's first mention of the political situation in West China was after she had spent almost a full year in the province; her silence suggests that there was little disruption during that time, yet her record hints that that the situation had not been entirely stable or peaceful. She initially appeared to be reassuring Canadians that the missionary community was safe and that the reported "Communist threats" had not endangered their lives. However, she continued her narrative, in late November 1934, advising that there was an ongoing civil war and suggested that once again, regional power-brokers were

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<sup>237</sup> Letter to People, 23 November 1934. (MLL 1:9).

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

struggling to gain control of the region and that they were wholly responsible for the ongoing conflict. For the first time, Mary expressed her belief that the central government, under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, had the will and power to bring stability to the region, and hoped that Chiang would decide to intervene in provincial affairs. Perhaps she was echoing Chiang Kai-shek's speeches, or perhaps she was forecasting them, when she suggested that West China was a rich province with almost unlimited promise, but that it was lacking in the required leadership and common will to fulfill its promise.

People are just hearing from home that the home papers have been trying to scare you into thinking that we were being attacked by Communists so it makes us feel as if we should try to get off to our home folks a re-assuring bulletin that we are all well and busy and happy. I think I mentioned in my last letter that there had been a Communist scare, but that it was all over. The Central government sent up troops, and their coming stiffened the morale of the local soldiers, and also released more men to drive back the enemy from the borders of the province. But better than that, it is beginning to look as if the days of civil war in this province may be over, for no less a personage than Chiang Kai Shek himself, has come up here to see what can be done to improve conditions in this province that is considered the wealthiest in all of China, so we hope that a better day is dawning for us here.<sup>239</sup>

Seemingly in support of these thoughts, in her next letter, written five months later, Mary included an extract from an address to the provincial military leaders given by Chiang Kai-shek in June 1935. His words chastised the provincial leaders' self-interest and lack of national goals.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Letter to Everybody, 10 March 1935 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>240</sup> "Abstract of Gen. Chiang Kai Shek's speech delivered to the Szechuan military leaders in Chengtu, June 3, 1935" in Letter to Folks, 4 August 1935 (MLL 1:9).

Chiang Kai-shek and his wife Madame Chiang visited West China in March 1935, perhaps as part of the Nationalist government's plan to stabilize the region or alternately, in an effort to solicit support from the population. From Mary's narrative of the event, it is evident that for many people, Chinese and foreign alike, this was a highly charged and exciting occasion. Mary's underlying hope was that the couple would further the work of missionaries in the province; Madame Chiang was a Christian, westernized woman, educated in the United States and fluent in English, and her husband was reputed to be supportive of her Christianity. Preparations in the city had been underway for several days before their arrival, and although Mary's account identified the superficiality of many of the preparations, it also demonstrated the importance of Chiang to the people of Chungking. Her narrative is full of imagery that brings the emotions as well as events of the day to her readers:

It was a very pretty sight, a week ago Saturday, to see the three aeroplanes arrive, the big plane that had brought General Chiang from Ichang, and the two smaller military planes (local military) that had gone down to escort him into the city, the two smaller ones were exactly together at a respectful distance behind, then when the big plane landed, the two smaller ones flew back over the city, and dropped pamphlets telling the people of his arrival. We could see them flying over our buildings.<sup>241</sup>

She explained that the people had to wait a little longer to see Madame Chiang; although she traveled extensively, she did not like to fly and so she came up to Chungking by boat. Mary's hope that their presence in Chungking would benefit mission work was apparently well-founded, as Madame Chiang had asked to be introduced to the missionaries.

On Friday afternoon we got quite a thrill, for one of the leading men in the city (who, by the way, is the chairman of the school board of our WMS school here)

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<sup>241</sup> Letter to Everybody, 10 March 1935 (MLL 1:9).



came to see Miss Coon, and asked her if she would be willing to be one of a committee of two foreign ladies to welcome Madame Chiang on her arrival here today! He, himself, is not a Christian, but a Buddhist, but he told Miss Coon that, no matter where she went, Madame Chiang always wanted to meet the Christians, and the city would like Miss Coon and Mrs. Gentry (the wife of an American medical missionary in the city) to try to make it pleasant for her while she is in the city, as she expected to be here about ten days. Well, it has been quite a day. All the schools were asked to send representative bodies of students down to the river to meet her - (I should say-girls' schools), and the Boys' Scouts, and Girl Guides were out in full force, as well as brass bands and soldiers galore.<sup>242</sup>

Mary's account of some of the city's preparation is couched in a little humor and perhaps irony, applying a veneer of modernity to the city because Chiang and Madame Chiang wanted China to be a modern country; and cleaning the streets because the couple promoted the virtues of cleanliness. Mary also recognized that these changes were similar to some of the changes she wanted to introduce to Chinese women.

The methods used to make a good impression are some of them rather amusing. For two days, no sedan chairs have been allowed on the streets – sedan chairs are very old-fashioned things, and in a city that has planes flying over head every day, and dozens of motor-cars, it would be “infra-dig” for sedan chairs to be seen by any of these august guests. Moreover, it was learned a few days ago that Madame is quite enthusiastic about women's clubs, so yesterday, some clubs were hastily organized, and their “officers” were down to meet the boat today, with banners stating their names and objectives! It is all to the good! Ever since I arrived, I have been trying to talk up something similar to our Women's Institutes in Canada, and now I can see some hope of success, this may give me a boost along that line.<sup>243</sup>

Unfortunately, by the time that Madame Chiang arrived, it had begun to rain and so the flags and banners, and all of the people, were soaked. Mary, once again recognizing some irony in the situation, noted that she found it odd that the language in which these exchanges were held was in English. Although she did not point to this as one more

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<sup>242</sup> Letter to Everybody, 10 March 1935 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*

instance of the difference between the central government and the provincial interests, it is perhaps indicative of the distance between the two. Mary described the encounter,

... (I) got there in plenty of time to see the arrival, and to see Madame Chiang shake hands with Miss Coon and Mrs. Gentry, and thank them in perfect English for coming to meet her in the rain. One of the problems is that she cannot speak the kind of Chinese that we do up here, and there were a couple of Chinese lady teachers among the reception committee who were very nervous and apprehensive, because they were to act as interpreters to her, and were afraid that their English was not good enough. Another on the committee was the secondary wife (or concubine) of a general in this city. She comes to our English Bible class, and although according to Chinese custom, it should have been the first wife who would have the honor of being on that committee, still by reason of the fact that the younger woman could talk English well, she was the one chosen! It does seem strange that it should be necessary for English to be the medium of intercourse in this country.<sup>244</sup>

That summer, as she would almost every summer, Mary spent her holidays in the small summer community on the Chungking hills, while Chiang Kai-shek and his wife vacationed in the very popular summer resort of Mount Omei which was located just beyond the West China city of Chengtu. The eleven bungalows on the Chungking hills housed a cross-section of the missionary community that first summer; there were two groups of Canadians, six Americans, two English and one Chinese. As well, there was the largest home which was owned by the China Inland Mission, and in which the international make-up of the CIM was well represented, with Germans, Americans, Canadians, English, Australians and even a baroness from Czechoslovakia. When Mary wrote her first letter to Canada after a full month on the hills, she apologized for not writing for such a long time, and advised that rather than being too busy, she was simply

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<sup>244</sup> Letter to Everybody, 10 March 1935 (MLL 1:9).

lazy.<sup>245</sup> This laziness, as she called it was synonymous with enjoyment; Mary's account of these two months conjures a clear picture of her relaxing and enjoying her community. She had been down to Foochow for a brief (three-day) winter vacation, and was particularly pleased that she was able to share her bungalow with people from Foochow who were summering on the Chungking hills. Every Sunday they attended church services together and worked with the so-called mountain children in a summer Sunday school. They held occasional mission meetings, at which they could discuss important issues; that summer the General Board, but not the WMS, missionaries were particularly concerned about financial matters and budgetary cuts "in home funds."<sup>246</sup> They allotted time for afternoon siestas, for reading books, and for some stimulating theological discussions. When the afternoon sun began to set, many of the vacationers would gather at the tennis courts in order to play in or to simply watch the daily tennis matches. The community members held small special events, among them a concert at which they shared their various talents. They gathered together for evening entertainment, and listened to samples from one another's record collections on the portable Victrola that one of them had brought up to the hills.<sup>247</sup>

As already mentioned, while Mary was enjoying the simplicity and camaraderie of life on the Chungking hills, Chiang Kai-shek and his wife were spending their summer with other missionaries at Mount Omei. As Mary noted, "I expect the missionaries will have lots of interesting tales to tell of personal contacts with these two very interesting

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<sup>245</sup> Letter to Folks, August 4, 1935. (MLL 1:9).

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

personalities.”<sup>248</sup> She much preferred the Chungking hills; however, she would join the Omei community the following year. The reason that Chiang was up at Omei was not really clear to Mary; his presence there certainly encouraged curiosity, speculation and rumor, but the only point of which Mary Lamb could be certain was that she and her colleagues hoped that he and his entourage would remain in the province after the summer and use their strength (and that of the central army) to decimate the province’s warlord regimes. In order to emphasize her belief in the determination and strength of Chiang Kai-shek, she enclosed in her letter to Canada an excerpt of a speech that he had delivered in Chengtu to the province’s military leaders.<sup>249</sup> In her discussion of Chiang’s presence in West China, she also, for the first time, referred to the Japanese threat in China. In her comments it becomes clear that although she was aware of the threat of Japan to China, she was not certain about the role or actions that Chiang Kai-shek was taking towards this menace. She wrote,

There are reports – not authentic at all – that the General recognizes the objectives of the Japanese and thinks that he will establish himself in this corner of the Chinese “empire” when they have taken all they want of this country, but I think this is only talk. Certainly the Japanese are not at all modest in their demands, and one wonders what we shall see out here in the next few years.<sup>250</sup>

Mary returned to Chungking after her holidays in 1936 and continued the work that had been interrupted over the summer months. She greeted a new colleague that winter, as Marion Coon, who had been in Chungking when Mary returned to China in 1934, had now left for her own furlough. Although her new colleague, Miss Jean Stewart, was

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<sup>248</sup> Letter to Folks, August 4, 1935. (MLL 1:9).

<sup>249</sup> “Abstract of Gen. Chiang Kai Shek’s speech delivered to the Szechuan military leaders in Chengtu, June 3, 1935” in Letter to Folks, 4 August 1935 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>250</sup> Letter to Folks, 4 August 1935. (MLL 1:9).

much younger than Mary, she thought that the two of them would get along well together, particularly as they seemed to share attitudes and interpretation of practical and theological topics.<sup>251</sup> She began to work with a weekly Bible class, and this was an undertaking that would prove to be long-lasting and very successful. It was initially begun as a weekly Chinese prayer meeting; however, the church's Chinese pastor had decided to change it to a Bible class. It had suffered from poor and fluctuating attendance, yet when it had a more formal structure with content that seemed to interest the participants, the attendance grew from about six people at each meeting to somewhere between 20 and forty at each weekly class. Mary was unsure why it appealed to people; she described the earlier prayer meetings as a "dead and alive sort of gathering."<sup>252</sup> This shift and its success seem to point to flexibility in their approach to evangelical work, and perhaps to the influence of Chinese pastors and the success of the co-work in which they were involved.

Mary also held a weekly club for the wives of YMCA secretaries; she tried to organize it like the Women's Institutes<sup>253</sup> which she thought would be a good and potentially successful model. It is interesting to note that her early estimation of this club was quite negative; she reported that it was not going as well as she hoped, and yet it was one of her

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<sup>251</sup> Letter to Folks, 16 May 1936 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>252</sup> Letter to Folks, 4 August 1935. (MLL 1:9).

<sup>253</sup> Status of Women Canada included the following description of Women's Institutes in a booklet that celebrated Women's History Month in 2001: "The *Women's Institutes of Canada*, founded in 1897 by Adelaide Hunter Hoodless, stressed the value of country living and of being well informed about national and international issues, especially those concerned with women and children." From the Status of Women Canada website: [http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/dates/whm/2001/booklet\\_e.html](http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/dates/whm/2001/booklet_e.html).

undertakings that would prove to be among the most successful.<sup>254</sup> In the months to come, the women would beg Mary and Jean Stewart to devote two more afternoons a week to their meetings, as they wanted have both secular and non-secular content available to their group on a regular basis. The women did not think that they could possibly devote so much time to one group, and so suggested that they would alternate in leading weekly religious meetings for the group, and the group would begin to hold the Women's Institute type of meetings on their own.<sup>255</sup>

It seems that Mary's country work was most difficult to fulfill. It was almost certainly her ideal, and perhaps idealized, type of work, but her city work almost always took precedence over her country evangelizing. Perhaps it was because the trips inherently took a considerable amount of time from her weekly commitments. It was a two day journey simply to reach the Mudong outstation, and so it is not surprising that these trips, which she had planned to take once a month, were frequently delayed or canceled.

In the middle of April I had a trip down the river by a small steamer to one of our stations called Mudong. I should have gone down every month but it has seemed impossible to squeeze it in since January. We always get a good reception there, and when we hold an evening meeting, the chapel is packed with people who seem to want to hear the Gospel, and listen most attentively to our message.<sup>256</sup>

The politics of Chiang Kai-shek were in increasing evidence in West China in the spring of 1936; this had less to do with his presence in the province, and more to do with the

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<sup>254</sup> Letter to Folks, 16 May 1936 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>255</sup> Letter to Folks, 14 November 1936 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>256</sup> Letter to Folks, 16 May 1936 (MLL 1:9).

apparent popularity of his New Life Movement. It was evident that the people of West China were embracing some of the tenets of the Movement: the river boatmen's voices could be heard singing the Movement's new songs, but the wealthy Chinese had not embraced its lessons of frugality. With some chagrin, Mary described the spoiled food and excessive money spent on a wedding that she had recently attended. Despite the Movement's directives, it was clear to her that opium was not yet wiped out; a boat on which she had recently travelled openly picked up a load of opium. Nevertheless, in bringing Canadians up-to-date on recent political developments, Mary suggested her support for and confidence in Chiang and his wife when she advised that the New Life Movement was "giving us Christians a great lever," undoubtedly reflecting her new and positive thoughts about the Movement.<sup>257</sup> Somehow she paired Christianity with the roots or fundamentals of the ideology.

Mary spent the summer of 1936 up on the Chungking hills, and her thoughts seem to be almost a stream-of-consciousness type of writing at that time. Mary seems to have been quite influenced by her particular situation that summer up on the hills: she was quite tired as she reported, but was having a particularly enjoyable and even rewarding time interacting with the other foreigners who were up on the hill, missionaries from other places and other churches, and business men and women from the next mountain range with whom she had little interaction during the year. She was thoughtful and introspective, perhaps in part due to her tiredness, about the work in which they were involved, most particularly in light of the difficult-to-read political situation. Most

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<sup>257</sup> Letter to Folks, 16 May 1936 (MLL 1:9).

notably, the withdrawal of central government troops from the province had her concerned that the warlords would be able to reassert themselves and thereby impact everything, including their missionary work. She intended to draw upon all of the resources of the community so that she would be replenished by the time that she had to return to work. She advised, "...one day I slept for two solid hours in the middle of the day an unheard of thing for me, so you can see I am not working very hard."<sup>258</sup> She was playing lots of tennis and other games, among them a favourite of the missionaries, the word game Lexicon. She found the companionship of other missionaries enjoyable and valuable, and even found the wives of the Chungking businessmen, whose lives she described as undoubtedly "dreary," to be good company.<sup>259</sup>

Once again, she returned to her concern about the political situation in the province. While up on the Chungking hills, the missionaries received reports that the people in Omei had to contend with a round of robberies; the trouble and anxiety that this problem caused her colleagues undoubtedly encouraged her to reconsider the political uncertainty in China and more particularly, in the province. Despite her notation that there had been more than a year of peace, this peace existed because there were several thousand central government soldiers living in the province. That they had been brought up to Szechwan on Chiang Kai-shek's order was clear to Mary, but she was less certain about the reasons behind Chiang's orders. Was Chiang preparing for an imminent retreat of his government from Japan-occupied Nanking? Was he amassing his troops in West China in order to

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<sup>258</sup> Letter to People, 27 July 1936 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.



finally “drive out the communists...to restore peace in the province...which hasn’t had peace since 1912”? Mary tended to favour the second supposition, but she suggested that there were many divergent opinions among her colleagues, and that it was difficult for foreigners “to read the Chinese mind.”<sup>260</sup> She appeared to be worried and uneasy, in part because China was unsettled and in part because she was still unable to understand China after living there for almost two decades. She reminded herself that time in China was very different from Western time, and that the lessons of Chinese history were in part, the lessons of patience, for events to unravel and come to their conclusions. She considered the warlords as an example; the Central government had brought them under its control, and yet the warlords might very well have the patience to wait until events shifted, and they could then once again assert their power. Mary also linked all of her thoughts about China’s disruptive environment to her own work, and identified that she dreaded the possibility that the work in which the missionaries had been involved, and which had been going so well, might once again be disrupted by civil disorder.<sup>261</sup>

Mary’s work in Chungking remained essentially the same: she met directly with Chinese women and on the whole found that the women were interested in their interactions and that she was happy with the women’s progress. The women’s club, which she and her WMS colleague Jean Stewart attended, continued to be extremely successful. Mary added one new activity to her work when she was invited to teach weekly Bible classes at a large government school for girls. She had been introduced to the school by one of its

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<sup>260</sup> Letter to People, 27 July 1936 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

Christian teachers, and although she did not explain why, she found this invitation particularly pleasing; it may have been because it was the first time that she was able to teach at a government, rather than missionary, school. Her work with the group of young businessmen that she had begun two years earlier continued to flourish. She noted their progress, writing “It is fascinating to watch how some of them are developing spiritually.”<sup>262</sup> Finally, although she was not directly involved in girls’ work, she was interested in their activities. She seems to have been unable to resist having a strong reaction to what she describes as a Girl Guide outing that was organized by the Board of Education. Her narrative begins with the exclamation, “Certainly we are living in a new age in China.”<sup>263</sup> She continued to explain that the WMS junior high school girls had come under a government directive to attend a three-day camping session. Mary advised that the WMS women “were aghast” when they received the order, and it was only when the parents responded with even greater alarm that the women were relieved to be able to tell the parents that the program was not a school program at all, but was something designed and organized by the government. The girls left the school on a rainy, cold day, with enough supplies to carry them through their three-day outdoor camping trip. Mary suggested that the trip would have been better suited to soldiers than to young Chinese girls, and according to the information that she had been able to gather, it was a program either inspired by or part of the militarization of China and Chiang Kai-Shek’s New Life Movement. Mary appears to have been ambivalent about the program and the societal changes that it seemed to be encouraging. She considered the camping directive in the

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<sup>262</sup> Letter, 14 November 1936 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

context of the lives of the girls' grandmothers, who, as she explained, "were not allowed to stick their noses out without a chaperone."<sup>264</sup> However, despite the worries of the missionaries and their parents, the girls returned home, having had a wonderful time on their adventurous outing. Mary's conclusion was that it had been poor use of their time; their school schedule, which was very demanding, had been interrupted, and furthermore, at least ninety percent of these girls would become homemakers, and so their experience would have had little relevance to their lives.<sup>265</sup>

During early 1937 Mary's diary had long periods without any entries; she stopped writing in late February 1937 and when she began writing again, probably in April, she asked herself whether she ought to bother with her diary at all. "This diary has been neglected so long that it is useless to try to catch up. I can only put in a few general statements on these blank pages regardless of dates."<sup>266</sup> But she did record her impressions of the difficult situation in which many Chinese in the region were finding themselves: a drought had introduced many serious problems to West China. Mary questioned what was happening in disbelief, but was unable to find any answers.

The country is crying out for rain. Everything is dry and parched, the river is lower than it has been for years and the poverty problem is very terrible. Refugees from the country districts are swarming into the city looking for food and not getting - dying by the roadside by the hundred. Some effort has been made by the city government to meet the situation but nothing nearly adequate to the need. Soup kitchens have been opened on the riverbanks at different points. A large refugee camp was organized at [illegible word] where about 1500 were housed for some weeks, but the provision was so poor that hundreds perished of cold and

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<sup>264</sup> Letter, 4 November 1936 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Diary, 16 April 1937 (MLL 1:7).

hunger. The YMCA and the (unknown word) organized a road-building project that solved the problem for about 100 men who were fit to work for some weeks – others have found work elsewhere. But nothing was done for the weak and helpless who were driven from one place to another and many of whom simply starved to death. It is a situation that has entirely baffled me. The extremely low water has meant only the smallest steamers have been able to navigate the river between here and Ichang, making two changes between here and that point. This has meant that very few goods have been able to get up river and the mails have been very slow.<sup>267</sup>

Mary was certainly aghast at the situation and could not believe that there could not have been more effective government intervention or that the situation was allowed to deteriorate so badly.

It may have seemed to Mary that no sooner were the repercussions of the drought alleviated, than there were huge numbers of refugees moving into West China because of the Japanese occupation of eastern China. By the summer of 1938, war was never far from her thoughts. In August 1938 she reported that more people were continuously making their way into West China, particularly after the devastation and fall of Nanking, which began in December 1937 and continued on until February 1938. Chungking had many refugees and the demands of the moving population were affecting Chengtu as well. She suspected that she would become increasingly involved in refugee work; however, even if this were to become her primary focus, she advised that she did not mind. The people would need help, and she was willing to do whatever she could to help them. Her flexibility and concern for the Chinese was particularly clear during this period and in the context of the war. Others may have had difficulty deciding how much to pressure Japan, and inherently blame it for the war, but it seems that Mary had no such

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<sup>267</sup> Diary, entry written under 27 to 28 February 1937, however it refers to events that occurred in April 1937.

problem. She unequivocally supported China, and when she looked to the future, she was concerned about the difficulties that it would face when it tried to renew itself after so many years of internally caused disorder and externally provoked war.<sup>268</sup>

*Women's work in Foochow, 1937 to 1940*

A brief note in Mary's diary stated that she moved to Foochow for the remainder of her term; she does not record any explanation, but simply wrote on August 18, 1937, "Letters from Mt.Omei and it is decided I should join Nellie Graham at FooChow as soon as I can pack up."<sup>269</sup> On September 18 she recorded, "Left Chungking for Foochow on the Yuan [illegible word.] Nellie met me. Such a lot of boxes I have."<sup>270</sup> She was immediately welcomed into the missionary community, and within a couple of days, she was unpacking and settling in. She noted that her room was very nice, and the place was much more charming than Chungking.<sup>271</sup> Only a week later, on September 23, she noted that she was "ready to go out itinerating on the Foochow district."<sup>272</sup> She worked closely with her fellow WMS worker, Miss Nellie Graham, and before the end of this term, became well acquainted with a new couple who joined the mission, Agnes and Irwin Hilliard. Foochow was, of course a small and indeed intimate foreign community, one to which Mary felt a particular attachment.

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<sup>268</sup> Letter to People, 11 August 1938 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>269</sup> Diary, 18 August 1937 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>270</sup> Diary, 18 September 1937 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Diary, 23 September 1937 (MLL 1:7).

It was in Foochow that she may have expected once again to fulfill her evangelical dream, although she undoubtedly had worked closely with and formed attachments to Chinese people in her other homes. However, the presence of the war changed her focus and in the months and years to come, she was able to take even fewer evangelizing trips into the country, in part because she was occupied with other work and perhaps because it was more difficult to hire carriers because so many men had been conscripted into the army. She became reacquainted with baby welfare work, but most of her other activities were involved, in one way or another, with the war. She began a Bible class with refugees who had moved to Foochow. It was comprised of a small group of Christians from downriver. She described them as well-educated; some were in better financial positions than others, and the leader of the class was “a clever young man who at present is acting as a Judge in the court in this city. His wife, also a Christian is a lawyer” as were others in the group. The couple that she drew attention to were the Chwangs, with whom Agnes Hilliard would become quite closely involved when she lived in Foochow. Mary visited prisons at the instigation of some of the members of the Bible class, and she pointed out that these newcomers to West China were particularly helpful to the province, “As Judge Chwang said the other night, ‘We young men are out to reform the courts’ and those of us who have been here for many years know how much that reform is needed.”<sup>273</sup> Mary found the presence and influence of the down-river people helpful to the province, and when she was told that at the prison most of the people were incarcerated for robbery when they had absolutely nothing to eat, she continued in her exaltation of the down-river Chinese: “so what is needed is some intelligent Christians

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<sup>273</sup> Letter to Folks, 23 April 1939 (MLL 1:9).

who are willing to help to solve the tremendous economic problem of this land.” She also made several trips to a nearby base hospital for soldiers, and became actively involved in meeting other refugees who were passing through the city, groups of young Red Cross nurses and groups of younger girls who were hoping to establish a base hospital. Some of their goals seemed to Mary to be very unrealistic, particularly as the girls were often very young. However, Mary admired their efforts, their strength and their resilience and tried to offer them whatever support they might need.<sup>274</sup>

In the spring of 1939, amidst all of this activity, Foochow experienced a fire. It was on one of the few nights that Mary Lamb was out of the city, having left on an evangelizing trip. When she returned and learned of the fire, she recognized the difficulty the city had endured: methods of fighting fires in Foochow were simplistic as houses were torn down in order to stop it from spreading or water was brought in a bucket brigade. She heard that a Chinese general who was in “command of this town” directed the efforts to save the mission property. It is unclear why he became involved, but his organizational skills were certainly needed.<sup>275</sup>

The war continued to preoccupy Mary, although she carried on with her work and enjoyed her vacation time up in the hills. The war was ever present, and by the summer of 1939, it was not so much that she could not believe how protected and how separate she was from it while on holiday, but rather that it was almost ever present, and even

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<sup>274</sup> Letter to Folks, 23 April 1939 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*

when the missionaries did forget about it and enjoy themselves, they felt guilty when hearing of experiences in other places. She also became more involved in refugee-related work, as she had forecast. And finally, she thought about her hopes for the future, which she still placed in the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, and wished that China would be able to reconstruct itself when the war was over. She had gone beyond wondering about it, and by now knew that China would need reconstruction. She wrote,

Pray for the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang. They are a wonderful couple, but are carrying a terrifically heavy burden and one wonders how long they can stand the strain. Surely it was for such a time as this that they were raised up, and we hope and pray that they may have the strength given them to help in the reconstruction work that will follow after this terrible war is over.<sup>276</sup>

Of course, the Sino-Japanese War continued to escalate and one by one, the cities of West China were affected. The Guomindang government of Chiang Kai-shek did move to Chungking during the war,<sup>277</sup> and the Chinese Communist Party, in its efforts to survive and assert its control over China, had moved to Yen-an in northern China.<sup>278</sup> In the middle of August 1939, just two weeks before Mary wrote one of her by now infrequent letters, Kiating was bombed by the Japanese. She advised that one-third of the city had been destroyed and their mission church burned down. Her response to this recent event was one of anger, as she referred to a recent newspaper report that Canada continued to sell war materiel to Japan, or in her words, Canada “is still not quite sure that she wants to stop selling war materials to Japan!” In an earlier letter, she had

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<sup>276</sup> Letter to Folks, 25 August, 1939 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>277</sup> For in-text discussion and literature suggestions on the GMD, see footnote 9 in Chapter One.

<sup>278</sup> For in-text discussion and literature suggestions on the CCP, see footnote 10 in Chapter One.



disavowed Canadian support, direct or indirect, for the Japanese war effort; it was not surprising that she found this particular outlet from which to launch her protest at the bombing of properties that she valued. Some of her stories were not really about the war, but in one way or another, they became linked to it. When she reported that the WMS had had electricity installed in its properties, she explained that the reason they had finally decided to link up to the two-year old electrical supply in the city was because the price of oil had gone so high, undoubtedly in part as a result of the economic burden of the war. When she wrote about the Stanway family returning to their little Foochow missionary community, the war played an active role in their journey. Their trip had some similarities to the one that Agnes Hilliard took two years earlier; however hers did not have the drama that the war brought to the Stanway story.<sup>279</sup> Mary wrote,

On returning a few weeks ago, Mrs. Stanway and the two children came by plane from Hong Kong to Chungking, a journey of about two hours. When they reached Chungking they could not land, for the mist was so heavy that they could not see the landing field...Her husband, with others of the party, had to come by rail from Haiphong to Yunnanfu (which we call Kunmin at present), and then from Kunmin to Chungking by truck, bringing their baggage with them. We are glad to welcome back...The railway was bombed as they were on the way. The first section of the train took refuge in one of the many tunnels that are on that route, until the bombing was over and the section that Mr. Stanway was on had not yet reached the scene of the bombing. So when they did reach it, all the baggage and freight had to be unloaded from the train and carried across the bombed area by coolies, where it was loaded on to another train, and thus reached Kunmin "only two hours late!" as Mr. Stanway told us later with a triumphant smile.<sup>280</sup>

Once again, the end of another term approached, and although she did not leave China until November 1940, in February Mary became quite nostalgic about her life in China. She wrote, "And so the days pass very quickly. You can see how I hate to leave this work

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<sup>279</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 5 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>280</sup> Letter to Folks, 8 February 1940 (MLL 1:9).

to go home especially as there is no one in sight to take my place.<sup>281</sup> There was a shortage of mission workers in West China, and when she considered that there was not yet anyone to take her place, she was given the unexpected news that Nellie Graham, her Foochow coworkers had to return to Canada due to a health problem. It was Dr. Hilliard, a fairly recent addition to the Foochow community who examined Nellie and made this decision. Mary recorded,

Since writing you last, another problem has come up that I did not foresee at that time. A mission doctor has been appointed here, Dr. Hilliard, a very fine young man, with a very fine little (no-she is quite tall) wife. This made it possible for us all to have our annual medical overhaul without going up to Chungking. The results have been rather unexpected, and it has been found necessary for my co-worker, Miss Graham to go home immediately. So you will see that it is not possible for me to leave this spring.<sup>282</sup>

She had advised her Canadian friends and family that although the mission field was being somewhat replenished by workers from Honan who had been evacuated and had come to West China, there had not yet been a WMS appointment of an evangelical worker (to Foochow). She also said that they were hopeful that when the workers returned from furlough in the fall, there would be someone appointed to replace her, making it possible for her to be in Canada by next Christmas. And then she continued,

I hope that this will not be a disappointment to any of you, I am quite happy about it myself, except for the cause as I did not want to go home till things looked a little brighter for the Chinese people whom I love so much. They have been so wonderful all through this experience, but I do think it is a moral support to them to know that we are willing to stand by. It is mostly in little ways that we can help them, but I do think they like to have us round. Whether or not I will come back to China is still a question that it is too soon to settle. The folks out here are very anxious that I should do so, but one can only live 'a day at a time.'<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Letter to Folks, 8 February 1940 (MLL 1:9).

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

Mary remained very active in her work throughout 1940, yet the nostalgia which she had demonstrated when she thought she was going to leave earlier returned once again in November. In her November 18 diary entry she wrote about the baptism of a Chinese couple in Foochow, "It was wonderful to see how God is giving me so many joys to take the sting out of parting. Florence led our foreign meeting in the evening and struck a high spiritual note."<sup>284</sup> And when we read further, and learn about other news of that particular day, it becomes apparent that her mood had been heightened by news from Canada. "A clipper letter from Aunt Grace telling of the passing of Aunt Emma on October 27. This leaves Lita alone and I think helps me to decide not to return to China much as I would love to – Today more packing"<sup>285</sup> The following day, her activities were assuredly intermingled with decisions that she needed to make about her future. On November 20 after returning from a funeral, she recorded,

I spent the rest of the day sorting old clothes to be given away. Took an organ out to get fixed for Mr. Peu. We were all at Agnes Hilliard's for supper where we had a nice quiet evening. Today there will be some repacking owing to the fact that I have decided not to return to China<sup>286</sup>

The following day she recorded her activities, which were almost completely focused on her departure.

Yesterday was spent in unpacking – I unpacked the boxes I had planned to put away if I returned and distributed the things in various ways – we had the teachers to dinner. Then I went over to the Hilliard's and finished packing the trunk that is to go home.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> Diary, 18 November 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Diary, 20 November 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>287</sup> Diary, 21 November 1940 (MLL 1:7).

Her final day in Foochow seems to have been spent most appropriately; she went to a prayer meeting with two Chinese women. Once again, her record is simple but emotionally laden, "My last day in Fou Chow. It was nice to see their dear faces in the church once more."<sup>288</sup>

Mary Lamb's departure was similar to many other arrivals and departures from Foochow. She recorded,

Yesterday was spent accounts and receiving farewell calls. It was nearly midnight when I was through. Jean and Florence had planned to come down to the boat with me, but it was pouring rain, so I persuaded them not to come. Got down to the boat at one-thirty a.m.<sup>289</sup>

However, on this final journey, Mary's delay in Chungking was not for a riverboat, but rather for an airplane. Transport had certainly changed in the twenty years that she had lived in China. In Chungking while waiting for her plane, Mary took the opportunity to visit with people both missionary and Chinese, and she seems to have exuded an acceptance that she was leaving. It was not a particularly happy time for her, in part because she was very aware of the damage that the war has done to the city. Once again, from Chungking, her departure fit the model that she had described for other peoples' travels, particularly the uncertainty of even planned travel. On November 25 she ended her diary entry with "Tomorrow at 7 a.m. we leave for the airfield. Good bye to old Chungking!"<sup>290</sup> However, her next entry (seemingly on the 27<sup>th</sup>) began, "We did not say

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<sup>288</sup> Diary, 22 November 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Diary, 25 November 1940 (MLL 1:7).

goodbye to Chungking!” The plane for Hong Kong never did arrive that day, and so she “took a chair” and went to visit a colleague. “A lovely ride.”<sup>291</sup> A few other visits and an errand, and then when she returned to the airfield the following day, after a wait of about four hours, the plane did arrive, and she finally, “got away on the plane for Hong Kong.” She described her experience with a little humor, “The plane left Chungking at 4:45 and we were just four hours and a half on the way! Very stupid of me, but I was sick. Enjoyed the first hour.”<sup>292</sup>

Her travel plans in Hong Kong were disrupted as the ship on which she had expected to sail had been cancelled. However, Mary did not particularly mind the change in plans, and was quite easy-going about the lack of fixed schedule provided her stop-over was not too extended. (This may have been due to financial concerns which crop up later). Perhaps due to her stance on the war, when it was suggested that there were “two alternatives” available to her booking passage – one on a Japanese ship, another on a freighter as far as San Francisco - she noted that “the latter appealed to me.” She later explained that the Japanese booking would have meant a three week stopover in Japan, something she did not want to do. However, the American ships were being reserved for Americans who were trying to leave China. There were also “rumours” about the possibility of booking passage on a Dutch ship. She kept herself very busy in Hong Kong, going about with other missionaries, visiting people, attending events, and doing small errands, and seems to have easily fit into the foreign community once again.

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<sup>291</sup> Diary, 27 November 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>292</sup> Diary, 28 November 1940 (MLL 1:7).

However, money did become a constraint and a worry. On the December 6<sup>th</sup> space in her diary, although seemingly written a few days earlier, she advised after friends of hers had just left the city aboard a ship, “The Thomsons left this afternoon going on the Cleveland. I’ll miss them.” And then she revealed her own plans, “Sailing at dawn on the 7<sup>th</sup> – My money is melting away. Only a few more days left now. Some more letters to write.” Her last day turned out to be a busy one, perhaps a way of distracting herself, or perhaps trying to add to her experiences in the little time left. She began methodically washing her hair, contacting a woman, writing a letter; her activity level picked up in the afternoon when she had lunch, then went shopping with Mrs. Morgan, and returned with her for tea and then she advised, “three of us went on a ‘spree’. She had dinner with two other women and then a small group of women went off to see a movie. As well, she found out, when she phoned the shipping office, that there had been a delay and her ship would not be leaving for several days.”<sup>293</sup>

Sunday December 8, 1940 perhaps predictably was a difficult day for her. She recognized her loneliness and loss and wrote, “Sunday in the morning I had quite a bad time with myself. I was terribly lonely for Szechwan and tried (unsuccessfully) to find the Mandarin service – so was quite sorry for myself.”<sup>294</sup> After all those summers of enjoying the respite of English services, she was now longing for what had become familiar, a Chinese-language service. She continued, identifying her loss quite clearly, “– so was quite sorry for myself. Not good. I am lonely for Szechwan. Had a rest and wrote a letter in the afternoon. Reading a story.” And in the evening, she attended another

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<sup>293</sup> Diary, 6 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>294</sup> Diary, 8 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

church service, perhaps trying and indeed finding some solace and comfort, as she recorded the small things that pleased her “Quite a nice sermon...A nice Scotch lady spoke to me.” Her loneliness appears so vividly, in that simple, final entry this day about the woman simply speaking to her.<sup>295</sup>

In the next few days, before her departure which finally occurred on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, 1940 she had a visit to nearby Kowloon, and continued to get together with friends; however, as she had predicted, she found that she had little money left. On the 12<sup>th</sup> she boarded what seems to have been a cargo launch headed initially for Shanghai from Hong Kong (as they were busy loading cargo that day and early the next), and by the 13<sup>th</sup> her ocean liner was pulling out of the harbour. As she reported, “The forenoon was spent in watching the life of the harbour. Very beautiful in the bright sunshine. The cargo was all on by noon and we sailed about 2:30 and in three hours we were out to sea.”<sup>296</sup>

Mary followed in the tradition of Dr. Smith and the Jolliffes as she hoped that she would have some influence on the captain of the ship. She had first mentioned him on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the day that she boarded the launch as she called it. “The ‘Tarifa’ is a very fine boat and the captain seems an interesting man. But loading cargo is not conducive to rest. However – will sail tomorrow.”<sup>297</sup> The next day, she may have been looking forward to

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<sup>295</sup> Diary, 8 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>296</sup> Diary, 12 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>297</sup> Diary, 11 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

seeing him, as she mentioned him again, “the cargo was all on by noon and we sailed about 2:30 and in three hours we were out to sea. Did not see the captain again.”<sup>298</sup> Once again, the captain appeared in her record. “The captain came and chatted with me for a time. He seems to be a very fine type of man. Likes to talk about his family.”<sup>299</sup> She seems to have settled into the trip; spending lots of time on deck, and simply enjoying her journey. “A lovely sunset that made one think of some of Turner’s pictures. Supper along with the captain and we got into earnest conversation. I wonder if we will go deeper still. He seems to be a very fine man.”<sup>300</sup>

There was a brief stopover in Shanghai and once again Mary visited the missionaries she had known in the past, particularly Mrs. Brown. Other passengers came aboard, and again, in character, Mary noted

We sailed about 9 a.m. Getting acquainted. I think we are going to have a good time together. As most of them are British it will be slower work getting to know them. One nice friendly American couple. Spent most of the day out of doors. By evening the ship began to roll a good deal – so I thought ‘discretion was the better part of valour’ and went to bed early.<sup>301</sup>

The next day the sea was perhaps a metaphor for her feelings about Japan when she wrote, “The sea was very rough. We were in Japanese water...”<sup>302</sup> Yet in her usual manner of enjoying the out of doors and being quite ‘tough’ and yet needing companionship, she recorded her day,

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<sup>298</sup> Diary, 11 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>299</sup> Diary, 13 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>300</sup> Diary, 14 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>301</sup> Diary, 17 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>302</sup> Diary, 18 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).



