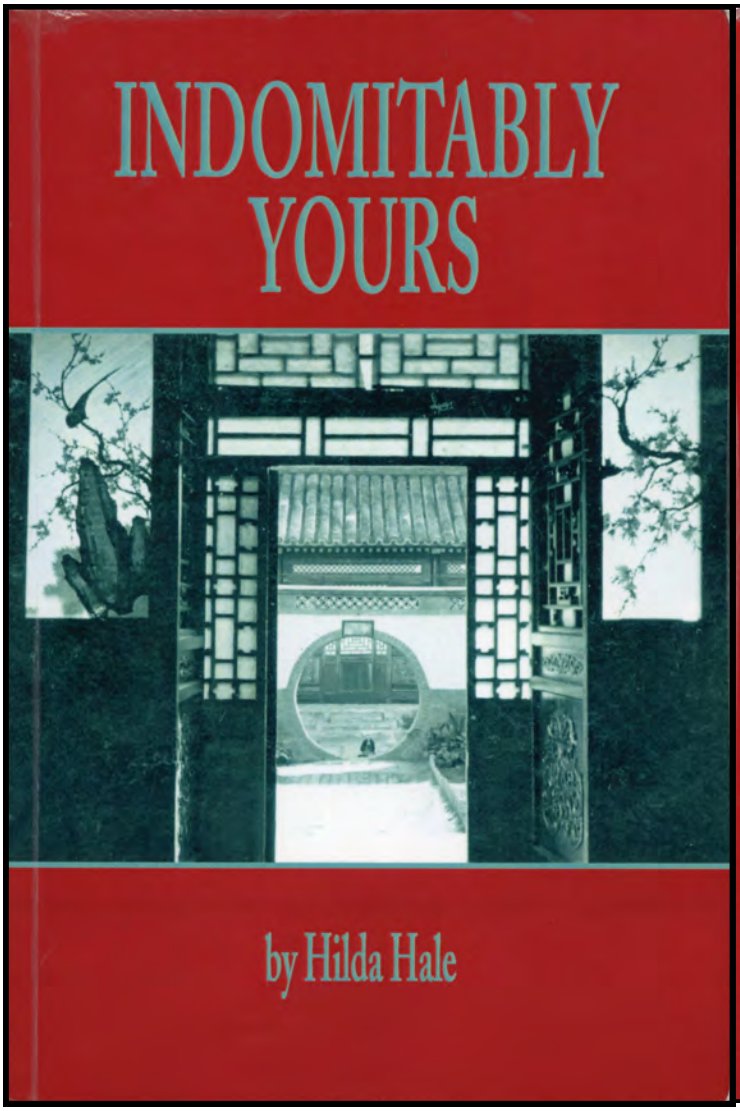

Annual fairs were part of the New Year festivities, and Lu Li Chung where we took Lady Mountbatten was famous for its jade sales. She purchased 16 jade pieces. Before leaving Peking she sent me a white jade statuette of Ho Hsien Ku, the only female among the Chinese Immortals. It was wrapped in the local newspaper, and her card said, "Thank you. Hope to see you in London."

INDOMITABLY YOURS

An Account of My Kaleidoscopic Life

Memoirs of Hilda L. Hale

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[excerpts ...]

PREFACE

Indomitably Yours is mainly the story of my adventurous life in the Far East Japan (briefly), China, Hong Kong, and India. For many years friends badgered me to write my story, but I procrastinated and put it off. It was not until my eighty-seventh birthday, following a pace-maker operation in 1994, that I decided it was now or never.

I thank those persistent friends and to two in particular I am indebted—the late Peter Fairbarns, who contributed six hundred hours of computer typing, and my gentle, talented and charming editor, Janet Craig. Over the nearly two years she and I have worked together a genuine friendship has developed.

The title of the book comes from the fact that Jim Gibson, columnist for the Victoria Times-Colonist, invariably referred to me as the "Indomitable Hilda Hale" in his column "This Town." Thus "indomitable" became my nickname in my senior years. When I was a schoolgirl in England it was "Soapy." But you will have to read on for the reason for that!

Hilda Hale

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION:

THE GYPSY'S PROPHECY

I was standing with my mother waiting for a Bristol Tramways car to take me to my dance lesson at Miss Maddock's studio, way across the city, when the gypsy approached us. Gypsies sometimes called themselves Romanies and were a common sight in England in the early 1900s. They lived in caravans drawn by huge horses.

As this one came near I moved closer to Mother, for I was only eight years old and, like many other children of that age, scared of gypsies. We had been told that they stole young children and could cast bad spells on people. No wonder I was frightened. The woman was very old and dressed in a peculiar fashion. She wore a long, very full, brightly coloured skirt, a white blouse with puffy sleeves, and a gaily coloured bandana over her grey hair (I knew it was grey, for two skimpy plaits hung over her thin shoulders). She wore dangling earrings and many strands of coloured glass beads. Her skin was dark—not as black as the Kaffirs' I had seen when we lived in South Africa, but more like the colour of milk chocolate. She had very black eyes, but I took only a quick glance at them in case they might cast an evil spell on me. She stared fixedly at me. I knew I did look pretty in my frilly dress and corkscrew curls, but she made me uneasy.

The woman was selling wooden clothes pegs strung together like firecrackers. The gypsies made them from bits of wire and wood from the trees in the forests where they usually lived. They also made strings of beads and pot holders from rags. She said to Mother, "Please, pretty lady, buy my pegs."

"No, thank you," said Mother, "I have plenty at home."

"Well," said the persistent old woman, "cross my hand with silver, Dearie, and let me tell your fortunes—yours and the bonnie little girl's." Her penetrating stare scared me more than ever. "Why doesn't that tram hurry up and come?" I prayed inwardly.

Mother loved things like fortune telling, tarot cards, and horoscope predictions, and I could see she was caught. Giving the gypsy a silver sixpence, she said, "All right, but make it quick, for the tram will be here any minute."

I cannot remember the exact words of the old woman, but I do recall her predictions. She told my mother she would travel over a great sea to a new home and would never live in England again. For me she predicted that I would travel to many countries and overcome dangers, and when I married I would live in a country of strange tongues. She also said I was lucky and would live a long life.

When later I asked Mother if she believed the gypsy, she just smiled and said, "Well, dear, they are supposed to have second sight."

Perhaps this one did. I had already been to Africa. Ahead of me lay more than eighty years in which to prove the rest of her vision. I did indeed live among people who spoke strange (to me) tongues. During my long life, including thirty-eight years of happy marriage, I have lived on five continents or subcontinents—Europe, Africa, North America (Canada), Asia, and India. I have faced dangers, surviving internment by the Japanese and a crash landing in the Egyptian desert. In only one respect was the gypsy slightly off track, and that was about my mother. She never lived in England after the family's migration to Canada, but she did visit the land of her birth after the death of her husband in 1952.

Now here is my story...

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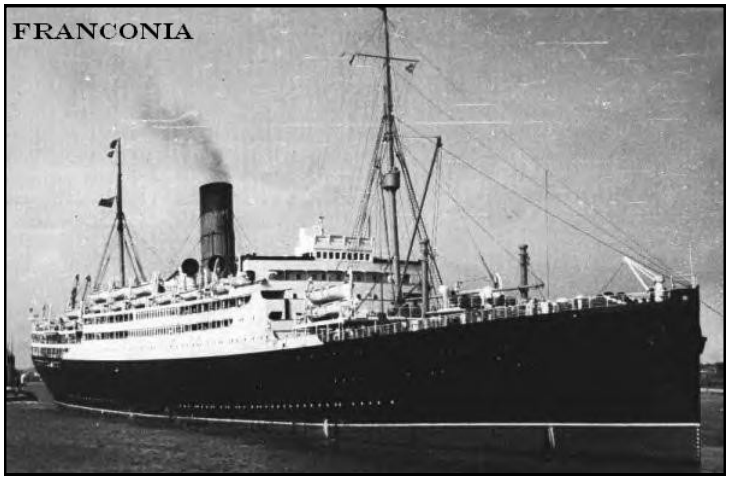
CHAPTER NINE

Home Leave and Japanese Occupation, 1936-1940



After the departure of the *Franconia*, Peking returned to normal and shopping became tolerable as the inflated tourist prices eased. It was time now for us to start preparing for Home Leave. But we still had to face the Yenching University lecture before we could feel free to concentrate on our own preparations for a six- month absence from China and our own home.

The trip to Yenching University was great fun. We were a convoy of four cars, three supplied by wealthy parents of the students. It was a sunny spring afternoon, and the dance demonstration was to be outdoors in the well-groomed grounds of the university. After giving a very brief outline of the different types of English folk dances, I put the young dancers to work. They did splendidly, demonstrating country, Morris, and sword dances. Following their performance, I paired them up with university students (mostly those in teacher training) and put them through the movements of a simple English country dance. We finished the afternoon with refreshments indoors and met a number of English and American professors, some of whom we met again a few years later in Weihsien Internment Camp. At this time, however, there was no thought of trouble in North China. We had heard that the Japanese were rattling sabres in the south, but that they would get as far as Peking was unthinkable. We should have been more concerned; before the end of 1937 and while we were still on leave in England, Peking fell under Japanese occupation.

Shortly after the Yenching visit, my neighbour Virginia and I went shopping for Home Leave necessities and gifts. Virginia refused to drive in Peking and thought I was "nuts" (American expression) to do so. We therefore went in Virginia's chauffeur- driven car. We were headed for an import shop in the Peking Hotel. It was not a shop in the true sense of the word. An American friend of Virginia's rented two connecting rooms in the hotel for her "salon." Her assistant was the English wife of a sergeant with the British garrison stationed in Peking. They were a good team, taking orders and importing goods from Europe and the United States and making this little business into a treasure trove. It catered to the needs of babies and dowagers, stocking christening robes, evening gowns, baby shoes from England, and evening pumps from Italy. I loved to browse among the beautiful imported gowns from faraway countries. There was an elegance about them that no Chinese tailor could ever reproduce, however well he could copy. It also carried such imported necessities as sanitary pads for women and disposable diapers for babies. The latter were aptly named Chucks and came from Canada. While these last two commodities did not bring much profit, they were excellent "temptation-ers," as Marie, the owner, called them. Customers coming in for these useful items would rarely leave without purchasing something more glamorous. On one occasion I was one of those tempted, and I bought a lovely purple French velvet dinner gown from Paris. It was expensive but lasted forever and was one of my favourite dresses.

Before reaching the hotel we were held up by a huge Chinese funeral procession honouring a recently deceased general and had to pull over to the side of the road, where we watched its passing. Heading the procession was a smartly dress-uniformed military band playing "Old Folks at Home" sadly out of tune and in the tempo of a funeral march. I've always regarded this ballad of Stephen Foster's as something of a tear-jerker, but played in this manner it was positively heart-rending. I could hardly keep back my tears for a deceased I'd never known. All the mourners were dressed in white, and in addition to those who were family there were many more who were hired to carry banners with eulogies of the deceased. Others were used to pull low-slung dollies bearing life-sized paper effigies of the deceased's favourite objects during life to the grave site, where they would be burned. Among the most prominent were cavalry horses and riders. A beautiful young maiden was mounted on a long-legged camel. An older black-haired beauty wearing an elaborate headdress and clothed in brightly coloured paper robes was suspended between two poles and carried along by bearers (Virginia's chauffeur said she was the general's No. 1 concubine, who would be his comfort in his spirit life). Effigies of his servants were also carried along between poles. Flowers and household objects—his chair, his desk, and his rickshaw—were also featured in the parade.

The chief mourner (his eldest son) staggered along supported by a man on each side holding his arms. Behind him a group of gaily-clad bearers carried the

general's sedan chair. His photograph was inside and tablets proclaiming his merits bedecked the outside. The huge catafalque came next, hoisted on poles and carried by thirty-two bearers, sixteen in front and sixteen behind. I learned that by tradition bearers of the catafalque had to be eight in number or multiples of eight. Family mourners filed behind the coffin, the widow in the lead. At certain intervals other hired help threw paper cash in the air. Along the sidewalks other helpers had set up tables here and there to offer tea to the participants of the funeral parade.

As the procession drew to a close I could not help but think of my grandmother Brownlee's funeral in England. What a contrast! I still remember sitting in the pony cart with my brother and young cousins as we followed the black-clad procession up Durham Road to the cemetery. Everything was black. Even the hearse, drawn by two black horses, had black curtains at its windows. Instead of music the only sound was the clip-clop of horses' hoofs. Voices were hushed as if fearful of disturbing the dead. Onlookers on the sidewalks stood silently with bowed heads, the men holding their caps in their hands. Black armbands were a common sight. Everything was mournful and silent, as unlike this amazing parade in China as could be imagined. But that was then, of course. By now, I believe, British burial customs have changed, too.

We spent so much time watching the funeral procession that our shopping trip was cut short by the time we reached the hotel. We bought some necessities from Marie and looked at imported shoes for my Hilary and Virginia's David and said we would bring the children to be fitted later in the week. We also called in at Helen Burton's Camel Bell. Her collection of jewellery made from semiprecious stones—coral, turquoise, aquamarine, and amethyst—set in exotic designs of Chinese silver was mind- boggling. I bought an amethyst ring for my young sister, and for my mother I found an enamel butterfly brooch decorated with turquoise and coral. These would be some of my Home Leave gifts.

As the time for our departure drew nearer, there was much to be done apart from preparing clothes for six months of the year—from July to January. I also had to make an inventory of the household possessions we would leave behind in the care of Bertram's replacement. His wife was an American and worked in the cipher office of the U.S. Embassy. They had no children, so we had to dispense with Wang Nai-nai. They agreed to look after the dogs, but we would be responsible for the dog coolie's wages. They also felt that No. 2 Boy could be dispensed with. I began to wonder if Home Leave was worth the effort. But it was necessary, for after a few years away from our natural habitat, strange things happened to the body's blood and to the brain's mentality. Some wives actually suffered nervous breakdowns and had to be sent "home" ahead of their husbands.

We left Peking early in July on a journey that took us via Japan, Hawaii, and Canada before we reached the shores of England. In Canada we had to make a hair-raising trip by narrow-gauge railway in order to see my father in Swastika, Ontario. Our arrival in Toronto, where we had to change trains for Swastika, was late. Little Train waited for us but had to make up the lost time. It certainly did; there were times when I feared it would fly off the tracks. From Swastika we went on to visit my mother in Montreal, and it was there that Hilary had her first birthday and took her first steps. We left her with Mother and my sister Erica while Bertram and I paid a short visit to New York so that he could attend to some business with Cook's New York office.

We returned to Montreal to pick up Hilary and sailed for England, where I met my family-in-law for the first time. We stayed with them in Welwyn and were exhibited to all the neighbours and a couple of Bertram's aging aunts. After some weeks we left Hilary with Grandma Hale and in a hired car headed for Yorkshire to visit my aunts and cousins. My grandfather Brownlee had also passed away in the interval. Once again I felt we were on exhibition. I had almost the sense of being an intruder, for it was many years since I had lived in England. One of my cousins, a strong supporter of the Conservative Party, got me to give a talk on China at his monthly club luncheon. It was only at question period that I realized how little these nice, conservative people knew about China, its customs and inhabitants. Oh well, thought I, conversely Chinese know little, if anything, about life in England.

Just before Christmas Bertram learned that we would not be returning to Peking because of the Japanese takeover of North China. So there we were, stuck in England with no home of our own and only the clothes suitable for a Home Leave! Furthermore, we faced a reduction in Bertram's salary when he was seconded to Head Office in London. He sold some of his precious watch and clock collection at Christie's, and we settled into a furnished flat in South Kensington. Hilary was nearly a three-year-old before we were allowed to return to our home in China in 1939.

As soon as I stepped off the train at Chi'enmen Station in Peking in March 1939, I felt the change. It was as though a cold vies had clutched my heart. Perhaps at first it was the physical presence of armed Japanese soldiers on guard at the station that alarmed me. But there was something more, something about the Chinese themselves that seemed amiss. They appeared to hurry past us, as if afraid of being contaminated! It was an attitude not exactly hostile but furtive and evasive, almost apologetic.

Bill Williams, Bertram's replacement, met us with the hired car Cook's used for tourists. Once more we found ourselves on familiar ground travelling to our courtyard home in the *hutung*. Hilary was tired but not so tired that she didn't react to the strange sights and surroundings.


The Hutung after rain

She became very excited when she saw a rickshaw coolie panting along with his passenger and waved gaily as if he were an old friend. Did she have any recollection of this before our long sojourn in England? Would she remember our Chinese servants and Wang Nai-nai in particular? (When we knew we would be returning to China Bertram had written to Williams asking him to rehire Wang Nai-nai and No. 2 Boy Ping if they were still available.) Would she remember the dogs, Back-Chat and Wallah-Wallah, her faithful playmates of three years ago? Bill Williams did not mention them; in fact, he and Bertram had a business conversation on our way home. We did not make any detours this time as we had on my arrival in 1935. We were tired, and Williams had to get back to the office. He did not even come into the house with us but said he would be back tomorrow after office hours.

There was no joyful barking this time when Bertram pulled the bell cord. The same old kai-mundi opened up for us and gawked at Hilary as he kowtowed many times in greeting. This time it was his young daughter whom Bertram hoisted over the high door lintel into the little outer courtyard. It was late winter and quite cold. The inner courtyard through the moongate was bare of potted plants and flowers and looked stark and uninviting. The servants were on the verandah to greet us. When Wang Nai-nai saw Hilary, she kowtowed and cried, "Ai Yah, Ai Yah. Hirry [she never could pronounce the"l" velly big gir, now velly pletty." She was like a mother retrieving a long-lost child, and her eyes filled with tears of joy. Hilary showed no sign of recognizing her old nurse. Indeed, she seemed somewhat startled at this strange collection of people lined up to greet us. Hsu remained composed and dignified; Cook Wang grinned like a performing clown; Ping, No. 2 Boy, was visibly moved; and House Coolie Guo was down on his knees in a deep, deep kowtow while Amah Dai Yeh stood nervously in the background. They all looked much the same, Hsu perhaps showing his age, his shoulders a little more stooped. But where were Garden Coolie Mah and the dogs?

We went into the living room, which also had not changed so far as we could see, and a welcoming fire crackled its greeting to us. Hilary couldn't wait to go off exploring. The first stop was the bathroom with chubby Wang Nai-nai panting along behind her. Bertram suggested that a cup of tea in the dining room would be nice. I would have preferred it in front of the living room fire, but I knew he wanted to show off his dining room to Hilary. As soon as she saw the Yangtse Riverboat Table, she cried out, "Daddy, what's that funny thing in the middle of the table?"

Bertram looked pained and somewhat nonplussed as he replied, "Well, dear, that's part of the construction."

"What's con-con-truction, Daddy?" The endless questions of a three-year-old! I just settled down to pour tea and left Bertram to deal with that one. Later, after Hilary had been bathed and put to bed (now in a junior bed), we tucked her in and Bertram read a little of her favourite book, Angus and the Ducks. Before long she was blissfully off in the Land of Nod.


Courtyard house at 3A TA PO KE SHIH.
Lady Mountbatten was our guest here, January 26, 1936

After dinner we called Hsu in to ask about the dogs. He told us sadly that Wallah-Wallah got sick and died about a month back. Coolie Mah was beside himself with grief and worry, for Back-Chat too was having the same sickness, and she snapped at people. For this reason Mah had not appeared with the dog when we

arrived. We told Hsu to bring Coolie Mah in with Back-Chat. Oh my poor little animal! She was skin and bones and her eyes were red and watery. She was on a lead, and when she saw Bertram, she gave a pitiful yelp and suddenly crumpled to the floor in a fit of shaking. I asked Bertram if it was distemper, but he didn't think so. As he bent over and examined her I'm sure she remembered him and whimpered softly as she felt his touch. I could not hold back my tears.

Bertram seemed more worried than sad. He told Hsu that Back-Chat must be kept away from Hilary until he had had the dog properly examined. Also, no mention must be made of Wallah-Wallah. All this was relayed to Mah in Chinese, and he in turn was to pass these orders on to the other servants. Mah nodded the Chinese nod of understanding. Then he slowly led the sick dog away.

That first night in our old home was nostalgic but worrying. I felt uneasy and slept restlessly. I kept waiting for the warning sound of the Toc-Toc man in the hutung but did not hear him. What I did hear was laughter and male voices and party noises. I knew it was not from the Andrews' residence, for Virginia had phoned earlier to wish us welcome and to say she would see me the next day. They were having an early night, so it was not they who were partying. We must have new neighbours on the other side. Before we went on leave the tenants of the adjoining courtyard house had been an elderly Chinese couple whom we neither saw nor heard and only knew of from our servants. I would have to investigate in the morning.

When Hsu brought in our morning tea (what luxury again!) I asked about the old couple who used to live next door and mentioned the party I had heard during the night. Hsu looked sad and said the elderly Chinese had been evicted and the house was now a Japanese officers' mess. There were many night-time parties, Hsu said apologetically—as if it were his fault—and Tai- tai would see many changes. "Peking no b'long Chinese any more," he said sadly. After he left, Bertram turned to me and said, "I don't like the sound of this. Maybe we will have to make some changes, too."

Before going off to the office he was even more perturbed when, under Hsu's guidance, he discovered that a urinal had been built on the opposite side of the wall connecting the two courtyard houses. "It stinks, positively stinks," he told me later, and advised me to keep Hilary indoors. As the weather was still cold there was little likelihood of her playing outdoors anyway. Hsu also told Bertram that in summer the courtyard was infested with big flies (probably bluebottles) and "Missy Williams very cross. She tell Wang to keep cover on all food."

Later that morning Virginia came in with her young son, David, and his amah. Virginia looked just the same: elegant and beautiful, the epitome of a cultured, well-groomed American lady. She always seemed to be smiling. Her dark eyes lit up with joy as she hugged me. "Gosh, Hilda, I never thought I'd see you again. And this dark-eyed beauty must be Hilary. Hilary, this is David."

What a handsome little fellow he was. When Hilary saw him, she ran and put her arms around him and gave him a whacking kiss. Wang Nai-nai was aghast. "Miss Hirry, no b'long plopper fashion," she admonished. Proper or not, Hilary took his hand and led him to her room with the two amahs in close pursuit. The Williamses had stored most of Hilary's baby toys and brought them out for her arrival. The musical top still worked; the hand puppets were as good as new; the performing monkey on a stick still did its tricks; and her three bears looked appealing and cuddly. With the two children happily at play, Virginia and I settled down to coffee and gossip.

She started by telling me about our mutual friends, those who were still here and others who had left. The Fitzmaurices had not returned following their Home Leave. He was now the British Consul in Amoy. The Spenglers had left for the United States, where poor George was fighting a losing battle with cancer. The Hennings were still living in Paomachang. Dudley had been transferred to Manila.

I was anxious to learn about the Japanese takeover. According to Virginia, the Japanese had simply marched into Peking with no resistance; not a shot was fired. It was felt that there must have been inside collaborators, for the invading army knew exactly what key positions in the city to seize. In no time at all they were in control of cable and wireless, transportation, all government offices, and utilities such as light and power. In fact, almost overnight Peking became a Japanese city! The invaders had not interfered with foreigners, but there were dreadful stories of atrocities to the Chinese. Many had been executed and their properties looted. Some wealthy Chinese had escaped to Free China (Chungking) with only their lives and a few necessary belongings. Their lovely homes had been sacked or in some cases taken over for the Japanese officers. Colleges, temples, and universities had been commandeered to house the troops or to act as prisons for dissident students. Virginia warned me I would see small groups of Japanese soldiers, proud and arrogant as they swaggered along the main thoroughfares. Woe betide anyone who got in their way—if a Chinese woman, she would be rewarded with a slap across the face; if a child, he would be pushed into the gutter.

So this was our new world, and I began to have qualms about the future. It was obvious that we were facing life in a very different Peking from the one we had known three years earlier. Shortly after Virginia left,

Bertram phoned to see if it would be all right if he asked the Williamses to come for a quiet dinner that night. I was feeling tired and shocked, but I knew that it was essential to get things settled up with Bill and Mira, who would be going on Home Leave in a few days' time, so of course I said I would speak to Cook about dinner for four. My first reaction to Bertram's phone call had been, "Oh no! I am really too tired to cook dinner for guests tonight," before I realized that I would not be cooking anything for anybody now. I was again a pampered tai-tai, living in an unreal world of leisure. Gone were two years of being a struggling Kensington housewife trying to assume the jobs of baby amah, wash amah, and cook in one protesting body. The cooking had scared me the most; it was extremely experimental and often unsuccessful. Though I tried hard, poor Bertram had been the sufferer. Clothes were another worry. Hilary was growing out of hers and mine were wearing out with little hope of replacement on our lower income. Of course it had to be at this time that the Mountbattens invited us to a luncheon at their palatial Brook House (they didn't know we were "detained"). The best I could do for the occasion was to skimp on the butcher's bill and buy a new hat. But that was over, and now here we were back to living an incredibly false lifestyle. Who, for instance, in England could afford seven servants on Bertram's salary? When there we could barely afford a weekly "char" (charwoman).

Conversation at dinner centred mainly on the Japanese occupation and the changes it had wrought. The Williamses both concurred with what I had heard from Virginia that morning. Nonetheless, with both Mira and Bill working in offices during the day and spending their weekends with friends in Paomachang, they had not been as closely in contact with the local conditions as had Virginia. They were sorry about the death of Wallah-Wallah and thought he had probably got loose in the hutung and picked up some dreadful local disease from the wonk dogs. They hoped that Back-Chat could be cured, but she was obviously suffering from the same malady.

We settled some financial accounts with them. They had bought a new refrigerator while we were away and asked if we would like to buy it from them. This we agreed to, for with no ice cubes supplied daily by Mrs. Polly as in the past, and with the addition to our family, a refrigerator was an absolute necessity.

The two men discussed business changes that had taken place. The Japanese had confounded local import merchants by abolishing the long-time international cable code and substituting one of their own. They were in complete control of all transportation and shipping-and-forwarding business. Williams resented the endless forms and permits that had to be filled out for every business transaction, always in duplicate and sometimes in triplicate! We learned that the city gates were now firmly closed at sundown nightly when the invading troops returned to the safety of their barracks. During daylight hours, permits were required to leave or enter the city. We would find many more Japanese civilians living here now. They had followed in the wake of their successful warriors. Many had usurped jobs formerly held by Chinese, causing unemployment and distress. Some firms had been invited to employ Japanese interpreters and to ignore the invitation was to court disaster. The extra demands on electricity had increased power failures. (Heavens! They had been bad enough three years before.) We would need to keep a watchful eye on the refrigerator. I don't know when I had experienced a dinner party conversation that culminated in such gloom, and I was almost relieved when our guests left.

