

THE SWATOW TYPHOON

BY ABBIE GERTRUDE SANDERSON, B.A., '14

The great Swatow earthquake of February, 1918, took place just before I left America, and although I have heard many people say that they would not have missed it for anything, yet I have never understood how any one could feel that way, nor have I ever wished for one minute that I had been here. I can understand better now, though, for the marauding typhoon, which swept this district August 2 and 3, has been a strange experience for me and one that is teaching me many things. Perhaps it will help make me a better woman and a more consecrated missionary.

Until about nine o'clock Wednesday night Mary Ogg and I were enjoying the most cheerful sing, and our songs were the most peaceful of lyrics and lullabies. Emily Miller and I had our beds brought into the living room, for we knew that we should never be able to stay in our beds out on the veranda, where we have been sleeping, in the high wind that had come up during the evening. About ten o'clock the two bamboo mats that we have used for awnings were torn loose and made a great racket whipping against the pillars and the veranda roof until they were wrenched off completely. The storm came on so quickly that we could not get all of the shutters closed. We did the best we could, then lay in bed and waited, while the house shook, trembled, stopped, then started violently again. This kept up until about midnight, when the storm suddenly shifted from the north, and the west window directly beside our beds blew in, with a mighty crash and fall of glass, and the horrible rasping shriek—like a giant madman's—of wind and rain whistling into the house. That awful howl still rings in my ears.

Our bedding was soaked before we could get it downstairs, and the rain was already pouring down from the upstairs room, but we dragged our army cots out into the hallway and got the Chinese women and children settled there with us. We thought that the storm was abating, and that we might get a nap, but no—another shift in the wind and we were up on our feet to brace the front door against the raging tempest.

The cook came and helped us hold the door, and the Chinese women helped get our trunks, boxes and clothes out into the hall. One thing that puzzled and frightened us all was a rolling and pounding as of huge tenpin balls. We could not determine the direction of the sound, but the walls drunkenly quivered and shuddered as the shocks came thick and fast. We held the door for over an hour. Suddenly the water began to rush in at the door cracks in knee-high swirls. Emily and I looked at each other, and then she said:

"Abbie, that is the ocean."

Just then one of the women, apparently struck with the same idea, leaned over and tasted. The water was salt!

You see, the two houses of the Chaoyang mission compound are side by side about sixty feet back from the front of a shallow lagoon of about forty acres in extent. The lagoon is walled in from the sea on three sides by a dike four feet high. On the top of the bank on the land side runs the public road, just beyond a compound wall which was eight feet high. The Groesbeck's yard is a little higher than ours, but our house is built up on a five-foot basement. This makes our lower floor nearly three feet higher than theirs. When we found it was sea water that was swishing insistently around our feet, we hurriedly piled a few things on tables and chairs and rushed up the stairway, through the pelting of rain, plastering and bits of flying glass from the skylight above. Louise Campbell had long since been driven into Fanny Northcott's room. Her shutters had blown off, and the window broken in; a part of the roof was off and the rain was coming through the ceiling in great streams, just as in the living room which Emily and I had left a short time before.

In Fannie's room the girls were frantically holding their door as we had held the one downstairs. Then the gust switched a bit to the east and we took turns holding first the door and then the window. Emily and Fannie grabbed their courage in both hands, dashed out on the east veranda, and closed the shutter there while we fastened it on the inside. Then we concentrated on the south

door. It was a matter of some moment to keep that door shut, for with the exception of one tiny and quite inaccessible room under the kitchen, the room we were in was the only one in the house that was dry even in spots. We had no other shelter. More than once just as we thought the door could not hold a moment longer, a little respite came, which generally meant that the next gale would be fiercer yet.

Straining every muscle, one of the women pushed by mistake on the glass and out came the lower pane, letting in a furious blast. In a wink Emily had stuffed a pillow into the hole, and it held. Finally we got the door nailed shut in several places. It seemed then as though that was what saved the day. I suppose it was then that the storm really began to slacken. We all dropped down on bed, chair or floor to get what rest we could the remaining hour or so before dawn. At five o'clock we were able to go into Louise's room and look out toward the front. Never in my life can I forget that sight!

The only thing visible was a wall of sea which appeared to be volleying full speed into our front yard. Talk about surf and breakers—there they were at our very door! I have no words to tell the thrill of horror and yet of fascination that gripped me as I stood watching that surge of water beating towards us. In reality it was much lower than it had been in the night; nevertheless the impression was that of an onrushing flood which must swallow us the next moment. As the day grew lighter, we could see that the compound wall had blown down. As the waves broke upon it we felt the spray on our cheeks. We could see the Groesbeck's verandas stripped of tiles, and their tall date palms, custard apple trees and others bent almost to the ground. The terrific tidal wave had rolled on past us up into the fields in back of the house, carrying broken shutters, parts of boats that washed ashore, and all the planks and crossbeams of our lower veranda! This explains the noise of pounding tenpins—the veranda was simply torn loose, knocked to pieces, and driven along. Our upper veranda was ripped in a good many places, and the roof all gone but the frame. We have a hole through to the sky in the living room.