Japanese water. I went up the top deck for my walk as the lower deck was frequently washed with the waves. Several of the passengers were uncomfortable but all were good sports. I stayed outside all day except for meals and read on the deck. Made a little progress in getting acquainted but not much.<sup>303</sup>

The following day the seas continued to be heavy, but she managed to walk a mile on the lower deck before the afternoon, when it was once again bombarded by the heavy waves; some of the other passengers were suffering from seasickness, but she was quite fine.

Mary happily reconnected with the captain and once again, slipped back so easily into the evangelical missionary and the woman who enjoyed serious theological discussion. She recorded, “The captain asked me to play dominoes with him. This may give me a chance to carry on some of the conversations we began before we got to Shanghai. I need guidance for it all.”<sup>304</sup> The following day, she reported that the sea was increasingly rough but she was still well. “Spent the day on deck. Played dominoes but did not get anything accomplished as others were in the smoke room. Find the captain’s cigar very objectionable – don’t know the nicest way to mention it.”<sup>305</sup>

Mary never did find her way to be easy with the other passengers; however, she did establish some sort of relationship with the captain. She was able to give him some literature to read, to continue playing dominos with him, and to discuss more serious topics intermittently. However, the passengers did not form a cohesive group<sup>306</sup>. When planning the Christmas evening event, on December 24 Mary wrote, “What a world we

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<sup>303</sup> Diary, 18 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>304</sup> Diary, 19 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>306</sup> Diary, 20 to 23 December, 1940 (1:7).

live in! Even in this little group of 10 – not counting the captain – there are dissensions.”<sup>307</sup> She continued, when describing the evening which turned out more successfully than she had expected, by identifying that the Christmas carols seemed to have relaxed them and brought them together, “I was thankful for the carols. It seemed as if the barrier was down. But what an empty life these poor people had – filled only with ideas of drink and smoke. I was lonely for my Christian friends.”<sup>308</sup>

On the December 31, 1940 Mary looked back on the year, and could only think about the reality of the war. “The last day of a very bad year for the world. We can only hope and pray and work for a better one to come.”<sup>309</sup> The following day, January 1, 1941, the captain advised that within thirty-six hours they would be in Los Angeles. Mary’s disdain for the other passengers had not lasted, and she had apparently even found some sort of camaraderie with them; she spent part of the day up on deck, talking to one of the passengers and then to the captain. Her closing comment leaves us with some of her ambivalence perhaps, when she writes about their New Year celebrations. “A very lovely day. Captain had us meet all the officers in the smoke room at 11 am. More drinks and speeches.”<sup>310</sup> Mary had left her missionary world behind her in China, but the way she approached people had not changed. She was unable to restrain herself from forming a bond with the captain and having some serious evangelical conversations with him. True

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<sup>307</sup> Diary, 24 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>309</sup> Diary, 31 December 1940 (MLL 1:7).

<sup>310</sup> Diary, 1 January 1941 (MLL 1:7).

to her nature and experience, while she was unable to establish the same kind of relationship with everyone, she was flexible, determined and accepting enough to find companionship wherever she went.

### **Perspectives on Mary Letitia Lamb**

The manner in which Mary Lamb dealt with difficult events, from the frightening repercussions of the activities of warlord Yang Sen's soldiers to the lengthy evacuation of missionaries to the city of Shanghai, reveals some interesting aspects of her character, the character which enabled her to be a fascinating China missionary. Her records of Yang Sen's (and others') military machinations dealt far more with the repercussions that they had upon her daily life and work; she evaluated the situation, identified various possibilities, and then immediately began to focus on the task at hand. She moved children's beds in the Chengdu boarding school and she bought house furnishings in Shanghai. She appears to have been a woman who was dedicated yet pragmatic, opinionated yet flexible, earnest yet humorous, and remarkably accepting of China and its people.

Mary was seldom entirely satisfied with the missionary community; it seems that, at least in her own mind, she questioned everything from the missionary enterprise to the lifestyle of missionaries. Mary was forty years old at the time of her first appointment to China, sixty years old when she left China for the third and final time. By the age of forty, she had attended one year of university; worked alongside her mother and then managed the local post office; attended her mother through a fatal illness; been a very active member

of her Church and its community; and lived in a small, apparently close-knit rural town. Certainly she already had considerable life experience when she became a newcomer in the China missionary community. She took her missionary appointment very, very seriously; she had been dreaming of working as a missionary in China for such a long time that, when it finally came about, it may have been almost inevitable that she would embrace and yet question everything about the reality of mission work. She was surprised to find that she was quite conservative in her approach to theological issues and missionary work; in her home town she had been considered quite a rebel. Perhaps this is not surprising, as the Canadian Church was in the midst of the merger that would create the United Church of Canada, and the evangelical work that had been the archetype of mission work for Mary, seemed (to her) to be shifting to a new, social gospel approach. Missionaries were not only expected to reach people through religious teachings and prayer; they were also going to become involved in the daily lives of people, reaching out into the educational and medical arenas to provide schooling and health care to people and bring them into the wider community of Christianity. Mary had always envisioned herself as an evangelical missionary. However, she did become an active educator, and even a health educator, as she taught young mothers how to care for their children. It is not surprising that Mary enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of serious theological discussion with other foreigners; she was always particularly pleased when visitors passed through the cities in which she lived and she had the opportunity to settle into some thought-provoking talk. She was also very concerned about the chasm between the lives of Chinese people and those of the missionaries; the very walls behind which they lived appeared to Mary to be unnecessary divisions. It seemed that something was

intrinsically wrong in separating themselves from the Chinese people. She was as well concerned about the apparent consumerism of some of her colleagues. When she went on shopping expeditions with some women, she found it difficult to watch them spending a lot of money. She found consumerism inherently frivolous, but she also believed that it was disrespectful to the Chinese people. In a world which she occasionally perceived as consisting of haves (the missionaries) and have-nots (the Chinese people), she thought that the missionaries were making a significant mistake because the Chinese people might be less attracted to the missionaries' message if they were offended by the missionaries' lifestyle. Mary's appreciation of the lives of missionaries in China (for example, the generous salary and vacations that she received and her discomfort with the gulf that existed between the lives of missionaries and the lives of most Chinese people) was a strong undercurrent in her narrative. While she was certainly critical of aspects of missionary activity in China, Mary also defended missionary activity from what she perceived to be the prejudices of foreign governments. She was concerned that the British and American consular officials might have been favoring business and military interests over the missionary interests in China. However, even when she considered the future of missionary work in China, she was unable to foresee the criticism that the missionary enterprise would suffer from future critics of imperialism.

In Mary's narrative, the stories of her work with Chinese women, when woven together, demonstrate a remarkable simplicity in the scale of her work. Mary Lamb spent most of her time working with very small groups of women. She carefully organized her life so that she would encourage Chinese women and girls to become close to her; in one of her

homes, she created an informal place for them to visit her by arranging her own rooms to accommodate a visiting area. Although her "home visits" suffered because she found that she did not have enough time to fulfill her expectations, perhaps in the tradition of Mrs. Smith who had introduced her to missionary work, Mary continued to try to visit women in their homes. She always found the Chinese women welcoming, and it is apparent that she believed that spending her time with individual women was worthwhile. Visiting women in their homes was an interesting experience for her as well; their homes allowed her to learn how Chinese families lived, from wealthy city officials to poorer working Chinese. She reached limited numbers of women in each of her duties, in her city and outstation work. Almost certainly the missionary women, including Mary, believed that when they worked with an individual woman, that woman would take her new knowledge back home and transmit it to her family members. In fact, this was frequently the case, as Mary told the story of husbands and families who came into the mission church in order to be baptized.

A certain snobbery or elitism is present in the impressions that Mary recorded about her experiences; she definitely preferred to work with the wives of city officials rather than those of what she called the military class. Of course, her preference may have been based on the reality that the military were a terribly difficult presence with which she had to deal; soldiers, both those of the warlords and those of the Central government, were in need of food and housing, and they placed a considerable strain on the Sichuan communities. The warlord armies moved into any empty homes without hesitation; this occurred during the period of evacuation, and again during summer holidays. Mary

referred to the work involved in keeping soldiers “outside the gates” of the compound, and of the at times constant pressure of military personnel to make their way into mission buildings. It may not be surprising that she preferred not to work with the families of military officials; although she was certainly willing to try to convert them, it was clearly a less pleasant experience. Despite the apparent snobbery in some of her accounts, Mary loved to go itinerating, and the response that she had, on every occasion, leaves little doubt that the people who attended the mission outstation churches were strong supporters of mission work. There were always requests from the outstations for increased missionary presence and expansion of the mission work. It may be that this dichotomy between appearing disdainful of the military class and accepting of the outstation congregants is representative of the complexity of missionary work in China. The men and women who worked with the Chinese brought to their work the complexities of their own lives and work in China. They were not perfect, they questioned and judged, but all the while they tried to sort out the best ways to approach their work.

In her writing it is evident that Mary saw the confusion of early twentieth-century China; she tried to report on the events that at times were truly swirling around her, but it was difficult for her to know what was going on. The complexities of China’s political situation were enormous and always rapidly changing; despite her efforts to appreciate the opportunity that she had to witness events in China, she was unable to construct accurate accounts of the larger ventures that were being undertaken, among them the huge mobilizations involved in the Northern Expedition or the Long March. Although

she identified that she felt privileged to “have a front row seat” in the second Republican Revolution (in Shanghai, 1926-27), Mary’s evident interest in central government politics did not enable her to have any sense of the looming importance of the Chinese Communist Party. However, Mary’s narrative is fascinating as a representation of Western interest and belief in and support for Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang. Mary’s account of their first visit to Chungking is filled with gentle irony in the way she records the steps that were taken by the community to have it appear (to the Chiangs) that it fit into their vision of a modern China and the fact that English was the language in which Madame Chiang conversed with local Chinese (through interpreters). Mary did not consider that Madame Chiang’s Chinese may have been fine, but that her understanding of the Sichuan dialect was poor. Rather, Mary identified that her English was probably good because she had attended an American university. Nonetheless, despite her initial questions about the Chiangs and her awareness of his limitations, Mary, as other Westerners, became enamored with Chiang and came to believe that he was the only man who could lead China. However, she was also aware of the disparity in China between the visibly increasing anti-foreignism and the rather less evident attraction of Chinese to things that were foreign, among them imported consumer products and English language lessons.

By the time that Mary was planning her third return trip to Canada, almost twenty years had passed. Once again, as she had done each time she had left China, she asked herself how much China had changed her. As well, as this final departure arrived, she reflected on the changes that had occurred in China. She knew that she had most certainly



changed; China was, according to her records, a much harder country in which to live than Canada, and she has aged accordingly. She wondered, in her self-reflective manner, whether she would “fit into Canada,” whether she would look odd and out-of-date. When she returned to China six years earlier, she had written that she was back “at home.”

Mary Lamb was almost certainly no longer a comfortable Canadian. After all, Canada had changed during the twenty years she had lived in China, and she had changed as well; yet she was no longer able to continue living in China. As she had been needed by her mother when she was nineteen or twenty years old, she was once again needed by a relative in Canada. Her term was up, and the relative’s circumstances encouraged her to make a decision not to return to China for a fourth term. Regardless of the events in Canada, Mary had apparently never considered living in China after she had retired from mission work. This woman, who balanced her pragmatic work style with self-reflection, summarized the changes that she witnessed in China: it was possible to fly (as she did) by airplane between major cities; it was difficult to find rickshaw and carriers any longer; the Yangzi River had become a venue for tourist trips; electricity was expected to be available city-wide; and the city water supply had been connected. However, Chungking remained a city of contrasts: the streets were the same as they had been so long ago, and she believed that the streets were evidence that there was still a lot of work for missionaries to do in West China. When she left China, Mary Lamb had become a China missionary; she was neither Canadian nor Chinese, but a woman who was loyal to and representative of both Canada and China. To a certain extent, she had managed to break down the walls that existed between Chinese and foreigners so that she might carry out

her own mission in China. Mary truly represents the growth of missionary experience in China, so at ease and so completely accepting of its culture.

Mary returned to a Canada that was quite unfamiliar to her. She had been steeped in everything that was China for twenty years, and had only reconnected with her Canadian “homeland” through the letters that she exchanged with Canadians and through her first and second furloughs. She returned to her “homefolk,” those women to whom she wrote her circular letters, as an outsider. Her furlough visits to Canada, between her terms in China, were representations of the knowledge of China and sensitivity to its people and culture which she wanted to transmit to Canadians. When she began to keep her first diary she identified that she was only doing so because it would serve as a record of her experiences and impressions, and thus enable her to write letters that would be meaningful. The stories that she sent home, although they lessened in number as the years passed, included a history of her life, of the lives of Chinese people around her and of events as they unfolded, and assuredly brought the realities of China to Canadians. The limited images of China that had accompanied her when she first embarked upon her missionary work were dramatically expanded during the years that she lived there, and these subsequent experiences and impressions undoubtedly affected the images of pre-1949 China held by her Canadian correspondents.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### AGNES HILLIARD

Agnes and Irwin Hilliard arrived in China in October 1938. That China was a country at war was undeniable; the second Sino-Japanese War had officially begun in 1937, and the rapid and merciless advances of the Japanese military, which would continue until its defeat in 1945, meant that China had become a militarized country.<sup>1</sup> Evidence of a country at war was abundant from the moment that their ship docked in China; war vessels were in China's harbors and soldiers were on its city streets. When the Hilliards reached their initial destination, Chengdu in Sichuan province, where they were assigned to spend their first year of language instruction, the war was evident once again. This time, it took on a different face; Nanjing was emptying as its residents fled to the "Free China" of Chiang Kai-shek, and although the destination of the refugees was the Sichuan city of Chongqing, Chengdu received the overflow. The presence of non-Sichuanese mushroomed as increasing numbers of so-called "down river" Chinese fled to the cities of Sichuan province. An outpost of Nanking University was established in the city. Many of the refugees were members of the university's faculty and student body; others were educated government officials and professionals; and still others were people who worked in displaced Nanjing industries. The smaller city of Foochow, where the Hilliards were stationed from October 1939 until the end of their term in China in 1944, was less affected by the movements of refugees. However, as the war continued, the Japanese turned to aerial attacks on Sichuan province. The city of Chongqing was the initial and

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<sup>1</sup> For in-text discussion and literature suggestions on the Sino-Japanese War, see footnote 12 in Chapter One.

primary target, but other cities were bombed as well. The presence and realities of war were felt in each of the cities in which the Hilliards lived. The couple tried to keep track of war-related events that were occurring in China, as well as in Europe. They were keenly aware of the European front of the Second World War, and became avid collectors of news from every source that was available to them, including newspapers, radio reports and accounts from newcomers and visitors. However, their primary focus was the work which they had come to do; Irwin's appointment as a medical missionary began with two years of language training for Agnes as well as Irwin. These were years in which the couple not only shared their Chinese language studies, but also established their recent marriage. Nonetheless, Agnes' reports reiterated, time and again, that Irwin was anxious to move beyond his language training and to get to work as a medical practitioner, work which he believed was needed and wanted, and to which he had dedicated the forthcoming years of his professional and private life. Agnes shared this commitment with him, and although she became an active member of the missionary community, participating as a full-fledged missionary wife, she too, was committed to Irwin's work as a physician and hospital administrator. This chapter, which is structured in an essentially chronological order, begins with a biographical sketch of Agnes Hilliard, which is then followed by a brief description of the archival sources pertaining to her. It continues with two narrative sections; the first is the story of her first year in China (1938) and the second is the narrative of the years in which she and Irwin were stationed in Foochow (1939-1944). This chapter concludes with thoughts about her experiences and impressions of China, in a section titled "Perspectives on Agnes Hilliard."

### **Biographical Sketch of Agnes Hilliard**

Agnes Hilliard, missionary-wife in West China from 1938 to 1944, was born Agnes Eva Magee in March 1915, and grew up in London, Ontario with her parents and her brother Fred. They were active members of the United Church and appear to have been quite representative of middle-class, Protestant urban Ontario families. The church formed a religious and social matrix for them, and it was not uncommon for parents and children to know of young men and women who had attended university and then gone on to become foreign missionaries.

The Magee family seems to have been particularly hardy and forward-looking and by early adulthood Agnes easily assumed that she was and would continue to be physically fit throughout her life.<sup>2</sup> This self-assuredness undoubtedly contributed to the choices that she made during her late teens and early twenties. She studied education at university, and when she completed her studies and began to work as a high school teacher, physical education was among the courses that she taught.

There is little recorded about her childhood. Her first appearance in the United Church missionary community seems to have been at the time of her marriage to Irwin McAmmond Hilliard, in the summer of 1938 when she was 23 years old. By that time she

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<sup>2</sup> 22 November 1938 Agnes wrote from China, "This past week hasn't been a very exciting one. Irwin has been in bed – his cold developed into a fever, but he is practically OK now, and will soon be up and around. Meanwhile I have been learning things I never knew before having always lived in a family where no one is ever sick." Letter from Agnes Hilliard to Mother, Dad, and Fred, 22 November 1938 (Accession number 86.319C, box 6: file 6, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, hereafter referred to as Letter to (name of recipient), date, (AH b:f: ). Accession 86.319C, which has six boxes of documents, is part of the Jolliffe Family Fonds. Box 6, files 6 to 13 hold the letters of Agnes Hilliard. Fred, one of the recipients of the letter is Agnes' brother.

had become a moderately experienced teacher, while Hilliard, who was exactly four years older than Agnes, had just completed his medical training at two hospitals in Toronto, the Hospital for Sick Children and the Toronto General Hospital.<sup>3</sup> His family's association with the United Church appears to have been more well-known than that of Agnes' family, and a United Church document written after the couple concluded their work in China identifies the Hilliards as "a distinguished Church family."<sup>4</sup> The Hilliard family was actively committed to foreign mission work and particularly to the West China mission field. Irwin's brother Foster preceded him as a foreign missionary, and his uncle, Rob Hilliard, had played an integral role in establishing the foundations of the Foochow, West China station.<sup>5</sup> Irwin applied to become a foreign missionary towards the completion of his medical training, and had already been appointed to the West China mission field before the couple was married.<sup>6</sup>

Marriage and life in China were inextricably linked for Agnes and Irwin; the couple left their homeland almost immediately after their wedding celebrations and arrived in China

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<sup>3</sup> Undated Curriculum Vitae, Irwin McAmmond Hilliard in Irwin Hilliard Biographical File, held at the United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, hereafter referred to as IHBF. Irwin's date of birth was March 24, 1911 which was the same day as Agnes' birthday. This shared birthday was something that they both enjoyed.

<sup>4</sup> Document titled "Dr. and Mrs. Irwin M. Hilliard," undated in IHBF.

<sup>5</sup> In fact Mary Letitia Lamb had worked with Rob and his wife Claudia in Foochow, and in the last years of her own tenure in China, also worked with Irwin and Agnes Hilliard. Agnes' letters have an excerpt from a letter that Lamb wrote to Rob and Claudia about Irwin and Agnes. Letter to Mother and Dad, 27 December 1939 (6:8). Concrete evidence of "Uncle Rob's" presence remained in the peach trees that he had planted on the mission property, the bungalow on the hills that he had built, and perhaps most importantly, the small church that he had also erected where missionaries and congregants continued to gather during the younger Hilliards' term in Foochow. See Letter to Mother and Dad, 24 April 1939 (AH 6:7), Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 24 May 1939 (AH 6:8), Letter to Mother Dad and Fred, 17 July 1939 (AH 6:8), and Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 3 October 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>6</sup> IHBF.

in the fall of 1938. They both recognized that Agnes' primary commitment was to be a good wife, a serious undertaking that included becoming a good housekeeper and making a good home. She would prove determined in her efforts to observe and understand China and its people, and to a lesser extent to bring some of the benefits enjoyed by Canadians (a far more advanced nation by her 1938 assessment) to Chinese with whom she had the opportunity to become acquainted. Agnes Hilliard departed from the west coast of Canada aboard the *Empress of Asia*, seemingly without any prejudices of note other than her underlying confidence in the superiority of the contemporary British-Canadian lifestyle, a superiority that embraced all of its components, from its society and economy to its culture and undoubtedly its religion.

Once they approached the shores of China the young couple experienced snapshot-like impressions in their brief stopovers along the way to Chengtu. Their ship initially docked in Japan, where the passengers were faced with undeniable images of a militarized country.<sup>7</sup> The next stopping point was Shanghai, where they were confronted with a notably militarized Chinese city, as the Japanese armed presence was impossible to ignore.<sup>8</sup> They disembarked from their ship for the final time in Hong Kong, where the Hilliards looked forward to the opportunity to reorganize themselves and their belongings and embark upon some long-awaited shopping in Hong Kong before traveling on to West China.<sup>9</sup> Their travel arrangements, which were so different from those of Lena Jolliffe

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<sup>7</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 17 September 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>8</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 19 September 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>9</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 28 September 1938 (AH 6:6).

and Mary Lamb, were the result of the Sino-Japanese War and the Japanese occupation of eastern China. It was at this juncture that Agnes and Irwin separated. Irwin was assigned to a small road convoy that carried their luggage and other cargo via Burma into West China.<sup>10</sup> Agnes and a small group of fellow missionaries traveled from Hong Kong to West China by a different route: by steamer to Haiphong and then Hanoi; then by train through Indochina to the Chinese city of Yunnan fu (which was also referred to as Kunming as Agnes reported); and then by air to Chungking, which was West China's largest city and the centre of Chiang Kai-shek's "Free China." At this juncture, in October 1938, she and her fellow travelers split up, and each went on to his or her assigned West China location. In Chungking Agnes stopped over at the newly constructed mission hospital compound, which at that time included three houses, two for its physicians and one for the nurse. Agnes knew that it was possible that one of the newly arrived missionaries, perhaps Irwin or their traveling companion Ralph Outerbridge, would be assigned to Chungking after the term of language training had been completed, and so she was particularly concerned about her impressions of the mission station and its surroundings. However, the stopover was very brief, as she spent a night, a day and then a partial second night in the city, and then arose at 4:30 A.M. in order to catch the early morning flight for Chengtu, the last leg of her trip which was only an hour and twenty minutes away by airplane. It was the middle of October when Agnes reached her destination, and to her dismay, Irwin had not yet arrived in the city.<sup>11</sup> It took almost another month before the couple was reunited in their new home in Chengtu.

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<sup>10</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 5 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>11</sup> Letter to Mother and Father, 10 October 1938 (AH 6:6); Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 1 November 1938 (AH 6:6).



The Hilliard's initial assignment, which would prove to be a relatively lengthy one, was to learn how to speak, read and write Chinese. The couple lived in Chengtu and attended the city's missionary language school for a little over a year, from October 1938 to the following November, although according to mission regulations they were expected to undergo two full years of language training. According to the Canadian administrators of China missions, and indeed to experienced China missionaries as well, adequate language acquisition was essential to all of their subsequent work. As we shall see when we follow the Hilliards from Chengtu to their medical missionary assignment in Foochow, they did continue to engage in language lessons for the requisite time period.

The Chengtu mission compound was an enclosed property just beyond the South Gate of the city. It was a large property and its buildings were quite far apart.<sup>12</sup> Among the buildings that the compound housed was the Canadian children's school, which was a boarding school for the children of the West China Canadian missionaries. It was here that Mary Lamb had spent her first term in China, from 1920 to 1926, as matron of the school. There were two hospitals (a men's and a women's), the technical part of a broadcasting station (although the studio was in the city centre), tennis courts, and the language school (which accepted non-missionary students). The Chengtu mission field was even more multifaceted than usual when the Hilliards arrived in the late 1930s,

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<sup>12</sup> This distance between houses was a uniquely Western one in Chengtu. The proximity of Chinese buildings to one another caused great concern among the missionaries. Agnes Hilliard and Mary Lamb both recorded their worries, as they knew that when fire broke out in any building, it almost always traveled quickly and devastatingly through adjacent buildings, and continued until it eventually burned itself out. Both women wrote about residents tearing down their own homes so that a fire might be slowed down.

because the campus had become the home of many refugees from, as Agnes called them, the “down-river” colleges. As Chungking became increasingly crowded with Chinese who were fleeing Japanese occupied China for the safety of Chiang Kai-shek’s “Free China,” refugees pushed further into West China and tried to settle in Chengtu. Among Chiang’s followers and supporters were university faculty and students, and the Chengtu mission compound became the home, in particular, of many people from Nanking University.

The Hilliards lived in two homes during their year in Chengtu. They initially boarded with the Hibbards, a family composed of a veteran missionary couple: Mr. Hibbard was the treasurer of the mission; three adolescent children (plus a son who was in Canada at the time); and an assortment of animals which included a monkey and a baby wildcat.<sup>13</sup> Their home was located on the campus and it provided the insularity which helped Agnes to become adjusted to her new larger (China) surroundings. Agnes and Irwin paid for their room and board; the only additional cost that they incurred was for fuel for the fireplace in their own room.<sup>14</sup> In late March 1939 when the opportunity arose to move into the home of a Church of England (C.E.M.) missionary, George Eliot, whose fellow boarder and colleague had recently been reassigned to another location, the couple decided to leave the by-then familiar and comfortable home of the Hibbards to share the C.E.M. accommodations with Eliot. They thought that Agnes might have the chance to become the principal homemaker, a role that appeared appropriate to them after a year of

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<sup>13</sup> Letter to Mother and Father, 10 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>14</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 1 November 1938 (6:6).

marriage spent in someone else's home. They remained in this second house until the end of their Chengtu language study term, only leaving it in order to spend summer holidays on the hills above the city, where the climate was a little more amenable and the company and activities a little more diverse. Their first spring/summer, in 1939, was spent up at Mt. Omei which was a famous West China destination for sightseers, as well as a regular spot for vacationing missionaries. That summer they had the companionship of many colleagues, as well as all of the children from the Canadian boarding school; the latter group (of 44 children) had been sent up to the resort in order to escape the dangers of Japanese air attacks on the city.<sup>15</sup>

The focus of activities each day in Chengtu, for both of the Hilliards, was their rigorous language study, although Agnes and Irwin were also encouraged to carve out some time for other pursuits. The seasoned missionaries led the Hilliards into their established missionary social circle, and also earmarked them for a variety of church-related activities. Being guests at dinners moved quite seamlessly into becoming the hosts of other evening get-togethers, and as soon as the community recognized any type of skill at all, the newcomers were assigned to fill needs and roles as they arose. Agnes quickly became an expert at playing the organ, at identifying and gathering important or interesting news items, and at teaching Sunday school classes. The students from Nanking University identified Agnes as a good resource person, and she headed some of their extra-curricular activities, such as volleyball and theatre. However, she also found enterprises that were of interest to her, and became involved, for example, in teaching

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<sup>15</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 15 May 1939 (AH 6:8).

physical education to the Canadian school girls. It was in Chengtu that Agnes assumed the role of homemaker for the first time, and tried to learn about and master the many facets of housekeeping that presented themselves to her in China. As well, Chengtu became a microcosm of China for her, as she occasionally visited tourist sites, went into the city to shop, and attended celebratory street festivals for Chinese holidays. Irwin's eagerness to engage in medical work was somewhat satisfied, as he was occasionally asked to see patients if the hospital physicians were unavailable and spent some time studying indigenous infectious diseases, but both Hilliards were reminded that their language studies must be completed before he could regularly practice as a physician in China.

In the autumn of 1939 the Hilliards were sent to Foochow, and Irwin was advised that as soon as his language training requirements had been fulfilled, he would begin his assignment as a medical missionary.<sup>16</sup> Only a few weeks earlier, when they were still on Mt. Omei above Chengtu as the summer drew to a close, the Hilliards had expressed their increasing desire to be sent to the Foochow station. The impressive Hilliard family presence in mission work there, the excellent reputation of the Foochow hospital, and the relative youthfulness of the city's resident missionary couple combined to make Foochow a very attractive venue for the Hilliards. Therefore, when the news arrived that Irwin was to be appointed physician-in-chief of the Canadian mission hospital, the couple was overjoyed. Although Irwin had looked forward to returning to Chengtu with Ralph Outerbridge in order to continue their interesting and much-needed study of special

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<sup>16</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 21 August 1939 (AH 6-8).

diseases, the Foochow assignment outweighed any disappointment that he might have felt.

Foochow was a relatively small Canadian mission station; its size meant that it not only offered the potential for the missionaries to work closely with the city's Chinese population, but also the likely difficulty of fairly limited resources. Its medical facilities had an excellent reputation; the hospital was considered a first class facility, as was the nurses' training school (which the Foochow mission had begun despite the reticence of the supervisory mission council). There was the opportunity, indeed the necessity, of its residents becoming involved in many activities and enterprises, but there was the downside of being understaffed and sometimes even under the threat of dissolution. Life was quite simple and straightforward for its residents, as there were few servants to manage and still fewer social events to attend. However, many services and consumable items were unavailable in Foochow and so missionaries needed to make the long trip back to Chungking (or even up to Chengtu) for services such as dental work, or items such as parts that were necessary to repair a (much appreciated) radio.

The Foochow mission compound, which was well-situated atop a hill, was lovely and spacious. Three of its four residences were located at the top of the hill, each with a front lawn. The hospital, which was assuredly the focal point of the station, and the fourth house were situated further down the hill adjacent to the compound gate. Fruit trees flourished on the property and between the uppermost houses was a tennis court. When the Hilliards settled in, they set up a badminton court as well. Although Agnes had heard

about the fine quality of the Foochow houses, she found that because the one in which they settled had not been regularly occupied for several years, the flowers in the garden required some extra care and the house required additional attention. The Foochow hospital was a reputable hospital, but it also had not had a foreign physician in attendance for several years. Although its financial resources were strained, it was a very good hospital, quite well supplied and in good order when they arrived, only lacking in electricity and perhaps some special items which Irwin identified as he established himself. Electricity at the time was only available within the city walls and even there, it was quite unreliable. The Woman's Missionary Society did have electricity installed in its two schools and its houses, all of which were located within the city of Foochow.

Irwin's appointment as hospital superintendent, physician, and surgeon as well as teacher in the Nurses' Training School, also inherently included the (unstated but assumed) appointment as colleague to Foochow's missionaries and missionary to the city's Chinese population. These titles or roles reflect the diverse expectations and demands placed upon him in his work in Foochow. The hospital managed to attract many residents of Foochow to its in-hospital and out-patient facilities. Irwin visited Chinese and missionary patients in their homes, and when necessary, he accompanied his patients to the larger medical facilities in Chungking or Chengtu. He occasionally joined evangelical missionaries on their itinerating trips to outstations and other facilities, among them nearby prisons, military hospitals and opium treatment centers. However, for the most part his work was limited to and focused upon the city's Canadian medical facilities.

Agnes, alongside Irwin, taught in the Nurses Training School, was a colleague to all of the members of the city's foreign community and to some extent, a missionary to the Chinese. As she had done in Chengtu, Agnes accepted the responsibility and indeed volunteered to do all sorts of work in Foochow. She assisted Irwin at the hospital, entertained Chinese visitors and established an interactive relationship with the rest of the little Canadian missionary community.<sup>17</sup> The Canadians lived so nearby to each another that they frequently, but always according to plans made in advance, ate meals with one another. Agnes played an active part in church services, which distinguished her from many other missionary wives who were unwilling or reticent to conduct Sunday worship. And finally, Agnes' role as missionary wife became more complex as her family expanded; she gave birth to two children while living in Foochow. Ann Pashley was born in 1941 and Robert Irwin, known as Robbie, was born two years later in 1943. Nonetheless, even with its complexities, Agnes' life in Foochow remained quite simple and restrained compared to the lives of her colleagues in larger centers. The Hilliards' semi-formal get-togethers with people from their own community were interspersed with considerable dining, entertaining and mixing with Chinese, although these occasions were a little more formal, and included students from the nursing school and members of the Chinese Foochow community, among them individuals interested in the church, generals and their wives, and hospital workers.

The Hilliards remained in Foochow until the time of Irwin's furlough, at the end of 1944.

Their journey to Canada was difficult to arrange, undoubtedly due to the difficulties

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<sup>17</sup> At times the hospital was without a foreign nurse, and so Agnes found herself being trained by Irwin to carry out a variety of nursing responsibilities.

imposed by the continuing war in China and in Europe. Although they elected to travel to Canada via India, the Hilliards reported in January 1945, from India, that they were having difficulty securing passage to Canada.<sup>18</sup> It is unclear how long they remained in India, and exactly when the family finally arrived in Canada. Although they had spent only one term in China, Agnes and Irwin never returned to missionary work. Irwin had arranged to do post-graduate work while on furlough, and was appointed Research Fellow in cardiology at the Toronto General Hospital upon returning to Canada in 1945. After two years he received an appointment as Fellow and Junior Demonstrator, Research and Pulmonary Function at the Toronto Western Hospital. Two years later, in 1949, Hilliard was appointed Clinical Teacher at the University of Toronto, and the couple officially resigned from the West China mission.<sup>19</sup> The couple had two more children after they left China, and Irwin continued his career as a physician and hospital administrator in Canada. Irwin Hilliard died on October 4, 2000 in Scarborough, Ontario at the age of eighty-nine. If still alive, Agnes would be nine-two.

### Archival Holdings

While she was in China Agnes Hilliard wrote letters to her family. During the first two years, from 1938 to 1940, she wrote to them quite regularly; she usually sent off a letter every Sunday, but when she missed a Sunday she tried to replace the missing letter with another by mid-week. From 1940 until 1944 she continued to write to them, but her

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<sup>18</sup> Letter to Family from Irwin, 8 January 1945 (AH 6-13).

<sup>19</sup> Documents titled "Dr. and Mrs. Irwin M. Hilliard, undated in IHBF; Curriculum Vitae of Dr. Irwin McAmmond Hilliard in IHBF, Untitled document in IHBF, and an undated copy of an article about Irwin published in the newsletter *West Winds, A Monthly Capsule of Activities at the Toronto Western Hospital* in IHBF.



letters were sent more infrequently. She did continue to apologize for her lapses, but she did not reestablish herself as a weekly correspondent. We might speculate that she had less need for regular contact with her family, or perhaps that she was simply busier (as she explained to them) and had less time to keep up this orderly correspondence. In any case, her letters provide the reader with her continuing and changing views about her life in China and about China itself. Increasingly, her letters tend to be written over several days; this, she occasionally suggested, was because she was too busy to complete the letter, or because so many things had happened, and so she wanted to continue writing in order to send along the story of the events to her Canadian family. Although there are some letters written by Irwin to his own family, they are far fewer in number than those of Agnes. However, he frequently added a postscript at the end of Agnes' letters, extolling her virtues as a letter writer, explaining that he could never do such a good job, and most interestingly, appending, in a sentence or two, his own observation of an event that she had described or his explanation of an experience or event that he found that she had left out. His comments are particularly useful to Agnes' readers as they provide a little additional information from which we can construct a more complete or perhaps simply a more detailed impression of her days. Agnes did not seem to have kept any personal diaries; if she did, then they are either unavailable or have not been submitted to the archives. However, perhaps because her letters were written to her parents and her brother, they are quite personal and revealing of her experiences and impressions. While it is evident that both Agnes and Irwin (in his post-scripts) wanted to share the steps that they were taking in establishing themselves as a married couple and then as a family with children, it is also apparent that Agnes wanted to transmit information about China, about

the country, the people and the work of the missionaries to Canadians who wished to learn about China through her eyes.

Agnes' letters, all of which appear to have been re-typed, are located within the Jolliffe family archival holdings.<sup>20</sup> It is unclear why this is so; perhaps as the Archives suggests, the Jolliffe family deposited the letters at the United Church of Canada Archives. They do not appear to have been edited in any way, as there are no editorial comments found in them as there are in Lena Jolliffe's letters.

#### **First year in China (1938-1939)**

This section begins with Agnes Hilliard's voyage to China. When she arrived in the West China city of Chengtu, she earnestly began her Chinese language training. She and Irwin settled into their marriage together, and Agnes strove with great dedication to become an excellent missionary wife. As the year progressed, Agnes added a variety of community activities to her language studies. She also became an avid gatherer of information on the war in China, and aimed to be an accurate war reporter in her letters to Canada.

*A young missionary wife en route to West China, October 1938*

Agnes Hilliard's first letters to her family, written from British Columbia immediately after she had boarded the *Empress of Asia*, raised the issues of leaving home, of dealing with separation from her family, and as well, of her parents separating from her. Initially, she may have deliberately tried to temper the consequences of her departure by

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<sup>20</sup> Finding Aid 55, Jolliffe Family Fonds, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

reassuring her parents, and perhaps by reminding them of the importance of her new venture. When she suggested to them, “try to have faith in the future,” she may very well have been advising that she was aware that they would miss her, but that she and Irwin had dedicated themselves to very important work in China. Alternately, she may have been encouraging them to think that she would not be gone for too long. However, undoubtedly she was also telling them that she actually felt uprooted herself, and that leaving her home had not been easy for her, when she wrote quite simply, “I am doing my best.”<sup>21</sup> The importance and closeness of her family’s relationship becomes even more apparent in her two accounts of her departure from Canada, first from Vancouver and then from Victoria. From Vancouver, her letter conveyed her dejection, when she wrote that she was saddened when she had peered down from their ship as it pulled out of port and could not find anyone to whom they might wave good-bye. However, after the ship left the docks of Victoria, her letter reported a sense of well-being, explaining that in Victoria some extended family members had presented themselves at the ship and had even come aboard in order to see the cabin in which the young couple would be traveling across the Pacific.<sup>22</sup> This brief demonstration by a caring family almost certainly enabled Agnes to write to her parents in a far more cheerful frame of mind about leaving the shores of her homeland.