It was three days later that Bertram brought Dr. Hoeppli in for lunch. He came from Switzerland and now worked in the Tropical Disease Research Department at the PUMC. After lunch Coolie Mah brought Back-Chat to the verandah for Hoeppli to examine. It did not take him long to make his diagnosis. He asked if Hilary had been near the dog. When Bertram told him that we had kept dog and child strictly apart, he gave a sigh of relief. "How very lucky," he said. "This poor animal is in the advanced stages of kalaazar, which is a fatal disease affecting babies and young children. We have had a terrible outbreak of kalaazar in the last six months with hundreds of deaths of children up to five years old. The virus is transmitted by the dog's saliva, and if it gets into an open wound, death is imminent."

Dear heaven, what a lucky break we had had! Dr. Hoeppli took Back-Chat to his laboratory, and we never saw her again. Oddly enough, we heard the word "kalaazar" three years later in Weihsien Internment Camp. Bertram's Tientsin friend Dennis Fulton had to help restore the camp's hospital after its almost total destruction by invading guerrillas (bandits) before we got there. His job was to go through the hospital files, and there he found records of hundreds of child deaths in Weihsien in 1939 when, before Pearl Harbor, American missionaries had lived there and run the hospital. It must, it seems, have been a widespread epidemic, for Weihsien was some seven hundred miles away from Peking.

Shortly afterward some friends in the BAT (British American Tobacco) Company were being transferred and wondered if we would like to have their Scottish terrier, as they could not take him with them. Bertram was delighted at the idea, as was Coolie Mah. The dog's name—of all names—was Angus. We knew immediately what Hilary's reaction would be: it was as if her favourite story, Angus and the Ducks, had come to life. But I warned Bertram, "Dog, yes. Ducks, no. Don't even think

of it!" Yet at Easter—guess what? Some half-witted friend sent Hilary six darling little yellow ducklings—live, of course—for an Easter present. There had to be an ultimatum, Angus or the ducks. After a day's play with the poor little ducklings, Hilary settled for Angus. We said we would take the baby ducks out to "Aunt" Elsie's farm in Paomachang. Then when we went visiting we would see them as they grew into big ducks.

At about this time some other newcomers arrived in Peking. They were Jewish refugees fleeing from the wrath of Hitler in Germany. Among them were Leo and Friedl Kandel (he was a dentist) who were introduced to us by some German friends we had made in Peking, Otto and Poni Burkhardt. Otto, a large, flaccid man, was always suffering from some form of ill-health, while Poni, his wife, was petite, dark and vivacious. They were in the antique business, and Otto was known worldwide for his scholarly works on the T'ang period—T'ang horses in particular. Leo Kandel was a dedicated German health professional with a quiet, gentle disposition. It was his tall and pretty wife who was Jewish. Leo had abandoned his profitable dental practice in Berlin to save his wife from Nazi persecution. They were childless and had come to Peking to stay with the Burkhardts until they could get established in a world as far away from Hitler as possible.

The Kandels' English was not up to standard, so I offered to coach them. Friedl in particular needed help. They came to our courtyard house three mornings a week when Hilary and David were taken by Virginia's chauffeur to the play-school in the U.S. Embassy compound. It worked very well. These German friends of ours played important roles in our future lives and helped us over some difficult times when we were placed under house arrest after the attack on Pearl Harbor. But that was two years in the future.

Meanwhile we tried to lead a life as normal as Japanese occupation would allow. We obeyed new rules, obtained necessary permits, and avoided any conflict with the new rulers. We managed frequent weekend visits to Elsie and Allan Henning in Paomachang but did not take Wang Nai-nai with us, for being Chinese she needed special exit and re-entry permits. It was less troublesome to have only foreign faces in our Hillman Minx at the checkpoints at the city gates.

Hilary loved these outings. She saw her ducklings at about their teen-age state in duck years and was delighted. It was as well that she didn't realize that when they reached maturity they would be waddle-walked to market by Elsie's gardener. Elsie decided to keep two of the six originals as she liked an occasional duck egg for breakfast.

Allan and Bertram had lengthy discussions about the current climate for business. The former in particular, being a private importer and not attached to a foreign firm, was having a most frustrating time with the many new rules and regulations. He had been forced to employ Japanese help but still kept on his faithful Chinese employees who had been with him for years. Having to face extra wages meant less profit, and there was not the earlier harmonious office atmosphere. The Chinese resented the Japanese, who lorded it over the local employees.

We told the Hennings about our new "neighbours" in the next-door house. Elsie was horrified when she heard of the urinal on the connecting wall; she was particularly concerned for Hilary, who was her godchild, and said it was time for us to move. But where to go? Moreover, we had spent much time and money fixing up our present rented home to meet our standards, installing modern sanitation (a flush toilet) and a septic tank. If we moved into another Chinese-style courtyard house we'd have to do it all over again. And we'd still have the Japanese breathing down our necks wherever we lived in the city. Allan asked if we'd ever thought of moving out to Paomachang? He had heard that his Chinese neighbour, Louey Hsien-sen, a prosperous landowner and farmer, was looking for a tenant for the property he had formerly rented to the French minister for his race-box. It was vacant now that the minister had been recalled to France. Why not call on Louey Hsien-sen and see what was up? No sooner said than done. We left Hilary with her godmother and walked across the field of newly planted millet that separated the Louey and Henning properties.

Louey Hsien-sen spoke English quite well, and in any case Allan's Chinese was almost a second language after his thirty years in China. We were shown the empty foreign-style bungalow. It contained a large living room, a small dining room, three bedrooms, a modern bathroom, and a connecting dressing room. The kitchen at the back of the house was bright and very large but old-fashioned by current standards, with its huge coal-burning stove, large wooden kitchen table, and heavy chopping block. The bungalow stood in its own spacious grounds surrounded by a low mud-brick wall with a tingah (open pavilion) in one corner from which there was a view of the distant Western Hills. No buildings other than the Hennings' house, to the east, were anywhere in sight. Louey Hsien-sen household was a short distance away at the back of the bungalow behind the servants' quarters. A small road on a gentle slope led from the property to the main Peking highway.

I could see that Bertram was very interested, but to my amazement he asked the owner if he would like to sell the property. Louey Hsien-sen smiled and said a hesitant no—but maybe he would give it some consideration. At this point Allan took him aside and they conversed in Chinese. Later he told us that he told Louey

that foreign occupants might be a safeguard against a Japanese seizure of the property, and if Mr. Hale wanted to buy, well, so much the better. Thus a preliminary agreement was reached.

It took weeks and weeks before the completion of the transfer of property. After that Bertram wanted to do some modifications. The dining room needed to be enlarged. The bathroom needed replacement of the bath, toilet, and washbasin, which were the worse for wear. We decided that a sunken bath and a shower were what we wanted, but what dear Bertram had not discovered was that there was a bit of a water problem (shortage!) on this particular property. It had not been named Hou Tao Kou (Fire Water Hill) for nothing. While used only at weekends the house had been sufficiently supplied, but with full-time tenancy more water would be needed. We could see that these planned improvements would take some considerable time.

Hua Tao Kou, our home in Paomachang at 14 Hou Tao Kou

In the meantime we continued to live in the courtyard house in Peking. We saw the seasons change, watched the moonflowers in their summer night glory, and taught Hilary to negotiate the flooded courtyard on her junior stilts (she loved to stilt-walk Hilary celebrated her fourth birthday by having a fancy-dress party for ten of her playmates. We enjoyed weekend outings to the Hennings' with Hilary and Angus, her faithful companion. By midsummer the ducklings were full-fledged ducks. Angus decided to have some fun and games with them once, but outnumbering him six to one, the big birds soon stopped any interference from the Scottie as they ganged up on him. One actually got a nip at his tail, and he came yelping to Hilary for protection. "It's exactly what happened in my story Angus and the Ducks," she told Elsie Henning. On these visits we could watch the progress on our house, which seemed painfully slow. But as Allan pointed out, conditions were not normal and there were restrictions even on doing house construction, with permits (always those confounded permits) needed for this and that.

By July I discovered I was pregnant again. It was not really planned, but on the other hand no steps had been taken to prevent it. In other words, we just let nature take its course. Bertram was delighted. As an only child, he did not want the same fate for Hilary. Not, perhaps, the best of times to have a baby, but we were not at war with Japan then. Also, as I pointed out in my letters to both sets of grandparents in Canada and England, with a lovely new home in the country and servants, what could be better? Once again I sought the professional expertise of Dr. Von Wolff of the German Hospital. He had pulled me through a very difficult birth with Hilary and I had the greatest confidence in him. I was, however, well along in my pregnancy when the war broke out between Britain and Germany. I was asked by the British Ambassador to change my plans and not go to the German Hospital. This request was made with great regret, but for diplomatic reasons and under the War Measures Act, it was necessary.

There were three other hospital possibilities: the French Hospital in the Legation Quarter, Dr. Leadbeater's Mission Hospital, and the PUMC. I immediately opted for the last. We knew some of the American doctors socially, and Bertram was friendly with Dr. Wang, the comptroller. They were very reluctant to accept me at first. As one of the doctors observed, "This is a college of medicine, and we like to take interesting and unusual cases." I said I understood, but if they would accept me I'd try and make it as interesting as possible! Never were more prophetic words spoken.

Beryl was born on February 7, 1940, which happened to coincide with the eve of Chinese New Year. The birth was, as births go, reasonably uneventful, but the after-effects were close to disaster. I had an adherent placenta, and about midnight, after fighting off the effects of a sleeping pill, I began to haemorrhage. A blood transfusion was essential if I was to survive. No Chinese blood donors were available, it now being past midnight and therefore Chinese New Year's Day, when it is forbidden to use any sharp instruments, such as those needed to extract blood.

One doctor suggested calling out the troops of the British garrison; surely a matching blood donor could be found there. It turned out that not only did they not have a record of the men's blood types but most of the soldiers were out on a Chinese New Year's Eve binge! I suggested the doctor should telephone my husband. He did. There was no response (Bertram was a heavy sleeper at the best of times) . He was alone in the house (Chinese New Year again—no servants). As a last resort I gave the doctor the telephone number of the car-hire people used by Cook's and told him to get them to send a car for Bertram. This was done, and when he arrived at the

hospital it was discovered that he had exactly the same type of blood as myself!

Before Bertram got to the hospital, though, they had to operate on me to remove the placenta. I was apparently in a critical stage by then. Never shall I forget that experience. In my semiconscious state I found myself floating in a dark tunnel heading for a bright white door at its end. I longed to go through that white brightness, for beyond that I knew I would make an amazing discovery that would be of benefit to all mankind. How I struggled to get through that door! Just as I was about to achieve my goal I would be pulled backward through the tunnel. Three times I experienced this strange phenomenon before I was rudely brought back to reality. I have no explanation for this except that I now know I must have been near death. Much has been written recently about "seeing the bright light at the end of the tunnel" but at that time I knew nothing about it.

The blood transfusion from Bertram saved me, but I was very weak for many days. When visitors were allowed, Poni Burkhardt and Friedl Kandel came to see me. Friedl took one look at me and beat a hasty exit. Poni told me later that she nearly fainted, for I was as white as the bed sheets. I do know that I was not allowed to have a mirror; I wanted to pretty myself up with a little make-up, but it was forbidden.

Before I was released I facetiously asked the doctor if I had made the case interesting enough. Indeed I had—in fact, a bit too interesting. And the doctor said they hadn't finished with me yet. More work would have to be done on me some months later on. I just put that remark on the back burner; all I wanted was to get home with our beautiful little daughter, Beryl.

Beryl was about two months old by the time we moved into our new home in Paomachang. At Ching Ming Festival in April we planted a pomegranate tree that Louey Hsien-sen gave us as a birth-gift. It was a mild spring morning, and our apricot tree was in full bloom, a picture of pink blossoms against the heavenly blue sky. We held a memorable little ceremony in the presence of all the servants and the Hennings and the two elderly ladies who were permanent residents of Paomachang, Gladys Finlayson and Mildred Thornhill

There were many "odds and sods" as Bertram called them living graciously in China's capital region, and these women were some of them. Gladys owned and operated a gift and hobby shop in the Legation Quarter while Mildred was a keen horsewoman and a lady of considerable wealth. According to Elsie Henning, she was also the victim of a broken romance in England. She had discovered Peking when on a world tour and had fallen in love with everything Chinese. She decided to settle in Peking but after a while bought a cottage in nearby Paomachang where she could indulge in her favourite pastime, riding. Gladys came out as a bride following her life in England as a teacher. Her husband, she eventually found, was something of a philanderer and enjoyed the company of young Chinese girls, so she divorced him. With the divorce settlement she started her gift shop in Peking and joined Mildred in her Paomachang cottage. They had lived together thus for some years, just two of the foreigners who had abandoned their previous lifestyles and taken up permanent residence in Peking. Among these were retired military personnel, authors, artists, widows, and "remittance men," who found they could live the life of Riley on very modest incomes. There were also those who, like Allan Henning, had started working for foreign firms and then branched out on their own after learning the business.

The cost of living in China encouraged this practice. For instance, we bought the Paomachang property for five hundred pounds sterling. Since as foreigners we were not allowed to own land in China, we had to do the transaction through Bertram's trusted secretary, Chow Yin-ti. He, in effect, owned it on paper and gave Bertram a covering letter saying he didn't! At the time of the purchase, the British pound was valued at $16 FRB (Federal Reserve Bank, the equivalent of the U.S. dollar); thus we paid Louey Hsien-sen $8,000 FRB. Bertram's salary at that time was approximately $1,700 FRB a month. The wages of the servants (all seven of them) came to $200 FRB monthly. Of course, they supplemented their monthly stipends with squeeze, which we didn't see but knew affected our monthly bills, though quite painlessly, I might add. When we lived in Ta Po Ke Shih, our monthly rent for the courtyard house was $17 FRB, which Bertram paid into the local court because the owner, a Mr. Chan, had fled to Singapore to escape something or other. It seems unbelievable that prices could have been so low in those days.

But back to the planting! As we watched the gardener carefully setting the young tree into the new ground, I wondered if we too would ever take root in China. I know that Bertram had looked at that possibility when he purchased the Paomachang house. We all put a handful of soil around the roots of the sapling, and Hilary sprinkled it with water from her very own toy watering can. Beryl, too young for active participation, just gurgled as she lay in Wang Nai-nai's comforting and protective arms. The planting over, we went indoors for the special lunch Cook Wang had prepared. All our old servants had followed us from the city. I had feared we would lose some of them, but they were happy to stay with us and, I think, to be farther away from Japanese dominance.

I was breast-feeding Beryl, but this time because of the city gates being closed at night we weren't able to go to any late dinner parties. Unlike the mad scramble I had had for Hilary's night feeding when we went out for dinner, Beryl was fed in a quiet, leisurely atmosphere. In

fact, our whole lifestyle changed. We found it so much quieter out in the country, with fresher, cleaner air (although we did have to get used to the strong smell of manure now and then). We did not have the hutung vendors calling out their wares and services nor the Toc-Toc man "guarding" us at night, but we did have the daytime cackling of chickens (fifteen of our own), the early crowing of the old cock, and of course persistent old Bottle Bird was always around. The most beautiful bird to visit our garden was the golden oriole. Angus, a ruthless bird chaser, caught and killed one. I was furious but, as Bertram pointed out, he was merely protecting his own territory.

We did have rabbits—white angora rabbits a pedlar brought around one day. At Hilary's pleading, we bought a pair, unfortunately not of the same sex. In no time at all we had mummy and daddy and six adorable babies. These grew to maturity very quickly, it seemed, and they in turn multiplied. Soon this increased rabbit population began to take complete control of our property. Something had to be done. Cook Wang had a solution, but that I absolutely forbade, remembering as I did what rabbit stew had done to me in my teen-aged years in England. Elsie Henning had the real solution. First catch the little creatures (easier said than done), then examine them and separate the sexes. Keep two males and give the rest to Gladys Finlayson to house and feed for their angora wool. Gladys was a weaver and also employed Chinese girls from the Pei Tung Convent to weave and knit for her. They turned out angora sweaters, scarves, and hats to be sold at the Craft and Hobby Shop. Elsie's wonderful idea worked splendidly. Hilary still had two male rabbits to chase around the garden and Gladys a lucrative addition to her angora business. Another crisis over!

If we thought we were home free we had to think again. The next vendor of livestock came jogging up the road with a covered basket at each end of his shoulder pole. The baskets contained squealing piglets. Hilary was first on the scene, followed by some of the servants. Her cries of joy had me quickly in their wake. What now? "Mummy, Mummy," she called. "See. Three little pigs. Just like my story—you know, when the big bad wolf says, 'I'll huff, and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down!"' Great Scott! Another of her animal stories had come to life! A little warning voice inside my head said, "Beware of reading her Kipling's Jungle Book."

"Please, Mummy, can I have them?"

"No," I said firmly. "They'll grow into big, fat, ugly pigs, and you wouldn't like that."

"But Mummy, please. I don't want the wolf to get them." Great heavens, the child thought she was saving them from the wicked wolf. The only wolf I could see was the smirking, eager vendor!

By this time the servants were getting into the act. Cook Wang's eyes gleamed as he said, "Velly good for roasting," and Hilary yelled, "No!" Wang Nai-nai, with Beryl in her arms, was on my side. She said, "Missy Hirry, piggles makee too muchee trouble." Hsu said nothing but shook his head both ways; was it a possible yes or a probably no? Gardener Mah was on Hilary's side. He said, "Not too muchee trouble. Mah fix piggy house in dung'ze." A dung'ze was a deep pit higher at the back than the front in which Chinese cabbages were stored for winter use; they were covered with heavy bamboo "blankets." I suppose he had in mind to block off half the space for those confounded pigs. I still hoped to be victorious, but that crafty vendor set down the baskets on the ground and in no time flat the piglets escaped and scattered in every direction.

"There," said triumphant Hilary, "they are ours," as indeed they were after Hsu negotiated the bargain price of two dollars local money for each one. The vendor wanted three dollars for the male, but Hsu cut him short by saying the male would need more feeding. I suppose this was logical since he had to service two females. I was not happy with the situation but had to concede defeat. It took some time to round up those squealing beasts, and Mah took them back to his quarters for the night until he could build a "piggy house" next day.

When Bertram returned from the office and heard my story, he said it was hilarious. "No pun intended," he said. "But with Hilary's help we are certainly becoming farmers out here." Those pesky little pigs. Mah treated them like his own kith and kin. When they were very small and could be kept in the dung'ze, all was well. It was not too long, however, before they grew strong enough to scramble over the lower edge of the pit. Then all hell broke loose. They were very destructive and managed to dig up a promising young grapevine that grew on the east wall.

The vegetable plot was beyond that wall—quite a large piece of land where the gardener had planted Chinese cabbage, brussels sprouts, potatoes, corn, and onions. He also cultivated lettuce, radishes, spring onions, and tomatoes for our salad days. Behind the dung'ze at the north end was the chicken run and coop. There was a forlorn-looking tree at the other end that as far as I can recall was called Shih jin shou. I thought the ugly thing should be removed. Mah was horrified. "No, no, Missy," he said, "it b'long very special tree." Later I discovered why. In the spring it brought forth large green buds that reminded me of the horse-chestnut buds in England. Before they fully opened, Mah would go out with a long pruning-pole and clip off most of this new growth. It was a great delicacy when fried in oil and had a delicious meaty taste with a garlic flavour. Mah would take this produce into the city, where it fetched an exorbitant price per catty (about 1 1/3 pounds) from

wealthy gourmets. I told Mah that he could keep this cumshaw as long as he supplied us occasionally with some of the delicacy. Thus we all saved face.

One of the pigs died during the heat of the summer. Mah said it was sunstroke. I had my doubts, but it made a good story. One of Bertram's friends, Phil Cobb, a Tientsin-weekender at Paomachang, being quite a wag sent us a couple of child-size pith-helmets for the remaining two pigs when he heard the story! I hoped the other two pigs would learn to behave, but they never did. In fact, each successive escape took them farther afield and would mean the exodus of all the male servants (except Cook, who was too fat to run anyway) in hot pursuit, particularly when those porkers headed for the Princesses' Tombs on the other side of the main thoroughfare. I had rather hoped that with care, captivity, and feeding we would have a nice Christmas ham or at least an acceptable pork roast. Not all the feeding in the world could compensate for the miles they had run in their short lives. When Mah had them butchered just before Christmas, the largest leg weighed only seven and a half pounds! Our pig-raising experience was not a total loss, however. I taught Cook how to make very good English-style sausages from my grandmother

Brownlee's recipe. We also had pork to spare for the servants' special feasts.

Life was busy and exciting in the Chinese countryside. We practically lived off the land and the chickens. We had more eggs than we could use in the spring and preserved the surplus in isinglass for winter use. One Yu Ji hen became a pet of Hilary's, probably because she was lame and older than the others. Her name was Henrietta, and she gave us enormous eggs—almost always double-yolkers. Then she suddenly stopped laying and started attacking the other hens. Mah said she should be put down or soon we would have no birds left, she was so vicious. He killed her and handed her over to Cook Wang. When the cook opened her up, she was full of undeveloped eggs. I fear we'd killed her too soon.

As the crops of millet and kaoliang ripened, a young boy would spend days on end sitting in a blind in the middle of the adjoining field, beating on a metal drum to scare off the flocks of little rice birds that attacked the promising harvest. Rice birds were another Chinese delicacy. When cleaned and cooked, each tiny bird would be a mere mouthful. Cook Wang served them on skewers interspersed with crunchy water chestnuts.

On summer evenings Bertram and I would enjoy our pre- dinner drinks sitting in the tingah and watching the glory of the setting sun as it slipped behind the Western Hills. On clear nights the open sky would shimmer with starry constellations different from those seen in our native land. The moon seemed to have a special brilliance in that pollution-free country air. The winter rains, however, were no less severe, but at least the soft earth absorbed the water and we had no flooded courtyard to negotiate. As there were no shops nearer than Peking, my shopping was limited to special trips to the city or when I went to a women's luncheon at the club. Sometimes Elsie and I would go in by train on the line from Tientsin for a quick shopping spree. The small station was only about two miles away, a pleasant country walk on a nice day. After shopping we would meet our respective husbands and return by car.

I still had to have regular post-natal examinations at the PUMC. On one of these visits the doctor told me that corrective surgery was necessary; the first birth had caused much damage, and it was a miracle that I had carried my second child to full term. He also told me it would be unwise, possibly fatal, to have any more children and suggested I should have a tubal ligation— to have my tubes tied! This could not be done until Beryl was weaned and put on to KLIM, which gave me a few more months' respite.

When the dreaded day arrived and Bertram drove me to the PUMC, I was terrified. Elsie Henning came in with us and tried her best to put me at ease. "You know, Hilda," she said sagely, "this is necessary, but it is not life threatening. You'll be back in no time. Meanwhile you know I will keep an eye on Hilary and Beryl once I penetrate Wang Nai-nai's protective armour." These were comforting words, but as each bumpy mile slipped by and we approached the city, I felt more and more apprehensive. Even the sight of two smiling American doctors who greeted me at the hospital did nothing to allay my fears.

The operation was scheduled for the following day. Bertram and I had been asked if the process could be filmed for the benefit of future doctors. Also, would I object to an audience of Chinese student-doctors? It was the first time that a tubal ligation from the vaginal area had ever been performed at the PUMC. I readily agreed to their request, for after all, no one present would ever recognize me in that film—not from that end of me, anyway! Here was I, a frustrated film actress, getting my first big chance! What a giggle, I thought, as I slipped into unconsciousness and was wheeled into the operating theatre.

Everything worked perfectly, said the beaming doctors as they leaned over me in the recovery room. The hospital care I received during the eight days I had to remain in hospital was exemplary. But to my chagrin, I heard that many of the American doctors and hospital personnel were to leave China on the SS Gripsholm, a Swedish evacuation ship. Had I not been in hospital and quite unable to be moved the children and I too could have left China on that ship. Such is fate. But I was thankful to be able to return to Paomachang to my

husband and children in a healthy state. It was wonderful to be home again.

Six weeks later, however, I had to return to the PUMC to have a vaginal insufflations with dye to check for "lack of potency"—in other words to make sure that there were no leaks and the tubes were tightly sealed. We were late arriving at the hospital and my turn had been taken by a young Chinese lady who, I was told later, was the wife of a high-ranking local official. We waited for some time before a doctor came, but instead of inviting me to accompany him, he took Bertram aside and spoke to him. I couldn't hear what passed between them, but when my husband returned, he looked pale and strained. To me he merely said, "It cannot be done today. Let's go home."

On our way he told me what had happened as related by the doctor. The lovely young Chinese lady who had gone ahead of me had died tragically on the operating table. She had been attached to some electrical equipment when that confounded Peking power failure happened and the supply of electricity went down to near zero. Suddenly it shot up again, and this sudden surge of power caused her death. Had I not been late, that probably could have been my fate! I was shaken by this story, and I decided that I would not return for the tubal insufflation check. We would take our chances and trust to luck against another pregnancy. Fortunately, those American doctors had done an excellent job and I was safe from further child-bearing

Shortly after my operation the British garrison in Peking was closed down. Many British residents and other foreign nationals mingled with thousands of Chinese, lining the pavement as the regiment, headed by a smart military band, marched to the station. I had come in from Paomachang with Elsie Henning, and I shed a tear when I saw the Union Jack being carried through the streets of Peking for the last time. It was said that the services of the regiment were needed elsewhere in the war that was raging against Hitler. As those smart young soldiers filed past me I felt a twinge of fear for their future. I also got a good look at them and wondered which one (if he had been available) might have been my blood donor on that Chinese New Year's Eve of Beryl's birth!

Among those who left was our friend Lieutenant George Axworthy, whom we were to meet again in Hong Kong after the war (he was by then Colonel Axworthy). We had spent many happy hours in Peking with George and his wife, Lucy. Many foreign civilians were also leaving Peking about this time because of the intolerable business conditions. As shipping was being used for warfare, imports and exports were restricted. Virtually nothing was coming from Europe. Limited supplies of foreign goods—mostly foodstuffs—did arrive from Canada and the United States. A great many items, however, were coming in from Japan. We could not help noticing that families of the Japanese military in control of Peking were among the imports from that country!

The Japanese occupation was not the only thorn in our flesh. Warlords were in a constant struggle against each other for the control of the whole country. Chiang Kai-shek was in line for the top job, but the Communists were also gaining strength and led by Mao Tse-tung were making progress toward the northern provinces.

Foreign embassies were still functioning but saw little hope of their nationals earning a living in Japanese-occupied territory. The British Ambassador had urged men to send their women and children away—not to the U.K., which was being starved out of existence, but preferably to Canada or Australia. This was before Pearl Harbor in December 1941. By then it was too late. Those nationals of countries united against Hitler and his new ally, Japan, were immediately placed under house arrest. This, of course, included U.S. nationals.

