Believing that the recent experiences of Pastor Din and myself might be of public interest and for the public edification, I'm undertaking as my first effort of the kind, a statement for the press.

Having assurance from people of the district and from officers of the army that the district was now peaceful, and knowing that this was usually the case at the time of opium harvest in which the military are deeply concerned as one of their big sources of revenue, we started on Monday; the 7th of April on a tour of some of the outstations of the district.

On the evening of the 9th, Pastor Din and I were chatting with one of the school teachers and an occasional guest in a small room at the back of the Bao Jia Miao Chapel,—about 40 English miles inland from the river. We had just visited the ruins of the ancestral home of the Kongs,—the original family of that name who had moved from Shantung 200 years ago. I knew the place well as I had been entertained there in years gone by,—one of the finest country homes I've ever seen in China. The home was burned to the ground, also another Kong home near by and the occupants had taken refuge in a stone fortress built a couple of years ago for such an emergency, while an armed guard kept constantly on the watch. The only entrance was a pair of huge wooden doors heavily faced with iron, like the gates of the walled cities of China. An attempt had been made a few months ago to force an entrance and quantities of kerosene had been thrown on the doors and on material piled against them and fired, but the bandits had to give it up. Their game had been to capture some of the clan and hold for ransom. No one seemed to feel that there was any immediate danger from any quarter. As for myself, I had been more or less accustomed to things of this kind for many years, and though I had already been in the power of bandits 14 times had invariably been treated with courtesy and allowed to go about my business with very little delay.

While we were chatting in the room back of the chapel we were surprised by bandits armed with automatics and the
school teacher, Pastor Din and I were marched off to the hills. By the dexterity and rapidity and nervous eagerness with which they relieved me of watch, knife and a couple of dollars I happened to have in my pocket, and from the firm pressure of one pistol at the base of my skull and another in the pit of my stomach I concluded that they were experienced and were desperate, and though it was but natural to demur at being thus rushed off supperless after a strenuous day, formed a rather quick decision to waive any objections for the time at least.

They wanted the modest sum of a quarter of a million for me. (I'm expressing it in Gold Dollars) and about two thirds that amount for pastor Din. I had previously told my wife that if I was ever captured by bandits or pirates I didn't want a cent of Mission money paid for my ransom. I have felt and still feel that it would be an unwise precedent to establish. After travelling about 6 miles (Here again as elsewhere through out this account, I use English standard of measure), the bandits asked Pastor Din and me to write notes to be taken back by the teacher telling their demands. We wrote by moonlight. I told them I'd state their demands, and that I had $100 that I'd pay for my release and was writing to Mr. McAmmond to say that if arrangements were made for my release on those conditions he might pay over that amount and I'd repay him on my return. They suggested that the Missionary Society or my country might put up the money for my ransom. I told them such a solution was unthinkable. They passed me on a few rods and talked long and earnestly with the others. The teacher went back with the notes and the other two of us were taken some miles further into the hills. I was told that if I or my friends didn't come over with the cash they'd pay later for my corpse. I replied that while friends might save me alive, my corpse wasn't of any real value and that people forwarding money for another would consider the possibility of repayment. I said they might judge for themselves how much a missionary depending on yearly stipend would be likely to be worth to them if dead. They said my friends wouldn't know I was dead till I was delivered to them,—truly a rather mortifying prospect. They entertained us with various other suggestions as to what might be done to persuade us to change our terms, and said we could think it over a while, say a few months or perhaps a year, that our feet would be put in irons and perhaps our hands bound and various things I'll not mention in this article. We had no supper and had walked 23 miles and conducted chapel service with pupils and teachers after inspecting the school, previous to our capture. When we finally landed at a straw thatched
mud farm house some time after midnight (my watch had of course been taken) we were invited to eat with them. The rice was cold and had a sour smell. I told them I'd eat in the morning. Pastor Din managed to get away with a little. We were then locked in a granary 6ft. high, 5 ft. wide, 7ft. long. The obvious design was to "break" these two stubborn captives. On our earnest plea for a bit of air they left out a board about 4 inches wide and the width of the opening,—about three feet.