She and Irwin Hilliard had married just two weeks prior to their departure from Canada, and so the early weeks of Agnes’ married life were spent aboard the ship. They readily became used to living together, and Agnes recognized the change in her life as she began

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<sup>21</sup> Undated letter to Mother and Dad, (AH 6:6).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

to make the transition from life as a single young woman to a newly married wife. She explained this change in a letter to her parents and brother, “We have come a long way in the past month in becoming one with each other and we are very thankful for it and for the way in which we have been able to adjust to each other and to live very closely together.”<sup>23</sup> This new status brought with it responsibilities, and Irwin, in one of his occasional postscripts to Agnes’ letters, also reflected upon their first month together. Agnes, he somewhat humorously advised, has not been able to have much of a holiday as she was busy keeping him “looking respectable” as she “washes and irons” his clothes. He explained how well they were doing together in an account which continued to underscore this new role that Agnes has taken on, writing, “However she takes her job seriously and makes me realize again and again what a lucky man I am.”<sup>24</sup> This consciousness of being a couple and of being bound together so strongly certainly began in these early days as they traveled to China and perhaps because of their quite unique initiation into marriage, becoming a foreign missionary couple just two weeks after their wedding, it continued to be a remarkable element in their lives in China.

Aboard ship Agnes was immediately impressed by the difference, or perhaps even disparity between everything that she had known and her new surroundings. Labeling it “the atmosphere of the Orient,” she recorded, “...the cabin boys, the waiters etc. are Chinese and jabber away to each other in Chinese all the time – it sounds most disconcerting. I’m afraid that I will never master this language – it sounds terrible!

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<sup>23</sup> Agnes Hilliard, letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, September 13, 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

However that remains to be seen.<sup>25</sup> In fact, Agnes was unknowingly predicting many of her future appraisals of her own language acquisition and ability. She would always be more self-conscious and far more critical of her own language skills than those of Irwin; yet she was very aware that unless they were at ease with the language, their activities would assuredly be limited.

Their sea-voyage offered them the opportunity to meet fellow missionary travelers and as they crossed the ocean, they joined in discussions about the status of their work in China, particularly in the context of the Japanese military occupation of areas in which they had established missionary stations.<sup>26</sup> In a postscript to one of Agnes' letters to her family, Irwin advised that they had learned that many missionary stations in the eastern part of China had been completely closed and the workers displaced. It was not at all clear when or even whether these fields would be reopened. In fact, the only certainty that Irwin could identify was the ongoing or accelerated need for medical missionaries, as the war had meant that there were more patients in the hospitals, and the hospitals required more health-care workers.<sup>27</sup> Once again, this early narrative is a predictor of a topic that would appear repeatedly in Agnes' letters; Japan's military intervention was something that would concern Agnes and she would become an adept reporter of the war when she related her own experiences and evaluated the reports of others in the letters that she wrote to her parents in Canada.

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<sup>25</sup> Undated letter to Mother and Dad, (AH 6:6).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad and Fred, 13 September 1938 (AH 6:6).

The time spent traveling across the ocean seems to have encouraged Agnes and Irwin to speculate about all sorts of missionary-related topics, from the way that they and their colleagues dressed and talked to the roles that missionaries might play in the coming of age of China. Irwin revealed a hint of self-consciousness about becoming missionaries when he suggested that perhaps missionaries were not quite as odd as he had expected. He wrote, "Missionaries except for Agnes and me are not really a queer bunch (we may be) but the ones on board with us are on the whole very fine and some in particular have been most friendly and kind in taking us into their community."<sup>28</sup> Actually, Margaret and Ralph Outerbridge, a young couple whom they met on the ship, remained their friends throughout their years in China. The Outerbridges were also on their way to West China as novice medical missionaries; she was a nurse and he a physician. Undoubtedly, Irwin did not really think that he and Agnes were odd at all; rather, he was identifying the stereotype that had been constructed about missionaries, and he also may have been identifying the impact that years of living in China would have upon them. It was almost certainly the discussions among the travelers that sparked his comments about the importance of their work in China. He explained his belief that China was poised to accept and make use of something from the West. He did not clearly identify what the West might bring to China when he stated, "One thing is very apparent – the future of China is in the West."<sup>29</sup> He may have been thinking about the vacuum that emerged after the collapse of the Qing dynasty, when he turned his attention to West China and continued, "The mission work in Szechwan is having a marvelous opportunity of helping

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<sup>28</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad and Fred, 13 September 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

to lay broad and firm the principles of Christianity in the young and plastic mind of a new nation. It is a great privilege to be able to have a part in this work.”<sup>30</sup> Perhaps Irwin had situated their work in the context of foreign advisors to China; just as the young Chinese intellectuals of the previous generation had looked to the West for answers, this generation of Chinese would benefit from the work of Irwin and his colleagues. However, if this was so, Irwin had not considered, or perhaps did not know that young Chinese intellectuals did not intend to encourage Christianity or religion to play a role in defining their modern China.

The *Empress of Asia* arrived in Japan, its first port of call, after two weeks at sea and the passengers had the opportunity to visit Yokohama and then Kobe. Agnes wrote to her parents about the beauty of Japan, and then described her steady adaptation to the East.

By now I am getting accustomed to the Oriental sing-song and it is beginning to feel quite natural to be in the East. Everything is a quaint and queer mixture of the Oriental and Western world – the costumes and the stores but the houses and the scenery are really Japanese and just like the pictures we have always seen.<sup>31</sup>

She seemed to be finding some familiarity in what she observed, sorting out what was Western-like and what was different, and was able to return to photographs that she had seen in Canada in order to organize her experiences and define some comparisons and contrasts between what were now her two worlds.

Shanghai, which was Agnes’ introduction to China, was a scheduled port-of-call for the ship before it reached its destination of Hong Kong. While in the harbor awaiting

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<sup>30</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad and Fred, 13 September 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>31</sup> Agnes Hilliard, letter to Mother and Dad, September 16, 1938 (AH 6:6).

entrance to the city, Agnes and Irwin had their first experience with the war; however, the experience had more to do with the imminent declaration of war in Europe than with the already existing militarization of China. The passengers had been told that if war was declared in Europe, their stopover would be cancelled and the ship would go straight on to Hong Kong. They went to bed that night, worrying about the future of Europe and not knowing where they would be when they awakened the following morning.<sup>32</sup> This scene reminds us of Mary Lamb's wartime experiences in Shanghai, when she and her housemates were roused from their homes in the night and they tried to sort out what was really going on.<sup>33</sup> The *Empress of Asia* did remain in Shanghai, and Agnes' account transmitted her first sight of the river and of China when she wrote, "But in the early morning light when we stuck our heads out of the window, there were the rusty, muddy waters of the Yangtze River so we knew we were headed for Shanghai."<sup>34</sup> The overriding concerns about Europe that she had described the previous night appear to have broadened to include unease about China, which was undoubtedly stirred by the sights that she saw in Shanghai that day. The incongruous images of commerce and war were self-evident, and may have encouraged Agnes to declare her allegiance to China, when she wrote:

It gave us a queer feeling to see war ruins along the shore, transport ships, Japanese soldiers, Japanese destroyers and Japanese flags flying everywhere. It touched our sympathy for China – but all is very quiet and alongside the war boats are commercial boats from all countries – U.S., Germany, Norway, Italy etc.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Letter to Mother, 19 September 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>33</sup> Letter to People, 15 April 1927 (MLL 1:8).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



But she returned to her still present worries about Europe. “We saw a beauty of a warship, a French one, going downriver and heard that it had been called home (or elsewhere) and that the British destroyer had already left. Europe is certainly having a bad time right now.”<sup>36</sup> It is difficult to know from her report whether Agnes actually found the co-existence of war and international commerce odd; however, it is certain that she was disheartened by the evidence of war that she saw later that day in the city.

In the afternoon a larger group of us hired a bus that drove us through the devastated areas of Shanghai that are still policed by Japanese soldiers. It was a terrible sight and it was very pathetic to think that once those ruins were streets swarming with people as in the International Settlement.<sup>37</sup>

After only a few weeks of travel, Agnes was ready to integrate her experiences and record some of her impressions of the cities that she had visited. Her identification of the disparities of privilege and poverty emerged, and when she concluded her description with an encounter that she has had with Shanghai’s beggars, the reader senses that she was trying to understand her new environment. Agnes’ intuitive reaction to the beggars that she saw was quite different from her actual interaction with them, as she quickly recognized that the reaction of the public to the beggars was circumscribed by behaviors long since worked out, worked out in society and by Agnes’ more experienced colleagues.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Letter to People, 15 April 1927 (MLL 1:8).

<sup>37</sup> Letter to Mother, 19 September 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>38</sup> For a discussion of popular culture in Chengdu, and particularly of commoners (including beggars) and public space, see Di Wang, *Street Culture in Chengdu: Public Space, Urban Environment and Local Politics, 1870-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

Shanghai, like the Japanese cities and even more so, is a strange mixture of the East and the West – very modern and beautiful buildings side by side with dirty little shops and broad paved streets with street-cars, buses, and rickshaws and traffic lights, side by side with dingy alleys. The streets swarm with people – some prosperous, some pathetically poor. The beggars bothered me a bit. I would have liked to help them all but it is evidently not the thing to do for most of them are professionals at their jobs and they can be a terrible nuisance if you pay them anything.<sup>39</sup>

Hong Kong, as the final port of call on their ocean journey, perhaps appropriately allowed and indeed encouraged Agnes to join together in some fashion the worlds of the West and the East. Her impressions of Hong Kong were clearly conveyed in her first words about it, as she quite exuberantly wrote, “Here we are actually in Hong Kong. To be really seeing and experiencing things that we all see in pictures is really wonderful.”<sup>40</sup> Once again, Agnes compared the sights that she was actually seeing to photographs that she had seen at home. We cannot know whether she had studied images of China in preparation for her journey, or whether she simply enjoyed seeing pictures of foreign lands.<sup>41</sup> She does suggest that her own audience, the recipients of her letters, shared her interest and that they would understand her pleasure at actually being in these faraway places. Perhaps these stored images reveal an adventurous spirit among all of them. It is in her description of her Kowloon lodgings and her shopping expeditions that Agnes

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<sup>39</sup> Letter to Mother, 19 September 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>39</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 28 September 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> In her letter to her parents, written on October 5, 1938, when Agnes reviewed her experiences thus far, she indicated that she had seen photos of China in books, magazines and in the movies. (See quotation and footnote 53 a little further on this chapter.) As well, given the commitment of the Hilliard family to China, there was probably an abundance of photographs and literature available to Agnes and Irwin through his family.

described the meeting of East and West, as her characterless hotel contrasted vividly with the sensation-filled shops. She wrote:

This is a very modern and substantial looking apartment sort of place where the rooms are large and airy, the beds uncomfortable, and the meals unattractive. However it could be worse. We have spent the days since then in one mad rush of shopping which, in addition to the heat (like August at its worst at home) and dampness have already almost exhausted us completely – not quite... We have bought groceries in a funny, dingy little Chinese shop on a narrow crowded little street – fortunately the food is canned or tinned some way or another – but the man is very reliable, reasonable and has an extensive trade – so it might be worse. After sitting there for two hours one afternoon, Mrs. Rackham and I were sure we were covered with fleas but it was just the power of suggestion that hovered over the place.<sup>42</sup>

Her reports of the shopping expeditions in which the West China-bound missionaries immersed themselves encourage us to think of Hong Kong as both the entrance to China and the exit from Canada. They were swept up in their determination to buy all the supplies they might want but would be unable to purchase in West China. They went over to the shops of Hong Kong each morning, returned back to Kowloon at noon, and then either returned to Hong Kong or made do with the shops of Kowloon each afternoon.

Agnes informed us of some of the results of her efforts:

We have bought two bicycles in an equally funny sort of place where no one at all spoke English. One man managed to speak with one of our men with difficulty due to the difference between Cantonese and the West China dialect. However we got the cycles – good English ones and quite cheap – everything seems to be more or less cheap when you exchange Hong Kong dollars back into Canadian ones with \$3.25 to 1.00. But food is very costly...I have worn out shoe leather shopping for mosquito nets, woolen stockings, a grass rug etc. etc. It has been quite a job and much worse than I expected.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Agnes advises that Mrs. Rackham was the Acting Matron, Canadian School.

<sup>43</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 28 September 1938 (AH 6:6).

The westernized parts of Hong Kong acted as a counter or a balance to its Chinese parts for Agnes; the former were lovely in their familiarity while the latter were challenging in their difference. Her experiences reveal her appreciation of the “British atmosphere,” her enjoyment of the city’s exoticism, and her disapproval of its poverty.

We have enjoyed Hong Kong more than the other large cities we have seen in the East – perhaps more because we have been here longer and have seen more of it, perhaps because of the British atmosphere of the place. The buildings in the business district and here where we live are solid and substantial and English looking. In the cities the big buildings are all of stone and have arcades that you walk under. The street cars are English and run alongside of rickshaws and sedan chairs... There are a great many Hindu Sikh policemen, - very romantic looking in bright turbans, black beards and khaki shorts – the funny part is that they can’t speak English as I found out one day when I almost got lost looking for a curtain store and wandering around the Chinese section.<sup>44</sup>

It was when she and Irwin visited one of the city’s outlying fishing villages that the lives of Hong Kong’s poor became difficult for her to accept. As she wrote,

...a quaint Chinese fishing village, with swarms of junks, sampans, and houseboats. To see the hundreds of house boats, dirty and unattractive jammed together at the water’s edge, you’d wonder how the people lived. Maybe they do escape taxes but the lack of fresh air; sanitation etc. must cause much disease and suffering.”<sup>45</sup>

The West China-bound missionaries began their inland trip at the beginning of October, 1938 without the company of Irwin, who had been asked (together with a fellow missionary) to transport their baggage on another route, and it was on this part of her journey that we find Agnes shifting from her identity as a tourist to that of a missionary.<sup>46</sup>

They planned to travel via steamer to the Indo-China city of Haiphong, by train

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<sup>44</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 28 September 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Agnes notes that the men drove two trucks inland, “from Ft. Bayard in Fr. Indo-China,” en route to Chungking.

northward through Indo-China to Yunnan-fu, and then by plane to China's Chungking. Haiphong was unremittingly hot and Agnes was undoubtedly lonely, and so for the first time she longed to find herself somewhere else, in a missionary community which would seem more familiar. Her loneliness for Canada was likely triggered or at least exacerbated by her separation from Irwin. She wrote that Haiphong was so hot that the only activity that her group could bear was complete inactivity. Her report leaves little doubt that she had left her exuberance and energy behind in Hong Kong, when she wrote, "We did nothing but lie around our hotel rooms." She continued, explaining that although the accommodations were fine, the food was not. "Fortunately the hotel rooms are large and airy and kept cool by large fans in the ceiling. The beds were very hard and the French meals not too good." She was as uninterested in the ten-course meal they were served as in the wine that they were given as a substitute for the water which was unsafe to drink.<sup>47</sup>

The train trip northward was a much more positive experience for Agnes, as she settled into traveling and was once again surrounded by sights that fascinated her. The missionaries were quite insulated from other passengers on the train; they had their own car which meant that they had ample room to spread out and a small kitchen in which they put their alcohol stoves and so had boiled water to drink and well-cooked food to eat. She wrote that the French inns in which they slept each night were unexpectedly good, and so we must assume that the train stopped overnight and that its passengers were able to find alternate accommodations if they chose to do so. Agnes wrote about the

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<sup>47</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 5 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

beauty of the scenery, and perhaps in the tradition of all travelers, she found herself comparing it to her homeland. Initially, the fields appeared remarkably like those in Ontario, but Agnes had to acknowledge that the comparison was not really very apt.

The clumps of trees were tropical trees and the white buildings were not barns but shrines in the middle of the fields...a close-up of the people clothed in very little but a big straw hat working with very primitive and crude implements. Their houses of straw and thatch and bamboo with mud yards with banana and palm trees shading them and their water buffalo with gray hides and huge horns easily convinced you that this was not Canada but some strange country.<sup>48</sup>

As the train made its way up into a mountainous region, Agnes' narrative seems to shrink the landscape into something that has the familiarity of children's tales. The train became a little train that was determined to conquer the mountain, and the mountain people became colorful characters that were present to interact with the travelers. She wrote, "...our little train on its one-gauge track climbing up the remarkable grades and tearing through the tunnels at a great rate – about 120, some in rapid succession."<sup>49</sup> When it stopped at villages along the way, it seemed that people "in the hundreds" crowded against the train. One village's market-day stalls were worryingly close to the railroad tracks, and the crowds of people were unconcernedly pressed against Agnes and her companions as they tried to climb down from the train. The clothing of the villagers was so remarkable that Agnes wrote about it as costume rather than clothing, advising that the people were dressed in "very elaborate costumes – high headdresses made of plain or chequered cloth, very full skirts of the same material and covered with silver jewelry – rings, bracelets and big combs in their hair."<sup>50</sup> Despite her interest in all of her

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<sup>48</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 5 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 5 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

surroundings, Agnes recognized that she continued to miss Irwin and wrote, “After being together for everything I was pretty lonesome most of the time.”<sup>51</sup>

As she neared the end of her trip inland, Agnes appears to have been ambivalent about the China that she had seen; China was neither, in her words, as strange as it might have been, nor was it as wonderful as she had expected. In fact, Agnes was not at all sure that she was going to enjoy living in China. The images that she had created from photographs had managed to pre-empt some of the strangeness of China for her. However, her train trip had emphasized the Chinese-ness of China; in just a few days she had left the cosmopolitan cities of Shanghai and Hong Kong, and entered the beautiful and fascinating but different world of China. The truth was that Agnes was looking forward to living in a missionary compound which would protect her from the streets of China and give her some time to adjust to this very foreign land.<sup>52</sup> She wrote,

Somehow or other things don't seem so strange as I had expected – perhaps because I have seen so many pictures of this sort of thing in magazines, books and movies but I am not sure how long my liking for it will last. I think it is a good thing that we are going to live in the University Campus at first while we are at language school and getting adjusted to the country – life there will be more like home – but I am afraid that there will be times when we yearn for a good Canadian meal and our own people. However we will see – so far all has gone well though I have been more homesick since leaving Hong Kong than before – partly I guess because we are getting farther inland and farther away from foreign things and seeing more of Chinese life but mostly because I haven't got anyone I'm really fond of and Irwin seems so far away.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> For further discussion of the strangeness of the mission field to newly arrived missionaries, particularly newly arrived (American) China missionaries, see Jane Hunter's text, *The Gospel of Gentility, American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

<sup>53</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 5 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

Agnes had quite accurately estimated her needs; Chungking at first sight seemed as unapproachable as its missionary compound seemed companionable. The city was hot, humid and full of stairs. As she wrote,

China's new capital is not a very beautiful city. Or at least what I saw of it...The plane landed on a sand-bar in the Yangtze. Mr. Jones and a WMS lady met us. We took a sampan across the river and then climbed 320 steps to the city, took a modern bus through the heart of the city, climbed down another huge flight of steps to the river, another sampan to the other side of the river and then by sedan chair a 15 minute climb to the new hospital and compound where I stayed all night with Dr. and Mrs. Hoffman...When you finally got up there the compound is lovely and the three houses (two doctors and one nurse) are very lovely.<sup>54</sup>

Her speculation about where she and Irwin would eventually be stationed undoubtedly contributed to her impressions of the city. She knew that Dr. Hoffman, the physician in residence, was due for a furlough in the next year or so, and so she thought that either Irwin or Ralph Outerbridge, the two newcomers who would be completing their language studies by that time, might be assigned to replace him. These concerns about future stationing assuredly added weight to Agnes' impressions of the different cities that she visited. As she wrote, "I liked the compound and its people but I don't know how well I would like Chungking. – its steps, its narrow crowded streets and its heat. Yesterday was terrible – 87 damp and oppressive."<sup>55</sup>

The war reasserted itself and Agnes began a dialogue with her parents in which she concurrently provided information about the war and proof of her safety. It was just a week or so earlier that she had described the signs of the war in Shanghai and her

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<sup>54</sup> Letter to Mother and Father, 10 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.



incipient allegiance to China, and yet she was ready, from her new home in West China, to become a reporter; she was quick to disparage other potentially frightening reports that her parents were receiving and to assert the credibility of her own observations and information. Only a week later, she would write to her family:

I don't know what the foreign papers have been reporting about the Japanese air-raids on this province, but don't be alarmed. Last week planes came to Chungking but didn't go over the city at all but just paid a short visit to the military airfield quite a long distance from the city, dropped just a few bombs and caused very slight damage and very few people were killed....In spite of all the papers may say at home, the Japanese are being very discriminating in their bombing. They can't afford to throw bombs around carelessly and so just aim for government and military stations of importance – air fields and railways mostly. They haven't returned to Chungking though there have been a couple of false alarms.<sup>56</sup>

*Language lessons, marriage, missionary community and war: Chengtu, October 1938 to May 1939*

When Agnes reached Chengtu, she began to settle into the city as a resident rather than as a tourist, and we can sense her pleasure at finally reaching her new home. In her first letter from Chengtu, she exclaimed, "Here at last!" She described it as the nicest city that she had seen in West China, perhaps alerting us to her awareness that West China was quite separate from the rest of China. She almost immediately ventured beyond the mission walls in order to explore the city. However, her first rickshaw ride introduced her to two of the difficulties that she needed to confront if she was to become truly independent; Chinese money and the Chinese language were both very new and rather unmanageable for her. In her detailed description of the currency, she once again demonstrated her interest in learning about China. As she explained to her parents,

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<sup>56</sup> Letter to Mother and Father, 10 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

Most of it is simple enough, - there are dollar bills, 50 cent bills, 25 cent and 20 cent and 10 cent bills, and also 5, 10 and 20 cent silver pieces but besides this normal order of things there is the 'cash' – at the present rate there is 24,000 cash to the dollar and there are large, heavy pieces that are 200 cash pieces and they are awkward to handle. However there used to be coins with a hole in the centre that you carried around on a string, by the thousands and I guess that was far worse. I am getting used to these cash pieces but it is still a problem for my unmathematical mind to figure out how many cents and how many cash pieces to give to the rickshaw man when the fare is to be 3,000 cash or something like that and of course not being able to say anything in Chinese doesn't help.<sup>57</sup>

Agnes may very well have inadvertently raised the matter of changes occurring in China at the time when she mentioned that coins used to have a hole in the centre; however, her interest in China, past and present, would remain unabated. She was really quite frank about her language deficiencies. Almost immediately upon reaching Chengtu she had recorded her needs:

It has been a great trip and we have seen many wonderful things but I'm glad it is over at last. I will be glad to get started at Language School for I feel quite hopeless when confronted with rickshaw men, servants etc. I know the words for hot water, warm water and boiled drinking water and that's all!"<sup>58</sup>

Agnes had been feeling quite lonesome for Irwin, and so the attention lavished upon her by her new colleagues was welcome. Although she did admit that she found it all "a bit of a whirlwind," the lunches, teas and dinners which were either held in her honor or at which she was an important guest, helped to alleviate some of her loneliness. She certainly had the unexpected opportunity to talk about Irwin; it seemed that many of the younger people to whom she was introduced had either been at university or in church

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<sup>57</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 17 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

activities with him.<sup>59</sup> She had written about the effect her separation was having on her in her first letter from Chengtu, advising, “If I only knew where Irwin was, I’d feel quite happy but as it is I’m terribly homesick. If it had been the London Airfield we landed on at 8:35 this morning instead of this Chengtu one, I’d have been very pleased.”<sup>60</sup>

Agnes was quickly immersed in all sorts of community-related activities; some of them were easily identifiable as missionary work, whereas others were certainly more optional activities. First, she offered to begin a sports class for the girls in the Canadian school.<sup>61</sup> She had learned that the school administration was thinking about adding a physical education class to the girls’ curriculum. Teaching sports immediately appealed to Agnes; she had been a physical education instructor back in Canada, and so she wrote a letter to her parents asking them to send along three of her sports rulebooks in case her offer was accepted. Second, she was asked to “help out with the youngest children” in the Canadian Sunday school, and seems to have surprised herself by agreeing to do so. Her students, much to her surprise, were “cute youngsters” who ranged in age from three to six years old, and so she became, she wrote, more of a babysitter than a teacher. Nonetheless, in describing them as cute youngsters she also intimated that it was not quite as unwelcome an assignment as she had suggested in her explanation of how she added this activity to her growing list of commitments. The most informal of her new activities was as a participant in the preparations for an upcoming missionary wedding. The bride was a

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<sup>59</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 17 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> This is the same school for the children of Canadian missionaries at which Mary Lamb had been the matron.

young missionary who worked in Chengtu under the Woman's Missionary Society, and there were more than 250 people invited to the wedding which was truly a community affair. The flowers, which Agnes helped to arrange, were supplied from various missionaries' gardens, and the reception at which she served food was held in several of their homes. We can sense Agnes' enjoyment when she described the wedding and her own participation in it.

The biggest event of last week was Ruth Sparling's wedding. It was quite an event and since everyone here is just like one big family, everyone had a share in getting it ready. Mrs. Hibbard and her cook made the wedding cake, others made other food stuffs and I had a hand in the bouquets for the bride, her bridesmaid and her flower girl. It was fun doing them and Mrs. Mullett and I were quite proud of our job when it was done.<sup>62</sup>

The welcome of the community did not completely resolve the isolation and loneliness that Agnes had identified. She certainly continued to long for Irwin's presence and probably continued to find herself either isolated or different because she could not communicate in Chinese. Her expectation that the campus would ensure that she could gradually adapt to her new larger environment proved to be wrong, at least early on, as she was confronted with one circumstance after another in which her inability to function in Chinese left her increasingly frustrated. First, she discovered that church services were not always held in English; in fact, their campus did not even have a church. Rather, each of the university's colleges held its own Sunday services, in Chinese. Her mounting frustration was evident in her explanation:

Sunday evening there was a student's service in the Administration Building so I went with Mrs. Hibbard and Mrs. Bell quite expecting to enjoy a university students' service again only to find it all in Chinese!! Not to be able even to go to

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<sup>62</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 24 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

church without feeling a stranger and entirely out of place was just the last straw for me! I was feeling lonely enough all day anyway, but that was just too much. – I feel terrible! To be sure the address was in English but so cut up by the Chinese interpreter that my mind couldn't stay with it. The last hymn was 'Breathe on me breath of God' so I sang in English!<sup>63</sup>

Then, the visit of the provincial governor to the campus proved equally frustrating. In this account, Agnes added Chinese food to the sources of her alienation, when she suggested that she found it far more preferable to eat food that was familiar, writing "...all the speeches were in Chinese, so the only thing I enjoyed was the food – it was foreign and good!" She was disappointed once again when she discovered that the events which were organized by a group of women with whom she looked forward to being associated were held, once again, in Chinese. The University Women's Association appealed to Agnes; it was composed of women all of whom had attended university, and she undoubtedly felt that she would be comfortable in their midst. Her account of the experience once again leaves us in little doubt of her surprise and then disillusionment, when she wrote,

...and so I went gaily off to it Saturday afternoon. But alas! Almost everything was in Chinese and I sat in the midst of foreign and Chinese women – some of them very brilliant – for almost two hours feeling small and insignificant...The President is a very charming Chinese woman – wife of one of the down-river University men – who has two degrees from American universities and has done some post-graduate work in England.

The only remedy for her language difficulties was to learn the language, and Agnes did begin her lessons in those first days in Chengtu. The primary responsibility, indeed the official assignment of all newcomers, was to study Chinese, and the Chengtu missionary site actually had a language school which the missionaries, as well as other foreigners, attended. Agnes quite quickly found that the language would require more intensive

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<sup>63</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 17 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

study than she had expected. When she had offered to initiate the sports program for the young Canadian girls, she had earmarked hours that she would need for studying, and hours that she would use for teaching. She wrote, "I would love to do it if I have the time and I expect that I could manage. Language school lasts from 8:30-12:00 and 1:30-3:30 so it would have to be after 3:30 that I could work in a class at the school."<sup>64</sup> But after her very first day of lessons, she reported that she was tired and stressed.

Having just finished the first day of language school, I feel completely exhausted! This morning's session of 3 hours was split into group work with Mr. Moncreiff (the U. professor who runs the Language School) and a Chinese teacher, and individual work with a Chinese teacher and this afternoon a two hour session divided the same way. The last hour this aft. I sat on a chair facing a Chinese teacher and repeated sounds one after another so rapidly that by the end of the hour I was a wreck! We begin by learning sounds, not words and in the Chinese language, as you know there are various tones, and to get these tones correctly is very tricky. Fortunately here in Szechwan there are only four tones but that is quite enough.<sup>65</sup>

One day Irwin simply arrived back in her life and his presence had an important effect on some aspects of Agnes' days. Her happiness was undeniable to all those who witnessed Agnes' response to the news that he'd reached Chengtu. As she later recorded,

At last we are together again and very very happy after both having been more miserable than we ever thought we could be. Irwin arrived last Wednesday afternoon and life has been completely different since. I was at school when he got here with the truck but Mrs. Agnew who saw him first dashed over to the school for me and I left in a cloud of smoke, much to the surprise of the teachers.

She also began to exude a little light-heartedness, which was most evident when she wrote about their language instruction. She now included some self-deprecating but

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<sup>64</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 17 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>65</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 24 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

humorous accounts of their efforts, and revealed that they did not always even manage to arrive at class on time.

This language is the darndest!! So far we have just been learning sounds and their phonetic symbols and a few classroom phrases such as 'How do you do, sir?' 'I can't answer' etc. and all day long we drill and drill on the same thing. It gets pretty monotonous by the end of the day and we wonder if we'll ever get anywhere with the language. I suppose someday we will but it looks pretty impossible. If they only used Roman letters for writing, it wouldn't look so bad, but one look at a character is too much for me. We had three days start on Irwin but he did very well and by the end of his first day, could do as well as any of us. Our facial contortions are the only thing that keeps us lively... Well, we Hilliards must get to school on time for a change – when you have only a short way to go, it's hard to get there on the dot, so here's to an afternoon of noise making and grunting.<sup>66</sup>

Irwin's presence also seems to have encouraged her to make the transition from a new young member of the community to a missionary wife. She wrote about her housekeeping responsibilities and advised her readers that she was the one who was now in charge of the family accounts. "I reckoned up our accounts with Mrs. Hibbard for the month of October. We pay her \$75 each per month for our board (Chinese) and that includes everything, meals, laundry, servants, etc., except for any extra fuel we would like for our own fireplace in our rooms."<sup>67</sup>

The formal and less formal activities in which she had begun to participate continued and grew; she added some that she did independently, and some that the couple did together. Although she had not received an official response to her request to teach sports to the Canadian children, she did respond to a personal request from one of the children, and began to instruct them at the school. She advised,

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<sup>66</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 1 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

One day last week a little girl came to see me and asked me if I would take Basketball with the girls twice a week so I have started that. The girls are awfully nice and they are getting a big thrill out of it. I'm having a grand time too for it is fun to be 'back on the job' so to speak.<sup>68</sup>

As she had expected, she thoroughly enjoyed the work; she had always liked teaching physical education, and so it was not surprising that she found this work particularly rewarding. She reported, "Have just come in from a basketball practice. My I enjoy doing this with the girls. They are so keen about it and have such a good time that it is a joy to work with them."<sup>69</sup> She was much less inclined to join a choral group that was led by the community's dentist, Dr. Agnew. It is uncertain whether Dr. Agnew or Irwin was responsible for convincing a rather reluctant Agnes to at least attend one meeting before deciding that it was simply not an activity in which she was interested. Despite her protests and explanations that she lacked any musical talent whatsoever, she did attend a rehearsal with Irwin, and apparently even agreed to return, as she explains "Perhaps I'll learn something even if I don't contribute much...I wasn't very good at reaching the high notes with the sopranos but it was fun. I think we are going to enjoy it. Maybe I'll try the altos next time."<sup>70</sup> Agnes was also asked to become the director of a play that some of the university students from the campus wanted to present, and it is with these students that she would have her first significant experience with Chinese people.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 1 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>69</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 6 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.



The reality that China was at war did penetrate the insularity of the Chengtu campus; the composition of the population was tremendously altered by the influx of refugees from occupied China. When Agnes was describing the campus to her family, she reported that it was, as she put it, "quite a large community." However, the community was certainly not comprised of mostly foreign workers; her calculations suggested that there were probably about two thousand people on campus, of whom the foreign population, including the children in residence at the Canadian boarding school, totaled not more than one hundred. Agnes later wrote when she was discussing the evacuation of the children from the city the following summer, that there were approximately forty-five children at the school. All the rest of the people were Chinese refugees who had fled the occupation of the eastern coastal cities. The people with whom Agnes had the most contact were students and faculty from the University of Nanking; in fact, the students with whom she worked on the theatre production were all Nanking students who were refugees on the campus. Agnes was particularly drawn to the young faculty who had fled inland. She tended to be on the lookout for young, educated people, Chinese or foreign, and the down-river Chinese were particularly attractive to her because many of them were able to converse in English.

The presence of the war was quite impossible to avoid, as reports of air-raids found their way to Chengtu and to Agnes, who was very interested in acquiring all updates that were forthcoming. She sent along many reports on the status of the war to her family; however, she was careful, and indeed vigilant, in balancing the news with her reassurances that she and Irwin were safe. She occasionally described precautions and plans that the

community had put in place in order to protect itself from possible air-raids, and she frequently tried to dispel any rumors or false reports that might have reached her parents from other sources. In one letter, after telling them that there had been totally false reports that Chengtu had been bombed, and at least partially false reports about attacks on Yunnan Fu, she explained first, why the Japanese might be loathe to focus on Chengtu and second, the safeguards that the community was taking. She wrote,

They say it costs the Japs \$2500 to drop one bomb and the Chinese pay \$2.50 to have the hole filled up again by coolies who can repair the holes in very short time. There is a military field here (though not very near the city and on the other side miles from the Campus) and the broadcasting station may attract the Japanese if they wanted to come this far but they haven't as yet and so we are all hopeful that they won't come. There has been one alarm here but that was before I came and so I haven't had the fun of experiencing any precautionary methods. It seems we are to get out into the country if necessary. Let's hope it won't be necessary.<sup>72</sup>

Agnes' opinions about the war and her allegiance to the Chinese grew as she learned more about the intentions and behavior of Japan and its military forces. When she learned that there had been a Canadian involvement in supplying war materiel to Japan, she was outraged, writing, "Do you know that our *Empress of Asia* delivered a huge load of scrap iron to Japan? We were horrified that our country would do such a thing!"<sup>73</sup> After attending the lectures of a respected American theologian who was visiting the Chengtu campus, Agnes became even more convinced that Canada's role in the war was highly problematic. In his lectures Dr. Van Dusen of New York's Union Theological College had told his audience that, although the majority of Americans were undoubtedly sympathetic to China, there were certainly Americans who had financial interests that

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<sup>72</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 17 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

were linked to Japan, and who were selling goods and even providing credit for the supplies that the military required in order to maintain its war effort. After hearing his speech, Agnes suggested that Canadians were also undoubtedly profiting from selling stores of nickel, copper and scrap iron to Japan.<sup>74</sup>

Agnes learned more about the war and other newsworthy events when she and Irwin were asked, or perhaps assigned, to work on the preparation of weekly newssheets that were distributed to the university's English classes. Each Friday evening, a small group of missionaries gathered together and filtered through a variety of sources in order to produce this newsletter. Reading reports from Chengtu, Manila and even London papers fit in well with Agnes' interests, and despite her rather negative initial comment that they had been "roped into doing it every Friday night," the work was actually quite satisfying to her, and supplemented the information that she would continue to seek from BBC news that came in on the evening radio broadcasts.<sup>75</sup>

The prediction that Agnes had made about acclimatizing to China while living within a missionary compound was eventually true; as the days passed into weeks, we find Agnes recording her observations of her surroundings (both people and places), and settling in to her new home at the Hibbards. When she wrote about an evening spent at the home of some colleagues, she reported that the food was very good, but that the house was remarkably cold. That evening, the only time that the guests were not chilled was when

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<sup>74</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 17 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>75</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 22 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

they were sitting immediately in front of the fireplace, warming their toes on its ledge. In contrast, she noted, “The Hibbards have about the warmest house on the campus and so we are lucky.”<sup>76</sup> Her luck was not only in boarding in such a warm house; the Hibbards’ home also enabled Agnes to make some first-hand observations of their servants, to begin to interact, although seemingly rather unsuccessfully, with these Chinese servants, and to consider just how she might change some of the daily behavior of “the Chinese” if she were given the opportunity to do so. In a colorful description of these servants, she wrote,

There is the cook – a fairly old man who sits around looking into space most of the time but cooks very well, - the table boy who looks like a muskrat, knows a few words of English and thinks I am terribly stupid, - the coolie who does the heavy work and cleaning – and the woman who is very sweet and nice to you even though she can’t talk to us – she and Irwin get along famously in the mornings when she comes to clean up the room. There is also a girl here most of the day who knits – (everyone on Campus seems to be having a new knitted suit or dress this winter and they nearly all come to Mrs. Hibbard for help) – and who gets a big kick out of my attempts at Chinese. The servants’ quarters are at the foot of the backyard in a small brick building, and all these small brick buildings behind every house have that elusive Chinese odor and most of them swarm with children who are awfully cute but have runny noses. I’ve decided that the first thing that I will teach my servants is to blow their noses with a handkerchief if they have any (children I mean not noses). The Chinese manner of blowing your nose without a handkerchief is a bit startling at first but you get used to it, and it is quite remarkable the way they flip their fingers and blow without getting their fingers wet. I’m sure we could never do it. And they think this is much more sanitary than carrying around a dirty handkerchief, but somehow I think I prefer our methods.<sup>77</sup>

Agnes continued to find opportunities in which she might learn a little more about her surroundings. A trip into the city in order to buy sugar yielded an array of information about sugar (naturally), about part of the city that she had not yet explored, about

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<sup>76</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 15 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>77</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 22 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

bargaining with merchants, about coal, and once again about the need, albeit a reluctant acknowledgement by Agnes, for servants. Once again, Agnes' detailed account of her outing brought the streets of Chengtu and the events of the day remarkably close to her readers.

