

Shelby Missionary Tells Of Heavy Fighting In China

Pochoh, Anhwei, Captured, Looted and Burned by Robbers. Strife is Rife in Land.

(Special to The Star)

In the enclosed note which I wrote the 7th from Kweitehfu I tell of the report of approaching robbers and the deep anxiety felt here. The very day I was writing that and the following, fighting occurred between the approaching tufei and the Anhwei soldiers who were here for the protection of the city. This was at Shi Pa Li Pu, 18 miles to the west of the city. The bandits engaged the soldiers with only a part of their force and headed them in battle while the larger body detoured and came into the city at 2 A. M. on the 9th, as stated, so it is reported by the locally engaged and paid soldiers. These are reported to have proven traitorous and let the robbers in. They came in at the south gate and there was a great exodus at the north gate, which included the Hsien official, the head of the Chamber of Commerce and perhaps many others. The only two men of our mission had left here Sunday afternoon for Chnegchow, our wives being left in a suburb north of the river and Dr. King and Miss Barrat inside the city. No word has been heard from the latter since Sunday noon, two days before taking the city by the bandits. A Red Cross Chinaman says they and their place are safe, but it may be only a surmise of his. Of course we are deeply concerned for them and hope that in some way today we may get word from or to them. My brother and I returned yesterday at noon, having had no trouble along the road from Kweitehfu here till we got within three miles of our home. The gates to the walled places were closely guarded and it was with some arguing with an ordinary centry that we were finally allowed to see the Twanchang and he sent one of his body guards with us to our house where we found our wives and many of our church members quite safe, but of course very anxious. We had had no word of communication since we left five days before, since the telegraphic and postal services were all closed since the morning of the 9th instant.

This is by far and away the worst trouble this great wealthy city has experienced since the Taiping Rebellion, that is, as far as we can learn the details and as our eyes have seen the signs of the three days of burning. The number of the bandits is variously given as from 1000 to 10,000. The number must be

rather large else they could not hold on so long and so boldly. It is now over 100 hours since they took possession and for most of that time the troops from outside have been hammering on them more or less day and night with all classes of guns. They certainly have spent much ammunition. The firing is in part out from this walled enclosure north of the river in which we live. Several bullets have come into our yard, two into the house and one with force enough to penetrate a glass window on the southside of the room and go without any deflection through both sides of an enameled iron pitcher on the opposite side of the room and bury itself into the brick wall, apparently had force enough after getting into that room to have passed fully through a human body! If this was shot by the bandits it had already travelled at least 1500 yards. We have heard of one person here on these streets who had a ball enter one cheek and pass out at the other as he walked the street. This report says that all the best business streets in the North Suburb, where is fully seven tenths of all the business of the whole city and suburbs have been burned and many people killed as well as animals. It is also understood that places were first looted and then burned. It will be possible to get an accurate estimate of the loss of property, but I should think certainly not much under \$1,000,000. Many were made homeless. There is a report on our street this morning that Kao Lu Chng, whose family is in the city, has arrived or is arriving soon with all his force from Pengpu and it is also asserted that these fiends are now surrounded on all sides, so that it looks like some thing must happen soon. They do not seem to be in as big a hurry as I would be, if I were in charge in all the circumstances! I do rejoice that the responsibility is not mine! As we came up to the mote of this enclosed town yesterday we noticed a headless body lying in the mote. As I returned from a consultation with the twanchang last afternoon, I met some soldiers guarding a fairly well dressed and intelligent looking man with hands tied behind him. I hear this morning that he was one of eight who had been sent out of the city to fire this walled town in which there are some three or four regiments of troops and who are nearest on the firing line against the city. These men were promised high positions in the National army if they succeeded. The one I saw probably filled his last office! The head of

this band is said to a General Swen and belongs or did belong to the Honan part of the national army. I may add more before I can get this off after further developments. On the train Monday to Chengchow we were in a car largely loaded with some of Chin Taa Rm, who has head quarters at Kikungban. These were returning from Shantung. They reported that the Honan forces had fallen back after their defeat at Tsinan to Tainanfu and had been in battle there for five days, 70,000 Honan men against 20,000 Fengtien men. Returning, a Kaifengfu, going back to the front after having been absent ten days on sick leave. The train service is very poor indeed. We reached Chengchow at 10 P. M. while due at 6 P. M. The trains are generally crowded with the great majority of the military.

I heard a few days ago that since the soldiers left Yungcheng something over a month ago the bandits have carried away over 100 persons from a small section in the north of

the county near Tangshan. People of that county have already paid their taxes for the 16th year and are expecting to be called on for the 17th year before the year ends. Besides this and besides having had almost no autumn crops in most of the county, the county was asked for 100,000 catties of grain and brand and provender for the army animals in proportion and carts and animals to deliver it to Kweitehfu and other railway stations! Is it to be wondered at that the people are getting restless? This is certainly will not be a very good one for your Christmas Number! Maybe I can send a few lines of a different strain. This is news, but not the good news.

Sunday Night, the 13th. Have been waiting in great anxiety since I wrote to this point. There are still no telegraphic or postal communications with the outside. We have not opened our chapel today as we are under strict martial law and firing going on all most all the time. Last night at 11 o'clock there was an attempt by the tufei to go out at the east gate and there was a half hour

of fearful attack from the noise of it. They were driven back into the city. We now hear also that the tufei are confined in the city, having left the north suburb after much burning and looting and that the provincial troops are now in charge there and just while I write there is fairly authentic word that they are on the eve of compromising to allow the Landits to get out; also that Kao Lu Chng has arrived for whom they have been waiting for two days.

There is also the very good word that seems almost certainly true that Mrs. Dr. King and Miss Barrat were safe as late as Thursday morning and that Swen Tien Yuen, the head of the band in the city had given orders for their protection as soon as he heard they were in missionary work. We are trusting that this is true. There is also word that this man Swen seems to have a special grudge against Kiang Kwei's family and property and that in the business part

several of their large places were burned. It is also reported that Swen is a native of this county some fifty miles away. It is most comforting to our ears not to hear incessant gunfire after these five days of not much rest from it. I wish to get this off early in the morning by a messenger to mail it at Kweitehfu and will write more as soon as I know more definitely the situation and can get into the city and see the situation.

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