We continued our peaceful country existence, and the children grew strong and healthy. Beryl loved her KLIM and became a pretty, happy, and contented child, while sturdy young Hilary began to feel her independence. She now regarded Wang

Nai-nai as Beryl's baby amah and began to resent her old nurse's protective care. One thing she did learn from Wang Nai-nai was how to speak Mandarin. By the time she was five years old she had a fair command of the language, and she would often act as my interpreter when I was dealing with some of the servants.

Hillary on her fifth birthday with Wang Nai-nai, who holds Beryl, aged one. Paomachang, 1941

Hillary on her fifth birthday with Wang Nai-nai, who holds Beryl, aged one. Paomachang, 1941

CHAPTER TEN

From House Arrest to Internment

While we were living in comparative security and comfort, our hearts went out to the victims of Hitler in Europe. What could we do in far-off Peking to help the war effort? Knitting socks, scarves, and balaclavas was out; transportation would be a problem. Besides, many of the local society ladies were not knitters. Though they were willing to be taught, by that time the war might be over! What did the local Allies have to give? Money! Yes, but how to get it painlessly, and for what special purpose?

When asked later what I did for the war effort, I shamelessly replied, "Played bridge and mahjong for weeks on end." I was not being facetious; that was the truth. I organized the Peking Friday Club, where groups of ladies held bridge and mahjong parties every Friday afternoon. We paid five dollars to play, so that a table of four brought in twenty dollars. We also asked that all winnings be donated to the cause. The money would be remitted by Bertram to Cook's head office in London. They in turn would contact the Red Cross and inform them that the funds were to be used for "comfort parcels" for Allied troops fighting at the front. In our case, we particularly favoured Polish soldiers, many of whom had lost their families in the dreadful Nazi carnage inflicted on their country.

It was amazing how quickly the Friday Club idea caught on. We even invited men players to participate, but it was mainly supported by women. Donations from those sympathizers unable to play were not infrequent. I held parties at Paomachang, as did Elsie Henning on alternate Fridays. Virginia had an enthusiastic group in her home in Ta Po Ke Shih. Other hostesses held parties in Peking. I would set up two tables for mahjong in one room and three for bridge in another, for mahjong can be a noisy game and upsetting to dedicated bridge players. We raised hundreds of pounds sterling and received many grateful letters from the recipients. I am sorry to say that these, like many other treasured souvenirs, were lost during our internment.

One of our Eurasian friends, Neville McBain, born of a Scottish father and a Chinese mother, gave a special all-day party for the ladies of the club. We started our games at 11 a.m., stopped for a buffet lunch, then continued playing until our husbands joined us after office hours for early evening cocktails. It was summer and the city gates did not close until 9 p.m., making it possible for us to return to Paomachang. It was a well-remembered party, for Neville had received a copy of "There'll Always Be an England" from friends in the old country. The guests sat me at the piano and with great, lusty, predominantly English voices burst forth with all the enthusiasm of a Welsh choir — not, perhaps, as musical, but nevertheless just as heart-warming. It was just such an occasion as this that helped lessen our frustration at not being able to help those brave men and women in their life-and-death struggle against Hitler.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor completely changed our lives. We now became the enemies and captives of the Japanese because we were residing in Japanese Occupied Territory! It really did not make sense to me, but it became real enough when we and hundreds of other foreigners were placed under house arrest. Indians, Britons, Americans, Canadians, French, Russians, and Greeks among others were affected. At first, chaos reigned. Those of us who lived in Paomachang had to stay there. To get into the city, special permits would be needed. All foreign banks and firms were closed down or taken over by the Japanese. All our money was frozen until eventually we were allowed "comfort money" through our overseas firms. I do not know how much comfort they thought we would get on the pittance that was allowed. It was obvious that we couldn't pay half the servants' wages, but none wanted to leave. "Maskee," they said, "maskee...pay by 'n' by." I suppose they thought the situation would not last, but it did. For fifteen struggling months it lasted.

Our car was seized. We would not need a car for the short distance we could travel outside our own property, and fortunately we had bought "his and hers" bicycles some months previously for the purpose of getting some much-needed exercise and to save gasoline, which was very scarce. On our bikes we could visit other foreigners who dwelt nearby. It was a very convenient form of transportation along sunken roads on windy days. We had special seats fitted on the back carriers and would sometimes take Hilary—and Beryl, when she was old enough— out for short rides. The Japanese allowed us to keep the bicycles.

How to keep family, servants, and pets alive with no purchasing power was the problem we had to face. It was now that our German-Jewish friends came to our aid. The first thing they did was to rush out to Paomachang before the Japanese got there to take an inventory of our possessions. Poni, having a Swastika flag

flying on her chauffeur-driven car, had no trouble leaving and re-entering Peking. Neither Poni nor Friedl had ever admitted to being Jewish, and we had been sworn to secrecy. Poni told me to give her all my jewellery for safekeeping; I kept only the Longines watch that had been given to me when I left Vermont. Friedl took some of Bertram's antiques including his Imperial Palace clock and some ivory figurines that he treasured. They told us to hide as much as possible before the arrival of the Japanese inventory officers. At present they were very busy in the city investigating, and in some cases rounding up, all the Allied nationals and taking stock of their possessions. But where could we hide anything safely?

It was Louey Hsien-sen who solved the problem, and I must say it was at great risk to himself. He told our trusted No. 1 Boy, Hsu, to hand what treasures we wanted to save over the back wall in the dead of night. This we did, and while we were interned he hid some of our antique rugs, the guest book, the embroidered picture from Princess Shou Chan, baby christening gowns and tiny embroidered bootees, our 8mm movie camera, table linen, photograph albums—all stored in a couple of camphorwood chests and cunningly concealed. There they remained for nearly three years while we were interned in Weihsien. The embroidered picture has a slight mildew stain in one corner; otherwise, everything survived in good condition.

Thank heaven Poni and Friedl rushed out to our aid when they did, for two days later we were subjected to a day-long house search by Japanese "inventory" officers. By some strange Chinese telepathy-telegraph system, our Chinese servants knew exactly when they were coming. Indeed, they actually told us when they had left the city gates! Thus we were prepared well in advance for their arrival.

Eight of them arrived in two cars. Two remained on guard outside the house and the others, working in pairs, searched inside the premises. They were arrogant and proud, very smartly turned out, and, I must admit, quite courteous. The first thing they did was to seal the radio (which we called wireless in those days) by pasting a flimsy strip of rice paper over the tuning knob. Was that it? Indeed it was, along with a stern warning that on no condition were we to remove it or ever attempt to use the radio. To disobey would lead to dire consequences! I was amazed at how well this officer spoke English. Oh yes, he knew England well, for he had been to school and university there.

They listed everything in the house and even searched the servants' quarters. While they were doing this Louey Hsien-sen's three camels arrived with a load of coal, and the two officers on guard outside the house watched the unloading process. Hilary, too, enjoyed watching the arrival of the coal-camels as they sank to their knees with their particularly ugly grunt as they dragged their hindquarters under them and settled down in front of the coal shed, happy to be relieved of the heavy baskets of coal they carried on each side. We joined Hilary for a brief moment as Coolie Guo and the gardener unloaded and stacked the coal away under the watchful eyes of one of the Japanese guards. Surely he wasn't counting every lump of coal as it was dumped?

Inside the house, the inventory-takers were hard at work and conversing in their own language. They made no objection to our being present; in fact, they seemed to expect it. Our Monnington upright piano seemed to intrigue one of them as he lifted the lid to look inside; he probably thought we might be hiding something there. When they came to our modest collection of books (it could hardly be called a library), they paid special attention, examining every volume in the bookcase. In some cases they wrote down the titles, and in every case they carefully thumbed through the pages. Looking for what? thought I. Certainly not pressed flowers. Much later we learned they were searching for gold and silver bars. Wealthy Chinese in Shanghai had been found to have cut out a recess in the middle of a thick book and slipped in a bar of silver or gold. After the war we had proof of this when Bertram's predecessor, John Henry Green, then in Shanghai, gave him a set of the 1910 Encgclopaedia Britannica with two of the volumes punctured by the swords of Japanese soldiers when they searched Mr. Green's office. They told him they were looking for gold or silver bars in the centres of books. I am thankful they didn't do further damage to the set, for it is still with me in its not too badly damaged condition.

Poor Mr. Green! He survived internment in Lunghua Camp in Shanghai, but his health was broken and he had to retire from service in the Far East. He died in England a few years later.

As the day and the search wore on we tried to follow our usual routine. The children had to be fed, and when we settled down to our lunch, the Japanese went off to the servants' quarters, where they were given tea and food. Back they came to their task, and I could not help but admire their efficiency as they went through desk drawers, clothes cupboards, dining room cabinets, counting and recording every wine glass and tumbler. Cutlery was also counted and added to the list. From room to room they progressed. Even children's toys came under scrutiny. One officer squeezed Beryl's teddy bear and it made a funny squeak. Was he, perhaps, expecting to find something of value in its belly?

When they reached the storeroom, which had originally been a dressing room, they were surprised to find sacks of flour, millet, and rice as well as containers of sugar, tea, and KUM. Wines were also stored there. Everything was carefully noted down. We explained that

living so far away from city shops we had to keep a good supply of food on hand (we did not tell them that in lieu of part of their wages we paid the servants in flour, millet, and rice). They accepted our explanation and made no further comment.

At last it was over, and they warned us that nothing was to be removed. There would be further visits to see that their instructions had been carried out. They were anxious to get back to the city before sundown and to the safety of their own quarters. No Japanese were ever seen parading the streets after dark. After they left I felt drained and depressed and a little apprehensive. What did this all mean? What was it leading to? Poni and Friedl had told us that rumours were circulating in the city about all foreigners being herded together in an internment camp, but where or when had not been established. If it did happen it would mean that all our possessions would fall into Japanese hands. At least, making this detailed inventory would certainly deter looting by the Chinese. With all foreigners' goods and chattels so carefully catalogued it would mean death to any looters caught with the spoils.

After the children were safely asleep in their rooms and the servants dismissed for the night, Bertram, daredevil as always, calmly lifted the bottom of the flimsy rice-paper seal over the tuning knob of the radio and tuned in to London! We were told not to remove the seal, and he hadn't. It was still attached at the top. He had also made a small jar of flour-and-water paste for reattaching the paper. I couldn't believe my eyes. How dared he? Hadn't we been told not to listen to the radio? "Fiddlesticks," said he, "I must have missed that part of their orders!" I could only hope and fervently pray he wouldn't be caught out. And he never was. We knew the Japanese would not venture outside the city gates at night. In any case, when they did pay their "visits," we were always alerted by the servants well ahead of their arrival, and the radio looked just as it had when they first sealed it. We were very careful not to use it when the children or servants were around so that they could not be accused of collaboration if we were caught. When, after the war, I heard that a bank manager and four British taipans were beheaded in Stanley Internment Camp in Hong Kong for listening to a smuggled-in radio, I felt faint and sick. It might have been us!

The most practical thing we did was to follow the example of the Japanese and make a complete and detailed inventory of all the possessions they had inventoried. But Bertram went a step farther and after each item added its estimated value at the rate of exchange on the date of making the inventory. This proved to have been a clever move, for he then put the list into the hands of Dr. Hoeppli, who was Honorary Swiss Consul acting for the Allied nationals in Peking. (He was the medical doctor who had advised us concerning the dogs' illness.) In Tientsin a Mr. Jorge, also a Swiss Consul, acted on behalf of the foreign nationals—captives, really, since they too were quickly placed under house arrest. They were treated more severely than we were, for their lovely homes were confiscated and they themselves were herded into local hotels. How lucky we were to be in our own home in Paomachang!

The visits of the Japanese were irregular and unpredictable. Sometimes we would not see them for a week. Then they would appear three days in a row for brief visits of an hour or so. All the foreigners living in Paomachang were subjected to this treatment. Our servants, at Bertram's insistence, were always Courteous and subservient to the visitors and were told to offer them refreshments. These were refused more often than not (Perhaps they thought the food might be offered as a bribe—or that we would try to poison them!) We now knew that internment was only a matter of time, but what we did not know was when and where.

Meanwhile we lucky ones living in the countryside carried on quite a tidy little barter business. The Hales would swap eggs for tomatoes, Elsie Henning would exchange potatoes for apricots, Gladys Finlayson would offer her homespun wool for vegetables, and Charles Peacock, who had a contract with the wine-making monks at the Shala Monastery, would swap a bottle of wine for a boiling fowl or some of our homemade sausage. We all lived within visiting range of each other, and this bartering game added some interest to our lives.

Our stock of flour, millet, and rice was being depleted all too quickly, for as I have mentioned, the servants were paid in part with such staples. How could we raise enough funds to replace these necessities? Poni came up with a bright idea. Why didn't we make and sell some of those excellent sausages that Wang turned out? She suggested that a market for them could be found at the Peking Club, now in the hands of Germans, Japanese, and some Italians. There was also a flourishing German Club in the city, and she knew most of the members. We decided to try.

To get the initial capital, I asked Poni to sell one of my rings. She found a ready buyer for my diamond eternity ring that Bertram had given me after Beryl's birth. The purchaser was Trudi Jorge, wife of the Swiss Consul, on a visit from Tientsin. With money in hand we made Cook Wang and all the servants responsible for the sausage-making operation from pig to marketing. It would have to be a clandestine affair carried out on nights when we knew no Japanese visits would take place. Wang's cousin (another Wang) was Poni's cook. He spoke German and was co-opted into the scheme; he would deliver the goods to the Peking Club and take orders from any other interested purchasers. Our sausages were so popular that we even got orders from Tientsin! Our scheme

worked marvellously and we were able to keep our hands clean.

There was a pig farmer living about three miles away. In the dead of night Wang, Coolie Guo, and Gardener Mah would borrow our bicycles to collect the slaughtered and dressed pig and sneak back under cover of the sunken roads. Then that large kitchen table served as the manufacturing area. All the servants took part. After Cook Wang had prepared the sausage meat, they would sit around the table and hand-stuff the casings—the pig's intestines, thoroughly cleaned and boiled. Bertram and I watched them once. They used funnels and wooden plungers to do the stuffing and then twisted the sausages into the required lengths. Even Wang Nai-nai and Dai Yeh got into the act. It was like a game to them but one that would help to ensure survival. We did well. The profit we made as a result of investing the two hundred dollars from the sale of my ring kept us in staples all during our house arrest.

Days stretched into weeks, and weeks into months as the summer passed away. Gladys Finlayson, who lived about three miles from our house, rode over on her bicycle three days a week to teach reading and numbers to Hilary, who turned five in July. We had a bumper crop of apricots that summer, and Cook Wang did not waste a single one. We had them in pies and desserts; we ate them raw; we bartered them for potatoes; and any surplus was dried and stored for winter use. When the winter rains kept us indoors we organized bridge or mahjong games; the poor old Friday Club had, of course, been finished by Pearl Harbor.

Suddenly we were facing preparations for our first Christmas as captives, but we were determined to celebrate the festive season as normally as possible for the children's sake. Charles Peacock got one of his monk friends to bring in a small pine tree from near his monastery. This monk often visited Charles in his temple-house and spent a couple of days with him, no doubt sampling the wines and spirits he brought for Charles. Somehow wily old Charles seemed to have a never-ending supply of money; he spoke fondly of his Chinese compradore (business manager- agent) whose visits from Tientsin were fairly regular--an easy journey by train. Before his arrest, Charles had had a flourishing import-export business in Tientsin, and he cleaned up a tidy fortune in hogs' bristles. He was a most unprepossessing individual: tall, thin, and going bald. He had a prominent hook nose and small eyes that needed strong eyeglasses. At the time We knew him he was in his late fifties and a dedicated bachelor. What he lacked in looks, however, he made up for by his happy and generous disposition and his love of the good life.

About a week before Christmas, Charles brought the tree over and we set it up in the living room, not too near the open fireplace and well away from the pot-bellied anthracite stove at the other end of the room. I resurrected some old Christmas tree ornaments from previous years, and Gladys supplied coloured and silver papers salvaged from her now defunct hobby shop. With these she taught Hilary how to make dainty little paper chains and silver stars. Beryl, nearly three years old, was too young to make things, but she helped by draping short lengths of the paper chains on the tree's lower branches. It was a wonderful way of getting the children into the Christmas spirit. Unfortunately there were no other children living in Paomachang and so no children's parties.

Neville McBain—happy, rotund Neville, who always reminded me of "Laughing Buddha"—was to be one of our Christmas dinner guests. He said he would bring us a turkey from Tientsin when he returned from a business trip. Although he was Eurasian, he claimed Chinese citizenship and was free to carry on his money-exchange business. He was to disembark at the small Paomachang station, where Charles Peacock would meet him on the afternoon of December 24, and stay with Charles over Christmas. Neville arrived as planned, but no turkey. Things had not turned out as expected. He was mortified. How could he face the Hales without a Christmas bird? Charles had the answer. A farmer living near him kept geese. What could be nicer than a Christmas goose?

A deal was made, and at nine o'clock that night the two slightly inebriated friends arrived at our house, followed by Charles's coolie with a live goose in tow. It was festively decked out Chinese-fashion, with its long neck painted pink and festooned with a white paper frill. I nearly swooned when they ushered this monstrosity into our living room. Thank heaven the children were in bed and Angus safely in Hilary's room, for that goose was not friendly.

"Happy Christmas," said Neville. "Sorry no turkey, but this is our contribution to the Christmas dinner."

"But Neville," I said, "that's tomorrow, and if Cook can deal with this creature in time, it will be as tough as an old boot."

"Not so," said Charles, waving a bottle of Shala brandy. "I have the remedy."

They took the protesting bird into the kitchen and, enlisting help from Cook Wang, the three of them poured the entire contents of the bottle down the goose's long neck. That, asserted Charles, would make it as tender as a spring chicken. The goose, now well and truly drunk, escaped into the living room and flopped around, first on one wing and then on the other with its unsteady legs slithering and collapsing while I sat terrified with my legs curled under me on the settee. At last it collapsed with a drunken leer on its face and was dragged back by Wang into the kitchen.

Christmas Day was bright and sunny, and Santa had somehow managed to leave gaily-coloured parcels around the tree. Neville had bought a few toys in Tientsin; the Kandels and the Burkhardts had sent out parcels the day before because they would not be joining us on Christmas Day. They had to be careful about fraternizing with the enemy! In fact, the only contact we had had with them during the past months was when I got a special permit to take Hilary and Beryl into town to the dentist— Dr. Kandel. We had to go in by train, and the children loved the adventure.

We were to have our meal at midday so that the children could join us, Beryl in her high chair and Hilary perched on a cushion on a dining-room chair. In all we had a party of twelve around the gaily decorated table. Gladys, bless her, had made some handsome Christmas crackers—except that they didn't crack! She had also fashioned some paper hats and a centrepiece of paper poinsettias.

The goose arrived on our largest platter and was placed before Bertram to be carved. To my horror, Cook Wang had decorated it with its own head, encased in a white paper frill! This I had never seen before. I had, at New Year, seen a suckling pig with an orange in its mouth, but here was a goose leering drunkenly.. Thank goodness Bertram had the decoration removed before he started carving. The bird was superbly cooked and wonderfully tender. My, those Chinese cooks knew every trick in the trade!

The Xmas pudding was lacking raisins and currants, but Wang had substituted chopped apricots, prunes, and kumquats, and with the whole well laced with local brandy and sherry, the desired effect was achieved. We had a custard trifle for the children.

So that was our captive Christmas dinner, and the last one we would have for some years.

The new year, 1943, was not ushered in with any celebration on our part. We still listened in to the BBC news from London, and what we heard about our allies' life-and-death struggle against Hitler was very depressing. By now, too, we knew for a certainty that interment was imminent. From news via the Chinese grapevine we heard it would happen in about two months. The exact location was not yet known; rumour had it that we might be sent to Japan or Manchuria. As it turned out, neither of these was correct.

Since our house arrest had begun more than a year earlier, we had received no news of Bertram's parents in England. They lived only twenty-six miles from London, and the devastation of that proud city was beyond belief. I felt almost guilty to be living in the peace and quiet of the Chinese countryside. What little irritations we suffered at the hands of our captors were absolutely nothing compared to the constant, merciless bombing raids inflicted on the civilian population of Great Britain. When I looked back to my childhood days in Yorkshire in the First World War, that shelling of Hartlepool was like skeet-shooting compared to what was happening in England now, when death positively rained from the sky.

We had not heard from my parents in Canada, but they at least were safe from Hitler's air raids. I wondered whether my father was doing "his bit" in his field of aviation. I was to learn after the war that indeed he was. He was too old for active military service, but he joined the RCAF as a training instructor for young aero-engineers who were sent out from England. I believe it was in Trenton, Ontario, that they received their instruction in safety. Then they returned to England to service planes of the RAF. My father ended his career as a Wing Commander, RCAF, before his enforced retirement because of age.

About mid-January, Bertram, far-seeing and wise as ever, said it would be a good idea for us all to get dental check-ups. For these we had to get special permits to go to Dr. Kandel's dental practice in the city. Bertram went first and needed nothing more than a cleaning. When my permit arrived I took the children in by train. They loved going to the dentist, for in their tediously restricted young lives the short train ride was a real adventure. once inside the city walls a new world opened for our two little girls. They would see lots and lots of people and have a rickshaw ride from the station, sitting together in one rickshaw while I would follow in another. On the short ride to Dr. Kandel's they would see Japanese soldiers patrolling the streets and Japanese housewives in their colourful kimonos shuffling along with the characteristic short steps and bowing to friends they would meet. There were new noises: the sidewalk peddlers extolling their wares and rickshaw pullers shouting for a clear passage. The city smelled different, too, with food vendors toting their portable kitchens and with tantalizing aromas from the open-fronted eating houses.

Hilary was always delighted to see "Uncle" Leo, whom she remembered from our days at Ta Po Ke Shih, but Beryl was too young to have those memories. She had met him only on the rare occasions when we had been in the city since our house arrest. His examination of the children's teeth did not take long, and he found them in very good condition. After giving them a brief lesson in how to brush their teeth properly he gave each of them two child-size toothbrushes and two tubes of toothpaste. He knew what the future held for us and that such things would not be available in an internment camp. I needed one small filling, and he also insisted on giving me toothpaste and toothbrushes. He absolutely refused payment, saying that his bill would offset what he owed me for giving him lessons in English. As he had a Japanese receptionist—"by invitation"—our conversation

was brief and limited before our departure. But as he kissed the children goodbye and held my hand in farewell, there were tears in his sad blue eyes.

By Beryl's birthday on February 7, 1943, we still had not received any news about internment. In honour of young Missy's birthday, Cook Wang had made a cake decorated with four candles. As she was born in 1940, it was obvious she was only three, but according to Chinese reckoning she was four because at birth she was already a year old. I had faced this problem with Hilary's birthdays and knew it was no use protesting. To correct would be to offend, so I just told the children the extra candle was for good luck in China. With no other children living nearby, her party had only adult guests. Gladys Finlayson had knit gloves for both children to match the beige (dyed) rabbit fur coats and matching hats Mr. Lui had made them before we left Ta Po Ke Shih. He had made a three-year-old and a six-year-old size for them to grow into. Beryl was still a bit too small for hers and Hilary had room to spare in hers, for the coats were on the generous side. How thankful I was that this was so, for they were a godsend on those bitterly cold winter days in internment.

When THE letter arrived, dated March 12, 1943, although not unexpected it was still a shock. Yet shock was tempered with a certain sense of relief. At last we knew. Being the pack-rat that I am, I still have that bulky document of sixteen pages. It is printed on heavy greyish paper; the first six pages are devoted to instructions and the rest are forms: one for the registration of books and the remainder applications for the sale by auction of household furniture and furnishings. The front page, stamped on the right-hand side with the official seal of the Consulate of Japan, Peking, reads as follows:

March 12 1943 Notice

You are hereby notified that for reasons of military necessity the Japanese authorities have decided to transfer all enemy nationals residing in Peking to the Civilian Assembly Centre at Weihsien, Shantung.

Accordingly you (and members of your family) are requested to make all necessary preparations in conformance with the following:

A. Assembly

1. Place of assembly—Former American Embassy Compound

2. Date and time—March 24th 1943 at 1.00 o'clock p.m.

3. Each individual is requested to bring his own supper.

B. Articles which may be taken to the Civilian Assembly Centre

1. Beds and bedding

2. Clothing

3. Articles of daily necessity and personal effects, excluding cameras, field glasses, microscopes, radios, maps or charts

4. Articles for sport and amusement, several books, garden implements and stocked provisions if desired.

5. Tableware (knives, forks, spoons, dishes, table-linen and the like).

6. For every hundred persons, one typewriter, sewing machine, phonograph and card table will be allowed.

The notice then went on to say that each individual could be permitted to take only as much as he himself could carry. The North China Transportation Company would pick up beds and bedding for transportation to the centre. We would be allowed one trunk each. The next four pages gave instructions for the disposal of property to be left behind and stated that a tag should be placed on each article to be sold by auction.

Well, when we read A and B, we felt quite light-headed. It was almost like perusing a travel brochure for a holiday resort. We heard of one fellow who took "articles for sport" quite seriously and actually brought along his golf clubs! The long preamble about putting tags on furniture for sale by auction Bertram decided to ignore.

We noticed that never in the document were we ordered to do anything but very politely requested and permitted. We also realized that there was a great deal that was not said about our future destination. We found later, for instance, that under the extremely primitive living conditions we faced, the inclusion of table-linen and cutlery (other than spoons) among the permitted effects was the laugh of the century. We were not told how long the journey to Weihsien would be nor what we would find when We got there.

I shall always remember that spring morning in our Paomachang house before we were rounded up. We had spent the night on spare mattresses on the floor, as our regular beds had been sent on to the Assembly Centre. When the Japanese guards arrived about noon to escort us into Peking for our 1 p.m. date at the U.S. Embassy Compound, they were accompanied by an officious young consul from the Japanese Consulate. We were ready for them with as much hand baggage as we could carry. Each of the children had a small backpack with food and water, toothbrushes, and face cloth. Beryl had a small teddy bear and Hilary a book. In my luggage, wise Wang Nai-nai had put a small toilet chamber and in Bertram's a larger pot. She knew what children needed on a long journey. We wore our warmest outdoor clothes: the children their little rabbit-fur outfits, I my lily -leopard fur coat, and Bertram a camel-hair coat.

The young consul took charge. He spoke good English

and was fluent in Chinese. He ordered the servants to extinguish all fires and to make sure all windows and doors were secure after we left. He looked around at our furniture and was dismayed to find nothing had been tagged for sale. When he asked Bertram why this request had not been carried out, my husband politely and calmly told him that he did not want to sell our belongings.