The foreign women buy their sugar in huge amounts. Mrs. Hilliard got approximately 370 lb. (300 catties in Chinese weight) and then their cooks refine it. It looks fairly well refined when you buy it but it has to be done once again. Even the best quality they buy looks like the lightest of our Canadian brown sugar. You can get another kind that when refined looks like granulated sugar, but it is much too expensive for everyday use. Mrs. Hibbard got a small amount that she is using for the marmalade she is making now. It was a very interesting expedition for me and the coal shops where the sugar is sold are in a very old part of the city outside the East Gate where I had never been before and to get to it we went down the street along the river where the small boats unload coal, wood and all things that are brought in from the surrounding countryside by boat and from downriver. There are a lot of coal shops and we saw carriers carrying bags of coal drenched with water. The price of coal has gone up very high this winter and the coal merchants manage to trick their customers a little more by soaking their coal in water. These Chinese can think of more ways of getting around you!<sup>78</sup>

As Agnes continued in her account of the shopping trip, we recognize that she was conscientiously observing the interactions between Mrs. Hibbard and the sugar merchants because, at least in part, she knew that one day, she would be buying household supplies for her own home. As she had done in her description of the Hibbard's servants, she once again wove together her observations and her opinions about the merchants and their affairs. She continued,

One of the important phases of buying and selling with the Chinese is to haggle the price, and I quite enjoyed listening to Mrs. Hibbard and the sugar merchants 'jawing' away in a good natured way. She speaks Chinese very well and I found that I could follow them very well though the Chinese merchant went too fast for me. They were good-natured, cheery people who knew Mrs. Hilliard from previous visits. Some of their sugar they have piled up in conical piles in huge wooden vats, but some is kept in huge baskets made of bamboo strips woven

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<sup>78</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 22 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

together and to show you a sample of that sugar, instead of opening the bag they have a long brass stick with a groove in it that they stick into the basket between the strips of bamboo and bring out the sugar in the groove. It was quite a system. It was a good experience for me as well as an interesting one, for I will have to do that myself some day. Sugar has gone very high and the best price they could get for it yesterday for a good quality was \$26 per 100 cattie – one cattie is almost a pound – that really is about forty cents a lb. in Canadian money, but even that is a bit high considering that you have to refine it yourself.<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps, in looking back over the day's events, Agnes came to the inescapable conclusion that household work in China was much more labor intensive than similar work in Canada. In her explanation, she quite simply and clearly separated Canada and China. She writes,

These people do a lot of things that at home you just run across the street for – make butter every morning from the cream that is skimmed off the top of the milk, boil the milk every day, make their own bread, cure the pork, grow their own vegetables. It is quite a life – no wonder servants are essential.<sup>80</sup>

Agnes did not have much opportunity to put her new knowledge to work; Mrs. Hibbard and her servants did the housekeeping, and so there was little that actually required Agnes' attention. Nevertheless, she and Irwin managed to establish their own home-within-a-home at the Hibbards. Their belongings, many of which were still in transit, gradually arrived in Chengtu, and with each addition they settled in a little further. Perhaps the most exciting possession, and the one which proved to be the most important to Agnes, was their radio. This radio would also prove to require a lot of care and attention; when parts broke or batteries ran out, it would have to be taken or sent to one

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<sup>79</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 22 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

of the major centers for servicing. Nonetheless, it provided entertainment and perhaps more importantly, news of the world from beyond China's borders.<sup>81</sup>

With the encouragement of Mrs. Hibbard, Agnes began to issue invitations to her own guests. She knew that she needed to reciprocate for the warm welcome that the community had extended to her, and so she took up her new task with energy, making lists of people who would be compatible with one another and undoubtedly planning menus that would simultaneously showcase her rather limited cooking skills and satisfy her guests' appetites. Despite her efforts to enjoy Chinese food, Agnes continued to find that she was not very successful in this particular endeavor. Her menu for their first group of guests reflected her Canadian roots and experiences and the actual dinner progressed without a single sign of Chinese food. She wrote,

The cook produced a swell meal with 2 roast geese, fresh new green peas. Mrs. H. concocted a very good pudding with sponge cake mixed in layers with green, white and pink gelatin and chocolate sauce over all. I made some chocolate fudge to go along with the marshmallows Doris had made earlier. Fortune favoured me and the fudge turned out just right though I left it cooling almost too long and Irwin and Bob had quite a time beating it – but the result was a perfect smooth and creamy texture. During the evening we had fun playing ping-pong and then listening to the radio for a while. Everyone seemed to have a good time and we felt very happy about it<sup>82</sup>

Some of the best times that Agnes and Irwin had were undoubtedly when they carved out a little time to spend together, without what she labels the “whirlwind” that the

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<sup>81</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 29 January 1939 (AH 6:7). They had received the radio in the middle of November, 1938.

<sup>82</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 27 February 1939 (AH 6:7).

community had so generously provided. Agnes described one afternoon and evening that clearly evoked this impression, when she wrote,

We got in a pile of wood and a shuttle of coal for our room and Sat. night settled down for a lovely time in our own room and felt very happy. We felt as if we had a little home of our own here and it was like one of our dearest dreams come true.<sup>83</sup>

That particular evening they had taken the Hibbard's gramophone up to their rooms and then played and replayed each of the seven records that they had with them at the time.

The balance of their record collection was one of those items that was still somewhere in transit. Eventually, Agnes and Irwin decided to keep Sunday afternoons and evenings as a time that they would spend together; all invitations were summarily refused in their commitment to this arrangement. When Agnes returned to this topic in a later letter, her readers once again could easily identify the importance that she placed upon earmarking time for each other and upon establishing a home for themselves. In fact, Mrs. Hibbard apparently recognized this (perhaps) unique characteristic among newly arrived missionaries, as Agnes explained,

Mrs. Hibbard has commented on how much we seem to enjoy our own company at home – I guess we are just like our parents – we always seem to be the first to leave a party and always come home early. Last night we had a swell time by ourselves – a fire in the grate, a programme of our own records (the radio man wasn't very good), a bit of reading on the biography of Sir William Osler that I am reading, a bit of dancing (also to gramophone records) a walk and then to bed. It doesn't sound very exciting but for us it was swell.<sup>84</sup>

Agnes and Irwin did, of course, continue to socialize extensively with many foreigners who were in Chengtu at the time. They attended formal dinner parties as well as rather

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<sup>83</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 14 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>84</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 27 February 1939 (AH 6:7).



casual get-togethers, and participated in activities whenever they discovered a shared interest with other members of the city's foreign community. Quite early on, Agnes' record of a luncheon demonstrates her association with non-missionary foreigners. She wrote,

On Sat. we had lunch with Mrs. Petro (who takes language with us but is not with a mission) at her home in the French Consulate. She has a very famous cook and it was quite a swanky luncheon party with tomato juice cocktails in the drawing room first and several courses beautifully served on lovely china and coffee in the drawing room after.<sup>85</sup>

Mrs. Petro was one of the non-missionary students at the language school who attended classes with the Hilliards. Mrs. Dye, also a member of the foreign community, was quite renowned for her expertise in identifying indigenous birds and although it was Irwin who was particularly interested in bird-watching, Agnes found that she was also quite fascinated when she went along on their outings. But her interest in the Dye family was not limited to their companion's interest in birds; Agnes' curiosity about everything that surrounded her led to her exploration of their front yard as it was filled with a variety of fascinating animals. Mrs. Dye's husband, who was the head of the Physics Department at the university, was involved with a colleague in a project in which they were shipping animals, among them a panda, several pheasants and one or two monkeys, from a local museum to a museum in New York.<sup>86</sup>

The stimulation available to members of the foreign community in Chengtu is evident in Agnes' accounts of their many social activities. There was an inescapable flavor of what

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<sup>85</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 1 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>86</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 13 March 1939 (AH 6:7).

we might term “treaty port life” emanating from her reports of their dinner parties and outings.<sup>87</sup> Nonetheless, Agnes’ reports of her experiences also reminded her readers that she and Irwin, and undoubtedly all of her colleagues and acquaintances, were also dealing with the mundane matters of life. Sometimes, for example, it was difficult simply to find the appropriate clothing to wear to an evening out. She noted a few particulars from one evening when she wrote, “We were at a very swell dinner party at the Wilmott’s place last Thursday and had not only an exceptionally good dinner with duck, pheasant, ice cream and chocolate sauce and even olives (a rare treat here) but a very good time also.”<sup>88</sup> However, immediately preceding this description, she had written that although this was to be their first chance to “dress up” as she put it, Irwin was unable to dress in formal attire because his tuxedo was, once again, one of those items that had not yet reached Chengtu.<sup>89</sup> On another evening, Agnes was the one who ran into difficulties when dressing for a party. They had been invited to a dinner party at the home of an American Methodist couple; this time Irwin was all dressed up in his tuxedo (which must have finally arrived) when Agnes discovered that her fanciest taffeta dress “absolutely refused to fit properly.”<sup>90</sup> It seems that she had recently had it altered, apparently unsuccessfully, and so the couple resorted at the last minute to dressing a little more informally; Agnes must have worn another dress and Irwin changed into what Agnes calls his “next best.” Perhaps their clothing difficulties help her readers to remember that

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<sup>87</sup> For a fine description of treaty port life, see John K. Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast: the Opening of the Treaty Ports, 1842-1854*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953). Chapter 10, “The Treaty Ports and the British Consuls” and chapter 15, “Anglo-Chinese Friction” discuss aspects of life in the treaty ports.

<sup>88</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 14 November 1938 (AH 6:6)

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 1 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

the Hilliards were not living in the undoubtedly idealized treaty-port lifestyle that we might otherwise conjure up in our imaginations after reading her accounts. Furthermore, her report of that particular evening revealed that despite their fancy clothing, the guests entertained themselves in a rather simplistic way that was typical of many if not most of their social evenings. Their companionable group settled down, after a (usually) excellent meal, and as she wrote, "...sat around the fire and read a play and chatted etc."<sup>91</sup>

Agnes and Irwin were not immune to illnesses and Agnes suggested that China was a harsh environment in which to live. The indigenous diseases which Irwin began to study while in Chengtu undoubtedly reminded Agnes that living in China would expose them to new or different diseases than they had encountered in Canada. Despite Agnes' claim that she had very little experience with illness, she found that she could not maintain this record once she had lived in China for a while. Initially she reminded her family of her hardiness when she was telling them about an upper respiratory infection that eventually drove Irwin to bed-rest, writing "Meanwhile I have been learning things I never knew before having always lived in a family where no one is ever sick."<sup>92</sup> It seemed that Irwin had just managed to recover when he succumbed to another bout of illness; once again, it began with a cold and then progressed to bronchitis. Agnes suggested that it must be the weather (which was cold and damp) and the living conditions (as the dampness penetrated their buildings) that were responsible for Irwin's repeated illnesses, as he tended to be in good health and had certainly not had bronchitis since his childhood. We

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<sup>91</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 17 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>92</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 22 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

have been keeping our room very warm and it is much warmer in the house.”<sup>93</sup> Despite their efforts, Agnes soon succumbed to a similarly incapacitating virus, and in recounting the episode to her family, she once again managed to transmit their simple, daily experiences to her readers.

...my good luck was too good to last – everybody was remarking on how well I was withstanding the colds that everyone else had – at any rate whatever it was I developed one day after I wrote last and by Wed. afternoon I was feeling pretty rotten and had managed to raise a bit of a temperature with my eyes and nose runny all over the place. Irwin sent me to bed after supper and I was able to miss Thursday and Friday classes which wasn't a hardship. However my doc. is pretty good and I got better in a hurry. This is a tricky climate. By now everyone here has been sick at one time or another with a cold. The Szechwanese bugs are tough alright, and I do hope we will build up immunity to them this winter. We are not anxious to fight them every winter.<sup>94</sup>

As the winter season in Chengtu settled in, Agnes continued unfalteringly with her extra-curricular activities. Perhaps among the most significant for her, although also quite stressful, was her involvement with the University of Nanking students and their production of a play that was to be presented during the Christmas season. As the director of the play, Agnes felt responsible for its success; however, the standard by which she seemed compelled to judge everything about her experience was almost certainly more suitable to a Canadian production than one in which all of the participants were Chinese university students. Her expectations and frustrations were remarkably evident in one of her early reports of their progress when she wrote,

My play is coming along pretty well and is to be produced Sat. night. I get a bit annoyed sometimes because the students never turn up on time for practices – the

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<sup>93</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 11 December 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>94</sup> Letter to Family, 11 December 1938 (AH 6:6).

Oriental mind doesn't seem to understand 'punctuality' at all – and I'm still not sure whether the stage mgr. will have everything fixed right for I haven't seen him and he hasn't been at one practice yet and tomorrow is the dress rehearsal. But aside from the few matters of uncertainty and irresponsibility, I hope all will be well.<sup>95</sup>

Agnes' final report about the play advised that it actually was quite successful, but her ambivalence about all sorts of issues related to it was difficult to ignore. In her narrative Agnes wove together some wonderful descriptions of the event, yet the reader is left with some sense of Westerners' misunderstanding of China, or perhaps of the reasons for the disappointments of Westerners who were trying to bring something of the West to the Chinese, something that Agnes almost suggested when she explained why the set designers had chosen that jarring "shade of pink." When she advised that the students simply had no idea about the set that they were designing, she also encouraged her readers to consider whether the students had much knowledge of the West at all, and furthermore whether the missionaries were the major or perhaps only representatives of the West that the students had encountered. She wrote,

The play is all over and I feel much relieved to have it over and off my shoulders. It wasn't up to our university standard of a play partly due to lack of equipment and time, but mostly I'm afraid to the inexperienced director. I had a bad moment when they produced the best scenery they could find and it was a bilious shade of pink! Of course I realized that they had no idea of the inside of an 18<sup>th</sup> century French cottage kitchen and they had no money or talent for building the new scenery, but I was upset for fear the scenery would spoil the play. However evidently the audience didn't look for anything better and I have had a few compliments from a few people who have been kind enough to congratulate me. I wasn't terribly satisfied with it nor the way I had done it. However I learned quite a bit from my mistakes and the next time I'll do much better I hope. Also I learned a great deal about Chinese students from working with them – about their absolute lack of any conception of punctuality, and a certain lack of responsibility. Just the same, they did a difficult play in a language foreign to them remarkably well. Also they were very nice folk in spite of their habit of not

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<sup>95</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 30 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

turning up on time and I am glad I had a chance to work with them and to know them a bit.<sup>96</sup>

One of the other activities in which Agnes had hoped to become involved was the creation of the sports clinic for girls at the Canadian children's boarding school. She had, as we know, established an informal beginning; however, her desire or perhaps even expectation to make this a more formal role was not fulfilled. Instead of being asked to head up the program, Agnes found that a young Chinese woman was hired as the instructor and that she and Agnes were to share the teaching. In her report Agnes seemed to have an underlying discomfort about the strengths of Chinese who had returned from study abroad. The new teacher was a young, educated, well-outfitted teacher who was not only Chinese, and therefore did not need to become acclimatized to China, but was also westernized. The attributes or qualities that Agnes continually found attractive in people were held by this woman; she was young, educated, and able to interact with foreigners. In her update on the sports classes Agnes wrote:

On Tuesday P.T. classes started at the Canadian School. We have divided the girls into two classes – juniors and seniors and Mr. Walmsley [the school principal] has called in the help of the P.T. Instructor of Ginling College (U. of Nanking). She is a graduate from Smith College, U.S.A. and has a Master's degree from the U. of Michigan, so I feel pretty incompetent beside her. However she is very nice and I think we will get along O.K. She is young, quite nice-looking and her whole appearance is very modern and un-Chinese – the typical P.T. teacher in blazer and skirt and running shoes etc. We have the classes 3 days a week from 10 to 10:30 (our recess from school) and we take the groups alternately. I have the juniors on Tuesday – girls from 6 or 7 to 11 or 12 – and it was quite an experience for me to figure out what to do with little girls like this. I hope I'll be able to give them things suitable for their age, needs and ability.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 6 December 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>97</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 22 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

Agnes' exposure to and interest in Chinese people extended and deepened as she had increasing opportunity to interact with them. The missionary community had developed multi-layered relationships with the Chinese of Chengtu, and so Agnes and Irwin were invited to quite a variety of events. When Agnes wrote, rather briefly, about an evening spent with "a good friend" of the Canadian missionaries, she alerted her readers to one type of interaction between missionaries and Chinese. As she described their evening,

Friday night the members of the Canadian group gave a dinner for General Den Shi Ho – governor of Szechwan who has always been a good friend with the Canadians and who entertained them all last fall at his country home. Everything went off well and we new-comers get a lark out of trying to understand the speeches in Chinese.<sup>98</sup>

A little while later she attended a dinner party that was held in honor of the leader of China's rural reconstruction campaign, a man whose work was already familiar to the missionaries.<sup>99</sup> Agnes' account leaves her readers in little doubt about her enjoyment of the evening, about how easily she was fitting into the community, and once again, about her appreciation of "well-educated Chinese." She wrote:

Dr. and Mrs. Agnew had a rather large dinner party with Dr. and Mrs. Yen as guests of hour. He is a very delightful Chinese man and a very clever one too. He has made a name for himself through rural reconstruction work which he has organized and worked hard at – a program that includes teaching the farmers modern methods, giving them a certain amount of education and other things. The Agnew's supper parties are nearly always musical evenings for that is his side line

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<sup>98</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 1 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>99</sup> Agnes' appreciation of her dinner companion was well-founded. James Yen, originally from Sichuan, had attended school in Hong Kong and subsequently graduated from Yale University. As one of China's important reformers, he worked on the design of a thousand character vocabulary (which would contribute to his goal of mass literacy), worked for the YMCA with Chinese laborers who were serving in France in World War I, and developed the famous rural reconstruction program. For readings on James Yen, see Charles W. Hayford, *To The People: James Yen and Village China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990) and Pearl S. Buck, *Tell the People: Talks with James Yen about the Mass Education Movement* (New York: The Day Co., 1945).

outside of dentistry. Dr. Yen has a very good voice and sang for us along with some other guests and there were several piano solos. There were two other guests – a University staff man and his wife and they were charming people to talk to. Really I don't think you could find in all the world a more charming person than a well-educated Chinese, and after seeing the coolie type of person every day, it is a joy to meet the other type of Chinese. All in all it was a lovely evening.<sup>100</sup>

As well, Chinese Christian wedding invitations provided Agnes with another type of social interaction, and one in which she was able to gather quite different impressions of Chinese people. Perhaps in the tradition of her missionary colleagues, Agnes had different expectations of Chinese people in general and of those Chinese who had converted to Christianity.<sup>101</sup> It seems that in converting to Christianity, the Chinese Christians ought to have left behind some of their “Chinese-ness.” The first wedding that she attended was one in which Mrs. Hibbard’s “woman’s son” was the groom and she reported to her family that “it was quite an experience.” Her detailed account of the day reflected her interest in the wedding and exposed some of the awkwardness in the acceptance or adaptation of bits and pieces of the West by Chinese. Agnes’ description of the clothing is enough to suggest to her readers that the meeting of East and West was not entirely reconciled, as she wrote,

All the important people had large artificial flowers pinned on them. The bride, though not in the traditional red, had on a bright pink scarf-like veil under a huge headdress made of artificial flowers. Her gown was green but piped with red. Her face was well painted in the traditional custom and she certainly had the Chinese bridal look of unhappiness. The groom came in with a fedora on his head which he carried in his hand during the ceremony...They evidently hadn't had a rehearsal of any kind and had quite a time doing everything properly and keeping inquisitive children out of the way. The arrangement for someone to play the

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<sup>100</sup> Letter to Family, 8 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>101</sup> See Jane Hunter for some discussion of the expectations of missionaries *vis-à-vis* Christian converts in China. Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, 181-189.



wedding march hadn't been very well made and at the last minute Alice Jenner had to do it. They had hymn books from the Church which had two wedding hymns in them. She played one as they came in and the other one we sang very unsuccessfully for nobody knew it and the tune was difficult, and it was a bit incongruous it seemed to me to sing, 'O happy pair in happy wedlock joined' for neither of the pair looked a bit happy about it. However afterwards they smiled at all of us at the feast.<sup>102</sup>

Agnes' narrative also identified the underlying disorderliness of the wedding and the lack of adequate preparation which, although unexpected, was becoming familiar to Agnes' readers. Hadn't the students been similarly "negligent" in their preparations for the play? Once again, the standard that Agnes brought to her description and evaluation of the event was almost certainly a Western one, although it is difficult to ascertain whether she would have invoked this standard if she had not had certain expectations of the participants. The University of Nanking students were members of the down-river Chinese refugee population which Agnes held in considerable esteem; this bride and groom were members of the city's Christian population for which Agnes similarly assigned a higher standard.

The fascination about China that Agnes had demonstrated in her earliest reports certainly continued when she settled into Chengtu. She became an eager sightseer at every opportunity, and her descriptions of her outings were filled with the details and impressions that she wanted to convey to her family in Canada. From her account of her earliest bicycle trips into the city, her readers can identify her adventurousness and curiosity. She recollected some precariousness about her first outing, recording,

Later in the morning I borrowed a bicycle and rode into the city for we were to have dinner with the Jenners in the city compound. It was my first bicycle trip

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<sup>102</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 6 February 1939 (AH 6:7).

into the city from here but fortunately I didn't get lost, just took one wrong turn, only bumped into three people but had to get off a few times to avoid collisions – such is riding here.<sup>103</sup>

Her record conveys, once again a little of the precariousness in the venturing out among the city's traffic, but also a feeling of adventure that an outing provided. As she wrote,

Saturday afternoon we had fun going into the city on bicycles and getting tangled up with the traffic as usual. Coming back it was getting dark which made it harder for me; also it was the supper rush hour. For a while I thought I'd rather be going down Yonge St. in Toronto for at least there I could tell what the other vehicles of transportation were going to do and at least people don't swarm all over the road. However I didn't kill anyone and except for getting my fingers pinched while trying to go between a rickshaw and a load of bricks and getting almost surrounded by a swarm of black pigs, I really got along fairly well.<sup>104</sup>

Her exploration of the Chengtu region included an organized excursion to a nearby Buddhist temple. Mr. Walmsley, the principal of the Canadian children's school had made arrangements for a group of adults to attend an initiation ceremony for novice monks. It seems that this experience, perhaps because it was to see something very unfamiliar, returned Agnes to her status, in this account, as a wide-eyed sightseer; China was once again an interesting yet harsh environment. The morning, which she later recollected as being the best part of the day, was actually somewhat difficult and perhaps should have been a warning about the rest of the day. When they arrived at the temple, the Canadians had some difficulty in gaining entrance to it, despite the arrangements that had been made by Mr. Walmsley for the visit. Eventually, they were taken on a brief tour by a man described favorably by Agnes as "a young and quite jolly monk."<sup>105</sup> Then,

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<sup>103</sup> Letter to Family, 8 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>104</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 24 October 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>105</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 29 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

because the ceremonies were not scheduled to begin until later, the group walked around the grounds and visited some of the buildings. It seems to have been a fairly extensive compound, with a series of courtyards linking the various buildings. They toured meditation rooms, rooms with altars and collections of books, and even the kitchen where a remarkable amount of rice was being prepared in expectation of the numbers of visitors who would be arriving. In her recollection of the rest of the day, Agnes' inauspicious sentiment in her first comment forewarns her readers that the Canadians were going to encounter some difficulties. She wrote, "If we had gone home then, I would have been quite content. But we waited around in the cold and finally were taken into the large hall where the burning of nine spots on the heads of the initiates was to take place."<sup>106</sup> The first problem that arose was the perceived favoritism shown to the foreigners by the monks.<sup>107</sup> Agnes accurately identified the frustration of the Chinese who wanted to attend the ceremony and then continued in a remarkable account of difference; the crowd that "tumbled in," the "muttering and the "munching" of tangerines clearly convey Agnes' discomfort with this Buddhist ritual. She wrote,

We got in before anyone else but caused a terrific uproar on the part of the Chinese mob who also wanted in and who did their best to shove inside and it really wasn't worth the offence to the mob. We waited in this gloomy hall with the smell of incense and dust etc. while the mob outside kept up a tumult. Finally they opened the doors to the initiates – some 160 in all and a sorry looking lot too – and the crowd tumbled in with them all in one rush. There seemed to be no

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<sup>106</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 29 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>107</sup> See Fairbank, *Trade and Diplomacy on the China Coast*, Chapter 11, "The Chinese Response to Western Contact." Although not specifically focused on the issue of the Chinese response to foreign privilege, Fairbank discusses "barbarian experts" and handling the barbarians in Shanghai. As well, see Paul Cohen, *China and Christianity: The Missionary Movement and Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963). Cohen does not discuss foreign privilege directly, but his examination of missionary cases that were registered between 1860 and 1870 does identify issues that arose as a result of the presence of Christian missionaries in the interior of China.

dignity or reverence though we hadn't seen any of the ritualistic parts. Each initiate was taken in charge by a monk and on his shaven head were placed nine little piles of some kind of inflammable vegetable powder that when lighted burned down quite rapidly. No one made a fuss, one man nearly fainted, most of them kept muttering all the time. Of course they were well doped and they were mentally prepared for it, but still it must have been pretty painful. Fortunately it didn't take long and they filed out munching tangerines. We didn't see a great deal as we were on the outside of the crowd that pressed in around each man but it was enough for me and I was glad to get out and on the way home both of us felt as if the whole thing had left a nasty taste in our mouths.<sup>108</sup>

Her curiosity and enthusiasm about Chengtu continued, and a month later, in February 1939, we find that Agnes was an observer and a participant in the city's New Year's celebration. These festivities offered her, as they had offered Lena Jolliffe and Mary Lamb, an opportunity, at least to some extent, to celebrate the Chinese holiday and to extend her impressions of the lives of the Chinese people.<sup>109</sup> A week or so earlier, she had advised her family that when she described the city to them, it was more likely that she would only describe things that related to the poorer people because the wealthier class was simply less visible. In a sense, her description reminds us of the seclusion behind which she flourished, when she wrote,

The river flows between the city wall and the Campus and looks very much like the Thames in size. Unfortunately the streets of Chengtu aren't very beautiful – (I'll take some pictures some day for you) all the really nice things and the better class people's homes are behind the shops and high brick walls and quite unseen except occasionally you catch a glimpse of a lovely little garden through a partly open gate.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 29 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>109</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 20 February 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

In her description of the Chinese New Year's festivities, Agnes was able to provide some wonderful details that not only explained the holiday, but also must have replaced the pictures that she intended to take.

Everyone was out and the streets were pretty crowded and lots of stores had special lights or torches. Before the old year is over every shopkeeper tries to get everything he can sold, so many of them take their wares to the East Gate and spread them out along the curb and crowds snoop around for bargains... These dealers all have their shops on one street known as "Wei Fu Gai" or 'thieves street' (since much of their goods is stolen goods) and there were lots of people and fire crackers set off by merchants when their accounts were all settled. Sunday was New Year's Day and a great excitement... We saw glimpses into many of the houses of the poorer class (the other people live behind high walls and you don't see their homes) and saw incense burning sticks on small altars in front of images, pictures or just red strips of paper with characters written on them.<sup>111</sup>

Agnes explained that people settled their outstanding accounts, cleaned their homes and prepared special holiday foods. Before beginning the New Year, they held ceremonies for their ancestors and the household gods. Agnes speculated briefly about the changes that occurred when the last dynasty collapsed and "the new republic was born."<sup>112</sup> In her explanation, the revolution seems to be a historical event, one that occurred in the distant past, and was of use as a historical marker, rather than something that had ongoing or even immediate implications for the Chinese people or for the missionaries. Instead, she wanted to give the greatest (if not the only) weight in terms of significant current events to the ongoing war with Japan: the events of the war, the fall-out from that war, China's spiraling inflation, the absence of males due to conscription and even the leadership of

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<sup>111</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 20 February 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

Chiang Kai-shek were all seen within this particular framework.<sup>113</sup> Her description of the Chinese New Year and its history continued:

It was a perfect day – warm and sunny till later in the afternoon – and thousands of people swarmed outside the city. We had lunch with the Kitchens in the city and had quite a time getting through the crowds. For supper last night the table boy produced one of the Chinese New Year's specialties – round balls made of rice flour and stuffed with something that was flavored with rose and then boiled in water. I couldn't say they were exactly delicious but the boys did away with quite a few and informed us that the servants had each eaten forty!! The rest of the meal consisting of poached eggs on toast with a cream sauce with cheese and mustard poured over them, scalloped potatoes, fruit and custard was more to my liking. The holidays last til next Monday for our teachers seem to need a week to prepare for New Year's and another week to recover. This is a time for much feasting – often and long I guess.<sup>114</sup>

The New Year brought the annual (1939) Canadian Council meetings to Chengtu, and for the Hilliards, it turned their thoughts to their appointment; they wondered when and where they would be sent to work. Agnes could not help but think about her strong desire to move on from their language training and although she continued to enjoy her studies, she held onto her desire to have a home of their own in which she could actively be the homemaker, and to Irwin's need to be at work. Irwin had recently been a little more involved in medicine; one of the mission doctors had arranged for Irwin and Ralph Outerbridge, the other new medical missionary, to work in the parasitology laboratory at the hospital each Saturday. As well, the doctor had referred a few medical cases to Irwin. However, the opportunities to practice medicine were infrequent and it is clear that the couple were eager to establish some regularity in their lives.<sup>115</sup> We find Agnes

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<sup>113</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 20 February 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 22 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

speculating about their appointment, and weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the various possibilities.

We are all keyed up with expectation these days, wondering where Council will decide to send us. The two best chances are Foochow (pronounced Foo-jow) or Kiating (Jawding). Harley Jenner was appointed to the hospital at Foochow a year or so ago but developed some TB and came back here for treatment last spring. Some of the doctors are evidently not in favor of him returning to Foochow because of the type of place it is and are advocating other places for him. If Harley and Alice don't go either Irwin or Ralph Outerbridge will. Irwin seems to have a good chance and is very anxious to go for that is where his Uncle Rob was for years and he built up the hospital there and naturally it is the place we are most interested in. Kiating would also suit us pretty well for there are quite a few young married people there in our mission and the Baptist one – but Foochow is where we would like best to go. However we don't wish Alice and Harley any bad luck either for they are anxious to go there too – and so it goes. Next week will probably decide our fate.<sup>116</sup>

Agnes was already aware that she would do well in the company of other young missionary couples. At this time she clearly identified that she and Irwin were strongly drawn to their family connections and history in Foochow, and to the community that young, youthful missionaries would give them. As she had speculated, the Medical Services Committee at Council did recommend that the Hilliards replace the Jenners in Foochow so that Alice and Harley Jenner could move to Chengtu.<sup>117</sup> Although she was disappointed to learn that the Committee was only able to make a recommendation, she did not have to wait too long before the Canadian Board accepted it and advised them that they were, in fact, to be appointed to Foochow. Their new friends and colleagues, the Outerbridge couple, were appointed to Kiating. Foochow was, of course the home of Mary Lamb. Whereas Mary Lamb was enjoying the experience in Foochow because it

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<sup>116</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 29 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>117</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 6 February 1939 (AH 6:7).

brought her into the close proximity to the Chinese of the city and district (as well as a relatively simple lifestyle), as it was one of smaller stations, Agnes had other reasons for wanting to be posted there.<sup>118</sup> Mary experienced a great opportunity to evangelize and live relatively closely with Chinese women; Agnes envisioned the potential of a community in which they would feel comfortably at ease and in which she could finally make her first home. She wrote,

The other foreigners who will be there when we go down to Foochow – after the summer are Mr. and Mrs. Longley (their daughter Beatrice I have met for she teaches P.T. in Toronto and Irwin I think knows the family), Mr. and Mrs. Stanway (at present home on furlough – what family they have I know not), Mr. and Mrs. Fred Owen and small child, and a WMS person, Miss Swann I think. The Owen family are quite young and have been out here for about three years I think. Fred is here for General Council and is one of the nicest people we have met. His wife Mary is not with him but from reports, she is very nice too, and I think we shall be very happy with them – if we go. We did hope we wouldn't be sent to some place where there are no young people and if we are sent to Foochow we will be very lucky guys. There are quite a few young people in Kiating too so I think the Outerbridges will be very happy there.<sup>119</sup>

That first experience at Council expanded Agnes' understanding of mission affairs; however, it did not stir her to become particularly involved in its events. She certainly appreciated being introduced to important people, and enjoyed listening to their ideas and stories about their experiences in China, but she found relatively little to report about the meetings, perhaps because she was not invited to participate in them.<sup>120</sup> Mary Lamb's

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<sup>118</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 6 February 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* Although disappointed that the Owens, with whom she had looked forward to living, were sent to Chungking, she was pleased that they were to be given the Owens' house in which to live. It was reported to be, as she noted, "one of the nicest homes in the mission." Fred Owen's glowing account of the house and the news spurred them to begin making plans for their new home, scouring furniture catalogues, hiring a carpenter to make furniture for them. They were apparently very excited about the news of their appointment; after all, this was only January and they would not be moving until the fall.

<sup>120</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 6 February 1939 (AH 6:7).



early impressions of Council meetings (taken at a similar point in her China career) were unfavorable. She had looked at the women in the meeting rooms and recorded that the wives were only able to knit and crochet and maintain their silence.<sup>121</sup> Agnes wrote, “This isn’t much of a letter I’m afraid, but these are busy days and Committee meetings aren’t much to write about.” Once again, similar to Mary’s lament, Agnes complained about the time spent in meetings. “The past few days have been one meeting after another till we are so sore from sitting and so head-achey we can’t really realize that it is all over.” However, Irwin’s experience was far from passive and he recorded, in one of his additions to her letters, “Council and Medical Service Committee of which I was the secretary, so had extra work of writing minutes – all day long. But now it is over and we are having holidays at least.”<sup>122</sup> Even Agnes, in looking back at the meetings, minimized the stifling experience that she felt at Council, and instead noted that she had learned important lessons; her knowledge of mission work was broadened, and although she had not had a voice (as the wife of a missionary), she now appreciated the complexities of the mission enterprise.

Council was a great experience for us even though it was often tiring and boring, for it gave us a good survey of the work to be done by our mission – in schools, hospitals, churches etc. The workings and complications of hospital boards, school boards, and finance were often too tangled for me to follow, but I think we learned some new things. At least for me the past days have been an eye-opener to discover how highly organized the mission was and to see all the factors involved in carrying out the work of the various departments.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Diary, 17 August 1920 (MLL 1:2).

<sup>122</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 12 February 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

The Council attendees returned to their West China stations and the Chengtu Canadians returned to their own community. Once again, as she had conveyed in the past, Agnes reported on a quite a whirlwind of activities in the winter of 1939, most of which involved socializing with members of other churches. One night, she wrote that they had “an excellent dinner with our neighbours the Simpkins. They are members of the Friends Mission and he is a U. staff man.”<sup>124</sup> Then she and Irwin attended a dinner party at the home of another couple, Mr. and Mrs. Stockwell. The missionaries almost always entertained each other: singing, playing musical instruments, reading poetry and perhaps an excerpt from a play, and at the Stockwells they shared in the reading of, as she records, “a mystical play by W.B. Yeats.”<sup>125</sup> Another evening they had supper at the Willmotts, their next-door neighbours. After eating they stayed for more entertainment: this particular evening Irwin played the piano, another guest played the violin, and others read poetry. Agnes wrote of her own participation, “...we, that is Dr. Kinnard, a very peppery little American Baptist on the U. staff and myself read a short play – the scene being a lively one between Henry VII and Katherine Parr. It was very much fun, so all in all it was a very enjoyable evening.”<sup>126</sup> These evenings create an image of tried and true ways of entertaining themselves, ways that worked well for their community. Agnes’ accounts might provoke her reader to consider the absence of Chinese in these frequent and relaxed evenings. It does seem as though the imaginary walls between the

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<sup>124</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 12 February 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>125</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 20 February 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>126</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 5 March 1939 (AH 6:7).

“communities” were in place; the insularity of these evenings seems so strong, undoubtedly with Chinese servants in the background.

In the spring of 1939 Agnes and Irwin, while remaining in Chengtu, were presented with the opportunity to move from their rooms in the Hibbard’s home to the house of an English missionary, George Eliot. Eliot was also a young missionary living on the Chengtu campus; a member of the Chinese Missionary Society of England (CMS), he approached the Hilliards with an offer to share his residence when his colleague (Doug Sargent) was unexpectedly posted to another city. For Agnes, it seemed that the long-awaited opportunity to have a little more independence and to test a few of her housekeeping skills had arrived. Mrs. Hibbard, when consulted, agreed with this expectation and added one of her own: the Hilliards, particularly Agnes, would have more opportunity and indeed need to speak and practice Chinese with the servants. The household also offered a mixture of the company of another young person as well as ample privacy. Agnes suggested this balance when she described one of their first evenings after their move.

Here we are fairly well settled in our home and enjoying having particularly our own house. The whole household, we and George are now gathered around the radio enjoying a bit of music from Germany interspersed with the crackling of a grate fire and everyone deep in letter writing. Your letter of March 8 was here when we came in for supper – we like to read all our letters together and need a bit of privacy for that so will keep it till we are going to bed and read it after we are snuggled down beneath the covers.<sup>127</sup>

She immediately set about managing the household, although not without a little fear or even trepidation. She recorded, “...tomorrow morning I will have to reckon accounts and

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<sup>127</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 2 April 1939 (AH 6:7).

discuss household affairs with the cook before school and I feel a bit wobbly about it. My little bit of Chinese to date hasn't been anything to brag about. However perhaps I'll learn in due time some of the many, many things I don't know."<sup>128</sup>

Agnes settled in well and yet she remained preoccupied about her limited language abilities. Her initial concern about whether she would be able to manage the household servants abated, but she remained worried, and looked for evidence, that she was unable to communicate effectively. Agnes was apparently very successful in her language classes, yet she was quite frustrated about her seeming inability to carry over her classroom lessons to daily life. She recorded, after two months of lessons:

School goes on as usual. Sometimes I manage to get a good mark in tests and stay among the top 3, but as soon as I leave school and try to say anything here at home, I am hopeless. The servants are still laughing over a mistake I made the other day when I left out half of what I wanted to say because I was confused. Ah me!<sup>129</sup>

Irwin and Agnes did try to find ways in which they could practice their Chinese. When they had a respite from classes over a brief Christmas break, they bicycled into the shopping district in order to do some gift shopping, but also so that they might use their Chinese.<sup>130</sup> Their persistence did yield some positive results. Soon after the shopping expedition, Agnes found herself quite comfortable at an evening event where the speeches presented were exclusively in Chinese. Although she found it easier to understanding the speeches of the two Canadian missionaries than those of the native

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<sup>128</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 2 April 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>129</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 30 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>130</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 1 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

Chinese speakers,<sup>131</sup> she had certainly moved a long way from her first weekend in Chengtu when she was so frustrated by the omnipresence of Chinese and stubbornly resisted it by allowing herself to sing the hymns in English.