Here we stayed eight days and nights. It was stifling. At times I felt a listlessness coming over me and fought to keep awake and tried by waving hands and kerchief to keep the air in circulation. Mercifully, the second night there came heavy storms and strong winds. I found a very slight chink in the wall and with my nails carefully took away some of the mud plastering that had been used to close the chink. At length I had a crack about one eighth inch wide and 1 1/2 inches long. There was a mud wall outside which was cheeked in drying and while the gale continued the air that came in was a real life saver.

The guard had a case of nerves. He seemed afraid lest under cover of some sound we were preparing an escape. We ate our food in the dark or by the light of a small smoky rush-wick lamp which added to the density of the atmosphere and gave us a choky feeling. Once nearly every day we had between us a small wooden wash basin with about a pint of hot water and a questionable rag about 4 inches square to wash our faces, and even one day were allowed water to wash our feet. We both took exercise waving hands and kerchiefs to keep the air in circulation. I tried waving the skirt of my Chinese gown which they had put on as a disguise, and waved it gently too, but they heard it and we were told to keep quieter. We were not to snore (Din is a heavy snorer, so I set myself the task of poking him every time he started and kept him quite quiet). We were not to cough, not to sneeze, not to blow our noses, not to clear our throats of the dust and smoke that at times nearly choked us, not to strike at the rats that crept around and over us in the night, nor sit up and scratch and catch the fleas that were trying to keep us from brooding over the fact of our captivity. We got barely enough light to tell night from day and always ate under lock and key or covered by at least one revolver. Our food was handed us by a man who kept us covered with a revolver in his other hand while doing so. I ached to tell Din to throw a boot at him when he kept telling us not to do this or that and kept telling how some of the gang wanted to start tortures. When he kept still we could get our minds
on other things. We talked little and only in faintest whispers. Often I heard Din repeating passages of scripture and hymns. (Chinese habitually memorize by repeating aloud, and the habit remains with them). Of course it was only a faint whisper, but I generally caught it. His favourite was “Guide me oh Thou Great Jehovah.” He even tried to cheer me by telling me what a comfort the hymns and various passages were. I let him know I was finding comfort too and only wished I could convey to him a small degree of the depth of meaning in the writings of some of our great Christian poets and authors. The chief communication was the eloquent clasp of the hand.

On the sixth night my feet were put in irons. I'll never forget the way Din plead with them not to do it. I was glad that for the time at least, they left his feet free. I calmly watched the process by the light of the flickering lamp, and saw how I believed I could remove those irons if my hands were left free and opportunity came; but I was not so mad as to contemplate an escape involving so much noise as forcibly breaking that prison even if it could have been done. We did not know who were on guard or where. Our brains were clear and calm. We knew we were not alone and we steadfastly refused to be anxious for the things of the morrow. As we thought of loved ones and friends we knew that the God who was sustaining us would sustain all as He had done in other trials. We both felt the Presence of Another, and it was borne home to us that during Passion week which the Christian Church everywhere was then commemorating, He had gone through all and more than we could be possibly called upon to bear, and would sustain us to the end whatever that might be.

Thursday evening we were given no supper. We scarcely missed it. Our food was not of the kind one greatly misses, was not abundant, and the conditions under which we were forced to eat were not conducive to appetite, but we were eating regularly as we could get it to keep up our strength as far as possible.

Some time before midnight that eighth night the lock was undone, the boards lifted enough for a man to enter, and while we were covered with pistols the shackles were taken from my feet. Just here I had nearly “spilled the beans.” When the irons were put on, the left ankle was too tight, I tensed the muscle of the right leg so they couldn’t band it so tightly, but the left caused me such discomfort that I loosened it slightly, in fact just a bit more than I intended to. As they removed this they noticed the fact and were very suspicious. I retained a very passive expression, but knew they had their eye on me.
With arms bound behind us we were started, a man behind each of us to hold the ropes and guide us like oxen. We were passive and received no ill treatment, but the sudden rush of fresh air was rather too much for either of us. We staggered on much like some of the walking advertisements for Gov't Control we grew accustomed to while on last furlough. We recalled that it was the anniversary of the night of our Lord's arrest and though we knew not what horrors might await us knew that He would sustain us.