"But it was requested," insisted the young consul.

"Well, it's too late now," retorted Bertram. "As far as I am concerned, you can do what you like with the furniture. I shall not be in a position to stop you."

This, I thought, is getting us off on the wrong foot, and I only hoped they would not cast my husband into jail! The consul and the officer in charge of the guards got into a huddle with pencil and paper and sat down at our dining-room table to work things out. But time stops for no man—not even a Japanese consul—and time was on our side. He realized that there was nothing he could do now and told us to proceed to the car Bertram had ordered for us. Bertram absolutely refused to have us taken in by army truck and had informed the authorities beforehand that he would, at his own expense, be ordering a car. They agreed to this on account of the two young children but said a guard would have to travel with us.

Saying goodbye to our servants had to be very cursory, as we did not want the Japanese to see the friendliness that existed between us. They were very suspicious of any such behaviour, and the servants would suffer as a consequence.

Dear little Angus had already been taken in to the Kandels. We had told the children we were going to a kind of camp nearer to the sea and one day a big ship would come and take us to England. Actually, this was not too far from the truth. The Weihsien Assembly Centre had been so named for this eventuality, and we had been told that future evacuation was a possibility. It was, but not for us; only some of the Americans got away on the Gripsholm evacuation ship after some months in camp.

We arrived on time at the former U.S. Embassy Compound with its now empty buildings. Its green lawn held a motley crowd of about three hundred and mounds of assorted baggage. We were taken to a place designated for British nationals and given armbands and a square of cloth with a number on it that we were told to pin on our chests with the attached safety pin. I fixed Beryl up, and she gazed at this performance in wonderment. Bertram did the same for Hilary, but she of course wanted to know "What for?" and "Why must I wear this?" She was told by her father it was so that she wouldn't get lost in the crowd, for if she did, the numbered armband and chest tag would help us find her. What can you tell a six-year-old who has been tagged like a criminal?

We found all our old Paomachang pals similarly decked out— Gladys Finlayson, Mildred Thornhill, Charles Peacock, and Phil Cobb—but no Hennings. Charles told us they were not going off with this bunch but would join us later in Weihsien. We now had time to take stock of our fellow captives. They were of all ages, from old men to young children. There were nuns and missionaries, doctors from the PUMC, students and teachers from Yenching University, and a particularly noticeable group of tall, bearded and hooded monks from temples in Mongolia. Bertram actually recognized some American world travellers he had dealt with who were caught in Peking by the unexpected attack on Pearl Harbor.

In the distance we saw someone waving to us from the American section. It was Dr. Whittacker from the PUMC. Then another hand was raised in salutation. It was that of Dr. Hamilton Anderson. Both had attended Beryl's birth in the PUMC three years before—that awful memorable Chinese New Year's Eve of 1940! We could not get near them, but it was comforting to know that they would be in camp with us.

Suddenly a Japanese officer shouted through a megaphone that we must now pick up our belongings and in our groups walk to the railway station. We would proceed alphabetically, so the Americans would lead the way. We had been warned not to take more than we could carry, but some had not taken that warning to heart and had to leave some of their precious goods behind. Dear Charles Peacock took Bertram's backpack so that he could carry Beryl piggy-back. Once more the Japanese officer barked through the megaphone and told us to march.

Staggering under our heavy loads, we slowly edged our way out of the compound and on to the main street that led to the station. The Japanese, in order to humiliate us, had lined the street with Chinese. Most were silent as they watched our painfully slow progress; others jeered or laughed as they saw our exit from their city. The station was only a mile away, but it took us an hour to get there. One poor old American of seventy collapsed on the station platform with a heart attack, and his body was unceremoniously whisked away on an army truck. Meanwhile we stood on the platform or squatted on our luggage waiting for the train to take us to Weihsien. At the barrier there were some Chinese pedlars with food and drink, but we were told not to move from the platform and not to contact the Chinese. More than an hour passed, and the afternoon was drawing to a close. The children were tired, thirsty, and hungry, and we still had a four-hundred-mile train journey to face. We gave them some water and biscuits

and told them we'd have a picnic supper on the train. Cook Wang had fixed some cold chicken wings done in tasty Chinese style, and we had various kinds of sandwiches, fruit, and Chinese cookies.

When the train eventually arrived we found ourselves jammed into third-class carriages with dirty windows and filthy floors. There were not enough seats, and by the time the baggage was piled in on top of us it was an intolerable situation. Bags that had been pushed into the overhead racks looked perilously like toppling off, and some had to be stored in the narrow aisles, where most of the men were standing almost cheek by jowl, having given seats to the aged and the women and children.

Bertram and I had seats, with Beryl on my lap and Hilary on his. We had to change trains at Tientsin, and we hoped and prayed for better conditions for the rest of the overnight journey.

At Tientsin we had a short wait on the cold, draughty platform. It was dark by then, and the station was poorly lit, dismal, and depressing. Bertram found a quiet spot for me and the children and told us to stay there and guard our luggage while he went off with other able-bodied men to help the older men and women. Presently two Japanese armed guards approached, stopped in front of us, and one barked out some command in Japanese at me, which of course I did not understand. He kept repeating his order. What in heaven's name did he want? The children clung to me fretfully, and when this bullying soldier hit me on the chest, Beryl began to cry. He pointed to Hilary's identity tag on her chest. I then realized that I had closed my coat over mine and he could not see my number. Stupid me. When Bertram returned to us the two guards swung around on their heels and marched smartly away.

"What did they want?" asked Bertram. I explained what had happened. He was furious but warned me in future to see that our identity tags were clearly visible. Why the Japanese could not have been satisfied with the armband I was wearing I failed to understand. I think his ego had ballooned with his uniform, and he just had to show his authority.

Did we hope for better conditions for the rest of the journey? If anything they were worse and even more crowded, and many poor souls had to stand all night or doss down on the luggage in the aisles. The toilet situation was deplorable: only one toilet, and furthermore it was kept locked and guarded. One poor woman—the principal of the Peking American School—needed desperately to use the toilet shortly after leaving Tientsin. She asked one of the toilet guards to let her in and he barked something at her in Japanese. She did not understand what he said and persisted in her request. He became very angry and gave her a resounding slap across the face, nearly knocking her down. This was too much for the men in our party, and one or two started toward the guard who had hit her. Thank heaven wiser heads prevailed, and an elderly minister calmed the angry men down. Apparently she should have waited until we were clear of the city before asking for the toilet.

All through that dreadful night we travelled off into the unknown. There was no heat in our carriage, and when we asked for some, they put it up so high that we couldn't sit on the slatted wooden seats under which the heat surged like a furnace. We took off our coats and sat on them, which gave us some relief.

When the children fell asleep on our laps it was not possible to stand up, and thus we spent the night, cramped, stiff, and sleepless.

It was morning when we reached Tsinan, where we had to change trains for the last lap of our journey. We were warned that it would be a very short stop and we would have to move quickly to catch the new train. It was obvious that if all of us and our baggage tried to get out at the same time, chaos would reign. Some of the men formed a plan. Women and children and the aged would alight first. The others would open the windows as soon as the train stopped and hurl all the luggage out on to the platform. Then they would disembark, grab all the bags, and run like hell for the Weihsien train on another platform. Chinese porters standing around were not allowed to help, and there they stood, open-mouthed, when they saw the "foreign devils" dashing with baggage to the waiting train. Bertram and I managed to grab our own bags and with the children ran with the crowd. Hilary thought it was great fun, but Beryl needed help. Once in the train we spent a great deal of time sorting out the luggage; but everything was there, and no one was hurt or left behind.

The last stage of the journey was moderately comfortable after what we had been through. That afternoon we arrived at Weihsien station and were met by W.B. Christian—"Billy," a friend of our from Tientsin. He told us that the Tientsin internees had arrived in camp four days before. An army truck would soon arrive to take us the three miles to the camp. Thank heaven we did not have to walk, for my legs were not themselves after the punishment they had suffered on that journey.

The truck took us down the cobbled streets of Weihsien city, then out through the massive gates of the city wall and into the countryside. Except for size, it was not unlike Peking, I thought. After the short rural drive we stopped at the tall iron gates of a compound enclosed by six-foot-high walls. We were deposited here and walked up a slight slope that led to a tree-lined driveway. The gates clanged shut behind us, isolating us from the outside world for the next two years and ten months.

#

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Weihsien Camp

The three hundred tired and hungry refugees from Peking now inside the gates of the mission compound were led to the baseball field on the right of the driveway. There we were counted, inspected, and lectured by the Japanese commandant. He stood on a little low platform and told us in fairly good English that as long as we obeyed the camp rules we would be left to our own devices. We would elect committees to run the camp, and the members in turn would be responsible to the Japanese authorities. At present nothing permanent had been organized as more internees were expected in the next few days. We would be given temporary accommodation for the present. He then introduced Billy Christian, saying he had been appointed our temporary leader and spokesman.

Billy, who was standing by the side of the commandant, then took over. He told us that our beds and heavy baggage had not yet arrived and we would have to rough it for the present. Women and children would be segregated from the men and taken to separate dormitories for the night. After settling in and disposing of our hand-baggage, we would be served hot soup, prepared by volunteers, in Kitchen 1, which we would see on our way on the left of the driveway. Two young Roman Catholic sisters in their black-and-white habits took charge of the women and children while Billy himself led the men off. We were watched by some very scruffy-looking individuals who seemed to have slept in their clothes. We were told they were the early arrivals from Tientsin and Tsingtao who had been in camp for four days. They had indeed slept in their clothes, as we would all too soon do also! Great heavens! Would we look like that in four days' time?

We passed a well-built church on the right of the camp entrance. Across the road was the Japanese guardhouse with an armed sentry on duty. We were led up the driveway on either side of which were rows of small attached rooms, rather like a present-day motel. I noticed that the rows were numbered and wondered how much farther we would have to go, for we were still burdened with our hand-baggage and backpacks. My two suitcases were feeling heavier and heavier with every laboured step. When at last we reached the end of the road there were several buildings across an open space. We were led into one of these and into a large empty room, probably formerly a classroom of this mission compound. At the door was a pile of sleeping mats, and we were each told to take one and find a place to doss down.

I took the children to the far end of the room and found a spot under a dirty window near a door marked "Exit." We arranged our mats on the dusty floor and set our baggage down. What a relief to be free of those heavy bags! Soon the place filled up with other internees, but no other children. We had no idea where our men had been taken, and Beryl was a little fretful when she asked, "Where's Daddy?" I explained that he was with the other men in another room and said we would see him soon.

The noise and confusion as the others settled in soon distracted her. She and her sister emptied their backpacks and "set up house." Beryl arranged her teddy at the end of her mat and Hilary took out her book and did likewise. Like the other inmates they were "claiming territory," I thought. "Where do we sleep?" asked Hilary.

"Right here on our mats," I replied.

"On the floor?" queried Beryl.

"Well, yes. It's a camp, you see," I responded with false cheer.

I was spared further embarrassing questions by the arrival of Bertram who told me that he was housed with the other men in the basement of the same building, which was very cold and the cement floor was damp. They, too, had been issued mats on which to sleep. He told me he had found that the "Gents" was appallingly filthy with the Chinese-style toilets blocked and overflowing. (A Chinese toilet, for the uninitiated, is a hole in the ground in which a porcelain bowl is placed. To perform, one has to straddle and squat. The "night-soil"

is valuable for cultivation, and at the camp it was collected each night by coolies and taken off in those "flower carts" to fertilize the fields.) Apparently nothing had been done to empty the toilets since the camp's first arrivals had come four days earlier, and the bowls were blocked. The stench was nauseating and the footing treacherous.

When I told Bertram the children wanted to go to the “Ladies," he advised me to take their potty, for he could not see them squatting over those filthy holes. He suggested that they use the potty just outside the entrance to the toilet, and then I should empty it into one of the holes. I, of course, would have to squat, and grin and bear it. Ugh! I was suddenly reminded of the birthday party of eighty-year-old Wong Tai-tai and my first introduction to a Chinese toilet (a clean one) and how blessed I had felt that we had a foreign-style lavatory in our courtyard home. Now here I was, back in the Dark Ages, and—dear Lord— for how long?

Toilet business over and potty returned to the dormitory, we now made our way to Kitchen 1 for our first camp supper, armed with cups, spoons, and bowls. On the way we passed piles of discarded and broken furniture that had been indiscriminately hurled from the buildings by previous military occupants, either Chinese or Japanese, since the evacuation of the American missionaries. In every open space we saw broken beds, chairs, desks, and accumulations of pipes and twisted metal. The place looked a shambles, but this rubble later became the scrounging ground for those with the initiative and skill to fashion usable furniture for our bare quarters. Some were able to construct bunk beds for the small camp rooms. Unfortunately, in some cases the wood they had salvaged was infested with bedbugs that continued to breed and breed for the duration.

When we reached Kitchen 1, long queues had already formed at the entrance, with weary bedraggled souls standing silently and patiently with their utensils. They were the early arrivals from Tientsin and Tsingtao, all strangers to me. After a short wait we shuffled into the dining hall. At a serving table two women dished out soup with ladles made from four-ounce tin cans attached to long wooden handles—obviously put together by some of the early arrivals. Thick slices of bread were piled up at the end of the table. At another table were hot water and weak tea but no milk or sugar.

We sat at long wooden tables with attached benches and tried to relish the watery soup and dry bread. We were so hungry that anything that was edible was welcome. The dining hall was lit by naked light bulbs dangling from the ceiling, for by now it was dark. As the place filled up we saw some of our fellow travellers from Peking, all looking as tired and weary as we were. We just smiled and waved at them in the distance. When our meal was finished we again queued up to have our dishes washed by two more volunteers at a table near the exit. It didn't take me long to realize that we would be facing an existence of queues and stews! What a lot of nonsense in the Orders about table-linen and cutlery! The only "cutlery" we needed was a spoon, as we were on "slops" for the duration. Later, when we learned to make peanut butter, a knife would come in handy to spread it on dry bread.

It was bitterly cold now, and how thankful I was that we had brought our warm fur coats. We had to part company when we reached the dormitory. The children gave Daddy a tearful goodnight kiss and he told them to "look after Mummy" and he would see us all in the morning. As he held me in a warm embrace he told me to get settled down as soon as possible, for he had heard that all camp lights were turned off at 10 p.m. We quickly went to bed. We had nothing between the bare boards and our bodies but the bamboo sleeping mats. I stuffed the children's fur hats with some undies and put them under their little heads as makeshift pillows. We slept in our clothes and used our coats as blankets. I had one of my suitcases covered with a towel as my headrest—a bit like a Japanese head-block. The children were so exhausted they soon fell asleep. It took me longer, for somehow I could not get my bones to accept the hard floor. I tried the left side, then the right, and finally ended up on my back, which I knew would cause me to snore. Not that it mattered, for the night was not quiet. Some of the our roommates talked in their sleep, some groaned, and others snored.

When dawn broke I thought most of my bones had, too. I was so stiff I didn't know how to getup until I solved the problem by rolling over on my tummy (that hurt, too) and slowly pressed up to a standing position. I looked down on our two little darlings, still in the Land of Nod, and silently cursed the cruelties of war— but at least we were alive and together.

Slowly and painfully the rest of the internees came to life, saying timid good-mornings to each other. The weather had turned against us, too. A penetrating cold drizzle had replaced the pleasant spring sunshine of yesterday. We had no idea what we had to face today until Billy Christian appeared on the threshold to tell us that breakfast was now ready for us and following that we were to assemble on the ball field.

"In the rain?" asked one woman.

"Unless it stops," quipped the ebullient Billy.

Bertram came to collect us. He also had had a bad night. In addition to the havoc the cold, damp cement basement floor had played with his bones, he had been kept awake most of the night by the squeaks and scurrying of rats. Breakfast was a repeat of supper except that instead of soup we were issued a bowl of bread-

porridge sweetened with saccharine and washed down with hot water or weak tea. I had brought some KLIM from my hand-baggage and stirred it into the children's cups of hot water. Presto! Instant milk. I also added some to their bread-porridge to make it more enticing.

After breakfast, we headed for the ball field. The drizzle continued as we stood awaiting the arrival of the camp commandant. Not until we were all counted and checked would he be sent for by a junior guard. Two male internees were missing. They had actually returned to the kitchen for seconds! While we stood, cold and shivering, they were re-stuffing their fat faces in the warmth of the dining hall. When they did turn up, Christian gave them a severe reprimand and the rest of us joined together in a resounding Boo!

The smart Japanese commandant once more stood on his little platform and told us we would be given other accommodation as our present dormitories had to be evacuated to make room for more people coming in from Tientsin and outlying places. He again turned us over to Billy Christian. Billy in turn introduced Langdon Gilkey, a young theological lecturer from Yenching University who had been asked to handle housing. He had spent most of the night setting up his plans. Families would be put into the nine-by-twelve-foot rooms formerly used by students. Single men and women would be housed in separate dormitories. Starting with families with young children he then read out where we were to go. The Hales' new address was Room 12, Row 14, right up at the end of the driveway. We were told to return to where we had spent the night, collect our belongings, including sleeping mats, and proceed to the room allocated to us. Would we also please leave the premises as clean as possible for the new arrivals.

We picked up our things from the dormitory and with no regrets whatsoever set off in search of our new residence. It was not far away. Crossing the open space we came to Row 15 and Row 14 behind it. A narrow brick path only wide enough for one person at a time led us to Room 12 at the far end. Here the outside wall made a sharp right angle and continued for about another hundred feet where it again right-angled and continued the length of the camp's perimeter. At the corner was a Japanese lookout post standing higher than the six-foot wall and manned by two soldiers with a couple of machine-guns. We were just in time to see the changing of the guard when the two soldiers descended from the post on a sturdy wooden ladder, and after exchanging salutes the two replacements smartly ascended for duty. This little exercise impressed on me that we were indeed imprisoned. The children were very interested and asked what the soldiers were doing. Bertram explained that they were up in their little tower to protect us from any "bad men" outside.

It was raining heavily by now, and we waited no longer to enter our new home. Bertram did not carry me over this threshold. As I stepped into the small room I hummed a little tune:

Be it ever so humble,

There's no place like home.

"What's Mummy singing?" asked Hilary.

"Oh, just a little ditty," replied Bertram.

"What's a ditty?" (This from Beryl. Oh, the questions children ask!)

"Just a kind of old song," he replied, and his reproachful glance told me more eloquently than words to SHUT UP. I did.

The room was bare except for three items. There was a wooden washstand with an enamel bowl decorated to kill with huge, brilliant red roses, but quite the cheeriest sight we'd seen since leaving Peking. At the back stood a small pot-bellied stove — but no fuel. To the right of the door a window looked out on to the open space that separated us from the back of Row 15. Not an inspiring sight at the best of times but one that would certainly not have distracted students from their studies. In the present downpour this open space was becoming a sea of mud. A small window set high up in the back wall gave light but no view of Row 13 behind us.

We sat the children on our suitcases, and Bertram paced the place — literally — putting one foot before the other in measurement. He found that the room was nine feet from front to back and twelve feet wide. I made a quick mental calculation: it was exactly a third the size of our Ta Po Ke Shih living room, which had held three nine-by-twelve-foot Chinese carpets. And this was to be our total living space? This cubicle that formerly housed one student was now to accommodate four human beings? I can tell you that at that point I did not think much of Japanese hospitality.

Bertram was now working out something in his notebook. "There's no possible way we can put our four beds in this place," he said. We had bought the beds from the Spenglers when they left Peking. They were longer and wider than the average bed because the Spenglers were big people. The beds had been specially made and had mattresses of horsehair "to discourage those pestilent Oriental bugs," George had said. The bed frames, beautifully decorated with black lacquer, were made for the springs and mattresses to settle down in Oriental luxury, but we couldn't bring them by order of our Paomachang guards. "Only springs and mattresses for sleeping," they said. In order to keep us off the ground, Bertram had had trestles made on which to rest the beds.

Bertram did further calculations and muttered,

"Absolutely impossible situation. When I subtract the area of beds from the area of floor space, we will be left with exactly two feet, six inches in which to put our four steamer trunks when they arrive." He need not have hurried over his calculations, for the beds did not come until ten days later.

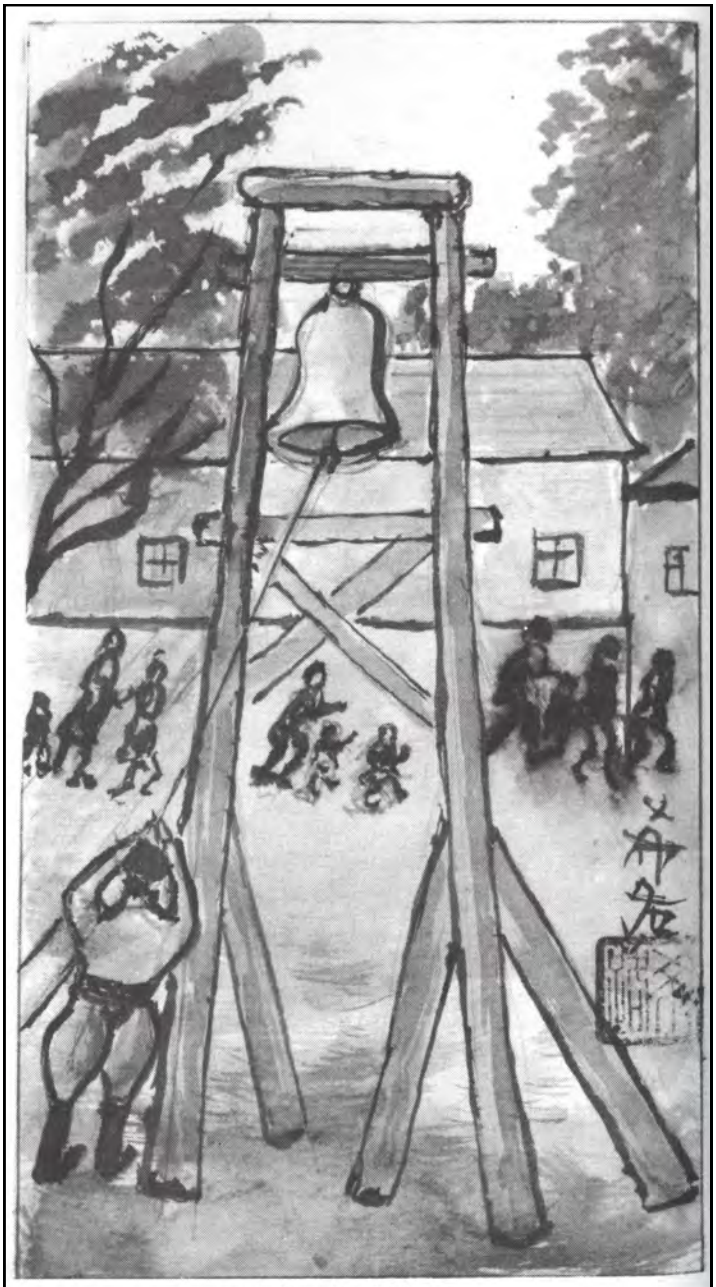
The immediate necessity was to try and make ourselves as comfortable as possible before nightfall. Bertram said he would go off on a scrounging hunt for firewood and anything else that would burn. Just as he was leaving, Langdon Gilkey (Lang, for short) paid us a visit. He was a good ten years younger than I and at twenty-six was the youngest internee committee member besides being very courteous and handsome. He said he was just checking to see if we had found our allotted space and to know if everything was okay. Bertram said we were certainly very cramped but at least thankful to be together as a family unit. Lang said he was sorry about our lack of space but hoped it would improve later on. "At present," he said, "we do not know how many more internees are going to be shipped into this camp. This is what you may regard as temporary-permanent accommodation."

Bertram said he wanted to get the stove going, and Lang offered to direct him to some wood piles and also show him how he could pick up some coke from behind Kitchen 1. The children wanted to go too but were persuaded to remain behind "to look after Mummy." Besides, we pointed out that it was pouring with rain and their fur coats and hats would get soaked. So Bertram emptied one of his suitcases and set off with the young university professor.

Bertram was drenched when he returned with his spoils. Not only did he have a suitcase full of wood for burning but he had also found a battered old bucket, which he'd filled with coke. Talk about manna from heaven! He set the stove but decided not to light it until later in the day so that we would have its warm comfort during the cold damp night. We now had time to examine the contents of our suitcases, which had been packed nearly two days ago. Much of the packing had been left to clever old Wang Nai-nai, who had so wisely included the two chamber pots. In addition to our spoons, cups, and bowls she had packed other camp necessities among our change of underwear. Bertram found a small saucepan in his and I was delighted with the little teakettle I found in mine. Into both of these she had stacked packets of tea, sugar, cocoa, and an instant cereal called Pablum that the children loved. She had not forgotten medications, too— aspirin for us and cough syrup for the children, just in case.

While we were rejoicing in our discoveries the gong went for our midday meal. Off we went in the rain with our eating utensils to stand in a soaking, drenched queue. God bless those early arrival volunteers who worked so hard under deplorable conditions to prepare our food. We were soon to learn that the Japanese responsibility for our welfare ended with the delivery of raw supplies—meat, flour, fish, grain, and vegetables. The rest was up to us. Weihsien was not a prisoner-of-war camp, for we who were interned were rounded up from "puppet" Chinese territory in reality held by the Japanese since 1937. As China still maintained a form of diplomatic relationship with Japan, we came under the jurisdiction of the consular service and civilian diplomatic officials were in charge of us. Indeed, Jorge, the Swiss Consul from Tientsin, paid monthly visits to the camp to hand out our "comfort money." These funds had come from the sale of the worldly goods, homes, and businesses we had had to leave behind. With this money we were able to buy certain luxuries and necessities from the camp shop run by the Japanese. The purchases ranged from dreadful cigarettes, which we named Flying Ducks from the picture on the package, to large tin tubs for laundry. There would be an occasional issue of peanuts, which we turned into peanut butter, and dates, which provided some sugar in our diet. Soap was another necessity in great demand. Adults were actually given a free egg once a month, while young children got a weekly egg issued through the hospital, and if under seven they received a cup of milk daily. We were astounded, at the end of hostilities, to find that Bertram, through his firm, Thos. Cook & Son, had been billed for the children's egg issue, which as a result of the fantastic inflation of the Chinese dollar worked out to three pounds sterling per egg. This, of course, was rightfully contested and eventually adjusted, but still some payment had to be made. "That beats all," I told Bertram. "Fancy having to pay to live in that internment horror!"