Agnes also knew that the community with its ‘walls’ enabled her to withdraw from the Chinese language and its demands. She expressed this quite clearly one day:

Somehow when you do the same thing over and over for five hours a day, five days a week, any interest in that thing seems to die out – and so it is with learning Chinese. By the time Friday comes we almost feel as if there is nothing interesting in life at all. However it could be much worse I guess for at least we are living in a community of foreigners and not surrounded by Chinese.<sup>132</sup>

This last sentence or comment is difficult to understand: what Agnes thought about being “surrounded by Chinese” is never really explained.<sup>133</sup> However, in future years she would return to her concern about being surrounded completely by Chinese speakers when she revealed that she worried when Irwin was surrounded by the language and on his own with only Chinese people.<sup>134</sup> Perhaps, in this concern, she was actually returning to her first frustration, that day when Chinese language was all around her in the church, unremitting in its sounds and unrelenting in its demands and limitations, but also revealing that here and in the future it was a source of significant pressure and anxiety provoking.

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<sup>131</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 1 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>132</sup> Letter to Family, 8 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>133</sup> Although unhelpful in understanding what Agnes meant in her letter, the missionary women in Jane Hunter’s work find a similar familiarity behind the walls of their mission compounds. Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*. Hunter points to the efforts of newly arrived missionaries to find continuities between China and Canada (2), to the wish that the (by then) experienced women had to maintain ongoing relationships with Chinese women friends (189) and ultimately the exultation of personal freedom that the women achieved in China (228).

<sup>134</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 11 August 1942 (AH: 6:12).

The language curriculum was arduous and almost certainly would have provided the impetus for Agnes to refocus her attention back to her language studies fairly quickly, had she not done so herself. She was obliged to take the same tests as the other language students. Her concerns, worries and successes are evident when she wrote about her progress, "Our next set of exams start tomorrow and I should be working on the Lord's Prayer in Chinese now for I don't know it well."<sup>135</sup> She returned to the exams in her next letter, reporting that the experience had been quite difficult for her. Describing the time as "a few bad days with exams," she explained their rigorous schedule,

Wed. we had 10 minute tests almost all day long which was a bit trying and Frid. morning we had to, individually, meet a stranger and converse with him for 5 mins. in Chinese with Mr. Moncreiff and the head Chinese teacher Mr. Pan present. That was pretty bad too and we were worn out by the end of the week. However the results were quite good. Irwin and I tied for first place in many, he came first in some, I in others and in some neither of us were on top. In the overall total Irwin ranked 2<sup>nd</sup>, George 3<sup>rd</sup> and I was lucky enough to pick up a few extra marks somewhere.<sup>136</sup>

It seems that Agnes was at the top of her class.

Agnes' first official interaction with the servants, the "reckoning of accounts" that she had been thinking about, was a fairly accurate predictor of the type of problems that she encountered as household manager. The greatest single difficulty that she had with servants seems to have been negotiations about wages, perhaps exacerbated because she

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<sup>135</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 17 April 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>136</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 24 April 1939 (AH 6:7).

represented, in some way, the household rather than simply herself.<sup>137</sup> In Chengtu, with George Eliot, Agnes was quite specific about the stress that she felt because she was in Elliot's home, not her own. She described one particular incident:

I in very halting Chinese and my heart in my mouth, told the cook that I heard he wanted more money and there were various things we could do about it etc. etc. and finally suggested that we give him more money and he agreed and was very nice about it, so it ended well, much to my relief. I wouldn't like to be on the wrong side of him if I could help it for he is a good cook and sort of belongs to the house.<sup>138</sup>

In the spring 1939 she had the opportunity to learn a little more about China's history, its culture and continuing traditions, when she participated in two outings: the first, organized by her language school, was to a nearby Daoist temple; the second, planned by her community, was to a more distant dam. Agnes commented that it was the first time that she had the opportunity to consider Daoism and its importance in China's history and culture. The trip, which was organized by Principal Moncreiff, was interesting to her. She described how the ruler who was responsible for building the temple, supposedly in about 200 AD, was depicted in statues with huge earlobes and very long arms; both, as she explained, were demonstrations of greatness. She was also struck by the anomaly of this very old temple and the modern posters that had recently been affixed to its walls by soldiers. These were posters about the war, and the soldiers were billeted, as were so many other soldiers, in temples that were no longer actively in use as temples.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> For a brief discussion of the difficulties between missionaries and their servants, see Stephen Endicott, *James G. Endicott: Rebel Out of China*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 91.

<sup>138</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 24 April 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>139</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 2 April 1939 (AH 6:7).

She had another chance to learn about China's history, as well as to see the continuation of an ancient tradition that was held each spring, when she joined many members of her community to travel to the annual opening of the dam at Kwan Hsien, forty miles from Chengtu. This particular dam was responsible for the irrigation of the Chengtu plain, and the ceremony was of particular interest to her because it was a traditional event which was still significant. It was a symbol of both community and individual responsibility. Centuries earlier, the ruler had ordered the Ming River to be divided at Kwan Hsien, and then subdivided many times in order to help farmers to irrigate their fields. Eventually, a series of irrigation ditches were built, and their existence and maintenance remained important to agriculture and the fertility of the fields. In her recounting of the story of the dam, Agnes advised that all of the property owners who lived adjacent to the river, Chinese and foreigners alike, were responsible for keeping the ditches clear so that the water could flow through them.

The confluence of tradition and modernity is evident throughout her account. She remarked that when they stopped for lunch en route to Kwan Hsien, they found themselves under the gaze of curious Chinese.<sup>140</sup> Perhaps the farther away from the city they moved, the more in evidence was the curiosity of rural Chinese people. Then they passed what Agnes identified as "the nicest looking temple" that they had seen; a temple that had been converted into an orphanage which housed, at that particular time, four hundred down-river children who had been orphaned by the Sino-Japanese War and sent up to West China to live. Finally, providing the most evident bridge between the

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<sup>140</sup> Document titled "Trip to Kwan Hsien – Spring 1939" (AH 6:7).



continuity of tradition and the accommodation to change (beyond the presence of foreigners participating in the work, the ritual, and now present at the ceremony), was the carrying out of the official's duties that day. Historically, the official in charge, upon opening the dam at Kwan Hsien, would immediately be taken by chair as quickly as possible to Chengtu, trying to outrace the water. If he did not reach his destination first, then it bode ill luck for the entire region. Agnes reported that as it took about one week for the water to wend its way down to the capital city, there was little doubt that the official, now riding "in his new model car" would bring, "good fortune for his constituents."<sup>141</sup>

Agnes' first actual experience with the war encouraged her to begin to differentiate between the reaction of her fellow missionaries and that of the Chinese to the threats that they faced. The Chinese, at least her teachers at the language school, responded to Agnes immediately and emotionally, and perhaps quite extravagantly, with visceral fear that caused them to simply run away (to where she doesn't suggest). She and her colleagues, on the other hand, found the precautions that they were supposed to take, which included leaving the city, completely unnecessary. This assessment of the threat was undoubtedly one that she genuinely believed, although it also served as a reassurance to her family in Canada that she and Irwin were safe. As the air raid alarm sounded (for the first time since they had arrived in Chengtu), the couple took charge of some of the children from the Canadian school, left the compound and headed out into the country. That particular day they found a quiet spot in the foreign cemetery and spent the rest of the morning

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<sup>141</sup> Document titled "Trip to Kwan Hsien – Spring 1939" (AH 6:7).

telling stories to the children, watching the planes overhead, and waiting for the notification that they might return to the city. When they returned to the language school, they found that the teachers had run off; this response and her impressions of the behavior of the teachers on that particular day was a sort of template for her, behavior that would be repeated by other Chinese in the months to come.<sup>142</sup> However, Agnes would eventually be encouraged to acknowledge that the steps the foreigners were directed to take were necessary, while some Chinese people became more complacent about the safety regulations and confident about their own invincibility as they experienced increasing numbers of air raids. However, that would only be in the years ahead. On this particular day, Agnes' impressions were abundantly clear. The precautions they had taken, she wrote,

Seemed like a waste of time and the houses here on the campus are so far apart that they are safe from anything but a direct hit. If Chengtu is ever bombed the Japanese are most likely to go after the airfield which is miles from here on the other side of the city. If they have lost their way again today that will be the third time so let's hope they decide that Chengtu is a myth. I only hope that the papers at home aren't reporting disastrous raids on Chengtu and getting you worried. Please don't worry or believe half of what you read.<sup>143</sup>

Then, turning to the teachers she reported, "The 'all clear' signal has gone and so we will have to go back to school this afternoon – that is if our teachers turn up. They went off in one mad dash this morning – where we don't know. Maybe they are running yet. I've never seen them move so fast."<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 6 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

The underlying message, one of reassurance to her family, was almost always present when she turned to reports about the war. Agnes had readily taken on the identity of a reliable reporter; she was not only reassuring, but also argumentative at times, and clearly protective of her family as she defines herself, inherently in her comments, as an authority on events occurring in China. She wrote, probably in response to something her parents had written to her,

I am sorry Mrs. German ever mentioned the visits of the Japanese to Chungking! She has no right to tell you upsetting things like that especially when nothing was definite. She may have been worried about herself and wanted a bit of company in her worries but she shouldn't have picked on you. For goodness sake don't ever worry unless you hear something definite – you may be assured if ever this part of the country is in serious danger, the foreigner will have to leave as they did at the time of the revolution. Chungking has not been seriously bombed though planes have been there several times. The Japanese have little point in bombing anything other than the flying fields and there are more false alarms than anything else. Since I have been here they have come only twice as I have previously told you and there is no need for you to worry about us. They'll probably keep clear of foreign compounds.<sup>145</sup>

In fact, Agnes' prediction was, to a great extent true. The planes did keep quite clear of foreign compounds and when there was a threat of danger, the missionaries were sent out of the city to the country, where they presumed they would be safer.

The air attacks on West China's major cities increased steadily, and Agnes digested reports which the Chengtu community received, and interpreted them in her letters to Canada. In an undated letter, she advises that among the properties of Chungking which had been destroyed were some belonging to their own mission.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 15 January 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>146</sup> Undated letter to Mother and Dad (probably written in early May); AH 6:7).

The situation there is pretty bad and not encouraging. However the radio reports from London and San Francisco were exaggerated though I am afraid you have no way of knowing that. So far there have been two bombings (not three as London reported) and the city badly burned in places. A hostel run by the WMS was damaged but no lives lost nor anybody wounded. The rest of our property and missionaries are safe – the Friends' property has been hit and the missionaries there have moved over to the Agency where the Jones live. Today we had lunch at the WMS hospital residence (two lady doctors and two nurses live there) and one member of the party was the Generalissimo's private air pilot who had just come from Chungking and so we got first hand information from him.<sup>147</sup>

This pilot, who had flown for Chiang Kai-shek, in recounting a particular episode to the Chengtu missionaries, brought a sense of immediacy as well as frustration to his listeners in his story of the death of one American pilot. He described a talented and successful young man who had been instrumental in stopping the attack on Chungking. However, later that day, in a reckless flight, he crashed his plane and died. Agnes was filled with anger rather than sadness for the young pilot, and wrote that he had not only taken his own life, but he had lost an invaluable plane.<sup>148</sup>

The Japanese air attacks continued in the spring of 1939 and Agnes shifted from assuring her readers that Chengtu would not become a target to the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek. Perhaps because she could no longer be certain of her own safety, she found hope in Chiang's presence in the province. She was certain that morale among the West Chinese was higher because they had a leader in their midst, and that they could rely upon him to give them accurate reports about the situation. In a letter written from Mount Omei later that summer, she wrote about Chiang when describing the false reports that emanated from Tokyo. After the first bombing of Chungking, Japanese news reported that Chiang

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<sup>147</sup> Undated letter to Mother and Dad (probably written in early May); AH 6:7).

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

was moving his government to Chengtu, and that people did not want him. Agnes explained, “both of which statements were quite false and sounded so ludicrous when we heard the Tokyo reports. The General is still the idol of the people and he is sticking to Chungking for the present.”<sup>149</sup> Her information about the potential vulnerability came from a foreigner, Mr. Shultz, who was staying with the Dickinsons and, as she noted, “working with the Chinese” at the airfield in Chengtu, seemingly to do with either the training school or the maintenance of the airplanes.

He is very optimistic re. the safety of Chengtu from air-raids. He says Chengtu is too well protected – both geographically being surrounded with hills and difficult to find since it isn’t on a main road or anything, and by the large air force and anti-aircraft machines here. The Japs can’t bring pursuit planes with the bombers this far, which is a disadvantage. The two times they came last fall and the other times they tried to come, they lost so many planes by either getting lost or being brought down by our pursuit planes that Mr. Schultz says the Japs are not very likely to waste their energies on Chengtu and I think he is pretty careful about what he says.<sup>150</sup>

*Refuge on Mt. Omei, summer 1939*

Agnes and Irwin did decide to leave Chengtu; despite some reassurances, the city appeared quite likely to be attacked, and so they moved their summer plans forward, and readied themselves for a holiday on Mount Omei. This decision was made after a particularly difficult night, in which there had been several air raid alarms. Initially, when awakened by the alarm, Agnes, Irwin and their neighbors went outside until the all clear sounded; Agnes reported that they were able to spot some Chinese planes in the sky. After returning to bed, a second alarm sounded, which sent them outside once again. By

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<sup>149</sup> Letter to Dad, 4 June 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>150</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 17 April 1939 (AH 6:7).

the third sounding, their indecision about leaving the city had been resolved, and the following morning they began to prepare for their journey. The morning also brought evidence of the concern of others; the language teachers were not at work, clearly too afraid of the threat of bombing to continue with their usual activities. In the city, the atmosphere was noticeably tense. When Agnes commented that, in her words, “people were very panicky,” she was accurately summarizing the mood on the streets; not only were the teachers absent, but also shop owners, and so it was difficult to buy even the most necessary supplies that they would need for their trip.<sup>151</sup> The Canadian Children’s School became part of the movement away from the city, as a decision was made that the children ought to move up to Mount Omei for the weeks remaining in the school term. The school was closed, and plans were even made for it to be reopened in another location; the city of Jenshow was chosen, perhaps because, as a smaller city, it was deemed less vulnerable to the attentions of the Japanese military. The departure of the Hilliards, some of their colleagues and the school children was part of a larger exodus of people from Chengtu, so many that arrangements for transport from the city were difficult.<sup>152</sup>

The group from the missionary community, traveling to Mount Omei in May 1939, quickly left the war and fear behind them. Agnes recorded, “Perhaps at home you are imagining us in the midst of bombs and desolation, whereas we are having a lovely and restful boat trip through beautiful country. It is impossible to think there is a war going on

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<sup>151</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 24 May 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

in China.”<sup>153</sup> They had required six houseboats to carry them and their belongings on their trip; 21 missionaries, a Chinese family, four cows and their calves spread out among the boats which carried them upriver to Kiating. Agnes’ description of their boats makes them wonderfully accessible to her readers.

We are riding on houseboats, - a sort of a wooden barge with covering over the central part. On the front are 7 men rowing and one poling, at the back the captain and another man poles when necessary. We eat and sleep inside and spend our time in or out as desired. We have two servants with us. The one who is to be our table-boy at Omei is cooking for us, the other is our coolie. It is a lovely lazy life. You eat and sleep and do nothing. Mrs. H planned with the help of other women on the Campus, food baskets for each boat. I brought food too and we get almost more milk than we can use (though the children drink a lot) - from the cows twice a day – so we are living high!<sup>154</sup>

It is not surprising that she felt very separate from the bombs and the war torn-cities that they had so recently left behind. We are perhaps reminded of the insularity that Lena Jolliffe had described on her trip up the Yangzi, when the banks of the river acted as boundaries, locking the passengers into their narrowed world.<sup>155</sup> For Agnes, this trip was her introduction to river travel, and so when the houseboats needed to be pulled upriver manually by the boatmen, she was impressed by the tremendous difficulty of the trackers’ work. As they continued upriver, the water level quite unexpectedly became so low that they had no choice but to leave the river and change to overland travel. Although unexpected, the group managed to sort out some alternate arrangements, hire as many overland carriers as possible and find a place to temporarily store the luggage that could not be accommodated by the carriers. In the end, a group of eighteen people set out on

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<sup>153</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 15 May 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>154</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 24 May 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

their rather challenging overland trip. Once again Agnes' experience seems reminiscent of an earlier journey, in this case her train trip into West China; we sense her appreciation of her surroundings and indeed, of China. This opportunity to see more of China is evident in her description, which brings immediacy to her experience, particularly when she described the people who were at work, standing in the water amidst the young rice plants. She wrote,

Six rode in what are called 'whaggers' – a canvas and woolen sheet slung between two poles (bamboo) which are carried by two men on their shoulders. The rest went on foot...The walking was bad – think gooey red mud, slippery, but the riding was worse for you just sat and got wetter and wetter while your poor men slipped and skidded and had to go dreadfully slow. I started out with a large straw coolie hat on my head and straw sandals over my shoes – they had to be discarded later in the day – and so walking and riding we went through the day, fields at first – neat little rice fields terraced to give different levels for the passage of water from one to the other...Sometimes we saw the country people in the act of transplanting and they looked just as pictures show – wide straw hats, blue cotton trousers or skirts rolled up knee high and standing knee high in water in the field. Some of the time we went through hills where there were lovely flowers most of which we had never seen before, lovely wild roses and very beautiful ferns. Always ahead of us were the mountains.<sup>156</sup>

Yet this was not really a leisurely trip; their destination was foremost in their minds.

Although Agnes caught glimpses of villagers removing silk from cocoons, she was hurried along and unable to pause long enough to witness the actual process. Eventually they reached the final approach to Omei, and the advice that Mary and her colleagues had given to the young tourist couple planning to travel up to Mount Omei with an infant, that it was a far more difficult trip than they had envisioned, became evident to Agnes as well.

She recorded,

Late in the afternoon we reached the foot of Omei and started up. It's a terrific climb – at least the worst I have ever done – and I thought we'd never reach the first range where the first group of bungalows are and where we were to live. It was some 5,000 ft. I think and most of it seemed to be up rock steps and around

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<sup>156</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 24 May 1939 (AH 6:7).



corners. However there were occasionally fairly level places. The next day we could hardly walk and were pretty fagged out all over. However with the help of some of the boys we got the cottage into fairly good shape in the morning and slept most of the afternoon.<sup>157</sup>

Agnes' reports about her summer portray a community that was very different from that described by Mary Lamb. It did not strike Agnes as a posh resort where there was constant social stimulation; rather, her days were filled with matters far more similar to Mary's pleasant summers spent in the hills immediately outside the city of Chungking. In the first few weeks at Omei, the missionary community was comprised of forty-two foreign adults and forty-four school children, spread out among six of the hillside houses. The surroundings were beautiful and strong community bonds quickly established themselves. This early part of the summer was organized around the children's presence and their needs. The Hilliards settled into a routine type of existence, with some organized community events and a relaxed, communal style of living. Undoubtedly stimulated by the presence of the school-children, the households held similar, quite regularized activities: each house, Agnes reported, was "asked to have the family worship. So we have that at the table before we start to eat."<sup>158</sup> Breakfasts, mid-morning snacks and lunches were had at specific hours because the children were still attending school classes. The language students also continued with their own language studies. Tennis, letter writing and informal visits tended to be included among the days' late afternoon and evening activities. The children had their Boy Scout meetings; in fact Irwin was invited to talk at one of them. The greatest adjustment made to the war, due to prices

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<sup>157</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 24 May 1939 (AH 6:7).

<sup>158</sup> Letter to Dad, 4 June 1939 (AH 6:8).

and shortages, was a change in the hours at which activities were held: the missionaries extended daylight savings adjustments to two hours because coal oil was so expensive and difficult to find. They had tried to use Chinese lamps, fueled by Chinese vegetable oil, but found that so very little light was given off by them, that they had come up with the time-change instead. As Agnes noted, they managed in this way to have daylight until nine o'clock at night, which was quite satisfactory, at which time they usually turned to their radio for entertainment. Agnes wrote, "the only thing which keeps us up is the radio news. Ours is the first radio ever to have been up on the mountain and the only one here this summer so far. So everyone looks to us for news."<sup>159</sup> They did enjoy other reports and radio shows: one night they stayed up late so that some of the older boys could hear the results of a prize fight. She reported, "Stephen Jones had bet with one boy to the extent of losing his dessert for three days and for a swift kick with another boy. Poor Stephen, he lost and for the next day I think he wished he were back home in Chungking."<sup>160</sup>

As in the past, Agnes and Irwin were called upon to share in the communal work, some of which was more enjoyable than the rest. The Principal of the school asked Agnes to lead guidance classes with the older girls. These seem to have been classes for girls who would be completing their studies at the boarding school that year, and were possibly returning to Canada. Agnes was being asked to prepare them for new challenges, particularly about personal relationships. However, as she was only twenty-four years

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<sup>159</sup> Letter to Dad, 4 June 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*

old, she had some misgivings about trying to teach the girls, who were only seven years younger than her, how to manage their personal lives and relationships. She wrote,

It's a big job and not an easy one. I'm a bit hesitant to do it for I am sure there are others who could do it better but with Irwin to help me, I'll do my best. I also have to train them in a couple of folk dances for a program at the end of the school year.<sup>161</sup>

But as in the past, her reticence gave way to enjoyment and fulfillment as she recognized her abilities and accomplishments. Irwin was also asked to work with the older students; he was to supervise them in organizing the Sunday school and Sunday worship. Rather than leading them, he guided them and the results were excellent. Boys who had been resistant in the past became fully engaged in the activities. His management style of encouraging and entrusting others with responsibilities carried over into his manner in running the Foochow hospital, and when he became disappointed with some of his staff, that disappointment was deeper perhaps because he tended to have confidence in sharing responsibilities and engaging in a non-directive style of leadership.<sup>162</sup>

The children only remained at Omei until the end of the school year, and after their departure Agnes and Irwin turned their attention to a little medical training and work for Agnes, with the intention of preparing her for anticipated Foochow needs. Agnes called this work her "doctor assistant course." She did not have any prior knowledge of medicine or about medical care.<sup>163</sup> She described some of her new work:

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<sup>161</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 12 June 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 22 November 1938 (AH 6:6).

I have been helping Irwin give the cholera inoculation shots these past three mornings and last night he was giving me instruction in the technical work of examining specimens. He hopes that eventually I'll be able to help with the technical work at the hospital in Foochow if the hospital lacks a good technician.<sup>164</sup>

Their assumption appears to have been that in her role as wife and supportive partner to Irwin, her activities extended beyond homemaking, or running a congenial and supportive household, and that she might play a fairly defined role in the public sphere.

Living up at Mt. Omei distanced the missionaries from the war, but it did not alleviate their appetite for news: they gathered information from as many sources as possible: from the Hilliard's radio each evening, from letters they received, and from anyone who visited their community. Their evaluation of the Japanese aerial threat seems to have been well-taken; within a short time after their arrival at Omei, they received reports that the Japanese had successfully bombed both Chengtu and Chungking. This news was initially from an Omei postman and Agnes suggested that in his accounts he exaggerated the facts.<sup>165</sup> Similarly, the intermittent radio broadcasts that they were able to receive had conflicting and upsetting reports. One night the Chengtu station did not broadcast at all; the following night there were no English broadcasts. Agnes had the servants listen to the Chinese broadcast, but they could not understand very much because the newscaster was, as Agnes describes, "a downriver man" and so his dialect impeded the servants' efforts. The London news, which would have been another possible source, was on that particular

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<sup>164</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 29 July 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>165</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 17 July 1939 (AH 6:8)

night reporting on the “European situation” and the visit of the King and Queen to Canada.<sup>166</sup>

Agnes found that letters sent from colleagues who were down in the cities gave fuller and more reliable accounts. Dr. Wilford wrote from Chengtu that incendiary bombs had destroyed about a tenth of the city; they were dropped on the main city street and among the buildings that were destroyed or directly hit were the head office of the Bank of China and the YMCA. Two bombs fell on the University campus; one damaged the Liljestrand’s house which was situated down by the river and, as Agnes wrote, undoubtedly to give her parents some comfort, it was at the opposite end of the campus from her own home.<sup>167</sup> The dormitory of the Canadian boarding school was hit, and some windows in the school itself were shattered. Contrary to the reports from Tokyo, Wilford advised that none of the military objectives had been successfully hit. Apparently there was extensive relief work being carried out; a relief committee had been in place well in advance, the hospital was busy and the Church was being repaired so that it could be used for the overflow of patients and for the homeless.<sup>168</sup> Chungking sustained considerably less damage which Agnes believed, was at least in part because its preparations for defense of the city were superior. She wrote, “They have made lots of fire lanes and other means of checking fires and aiding relief work.”<sup>169</sup> In this brief comment, she foretold

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<sup>166</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 17 July 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* Mrs. Liljestrand, whose arm was cut by flying glass, had traveled into West China with Agnes, and her husband had been with Irwin on his trip into the province.

<sup>168</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 17 July 1939 (AH 6:8)

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

her recognition of the importance of careful, responsible planning, and her future impatience when events were exacerbated in their effect by the obverse, the refusal to be logical and vigilant in instituting precautionary measures. She advised that in Chungking, no foreigners were seriously hurt, and with the exception of a few broken windows, the United Church properties were undamaged. However, in her positive appraisal, the immediacy of the war is evident when she described the actions of one missionary.

Many of the Baptist houses lost a good deal of glass in the windows and some had door and window frames wrecked by the explosion of a bomb near the Baptist dormitory. The Canadian School also lost \$140 worth of glass at the same time. Mr. Hibbard was in the school opening the windows at the time so some of the windows were saved.<sup>170</sup>

Agnes and her summer companions gathered information about the war each time someone arrived at their Omei community. Some of the stories were quite funny, as she recognized, but the reader cannot help but be aware of the underlying concern if not foreboding that they suggest when considered together. For example, she wrote:

Although the raid was quite a few weeks ago we are still hearing plenty of reports and every time a new party arrives, it once more becomes the topic of conversation till we have heard just what they did etc. Some of the stories have funny sides to them to relieve the situation a bit. One was Dr. Tsai and his wife – a Chinese doctor living in the residence that was badly damaged when a bomb landed in a tree beside the dormitory – they were drinking tea when he was suddenly aware of planes overhead and shouted ‘Under the table’ and he and his wife were just under when the walls crumbled down on them and later they crawled out without a scratch. ‘Under the table’ seems to have been the motto in many houses. Peter Brennan said that when he got under there wasn’t much room left for him. Mrs. Sparling said they all looked rather like ostriches. John has been trying to get us to practice and usually at least once a day at a meal he suddenly shouts ‘Under the table’ – so far no one has jumped. He thinks now he will wait till we have guests.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 20 June 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>171</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 2 July 1939 (AH 6:8).

On the other hand, another of her other narratives about events had a somewhat more serious flavor:

Another story was of Dr. Chen, President of Nanking U. who was sitting on their veranda near the river bank where the second bomb exploded. He and his family were making a last dash for safety when the explosion came and he was blown in the air and made two somersaults before coming down completely unhurt. Peter Bannon said the knots were all blown out of the knot holes in the wall of his office. There seem to be many stories of miraculous escapes – Mrs. Moncreiff dashed upstairs to get their invalid son to the dug-out and had just left the room with him when the explosion shattered the window of his room scattering glass all over his head. Downstairs Mr. Moncreiff and Mrs. Kennard had just stepped out of the hall when a piece of shrapnel came through the door and straight through the house. We are all very thankful that the people on the Campus got away as early as they did since they had no immediate danger signal.<sup>172</sup>

Later that summer, she would report that the medical staff also abandoned their work at the hospital, leaving the hospital with drastically limited capabilities and a heavy patient load. She described this particular event:

Practically all the nurses and interns with the men's and women's hospitals ran off and at the women's hospital the three Canadian girls on the staff and a few coolies who stuck had to carry all the patients down to the basement where they go for refuge. Since the raid, although a good many stuck to the hospital did very good work, when things quieted down many of the interns, doctors and nurses have either taken holiday (indefinite) or skipped entirely.<sup>173</sup>

The stories that the missionaries recounted to one another were replete with misinformation and misunderstandings; the city people, who were the ones most affected

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<sup>172</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 2 July 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

by the air alerts and Japanese bombings, were evidently very frightened. Agnes' narrative of the stories that she listened to effectively transported her readers to the streets of West China's cities.

Peter told the story of how the next morning when he was going into the city, he was suddenly overcome by a huge rush of people heading for the city gates. He gathered they thought there was another alarm but the police were as bewildered as he. Arriving at the Canadian Press he found Mr. Kitchen relating the story of how his rickshaw man ran into a vegetable seller's stand and the man started to run after the rickshaw, others started to run too and their number gathered til there was a big crowd rushing towards the gate. This of course is just John Kitchen's story but the Chinese are easily made panicky. There is a story of a man in Kiating who was having his hair cut and he suddenly rushed out of the store saying there was an alarm and soon the whole city was in a mad rush of people headed for the country. In reality there was no alarm at all. During each false alarm in Chengtu there were usually a fair number of people killed in the rush to get through the gates.<sup>174</sup>

The war news and the 1939 summer community's involvement in the war shifted as the weeks passed; by mid-July there were no further reports of bombing of either Chungking or Chengtu and most of Agnes' companions had become more positive in their predictions about the war. Although Agnes was less hopeful than her companions, she did reassure her family, in light of their plans to move to Foochow, about her own safety. She advised them that Foochow was of less interest to the Japanese, perhaps because it was a much smaller centre. The hospital compound was a particularly safe haven in the event of an attack; in fact, she explained in enough detail for her family to imagine just where she would be, it was "outside the city on a hill-side where there are plenty of places for refuge."<sup>175</sup> Soon however there were new reports of bombing of Chungking, albeit with little damage to the city. Most of the bombs, she explained, fell into the river

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<sup>174</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 2 July 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>175</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 2 August 1939 (AH 6:8).



and on a small suburb on the opposite bank of the “small river.” Her comments seem a little callous, and she did not show any concern for the people who lived in that small suburb, but perhaps she was really thinking about the good fortune of the Jones’ (whom Mary Lamb knew well) and the United Church Agency. She reported, “In each raid the Agency where the Jones’ are had miraculous escapes – except for broken windows. Everyone is beginning to think it must have a halo around it.”<sup>176</sup>

The war did, however, reach their community when the nearby city of Kiating was bombed. Initially, it had seemed that Omei was going to be targeted, as Agnes counted “40-odd planes” overhead, but the planes continued on, and dropped their bombs on Kiating.<sup>177</sup> Irwin tried to help the residents by leaving almost immediately, with Ralph Outerbridge, his friend and medical colleague, and two Kiating men, to offer medical help and expertise. It was a 30 to 40 mile walk, and it took all night to reach the city. In fact, the men did not stay long in the city as they were replaced by another medical team, “an international medical squad of some sort” she advised, that had been flown in, with Jim Endicott, to take charge of the relief work. Agnes surmised that Irwin and Ralph were not overly reluctant to leave Kiating and return to the mountain because the situation in the city had been very difficult. She wrote,

I guess Irwin and Ralph were glad to see them for they were having the worst experience they had ever had. The hospital is not well equipped and in an emergency like this to carry out work properly was pretty difficult. The horrible sights, the language problem, the unfamiliarity with the hospital all made it pretty

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<sup>176</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 2 August 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>177</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 21 August 1939 (AH 6:8).

hard – to say nothing of the lack of sleep and decent meals. However I think they did a good piece of work and they were not sorry they had gone.<sup>178</sup>

Thoughts of Foochow, while never a preoccupation of Agnes that summer, were almost certainly pleasant and even exciting to entertain. In one letter, she advised her parents about sending their letters to her new address, and thereby revealed that the government was developing the country's infrastructure even in the midst of war. "Fowling" she writes, "is the P.O. official name. The government has been changing the names of a lot of towns and cities though they are still called by their old names a good deal. That will at least keep Foochow and Foochow (in Fukien) separate."<sup>179</sup> Her anticipation was apparently shared by members of the little missionary community in Foochow; she had a chance to spend some time with Nellie Graham (the WMS missionary and Mary Lamb's "partner") when Graham arrived for her annual summer holiday and brought reports that the whole community joined her in anticipating the Hillards arrival.<sup>180</sup> As the end of the summer approached, Agnes' plans began to take shape; she and Irwin would return to Chengtu, pack up their belongings as quickly as possible, try to hire a cook, have one of their bicycles repaired and then begin their trip downriver from Chengtu to Foochow. It seems that despite their eagerness to move to Foochow, they looked forward to a rather leisurely trip downriver, it was a ten day journey and they hoped to stop off at a few of

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<sup>178</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 21 August 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 2 August 1939 (AH 6:8).

the mission stations along the way and visit some of the people they had met since their arrival in West China.<sup>181</sup>

Plans for the Hilliards' move to Foochow in September 1939 seem to have fallen into place, although they ran into some difficulties which were actually once again, repercussions of the war. The first part of their trip, from Mount Omei to Chengtu in particular shed light on the indirect impact that the war had on the lives of the people.

A few days earlier a group of mountain men who had taken one party down to the plain were caught in Omei Hsien and conscripted for army service so we had difficulty in getting men to take us down. However we did get down but they refused to go further than the temple at the foot of the mountains.<sup>182</sup>

Then they had the options of continuing on to Chengtu by boat, which would be a lengthy trip of seven to ten days; overland by rickshaw, which they preferred because it would only be a three day trip; or by bus which was a notoriously unreliable form a transport and always over-booked. Prices of rickshaw carriers had soared, and they knew that they would need at least three men to carry them and their luggage.<sup>183</sup> However, these difficulties were not insurmountable, and at the end of the summer, they did, indeed leave their introduction to West China behind, and begin a new chapter in which they would become full-fledged missionaries in China.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 27 August 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>182</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 3 September 1939 (6:8).

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. Some of their luggage was being sent with the Jenners as far as Kiating, and then picked up by the Hilliards en route to Foochow.

<sup>184</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 3 September 1939 (6:8).

### **The Foochow years (September 1939-December 1944)**

This section of Agnes' narrative investigates her experiences, interests and impressions during the years she and her family remained in China. In September 1939 the couple was assigned to the small Foochow missionary station, where they continued their language training, rather to Irwin's chagrin, and became active members of the city's missionary community. Perhaps because of the size of the community, Irwin was able to work as a physician, although he was not allowed, until 1940, to begin his official assignment as a full-time doctor and hospital administrator. Agnes was less inhibited by official regulations, and so she began to work, as a missionary wife, with local Chinese women. In November 1941 she gave birth to their first child, and although she found, according to her own comments, that she had little to report about other than her mothering experiences, in fact she continued to flourish as a young missionary woman. Beyond her work with women, at school, meetings and clubs, she played a rather active role in hospital works by being a sounding board for Irwin and helping with various hospital tasks. By the time that Agnes gave birth to the couple's second child, in November 1943, she had also established friendships with other Canadian and Chinese mothers, and she was comfortable raising her children in the inter-cultural community of which she had become a member. The narrative concludes with the Hilliards decision to return to Canada permanently in December 1944.

#### ***Medical missionary work: Foochow, September 1939-August 1940***

Agnes' first note, written soon after they left Chengtu, expressed how simply excited and happy she felt.

Here we are en route to our own home at last! The movement of the boat makes writing a bit difficult but I'll try for a while. This is a great life on the river – just the two of us, beautiful scenery, nothing to do but loaf and read. It's just like a honeymoon all over again. We are getting a big thrill out of it!<sup>185</sup>

The days that they spent traveling from Chengtu to Foochow seem, in a way, to weave together the strands of their experiences in China: the strong sense of community in Chengtu, the pleasure of being married to Irwin, and the uneven presence of the war. Their departure from the city was dampened for Agnes as she realized the number of people they would be leaving behind. As well, when she identified the anticipation that she had about having her own home, it became evident that (at least in retrospect) her experience at George Eliot's house had been just another boarding situation. Even though she had looked forward to and handled the opportunities and responsibilities of being in charge of the house, it had not, after all, been her own house.

As planned, Agnes and Irwin stopped at several cities en route and at each stop they were confronted with the effects of the bombing of West China. Their first stop was Kiating where they were to pick up some of their belongings and Agnes recorded that the city had been devastated by bombing, "Kiating was a very depressing city. The largest part is just a mass of ruins – partial walls still standing, the ground covered with broken bricks and tiles and people digging around in them and the little trees along the roads just charred sticks."<sup>186</sup> In Kiating she also heard further bad news about Luchow, a downriver city located almost midway between Kiating and Chungking. It was also badly hit by recent bombing, as she explained,

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<sup>185</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 16 September 1939 (6:8).

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

Our mission hospital, the WMS school and house all burned out and two other houses partially destroyed by a demolition bomb. Miss Virgo was quite upset. She had just left there in the spring. We had planned to visit Mrs. Hoffman there and see the hospital but now we will just stop and see if there is anything we can do to help.<sup>187</sup>

When they reached Chungking, her expectation of another city ravaged by bombing was not fulfilled; instead she found a thriving city, as she explained, “so much life and activity and so many fine buildings still here.”<sup>188</sup> She was quite hopeful about the future, perhaps in part because she was hearing more positive reports while staying with the Endicotts in Chungking, and certainly, as she noted, because she was very impressed with the city and its residents. She wrote, “We hadn’t realized before what a large city it really is. It doesn’t look as if the Japanese will ever destroy this place.” She continued her enthusiastic reporting about the city a little later.

Compared with Chungking, Chengtu is a mere town. It quite deserves its name of the Hong Kong of West China. In spite of its twenty odd bombings, there is a great deal still left and the city has rapidly spread out in all directions. After shopping we had lunch at the Agency with a large group of non-missionary people who live there. The next afternoon we took a trip up to the hills to see this place where Chungking and district people spend their summers.<sup>189</sup>

Agnes’ first impression of Foochow, soon after their arrival in September 1939, was one of utter happiness.