After a time we became accustomed to the air and it was more strengthening than all the food of those eight days. I was questioned from time to time,—Where did I think we were, Did I know a certain road we crossed, How far did I think we had travelled, etc. etc. I gave evasive but not untrue replies. How should I know where we were, I had never been that way before, How could a man taken supperless and exhausted from a place like they had kept us, and travelling by paths in the night have any idea how far he had travelled? They seemed satisfied that we were as confused as our replies would indicate. However, though I'd never been within 10 miles or more of the place before, there had been moonlight both nights of travel, and from that we could tell very well the general direction of travel and the time spent on the road.

We were landed finally in a farm house,—mud walls and thatched roof,—one door entering the kitchen from the side and no other doors or windows. We were put in the end room farthest from the kitchen, and asked to again write our friends. Din wrote asking that they try to raise $10,000. I affixed my name, but told the bandits that if it was paid the Chinese authorities would have to pay it, just as our Canadian Gov't is responsible and accepts responsibility for the safety and security of the 80,000 or more Chinese within our borders. I again said I was ready to pay $100 for my release and wrote another note to that of effect.

This time we were both put in irons. The anklets had been left on me for that night journey and my legs and ankles were aching. I was not sorry to have a more roomy though heavier pair of anklets substituted. They used the smaller ones for Din whose ankles are smaller. We were told that if we loosened the fastenings or attempted it they'd cut off our fingers.

As Din and I lay exhausted on the Chinese bed (heads at opposite ends, as we weren't to talk) with two armed bandits on guard in the adjoining room which separated us from the kitchen, a young farmer,—son of the farmer whose house the
bandits had requisitioned,—sat silently smoking. Presently he rose, opened a cupboard, took out a warm comforter and spread it carefully over us, then put out the light and crawled in beside us. I'm sure he used the least space and knew he had only a narrow edge of the comforter. This real touch of human sympathy and kindness,—the first in eight days,—meant more to us than we can express.

The next morning they brought us the cleanest water and basin and cloth we had seen for days and during the day the farmer took our socks and shoes and my handkerchief and cleaned and dried them. He also brought us water for our feet. For breakfast we had the first really good rice we had seen and some delicious green peas and some very good pickle. Our drink was rice water and tea. At the first place of imprisonment I had realized why some Chinese cows have to be force fed when given rice water and formed a resolution that if I ever had one to feed again I'd see that there was something in it to give it at least a semblance of taste. At this place it had that, and for two days the better food and air did us a great deal of good.

There were in our bed a vast number of "wingless, bloodsucking, hemipterous" insects. (I quote Webster). We were exhausted, my glasses were taken, the light was poor and the beasts were comparatively inactive. Then it began to warm up, and there was a ray of sunlight through a ventilation hole in the roof. The farmer had told us there were times when we could relax a little and even chat so long as we kept quiet at special times when we were told to, as for instance when the people were busy gathering opium near the house or when guests came. As the sunlighted and warmed things up a bit, I suggested to Din that we organize a hunt. We went at it as thoroughly as we could. My prize "bag" was that first afternoon, 56—and I think Din ran a close second. We had fairly good success at other times also. It helped wonderfully to pass the time.