Returning to our first days at Weihsien Camp, we were delighted to find a notice posted up at Kitchen 1 saying that the trunks from Peking would be available for pickup the next day. Groups of men should get together to help with the moving. A few hand-carts were available. It was regrettable that the beds had not yet arrived. Looking back, Billy Christian had warned us we would have to rough it for the present, but it looked as if his "present" was extending into the future! We spent another wretched night on the floor, but this time with the heat from the little pot-belly we were comfortably warm. With daybreak we had something to look forward to besides queues and stews. Our trunks were here! Bertram had already got his little work-gang together, and immediately after breakfast they delivered our four trunks to Room 12, Row 14. Placing one trunk against each wall, we had ready-made beds—hard though they might be and small for adults—and something on which to sit.



Roll-call, Weihsien

We spent most of the day setting up our house. With blankets and pillows from our luggage we fixed up the trunks to afford some semblance of comfort. At least we were up from the draughty floor. In the afternoon, Bertram and the children went out coke-scrounging. We found we could boil the little kettle on the top of the stove, and we unearthed a teapot and made a real cup of tea. That such a small act as making our own tea gave us such joy seems incredible today. And to be able to change the clothes we had been wearing constantly since leaving Peking was wonderful. Bertram used his battered bucket to collect water from a nearby pump and set the bucket on the stove top. After it slowly heated up I gave the children sponge baths and then used the water to wash our underwear. The rope from the trunks made a splendid clothesline across the back of the room.

And thus a certain pattern of living was established, but only on a temporary basis. We were still expecting more internees, and until they all arrived nothing permanent could be set up. At the beginning the daily routine was roll-call at 7 a.m., breakfast at 8 a.m., lunch at noon, supper at 6 p.m, all lights out at 10 p.m. Every drop of water had to be pumped and carried back to our room. There were showers for the men and women, but they were not yet working; there was a bakery that also was in need of repair, and our bread was sent in from Tsingtao.

Those first ten days of camp life were quite the hardest we ever experienced in our lives. And there was more to come! one thing that had been done — thank God — was the cleaning of the filthy toilets by those wonderful nuns and monks. Wearing face masks and rubber boots, they spent a whole day cleaning the four men's toilets and the only one allocated for women. Apparently it was expected that there would be a greater number of male internees than women. Not so, as it turned out; it was about a fifty-fifty distribution.

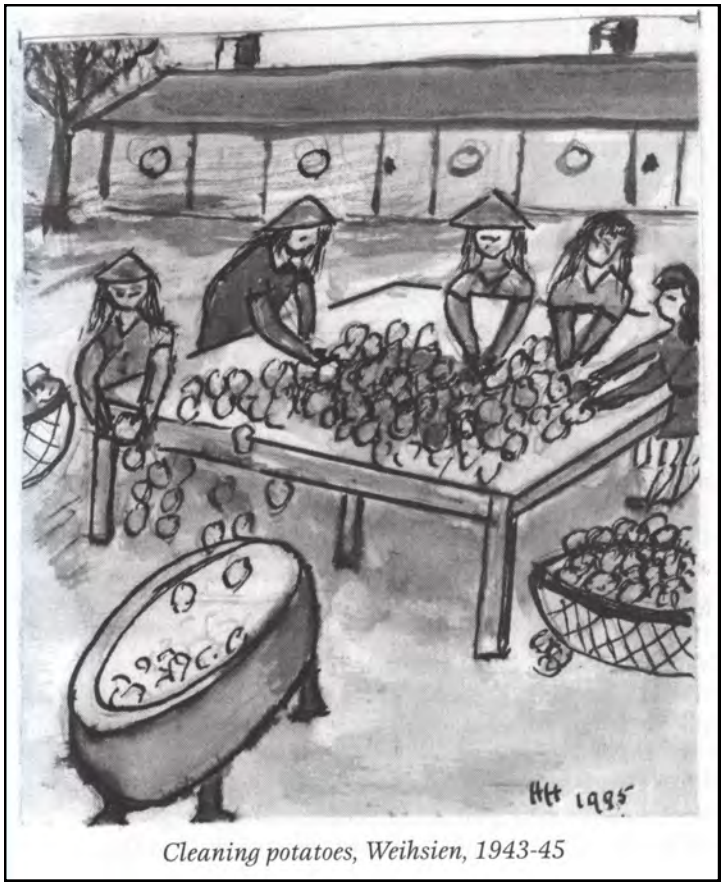
When our beds eventually arrived, we almost jumped for joy! Bertram got the assistance of his little gang of sturdy helpers and use of a hand-cart. The beds looked enormous unloaded outside our room. One of the helpers said, "Boy, have you got a problem!"

"Well, not really," my husband replied. "I've had plenty of time to work things out. What we will do will be to stand one of the springs on its side flat against the back wall. Then we set up two trestles, put on another spring, and on top of that set two mattresses. The other two beds can be put up normally along the left and right walls. That will leave us with a couple of spare trestles. They will go in the space left in the centre. On top of them we'll set one of our trunks for a dining table," he finished with a triumphant grin.

"Gee," said young Helsby, who lived in our row, "you should have gone into construction with a mind like that."

"Yes," replied Bertram. "I've been told that before." Shades of our Yangtze Riverboat table in Ta Po Ke Shih!

Wash day, Weihsien Camp



Cleaning potatoes, Weihsien, 1943-45

The trunk used for a table was empty, for it had contained our bedding. The other trunks fitted neatly under the three beds after we had repacked them, putting our food supplies in one, the children's outfits in another, and Bertram and I sharing the third. Bertram found that putting his good suits between mattress and spring kept them in excellent shape, and I did the same with some of my clothes. In any case, there was nowhere to hang them up.

Strangely enough, for the first few weeks we saw little of our Paomachang friends among the nearly two thousand internees. None were housed in our block. When the Hennings arrived after we had been in camp for six weeks, they were put in the end room of the block in front of us. Elsie could look through her small back window and wave a good-morning to us.

For a long time we could not locate Gladys and Mildred, but one mealtime we happened to stand behind them in the food queue of Kitchen 1. They had a room to themselves on the other side of camp. Later, as the camp filled up and more kitchens had to be opened, they were allocated to Kitchen 3; we therefore saw very little of them. Mildred was on vegetable-cleaning duty, and Gladys helped in the library when it was established.

Charles Peacock shared a room with two other men, Oswald Dallas and a Mr. Bodde, an elderly sinologist. Quite early on a story was going around about Oswald and Charles arguing over the attributes of electricity. They had both been imbibing (Charles had smuggled in some whisky). Dear old Mr. Bodde was trying to sleep. It was close to Lights-Out. The dialogue went like this:

Charles: Oshwald, it's a well-known fact that if you throw water on an electric light bulb it will explode.

Oswald: Never heard of it, old chap.

Charles: Absholutely, old boy. Look, I'll show you.

There happened to be a camp light just outside their door. Charles picked up Bodde's water glass, stepped outside, and flung the contents at the electric light. Unfortunately, he had not noticed poor Bodde's dentures in the glass! Crash! End of both light bulb and poor Bodde's false teeth. Then shouts and the running feet of Japanese guards finished the scenario. When Phil Cobb (he who had provided sun-helmets for our piglets in Paomachang) heard the story, he just said of Bodde's loss, "He'll talk funny. But as for meals, he'd be better off with a straw for the slops we get anyway."

The last internees arrived on April 6, 1943. A census was taken that showed we now numbered 1,798 inmates of seventeen different nationalities. Our fellow prisoners were from all walks of life: prostitutes, clergy, bankers, missionaries, nuns, monks, taipans (business executives), musicians, doctors, nurses, teachers, one dentist, engineers, and those who had chosen to retire in China. It was a conglomeration of mixed breeds of all ages thrown together in pitiful communal living conditions with only one thing in common: we were all prisoners.

It was obvious that this mass of humanity had to be organized into working groups if we were to survive. Billy Christian, helped by Lang Gilkey, arranged meetings that any who were interested were invited to attend in a large schoolroom. I, of course, could do no more than look after the children, but Bertram went, and from him I learned of the various problems that had to be faced.

For example, after the compound was abandoned by the missionaries, who were being evacuated, it suffered from the battles going on between the warlords—the guerrillas, as we knew them. As one army was forced to retreat it would resort to a scorched-earth policy, causing great damage so that the incoming victors would be faced with the wanton destruction left behind. Heaven knows how many armies had used the Weihsien compound before we were interned.

The doctors insisted that the first priority was the hospital, for sickness could strike at any time. They asked for volunteers to undertake the horrendous job of cleaning up the building. The boilers and pipes had been ripped from the basement and beds and equipment thrown out everywhere. The operating table was discovered under a pile of rubble, and surgical instruments were unearthed here and there. There was no lack of volunteers, Bertram among them, and within ten days they had that hospital in working order. Sadly, it was not in time to save the life of a black American from

the Tientsin Jazz Band. He needed an operation for appendicitis and had to be sent by train to Tsingtao, a six-hour journey. He died on the way. But the news of his death made us all realize the urgent need of a working hospital. The hospital records were a shambles, and our Tientsin friend Dennis Fulton was asked to undertake the job of straightening out what could be found. It was while working on this that he discovered the reference to the dreadful kalaazar epidemic that Hilary so narrowly escaped in Peking.

This discovery brought recognition of the fact that we could all be victims of sundry Oriental diseases to which we had no immunity while living in these unsanitary conditions. Oddly enough, it was about this time that Hilary came down with, not an Oriental disorder, but, of all things, whooping cough. Children who had come with the last of the internees from Tientsin brought this childhood scourge in with them. It was not long before Beryl, too, contracted the disease. If there was anything to be thankful for, it was that our beds had arrived first. The hospital could not take children in, for it was only just capable of treating emergency cases at that time. They had to be treated "at home," and for three dreadful weeks we laboured to pull them through their coughing and whooping and being sick. Washing soiled sheets in cold water (not the whole sheet, but just the part where they had vomited) became a daily chore. Nights were particularly bad, for by now Bertram had a camp job, working in the bakery. This meant he was working at night and I was left alone with the two children. They pulled through all right, but I was so completely exhausted that Dr. Anderson insisted I should go into hospital for a two-night sleep. He gave me a shot of something that knocked me out, and I slept around the clock. That short rest in hospital did wonders for me, but I was glad to get back to my family. It took some time before the children were completely recovered.

In the meantime, nothing much had been happening at the camp meetings except arguments, dissensions, and individuals jockeying for key positions. Who was to be Caesar? As the organizational meetings were taking too long without results, our captors stepped in and solved the problem. The Japanese commandant gave the internees exactly forty-eight hours to form nine committees: General Affairs, Labour, Discipline, Education, Supplies, Housing, Medicine, Finance, and Engineering. Bertram, who was unable to attend the meetings because of his job, got the list from Lang Gilkey, who headed the Housing Committee. Lang reported to Bertram that a Council of Nine, the chairmen of these committees, would represent the camp under the ruling commandant. In addition, a Japanese would be in charge of each committee. Our captors made it abundantly clear that there was not to be one particular leader among us and that they were our rulers.

We all had to do our share of work in the camp. The biggest trouble was with toilet cleaning; many women became physically ill at their first attempt, and no one would take this on as a steady job. Nevertheless, all able-bodied women had to take turns at the filthy task, and it was so organized that each woman would do the cleaning about one week during the year. I was excused this unpleasant job because both our children were under ten years old. My camp job was teaching school, once we had the school system organized. This presented its own set of difficulties.

The carpenters in camp repaired the desks that had been so unceremoniously thrown out into the courtyards. Those scroungers who had taken desks for furnishings were asked to return them. The internees included teachers and students from three different schools: the Cheefoo School, the Tientsin Grammar School, and the Peking American School. The books they had brought were collected to be examined by the Japanese. This took considerable time, for every book had to be scrupulously thumbed through. Were they looking for slim gold or silver bars hidden in spaces cut out of the middle of the books?

In many cases they ripped out whole sections of a book, sometimes just a page or two here and there. This destruction took some time to repair, and only a small percentage of complete texts could be put together by teachers and students from this carnage. I was teaching English and maths at junior high level and with incomplete algebra texts, in particular, it was frustrating.

Classrooms were scarce, for most had been commandeered as dormitories for the single men and women. How lucky we were to be living together as a family unit between four walls! Because of the lack of space, classes were divided between mornings and afternoons. I taught in the mornings when Beryl was taken care of in kindergarten and Hilary was in elementary classes in another building.

By the end of April the camp was running fairly smoothly except for the housing situation, and poor Lang Gilkey was having a rough time with those living in dormitories. The singles were packed into the rooms like sardines in a tin, with at most eighteen inches between beds. Privacy was a thing of the past. Some of the older women were unable to use the Chinese-style latrines and had to resort to using chamber pots in the dormitory. The limited space between beds and lack of privacy made this another indignity these poor women had to face, exacerbated by the fact that early each morning they had to set off to empty their bedside chambers at the women's latrine. With their pots modestly covered with towels, they themselves would muster as much dignity as they could on this "potty-parade"! A large tub of water and ladles for rinsing the pots had been set up

outside the foul-smelling latrine.

With warmer weather came an outbreak of dysentery. One night a very pleasant but heavily built missionary maiden lady just had to head for the latrine (she was too large to use a chamber pot in the space between the beds). In the dark she slipped in the latrine, and her leg became stuck in the hole. Since it was long after lights-out and everyone else was safely in his or her quarters, no one heard her cries for help. There the poor soul remained in a semi-conscious state until found by Japanese guards on their early morning patrol. She had fractured her hip and spent weeks in the camp hospital.

By now the engineers in camp had got the showers working.

We were allowed one shower a week. Teen-aged boys manned the water pumps to fill the huge water towers that serviced the men's and women's showers. Whoever worked out the roster for our weekly cleanup did an excellent job by arranging the shower times according to age groups. Mothers with young children showered together, teen-agers formed another group and older women yet another. There were six showers but no dividing partitions, so we all got to know each other fairly intimately. I had to share one shower with Hilary and Beryl at a certain allotted time, ours being Fridays at 3 p.m. The individual showers also had to be allocated, for Number 1 shower got a full flow of water, but because of poor pressure the stream of water at Number 6 would be reduced to a mere trickle. Thus over a period of six weeks we would progress through the six showers. When Number 6 was our lot, we would test the pressure before lathering in case there wasn't enough water to wash off the soap—when we had soap!

Bertram became a master baker, heading a group of men that included James Mouat, his Tientsin office manager. About this time "perks"—short for perquisites—became the accepted rule for all those working in supplies and food. Also in line for perks were the stokers who manned the kitchen and bakery fires and might sneak a lump of coal back to their quarters. Of course perks were not available to those pumping water or cleaning latrines! This seemed particularly unfair because as time went on and food became scarcer and scarcer, a handful of flour taken from the bakery, a potato from the vegetables, or a square of meat from the butchers would mean that others would be short-changed.

Teachers of course had nothing to take home except frustration at the school system. How could we prepare the older students for the English Certificate of Education or for entry into American colleges? For as the weeks progressed to months and months to years, it became more and more difficult to meet the required standards. Not only were teachers handicapped by inadequate school supplies but students showed signs of deterioration, particularly in their eyesight. The lack of proper vitamins in the diet, poor lighting, and the impossibility of getting reading glasses played havoc with their progress. In many subjects oral examinations became the order of the day. Following our release from internment, credit was given to those students recommended by bona fide certificated teachers.

Eventually perks had to be stopped. The system had developed into bare-faced stealing by some of the unscrupulous in camp. The Discipline Committee stepped in to rectify the situation. With the help of the Labour Committee they changed the jobs of those suspected of pilfering, assigning them to tasks that would not offer perks—garbage disposal, for instance. Curiously, the only time internees ever got outside the camp gates was to dump the daily garbage, which was picked up by Chinese coolies.

The camp shop, controlled by the Japanese but manned by a couple of internees, was open for business. Here we could spend our comfort money on luxury items from washtubs for our cold- water laundry to rat traps, for these pests were getting out of control. Food containers were also to be had, and we bought a couple of them. We could now collect our food rations for four and eat "at home." We did not want to subject the children to those long food queues three times a day. Either Bertram or I would collect the rations and at the same time get our thermos flask filled with boiled water or weak tea—when there was tea. The camp shop was sadly lacking in goods relating to personal hygiene: soap, toilet paper, toothpaste, and sanitary pads for the women. My stack of the latter was depleted by the end of the third month, and I had to make my own from old sheets. These had to be washed, and once a month—regularly—my clothes line would clearly indicate when I was menstruating! I found it embarrassing at first, but with other women facing the same predicament, it soon became an accepted fact. To quell the children's curiosity I called them "dust rags," and actually demonstrated their use by using one to clean the window! Oh, those helpful little white lies!

Rats became our greatest enemies and competitors for our meagre food rations. We were asked by the Japanese to go into an all-out blitz against these disease-carrying creatures. General Affairs set up a competition and offered a prize for the greatest number caught in one week. In our room, the trap that Bertram set caught two rats at the same time. On another occasion his hand had dangled over the side of his bed, and he was awakened by a rat gnawing at his fingernails, where some bread dough was still lodged. Bedbugs, too, menaced some people who had used infested wood to build bunks for their young children. Our room was free of these pestilential things, but at the other end of our

row a missionary family with five small children had a terrible time. We would find the parents on a sunny morning heaving the mattresses outdoors. Then they would pour boiling water around the seams where the bugs seemed to hide. After the library was established with donations of books brought in by internees, our friend Gladys warned us that there might be bedbugs nestled in the middle of the books! We had to leave them outside our rooms, and reading had to be done outdoors on clear sunny days. We were so busy with our own daily chores, camp duties, water-pumping, and food collecting, however, that we found little time for reading.

We soon got to know the rest of the inhabitants of Row 14. At the very end were the poor bug-bitten missionaries with the large family, who occupied three rooms. An American widow and her three teen-aged daughters were in Rooms 4 and 5. A Salvation Army couple with two teen-aged daughters were in Rooms 6 and 7. Then came an elderly couple who had been born and lived all their lives in China. They were from Tsingtao and had been brought in with the husband's mother, who was ninety. They occupied two rooms, for the poor old lady was bedridden and suffering from senile dementia; she would scream through most of the night for her amah. The young missionary professor named Helsby and his wife and two-year-old daughter were in Room 10. Next door to us were Peter and Clarice Lawless. Peter was British and had been a policeman in the concession in Tientsin. He was a big, red-faced disciplinarian who was, of course, on the Discipline Committee. His wife, Clarice, was Swiss and interned because she was married to a Britisher. They had no children. Clarice was a strong, healthy-looking, outdoors type with a wide happy smile on her round, apple-cheeked face. She did yeoman work with Girl Guides in her normal life. Then closing out the row in Room 12 were the Hales with their two children. We were neighbours in adversity and all very friendly.

It was not always so throughout camp. One case in particular was that of the father of the murdered Pamela Werner and the dentist who was involved in that case in Peking in 1936. Fate played a strange trick throwing those two together in the same internment camp. Whenever their paths crossed, old Werner would become quite abusive, and on one occasion was reported to have spat in the dentist's bowl of cereal! Discipline had to move one of the men to another kitchen (we had three kitchens working by then). There was also much bitterness among those living in dormitories, all over the question of space. It was not unusual for a bed to be eased over its boundary line to claim extra territory. Then all hell would break loose! Lang Gilkey had a terrible time with two contestants in one of the women's dormitories. They almost came to blows over a space of a few inches. In the end he had to call in Discipline to quell the disturbance.

With the cessation of perks, black-market purchasing (over the wall) became a flourishing concern on the other side of the camp near the hospital. The Roman Catholic priests and the Belgian monks, who were housed in the upper floor of the hospital, did a roaring trade. Furthermore, they were the only camp inhabitants who could see the outside world over the wall. Because of their long sojourn in China, most of them spoke several Chinese dialects. It did not take them long to make contact with the farmers who would sell eggs, cigarettes, Pai gah (pronounced buy-gar, a Chinese wine made from kaoliang), jam, and sugar to them. They in turn would sell any surplus to those internees who had money. A very nice little business-cum-racket but of course frowned upon by the Japanese with threats of dire consequences for anyone caught.

Those of us living on the east side of the camp did not benefit from this bonanza until one warm spring day the Hales got involved in black market too. With the children, I was planting some lettuce and radish seeds in the small strip of soil beneath our window. A monk in a brown hooded habit stopped to chat. Although I'd never seen him before, I knew who he was, for Bertram had heard about him from a Roman Catholic priest working in the bakery. He was a Trappist monk, the only one in camp, and his name was Father Scanlon. The Trappist discipline is said to be based on a rule of silence, but the present extenuating circumstances had caused the Pope to release Father Scanlon from his vows. Once his tongue was freed, he hardly ever stopped talking—or singing—as he wandered around the camp. He was a friendly little fellow, going bald and obviously very short-sighted, for he wore old-fashioned thick-lensed, metal-framed glasses. He squatted down to the children's level and asked What they were planting.

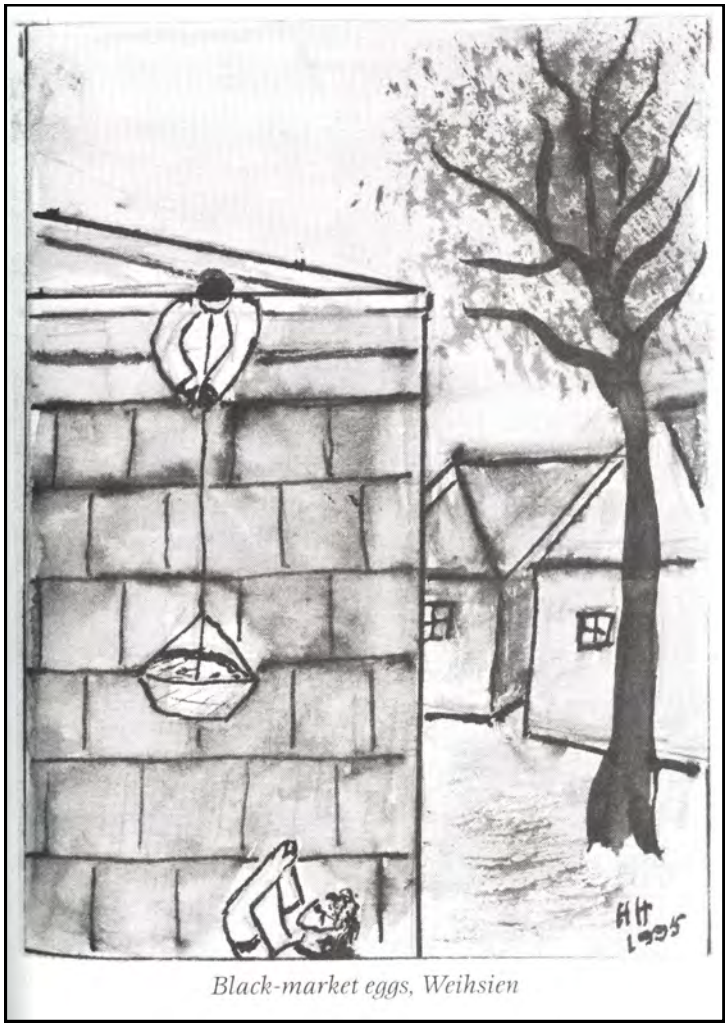
"Just radishes and lettuces," said Hilary. "Auntie Elsie brought some seeds into camp." (The Hennings had arrived in camp by this time.)

Turning to me he said, "I see you live next to an outside wall. How very lucky."

"Why lucky?" I asked.

"Well, it would be easy to get goods over the wall from the Chinese farmers. We do it all the time by the hospital—get eggs and foodstuffs. If you like, I will send our Chinese to contact you. His name is Han Lin-shun." Then, with a benign smile and not waiting for an answer, he quietly slipped away.

When I told Bertram about this strange encounter he was not enthusiastic, for he knew if we were caught it would mean punishment, and we had to think of the children. On the other hand, the idea of being able to supplement the meagre camp diet had its allure, and we



Black-market eggs, Weihsien

decided to take the risk. We did, however, make up our minds to buy nothing but necessary food—no Chinese wine or whisky, no cigarettes, not even soap.

Very early next morning before Bertram returned from his bakery shift, I was awakened by gravel being thrown at the window. It was still dark, and when I opened the door I heard a gruff voice whispering, "Hai Tai-tai, Hai Tai-tai. Mai jhi tze": "Mrs. Hale—buy eggs." There was Han Lin-shun quietly lowering a basket of eggs over the wall. I quickly took them into the room and hid them under my bed; when I returned to look for him, Han Lin-shun had disappeared. We looked at the eggs when Bertram returned and were staggered at the sight of so many—at least five dozen. We found a note written in Chinese that we got young Helsby to translate for us. In effect, it stated that Han Lin-shun would supply us with goods for which we could pay at our final victory! Incredible! But it was a special business arrangement, and we kept records of purchases while he kept his records of sales. Sure enough, at the end of hostilities we did meet Han Lin-shun and had a settling up. In the meantime we continued to get eggs, sugar, millet, and jam over the wall.

Sometimes we would get requests from the hospital for extra sugar and eggs. On one occasion we were asked if we could get a chicken for a very sick Philippino boy who was not expected to see another birthday. Oh sure, Old Han Lin-shun could get chicken! What he did bring was two live chickens with their feet tied together. These he flung over the wall. The fall broke them apart. Peter, our next-door neighbour, grabbed one, but the other made a dash for freedom with Bertram in hot pursuit.

He made a splendid rugby tackle and smothered the cries of the squawking bird before they alerted the Japanese. A Greek butcher in the next courtyard quickly disposed of both birds with his butcher's knife. But that was a close call.

On another occasion, on a cold, dark morning when Han Lin-shun came with his basket of eggs, I was down with a bad cold. Peter from next door reached up to receive them. His hands were cold, and the basket slipped right through them. The guards, we knew, would be changing very soon, so we quickly took the ashes from our stoves and buried those precious eggs.

We continued our black marketing until one day two Chinese farmers were shot within our hearing. That scared us, and all the precious over-the-wall purchasing ceased throughout the camp—for the time being. We wondered whether poor old Han Lin-shun was one of the victims, and I felt sick at heart. We heard later, however, that these two Chinese farmers had finished their "drop" and while running away were caught by two Japanese guards. They were carrying enough money to support a Chinese family for a whole year. Maybe wily Han Lin-shun was extra smart in gambling on an Allied victory and receiving payment after the war. Had he been caught, no money would have been found on him!

#

CHAPTER TWELVE

Combating Despair

Before summer was over, the group of Belgian Dominican monks—quite the most hard-working and popular men in camp—was released, together with some Roman Catholic priests and nuns. This was done at the request of the Pope, and while we rejoiced at their freedom we were saddened by their departure. The Dominicans mixed with everyone and enjoyed their drinks and smokes when they could get them (over the wall!). They were among the four hundred monks, nuns, and Roman Catholic priests who had entered camp. Their leaving affected every section of the camp's workforce. As they walked through the camp gates, we stood en masse to wave them goodbye, and there I was hardly a dry eye among us. How we would miss the gentle ministering hands of the kind nuns who worked in the hospital and the strong-muscled arms of the monks, ready for any task, however menial. Their cheerful, uncomplaining attitude to confinement had set a standard of behaviour difficult to emulate.