About four o’clock we turned a corner and there ahead of us was Foochow built up on the hillside from the river. To the casual observer it didn’t present a very good-looking sight – a group of low, dull, ramshackle buildings clinging together on the point where a smaller river ran into the Yangtze. But to us it was home, a home we had been looking forward to for a long time and as our boat made its

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<sup>187</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 21 August 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> “Trip from Chengtu to Foochow (Fowling Hsien) September 1939” (AHH 6:8). This would have been the community where Mary Lamb often spent her summers.

way into the landing we were experiencing a great thrill. We had arrived!! It was quite a long climb up steps through a very narrow street to reach the hospital compound. Everyone stared at the strangers in their town but for once we didn't care. We were so glad to be there.<sup>190</sup>

The second report that she wrote about arriving in Foochow was perhaps more realistic; she was still very happy to be there, but in this description, Foochow was a little smaller, a little more crowded, the house perhaps smaller than expected, but very nice. Here, we discover Irwin's burst of romanticism, as he carried her across the doorstep into their new home. The following day they brought their belongings up from the boat and began unpacking. It was the first time since she had been in China that Agnes unpacked completely, and in opening up all of her belongings, she may have been transported back to her wedding, and she was certainly reunited with her wedding presents. Finally unpacked, she experienced a little disappointment when she allowed herself to be confronted with some of the realities of their new little community. There were only four foreigners at that time (although it soon expanded with the return from furlough of the Stanway family), the Longleys who were also in China under the United Church, and Nellie Graham and Mary Lamb of the Woman's Missionary Society. Perhaps the size of the missionary community had a greater impact on the lifestyle of its members than the size of the city in which they lived, as Agnes considered that she and Irwin were not going to be able to use all of their belongings after all. She explained,

We rather felt as if our things were too nice! In a larger place like Chengtu or Chungking they wouldn't look out of place, but in a small place where at present there are only four foreigners – Mr. and Mrs. Longley who from time to time have lost their good things either from fire or bandits (years ago) and two WMS ladies

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<sup>190</sup> "Trip from Chengtu to Foochow (Fowling Hsien) September 1939" (AHH 6:8).

whose things may not be very good. I'm afraid I felt a bit depressed – but after all we have years ahead of us and if we don't use them all now, we will later.<sup>191</sup>

As she continued her description of their new home, she seems to reveal a bittersweet recognition that some of their dreams will be fulfilled, while others may have to be at least temporarily changed or given up. “The whole compound is very lovely – up the side of a hill and well away from the city. The three houses are in a curve along the crest of the hill and set among lots of trees.”<sup>192</sup> The house was a little smaller than most of the missionary homes that she had seen in China, but she assured her family that it was a very good size for her; it had ample room for their needs and a larger house would have required more management. The garden, she advised, needed some work, but would be nice in the future. The compound itself, which is the view that she had seen when she looked up from the river, was very beautiful; there were three houses on top of a hill with the hospital and a fourth house down the hill, on the other side of the compound gate. The property had many trees, including some lovely fruit trees. She was pleased to see that there was a tennis court situated in between her house and that of the Longleys and she almost immediately envisioned the addition of a badminton court beside her house. In the tradition of Mary Lamb, Agnes enjoyed playing tennis and badminton, and was determined to exercise so that she remained as fit as possible.<sup>193</sup>

The houses themselves, as well as housekeeping, were of course remarkably different from anything her Canadian friends and family had experienced. Nonetheless, by this

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<sup>191</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 3 October 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*



time, after a year or so in China, Agnes was not at all surprised by the lack of Western amenities; in her description of her new home she only mentioned them in the context of her need to employ servants. While she was conflicted about having servants at all, she knew that she must not bring her Canadian standards and expectations to her Chinese home. After all, her house had no tap water or plumbing, a rather difficult coal stove and neither wooden floors nor electricity. Perhaps with a touch of justification, she wrote,

Housekeeping here isn't quite what I would have at home where I'd not have servants to do it all for me. Servants are a bit of a nuisance and seem more trouble than they are worth at times but in a house where you can't turn on a tap for water and have to cook with a dinky coal stove and where floors have to be washed every day, they are a help. Hardwood floors, plumbing and electric lights are the only things the house doesn't offer. However we plan to install electricity here within the next few months....We are used to the floors and if you have a coolie to haul the water from the well every day, life is not so bad...Since we are only two, we don't need as many servants as some families have. We just have a cook and a coolie. For awhile the cook's wife worked for us every morning but she was not satisfactory and when there was a good opportunity to let her go we did. After all I can manage to make our bed and keep the mending up pretty well. Not having much to be careful with in their own houses it sometimes takes the servants a long time to learn how to look after things in a foreign home...And their idea of cleanliness and ours are just two different things. However I suppose they will learn. No cook is very keen to have his mistress go into the kitchen and do things that are really his job and some of them will immediately produce the same then for the next meal. However ours is not too bad and often on Saturdays when I don't study in the mornings I putter around the kitchen a bit.<sup>194</sup>

As time passed, the servants became something of a window on the Chinese people for Agnes; her interactions with them were the closest of her contacts with ordinary Chinese, and their strengths and weaknesses in some sense provide her with experience and therefore more information about China and its people. She and Irwin were confronted, several times, by a seeming recalcitrance to do different types of work. In fact, as Agnes

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<sup>194</sup> Letter "Hello again," 24 September 1939 (AH 6:8). In her review of her letters in 1976, Hilliard adds the following comment, "(Note: the houses were never electrified while we were there)".

eventually came to realize, the servants were simply standing firm on issues of hierarchy and “face” or “place” rather than her initial impression which was that they were difficult to manage and unused to foreign ways, although that would prove to be true as well. Her servants were carrying over a traditional social code in their attitude to hierarchy: they would not perform jobs that were not part of their role or responsibility, and certainly they would not support Irwin when he decided to challenge this cultural and social tradition.<sup>195</sup> With an increasing labor shortage during these war years, Irwin sometimes decided to tackle the work that needed to be done. Agnes had difficulty reconciling the seemingly contradictory attitudes and work ethic of Chinese people, as exemplified in her servants.

I think they thought us terrible to put up the stove by ourselves instead of calling in a mason to fix it and Irwin said the other day that if the carpenter didn't soon turn up (we have been expecting him for ages and he was busy elsewhere and there are simply no others available these days) he would do the little jobs himself and asked the cook to get the lumber. Well, the cook just couldn't understand how a doctor could do a carpenter's work. The ordinary Chinese doesn't know how to do the simplest thing outside of his own work. We had to have a special man to put some glass tiles in the roof of the cooks here because he couldn't climb up on the roof of his little one-story house to do it himself. They are absolutely helpless and sometimes they seem too stupid too. I wonder why we have them. And I get disgusted with the way they keep the kitchen clean. To begin with I don't see how they even manage to get the wall behind the stove and around the sink so dirty. I know the coal is very soft and dirty but oh dear! I sometimes wonder if I'll ever teach them my idea of cleanliness. It seems to me that I spend hours Saturday morning cleaning where the coolie has missed. He never sees cobwebs unless I practically put him in it and I can't have him do the dusting a second time each day or he would never get anything else done. So I putter around after him and hope that some day he may surprise me.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 28 January 1940 (AH 6:8).

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

It seems that the greatest difficulty that Agnes encountered in establishing her household in Foochow was in sorting out how to manage her servants. When they were directive, the couple ran into what they could only interpret as stubbornness, as in the times when they tried to have work done without waiting for the appropriate repairmen. When the servants were left on their own to manage tasks, Agnes discovered that they made mistakes that were costly and frustrating. Even those who had worked for foreigners in the past required a great deal of supervision. Agnes' stories about problems with the washing easily fell into this category of experiences.

The coolie who was here – Fred and Mary Owen had him last year – is slower than slow. I thought he know about washing so didn't oversee the job last Monday and all Irwin's white socks and my tennis socks are now pink. Then I gave him some bleaching powder to whiten them but foolishly didn't tell him how to use it and he used it all and didn't boil them so that they were still pink. So I took them in hand yesterday and boiled them in washing soda but they still have a pinkish tinge.<sup>197</sup>

Agnes must have thought that after she had corrected his washing technique he would be able to do this particular work without any further intervention. However, it was not long before she was confronted with a second problem, and she must have then realized that the man needed ongoing supervision. He had, it seems, followed her directions about washing the clothes separately according to their color, but had then rinsed them all together and she was enormously frustrated. "I was in despair and furious!! Horrors! Sometimes you wonder where the Chinese servants keep their intelligence hidden."<sup>198</sup>

Agnes was less frustrated with the cook, and although she reported that he was quite good at his work, it is apparent that she had compromised her expectations. She considered that

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<sup>197</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 3 October 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>198</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 12 November 1939 (AH 6:8).

her compromise might have more to do with the difficulty that she had in “bossing the servants,” but it may very well have been that she was simply accommodating her own homemaking experiences with the reality that she was living in China. She reported,

the cook still insists on cooking so many vegetables that we have to eat the same ones for two or three meals and the other day he cooked a dish of pork and beans large enough for a family of 6 boys at least. We ate beans for 3 or 4 days and then he didn't have the face to produce them again.<sup>199</sup>

Perhaps one of the reasons that Agnes was not more directive in the kitchen was that she doubted her own cooking skills. She had not thought about bringing a cookbook to China and so she found that she could not give the cook the exact recipes for food that she wanted him to prepare. When she tried to have him make her mother's salad dressing, the result was unsalvageable; she had forgotten to tell him that he must stir it constantly and so it curdled. When she tried to cook herself, something she only felt comfortable doing when the cook was not in, she was not very pleased with the results and believed that it had to do more with her own lack of experience than with the challenges of her Chinese kitchen.

Within a few weeks, despite Agnes' accounts of her frustrations and difficulties, she and Irwin had settled in quite well; she was managing the house and the servants understood more of their needs. Once again, their belongings serve handily as a gauge to estimate how she was doing. It seems that they had been able to integrate some of the more elegant gifts into their daily lives.

It is a wonderful feeling being in our own home and using our own things. Most of the silverware we have locked in the storeroom but the candlesticks grace our

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<sup>199</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 22 October 1939 (AH 6:8).

sideboard and we use them every night at dinner. We use our silver teapot for afternoon tea and the good silverware at dinner. The cook had a bad time the first few days discriminating between the silver that is kept in the dining room and just used at night and the other that is kept in the pantry and used for breakfast and lunch. The inexpensive set was part of the Simpson's order. The yellow dishes appear at breakfast and noon with ordinary table linen and the Wedgwood dishes at night with good mats. Lately we have been using the ones you crocheted, Mother, and they look swell.<sup>200</sup>

The Foochow missionary community, although very small in number, worked its own sort of magic, and enveloped the newcomers so that they settled in there as well. Their first Sunday in Foochow, Agnes and Irwin felt quite awkward at church. As she advised,

The Church which Uncle Rob built is a very nice little one and the people seem nice too. Our only objection is that the men sit on one side and the women on the other. The first Sunday we both felt pretty conspicuous. Unfortunately we were late and everyone was curious to see us and stared pretty hard, I felt.<sup>201</sup>

Mrs. Longley, in the way that we have seen senior women handling newcomers, immediately assigned Agnes to an activity, so that any sense of being an awkward outsider was immediately dispelled. Undoubtedly, she had no idea that Agnes' singing abilities were limited. Agnes wrote,

Mrs. Longley persuaded me to sit with the choir to help out – you can imagine what a help I was with my voice and being able to sing only one out of every ten words. However I kept my mouth open at least. Laugh all you like but Mrs. Longley wants me to help her with the choir (made up of nurses) and she won't believe me when I say I can't sing.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 3 October 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

Within days of their arrival in Foochow, Agnes and Irwin ended their interlude of homemaking and settling in, and were focused, once again on their work. Language studies continued to be their primary responsibility, and they were required to complete their language courses. The instruction was scheduled to take two years; however, Agnes advised that it was theoretically two years, but that she and Irwin hoped to complete their studies a little faster. It seems that Irwin's hope and perhaps expectation to shift to medical work was quashed, when he was advised that he would not be able to do so until the spring. The Chinese doctor who had been acting head of the hospital appeared to accept that he was going to be replaced by a new foreign administrator, and he actually appeared fairly anxious, according to Agnes, for Irwin to start. However, the most that Irwin was able to do was Saturday clinic work, which was likely similar to the type of experience that he had in Chengtu. As she became more familiar with the community, Agnes suggested that the hospital actually needed him and that Irwin might be able to raise the standards of the work that was being done, although she realized that the fundamental problem was actually a matter of funding. The hospital, it seems, turned poor people away from its doors, "without proper medicine and care." She expected that somehow Irwin would find a way of dealing with this situation, so that everyone who requested and required medical help would be treated.<sup>203</sup>

Agnes, by this time, appears to have acquired a maturity or confidence about her abilities, which was particularly evident when she considered her new language studies. She almost immediately noticed that the teachers were not as good as those in the Chengtu

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<sup>203</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 3 October 1939 (AH 6:8)

language school. She unhesitatingly and confidently evaluated them, and reported that her primary or main teacher was “quite good but not up to Chengtu standard,” and that the secondary teacher, whom she had only a couple of hours daily, was, in her estimation, “a punk.” She suggested that because he was a Christian, she expected more of him. “He may be a member of our Church and Principal of the Boy’s school but he is no good as a language teacher. If we find a better person we may bid him farewell.”<sup>204</sup> Of course, she might justifiably have thought that the principal of a school would be able to guide her in her Chinese studies.

As she had done in Chengtu, Agnes embarked upon community-related endeavors on her own rather than simply relying upon Mrs. Longley’s leadership. In November 1939 she once again became involved with the activities of the community’s students, although this time it was with the student nurses. She held practice sessions at her home for the upcoming Christmas church service, and her experience was a little reminiscent of the play with the pink sets. Although as we have seen, Agnes was never much of a singer, she was unabashedly certain that the Chinese singing needed her (Western) help, as she explains,

You should hear them sing – it’s bedlam! Everyone seems to think the occasion calls for all their vocal strength, and Chinese voices at any degree of loudness are not very sweet. The sopranos drown out everyone else. They persuaded me to help the altos but after the first line I’m lost completely and can’t sing a note. They use the system whereby all the notes on the staff are represented by a number and they sing ‘do, la’ me’ etc. It is an excellent system for anyone who has learned as they have at school can sing without notes. Still they take one look at their numbers and sing right along regardless of the organ or anyone else. It seems rather hopeless to us, but the congregation will probably think they are

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<sup>204</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 3 October 1939 (AH 6:8).

wonderful. Oh! For some good home music! The radio does a lot of good for us.<sup>205</sup>

Agnes and Irwin began to socialize a little with Chinese people, and within a short period of time they had an array of social engagements with people whom they had met through their mission activities. The first invitation they issued was to Dr. and Mrs. Tao, he was the administrator of the hospital and so he was perhaps the first local Chinese person that Irwin met (beyond the servants). Agnes invited them for dinner and, as she advised, “a bit of entertainment.” Afterwards, she felt that the evening was “quite successful.” When she expanded a little upon the evening, her readers have an idea of her expectations, and indeed the things that were most stressful to her: the quality of the food and the ease in which she and Irwin could communicate were the two aspects that seem most important. She wrote, “The cook did pretty well, the table looked nice, and the Tao’s were easy to entertain. They spoke clearly and were good about helping us with our difficulties.”<sup>206</sup> The difficulties that she referred to were mostly caused by the limitations of their own vocabulary. She also entertained church workers: a pastor, seemingly from the Foochow church and a man whom she describes as a “Chungking worker” who was attached to the America Bible Society visited another evening. Once again, Agnes gauged the success of the evening by the ease with which they all communicated with one another.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 22 November 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>206</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 3 October 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.



Agnes and Irwin's social engagements in Foochow soon expanded to include more people, and at times the couple found that they were overly committed. Socializing with Chinese people continued to exert certain pressures on Agnes. There was the need to speak Chinese, to be comfortable and adept with chopsticks, and to eat in Chinese style. Whenever she entertained, her meals were always served in Western or a quasi-Western style. Although she sometimes served Chinese food at her dinner parties, she never managed to do away with Western-style serving spoons. Her guests, often confounded by or awkward with these utensils, could relax with their chopsticks, but were discouraged from introducing them to her serving platters.<sup>208</sup> Undoubtedly, Agnes never became comfortable with and accepting of the Chinese style of serving food. The lack of hygiene implicit in eating from the same bowl was something she could not accept, and although she knew that being served a special morsel by a Chinese hostess was an honor, she never quite adapted to it or lost her discomfort with it.

The Hilliards were, of course, invited to special events in the Chinese Christian community, as well as to spend evenings with Chinese people whom they met through their mission work. They were guests at the church wedding of a couple who were passing through Foochow en route to their home in Chengtu. This particular wedding was similar to many other Chinese Christian weddings; Agnes explained that it "combined old Chinese tradition with our Western ceremony."<sup>209</sup> There were, by her accounts, too many long speeches and far too much singing, the latter an addition that was not present in Western ceremonies, but the dinner that followed was, in her words, "quite a good

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<sup>208</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 4 January 1940 (AH 6:9).

<sup>209</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 30 October 1939 (AH 6:8).

feast.”<sup>210</sup> They were invited to the Tao’s home for dinner, and once again Agnes had a mild criticism, but more than just an observation, about the Chinese-ness or difference of their home, and as well she once again raises the issue of language. She wrote,

A Chinese home seems quite bare to us who are used to rugs and curtains and pictures etc. They have very little to adorn their rooms and their chairs are not very comfortable and plain backless benches at the table. However we had a good meal and a nice time. Fortunately there were other guests and so I didn’t have to say much.<sup>211</sup>

They were invited to dinner in a restaurant by the head doctor of the nearby opium hospital who was entertaining a visiting colleague; supper at the Longley’s when entertaining Chinese guests; and dinner (once again in a restaurant) with the visiting superintendent of a military convalescent hospital. Eventually, Agnes began comparing and contrasting the outings and it became evident to her readers that the Hilliards had established a fairly extensive network of relationships with men who worked for branches of the Nationalist civil and military government offices.<sup>212</sup> Their social activities continued to expand, as they invited guests to their home (both reciprocating and instigating invitations). They had a successful dinner with Pastor and Mrs. Tzu. Her memo about the dinner once again identified one of the standards against which she judged their evenings: “He had an exceptionally good appetite and even she ate so heartily that we were pleased and surprised.”<sup>213</sup> At a dinner at the Longleys, Agnes and Irwin were introduced to two Chinese couples, both of whom had recently arrived in the

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<sup>210</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 30 October 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 28 November 1939 (AH 6:8).

city from eastern China. It would not take long before a remarkably close relationship developed between these newcomers and the Foochow missionaries. General and Mrs. Han and Mr. and Mrs. Chwang were all “down-river people.” The General was in Foochow in order to head up a new training program for soldiers; the Chwangs, both refugees from the war, were lawyers.<sup>214</sup> These people made lasting impressions upon Agnes, and she had considerable interaction and developed relationships with them.<sup>215</sup> They encapsulated the qualities that she respected and enjoyed most in Chinese: they were educated, thoughtful, and intelligent people, who had been exposed to Western influences. For Agnes, certainly their youth and ability to converse with her enabled her to quite easily establish relationships with them. Perhaps she found herself missing the companionship of other young couples, and she certainly noted, in her remarks about them, “They are all very nice people and very young”;<sup>216</sup> Together they played ping pong and listened to radio newscasts. Eventually she even built on her friendship with them, and relied upon them to extend out into the community, meeting other down-river lawyers through the Chwangs, and other women through Mrs. Han.<sup>217</sup>

Agnes and Irwin’s closest relationships were undoubtedly within their own missionary group. When they began to participate in quite regularized community suppers, it seems that they were firmly part of the missionary community. Halloween presented the reason

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<sup>214</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 28 November 1939 (AH 6:8). In her records, Agnes referred to this family as Jwang, Chwang and Chuang.

<sup>215</sup> Mary Lamb wrote about them as well, and was equally impressed by them.

<sup>216</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 28 November 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>217</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 26 June 1939 (AH 6:8).

for the first community dinner at their new home. She wrote of that evening, “This is the first time we’ve had the whole 6 of us – Mr. and Mrs. Longley, Miss Lamb and Miss Graham and us.”<sup>218</sup> It was quite an important evening for Agnes, and when the cook drastically miscalculated the amount of beef he should use for the soup, Agnes was resilient enough, and perhaps notably relaxed enough, to simply delay the meal a little and send him down to the shops to purchase and prepare additional meat. The food that evening was typically Canadian food and the image that she conveyed when she described the events conjures up an evening where East and West met comfortably together, most notably when the cook returned to the store. It was not Agnes, crossing the street from her house to shop in the nearby store, as she reminisced about at another time, but her servant.<sup>219</sup> When Christmas approached, she lobbied the members of her little community quite vigorously so that they would agree to have Christmas dinner at her home.<sup>220</sup>

As Agnes had suggested, her servants brought issues to her, as their employer, which she might otherwise not have considered; in some ways this extended her understanding of the China in which she lived. Agnes found that she had to deal with the ever-increasing inflation that was plaguing the Chinese economy because the servants demanded compensatory wages. The issue was truly over wages, but the problem in the first instance told of the escalation of prices, and in the second the equally important question

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<sup>218</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 1 November 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>219</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 30 October 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>220</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 28 November 1939 (AH 6:8).

of the difference in the standard of living between missionaries and the Chinese.<sup>221</sup> Need, expectation and demands converged together, and Agnes knew that she must work together with her colleagues in order to come to a joint decision about how they should respond to the demands.<sup>222</sup> As she explained,

During the past two months prices have soared tremendously and the Chinese, the ordinary people, just can hardly live on what they have. The carpenters, painters etc. have raised their prices and now the servants want the same high wage. They have rather high ideas but you can hardly blame them. The thing that bothers me chiefly is to think of the difference between what we spend and what we give them to live on. Of course they realize that our standard of living is different than theirs but still I don't see how we can refuse their requests. The problem has been bothering me the past couple of days so I'll be glad to have it settled. The Longley's and we have discussed it but so far we haven't been able to discuss it with the WMS ladies and seeing we all stick together in these things the matter is still open.<sup>223</sup>

Agnes had struggled with the matter of having servants in the past. Initially, she was unsympathetic to the notion of servants, and it was only after trying to do activities (such as shopping) without their help that she conceded that the society was more accepting and indeed used to foreigners having servants than she had expected. The Chinese marketplace had its own unwritten rules, which she eventually conceded made it more logical for the servants to shop for her household needs.<sup>224</sup> She explained some of these complications in a letter written the following year,

We use more expensive things like meat, flour, sugar, eggs and milk...but a large amount disappears by means of the age-old 'squeeze.' Our cook never reckons with us for exactly what they paid for something. How much they make on our shopping I don't know for we can rarely put our finger on anything definite. It seems like dishonesty to us, but it isn't to the Chinese mind. For hundreds of

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<sup>221</sup> See Endicott, *James G. Endicott: Rebel Out of China*, 91.

<sup>222</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 28 November 1939 (AH 6:8). Endicott: *Rebel Out of China*, 91.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid

<sup>224</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 2 September 1940 (AH 6:10).

years the 'squeeze' system has prevailed in all money transactions so that it is a part of life. You might say – 'Why don't you do your own shopping.' That has its difficulties too for foreigners can't buy as cheaply as the Chinese for we are all supposed to be rolling in wealth and so prices go up for us. If we had to buy our own food of course we would but since food isn't bought in nice clean stores as it is at home, I'm just as glad to have someone else do my buying for me.<sup>225</sup>

As well, she accepted that running a household was a far more labor intensive undertaking than it was in Canada.<sup>226</sup> It seems that when she made this concession, despite her predilection to be an independent and active woman, she had actually become more accepting of China and indeed less insistent that she create an oasis of Canadian life for herself.

Experience allowed Agnes to think that Chinese were simply different; each experience that she had gave her a little more information about China, and particularly about Chinese culture. The Christmas season found her wishing that she could entertain her own family. Agnes was seldom homesick and perhaps, like Mary Lamb, she found the holiday season provocative and became sentimental and rather nostalgic, and so she and Irwin decided to open their home to some Chinese guests. She was well aware of the differences in their lifestyle, and voiced her unflagging surprise that Chinese guests did not particularly appreciate their more luxurious Western lifestyle. In a brief comment she revealed a little impatience amidst her growing understanding: "Since we can't entertain those we want most, we are trying to do our best by the Chinese here, even though they don't appreciate our nice things and our warm home."<sup>227</sup> That particular evening about

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<sup>225</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 2 September 1940 (AH 6:10).

<sup>226</sup> Ibid

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

which she was reminiscing was one in which they had hosted a family that had moved into the city as war refugees, and the man had been appointed assistant minister of the Foochow church.<sup>228</sup> On another occasion, when the nurses came in for an afternoon of tea, ping pong and volleyball, she became noticeably critical of them, and suggested that they truly needed the influence of a Westerner in order to play properly.

The Chinese haven't been playing games long enough to have developed the attitude of good sportsmanship and fair play that we have and it makes us feel very badly to see them counting incorrectly, - whether intentionally or because of their inability to score clearly. They also played volleyball outside and the boys just let the girls run after the ball until Irwin's good example finally stirred them up.<sup>229</sup>

It may be that Agnes' reaction to Chinese behavior, her appreciation as well as her intolerance, had more to do with particular experiences or events than with her overall sense of the Chinese people. Several months later, when she reported about the more serious matter of a fire in the city, she was once again critical of Chinese people. She made sweeping statements about the lack of shared concern and the limited sense of community in Chinese society; she identified the tightness of family relationships to the exclusion of all others; and finally, she was quite argumentative, identifying that in a situation in which there was more need of cooperation, there was none.<sup>230</sup> She was undoubtedly frightened and frustrated. The cause of the fire was unknown, and it seemed to her that the city sorely lacked an adequate plan to fight fires. In her report, we find her

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<sup>228</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 2 September 1940 (AH 6:10).

<sup>229</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 21 November 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>230</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 16 September 1939 (AH 6:8).

returning to the scenes that she had seen in Kiating and Luchow, and undoubtedly she had been frightened that Foochow could have suffered similar damage. She wrote,

The tragedy of it is too that so few do anything to check it. Chinese don't trust each other very much and their fire fighting organization doesn't seem very good. There were people tearing down where they could to try to stop the fire but outside the burning area on the hillsides there were hundreds and hundreds of people just watching. If they thought of helping they wouldn't know where to start and if they did they would probably have been thrown out because they didn't belong to that section of the city and no one would trust them. One of the biggest weaknesses of Chinese society is their lack of any sense of responsibility for anyone or anything outside their own family. Within the family circle the sense of responsibility is very high but outside of that there is distrust and suspicion underneath a veneer of extreme politeness.<sup>231</sup>

The immediate information that they could gather about the fire, its cause and outcome was limited, and it was only a month or so later, that Irwin returned to the event. It had been estimated that one-sixth of the city was completely destroyed by the fire. The mission had apparently received contributions towards rebuilding the city from people he described as "former members of the Mission," and he was as disillusioned as Agnes had been on the night of the fire, because the city council had not used the money well. He believed that the funds should have been used to build fire lanes but instead, as he advised, city officials had acted with little forward planning. "Mushroom structures have sprung up and it is worse than before. You would think that they had never heard of the bombing of Kiating or Luchow."<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 28 November 1939 (AH 6:8). In 1976 when she reviewed her letters, she added the following: "(note: this obviously was in the days before I learned of the neighbourhood organization which was in China in our days though not as well organized as in today's China..)".

<sup>232</sup> Letter to Everyone, 28 December 1939 (AH 6:8). This letter is written by Irwin.



In some ways, Agnes created a quite Canadianesque home life, but we must be careful about interpreting her comments about Chinese lack of appreciation of her home and its comforts. Her aspiration to be a good homemaker was most evident when she considered her cooking skills or asked for recipes from home when she wrote to her family. In one letter, having just had Mrs. Longley and Mary Lamb over for a waffle supper, she wrote,

Any recipe will always be welcome. How I was ever so stupid to come out here without a decent cook-book I don't know. My collection is fine as far as it goes but it's the simple ordinary things that I seem to know so little about. Maybe I'll learn, at least I may learn more here where I can't run to the local grocery and buy canned things. Desserts seem to be my present worry.<sup>233</sup>

Despite the limited resources, a coal stove, rigged up heating system, coal oil (or even the poor vegetable oil) lamps, unfinished floors, lack of water supply and so on, Agnes was determined to create a home according to at least some of her preconceived expectations.<sup>234</sup> As she continued in her description of her efforts to make desserts, her readers are almost transported directly into her kitchen.

We eat a lot of milk puddings and the cook produces a fairly good carrot pudding and excellent raisin tarts (now made with dates and canned cherries since our Hong Kong raisins are all gone). Then too we have Irwin's favorite lemon pudding (made here with orange juice) that his mother used to make. You take a baking dish and put in the bottom the juice of about three lemons plus sugar and water (like lemonade) and then put into that a batter made of 1 c. sugar, 2 T shortening (we use lard here), 1 c flour, 1 t baking powder and ½ c milk (or enough to make a good batter) then bake it in the oven 20 minutes – ½ hour till its nice and brown on the top. The bottom should be nice and gooey with a fair amount of liquid. We think its swell but I suppose both Dad and Fred would stick up their noses. Alas, we have no apple pie here and in fact we have pie only when we have guests to help us eat it.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 11 December 1939 (AH 6:8).

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

Her wish for a cookbook was answered more quickly than she had hoped; when the missionaries exchanged presents at their Christmas dinner, she discovered that Mary Lamb had given her a cookbook. Perhaps this was the cookbook that Mary had purchased in Shanghai so many years earlier. Agnes writes of her present, “Miss Lamb gave me a 2 vol. cook book in English and Chinese, an excellent book purchased in Shanghai and I was thrilled to have it.”<sup>236</sup> Their Christmas dinner was almost a traditional meal, with a few variations and substitutions, as she explained,

Our dinner seemed a success even though it was chicken and a duck instead of turkey or goose. I had brought a small bottle of cranberry sauce from Hong Kong that I got out. Mrs. Longley produced a good Christmas pudding and hard sauce and a mince pie. My fruit cake and shortbread appeared with the coffee and were not bad.<sup>237</sup>

It seems that Agnes had adapted her expectations about being a homemaker to her circumstances in China, so that she reached a balance with which she was comfortable. She had easily found her place within the small missionary community, and had sorted out ways in which she could play a role in the larger missionary community by, for example, socializing with Chinese people. The latter was simply part of her life; she, as a member of the missionary community, wanted to establish relationships with Chinese people and to learn about China. She was quite open in her reasoning, suggesting that relationships were reciprocal, and some of her actions were simply part of the give and take of daily life. When she invited two young men from the electrical company for dinner, she candidly advised that she was “trying to get on with them” because they

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<sup>236</sup> Undated letter to Mother, Dad and Fred (AH 6:8).

<sup>237</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 25 December 1939 (AH 6:8).

might be needed to install electricity in the near future.<sup>238</sup> With few exceptions, her relationships with Chinese people were fairly superficial; the clearest example of a friendship that comfortably spanned the cultural differences to which she so often referred was with the Chwang family. Agnes, who had been so impressed with Mr. Chwang at their first meeting, was pleased to report that he had decided to write the Chinese consular exams, then was posted to Chungking for some military training, and thereafter would be joining China's diplomatic service. She was hopeful that he would eventually be posted to Canada, perhaps so that they could continue their relationship there, or perhaps because she envisioned him being an excellent conduit for Chinese-Canadian relationships.<sup>239</sup>

Daily life in Foochow seems to have been quite free from war-related activities; however, the war was undoubtedly a presence that loomed in the background of Agnes' days. Some nights they were able to hear planes that they could only presume were targeting West China's larger cities. Agnes and Irwin had both been concerned about the lack of preparedness in Foochow, a concern that surfaced most clearly in the aftermath of the fire that had raged through the city. Although the fire was not the result of an incendiary bomb, as had occurred in other cities, their response linked the damage caused by fire to similar damage that had been caused by the war. Perhaps because they had lived in a larger centre before coming to Foochow, it seems that the couple was more vigilant about instituting security measures than the other missionaries were. She wrote,

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<sup>238</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 16 January 1940 (AH 6:9).

<sup>239</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 20 February 1940 (AH 6:8).

When we first came here last fall we were determined to build some kind of air raid shelter, not because we were afraid but because we had seen enough in Chengtu, Kiating and Luchow to feel that it was the only sensible thing to do. But everyone here laughed at us and assured us that no proper dug-out was possible for there is no rock in this hill. Even the hospital refused to be alarmed. We fixed up as best we could under our house and have tried to set a good example. Just recently Beth and Nick went to a ministerial conference in Junghsien and the first thing they did when they came back was to start building a dug-out. They had seen what the Tzeiliutsing and Junghsien people had in the d.o. line. So the dug-out is now being built into the hillside where we had previously been told it wasn't possible. No sooner was it underway when Dr. Tao came up from the hospital to see it and decided that the hospital must have one exactly like it even though the ground around the hospital is even less suitable than up here. Such is life!<sup>240</sup>

In the middle of May 1940, Foochow was bombed. Agnes' reports to her family were swift and reassuring: it was true that the city had been bombed; she and Irwin were fine; the bombing was far less severe than it might have been; and finally they must remember in the future that any bad news would reach them immediately via the Toronto mission office and so they must never worry that something awful had happened. However, once she had completed her assurances, Agnes moved onto a loss that she and the community had sustained: Mrs. Han, one of the Chinese women of whom she had grown fond, had died. Agnes told and retold the story of her death, perhaps trying to come to terms with a bomb that had seemed almost inconsequential (at least when she thought about the damage it could have caused) and yet had taken the life of a woman who was a wife, mother and good friend to the missionaries.<sup>241</sup> The immediacy of the day's events was conveyed in her account to her family.

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<sup>240</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 17 May 1940 (AH 6:9).

<sup>241</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 31 May 1940 (AH 6:8).

About 10:30 yesterday morning we heard the sound of planes and saw 27 planes pass over, flying very low and looking very beautiful as they flashed in the sun. They were heading in the direction of Chungking. We waited till after they were out of sight and hearing and then went back to work. About 15 minutes later a single plane came suddenly back upon us. Before we realized it, it was above the city and we heard the bombs burst. As quickly as it came, it went – and everything was all over. We and the servants and the Stanways had dashed into the dugout under our house and as soon as it was quiet we had the minister and his family and various outsiders rushing up to our house. Off in the direction of the city we could see smoke rising in a huge cloud and hear the crash of falling houses...At the hospital we joined Dr. Tao and the nurses rolling bandages. We started in on the wounded. Mrs. Han was brought in. Irwin took her to the operating room and did everything he could for her but she went very quickly. A large artery in her hip had broken and she had lost so much blood that she couldn't pull out of it...Miss Lamb who came over in the afternoon helped me to look after the women. A group of Miss Chiang's training school girls also came to help. It was nearly 8 o'clock before we got home for supper, our first meal since breakfast, but somehow we didn't have much appetite.<sup>242</sup>

She continued,

We all feel badly about Mrs. Han. The story is this – she and all the other people in her household and those living in the same compound (the Chinese equivalent to an apartment building at home) had gone into their dugout but because it was damp inside when the first group of planes had gone over and all was quiet they came out again. When they heard the one plane returning they all ran for the dugout but Mrs. Han was struck before she reached it...I think that is about all there is to tell and I hope I haven't said too much but I know that you would want me to feel free to tell you about it.<sup>243</sup>

In spring 1940, around the same time as the bombing in which Mrs. Han was killed, Agnes had the opportunity to make several trips outside the city of Foochow, all of which were related to the community's missionary work. On one of these trips, she and Irwin joined Mary Lamb who was going off to visit the nearby hospital for sick soldiers, located about five miles upriver from Foochow. This outing was an important step for

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<sup>242</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 31 May 1940 (AH 6:8).

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

Agnes, an experience which seems to have shifted her identity even more firmly to that of a missionary woman. Agnes' accounts of the events of the day were wonderfully detailed. Perhaps quite intentionally, she created the separate images of the evangelist and the travelers: Mary Lamb, who took every possible opportunity to work among the people that she met; and Irwin and Agnes, who were enjoying every minute of this new experience.<sup>244</sup> Agnes did note that the day enabled her to really feel like a missionary.

She wrote,

We got up at about 3:45 a.m. and had breakfast and started out to catch the 'rice boat' a boat that brings rice and vegetables down from the country and takes passengers back. It was due to leave at 'dawn'. We planned to get there by 5 o'clock but it was already quite light when we got down by the river so we hurried for fear of missing the boat but as usual there was no need to hurry in China! Miss Lamb, Miss Lin, a Chinese lady whom we would call a 'deaconess', were already there holding a place for us. The seats were merely planks stretching from one side of the boat to the other and not very luxurious. Miss Lamb managed to get seats at the side so at least we had something to lean against. The Chinese boatmen are not very punctual about arriving or leaving but wait until the boat is full. Many of the passengers took their time in spite of the shouting of the boatmen to urge them on board. Both going up and coming back the boat started and pulled back several times to pick up late passengers. It went at a snails pace, most of the time being pulled by the oarsmen. However we chatted and I knitted and Miss Lamb passed out pamphlets to the passengers. A fairly young passenger whose English was passable knew Miss Lamb. He chatted with us.<sup>245</sup>

After they had disembarked, their little group stopped at one of their street-front chapels and held a short service which was well attended, although it was mostly soldiers who ventured into the chapel while others watched from outside. Then they continued on their way, up to the hospital which was actually housed in part of the family home of the young man whom they had met on the boat. "We, the ladies of the party, got into whaggers while the men started out on foot for about a three mile jaunt into the country,

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<sup>244</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 17 May 1940 (AH 6:8).

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

uphill most of the way to the hospital."<sup>246</sup> They toured the hospital, which Agnes reported was in "surprisingly good condition." There were about 400-500 in-patients at that time, although in the past the hospital had probably accommodated even more patients. The patients were gathered together in the central courtyard and the missionaries were all introduced and asked to speak to them. Agnes advised, "Irwin managed to put forth a few well chosen words in good style. I politely declined. Mrs. Liu gave the chief talk and Miss Lamb taught them a song, gave them some pictures and tracts and all went well."<sup>247</sup> They also visited the young man from the boat and had the chance to see where the family whose home it had been had moved.