We went downstairs fearfully; but the water had not come much higher than

when we left the hall, nor had the door blown in as we expected! The most of our things were high and dry; Emily's hats were all wet, and I had not a single dry shoe. I found my camera, with three exposures still in it, soaking on the floor. With the camera were the books containing all my pictures of the great Swatow earthquake. We peeled them off, washed them, dried them, and now I am planning to put them in the same book with any pictures I may get of this catastrophe. I am not sure that I shall want many pictures, and I need none to help me remember it!

The Groesbecks had a more frightful experience than we did; water waist deep throughout their lower floors; mammoth china closet crashed to the floor and many dishes broken; desks and typewriters and valuable records overturned and sopping with mud and water. The front door was split in two, and no one knows how many things have been washed away. Their kitchen and servants' quarters were demolished and not a thing left in their pantry; no sugar, flour, eggs, charcoal nor even stoves. Fortunately our culinary department was not disturbed—so we had the Groesbecks come over here to meals until yesterday morning. The hardest thing for them was that Dr. Groesbeck was out on a country trip and not a thing was heard from him until he got here late tonight. We could not help worrying, and we have all been singing hallelujahs since he came.

The fine big chapel here has but two walls left standing; the prow of an enormous junk cleft the whole building and brought the roof down. This building was used for a hospital, and several patients were drowned and buried in the debris.

This all seems gruesome enough, doesn't it? But when we hear reports from elsewhere we are grateful to be still alive. More than 3,100 bodies have been dug out of the ruins in Swatow city alone, and the dreadful work is not nearly finished, the stench is unspeakable. Our mission compound is a wreck as far as roofs are concerned. Many Chinese houses are flat and many, many more people are homeless than at the time of the big earthquake. Miss Mabelle Culley has sixteen Chinese people with her now in our house at Kakchieh, and she is using some of the rooms as an annex to the hospital.

Many of the river launches were smashed to bits; we found the red and blue cabin door of one in our front yard. There is no way to get to Swatow except by small boat or all the way by chair, and either way at an exorbitant price. For the first two days we could get no chairmen because they were all busy cleaning up their own houses or carrying coffins. Two villages near here suffered severe losses and have heard the wailing at all hours of day and night. The shores are lined with wrecks of large and small boats. Several were caught on the lagoon dike and probably thus kept from doing our houses serious damage. Our boys helped to rescue a number of men who were washed up clinging to planks. The coolie we hired for the summer lost his little girl as he and his

family of seven were seeking shelter after their tiny home had blown away.

There are villages of ten or twelve thousand with scarcely more than two or three houses still erect. Entire families are wiped out. Some people swam to the high new Institutional Church building in Swatow and were saved. Our chapel in Kakchieh was not badly hurt, but some of the schools cannot possibly be reopened this fall. The mat shed that I had put up last summer is all gone. This means that we shall have to turn away many girls who are eager to come and study.

More I cannot write; the details are sickening. Will you pray that this trial of faith may only make us the stronger? Chaoyang, China.

THE CHALLENGE TO THE ALUMNAE

BY ROSE ADELLE GILPATRICK, M.A., '92

During the war a French mother wrote to her son who was in Canada telling him that his two brothers had been killed in the service of their country. She concluded by saying: "Your country needs you. While I am not going to suggest that you return to fight for France, if you do not return at once, never come."

Our Alma Mater needs her daughters at this time. There is urgent need of a new building for the Women's Division. As the college is not able to provide it, the alumnae have been asked to do so. A campaign for this purpose was undertaken more than a year ago. A goodly number of women volunteered for service and have made a brave attack. The objective, however, has not been reached. The great trouble is that the rank and file of the women have not responded. They are waiting, probably, to see if it is going to be a winning campaign. Let us remember that the war would not have been won without the united effort of all the allies working together. The same is true of this campaign; it can not be won by the advance guard alone, but it can be by the forward movement of all the women, armed with the determination to succeed and a willingness to make the necessary sacrifices.

This is the first time that the women

of Colby have been called to the colors. Some have strayed far away and have been occupied with varied interests, but they surely have not forgotten "the blue and the gray" and what the college did for them. They must realize that she helped to make them what they are and that without her they never would have been able to accomplish what they have done. Wherever they may be, we urge them to come to the help of the cause. If for any reason they are not able to come now, we do not say, as the French mother did, "never come," but we do say, "Colby needs you now; come now."

No campaign ever was undertaken without some risk or some sacrifice, just as everything that is worth having involves effort and sacrifice. We must recognize that this is a real service, calling for sacrifice. We are undertaking a great task that demands a supreme effort. We are to erect a building worthy of the alumnae and adequate to the needs—one that shall be a credit to such a large body of college women. Surely, every woman will be proud to have a share in it.

What does this mean for each one of us? We have hesitated about defining the amount of a share, preferring to leave it to the judgment of each one, but it may help to have some definite idea. There are about one thousand Colby