Another evacuation of some three hundred American and Canadian internees took place on September 1, 1943. Dr. Hamilton Anderson, Billy Christian, and Miriam Pratt were our particular American friends who were being repatriated, and they offered to take out letters to my family in Canada. The letter I sent to my father is as follows:

Dear Father,

This letter is being taken by Dr. Anderson. We were interned here last March and it has been no picnic. The journey here was an absolute nightmare—overcrowded third class carriages with no food or water supplied. We had to sit up all night supporting our two sleeping babes and after a twenty hour journey (with two changes to make) were all pretty worn out upon arrival at this dump.

During the past five months we've got things organised, a well-run hospital, schools, bakery and kitchens greatly

improved. I am teaching school and Bertram is a baker, The children came down with Whooping Cough soon after our arrival here. We had a dreadful time with our two—Beryl in particular.

We all, however, keep cheerful and confident and perhaps will write some kind of memorandum of life here. We do not know if there will be a British repatriation—or if we will be included, quite a few ships would be required to take off all the Britons living in China.

We have had a trying summer but winter here will be a grim affair. We hope for a crack-up in Europe and a speedy and severe attention to Japan before the year is out.

We hear that our house has been taken over and some Japanese families [are] living in it. Our furniture was taken into the American Embassy, Peking, for storage. Whether anything was taken en route is a moot point. I doubt if we will see much of it again. If the war is not over or the end not fast approaching, I think you could get a letter to us. Bertram suggests the following procedure. Your letter should contain the date but not the place from which you write. Address the envelope to Mr. Robert Drummond, China Broadcasting Corporation, Chungking, China, with a short note to Mr. Drummond asking him if he would be good enough to mail the letter as follows:

c/o Dr. R.J.C. Hoeppli,

SWISS CONSUL,

Grand Hotel des Wagons Lits, Peking, Hopeh

We have repeatedly written Red Cross letters to you and to Welwyn but have not received any news of you for almost two years. We hope all goes well and wonder whether further promotions have come your way. Love from us all.

From San Mateo, California, Dr. Anderson wrote this covering letter:

Dear Mr. Suddes,

I am enclosing this letter from Hilda which was entrusted to my care and has finally cleared through our authorities. You will note that certain parts have been edited en route. I have also another letter written a little more than a year ago when the Hales were still in Pao Ma Chang which describes their condition at that time. If you receive this letter, please let me know and I shall forward the first message to you.

May I add that on leaving Weihsien the whole family was well and while they have been through some trying experiences, they keep up a fine spirit and are making the best of an unhappy situation. Many of their friends keep them supplied with supplementary rations and this keeps up the calories to a fairly satisfactory level. Actually the medical and hospital situation is good and they have supplies in the camp to keep going for another year. The Swiss representatives in North China keep fully informed of their various needs and have been able to get things into the camp from time to time. No Red Cross supplies had reached the camp at the time we left, however.

Let me know if you would like any additional information.

Sincerely yours, H.H. Anderson

Miriam Pratt typed my letter to my mother on a Kleenex to smuggle it out! In this letter I spoke of the dreadful first few days and nights. Of the food I wrote:

> At first the food was terrible, soups and stews and bad at that. We had at one time 76 people down with food poisoning but all survived. The camp is run by the internees. That means we do all the work. We have squads working on vegetables, baking bread and cleaning the filthy primitive latrines, carrying supplies, running the hospital and schools etc. I have got myself appointed as Director of Children's Handicrafts and have a staff of six working with me. Bertram works in the bakery and a pretty hot job it has been in this hot summer. We have both lost quite a bit of weight but manage to keep the children on the up-grade. We have had a terrible time with flies during the hot weather and a wave of dysentery a few weeks back. I got the germ and had a short spell in hospital.
>
> Lately the food has improved somewhat but we receive very little milk and practically no fresh fruit.

There was more typed on this fifty-year-old Kleenex, but the end of the letter is now in tatters, and I can make out only a word or two.

In the covering letter Miriam wrote to my mother from her home in New Orleans she speaks lovingly of Hilary and Beryl. She wrote:

> It was my privilege to live next door to them in the concentration camp. The children are so sweet and so patient with the hardships of camp life. Both had bad cases of whooping cough but were well when we left the camp in September. Hilary is very bright and understands everything adults discuss. She is doing very well in the camp school and her mother teaches folk dancing or country dancing and handwork. Hilary is in all these classes and the enclosed case was made by Hilary (for her "Real Grandmother" as she calls you) in the sewing class. Her stitches are beautifully made. As you probably know her greatest joy comes from pets and for a while she had a pet turtle named Tilly.
>
> Beryl is a beautiful child and quite able to keep up with her big sister.
>
> Hilda keeps very busy teaching, working, cleaning, cooking and looking after the children. Never an idle moment.
>
> Bertram works long hours in the bakery making bread for 1800 of us—at all times our diet was 50% bread.
>
> Billy Christian did not carry a letter from me to my father but wrote a long typewritten account from *MS Gripsholm*. It was dated November 27, 1943. The voyage home had taken more than a month. His letter had a long preamble about our life in Peking and Paomachang "just outside Peking," including events while we were under house arrest. I have condensed his letter as follows:
>
> It gives me much pleasure to write to you at the request of your daughter, Hilda. I have known the Hales for many years and especially since the outbreak of the Asian War in December 1941 have seen them constantly.

He then went on to reiterate in his ebullient manner what Dr. Anderson said of the camp in his concise letter. Billy, however, did refer to our black-market activities, and well he should, for he was a beneficiary of our over-the-wall purchases. He concluded his long epistle as follows:

> Both Hilary and Beryl as well as Hilda and Bertram were well when I last saw them in the morning of September 1st when I with about three hundred Americans and Canadians left the camp for our long trip home. Hilda and her family of course send all their best and asked me to tell you not to worry about them particularly as they hope and expect to be on an early evacuation. She said that her home was occupied by a Japanese family and fears that her furniture, carpets, etc., may be lost but of this nothing is certain.
>
> In closing, I can assure you that the Hales are as well as circumstances permit and both mentally and physically were quite normal.
>
> I hope to have the pleasure of meeting you in the near future and with kind regards I am,
>
> Very sincerely, W.B. Christian

It was sad saying goodbye to our friends, and we could not help but feel a little envious when once again we lined the driveway to bid them Godspeed and waved tearful farewells as they passed through the camp gates to freedom.

The exodus of these repatriates once more disrupted the life of the camp. Quite a number of children were among those released, reducing the three hundred students who had first arrived. This meant a certain amount of reorganization, as some teachers had also been among the evacuees. We lost doctors and nurses as well, thus putting a heavier workload on the few left behind. Working committees had to be reorganized and living quarters reassigned, for with so many departures we had more space. Poor Lang Gilkey! It is a wonder he did not end up in a strait jacket, for like vultures pouncing on the dead, the internees in crowded dormitories actually appropriated the rooms vacated by this exodus. For a short time chaos reigned until things were straightened out. Once more the Japanese took control, stating that no moves were to be made without the authority of the Housing Committee and under the direction of the Japanese Commandant.

We were among those lucky enough to get extra living space. We received a second connecting nine-by-twelve room when our neighbours, Clarice and Peter Lawless, moved down the row one room after the American widow and her two daughters were evacuated. Bert Tovey, one of the engineers in camp, knocked a hole in the brick wall to connect the two rooms. There was no door, but he built a lintel over which I could hang a blanket. I then had the privilege of referring to "our suite." The bricks were precious, for Bert had designed a small brick stove with jam tins joined together for the exhaust flue. As he pointed out, with the approaching bitterly cold Weihsien winter, the one bucket of coal allotted to us per week would last no longer than two days in the pot-bellied stove. This would leave us five days in which to freeze to death by inches. News of Bert's invention spread like wildfire throughout the camp, and those living in individual rooms became hell-bent on pinching bricks and building stoves! Some actually snitched bricks from old outhouses, but they did this very surreptitiously, taking a brick here and a brick there. Eventually they weakened the structures so much that in the heavy fall rains they would collapse in a sea of mud.

Besides space, other benefits accrued from the evacuation, since those who left camp donated furniture, clothes, blankets, and cooking utensils to those left behind. We got a card table, which led us into a weekly bridge game with James Mouat and Milton Saltzer, both of whom worked in Bertram's bakery shift. We also inherited four folding camp stools: not the most comfortable seats for a bridge game, but bearable. Because the camp's electricity was quite poor and unpredictable, we often had to resort to peanut-oil lamps fashioned from jam tins, using homemade wicks. But quite the most precious gift was a meat- grinder given me by the American widow. We used it for making peanut butter when we got an issue of peanuts from the camp shop. The meat grinder did yeoman service up and down our block and elsewhere.

Not long after the repatriation we learned that black marketing had started up again over the hospital wall. We, however, decided to give it a rest, and when Han Lin -shun appeared at our wall we gave him a note written in Chinese by Helsby saying that for the present we did not wish to trade. This was partly because shortly after the hospital wall negotiations restarted, the Japanese caught Father Scanlon! His method of obtaining eggs was to kneel as if in prayer close to and facing the wall, where he had made a hole through which eggs were pushed on a low, flat basket. On the day he was caught he was told to stand up, and under his voluminous robe the guards found he had been squatting on a couple of dozen eggs. This Holy Man's Miracle amazed the Japanese but did not deter them from placing him in solitary confinement for six weeks. Solitary confinement for a Trappist monk was like returning home; he was right back where he started. But having been released from his vows of silence, he would sleep all day and by twilight would begin singing with full voice his praises to God—all night! Those internees living close enough to hear him said it was awful, a sort of Latin chant, loud and unmusical. It disturbed their rest. It also disturbed the rest of the Japanese Commandant, and Father Scanlon was released after ten days.

One afternoon not long after this I was returning from our weekly shower with the children when I saw a Chinese head at the top of the wall—but it wasn't that of Han Lin-shun. I told him in Chinese to go away, but instead he dumped a load of black-market jams, dates, and sugar—thump, thump, thump— and then sped away. We dared not leave it all there, so, with the children helping, I quickly got the items into the room and hid them under the bedclothes. Almost immediately Peter Lawless came panting in. He said, "The Japanese have caught someone doing black market about five blocks down. Thank heaven you have stopped. There is a room-to-room search going on."

Disaster!

"Look, Peter," I said pulling back a bedcover, "some clot dumped this stuff at our doorstep, so I had to bring it in to hide it."

Peter went ashen, but I suddenly had a brainwave! There was an epidemic of measles among the children in the camp. I hastily put Hilary and Beryl under the bedclothes with the contraband stuff. Then I took my lipstick and to their amazement planted nasty red spots on their noses and foreheads and cheeks.

"Shush," I said, "we'll pretend you've got measles. Lie very still if the Japanese come into the room and don't say a word."

It was not long before we heard shouts and banging on doors as the guards came along Row 14. At Room 12 I stood at the open door, and when they approached said the children were sick with measles. Perhaps they could look through the window and see them lying in bed? The two guards did some Japanese talk between them and then decided not to enter the infected room. They did look through the window and beat a hasty retreat.

Another lucky escape!

Our daughter Hilary, who was only seven at the time, remembered this incident vividly and many years later when she was teaching in Toronto wrote a short play about Weihsien that included this experience. The play was performed by her students.

We produced quite a number of well-acted plays in camp now that our daily living had become routine. Each play took six weeks in preparation, and every Friday and Saturday night the church would be turned into a

theatre. In addition to plays, entertainments included sing-along, musicals, symphony concerts (we had a number of talented instrumentalists in camp), and piano recitals on the grand piano of the now reconstructed church, which had suffered malicious damage before our arrival. We had two excellent pianists among us, and one, an Indian girl of eighteen, became quite well known after internment. Her name, as I recall, was Shireen Talati. We heard after the war that she was performing in London.

Some of the talented scribes wrote plays especially for children that were enjoyed equally by the adults. One of these in which Hilary and Beryl performed was "The Pied Piper of Hamlin." The girls were among the thirty rats costumed in black stockings and matching pullovers. Mothers had worked hard to get them to look like rats, with long, spiny tails and whiskers painted on their faces with eye-liner. The piper himself was a tall thin fellow, and his wife had decked him out with a pointed hat, dyed long johns (his own underwear dipped in red ink), and a multicoloured coat. His pipe was borrowed from one of our musicians. I helped with the production and was backstage most of the time. The children had learned a catchy little tune composed by one of our musicians, and as they followed the Pied Piper around the stage they sang:

Rats, Rats, we've got to get rid of the Rats!

The Japanese Commandant and a number of his officers always sat in the front row of every performance. To my horror, on the night of the second performance, from the back of the audience, when the children were singing their rat song on stage, I heard very distinctly the audience joining in with them, but their version was

Japs, Japs, we've got to get rid of the Japs!

Thank heaven someone started to applaud and that saved the day, especially as the Japanese themselves joined in the applause for the children on the stage, who gave an even louder rendition of their rat song. Had the Japanese heard the audience's words I am sure they would have prohibited any further weekly performances. That would have been a shame, for they helped to boost morale, gave us something creative in an otherwise monotonous existence, and brought out hidden talents many did not realize they had. Right up to the end of internment we continued our Friday and Saturday entertainments. Just to have something to look forward to gave a lift to our sagging spirits.

One of the plays we produced was Noel Coward's Hay Fever. I played the lead as Judith Bliss, and the single-page, typewritten programme reads as follows:

The Weihsien Dramatic Society Presents

Noel Coward's

"HAY FEVER"

produced by Joan Donnelly

The action of the play takes place in the hall of the Bliss' house in June.

Act I - The Hall of David Bliss' house at 3 o'clock on a

Saturday afternoon

Act II - After dinner on a Saturday evening

Act III - Sunday morning about 10 o'clock

The time is the present

Prompter—Margaret Bishop

As I look at this old programme on thick grey paper, unevenly typed in blue with a ribbon that had obviously seen better days, I get a pleasant feeling of nostalgia for the effort we put into those productions to remind the internees of what life used to be like and how we used to live and dress. The performers all delved into their trunks to produce their "best" clothes. The producer borrowed furniture from the well- disposed Japanese Commandant, Izu-san, for the stage set. With the help of our camp carpenters and budding set designers we fashioned a very plausible "Bliss Hall," complete with the camp's grand piano. When the curtain rose on Hay Fever the commandant gave the set hearty applause, supported by his officers in the front row.

We did one other Noel Coward play, Tonight at Eight Thirty, in which I again acted—with a bad case of laryngitis at the time. Bertram said my husky voice made me sound very sexy!

I was the producer of George and Margaret, a play that called for an elegant London drawing-room setting. Commandant Izu had been replaced by then, and his successor was not nearly so friendly. Nothing daunted, however, I wrote a pleading letter to him through General Affairs asking for the use of some of his furniture. The head of General Affairs said he didn't think I'd stand a chance, but to our amazement—and delight—the request was granted. He too applauded loudly when he saw his furniture on the stage, even to a carpet and drapes.

The most ambitious play of all, produced by former antique dealer Arthur Porter, was Shaw's Androcles and the Lion. In an internment camp, you ask? Yes, indeed. It seems the longer we were interned, the more inventive we became. We had by then received our first Red Cross parcels (well into our second year), and Arthur saw great possibilities in all the cans they contained. With help from some enthusiastic teen-aged boys, he had the empty cans hammered flat and fashioned into armour for the Roman soldiers. Cardboard from the cartons was used to make the soles for sandals. The lion was a masterpiece of invention. His head was made of papier mâché (again those useful cartons) by two artists in the camp. Donations of old, worn-out fur coats were used to

construct his body. It was a remarkable production with many internees getting involved, and it seemed a shame that after all that effort there were only two nights of performance.

The first winter, 1943, was something to remember with horror, for most of us had never lived in a Do-It-Yourself community. This was bad enough during the summer months, but when it came to that bitterly cold winter, we faced the monumental task of keeping from freezing. That weekly bucket of coal lasted nowhere near a week, even with our little brick stove, and we had to supplement it by making coal-balls. To do this, we mixed coal-dust with earth and water in an old washtub.

At first, wearing old gloves, we rolled this mixture by hand but had some dismal failures and very sore hands. It was a question of the mixture's consistency. If it was too wet the balls didn't hold together; if it was too dry they would crumble during the drying-out period. Bertram found an all-round solution. He nailed a four-ounce can on the end of a stick and when by experimentation we got the correct proportions of coal-dust, earth, and water established, he filled his little scoop and flopped nicely rounded coal bricks onto makeshift trays. We put these trays of coal bricks under our beds to dry, for to leave them outdoors was to encourage pilfering.

We sometimes went out coke-scrounging around the kitchens, bakery, and shower rooms, where most of the coal was used. Our children became very proficient at this, going off in their little fur coats and hats and wearing woollen mittens, carrying a bucket between them. They were in heavy competition with other children when, after school, they would begin their hunt. Sometimes there would be altercations, but Hilary in particular was not one to be thwarted.

The dormitories were heated by large pot-bellied stoves, and those who slept closest to them suffered as much from heat as those at the far end suffered from cold. But for those of us who lived in individual rooms, the trick was to keep our little brick stoves permanently alight. While this stove did not emit a high degree of heat, it did offer a low, constant warmth. We ourselves augmented the coal bricks with an occasional lump of coal from our weekly issue and coke collected by Hilary and Beryl. We would "bank up" the stove at night with tea leaves scrounged from the kitchen and so kept the stove going day and night. The tea-leaf trick was one I had learned as a child in Yorkshire during the Great War, when coal was rationed. We also used potato peelings then, but in Weihsien Camp we ate them!

The winter had been preceded by torrential fall rains, and the space between our narrow brick path and the back of Row 15 became a sea of mud. The new commandant was a stickler for protocol or whatever it was they used in Japan to venerate their emperor. We were told that when walking on the path, should we meet a Japanese guard, we were to stop, bow, and step aside as a courtesy to the uniform worn by his Imperial Majesty's soldiers. What! Step aside into that mud bog? Not I, not Bertram, and, we hoped, not the children. Bertram and I worked out what in Yorkshire would be called "a canny compromise." If we saw a Japanese approaching us we would turn and walk back to our room as though we had forgotten something. Being in the end room of the row, we would find this easy, for their march to the changing of the guard had to start at Room 1, and that gave us plenty of time for action. If we heard the approach of the guard as they neared our room, we just stayed inside until they had passed.

It was about this time that the elegant Helen Burton, former owner of the Camel Bell in the Peking Hotel where our guest book had been made, found a disused outhouse and converted it into the White Elephant Bell. This successor to the Camel Bell was a barter shop. Camp cartoonist Daisy Attenbury and calligrapher Ruth Kunkel designed an attractive poster for it. I am fortunate to have a copy that Helen had printed when she went to live in Honolulu after the war. The beautifully printed poem in the centre is surrounded by sketches of things for barter, such as ladies' dresses, an umbrella, a brush and comb, and a hand mirror. Two performing white elephants head the poster. The poem reads:

Oh the Elephant Bell, the Elephant Bell
Just think of the tales its chimes could tell
Of hearts made lighter and hearts made gag
By living the giving and getting wag.
On the Rivers of Trade you cast your bread
Only to find you get cake instead.
Those narrow shoes that gave you pain
Are just the thing for Mary Jane.

You scorn the brush, the comb, the file
That would make some other trader smile
The cot you can't find a place to keep
Would give another his first good sleep.
Oh the Elephant Bell, the Elephant Bell
With its gay little song of buy and sell.

Money was scarce in camp, for our comfort money was woefully inadequate. Besides, it was needed to buy necessities from the Japanese-run camp store. For mothers with growing children this barter shop was a godsend. They would be able to trade in shoes that had

become too small for larger ones and clothes that had been outgrown for bigger sizes. I found that from going barefoot in the hot summer my feet had begun to spread, and I traded some almost new shoes for older, larger ones for winter footwear. Moreover, the Elephant Bell would take goods for sale, and as Christmas approached, the shop was there to provide toys for the young children. Not that we could be enthusiastic about the festive season. Some church services were held by the different religious denominations, and the kitchens rustled up a date pudding on Christmas Day; otherwise, it was just chores as usual.

All over-the-wall trading ceased during the winter months, for the Chinese had no cover when the fields were bare. To venture near the camp was to invite a burst of gunfire from the machine-guns mounted on the lookout towers. This lack of black marketing meant we were almost entirely dependent on the camp food. When an issue of peanuts arrived at the camp shop, there was such a long queue that those at the end were shut out. For them it was back to dry bread.

The dreariness of that first winter was in part offset by the fact that we now had Rooms 11 and 12. We could at least get a change of scenery by going into the children's room. Each of them now had a bed and there was space between them for a play area. We put one of their trunks beneath the window and covered it with a tablecloth. Here they could amuse themselves with a pack of cards building card houses or playing Snap. Among their toys Wang Nai-nai had packed a Snakes and Ladders game, which they loved. It was now possible on dull winter afternoon: to invite their school pals to play with them. In fact, they began to live a life of their own, as did we.

Our winter evenings were taken up playing bridge with James and Milton; we religiously kept score for a settlement a' war's end. With lights out at 10 p.m. and peanut-oil lamps terrible strain on the eyes, our bridge sessions were of shor duration. The Tientsin Jazz Band organized weekly dances it Kitchen 3, patronized mostly by young unmarrieds and older teenagers. This seemed to lead inevitably both to budding romances and to some promiscuous behaviour. The only reporter pregnancy, however, was that of "Lily," a lady of the night fron Tientsin. She was considered lucky by her pals because in he delicate condition she would escape toilet cleaning.

The New Year of 1944 was not ushered in with any fanfare It just settled over the camp like a cloud of gloom. Rumours of Allied defeats and the sinking of the entire U.S. Navy circulated through the camp. Any hope of repatriation was eliminated. There was, however, talk of the Japanese taking men out of camp to work in the salt mines in the north. That would leave only women, children, and young teenagers to run the camp. The prospect was terrifying, and we never knew from day to day if there was any substance to the rumour.

In April of that year two of our men escaped. They were in their thirties, still physically fit, and both fluent in Chinese. Behind their escape was the desire to contact friendly guerrilla leaders and ask for help in getting much -needed medical supplies for the internees. The result, however, was punishment for those left behind. Instead of the early morning door-to-door roll call and head count we now had to turn out twice a day at designated locations. As soon as the roll-call bell clanged we had to rush out, dressed or not, to be counted. Should anyone be missing or late, there we would stand until the guard in charge of that group found the missing culprit. A new commandant arrived in May, and he was a man of discipline! He also knew a good thing when he saw one, and in our black marketing he envisaged a very lucrative little business. He therefore took it over for himself and soon put a stop to the internees' doing over-the-wall trading by threatening to shoot anyone who did it. Thus the lovely extra food we had been getting fairly regularly in the fall of 1943 was cut off.

This new commandant, stocky, arrogant, and very loud- voiced, used his guards as middlemen. Short of cash themselves, these guards would receive our valuables such as watches, jewellery, and clothes to trade with the Chinese for money or goods. They also went into high-class merchandise such as jams, sugar, Chinese whisky, and cigarettes: no more messing about with eggs and peanuts for them. Bertram sold his watch first— not by direct contact with a Japanese guard but through a fat, sleazy buy-sell man who, by claiming a weak heart, never did a stroke of work in camp. Instead, this quisling type shuffled his revoltingly fat body around, collecting and distributing for those corrupt guards. I sold my Longines wristwatch from my Vermont friends, and the Chinese money it fetched was used to buy food. All these middlemen took their rake-off, but we had to accept what was offered.

It was in June, just before the schools closed for a summer rest for teachers and students, that Hilary and Beryl came down with paratyphoid fever, an intestinal disease related to but milder than typhoid. There were several other cases in camp, and a young Roman Catholic nun died of it and was buried in the small cemetery behind the Japanese quarters. Clarice Lawless, our next-door neighbour, had also contracted it. Hers was such a serious case that she had to be hospitalized. The hospital was already overloaded with cases of dysentery, and the doctors said it would be unwise to subject our children to the presence of so much disease. Instead, I would have to nurse them "at home." Nursing meant keeping them in bed and as quiet as possible, for any movement would activate the intestinal infection and keep their temperatures elevated. They were not to do any walking for five days after their temperatures reached normal

and must be on a strict diet of food we had to collect from the hospital. A doctor would pay regular visits (in this case a British doctor named Hope-Gill from Ching Wang Tao, who with his wife and two children had quarters near the hospital). A nurse would make daily calls to check the children's progress. It was a very hot and humid July, and while other children were enjoying their freedom from school lessons our poor darlings were confined to bed in their small room. In order to keep them amused I would spend many hours reading to them. I gave them cool sponge baths several times a day. What they liked most was watching me paint a funny alphabet frieze along the wall next to their beds. Beryl had brought in an A-B-C book depicting animals, birds, elves, and insects in cartoon style. For instance, C was for Caterpillar, so I copied Mr. Caterpillar going off to the office wearing a bowler hat and carrying a briefcase. B was for Bird, who was a lively black crow wearing boots and carrying an umbrella. M was for Mushroom, and from the picture in the book I drew a large mushroom with elves dancing around it, and so on. (I had packed my watercolours, pastels, and crayons as "recreational equipment.")

I was delighted when after about ten days their temperatures became normal. I remembered what the doctor had said about checking it for five days before allowing them to do anything active. On the third day, when not only were they feeling better but also looking better, a volunteer nurse came to visit them in the afternoon. "Oh," she said, "they look fine. Let us get them into some clothes and I'll take them out for a short walk." I protested. The doctor had said five, not three days. But the nurse was adamant and said she would take full responsibility. I wish she had, for that short walk set them back again. Their temperatures rose, and we were back to square one; it took me— not that stupid "makee-learn" young nurse—another ten days of nursing before the children were normal again. I could have killed her. She never showed up again, and I never looked for her, for I knew we would have had words! But in retrospect I was partly to blame. I should have thrown her out of the room on her first and only visit.

What a relief when I could take the children out for short, slow walks, at first to the end of the row, and gradually increased distances until they could get as far as the ball field to watch the baseball. By the end of the summer recess we had organized a track-and-field day for school children, their parents, and teachers. It was a riot. In the husband-and-wife three-legged race, Bertram and I came a dismal last, but Hilary and her daddy won the father-and-daughter relay.

Clarice Lawless died in hospital from complications following paratyphoid fever. It was unbelievable. She had been such a strong, healthy-looking individual and as Peter, her husband, said, "Never had a day's illness in her life." Poor man, he was crushed with grief. We never told the children, and they believed she was still "living in hospital."