He and his mother and younger brother were living in a few rooms they had saved for themselves...Miss Lamb assured us he would have a meal ready for us but all we were served was the usual cup of tea. By this time our stomachs were nearly dropping out of us, so we made straight for the town and a restaurant. The place wasn't the height of cleanliness but we scalded the chopsticks in boiling water and dug in! Our hunger was a stronger influence than our scruples after eating we dropped in to see some people who used to live here and after sipping more tea went to catch the 2 o'clock boat which finally got underway about 3:00. The trip downriver was much faster and very pleasant. There was a group of young soldiers on board and Miss Lamb, after chatting with them taught them the patriotic song she had taught the other soldiers. We arrived home feeling more like what we thought missionaries were like. It was our first trip out from the city. We enjoyed it.<sup>248</sup>

Irwin's involvement in hospital work increased dramatically, and by the summer of 1940, when the couple expected to vacation on the hills near Foochow, Agnes was uncertain whether he would be able to have a break at all. Irwin had been thrust into hospital management when the nursing students went on strike. The national government, as part

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<sup>246</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 17 May 1940 (AH 6:8).

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

of its focus on civil matters, had established regulations regarding education. It had declared, several years earlier, that the minimum training period for nursing students was three years and four months. The situation that provoked the nurses' strike revealed, according to Agnes, a lack of adequate management of their program. Instead of following the government mandate, the program remained a three year course under the direction of its foreign nurse. Seemingly unexpectedly, the current principal of the nursing school had unilaterally decided to implement the regulation. The nurses responded not only by refusing to attend classes, but also by declaring themselves to be on a hunger strike. Lack of communication between the various people and groups in charge of the mission program was undoubtedly, at least in part to blame: the school board had not been consulted by the principal; the nurses were not forewarned; the acting head of the hospital, Dr. Tao, was uncertain and hesitant about how to resolve the issue; and the hospital was left without much of its staff as the nurses-in-training worked directly with the patients. Agnes and her colleague, Beth Stanway (who was a registered nurse), were prepared to fill the vacated positions. This was a particularly difficult situation for Irwin to resolve; he appears to have drawn upon his interpersonal skills, which he had demonstrated up on the mountain with the children, and assumed a clear role of leadership. The situation did not continue to spiral out of control and the striking nurses apparently returned quite readily to their work, and perhaps fortunately for Agnes, she and Beth Stanway were not called upon to act as replacement nurses.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 26 June 1940 (AH 6:8).



Irwin's medical work at the hospital increased despite the earlier caution that he would not be fully engaged at the hospital until the fall, when his language training was to be completed. It seems that he was pulled into more work because other hospital personnel were absent: Dr. Tao, the physician and administrator, was on holiday (leaving Irwin alone in the hospital); the head nurse of the women's hospital was also away on holiday; Mr. Dzen, head of the nursing school had taken the graduating students up to Chungking where they were writing their final exams; and, as Agnes advised, new patients were being admitted each day. Treating patients was sometimes difficult in unexpected ways: Irwin told her of the frustration that he felt because Chinese patients often failed to follow his treatment plan, but always expected to have immediate, positive results. It seems that Western physicians were held to a high standard, but that their directions were not always respected. Agnes recounted two stories about children that he had treated.

I don't know what principles if any are involved in the training of Chinese children but so far we haven't seen any properly disciplined according to our ideas. There are only two in the hospital now that need a special diet and since the hospital hasn't a dietician to make special things, I sent things down from here. One little girl didn't like the egg-nogs and her mother didn't insist on her taking them, so we gave up after a few days. For a little boy, Irwin mixed some medicine in a quart of orange juice but the bottle was returned today with only a little bit gone which Irwin thinks the mother drank. Doctor's orders seem to mean nothing to a mother if her child doesn't happen to like the treatment and yet they expect the foreign doctor to work fast cures!<sup>250</sup>

Agnes also reported that she finally knew what it felt like to be the wife of a physician. Her husband was late for meals, she never knew when he would arrive at home, and their planned summer vacation might even have to be cancelled. However, her news did not carry even a hint of negativity; she reported that Irwin was enjoying it all, in spite of what

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<sup>250</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 31 May 1940 (AH 6:8).

she termed “the difficulties,” and undoubtedly she was happy that he was finally doing the work that he had been so eager to begin.<sup>251</sup>

Their vacation in 1940, which they eventually were able to take, was spent in the distant summer community of Kao Shih Ti. This was where the Stinsons, a young couple whose company they particularly enjoyed, were spending their holidays and so Agnes and Irwin decided to share their house. It was a small, relatively quiet community, and although Agnes’ reports from Omei the previous year had not described a particularly hectic or event-filled time, she suggested that Kao Shih Ti would be very quiet compared to their Omei experience and that they would be the only two young couples at the resort area.<sup>252</sup>

Their trip was quite remarkable for Agnes; it was the first time that she had traveled over that particular route, and so it gave her the chance to see a little more of West China.

They began their holiday with a boat trip to Chungking. Her description of this part of the trip tells of how busy the river was at that time of year; although they tried to secure a cabin by being at the dock at 4:00 in the morning, they had no luck, and instead sat on stools in an area that was actually reserved for the boat staff. The weather was very hot and a cabin would have provided at least some protection from the sun. Other than having to be at the dock at that hour, the trip was quite unremarkable: they enjoyed the scenery, there was a little breeze, but Agnes and Irwin were unable to move around the boat, and actually found themselves quite uncomfortable, as people walked around them and “stepped over them” throughout the day. They spent a day in Chungking, and Agnes was

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<sup>251</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 26 June 1940 (AH 6:8).

<sup>252</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 21 July 1940 (AH 6:10).

once again very impressed with the city. It had been quite damaged by the bombing it had sustained, but she was particularly struck by the way that the population had responded to the war in an organized, low-key manner. The second part of their trip was from Chungking to Junghsien, with a stopover in Tzeliutsing. That particular bus route was apparently always booked up well in advance (although it seemed that each time the Hilliards needed to book passage on a bus, the route was one that was always heavily used), but with the mediation of Gordon Jones who was the head of the Business Agency, they secured places on a truck, which turned out to be extremely crowded. Agnes' narrative of this part of their trip was exhaustive and conveyed the fatigue and frustration that she felt that day. The behavior of the driver towards people who were walking along the road upset her, and she turned to speculation and suggestions about class divisions once again, inadvertently perhaps raising issues of roles and responsibilities in society.

These down-river drivers seem to think they own the road and are very uppish in their treatment of the Szechwanese people. Besides in China it is a regrettable thing the underdog is the one who always gets it in the neck. It made us pretty mad the way our driver treated the coal men who, of course, wouldn't dare hit back as a worker at home would. There is no such thing as equality in this country. Class distinction is still strong.<sup>253</sup>

She also, in this situation, had her first negative reaction to down-river people, whose behavior that day was overtly superior and nasty towards Szechwan natives. They spent the night with the Jenners in Junghsien and Irwin, by now no longer a newcomer, talked to Dr. Jenner about hospital business and its problems. As in the past, the Agnes and Irwin hired whaggans in order to travel up into the hills.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 21 July 1940 (AH 6:10).

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

The three weeks in Kao Shi Ti went quickly; the couple spent most of their time playing tennis and relaxing with their companions. They had not brought their radio and had virtually no news from outside the community. Perhaps it was being in a state of complete relaxation or it might have been that they were in the company of other people their age, whatever the cause, Agnes sent photos back to Canada and hoped that her family would appreciate that she had not become a dowdy missionary. She dressed and tried to pose so that she and Irwin would look their best, fashionable, youthful and smart. She may have been feeling particularly playful, or she may have been a little self-conscious. Whatever the cause, her photos remind us of their early reports, as they approached China, that missionaries were quite nice on the whole, and that they, in particular, were not at all old-fashioned.<sup>255</sup>

Their summer holiday might be seen as a marker: before their vacation they had been busy with all sorts of activities; immediately after their vacation their work seems to have become more limited in its focus. As they had done on their trip up to Kao Shih Ti, they stopped in Chungking on their way home. Chungking was bombed that day and Agnes reported that the bombing was so severe that even people outside the city, where it was almost always safe from attacks, sustained injuries. Agnes and Irwin immediately went to work up at the overburdened mission hospital; she rolled bandages and made dressing throughout the day and into the evening, while Irwin worked side by side with the Chinese doctors. At one point Agnes counted more than eleven fires that she could see;

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<sup>255</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 12 August 1940 (AH 6:10).

all were the result of incendiary bombs that had been dropped on the city.<sup>256</sup> Upon their return to Foochow, they found out that while they were on holiday their own city had been bombed and the impact went beyond any physical damage to the city. Irwin discovered that the morale among hospital staff had deteriorated badly; Dr. Tao was unable to provide leadership and it was left to Irwin to staunch the spreading malaise. She wrote, "Dr. Tao who received a very slight injury to his leg evidently went to pieces and didn't stand up in the crisis."<sup>257</sup> Agnes certainly saw Irwin as the Westerner, the only one who could be counted on when situations were very difficult. Dr. Tao's letter of resignation may very well have pushed her to this conclusion. She suggested that his behavior was quite typical of Chinese who did not communicate at all well. She had experienced several incidents in which Chinese workers had not been forthright in their plans; a servant who had untruthfully said that he had taken another job, a nurse who said that she was going on holiday, but was actually leaving her work, and now Dr. Tao, who resigned without trying to reconcile his difficulties. In fact, the doctor did return to work at the hospital, but he only remained for a little while before opening a pharmaceutical dispensary in another town. Agnes commented that it was difficult to know what prompted his actions; at various times he appeared jealous of Irwin's standing, fearful of the bombings, or responsive to his wife's complaints that he was underpaid, taken advantage of by the mission, and exposing the family to the dangers of the war.<sup>258</sup> Once

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<sup>256</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 12 August 1940 (AH 6:10).

<sup>257</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 22 August 1940 (AH 6:10).

<sup>258</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 9 September 1940 (AH 6:10).

again, she seemed to be saying, it was impossible to sort out what he really thought because he was not in any sense forthright.

*Language lessons completed: Foochow, September 1940-November 1941*

As the head of the hospital and its chief physician, Irwin gradually extended the work of the hospital. He reached out to the population and tried to ensure that the in-patient as well as outpatient facilities were well used. Fulfilling the potential of the obstetrical service required a particularly culturally sensitive approach, and Irwin's willingness to accommodate Chinese tradition almost certainly contributed to its success. Agnes' accounts of Chinese women who were thwarted from giving birth in the hospital because of long-held beliefs tell of simple and complex manipulations of tradition. As Agnes wrote:

The Chinese believe that a woman is unclean after her baby is born and many will not let her come into the house for 30 days after the birth. She can go into her own house only for fear of offending the 'Door Gods' who are responsible for keeping the devils out of the house. Because many women live in other peoples houses they don't want to come to the hospital because they would have to stay so long. Modern women are not so worried about the gods and beginning to come to the hospital. Irwin had an interesting case the other day. After waiting in the rain most of the day at the home out in the country, he (Irwin) urged the patient to come to the hospital. She and her people demurred because they were in a rented house or part of a house. Finally they called the owner of the place, an old lady who devised a way of getting her back into the place after the birth. She is to be taken first to the dug-out, then the head of the house will rush to the front door and set off firecrackers and burn incense and candles to distract the door God. He will be pleased and won't see the new mother being rushed in the back door! Everyone seemed happy with the scheme and the woman came into the hospital.<sup>259</sup>

She also noted that his work was having a positive effect; when they returned from their holiday there was only one in-patient, yet by the fall there were twenty patients, the

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<sup>259</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 29 September 1940 (AH 6:10).

majority of whom were in the women's ward.<sup>260</sup> The role of hospital superintendent extended beyond giving medical care, to completely administrative tasks, and Agnes identified two areas in which the work was less than pleasant. Irwin was responsible for the hospital accounts, which he sometimes passed on to Agnes, and for discipline among all of the employees.<sup>261</sup>

Agnes extended the medical work in which she was involved as well. She worked with mothers and their children in the Baby Welfare clinic. This was almost certainly the clinic to which Mary Lamb had been so dedicated, and Agnes was similarly committed to bringing Western ways of caring for babies to Chinese women.<sup>262</sup> Like Mary, Agnes knew that when she provided the facilities in which children could be washed, particularly in the hot weather, she was improving the daily lives of the families which visited her clinic.<sup>263</sup>

Another activity which was well-suited to women's missionary work was the organization of a club or group for the nurses. Mary Lamb had been the person who had actually suggested this idea to Agnes, and Agnes then partnered with Beth Stanway as leaders of this new activity. It was to be a Christian social group for these women who were particularly isolated, as they were boarders at the hospital, and had little social

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<sup>260</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 12 August 1940 (AH 6:10).

<sup>261</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 29 September 1940 (AH 6:10).

<sup>262</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 20 October 1940 (AH 6:10).

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

interaction or indeed activity beyond their nursing work. Deciding to start the group was one step; knowing what to do with the women was another matter, and for this, Agnes turned to Mary Lamb for help. Mary, who had worked with Chinese women for years, gave her some material on church activities that were geared to women. Agnes recognized that the group that they were beginning was modeled on girls' groups in Canada, and was somewhat concerned that her women were a little too old for the activity. She reported that the first meeting was very good; the nurses were enthusiastic and the meeting was lively. The second time that they got together was not quite as good; the women seemed less enthusiastic and Agnes thought that perhaps the reality of a social group was a little too "foreign" for the nurses. Nonetheless, she was quite determined to find ways in which they might engage the women. She even asked her mother to speak to the woman who was in charge of her local Canadian group of CGIT (Canadian Girls in Training) girls and hoped to begin a sort of 'pen pal' exchange between the two groups, in which the Canadian girls would send news about what they are doing in their meetings; she thought that this type of information would be helpful to the Chinese girls.<sup>264</sup>

Finally, Agnes was committed to what she called her "social calls." Once again, joining her interest in learning about the lives of Chinese and her role as a missionary woman, she regularly visited Chinese women in their homes. A long time earlier, when Agnes had chosen to lead her first Sabbath service in their Foochow home, Irwin had voiced his pride and appreciation that Agnes was not like all other missionary wives: she was one of

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<sup>264</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 30 October 1940 (AH 6:10).



the women who chose to be active in the life of the mission. He had written in her letter at that time, "Agnes is just too modest about the service to-day. I was proud of her. Some of the women won't do it because they don't feel it is part of their job and it always makes me happy to have a wife who is one with me on everything. It is great!"<sup>265</sup> She began this new "project" as she called it with a visit to Mrs. Chwang. Mr. and Mrs. Chwang were both trained as lawyers in Beijing, and had become active in the city's legal affairs, as well as church activities. Before he left the city to undertake his military training, Mr. Chwang had been appointed as a judge in Foochow. They were, to Agnes, a fine example of down-river Chinese who had brought much needed talent, training and experience to the region. When she visited Mrs. Chwang in her home, she was quite surprised to see how she lived. She wrote,

Her husband is in Chungking so she and her baby are living in just one room but it was the most cheerless and unattractive place, and far from what we would call clean. It seems strange to me that a modern and fairly well-to-do young woman would be willing to live in a place like that and not fix it up in any way. But they are all the same and I don't see any reason, for they like our homes and our way of fixing things up though no doubt they think we have a lot of unnecessary things and space. Looking up at our houses as we came up the hill, we wondered just how many families the Chinese would put into our houses. Our house would take five or six I expect and the other houses more.<sup>266</sup>

Agnes truly enjoyed visiting the women and continued to absorb information about Chinese people at every opportunity. During the Chinese New Year festivities in 1941, she restrained herself from visiting anyone, although she admitted that she had some regrets about her decision.

I would rather have liked to have gone calling on some acquaintances Monday afternoon to see what I could learn of the customs, but it is a family day for them

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<sup>265</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 30 October 1940 (AH 6:10).

<sup>266</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 12 November 1940 (AHH 6:10).

and after talking it over with Beth Stanway we decided it would be better for us to stay away. The holiday for them is like Christmas for us.<sup>267</sup>

In the months to come she agreed to teach English to an incoming class of nursing students and as well, to share in some nursing duties with a newcomer to the Foochow missionary community, Mary Birtch.<sup>268</sup>

The war continued to be ever-present in late 1940 and early 1941, and from the reports it seems that at least for the two major Sichuan cities, air raids and bombs had become the norm. Perhaps all the news of the war encouraged Agnes to have a visit with General Han one evening after he had a meeting with Irwin. She had, of course respected him when his wife was alive, and his behavior since her death has only served to deepen that respect. His commitment to raising his children was clear to her and he seemed unique among Chinese men. This visit would be one of the last that they had together, for the following month he notified them that he was being transferred to another city. She wrote about his visit and her impressions of him,

Gen. Han had come over to see him and had stayed for supper. He was much more like his old self than I had expected but his loss had made a great change in him. Several times he spoke of his heart and mind as having gone. He is trying to find a governess for his children and that sort of a person is rare in China as there is practically no demand for such. Most men, if they are left with children marry again as soon as possible. Gen. Han isn't that kind and is very anxious to find the right kind of person for the children. At present he has only a servant girl who isn't much help. He seems to have no relatives in this part of the country who might help him.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> 241 Letter to Mother and Dad, 20 January 1941 (AH 6:11).

<sup>268</sup> Rev. George Birtch, wife Mary and 6 month old Ralph were replacements for the Longleys who had gone on furlough. Irwin had known the couple when they were university students, and Agnes was pleased with the appointment, advising, "I think we should have good times with them. They sound like 'our type.'" As well, the community awaited the arrival of Miss MacIntosh who was a returning nurse and was due to arrive in Foochow in the fall of 1941.

<sup>269</sup> Letter to Mother, Dad and Fred, 9 September 1940 (AH 6:10).

Certainly Chungking appears to have been the most directly affected by the war; Agnes suggested that it was not more vulnerable than other cities, but perhaps simply a more important target for the Japanese planes. It is possible that because of the proximity of Foochow to Chungking, Agnes heard more about that city's suffering than the more distant Chengtu; however, she had always been a conscientious gatherer of news and so it is less likely that her reports were affected by the proximity of Chungking. Finally, the people of Foochow put a face to the war, with the presence of a captured Japanese pilot who was marched through the streets of the city on his way to the boat that would transport him to Chungking. Mary Lamb and a companion were present among the crowds, and gave a rather vivid report of the event to the other missionaries. Agnes recorded:

Yesterday as we were coming up from Church the people were rushing to line up along the street and we learned that the Japanese was to be brought along en route to the boat that was to take him to Chungking and everybody was filled with curiosity to see him. We wondered what their reaction to him would be but unfortunately we arrived home before he came along. Miss Lamb and Miss Fee coming along later did see him and they said the crowd didn't do anything but stare. There was no hissing or booing as one might have expected. I rather imagine they were all taken aback to see him looking so much like themselves. Our teacher who saw him seemed surprised he wasn't different.<sup>270</sup>

With little apparent forewarning, in May 1941 Agnes sent her parents the news that she was pregnant. She advised her parents that she was going to be having a baby the following December, 1941, and that it would be their Christmas present. She was clearly so thrilled to be pregnant that she could not follow through in her plans to wait a while

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<sup>270</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 30 October 1940 (6:10).

before making her announcement. She wrote, "Earlier I thought that if I ever started to have a baby I wouldn't write home about it till the last minute, but now I want to tell everyone, at least everyone who I think would like to know."<sup>271</sup> It is doubtful that she could have kept her secret for very long, for Irwin's nurses at the hospital had been wondering why she had not yet become pregnant, and Mary Birtch was going to have her second baby in January. Alice Jenner, her long-time missionary colleague was also expecting a baby, just two months before Agnes. Almost certainly Agnes would have had great difficulty hiding her pregnancy from all of the women and losing out on the opportunity to share common experiences. Even more than friends, however, in these early days of her pregnancy, Agnes looked to her family for intimacy and support; she confided that she needed Irwin's presence, and she told her family about her pregnancy, although she had no intention of doing so. Irwin may have been away from home when she revealed her news to her parents, for she wrote, in the same letter, "It was good to have him home again for I had missed him a lot. Life doesn't seem quite right here without him."<sup>272</sup> At another time, when Agnes returned from a week's trip to Chungking, she identified once again, the important role that he played in her life. "It was best of all to get home again for both of us to realize how much happier life is when we are together rather than separated. While away I just seemed to be putting in time but yesterday I started living again."<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 19 May 1941 (AH 6:11).

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

The months ahead, in the late spring and early summer 1941, brought a multitude of difficult situations to the little missionary community. The first that was identified by Agnes, was a problem that had been growing for some time: whether their district could continue to support all its mission enterprises. Occupied China had witnessed the closure of its mission fields and the subsequent discussion, by many different church missions, of whether and how to redistribute their workers. The Scottish Presbyterian Mission was an example of this quandary; withdrawing from Manchuria, it considered moving to West China and had approached the Canadian mission to see if it had any area west of Ichang that it would be willing to "turn over" to it. Foochow and Junghsien, which were the two largest centers in this area, became the focal points of the Canadian discussions. Agnes acknowledged that everyone agreed that they were badly understaffed, and required more foreign and Chinese workers in order to cover the fields adequately. She explained in some detail,

We are spread so thin over a large area in Szechwan and at present with the staff that is here the work is almost too much. The feeling of the majority is that we should give up some of our territory and concentrate on the rest. Chungchow for some years has had no foreign workers and is manned only by Chinese. The district is supervised from here. The district around here is big and the work is suffering from lack of workers. A few years ago there were three foreign evangelistic workers here for this city and the district and now Nick is the only one with George ready to start in the fall. Our schools here have had to be discontinued from lack of funds and staff, so everyone is more or less in favor of giving it up if the other mission can handle it adequately and wants to take over. Irwin and I are about the only dissenting voices. We hate to see this place given up especially since this hospital is about the best of the small hospitals. However even we agree that a concentration of the mission's resources may be a valuable thing.<sup>274</sup>

This serious discussion continued at Council that winter, and Agnes eagerly awaited news of the decision. One of the problems was that the hospital in Chungking truly

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<sup>274</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 15 June 1941 (AH 6:11).

required an additional physician. It was not at all clear what the outcome of the Council meetings would be, and ultimately, the Chairman of the committee was called upon to break the tie vote; he felt that Foochow should continue to have a physician appointed to the mission. Agnes was relieved because, as she explained “although Chungking would be nice in many ways, Foochow still has our love. We would be very loathe to give up our happy home here.”<sup>275</sup> However, it was not until January 1942 that the decision was reached.

By late summer 1941, repercussions of the war had grown in Foochow. The mission church was destroyed in one particularly difficult day of bombing, and the city was ravaged by fire. Agnes’ reaction to the day’s events and more particularly to the firefighting was one of loss, frustration and ultimately scathing criticism. Her narrative not only conveyed her response, but also brought an immediacy to the event that was compelling.

A group of the city fire-fighters with a hose and pump had been called in but they were the worst specimens of fire fighters I ever hope to see. They were sauntering around as if it was a picnic and they weren’t even having a good time. The church had prepared wooden pails for an emergency to carry water from the cistern and they hadn’t been put to use so leaked as fast as possible and here were several dopey looking men sauntering along with pails from which the water was streaming faster than the men could move. The pump was continually running out of water. Irwin and George got a bit of speed worked up but it was pretty hopeless. In a little while they folded up their hose and departed. Meanwhile Irwin dashed home for some decent pails and some of the servants to help and eventually they got the fire stopped and saved most of the Sunday school.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 28 December 1941 (AH 6:11).

<sup>276</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 29 August 1941 (AH 6:11).

Agnes continued to be confronted with problems relating to her Chinese servants. Unfortunately, before she was able to rectify the problem it affected their little community. Agnes had apparently been investigating what she termed “the crooked business of our dairy.” She explained, “Every once in a while during the past two years we have felt that our milk was partly water, and there have been times when we have all lit into our cooks for diluting the milk, but beyond blaming them we have done nothing about it.”<sup>277</sup> But the rising costs, the poor quality of both milk and butter, the expense of running the dairy and, as she described “a hunch that Beth had about the cow coolie” led Agnes to do a little detecting. She discovered that the guilty person was indeed the cow-coolie. He had been siphoning off some of the milk, selling it to a storekeeper, and adding water to the remainder for the missionaries’ consumption. Agnes was particularly upset when she discovered that the storekeeper was not only a Christian, but also one of their best church members, “a friend of the foreigners of long-standing who years ago was a cook in our compound.” She expanded upon her frustration, adding, “That he would carry on for years with a crooked deal with a servant here knowing very well that it is against all principles of foreign decency etc. is a very disheartening and aggravating thing to say the least.”<sup>278</sup> It was fairly simple to resolve the problem of the quality of the milk; however the community members became embroiled in an unexpected issue which was responsibility for the management of the dairy. As Agnes explained,

Nick especially is very hurt and resigned in favor of George the other night. None of us have blamed them, it's a matter we are all involved in and nobody really wants the job of running the cow business. However the wicked servant hath departed and George is now in charge. He knows more about cows than any of us.

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<sup>277</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 2 November 1941 (AH 6:11).

<sup>278</sup> Ibid

He's having to do the milking himself and other things until he gets a new staff organized which is quite a job for him.<sup>279</sup>

Agnes later reported that they had decided to buy a goat. Perhaps they had shut down the controversial cow dairy, at least for a while.<sup>280</sup>

*Motherhood, November 1941-December 1944*

Controversies, difficulties and plans for the future were interrupted when the Hilliard's baby Ann Pashley was born two weeks early, on November 26, 1941. From that time on, although Agnes continued to be a vital member of the little missionary community, her thoughts were, according to her own reflections, centered around Ann. Agnes certainly continued to entertain guests in her home and to greet everyone who visited Foochow, but the birth of her baby affected her interests, her concerns and her priorities. When Council was discussing whether to close the Foochow mission and move the missionaries to other locations, Agnes voiced her hope that she and Irwin (and the baby) would be able to remain in Foochow with the Birtches. When it was tentatively decided that the Stanways would be moved to Chengtu (which they had actually requested) and the Birtches and Hilliards would stay on in Foochow, Agnes announced, "However as far as we know we are still here with the Birtches for company. None of the four of us are at all sorry for we would not like to be separated." Their friendship may have been deepened by the birth of their babies; they not only shared their youth, but also their young children.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 2 November 1941 (AH 6:11).

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>281</sup> Letter to Everybody dated February 1942 (AH 5:12).



In light of her new circumstances, Agnes became particularly interested in observing the mothering techniques of Chinese women. Although she had helped women bathe their babies at the baby welfare clinic, she began observing their mothering techniques after she had her own baby. As she described her impressions of one particular experience,

Chinese mothers are accustomed to having their babies up most of the time and pick them up when they cry. A friend came in the other day before I got Ann back to bed after her meal and she was surprised that I would walk away and leave the baby crying after I put her down.<sup>282</sup>

She also noted that Chinese women tended to feed their babies on demand, whereas Western women fed their babies in their homes according to a pre-determined schedule.<sup>283</sup>

...(At the Baby Welfare clinics) we always try to tell them about feeding at regular times and at home etc. One mother stopped as soon as she got outside the door and sat down on a convenient chair and started to feed her child. So I went up to her and started my little talk on feeding babies but I got my vocabulary mixed and was telling her to feed her baby every three weeks instead of every three hours. No wonder she looked as if she thought I were daft. Those crazy foreigners who think that they know it all! Of course I noticed my mistake and Irwin also rushed around the corner just in time to hear me but I don't think my correction helped any.<sup>284</sup>

As Agnes was giving advice to Chinese women about how to take care of their babies, she was also questioning her own mothering strategies and Ann's progress. It may have been that the delay in sending and receiving mail affected the dialogue that she had with

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<sup>282</sup> Letter to Everybody dated February 1942 (AH 5:12).

<sup>283</sup> For further reading on this topic, see Hsiung Ping-cheng, "To Nurse the Young: Breastfeeding and Infant Feeding in Late Imperial China," *Journal of Family History* 20 (1995): 217-238.

<sup>284</sup> Letter to Everybody dated February 1942 (AH 5:12).

her family in Canada about the baby; it is certain that rather than asking them questions and waiting for their responses, she was raising rhetorical questions about her concerns. When she told them about the day's events, she seemed to be reassuring them that everything was fine. Even in Foochow, far away from Canada, her child was growing well. Her tone was somewhat reminiscent of her very first letter to her parents, when she suggested that she was going to be fine, or of her letters about the war, when she reassured them that she, Irwin and Ann were safe. Underlying this reporting, it is just possible that she was raising self-doubts rather than the questions that she might more easily have shared with her parents if they had been able to exchange questions and answers more readily. She wrote one day,

In spite of her clothes which I don't make very well and her home-made toys and tin cans, Ann is adorable and when her things are simple her wants are simple too. She loves her ball and her cloth doll and doesn't know what she is missing which is just as well...She has just started feeding herself the past week or so. Maybe I should have started her earlier but I didn't think of it.<sup>285</sup>

By the time that Ann was six months old, Agnes was writing something about her development in each of her letters. In one letter, she acknowledges that the world of her narrative has become acutely and unabashedly focused, "Except for Ann I can't think of much news."<sup>286</sup>

Agnes' letters may indeed always have had Ann present; however she did tend to slip into the background when Agnes has other news to pass along to her family. They had

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<sup>285</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 9 April 1942 (AH 6:12). The cost of postage had risen sharply and so Agnes was sending fewer letters. In the summer, Irwin would write to both of their families and suggest that it would be best if the families would exchange the letters that they received from China so that Agnes and Irwin would be able to spend less on postage. Letter to Mother and Dad, 11 August 1942 (6:12). This letter was from Irwin.

<sup>286</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 3 June 1942 (AH 6:12).

planned a summer holiday in 1942 at Kao Shih Ti once again, but needed to secure a replacement for Irwin. Agnes was particularly impressed by the man that they hired; she described him as “a fine new doctor” and went on to list all of his qualifications, ending with the following note, “He is about forty, good looking and fairly glows with efficiency.”<sup>287</sup> Their previous journey to the vacation resort had involved the unhappy truck ride from Chungking to Junghsien. This time they were able to take the bus, because the service had improved dramatically. This too, she found worth recording in some detail and it is clear that the government was continuing to make some infrastructure improvements.

It was a bus service such as we have never seen in the part of China, - new buses, clean and neat, - above all efficient, no overcrowding or graft. The buses in this part of the country are usually mob scenes and so many drivers or bus officials squeeze their ‘yellow fish’ that it is practically impossible for a group like ours to travel. However the new bus line is swell.<sup>288</sup>

The Hilliards 1942 summer holiday was particularly fine; Agnes had the company of other young missionary families, some of whom had been good friends of theirs since their early days in China. The Hilliards and the Birtches, as well as two other missionary women, made the trip from Foochow together, and when they arrived they were greeted by their “old friends” as she calls them, the Stinsons and the Outerbridges. It was very good for her to be surrounded by so many young families, and as she noted in a letter written from the hills, “As usual this letter is spreading itself over several days. I find it hard to settle down to writing these days, though all I do besides looking after the baby is

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<sup>287</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 7 July 1941 (AH 6:12).

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

eat, sleep and gab.”<sup>289</sup> Perhaps it was this happy, replenishing environment that encouraged her to become thoughtful and reflective about China, missionaries, the past, present and the future. She wrote,

This is such a quiet, beautiful and peaceful spot that it is hard to imagine that in other places people are suffering under the strain of war. It hardly seems fair that we should have this sort of summer. However if we can feel that everybody has his or her part to play in the building of the world society, then we can feel assured that whatever we do, if it is done with the best of our ability, will count somehow. At any rate this holiday is meaning a lot to us a change of pace and place and company is a great thing in this country when one lives in a small place and one’s friends are of a different race, speaking and thinking differently. We’ll have a good holiday here and then it will be grand to get home again.<sup>290</sup>

The summer of 1942 seemed to be passing far too quickly; the region was in the throes of a heat wave when Irwin was supposed to return to work and so they decided, after great hesitation, that Agnes would remain up in the hills for a while longer. Once again, Agnes admitted that she would be lonely without him, but perhaps because she was surrounded by friends her concerns lay with the isolation that he would have to deal with back in Foochow. It was at this particular time that Agnes returned to her thoughts about the Chinese language as an isolating language, that it would be a difficult experience to be surrounded by Chinese speakers and to have to communicate in Chinese at all times.<sup>291</sup>

It may have been the heat wave that contributed to another grave concern which Agnes reported. The region was being ravaged by cholera and no one appeared to be willing to follow Irwin’s well-founded medical advice. Because of the magnitude of the outbreak,

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<sup>289</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 7 July 1941 (AH 6:12).

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 11 August 1942 (AH 6:12).

this was a far more severe problem than when individual hospital patients ignored his treatment plans. Once again, there was an underlying problem of competition between two medical resources, the incompetent Public Health officer and Irwin as the administrator of the mission hospital. Foochow had been without rain for almost a month; the temperature was over 100 degrees in the shade, and the city's sanitation system was very poor. The Public Health officer, whom Irwin had described as "not only useless, but a menace, without any medical training yet appointed by the Foochow business community," was aggressive and underhanded in his attacks on the hospital. He referred to the hospital patients who were terminally ill with cholera or who required surgery, but were similarly hopelessly ill. Irwin had assessed the health needs of the community, but his recommendations were not followed. As Agnes reported, "The sanitation of the filthy gutters ceased working and the old dirty wells are called into service again and people drink cold water instead of their boiled water." Until they returned to boiling their drinking water, they would be condemned to continuing the spread of the disease. Irwin recommended that the government mandate that every person must be inoculated against cholera, and that the police enforce this regulation and that shops be permitted to sell only cooked food and drinks made with boiled water.<sup>292</sup> It seems that neither recommendation was easily accepted.

Agnes's wrote even fewer letters as the months passed; the cost of mailing letters to Canada continued to rise and so she limited her correspondence even more.<sup>293</sup> She began to lose track of the stories that she had told them and those that she had intended to save,

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<sup>292</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 11 August 1942 (AH 6:12).

<sup>293</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 7 February 1943 (AH 6:12).

and so the small events that made up the daily life of her family lost some of their continuity. However, one piece of news was not lost: she was pregnant with their second baby, and it is due to be born in the month of November, in 1943.<sup>294</sup> Once again, during her pregnancy Agnes continued to participate in some of her community activities. In the fall she and Mary Birtch reorganized a women's club that had become defunct. She also began giving English language lessons to a young Chinese couple who were preparing to go the United States to study. These were bright and energetic young people; the husband was being sent by the government to study engineering, and the wife was hoping to study economics at Columbia University. Agnes advised, "They are really nice and I am enjoying it."<sup>295</sup> It seems that in Agnes' work with women, she was no longer trying to learn from them (as when she was pregnant with Ann), but was now instructing them instead. She returned to noticing the differences in their lifestyle; however, she appears to have been neither judgmental nor inclined to try to change their ways. Perhaps she had grown to accept the differences between the two cultures. Nonetheless, she continued to take her role as an educator seriously.

I am trying to think about something in the woman's job in the home –but it isn't easy. If our houses were more like theirs, we might be able to do more to teach them to look after their homes but these big foreign houses are so different from the three to four rooms they live in.<sup>296</sup>

She also invited the women to her house, ostensibly so that she could show them how to make cookies. However, it seems that, despite her increasing sensitivity to the differences between cultures, she also wanted to use the opportunity to have them see a little more

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<sup>294</sup> Letter to Dad, 28 April 1943 (AH 6:12).

<sup>295</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 3 June 1943 (AH 6:12).

<sup>296</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 31 October 1942 (AH 6:12).

about Western style of living. As she wrote, “We were late in getting everything finished, but it gave them a chance to see how Ann was fed and put to bed. Fortunately, she did everything in her best style and was a proper model child.”<sup>297</sup>

Agnes remained true to her word; the most interesting topic for her to write about was Ann, as she was enthused about and interested in her daughter’s development and daily exploits. She observed Ann as she began to form little friendships, and considered the restrictions that China imposed upon the socializing aspect of her childhood.

Ann is certainly getting to the stage where she needs other children and yet she isn’t old enough to play really well with them. Today a friend came to call with her small boy who is about the same age as Ann. At first he was frightened by the strangeness of our place but eventually the two of them started running around together but by that time it was time for them to leave. Unfortunately our compound isn’t very convenient for people living in the city to bring their children to nor is it easy for me, or wise, to take Ann into the city. The Chinese make too big a fuss over our children so the problem of companionship is very difficult. I’ll be glad when the B. family is back.<sup>298</sup>

By the time of their summer holiday in August 1943, Ann was a thriving toddler who was interested in everything around her. She was a great traveler, awakening without a fuss in the middle of the night, enjoying the boat ride up river, and finding the people and shops of Chungking fascinating. Agnes reported that the summer community was a particularly good environment for Ann because she enjoyed the stimulation of interacting with more people, and having more toys to play with and activities to do than at home. In response to questions that her family must have posed in a previous letter, Agnes wrote,

You ask about her food – unfortunately there isn’t much variety in vegetables to give her and we get nothing but pork in Foochow though we get liver about once

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<sup>297</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 13 November 1942 (AH 6:12).

<sup>298</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 21 July 1943 (AH 6:12).

a week. At present her meals consist of mostly potatoes and squash occasionally spinach of a sort along with her eggs and rice porridge for breakfast and supper. She had apples before we left home but now the only available fruit are Chinese pears - a specimen of fruits not the least worthy of the name of pear, being hard and inclined to be gritty and puckery though not too bad when cooked or baked. Milk is a bit scarce up here and inclined to be watery, not nearly as good as we get at home from our own cows. However even if she doesn't get fed according to the most recent books on feeding of children she is thriving very well and is far from thin.<sup>299</sup>

On November 29, 1943 their second baby, Robert Irwin, was born. Although Agnes' reports about the baby were fewer than she had written when Ann was born, perhaps because she was careful about the cost of postage, the Chinese community's welcome was all-embracing. In the Chinese custom, their friends, acquaintances and patients gave the Hilliards dozens of chickens and eggs to express their good wishes.<sup>300</sup> This outpouring of generosity and warmth was remarkably different from the lack of appreciation for Irwin's hard work that had hurt her in the past.

Ann continued to thrive as well; her language skills were flourishing and, in contrast to Agnes' earlier lack of confidence, Ann freely conversed with everyone in Chinese or English. Agnes recorded about her development in June 1944,

Her language these days is a mixture of Chinese and English, her Chinese being mostly the colloquial stuff she gets from servants and the other children in the compound. The three of them talk Chinese when playing whether Chinese children are with them or not. In many ways I think it is a much easier language.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 15 August 1943 (AH 6:12).

<sup>300</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 8 December 1943 (AH 6:12), from the Addendum by Irwin; Letter to Mother and Father, 1 January 1944 (AH 6:12).

<sup>301</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 11 June 1944 (AH 6:13).



Agnes's thoughts eventually turned to their plans to leave China and return to Canada. Her first concern was, once again, that there was no one available to replace Irwin. Dr. Service was needed elsewhere; the Chinese doctor that Irwin had expected to take over the superintendency had refused the position, and his wife who was the principal of the nursing school was leaving as well. Agnes reported that Irwin found it depressing to consider that the hospital might slip from being a first-rate facility. The repeated difficulties that they faced in staffing the hospital perhaps reveal the fragility of the missionary enterprise.<sup>302</sup> At one point, the situation must have seemed particularly challenging. She wrote:

I think in my last letter I told you a little bit about Irwin's difficulties in having all his carefully built up staff fall to pieces. With the lady doctor gone to get married, Dr. Han and Miss O-Yang (his wife) setting up in private practice here, the intern fired for dishonesty and the registrar for the same reason and Miss McIntosh at odds with one of the staff nurses and 3 of the boy students creating difficulties, the prospect at present isn't a bright one. But by fall things will probably clear up and we will wonder why we felt so down.<sup>303</sup>

Eventually the staffing issues were sorted out; a physician from Chungking was assigned to work at the hospital temporarily, several nurses were scheduled to arrive as well, there was a possibility that a female physician who was from Vienna, but attached to a German mission that had recently closed, would be coming to Foochow, and a permanent Chinese physician was found to replace Irwin. Agnes described him and his family in glowing terms.

They stayed with us for about a month while their house was being fixed and furnishings made. Having been brought up in families that have been Christian for generations and living in the coastal regions of China where life is more

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<sup>302</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 11 June 1944 (AH 6:13).

<sup>303</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 19 July 1944 (AH 6:13).

influenced by Western civilization than in this part of China, they are quite different from some of our friends here and speak English which is a big help.<sup>304</sup>

As their end of their term in China approached, Agnes and Irwin were struggling with their decision about their future. Initially, it seems that they had been considering two options: Irwin could agree to be re-appointed as a China medical missionary, or he could resign his mission duties so that he could join the Canadian armed forces in the European front. It was only in Agnes' letter to her family in August 1944, that Irwin's concerns about being in China, rather than in Europe were raised.

Of course our minds are full of getting home and seeing you all again and we sometimes speculate about the future. Irwin has all along felt badly to be out of the experience that our brothers and friends are having and we have several times when things were difficult here, felt like pulling out and going home so he could join up. However it never seemed to us the right thing to do – to break our contract here just because things were difficult or because we were afraid of what others at home will think of us because we haven't been in the war. Last fall Irwin had a long talk with General Odlum, our Canadian Ambassador in China and he advised Irwin to stay put and keep our hospital in good working order for someday it might be needed when greater Allied strength was brought to bear on Japan. So we stayed put. However in planning for furlough Irwin felt constrained to write to the Selective Services Board at home offering his service in any medical unit that might be sent here. Having a knowledge of China and Chinese he might be of some use. So far no reply has come. Also at the rate the war is progressing, he may miss out on it altogether.

However, as she continued this letter to her parents, she raised a third option that the couple had apparently been considering; Irwin's applications for positions in North America meant that he would resign from his position as a foreign missionary. Agnes wrote,

Also he sent applications for work to both the Toronto General and Johns Hopkins. Ruth, in Wentworth's absence (Irwin's brother) has taken up some

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<sup>304</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 13 September 1944 (AH 6:13).

social service work at Johns Hopkins and wrote Irwin suggesting he try for a job there...So much for our thoughts on the future.<sup>305</sup>

Agnes' only comment about the possibility of returning to China was brief and undoubtedly written in the spirit of reassurance. "Mother, don't worry too much about our future. There are lots of things against our returning here, but it will depend on things at home."<sup>306</sup>

In their final weeks in China in the autumn of 1944, Agnes returned to reports about the children's progress: what they were interested in, how they behaved and perhaps, how they would present themselves when they finally met their grandparents. She wrote,

Ann is a lot better than she was earlier though her appetite is still poor and we can't persuade her to eat much and when she is tired her temper isn't what we would like it to be. I'm so afraid she will be at a very difficult stage when we take her home. Robin is sweet most of the time. I wish we were taking him home right now. He hasn't shown any interest in standing up or trying to crawl though he is almost 9 months old, but I suppose that is nothing to really worry about. He is growing well. ... I wish we were taking the children home now. Ann has been very sweet lately and her language is so interesting. She has been conscious of older children going to school and she is very keen to go. So I always tell her that next year when we are in Canada she can go.<sup>307</sup>

In late October 1944, only two months before they were to leave the country, Agnes sent along a final note about the children. Almost certainly she was self-conscious about the children's development, when she tried to advise her parents to pre-empt any disappointment that they might have when they met their grandchildren. China had been a different home in which to raise her young children, and the distance between China

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<sup>305</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 27 August 1944 (AH 6:13).

<sup>306</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 22 October 1944 (AH 6:13).

<sup>307</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 27 August 1944 (AH 6:13).

and Canada was about to disappear. Undoubtedly, Agnes was concerned about how her children would measure up to Canadian standards.

I just realized the other day that she is about 3 years old and we have taken very little trouble to teach her things. Hope she won't seem too backward when we get her home. Actually we think she is not too bad for her age. Her language is quite good, she seems to reason things out...she has picked up several new words lately...and brings them out in the cutest way. Also she is getting quite interested in the 'going to Canada' idea...the children seem to fight a lot which bothers me sometimes but I guess they are just normal energetic kids...He (Robin) is still growing well and now has 6 teeth but hasn't yet developed any desire to stand up.<sup>308</sup>

Agnes and Irwin departed for Canada quite hurriedly and unexpectedly in December 1944; they had spent so much time preparing for their departure, yet they actually left because they had received instructions from the Canadian government regarding a possible evacuation of West China. In an editorial postscript to her letters of the time, Agnes added the following information about their final days in China,

There doesn't seem to be a December letter. According to Dad's memory it was in the middle of December that the Canadian Embassy recommended that Canadians planning to go home in the spring should leave as soon as possible. The Japanese were threatening to press on towards Chungking from Kweiyang and the Canadian Embassy didn't want to have any emergency evacuation of all Canadians if the situation became dangerous. So we made plans to leave after Christmas, sold much of our furniture and household goods to Chinese friends and left for Chungking sometime between Christmas and New Years. I don't remember that month very clearly but I do remember the plane ride from Chungking to Calcutta very clearly. We were excited to be going home in an airplane over "The Hump". The plane was a D.C. #3 – not very big and it was well filled. I was air-sick most of the time...When we arrived in Calcutta there was a great noise of sirens and we thought we were in for another air-raid but discovered it was New Year's 12 midnight. So we greeted 1945 by arriving I Calcutta. The Japanese never did go beyond Kweiyang and the Canadians never had to be evacuated but we were on our way. If we had stayed in Fowling till May

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<sup>308</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 22 October 1944 (AH 6:13).

or June w probably would have been home just as soon without the long delay in India as the next letters will relate.<sup>309</sup>

Their return to Canada was in the context of the war in China, just as their arrival in Shanghai had been so many years earlier. The information about the war was as elusive as it had been in those early days, and the Hilliards responded in perhaps a similar manner, awaiting official word and then proceeding along with their plans as best they could.

### **Perspectives on Agnes Hilliard**

Agnes Hilliard had been married for only two weeks before boarding the ship that would take her to China. Her narrative, at least for the first two years of her life in China, reflected the new and deep love that she had for her husband Irwin, the excitement and nervousness that she felt about being a wife, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, a fascination with her surroundings. She simply wanted to shape their marriage into a family, and to ensure that she was a good homemaker. Despite the fascinating accounts that Agnes recorded about China and the events in which she participated, her readers might expect that this obviously intelligent and talented woman would lose sight of China in her dedication to her apparently overriding personal commitments. However, Agnes' interest in China continually replenished itself, and she did not lose the experience; rather, she maintained her role as an active member of the missionary community, and actually extended and expanded her work with Chinese women throughout the years of Irwin's China appointment.

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<sup>309</sup> Letter to Mother and Dad, 22 October 1944 (AH 6:13).

Even before arriving in China, Agnes had been startled by the presence of “the Orient.” She had prepared herself for life in China as other missionaries had done, and yet China startled her in its difference. On the other hand, she found Hong Kong to be a comfortable city in its meeting of East and West. Agnes clearly felt the need for help in becoming comfortable with and in China; she appreciated living on the Chengtu university campus, almost certainly because it offered an environment that was, in a way, similar to that of Hong Kong. It was part of the West China city of Chengtu, but it was also a special, Westernized environment. Agnes knew that the compound would play a mediating role; it would ease her into a fascinating yet confusing country. However, it did not take her too long to fit in; she quickly became involved in the life of the missionary community; the missionaries brought her into their social community and introduced her to some of their work. During the two years of language training, Agnes shifted from being focused on establishing herself as a homemaker; by the time that she moved to the rather intimate Foochow station (with only a handful of missionaries at any time), she was committed to her mission work. China no longer startled her; it had simply become her home.

Agnes and Irwin lived in a country that was at war and Agnes appears to have found ways of coping with the war by shifting it in and out of the forefront of her concerns. Before their ship docked in China, Irwin and Agnes discussed the war with other passengers. Irwin concluded that China needed missionaries more than ever. Rather than suggesting that Christianity could bring some sort of guidance and comfort to the Chinese people, he believed that because of the war, there was a greater need for medical

practitioners and for people who could train new doctors and nurses. It did not take Agnes long after arriving in China to identify herself as an expert on the progress of the war. She avidly sought out news about the war in China and in Europe in local English language newspapers, from BBC radio news reports and from any other reports that found their way into the missionary community. Their radio, which was the first one on the hills and used by other vacationing missionaries, demonstrated and embodied the young couple's interest in events beyond their daily lives, but which undoubtedly affected them directly and indirectly. When news was particularly bad or when, eventually, the war reached their own city, it moved to the forefront of her concerns. When Foochow was bombed, her narrative was filled with chilling accounts of the day. Her accounts of the death of Mrs. Han were vivid, and her reports convey a sense that she had difficulty dealing with this tragic event and loss. In subsequent months she returned to record how General Han and his children were doing, explaining that he was a special Chinese man, who was unwilling to rush into another marriage so that he would have a replacement mother for his children. Not all Chinese had the character of General Han, according to Agnes. She reported some events that seem almost humorous about the fears that Chinese had about the Japanese bombings. Teachers ran away from their classes and the hospital's Chinese doctor was reluctant to come to work because he was so unsettled by the aerial attacks. Agnes on the other hand appears to have been less frightened; it seems that to her that foreigners in China were more realistic and less emotional, more committed to their work and less likely to leave it because they were upset. In fact, when the war was less present in their lives, Agnes was able to adapt: eating, sleeping, working and simply living in her established daily routines.

Agnes' gradual acculturation to China and understanding of Chinese people is significant; at the beginning of their term in China, she had been so frustrated with the Nanking student-actors, yet by the end of their time there, she worked and lived with Chinese women easily. By the end, the difference may have still existed, but it was unremarkable to Agnes. She still had interesting tales to tell about Chinese women and she continued to believe that she had mothering skills to teach them, but her stories were simply the stories that people tell each other about their daily lives. She had moved far beyond her early need to use the university campus as an introduction to China; she lived comfortably in the small Foochow missionary community, in which the missionaries and the Chinese made their homes, if not side by side, at least in close proximity to one another. It was easy to move from the city of Foochow into the Sichuan countryside. Almost certainly, Agnes had shifted from becoming, in her own mind, the wife of a missionary to a woman who was an energetic member of the community, and fascinated and indeed energized by the work in which the China missionaries were involved. Her account of the trip that she and Irwin took with Mary Lamb, out to evangelize in the countryside leaves little doubt that she enjoyed being a member of the missionary enterprise. When she watched Mary hand out tracts, listened proudly to Irwin speak to the Chinese at the outstation, and she mingled with the Chinese women, she finally understood what it felt like to be a missionary.

As she prepared to return to Canada, Agnes became concerned about what her Canadian family would think about her children; her preoccupation was undoubtedly about whether



her children, who had fit so easily into their China home, would seem adequately Canadian. Agnes' concerns may well have been encouraged by the adaptation that her family had made to living in West China; although they were members of the non-Chinese community, the children, both of whom were born in China, actually lived in a Canadian-Chinese world. These were children who spoke Chinese as easily as they spoke English, something that Agnes could not have imagined when she felt almost incapable of acquiring facility with the language. They ate food that was a blend of Canadian and Chinese food and sorted out how to be friends with Chinese and missionary children. The acclimatization that Agnes had made was in full evidence in her children, children who co-existed with their Chinese peers.

Agnes and Irwin were full-fledged members of the West China missionary community; Agnes' support of Irwin's "calling" to provide a high standard of medical intervention to the Chinese people was evident. Despite the difficulties that he encountered in his work, when patients would not follow his advice, or when student nurses resisted the restrictions of the training school's rules, Irwin (and Agnes) infused a sensitivity and humanity in their work so that the Chinese would benefit from his skill and knowledge. They learned to understand and appreciate cultural ways that stymied some of their efforts; when women were unable to return to their homes if they gave birth in the mission hospital, they worked together so that the local Chinese mores would remain intact; they bent a little in order to accommodate the needs of their new patients. Interestingly, Irwin was particularly involved in and committed to providing good medical care for pregnant and nursing women, and Agnes, similarly became a quiet and

responsive resource for women who had babies and young children. Beyond the medical care that the couple brought to local Chinese, they encouraged a high standard of training for student nurses. The nurses training school benefited from Irwin's leadership and, as Agnes had suggested, the respectful manner that he had demonstrated with the Canadian school children up on the hills one summer, was applied to his work in the nurses school and the hospital.

The experiences and impressions that Agnes recorded in letters to her Canadian friends and relatives undoubtedly conveyed to them a China that was very accessible. From her earliest reports, in which she tried to understand the comfort that she found in places that blended the familiarity of the West with the unfamiliarity of the East, she transmitted the enjoyment and difficulties that confronted foreigners in China. The harshness and, to some extent the disappointment, that she found in those early days and months gradually gave way, in her letters, to a contentment with her surroundings. China became, simply China. The necessity to find the places in which the blending occurred was replaced by an understanding and acceptance of the Chinese people, their culture and their country. Nonetheless, she remained an acute observer of her surroundings, and in that way, she was certainly able to make Canadians more aware of, and accepting of, China and its people. Agnes was particularly effective in her reports on the war as it affected the Chinese people; the "mood on the street" that she wrote about brought war-time streets with their frightened inhabitants closer to Canadians. Her consideration of the growing juxtaposition of tradition and modernity was something that assuredly encouraged her readers in Canada to consider the efforts that China was making to modernize, as well as

the difficulty of this complex process. As well, the depth of China's traditions was exposed to Canadians through Agnes' reporting on her various sight-seeing trips. Through their heroic work as medical missionaries in war-time west China, Agnes and Irwin Hilliard contributed to China's transition from a Confucian to a modern society and simultaneously facilitated Canadian awareness of and fascination with China.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The fascinating journey of these three women has come to an end. The past three chapters have tried to capture China through the eyes of Lena Jolliffe, Mary Letitia Lamb and Agnes Hilliard. The three women's impressions of China, garnered from their individual experiences as recorded in their diaries and letters, effectively became windows on China during these confusing years. This chapter revisits the themes that were identified in Chapter One and were the underpinnings of Chapters Two, Three and Four of the thesis. It begins with a return to two of the books that were presented in the historiographical section and continues with a discussion that is organized around three themes. The first of these themes, the Western experience in China, is the most complex because it has three dimensions: the women's unique contribution and perspective because they were able to work with Chinese women while male missionaries could not; the opportunity that their China experience provided for Canadian missionary women because it freed them from the usual Canadian social constraints and expectations; and the Canadian dimension which appears to have been less nationalistically self-serving than the China activities of the major western players in China. The second theme is the specific contributions that these extraordinary women made to China. The third theme is the impact that these women had back in Canada, which flowed from their writings and their furlough activities.

Two books were particularly influential in fostering a fascination with the presence of foreigners, particularly Christian missionaries, in China: Jonathan Spence's *To Change China: Western Advisors in China, 1620-1960* and Paul Cohen's *China and Christianity: the Missionary Movement and the Growth of Chinese Antiforeignism, 1860-1870*. It is likely that Spence and Cohen would be surprised to learn that these two particular books, both written more than four decades ago, played such a significant role in this research. In Spence's brief studies of various Western advisors in China, the underlying theme is that these individuals probably failed to fulfill their intentions in China, but that their lives were vastly enriched by their experiences. Paul Cohen's study of the missionary enterprise and the growth of anti-foreignism, suggests that the presence of missionaries had intended and unintended consequences. The histories of Western advisors in China and the postulation that the mere presence of Western missionaries was provocative and that they were unable to control the results of their work were topics that appeared to warrant further investigation. Thus, these studies by Spence and Cohen eventually led to the expectation that records of the experiences of specific Canadian women missionaries would allow us to learn more about the Western encounter with China.

The first dimension of the Western experience in China theme is that the three women were in a unique position to contribute to China and to establish a perspective on China because they were able work with women while their male colleagues could not. The women missionaries had the opportunity to introduce Chinese women to religious and secular information, to develop relationships with them and in many cases to gain access to their hopes and needs. Mary, who had dreamed of becoming a missionary for such a

long time, simply wanted to work. Within hours of settling into her first home in West China, she accompanied her hostess on a “home visit,” one of the methods in which the missionary women worked directly with the Chinese women. Home visits were a remarkable opening for missionary women, because they provided both a learning experience for missionaries who needed to understand how Chinese families lived and functioned and immediate contact with individual women. This particular type of work was rewarding yet time-consuming, because the missionaries were only working with one woman at a time. Larger gatherings, in city and rural churches, were venues in which they could hand out tracts, speak publicly and reach more women. At the conclusion of these outings, the women always stayed behind to respond to individual women’s inquiries. Lena, throughout the years in which she and her family lived in China, accompanied her husband on many of his district tours and while he preached to the men, she gathered the women and girls together at the back of churches or meeting rooms so that they too could benefit from the information that the male missionaries were imparting to China’s men. Classrooms were a more formal venue in which the missionaries worked with Chinese women, but once again, their relationships were usually intimate in nature, as the class sizes were typically small and the women were taught life skills as well as academic subjects. Images of the women playing dress-up and pin-the-tail-on-the donkey are juxtaposed with the women learning how to read. The missionary women cultivated and valued their relationships with Chinese women and found ways of making themselves approachable.

The second dimension of the Western experience in China theme is that the women who worked in China were freed, to a great extent, from the usual Canadian social constraints and expectations. When Lena, the first of the three women, joined the Woman's Missionary Society and set sail for China, she immediately became a more independent woman. For exactly one year, her first in China before her marriage to Orlando Jolliffe took place, she was a self-supporting woman who, if she had so desired, was free from the societal convention of marriage. In fact, she was concerned that her Woman's Missionary Society colleagues would be disappointed in her decision to marry. There does not appear to be any reason to assume that she had expected to marry when she moved to China, and although there were certainly Canadian women who were engaged to young male China missionaries and who traveled to China in order to marry their fiancés, this was not the case for Lena. Undeniably, her commitment to missionary work (which began when she was an adolescent and young woman on the prairies beyond her hometown of Winnipeg), was the reason that she joined the Woman's Missionary movement. Mary, the most resolutely independent of the three women, was a self-supporting, unmarried Woman's Missionary Society worker until she returned to Canada at sixty years old. It was, of course, only when her mother died that she was able to begin her career as a missionary women; until that time she had fulfilled an expected and traditional woman's role, that of a single daughter who remained at home as the caretaker for an ailing parent. She was almost forty years old when her mother died, yet she did eventually become an evangelical missionary worker in China. In this transition from her life in Canada to China, she became a fiercely independent woman who carefully managed her own financial affairs, resolutely made her career decisions, protected her

health and well-being and sought out the companionship that she enjoyed. Perhaps it was Agnes who gained fewer benefits from this dimension of the Western experience in China, as she had almost certainly married into a family with a strong dedication to mission work in its history and she had a fairly well-defined and traditional woman's role when she arrived in China. Yet living in China did provide her with opportunities and experiences that she would not have had in Canada, the opportunity to work outside her home (particularly in the medical work that Irwin trained her to do), to intentionally transmit Western skills to Chinese women, and to raise her children in a relaxed and unconventional way. Of course, she had concerns that she would pay a price for her child-rearing decisions, because she was uncertain whether her children would measure up to the established societal expectations when they returned to Canada.

The third and final of the part of the Western experience theme is the Canadian dimension, which appears to have been less nationalistically self-serving than the China activities of the major western players in China, such as the British, Americans, French, Germans and Russians. This actually reflects the relative lack of a strong sense of nationalistic identity in Canadians and Chinese at the time. When Western countries had expected and then demanded that China open itself to their trade and diplomacy, Canada had been completely uninvolved. From their records, it appears that the three Canadian missionary women continued in the tradition of non-nationalistic self-interest and little mention is made of their Canadian identity at all. When Mary and a colleague hung a map of China on one wall and a British flag on the opposite wall of their steamship cabin on a trip up the Yangzi, the wall coverings were not indicative of any nationalistic



statement. It seems that they signified nothing more than learning more about China (from the map) and covering some unsightly holes in the walls (by the flag). It appears that the women held no more allegiance to fellow missionaries from Britain than those from the United States. The three women repeatedly demonstrated that they were members of a community of Christian missionaries and aid workers, from Europe (and even Siberia) and North America. The only episode in which Canadian identity became overt was when Mary was confronted with the issue of Canadian trade with Japan during the Japanese occupation of China. Her distress with the crassness of this trade was undoubtedly stimulated by her loyalty to China, and in fact, years later when she was trying to book her passage home to Canada, she found herself unable to take a ship that would have a lengthy stopover in Japan.

This lack of a strongly nationalistic identity among the Canadian missionaries may have encouraged the Chinese people to identify the missionary leaders as their own leaders as well. The Chinese people asked the Canadian missionaries to protect them when they felt vulnerable, when their lives were threatened and even, remarkably, to act on their behalf as quasi-local officials. When the men of Tseliutsing asked the leaders of the missionary community, including Lena's husband, to act on their behalf, to watch out for them and to perform official duties, they were in effect seconding them as power-brokers. The uniqueness and importance of these events, which were registered in Lena's diaries, are undeniably remarkable. On many occasions during these years of civil and military disorder, the missionary compounds were identified by Chinese people as places of refuge and safety, and the extent to which this occurred, in the records of both Lena and

of Mary, is impressive. Both women reported that city leaders (officials as well as important businessmen) and their families sought refuge within the walls of mission compounds and that Chinese people also flooded the mission buildings when they were worried about their own safety. Without a doubt when the officials asked the leading male missionaries to oversee the affairs of other officials and to act on their behalf, it signaled that the West China Canadian missionaries had become a trusted part of the civil authority during these chaotic years.

The second overarching theme concerns the specific contributions that the three women made to China, which encompassed impacts in the social as well as educational and public health arenas. Perhaps, despite their intentions to bring Christianity and some of the benefits of the Christian lifestyle to Chinese women, the three women were most influential simply by being in China. They were observed. They not only looked different from Chinese women, but they lived differently. They had journeyed far from their homeland, they could read and write and they worked outside their homes. They did not have the restraints which thousands of years of traditional Chinese culture had imparted to the women of early twentieth-century China and which kept these women within the rigid hierarchical rules of Confucian tradition. These three women almost certainly contributed to the disintegration of the traditional Chinese world view simply by living alongside the Chinese women. Joseph Levenson, in *Confucian China and its Modern Fate*, identified the fatal crack in China's Confucianism: he explained that the mere questioning of Confucianism (by intellectuals in his study) signaled the beginning of its demise, or at least that it was in the process of dying, for as a totalistic philosophy it had

no room for questioning of any kind. The questioning that the intellectuals and political leaders undertook during these years was evidence of one of the cracks in the Confucian society, but the meeting of Chinese women and the three missionary women assuredly contributed to the demise of the Confucian tradition as well. It may be, however, that the full potential for change that was available to the missionaries may not have been fulfilled. When Mary voiced her concerns about the missionary enterprise, she was thinking about the ideas that future critics of cultural imperialism would argue.

Particularly when faced with difficult experiences, Mary, as well as Lena and Agnes, returned to the question of whether the mission enterprise would ultimately succeed in China, yet it was at these times that each of the women identified that Christianity held the solution, and indeed salvation, for this struggling and problem-riddled country.

The contribution of each of the three women was assuredly in their contact with Chinese women, however it is important to identify that none of them dealt exclusively with women: they lived in relatively small missionary communities, in which the responsibilities of the individual members were well-defined, but the daily work was fluid and the missionaries unhesitatingly helped one another. The Hilliard's first itinerating experience was when Mary invited them to join her on a trip to one of the river towns where she regularly worked with the local Christians. Agnes noted that although she knitted on the boat ride to the river town, Mary and Irwin both engaged in missionary work, handing out tracts and talking to people who were interested in their message. This type of communal work is particularly noteworthy because Mary and Irwin held appointments with two separate church boards, the Woman's Missionary Society and the

General Board. Furthermore, Irwin was assigned to medical work, but he was able to engage in some evangelical work as well. When Agnes described the day's events, she explained that it was the first time that she and Irwin felt like real missionaries.

This healthy communal spirit did not negate the reality that most of the work in which the three women were involved was working with women, and perhaps their greatest contribution was the subtle information that they conveyed about society and women's lifestyle to the Chinese women. Home visiting, which Mary had so clearly embraced, was an important type of work for each of them women. This direct interaction enabled the Canadian women to learn more about Chinese homes and relationships, and to exchange ideas with the women, while they provided whatever services the women might require. The missionaries tried to maintain regularized home visits to interested and welcoming women, as well as unscheduled visits to homes with specific needs, such as a sick child or an aged relative. However, their other commitments frequently interfered with these plans. The missionary women tried to make their residences and mission buildings welcoming to Chinese women. Mary worked exceedingly hard to make her home, as well as the women's and girls' schools, inviting. She deliberately organized her own rooms so that they would easily accommodate and welcome visitors, just as she held cooking classes in her kitchen because the women students were interested in learning western cooking techniques. The missionary women helped the local women to organize clubs which had secular rather than religious underpinnings, but which assuredly conveyed a Christian Canadian lifestyle. Each of these women interacted socially with Chinese people, and inherently exposed those Chinese women (and their husbands and families)

with whom they socialized to Western ideas and practices. When Agnes decided to curtail their social obligations so that she and her new husband could spend some time together, she was somewhat unintentionally underscoring the fact that Canadian missionaries and Chinese people socialized frequently, and it is certain that these social activities effectively transmitted Western social mores to Chinese people. The missionaries invited guests to their homes for dinner, Chinese families reciprocated with their own invitations, they Canadian women held afternoon teas with entertainment for Chinese women, and they participated in Chinese weddings. The colorful descriptions of the mixing of Western modernity and Chinese tradition at these weddings represented, with clarity, the effect that the Western missionaries, and these three women, were having upon the women of China.

The missionary women overtly contributed to the knowledge and skills of Chinese women, particularly in the educational and public health sectors. Perhaps the most significant contribution that they made was teaching women and girls how to read and write. The interest that Chinese people had in becoming literate was evident to the missionaries: when Mary was almost overwhelmed by the tremendous attendance at the missionary Bible classes that she held with Reverend Irish of the General Board, she wondered, as he had in the past, whether the attendees were more motivated by the desire to learn to read and speak English rather than interest in the Christian scriptures. She was pleased to record that when they offered an all-Chinese language Bible class, people continued to demonstrate their interest. She, as a rather old school evangelist, wanted her evangelical work to play a more important role than her social welfare work.

Nonetheless, in her women's classes at the women's and girls' schools, she taught a variety of subjects. Her creativity was evident in the courses that she designed: she introduced the women to calisthenics, to Western cooking techniques and to games. When Mary and her colleagues tried to improve upon the kitchen "appliances" so that they might cook somewhat more efficiently, the women students were undoubtedly exposed to the changes that had been made. The baby welfare clinics, which were held in order to teach mothers about public health issues as well as to provide them with amenities such as fresh water in which to bathe their babies in the heat of the summer, played an important role in the work of the women as well. Mary and Agnes were both involved in transmitting health information to women. Agnes was trained in several areas of health care by Irwin, because he was concerned about the potential shortage of health care workers. She was then able to use these skills, as well as her experience as a mother, to impart information to Chinese women. However, the contributions that the three women made, even in the educational sphere which should have been quite easily delineated, were instead notably complex. An episode that Mary reported, about a camping trip for middle school age girls, is representative of the complexities of their work. Amidst the wonderful detail of her record, Mary reported that the girls' parents were "aghast" that their daughters were going on an overnight camping trip; they initially blamed the missionary school for this outrage; when advised that the government had ordered the outing, they were more compliant; the girls had an absolutely wonderful time; the girls' grandmothers would not be able to comprehend the activities to which their granddaughters were exposed; and from Mary's perspective the outing was pointless because most of the girls would become wives and mothers and never use any of the

skills that they had learned on their outing. The goals of the missionary women were fluid and changing; their work was flexible; and the changes that the women of China were undergoing were never fully evident, despite the efforts of the three women to understand them. When Mary, who was the most introspective in her records, posited that the women who had converted to Christianity might have a more difficult time within their own families because they would be different, her thoughts were well-founded. The contributions of these three women appear to have been most remarkable with individual women with whom they developed relationships and worked; however, their presence among the larger Chinese population should not be underestimated.

The third and final theme is the impact that these women had back in Canada, which flowed from their writings and their furlough activities. The women appear to have had two reasons for writing: it helped them to connect to people at home whom they had left behind, particularly in the early months and years in China, and it enabled them to expose China to Canadians. The three women came to accept China as it was, even while they were trying to change it. This is perhaps the greatest anomaly of their experiences, and one that was undoubtedly transmitted by them to Canada. They truly loved China. They were proud of its history and appreciated its people. However, they were in China in order to change it, they had a mission to accomplish, or at least to work towards. This anomaly was never addressed by the three women and seems to be the remaining conundrum of the lives of missionaries in China. Determined to do so, they had become knowledgeable about China very quickly. Lena kept extensive records of her journey up the Yangzi into West China and her readers can feel the isolation of the river which is

bound by its river banks. Agnes' records of her trip into Sichuan, after she had been separated from Irwin, were truly tactile in their imagery. The women brought China to life in their letters, and were determined to explain what China was really about. Lena continued to capture her trips with such extensive detail that they practically came alive. Mary was introspective and somewhat irreverent in her description of the day that Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang were received in the province, and she asked questions of herself and explained ideas that she had organized to Canadians. Agnes tried to write regularly, and took such care with her letters that her husband almost always read them and added a line or two of clarification or additional information. Most importantly, these three women were all successful. The tactile images and detailed information reached Canadians. When Agnes told her parents that *she* was the authority on the events of the war, we know that she had carefully considered information that she was imparting in her letters. When she reported that a captured Japanese pilot was marched through the streets (and that Mary was on the street as one of the spectators), Agnes identified the isolation of Sichuan province, that most of the local people had never seen a Japanese person and that they were therefore shocked to see that someone who looked like them was their enemy. Agnes brought her readers into the streets of the city, so that they could stand alongside the Chinese who were lining the streets.

Beyond their letters, in which they transmitted their ideas about China, these women talked to people when they returned to Canada, particularly on their furloughs between terms, but as well when they retired from the mission field. Mary's preparations before she left China for each furlough included the selection of items that would be particularly



helpful when she went on “the missionary circus” where she met with Canadians who supported and were interested in China missionary work. These audiences wanted to know more about China and the returned missionaries were authorities.

These three women lived, despite the sanctuary that the compound walls had offered them in their earliest days in China, in close proximity with the Chinese. They continued to live in the compounds, but they each broke down the metaphoric walls and became part of China. Although they seldom dressed in Chinese clothing, each of them learned the Chinese language so that they could communicate effectively, brought their work to the Chinese women and became friends of the Chinese. It was their stories about China that were told to church-goers and almost certainly beyond the walls of their churches. The missionary presence in China was undoubtedly the one which transmitted, during this period, detailed stories and images of China to Canadians.

The decision that these women made to deposit their personal papers in the public archives is not explained by any of them, however, their experiences and impressions continue to give Canadians more experience and understanding of China. Throughout the years in which they lived there, the three women interpreted China through ever-changing eyes. Their records were shaped by multiple lenses, perhaps simply in the act of writing, or in the selection of what to write. The recipients of their letters added yet another prism when they interpreted the stories that they read, and undoubted, the analysis of the documents adds a further lens. *Prisms of China* intends to convey the

fascinating, multi-layered interpretation of China that emerges from the experiences of these three women.

A final intent of this thesis is to suggest that the cultural chasm that was identified by these women must be in the forefront of the minds of Canadians who hope to deal with China today and in the future. The hopes and dreams of missionaries and other Westerners who approached China from the middle of the nineteenth century, which culminated in the unequal treaty system and the so-called opening of China, are not unique to that time. Once again, China is tantalizing to outsiders. While the welcome that Westerners receive is, in some ways, different from the reception of the twentieth century missionaries, it remains a welcome that is grounded in Chinese self-interest and Chinese understanding of their country's place in the international community. A city official had tried to protect one of the missionary groups on its upriver trip; another city official had sent a letter of apology to a woman missionary subsequent to an incident inland. These actions were actually following the directives laid out in the treaty provisions, in which the safety of missionaries and foreigners was to be guaranteed by local officials. As these missionary women's narratives demonstrate, Western encounters with China are likely to be more successful if outsiders are sensitive to China's culture and appreciative of its history. After all, China considered itself the Middle Kingdom and found it quite impossible to understand why foreigners did not recognize this identity

The narratives of the lives of these women in China ought not to be concluded without once again recognizing how exceptional they were, as women who struck out for China

and in the process distinguished themselves from the vast majority of other Canadian women. The historical context for their stories provided early in this thesis began by establishing the Boxer uprising as a metaphor for the dislocation and uncertainty that China, as a country, faced in 1900. This was the China into which each of these women ventured. Lena Dunfield left her home in Canada only four years after the Boxer uprising. These women moved to a country that had little resemblance to their homeland, the houses not only lacked electricity, they were without running water or wooden floors. China was a vast country, the cities were shockingly congested (at least to the women), dark and dirty, and the women found themselves looking forward to the walls that would separate them from the work that they had come to do. However, they quite quickly moved beyond their initial inhibitions and undeniable Western-centric impressions to become women who respected the complexities of China and the Chinese people. Each of them made her own imprint upon the people with whom she lived and worked. It is with certainty that Lena Jolliffe, Mary Lamb and Agnes Hilliard can be identified as fascinating Canadian women, and women to whom other Canadian women might look for inspiration when they are trying to forge their own dreams and futures.

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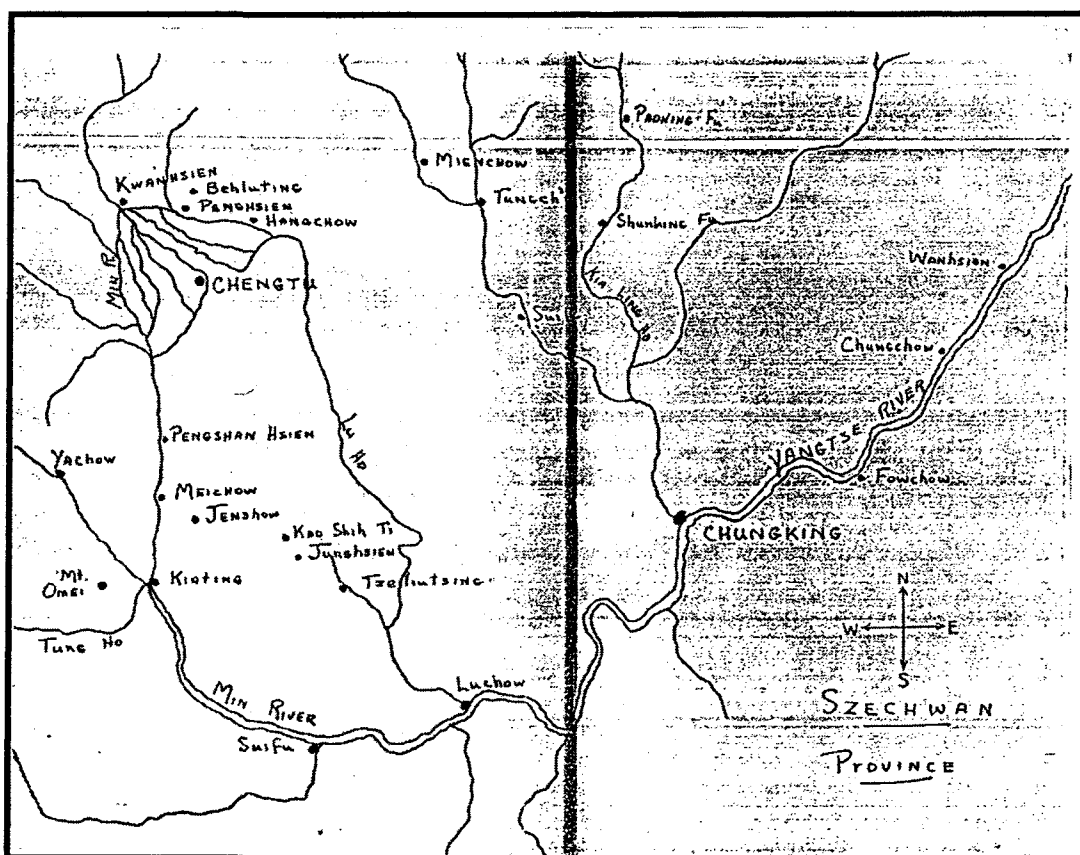


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APPENDIX ONE

MAP OF WEST CHINA



Records Relating to West China, Finding Aid 158, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto. A map used by the missionaries of the West China mission district.

## APPENDIX TWO

### LIST OF PLACE NAMES

<b>Pinyin</b>	<b>Former Spelling</b>
Chengdu	Chengtu
Chongqing	Chungking
Fuzhou	Foochow and Fowchow and Fow Chow
Hankou	Hankow
Leshan	Kiating
Mount Emei	Mount Omei
Nanjing	Nanking
Sichuan	Szechwan and Szechuan and Sze Chuan
Yangzi River	Yangtse River
Yibin or Ipin	Suifu
Yichang	Ichang
Yunnan	Yunnan
Ziyong	Tseliutsing and Tzeliutsing