The food situation seemed to get worse day by day. Supplies were fewer and not always edible. We had several deliveries of "slightly off" meat, and one very hot day a load of fish was delivered. Without proper refrigeration its journey of six hours from Tsingtao on the coast had been too much for it. "Bad" is the only word to describe its condition upon arrival. Word came around that we had to collect our rations of this raw fish from the kitchens, but we were warned not to eat it; we had to bury that night's supper. Had we not accepted it, we feared the Japanese would probably punish us by cutting down on the next day's supplies. Those poor cooks in camp never knew from day to day what would be delivered. With the fish buried in the ground, our supper that night was one baked potato and two slices of bread. Formerly we used to be able to eat as much bread as we liked, but no longer. It was now rationed at two slices a meal.

Later that summer we had a serious problem among the younger teen-agers, those who on entering camp were eleven or twelve years old and had now reached their "terrible teens" stage, Parents were losing control and sex was taking over. As rumours began to circulate, the parents became frantic. They asked for an investigation by the Discipline Committee, which discovered that these teens were sneaking out after lights out. They were found in the basement of one of the buildings where apparently for some time they had been holding sex orgies. The distraught parents held meetings and eventually turned to the missionary teachers for help.

A game room was organized where under supervision chess and checker tournaments, Scottish dancing, one-act plays, and puppet shows were carried on. All the miscreants had to attend every night from Monday to Friday. The youngsters were resentful at first, but strangely enough they began to enjoy these get-togethers. The man most responsible for the success of the solution was Eric Liddell, whom many will know as the missionary Olympic hero in the film Chariots ofFire. A handsome Scot in his mid-forties, he was a prince among men. His wife and family had escaped internment by leaving on that first Gripsholm repatriation from North China. Only three months before the war ended Eric Liddell was stricken with a brain tumour. One morning he awakened with a severe headache, and he died the same day. His death more than anything else had a very sobering effect on those teen-agers, and they stood and wept openly at his burial.

In July 1944 the first Red Cross parcels arrived in camp, but only for the two hundred Americans who were

still interned. We who were not American could only stand and drool as we watched the distribution of the parcels outside the General Affairs office. Were we envious? You bet your life we were! But this delivery had been clearly earmarked for U.S. citizens. Maybe—just maybe—we would get some later on. I must say that most of the recipients did give the rest of us some food from their parcels. We were most impressed with American generosity, for there was hardly anyone in camp who did not receive something.

The winter of 1944-45 was if anything colder and more miserable than our first winter in camp. Heavy snow added to our misery; this coupled with pangs of hunger put the camp's morale at a critical low. The future looked as bleak as the weather. Then suddenly, and without warning, early in January another load of parcels arrived. The camp gates swung open and the donkey carts that brought in our daily supplies came crunching through the snow, piled high with boxes of Red Cross parcels— hundreds of them! In no time at all the entire camp turned out to see this miracle. We hugged each other; some laughed and others cried. We were all amazed and almost hysterical as we counted fifteen carts each with one hundred parcels, clearly labelled "American Red Cross." Surely all this load could not be just for the two hundred Americans? There was no covering letter and no information as to who was to get them. The Americans thought they were the rightful owners. This nearly caused a riot, for there were certainly sufficient parcels for distribution to all in camp. The upshot of it all was that the parcels were piled up in the church until inquiries could be made.

Two days later the Japanese Commandant announced that the parcels were to be distributed to everyone in camp at 10 a.m. the next day. We could hardly sleep for the excitement and joy of anticipation. We got up early the next morning and lined up to get our treasures. To our dismay the distribution was cancelled and a notice was posted:

"Due to protests from the American Community, the parcels will not be distributed today as announced. The Commandant."

Our joyful anticipation turned to disbelief and anger. We felt robbed, crushed, abandoned, and above all filled with hatred for those who had perpetrated this outrage. The protest was said to have been made by a group of young American men who went to the commandant and demanded to see what authorization the Japanese had for distribution to the whole camp. Tokyo had to be contacted. Meanwhile arguments and fights broke out between those Americans and the anxious, exasperated, hungry, hopeful residents. Even some of the American themselves were upset by this delay, for everyone would receive a fair share.

It took ten days to iron out the dispute and before we received news from Tokyo that the parcels were intended for everyone ten anxious days of waiting and wondering. When at last we did receive them they were lovely, absolutely lovely, and quite large, too. Before opening his, Bertram measured it and found it was three feet long, one foot wide, and eighteen inches high. Hilary, Beryl, and I sat on the floor and watched him open it with his penknife. It contained four sections, and Bertram figured each section held about eleven pounds of supplies. There were powdered milk, cigarettes, four tins of butter, three of Spam, a pound of cheese, chocolate, sugar, instant coffee, jam, salmon, liver paté, dried prunes, and raisins in each section. Bertram noted down each item as he unpacked: "a record for future reference," he said, "for when we write our memoirs."

There was a parcel for each of us with exactly the same contents. The cigarettes, which were of no use to the children, were Camels and so strong after the pitiful Chinese things we had been smoking that the first puff nearly knocked us senseless. Apart from cigarettes, Bertram totalled up the combined contents of our four parcels and estimated we had at least 150 pounds of glorious, edible foodstuffs. What a change after bread and water—oh yes, and those watery stews. The doctors issued a warning that this rich and unaccustomed food had to be taken in limited quantities or we would become ill. Some of the members of the Tientsin Jazz Band scoffed at this and went on a real binge. They landed in hospital and had to have the stomach- pump treatment!

Now this was January 1945. Why had those parcels taken nearly two years to reach us? But heaven knows, it was better late than never. The psychological effect of those Red Cross parcels was to stimulate hope and encourage our determination to survive. Although there had not been any suicides in camp, there had been many cases of despondency and depression. We were now assured, through the parcels, that outside those high camp walls there were people who cared; we had not been abandoned. Inside camp the unfortunate dispute over the distribution had almost been forgotten, and peace was restored.

#

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Rescued At Last

Bertram no longer worked in the bakery because early in 1944 he had developed a very peculiar throat infection. Dr. Hope-Gill thought it might have resulted from inhaling something in the flour, the Heinz 57 variety as the bakers called it. It had so many different substances in its composition: some wheat flour enhanced with ground peanut shells, millet, white beans, corn, and heaven knows what else. That was why after its first day's freshness the bread dried out quickly and it was like eating gritty cardboard. Strangely enough, rice was never found to be part of Heinz 57! In rice-eating China we saw not one grain of rice during our internment. Poor Bertram had a rough time with that throat infection. It was my task to paint the back of his throat with some medication concocted by Dr. Hope-Gill. It caused great pain during the process, but it cured him eventually.

Bertram was now comptroller of Kitchen 1, which served eight hundred internees. These he had to watch at every mealtime because when food became short it was found that some unscrupulous people at the head of the queue would take their rations to their rooms and then dash back to join the tail end of the queue for another serving. This often deprived honest latecomers of their fair share. It was not an easy job but one in which Bertram got to know about half of the camp's inmates quite intimately. It required skill, diplomacy, and a good memory, and Bertram had all these qualifications. Our little family still continued to eat in our room, for Bertram would have our rations set aside, and after his checking job he would bring the food home. It meant only that we ate a little later than the others.

We started to do quite a brisk exchange business with the contents of our parcels. Nuns who didn't smoke would swap cigarettes for something edible—preferably chocolate. Bachelors—some of whom swore they hadn't drunk milk since being weaned—would eagerly swap their milk powder for the children's issue of cigarettes. People allergic to fish would exchange salmon for Spam. Some diabetics in camp would give jam in return for salmon, and so on. It became quite well organized, and notices would be put up in the Elephant Bell under the heading "Parcel Exchange." It kept us busy and helped to pass those cold dismal days of January and February.

Our family rationed our own supplies very carefully, for we had no idea how the war was progressing or when it would end. Such news as the Japanese would allow into camp via the occasional newspaper was full of their own propaganda and better left unread.

With the approach of spring, sunny mornings, the songs of birds and bursting of buds made life a little brighter if still overshadowed by that rumour of sending the men in camp away. This was the meanest form of mental torture and a possibility that could not be ignored.

In the summer when the heat made classroom study unbearable we organized Summer School. For the past two summers I had taught handwork (mostly sewing), outdoor sketching, and country dancing. In the summer of 1945 I was asked to head the Summer School for girls. The boys were under the organizing skills of a missionary teacher. He could enlist the help of anyone, not necessarily in the teaching profession, who would instruct small groups of boys in carpentry, watch repair, shoe repair, and electrical and engineering techniques.

I had a staff of nuns to help me, and we decided to concentrate on sewing: dressmaking, repairs, and alterations. Some internees had lost so much weight that their clothes almost fell off them, needing "taking in" and sprucing up. We had five treadle sewing machines in camp. For dressmaking we needed material and thread and equipment such as scissors and tape measures. Some of these could be collected from the internees, but cloth? I approached General Affairs and pointed out that in their normal schooling the older girls would have received instruction in dressmaking in their Home Economics classes. Could I possibly prevail on the influence of the commandant to get cotton material for this purpose either through the Swiss Consul or from our comfort money funds? It was an ambitious project, but I had in mind that the girls would not only make dresses or shorts for themselves but also sew clothes for some of the younger children. Many had outgrown the clothes they had arrived in over two years earlier.

To my joy and amazement, the suggestion met with the approval of the Commandant, and we were in business. The six nuns who worked with me were marvellous. They drafted simple patterns, helped with the cutting out, and taught the older girls how to use the sewing machines. They also estimated how many yards of cloth would be needed and what thread was necessary for the treadle machines. Every scrap of material was put to use. We taught the younger children to make samplers from any leftover pieces. I still have one that Hilary made. It is a needle case of white cloth lined with pink flannelette. On it she learned to baste, hem, and cross-stitch. She also mastered stem-stitch on a simple design of two pink morning glories complete with tendrils and a couple of green leaves.

The nuns did most of the machine work after the girls had done the necessary basting, for we dared not suffer a failure. Sometimes the Commandant himself would drop by for a "look-see." When we saw him approach, the nuns would quickly seat the girls at the sewing machines while they stood by giving instructions. We had

a grand exhibition of the finished work, which was inspected and praised by the Commandant. Proud parents also came to see their children's accomplishments. Thus the older girls each got a fresh new dress and some of the younger children got outfits too. They would have something new to wear on Victory Day.

Summer School ended in the first week of August when students and teachers alike had a break from the classrooms and each other. Now that the terrifically humid heat of July was behind us, sports days and baseball games were organized. It was at about this time that some news of the war reached us through an English -language newspaper published by the Japanese. It was most disheartening. We read of great Japanese victories; we learned of fighting in strange places such as Guam and Guadalcanal; we were informed of the sinking of the entire American navy and the shooting down of thousands of U.S. planes. Meanwhile our black-market Chinese allies sent in messages about the war's progress that completely contradicted the Japanese propaganda.

We ourselves had received such a communication early in December 1943 when we were buying eggs over the wall. Early one dark winter morning before Bertram returned from his job in the bakery, I heard gravel thrown at the window of our room then the gruff whisper of Han Lin-shun: "Hai Tai, Hai Tai, lai [Mrs. Hale, Mrs. Hale, come, come!]." I made sure no guards; were around, quickly collected the basket of eggs, and stepped back into the room. This time there was a letter hidden under the eggs. I did nothing about it until Bertram returned, and before the children awakened we read it together.

It was typed on the finest quality rice paper and "bordered" in red. Its contents astounded us. This is what we read:

Western Gentlemen

I communicate the following to you privately. Last month the King of Germany Hsi-t'e la [Hitler] fled. We allies England, America, China, France, Russia—five nations—in Annam Burma and South China—three sectors—completely annihilated the Japanese troops. Our chairman Chiang has dispatched 2 1/2 million troops to fight around Ch'ang Chow, Hunan. The airplanes of the three allies England, U.S. and China number 10,000 machines. All of the inferior Japanese troops are being exterminated through bombings. In the five provinces from the Yangtse River through North China the inferior Japanese troops number altogether 300,000. Troops in all parts of China are listening only to Chairman Chiang's orders and are attacking. Looking at the morale of the Japanese one sees that they are truly dismayed. In Tsingtao the Japanese cotton mills have loaded all their machinery on ships and sent them back to their country. At present all kinds of Japanese goods such as bolts of cloth, cotton material, grains, and coal can be purchased only at exorbitant prices. The merchants are depending on the opposition of our government to the Japanese military and we are assisting you. Most likely within two or three months after New Year, you Western Gentlemen will be able to return to your countries. We allied nations are now singing the song of peace. It is certain now. According to our Central (Chungking) broadcasts inferior Japanese will have to return to China all her leased territories—China's Formosa, Dairen, Port Arthur and Manchuria. This is certain. Troops of the three allied nations England U.S. China will occupy Japan for this purpose. The Japanese are not sincere. They are unwilling to yield. Within four or five months after the turn of the year, Japan will certainly be destroyed. Now the prices of all goods have gone up too high because the Federale Reserve Bank paper notes have become worthless, no one dares to keep them. Those having FRB notes are investing in goods. Looking at the Japanese military and the capitalists one sees they are alarmed. The Japanese troops cannot return to their country. They have to die in China.

Our military headquarters for the Lu-Su (Shantung-Kiangsu) war sector has a radio station. Every evening there are Central (Chungking) broadcasts. We have assumed responsibility for investigating Japanese activities. We have secret work to do. Inform all other Western Gentlemen of these things.

After seeing these words, quickly burn them in fire for your well-being.

December 18 (1943)

This letter was obviously written by a well-educated Chinese a remarkable command of the English language. Its contents, fever, were extremely dangerous should they fall into Japanese hands! His optimistic prediction that "within four or months after the turn of the year Japan will certainly be destroyed" would mean he expected the war to end a few months r the Chinese New Year—perhaps May to July 1944 at the latest. This, if true, was a comforting thought.

But the end of the letter sent cold shivers down my spine. ram realized how risky it was to have it: "like holding a bomb," he said. Nonetheless, he believed it to be genuine said I must never, never mention it to anyone. He would with it and place the information in the right hands. To day I do not know to whom he

showed the letter; in fact, he n- referred to it again, and I soon forgot its contents. Nor did he obey the writer's instruction to burn the letter. I came across it again among his papers only after his death in 1973.

By now, of course, it was 1945. The summer was hotter than usual, and there seemed no end in sight of the grind of daily chores to keep ourselves alive. There was little to lift our spirits. Then one bright morning early in August a large plane was sighted high in the sky, and from it, like manna from heaven, rained down hundreds and hundreds of leaflets. What an amazing scene as they showered the camp while the internees rushed about collecting them! The news they contained was incredible and heart-warming. On one side the paper read:

ATTENTION ALLIED PRISONERS

On the reverse was this message:

Allied Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees, these are your orders and/or instructions in case there is a capitulation of the Japanese Forces.

1. You are to remain in your camp area until you receive further instructions from this headquarters.

2. Law and order will be maintained in the camp area.

3. In case of Japanese surrender there will be allied occupational forces sent into your camp to care for your needs and eventual evacuation to your homes. You must help by remaining in the area in which we now know you are located.

4. Camp leaders are charged with these responsibilities.

5. The end is near. Do not be disheartened. We are thinking of you. Plans are under way to assist you at the earliest possible moment.

A.C. Wedemeyer

Lieutenant General, U.S.A. Commanding

Not even a dozen Red Cross parcels could have given me more comfort, delight, even ecstasy than that little four-inch-square piece of paper with its message, "The end is near." Those magical, incredible words! Of one thing we were certain: that message from General Wedemeyer was genuine and sincere.

Later, of course, we learned of the atomic bomb and the dreadful destruction of Hiroshima and then of Nagasaki, but at the time we knew nothing of these events. We had no idea of the destructive force of that monster bomb; remember, we had had no regular news of the outside world for over two years except that issued by the Japanese. At first we assumed Hiroshima had suffered the type of bombing that London had suffered. What we learned of the power of the new bomb was terrifying. When we returned to Peking a scientist told us that no one would ever know how long the nuclear reaction resulting from the release of the bombs would last or how far it would penetrate the universe. Those bombs did stop the war, but what damage had they done to our planet?

The item in the leaflet calling on camp leaders to face their responsibilities led to secret meetings of the camp's committee members, including Bertram. They formed what was tantamount to a civilian secret service, so secret, indeed, that not even wives were to know of it. This group was to be at the ready when the end came. They had to control and restrain the internees. Equally, they had to ward off any hostile action by the Japanese should that be necessary.

After the dropping of the leaflets there was a marked change in the attitude of the Japanese guards. It was obvious that Commandant Watanabi had given his guards a translation of the message from General Wedemeyer. They seemed less aggressive, though they remained as poker-faced as ever, and if they had any bitter feelings they did not show them outwardly. Watanabi himself, who was generally disliked by us, also seemed more subdued, and his arrogance at our regular roll-calls on the baseball field was definitely lessened.

Camp life carried on as usual but with an undercurrent of expectation and hope. About a week later, Bertram returned from his job in Kitchen 1 with that "I've got a secret" look written all over his face. "Well," I said, "what is it?"

"What's what?" he queried.

"Oh, come on, Bertram. I can tell by your face that something has happened."

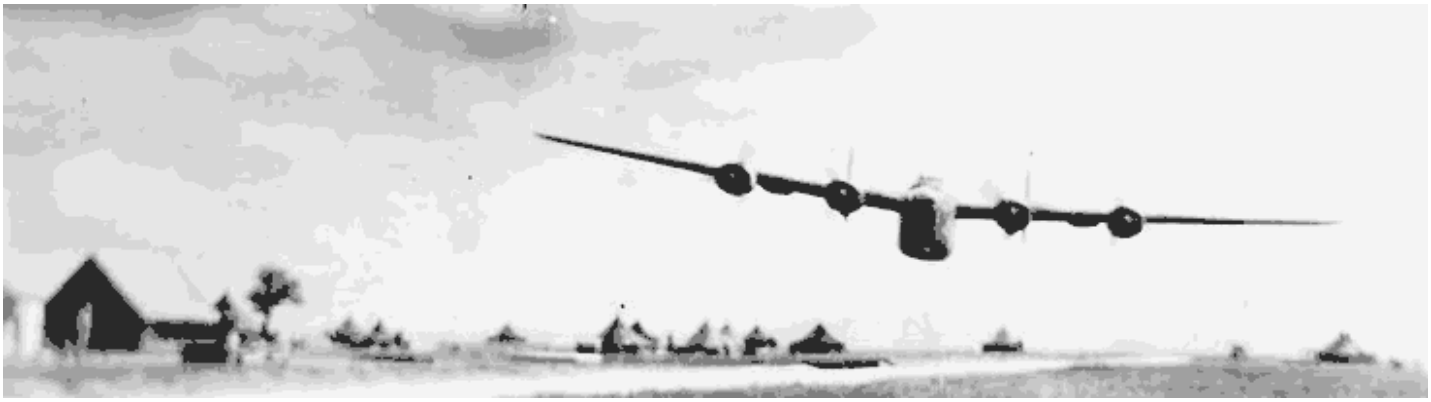
He came closer and whispered, "Can you keep a secret?" "Of course I can if I have to," I replied.

"Well," he said very dramatically, "the war is over!" "Since when?" I retorted sarcastically. I really thought he was joking.

"Since a few hours ago. I stepped out of the kitchen and bumped into Ted McLaren, who was looking for me. He told me and also asked me to tell the other committee members in strict secrecy."

Ted McLaren, before coming out to the Far East as a banker, had been a Scottish International Rugby player and a great friend of Eric Liddell's. He was a tall, handsome fellow and very popular with the internees. "And how, pray, did Ted McLaren get this astounding news?" I queried.

"From the coolies, who told that missionary chap who



works on the Labour Committee and speaks excellent Chinese.* He told Ted that the news had been broadcast over the Chungking radio."

"There you are," I said. "Coolie rumour again. If it is really true, why doesn't Watanabi make an announcement to the whole camp. Why this secrecy?"

"Because," replied Bertram, "until it is officially confirmed it must be kept secret in case some hothead in camp decides to take out his revenge on one of the guards he hates. That would lead to heaven knows what catastrophe. Remember, Hilda, the guards are armed and we are not. Also, we must obey the instructions issued by General Wedemeyer in the pamphlets that were air-dropped."

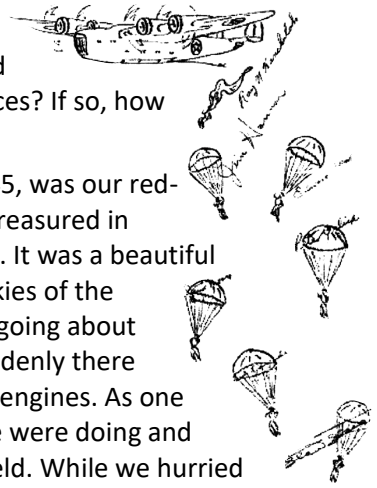
By now I was convinced that Bertram believed the war was over. My emotions were a mixture of relief, joy, and a fear of the Japanese reaction. I suddenly felt very weak, and as my knees began to collapse I sat on the bed and burst into tears. Thank goodness the children were not around. Bertram sat down beside me and put his arm around me. "Tears of joy, I hope," he said.

Then I said, stupidly, "Who won?"

He burst into a guffaw. "We did, of course. It's all over and we are free!"

By the next morning the "secret" was all over camp, but there was not a word from the Japanese. That was Tuesday morning. Nor did we hear anything further on Wednesday morning, and the suspense was terrible. By the evening of that same day the adults in camp decided to go to the Commandant's office and seek the truth. But when Watanabi came out and saw this mass of internees in belligerent mood, he took to his heels and fled to the Japanese quarters without uttering a word! There was nothing we could do but return to our rooms.

Thursday came and went with still no official news of the Japanese defeat. It was a day filled with apprehension and uncertainty as we endeavoured to carry on with our camp jobs. Would the Japanese sneak away and leave us to our own devices? If so, how would we get supplies?



Friday, August 16, 1945, was our red-letter day, always to be treasured in memory as Freedom Day. It was a beautiful summer day with clear skies of the bluest blue. We were all going about our usual work when suddenly there was the roar of a plane's engines. As one we stopped whatever we were doing and rushed to the baseball field. While we hurried along a huge plane roared overhead just above the treetops, and we could see the U.S. markings on its side. We learned later that it was a four-engine B29.* No wonder that at that height it made such a deafening noise. After it circled the camp it rose up in the sky and circled around again. This time it dropped parachutes weighted with small packages that landed beyond the camp walls. Then the plane went off into the distance. What had it dropped, and why had it flown off? Suddenly we saw it approaching the camp again, flying quite high this time. Wonder of wonders, we saw its huge belly open, and out floated men dangling from large parachutes. A wild cry went up from the internees as we realized this was a rescue mission.

Headed by the men in camp, a wild and noisy stampede of people astonished the guards as they burst through the camp gates to meet our rescuers. This mad rush of humanity alarmed me as I held back with Hilary and Beryl. I had caught a glimpse of Bertram going out with the first group of men.

"Come on, Mummy," yelled Hilary, and taking the children's hands I followed the rest of the pack into the outside world we had not seen for so long.

Following the crowd, we got close enough to see the

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* … the "Missionary chap" was Father Raymond de-Jaegher … a key individual in the camp's intelligencia. — GoTo: http://weihsien-paintings.org/rdjaegher/SAM/txt_fromPekingUK.htm

- In fact, it was a B-24 — the "Armored Angel"

GoTo: http://weihsien-paintings.org/The7Magnificent/photos/p_TheSeven.htm#10

Americans emerging from the field of kaoliang where they had taken cover. They told us later we were a terrifying sight and looked barely human. They saw gaunt and skeletal, ill-clad creatures, many with bare feet, dancing around, jumping up and down, cheering, laughing and crying at the same time. They said it was the most moving thing they had ever witnessed.

The leader of our men spoke to them, and they in turn asked to be taken to the camp. Their request was interpreted literally as each GI and the commanding officer were hoisted shoulder-high and trotted off to the camp, with the rest of the jubilant internees close behind. I had lost sight of Bertram among all this confusion. The pace of the return was too fast for the legs of the children, so we brought up the rear. When we reached camp we saw the paratroops slide to the ground and go through the camp gates but were not close enough to see what happened next. Bertram told me later that there was a dramatic incident when the Japanese guards raised their rifles and the Americans aimed their handguns. For a tense instant these enemy soldiers just stared at each other. Would the Japanese open fire? Then the captain of the guards barked out an order in Japanese, and the rest lowered their rifles. As Bertram said, it was a heart-stopping moment, "but thank God common sense prevailed." Then the U.S. major in charge asked Ted McLaren to take him to the quarters of the Japanese commandant. There, behind closed doors, the surrender took place, and the Americans became our protectors in charge of the camp.

Our fellow internee Dennis Fulton told me only recently that he did not see the actual changeover. Instead, he and two other kitchen workers were trundling a kitchen trolley out to pick up the packages that had been dropped. These contained radio and electrical equipment.

With our newfound freedom, those of us with young children organized picnics by the banks of a river about two miles away. After eating in a nine-by-twelve-foot room for two and a half years, this freedom and fresh air was almost intoxicating. Some of the young men and women went farther afield to a Weihsien City restaurant for Chinese chow. The local farmers living in that small village of mud huts close to the camp set up braziers and sold fried chicken or roasted corn-on-the-cob. We met Han Lin-shun and paid off our debt. It was strange seeing him from top to bottom when formerly I'd only seen the top of his black head. He was ugly and stocky but had the most endearing grin when he greeted me with "Hai Tai-tai, Hai Tai-tai, i-na-ha? [Mrs. Hale, Mrs. Hale, how are you?]"

The Americans made many changes in the camp, and while for the most part we continued our daily chores, the load seemed lighter. We no longer had to leap out of bed at 7 a.m. every day for roll-call and head count. The engineers among the paratroopers got busy installing electric speakers at the end of every third row. Knowing the fluctuating local electric current as we did, we wished them luck. One morning shortly after their arrival we were awakened at 6 a.m. with MUSIC—loud, penetrating music. Someone with a marked American accent was belting out:

Oh what a beautiful morning,
Oh what a beautiful day!
I've got a wonderful feeling
Everything's going my way.

We who had not heard anything more recent than "There'll Always Be an England" and "God Bless America" on phonographs that had been brought into camp were bewildered. Instead of the Japanese roll-call bell, someone was singing us awake! Well, we thought it a bit of a giggle on that first occasion, but when it continued for the next three days, some of our camp engineers decided enough was enough and cut the wires. The American captain in charge of our "morale" rehabilitation was extremely upset—hurt, in fact. But he acknowledged the warning that as an ongoing cure for whatever ailed us, this was not acceptable. From then on we had no more wake-up music, but the speakers were restored and were useful for important announcements.

About a month * following our rescue a flight of eleven B29s was spotted coming in from the east. They seemed to fill the sky as they circled high above us. Suddenly they opened their bellies and released great loads of goods that floated down on parachutes into the countryside around us. Heavy drums of canned goods hit the ground like bombs. Many burst open, scattering their contents of peaches, pineapple, and apricots among the burst cans. The local Chinese were there like a flash of bolt lightening, outrunning our men in hot pursuit of this unexpected bonus from the sky. Bertram reported it as being chaos (he was one of our volunteers who rushed out with handcarts to retrieve these food supplies). Just when the internees thought they had collected what was fit for eating, these great planes came in a second time, and a third, dropping their lethal gifts. It was a wonder no one was killed as the crates and drums plummeted to the ground, for by that time there were hundreds of Chinese and most of our able-bodied men on the site. Many of the Chinese started eating the contents on the spot. Tales were told of their tasting shaving cream, for they could not read English labels. One ran off with a box

* The first of the B-29 US bombers arrived over Weihsien with food cannisters just 10 days after our liberation . GoTo: http://www.weihsien-paintings.org/PeterBazire/diaryBook/Wednesday.htm

marked "Medicines," and yet another swallowed a whole bottle of vitamin pills. Such were the stories that reached camp when our exhausted and shaken men returned.

The B29s came back about every four days and continued for the next three weeks or so. The drop technique improved, and less food was lost; but there was always the chance of some miscalculation. I still remember the time a Field Day was set up for the children. The Americans organized it beautifully with bunting and flags and a yellow parachute covering the baseball diamond. I took the children to see what was going on about eleven in the morning. The track meet was scheduled for 2 p.m. Suddenly a single plane approached and seemed almost to hover above us as it opened its belly to drop its load. Fortunately we were walking along the edge of the field, and before the load hit the ground a tall GI rushed over to us and pushed us and himself into the drainage ditch at the field's edge. It was dry and empty, and we arose frightened and bruised but still alive! If that GI had not been so resourceful it might have been another story. Some of those heavy crates missed us by only a few feet. Drums of supplies actually crashed through the roofs of several rooms bordering the field, but luckily no one was inside. That certainly put paid to the Field Day. Instead of sports the competitors spent the entire afternoon cleaning up the mess. It seems that the pilot of the B29, seeing the flags, bunting, and that yellow parachute, thought it was a drop-site.

In spite of all this largess rained down upon us, we were very unsettled. Although we were rescued and rid of our captors, we were not yet freed. The original group of paratroopers left the camp after about ten days. They were replaced by a regular army unit that arrived in large army trucks. There were about forty men under a colonel of the U.S. Army. He almost immediately told us through the loud-speaker set-up that, regrettably, there was no hope of evacuation at once. It appeared that guerrillas had cut the railway lines to Tsingtao on the coast, which meant we would have to remain in camp for at least another month. Our disappointment at not being able to resume our former lives in a civilized world cast a terrible gloom over the camp, and morale sank to low ebb. Food we had. Freedom we had not.

Our dismay was heightened by the arrival of a British general from Chungking whose tale of doom and gloom sent cold shivers down my back. He addressed all the assembled British internees and told us that life in China was over for us. During our internment, small businesses had been destroyed, shops and godowns (warehouses) had been looted, and since the defeat of the Japanese everything had passed into Chinese hands, with no hope of reparations. "Colonial life" in China, he said, was a thing of the past. Foreign firms were no longer welcome, and protection of foreign residential areas was

Weihsien Camp – September 1, 1945
British internees assembled to meet an English General from Chungking who told us to get out of China. We were not welcome. Our homes, businesses and warehouses had been ransacked. There would be no protection for foreigners in the future! We were still in camp because bandits had blown up the railway lines. The men who are naked to the waist had been collecting food drops from U.S. planes outside the camp.

impossible. "Go home," he advised us. "Seek refuge with relatives in England or find jobs in other parts of the British Empire such as Australia, Canada, or New Zealand." Of course, many old China hands with their own small businesses who had lived in China all their

DESTINATION SUMMARY

1 = Tientsin; 2 = Peking; 3 = Tsingtao; 4 = Chefoo; 5 = Shanghai; 6 = Abroad; 7 = Weihsien; 8 = Total

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
American	60	54	15	1	2	49	3	184
British	502	113	52	58	14	257		996
Canadian	6	16			17			40
Belgian	27	10	6		1	5		49
Cuban	7							7
Dutch	16	2	7	2		3		30
Filipino					1			1
Greek			9	5	2			16
Indian		1						1
Iranian		9						9
Norwegian	1		3	2		9		15
Palestinian	8					1		9
Panamanian	2							2
Uruguayan			1					1
Italian	21	13		1	64	9		108
Total	650	209	104	68	83	351	3	1,488

lives, as had their fathers before them, had no relatives to go to in England—or anywhere else. Listening to that General, we found it hard to believe the war was over and we were victorious! He flew back to Chungking leaving a despondent group of his fellow countrymen behind him. We knew that everything he told us was true, and the future looked grim.

When evacuation eventually became possible, Bertram worked closely on it with the American colonel. I have some old correspondence and papers among which is an interesting list Bertram had compiled of all the different nationals in camp and where they had lived prior to internment. This was for Colonel Weinberger's guidance in arranging the evacuation.

Toward the middle of September 1945, the colonel said he had at last been able to arrange rail transportation to the coast. It was to be for those Americans and British who wished to return to their homelands. From Tsingtao they would be transported by ship to England or San Francisco. We did not apply, for we wished to return to Peking where we had left furniture, some antiques, and my jewellery as well as a house in the countryside. Many others wished to return to their previous posts in China, such Tientsin, Chefoo, Peking, or Tsingtao, to try to salvage what was left of their homes and businesses. Sadly, it was wasted effort in most cases, and all eventually were forced to leave China once the Communists took control. The Hennings were among the last to leave—about eighteen months after leaving camp.

Bertram's office, too, needed his attention. During our internment one of the not-so-pleasant Japanese commandants had forced Bertram to divulge the combination of the office safe. He actually made threats against me and the children, as Bertram's letter written from Weihsien on September 27, 1945, explains:

Block 14 Room 11 C.A.C.
Weihsien, Shantung Sept. 27th 1945
Applicant: B.C. Hale
Nationality : British

Profession: Travel Agent and Banker (Manager for North China of Messrs Thos. Cook & Son, Ltd.)

Remarks: On July 17th 1943 while in this camp and in the presence of Mr. Joerg—Swiss Consul General of Tientsin—I was forced by the Japanese under threat of action against my wife and children, to divulge the combinations of my office safe in Peking.

I am anxious to return before the evacuation of the Japanese Consular Official responsible for the purpose of apprehending him (a certain Mr. Honda).

Furthermore, my Far Eastern General Manager [J.H. Green] is now in Peking having been transferred with the Haiphong Road Shanghai "Political Prisoners" and I wish to consult him on this question and that of resumption of business as early as possible.

B.C. Hale

Thus our reasons for wanting to return to Peking were for business as well as personal matters. When eventually we did get back to Peking there was no trace of that "certain Mr. Honda" Bertram wanted to apprehend. Heaven knows what he intended to do to him! Nor did we meet Mr. Green. He had had to return to Shanghai to attend to salvaging Cook's office there.

The first evacuees left camp for Tsingtao on September 25, 1945. Among those leaving was our friend Lang Gilkey. As he walked with others to the waiting trucks that were to take them to Weihsien station, we felt sad and disconsolate. Would we ever meet again? Our own release did not take place until nearly a month later. Indeed, it was rumoured that a question was asked in the House of Commons in London as to the whereabouts of the lost tribes of Weihsien. I cannot substantiate this tale, but it could be true. Bertram was still trying to get the remaining internees out of camp, which was a losing battle because the guerrillas had resumed their sabotage of the railways. On one occasion a large group of our people destined for Tientsin got as far as the railway station in Weihsien City only to learn that the railway lines had been demolished. The poor souls had to return to camp to try to pick up where they had left off. These miserable conditions continued for another three or four weeks. Eventually the U.S. Marines had to be called upon to airlift all the remaining internees to their desired destinations. I believe it was about October 17, 1945, when our little family got out.

A truck took us to the local airfield where we boarded a military plane (a Dakota) with bucket seats on each side of the passenger compartment. We travelled with some U.S. Marines who were being posted to Peking under the command of General Jones. This plane did not make it to Peking. The radio-man received a message saying the airfield there was closed down because of a military plane crash. We were to land at Tientsin and then go by train for the rest of the journey to Peking. From the airfield we were taken to Tientsin railway station in a Jeep while the Marines followed in trucks. We'd never seen a Jeep before! What other strange new things would we encounter after our incarceration? We had seen huge planes filling the skies, watched men and goods floating to the ground under parachutes, and from comfort parcels tasted new foods like Prem and Spam; even the names were new to us. It was rather frightening, a bit like Rip van Winkle awakening.

The gloomy railway station at Tientsin revived the memory of that incident when the Japanese guard had yelled at me and scared the children on our way into internment. Now here we were being escorted by

American Marines on our way out of captivity. While we were waiting for the train one of the Marines came over to us and gave Hilary and Beryl each a banana. I don't recall if they'd ever seen a banana before going into camp. Beryl examined hers and tried to bite it, skin and all. The Marine laughed. "No, honey. Not that way. You gotta peel a banana before you eat it."

"I don't think they've ever had bananas before," I said.

He looked astounded. "Never had bananas? Gee, that's terrible," he said. "Poor kids."

The train journey to Peking was uneventful and comparatively comfortable. As the train pulled in at Chienmen Station a tear trickled down my cheek. To be back again in Peking seemed unbelievable. Somehow I could not blot out the memory of the last time we had stood on that station platform over two and a half years before, waiting to be transported into the unknown. The reality had been a long, miserable imprisonment that, thank God, was now behind us. But would we ever be able to forget it?

There had been no bombing of Peking. While we had been in England on extended leave from 1937 to 1939, the Japanese had taken over Peking without any fighting or destruction. During the war years, unlike Shanghai, Chungking, and other cities that were heavily bombed, Peking remained unscathed. When we left it was still a walled city of magnificent palaces, temples, and imperial treasures, which I think the invaders wanted to preserve. It was Mao Tse-tung who tore down the great city gates and enormous walls and used the huge granite blocks to make the road to the Ming tombs and to build memorial halls to himself! One post-war book I have read calls this "the rape of Peking."

We were met by two of Bertram's ex-office staff who told him that we had missed John Henry Green by thirty-six hours. Green had taken advantage of a military flight to Shanghai to salvage what was left of Cook's office there. Also on hand to greet us were some of our old servants—Hsu, Ping, and Cook Wang, all grinning and kowtowing—and, glory be, dear plump Wang Nai-nai and skinny Dai Yeh. Our greetings of reunion were sincere and moving but had to be cut short, for we were ushered to a waiting Jeep to be driven to the Peking Hotel (I never, ever got used to its proper name, Grand Hôtel de Pekin -- to me so Frenchy).

As we drove through the crowded streets everything looked the same except that there were no Japanese to be seen. Tall American soldiers were marching along in twos. They wore red armbands with "M.P." stamped on them, which the driver told us meant military police. We saw the usual rabble of rickshaws—human beasts of burden hauling heavily laden carts—pole-toting coolies balancing baskets of produce as they swung along with their peculiar gait, a camel or two (these intrigued the children), and a few bicycles, probably our two among them. We passed a few more military Jeeps and one saloon car that caught Bertram's eye. (No, it was not our old Hillman Minx! We had traded that car for a Pontiac when we went to live in Paomachang.) It was a large American car with a most peculiar contraption mounted on its rear. It was puffing out smoke!

"What in heaven's name is that?" inquired Bertram.

"Oh, you'll see quite a few of those around," the driver said. "When the Japs ran out of gasoline the clever little monkeys invented those charcoal burners. They work okay for short distances." We were to inherit one of these ourselves in the near future.

Dear old manager Rustan greeted us at the hotel, still as voluble as ever with so many *"mon dieus"* in his welcoming recital that it caused Hilary and Beryl to gaze at him in rapt bewilderment. He offered us champagne, but we said no, thank you; we'd have that welcoming drink after we had washed Weihsien off our bodies for good! Rustan applauded this idea, for we were not looking exactly Peking Hotel-style after our hectic journey by truck, plane, and dirty train—to say nothing of the ride through the dusty Peking streets in a Jeep. The ascent in the elevator to our room on the second floor was a great thrill for our girls. They were very disappointed when it ended so soon. Our large bedroom overlooked the wide, tree-lined thoroughfare and gave us a view of the old Legation Quarter and distant Chienmen Gate. The size of the room staggered the children. It had two double beds, a clothes cupboard, a dressing table, a small table at the window with four upright chairs and two armchairs, and there was still room to spread ourselves around. The thick pile carpet underfoot was the icing on the cake. The Japanese military had been billeted here during the war and had had their officers' club in the hotel. But Rustan had been there throughout and perhaps prevented undue damage to the place. Hilary and Beryl asked if they should remove their shoes. Bertram said it wasn't necessary, but they did so anyway. Then they skipped around in a delight of exploration. We heard joyful squeals from the bathroom when they discovered the flush toilet, a huge bath, and taps that supplied hot and cold water.

After the best clean-up we'd had since entering Weihsien Camp, we felt and looked like a million dollars dressed in our "Victory Best." I had to alter Hilary's dress by letting out the side seams and lowering the hem. Beryl could now fit comfortably into one of Hilary's pre-camp outfits. Then off to the dining room for our first real Victory dinner. A white-gloved waiter presented each of us with an enormous, elegant menu (Beryl got hers upside down). We found it difficult to select a simple meal, foods that our shrunken stomachs would safely accept. Rustan had presented us with

complimentary champagne, and there again we had to be very careful. The first tingling sip went straight to my head.

The children were perplexed by the different types of cutlery, for we had had no need to use a knife and fork with our camp stews. I suddenly remembered the wit in camp who had suggested that we didn't need "eating utensils," we needed drinking straws. At this memory I got the giggles. Bertram said I'd better watch that champagne, so to save face I told him why I was giggling. Even the children enjoyed that joke, and they became more relaxed. When they asked which utensil to use, Bertram said, "Just watch what Mummy and I do and you'll be okay." Bless them, how they tried, poor dears, but in the end they fell back on the familiar spoon.

The leisurely meal took some time. When I saw the sleepy look Beryl was trying to conquer, we headed straight back to our room. At the elevator a young officer approached us and asked if he could take our photographs for the U.S. Army files. Could he perhaps come up to our room later on? He did so, and by that time I was in bed with Hilary and Beryl on either side of me while I read to them. Bertram was at the window table working on some office business. He joined us by standing at the head of the bed, and the young lieutenant took several grouP photographs. He gave us one the next day; unfortunately that is one thing that over the years I have lost.

The next morning, after a most restful sleep, we were up early and immediately after breakfast went into action, Bertram to his office in the hotel and I on the telephone to let the Kandels and Burkhardts know of our safe return. I wanted to get the children's teeth checked by Dr. Kandel and asked him how soon he could see them.

"Oh, immediately," he said.

"Come along as soon as you can this morning."

I phoned Bertram and told him of my plans, and he asked if I needed a hire-car. I said the children wanted to go by rickshaw. He told me to make arrangements to use the hotel's rickshaws, for at present, until our finances were straightened out, everything was to be charged to the hotel.

We could not, at that time, realize what a chaotic financial situation existed in China. A previous Minister of Finance, H.H. Kung (brother-in-law of Chiang Kai-shek), had been printing money ad lib, and inflation had crescendoed until the currency was practically worthless. A friend of mine who after the war returned to her job as cashier in a foreign firm in Shanghai told me of the horrors of inflation. In order to collect the staff's wages from the bank, she had to go under armed escort in a truck. This vehicle was then filled with one-thousand-dollar bills tied up in bundles. We found ourselves in a somewhat similar fix in Peking, and there was a dramatic rush to change the worthless paper money into bullion in the form of small gold and silver bars. We were to face this panic buying a little later on.

The children and I were at the Kandels' in a matter of twenty minutes in three nice clean rickshaws in regular use by hotel clients and ordered by the hotel doorman. At the dental clinic I left the children to be examined by "Uncle" Leo and went upstairs where the Kandels had a nicely furnished apartment to see Friedl. I was not surprised to find Poni and Otto Burkhardt there too, and their joy at seeing me again was very moving. They remarked that I had got very thin but looked quite well. We all wanted to talk at once as we compared our miseries over the past war years. They too had suffered many privations from food rationing and gasoline shortages. They had also been subjected to regular house searches by the gendarmes.

"But they never found your jewels, Hilda," said Poni. "I have them safely hidden and will bring them to the hotel this afternoon. It would be better to keep them in Cook's office safe now."

They wanted to know how long we would be staying in the hotel, and I said only as long as it would take us to furnish and move back to our house in Paomachang. Otto did not think that that was a very wise move, for guerrilla warfare was still a factor in the outlying districts. This surprised me. I thought that with a U.S. Army of Occupation now in control all would be peaceful. But as Otto pointed out, the Americans were here to protect and help rehabilitate all Allied nationals after expelling the Japanese. We were all under Chinese rule now and would find it a very different way of life.

Poni and Otto drove us back to the hotel, and Poni said she would return later in the day. Otto was not in good health and needed to rest every afternoon. We called in at Cook's office to find Bertram in a fine old state; he was positively fuming about the office safe. He could not get it open. Only he knew the combination, so only he could open it. He blamed that Honda-san who had demanded to know the combination when we were interned. It seemed obvious that he too had been unable to open the safe. "He probably has damaged it in some way," said Bertram, "but let's leave it now. What about some tiffin?"

As the morning had been long and eventful, we were all ready for our lunch. We headed for the dining room, which was almost full of military personnel, but we had a table reserved for us. Bertram wanted to know about the children's teeth and also asked for news of our friends. I told him of Otto's concern about our moving out to Paomachang, but Bertram said we really had no choice. Our privileged stay in the hotel had to be limited as the

space had been commandeered by U.S. Army personnel. The Marine officers were billeted at the Wagon-Lits Hotel in the old Legation Quarter.

After lunch we put the children down for their afternoon siesta, and I returned with Bertram to his office. He was desperate to get that safe open. A letter from Mr. Green in Shanghai said, "When you get the B & E [Banking and Exchange] safe open, make a full record of all that is there, then close the safe again." "What irony," said Bertram after he read that part of Mr. Green's letter to me. "How the hell can I close something I can't open?"

I could see he was getting desperate as he tried again and again to open the confounded thing. "Let me try," said I.

"Well, it would be very unethical to give you the combination," he said, "but what the heck! If you can't trust your wife, who can you trust?" He then showed me how to turn the knob to the right, to the left, to the right again, and in each case to stop on a selected number, which he told me. He said to put my ear to the safe: "You should be able to hear the tumblers drop. Go ahead. Try your luck."

I had never opened a safe in my life, and incredible as it may seem, it was first time lucky for me. I did it! Bertram turned the handle and pulled open the door. He was ecstatic and picked me up and swung me around in a big hug. I could see he was anxious to get down to work, and I slipped away to look at the hotel shops. I had no money, so all I could do was to window shop, but I made a mental note of what I would buy when I could. During my explorations I happened to look into one of the small reception rooms that led off the hotel lobby. Something about this room looked familiar. Yes indeed! There stood four of our cane-back chairs with their brocaded seats that I had first seen in 1935 in Ta Po Ke Shih.

With this exciting discovery I rushed back to Bertram's office, and he too came to investigate. He at once set off to see M. Rustan, who agreed that it was our furniture, brought in by Japanese officers over whom he had no control. He also took us to another room that had been set up as a Japanese officers' club. In this we found five of our carpets. A lampstand and a settee that had been looted from our Paomachang home were found in other rooms. This was at least a start to refurnishing our home, and Rustan had no hesitation about admitting our claim. When eventually we did return to live in Paomachang he kindly lent us more furniture from the hotel. I have before me a very moth-eaten-looking memo typed on heavy greyish paper (headed "American Red Cross," in red letters) listing these furnishings:

4 chairs with cane backs in Room 338
1 settee with cane back in furniture room
5 carpets in Japanese Club
1 lampstand in Japanese Restaurant

The above represent identified personal property.

Furniture loaned:

1 settee with two easy chairs 1 round table with glass top
1 dining room table
8 dining room chairs
5 small lounge chairs
1 carpet.

We were now really getting somewhere. All we lacked were our beds (on their way from Weihsien) and our trunks with what we had taken into camp—bedding, clothes, utensils, and the famous cutlery. Our greatest need was transportation, and Bertram's next job was to contact the Japanese Liaison Office, which was located in the former Japanese Embassy in the old Legation Quarter. When he did so, he found to his amazement that he knew one of the two Japanese in charge, a certain Viscount Kano, whom he had met in connection with doing business with the Mitsubishi Shipping Line. The other official was a Mr. George Fujita. It is always useful to know people in high places, and in this case I was sure Bertram's previous business relationship with Viscount Kano helped to expedite our claims.

I still have Bertram's letter written In October :

Room 110
Grand Hotel de Pekin Peiping
Oct. 21st 1945

Dear Sirs:

Household Furniture etc., of B.C. Hale at 14 Hou Tao Kou

Paomachang, Peiping West

In confirmation of my call yesterday, I wish to lodge a claim for the restitution of my effects as listed below and as previously notified to the Swiss Consular representative.

Philco 11 tube all-wave radio Removed from my residence at Paomachang by Sgt. Nishimura of the Gendarmerie Headquarters and by Mr. Nishimo of the Japanese Consulate on November 3rd 1942. It is believed that this radio was taken to the Gendarmerie office at Lockhart Hall, Hatamen Street. It was in perfect condition at time of seizure.

Pontiac Model 1937 4 door Black Saloon sedan, 6 cylinder, Local registered number plate 5137 From information received this car was removed from the garage of my residence by the Gendarmerie during my internment in Weihsien. At the time of leaving the car had run some 27,000 miles and was in perfect running

condition on a gasoline fuel consumption. As I am moving out to my Paomachang residence in the very near future the return of my car in good condition is of urgent necessity. Pending the delivery or loan of a suitable car in the interim I reserve the right to lodge a claim for my transport expenses. It is not out of place to mention that in Oct. 1942 Mr. Koga of the Japanese Gendarmerie at Weihsien asked for the keys of the car which I informed him were lodged with Dr. Hoeppli (Swiss Consular Representative, Peiping). I have since ascertained that these keys were never asked for and are now, once again, in my possession....

Bertram then went on to claim our household effects as listed in the inventory he had left with Dr. Hoeppli. This carefully detailed letter had almost immediate results, and the Japanese officials were courtesy personified.

The reader will have noticed the many spellings of Peking. Earlier it had been Pekin, then it became Peiping (pronounced Pay-ping), and now it is Beijing (pronounced Bay-jing). The poor city has certainly had its ups and downs in every way over the centuries.

The next couple of days were hectic indeed. I almost longed for the protective walls of Weihsien with its regularity of day-to-day existence. Here everything seemed to happen at once. The beds and trunks suddenly arrived and were sent out to Paomachang, where we had set up a skeleton staff of servants Otto Burkhardt kindly lent us his car so that we could go out to see their arrival, and Wang Nai-nai accompanied us. The ride out to the country was a great treat for the children. Bertram and I noticed some changes outside the city gates. Where there had once been open fields, small settlements had been built up possibly for Japanese farmers. We knew some Japanese had lived outside the city, for our own house had been occupied by Japanese families. Heaven only knew what state we would find it in now.

One thing had not changed: that filthy "quelques fleurs" creek bordering the road was still there and in use as a communal latrine. "Pooh," said Hilary. "I smell a stinky-fishy something!"

"Close all the windows," said Bertram from the driver's seat.

When at last we turned off the main road and on to the short hill track that led up to 14 Hou Tao Kou, Hilary knew immediately it was leading to our home. Beryl, who had been only three when we left, was not so sure but reacted joyfully to her sister's declaration, "We are home!" The whole Louey clan turned out to greet us—only there were more of them now! A period of nearly three years can make a notable increase in population in China. But what a joyous reunion it was, with our two servants, Hsu and Ping, joining in. To our delight and amazement the place was neat and clean, but entirely empty. Even the children's garden swing had gone. Inside the house it was empty room after empty room. The only evidence of our ever having lived there was the huge kitchen stove and in the bathroom the sunken bath. The toilet had been ripped out and—shades of Weihsien—that infernal squatting hole stared at me. I didn't know whether to laugh or to cry until Bertram grinned and said, "Looks familiar, doesn't it? Never mind, we'll soon fix that little problem." Then I giggled too.

Louey Hsien-sen invited us into his house to await the arrival of the truck carrying our belongings. In a typical well-to-do Chinese parlour we admired wall scrolls and Chinese brie-A-brae and sat on hard blackwood chairs. We drank Chinese jasmine tea from delicate porcelain bowls. The children did not know how to deal with them, for they had no handles. When the truck arrived all the able-bodied male Loueys helped with the unloading, and Hsu and Ping then took charge. We set off on our return as soon as possible, for we wanted to get through the city gates before dark.

The next day Bertram was called to the Liaison Office to take possession of our car, which, because of the shortage of gasoline, had been converted into one of those charcoal-burning contraptions. It was in reasonably good condition, however, and could serve as our much needed transportation.

Lack of money was still a problem, and Bertram had to seek help from the International Red Cross. I have an IOU receipt dated October 20, 1945, that reads:

Received from the International Red Cross Committee, Peiping [sic] Office the equivalent of US$5.00 as a temporary loan to be repaid in U.S. currency.

Inflation had gone wild. The FRB dollar was quickly and surely going out of sight. For instance, another receipt I still have clearly indicates the fate of the FRB currency. Dated November 20, 1945, it states:

Received from the International Red Cross Committee, Peping Office, the sum of FRB $25,200.00 as a cash grant in lieu of fruits, fish, vegetables, flour and milk, etc., for the period of Oct. 20 to Nov. 18 for self, wife and two children under 12 years of age.

Twenty-five thousand, two hundred dollars for food for one month! It was insane when I compared it to costs in 1935. But of course ten years had passed since then. Even so!

We moved into the Paomachang house two days after receiving the car. Bertram drove to the office each day in his old new-fangled car, which was a bad starter. The servants had to give it a mighty push down the hill, and sometimes it kicked over and started. Many times it did not. Then Louey Hsien-sen would harness one of his camels to the car and haul it to the top of the hill again.

Sometimes on cold days it was again and again! To quote Bertram's language on these occasions would be to invite censorship. Let's just say he was intensely frustrated.

#

KGV School, Hong Kong, 1950:
Hilary Hale, aged 14, Hilda Hale, Beryl Hale, aged 10

[… end of excerpt...