I had communicated to Din that I was sure we could remove the irons when opportunity came. The guard was getting nervous again and getting on our nerves too. We were fairly sure there was only one on guard most of the time. At the end of the fifth day in this our second prison, he came and made a very close scrutiny of our irons which we hadn't sprung a hair's breadth, though we had our plans in mind if opportunity came. On Friday afternoon (the eighth day of captivity in this second place) we were fairly sure that the guard was not in the next room, and concluded that he was either watching from some point outside or had gone to confer with the others,
leaving us in charge of the farmers. We of course could not
tell whether the farmers were co-operating willingly or through
intimidation. Though the guard was often silent for hours,
and would often appear unexpectedly with no sound to herald
his approach, he had a nervous habit of toying with his revolver
by day and by night and seldom went many hours without a
telltale click. We both lay awake that night, every sense alert.
When a strong wind was blowing I muffled my shackles and
tested a place where we had a faint hope we might climb on a
chest and squeeze out under the thatch. I found the whole
affair too heavy, too close to the wall and too securely fastened
to give any hope from that method. We knew the door was
locked at dusk. All night we heard no sound of revolver and
were sure the door was not opened. In the early evening and
again later we cleared our throats in a normal way without the
usual reprimand and the threatening revolver. At daybreak
the door was opened as we judged for the family to go about
their daily work. We had not heard the guard return, and of
course could not be sure whether he was in the house or on
guard at the door. We both felt the time had come to make
a break for freedom. Muffling the shackles in the bed-cover we
each managed to free one ankle, and tie the shackles securely
with our handkerchiefs to the other leg. There was a pot of
cold tea on the chest by the bed, and we each took a sip. As
we stepped out of inner room, hearts lifted in prayer, Din
armed with a bamboo staff, I with an old gun-stock we had
found in the bed-room, we heard in the guard room the regular
breathing of someone asleep, and saw no one but the house wife.
Swift and silent as cats we crossed the guard room and slipped
past the woman who was close to the kitchen door and didn't
see us till we were gliding past her. I suppose the poor soul
was too terrified to cry out. By the time she could raise the
alarm we were too far from the door for anyone to raise a cry
or to dare to follow us unless by stealth and with arms con­
cealed. I had my sense of direction established and led the way
as I was stronger and more sure footed. On a bypath we
surprised a man pasturing his water buffalo, and learned from
him that we were something over 50 miles from Fowchow and
about 35 miles from another of the Fowchow outstations about
20 miles down river. We quickly decided on the longer route
to the river, as we had reason to believe the other less safe, and
knew too that if we got through to the river it would be some
time next day before we reached here if we had the up river
journey to make.
Din said "Have you thanked God"? "Yes" I said, and I'm still watching and praying. Soon he began to sing softly "Guide Me Oh Thou Great Jehovah". I said "I'm with you in heart, but let us for the present sing in our hearts only, and concentrate on making tracks as we need every ounce of energy we possess". He saw the point and we hurried on. For some time we kept to by paths, rice field dykes etc. walking on grass or hard beaten paths as much as possible so as to leave no trace. It was a cloudy, misty morning, no sign of direction except as we had oriented ourselves by the moon on those two nights of travel and by the sun that for a short time on two or three days had peeped in the roof of the farmhouse. In the mist and drizzling rain, under shelter of a great rock we stopped to free the shackles each of us from the remaining ankle. I said "We must keep these" and we tucked them in our belts under our gowns and hurried on, I fairly sure footed, but poor Din slipping and stumbling on those greasy paths. I could only help by keeping in advance far enough to pick the path as well as possible. He looked back and said "Look, God's pillar of cloud" and it truly was there and continued to serve as a protection for some time. Soon we realized that we were approaching the barrier or divide we had passed the first night of our captivity. Just then we heard a challenge, but immediately realized it was to someone approaching from the other side. We sought concealment at once and presently saw several men bearing loads to market. The question was whether to follow them and seek their co-operation in escape or to go through the barrier. We decided to risk the barrier, as, if once we got safely through we could the more quickly strike familiar trails, and we had rightly concluded from the fact that the men had come on without delay that it was probably just a bit of fun among themselves. We did not know till two days later that those men were travelling in the direction of the rendezvous of the band of bandits who had taken us. We came through the barrier and found all clear. We met one man who was apparently terrified at our wild appearance, but I put up a reassuring hand. We agreed to ask guidance in seeking someone to see us safely to Foochow that night. We selected our man and selected wisely,—an open faced alert lad of nineteen by himself on the way to market. Din gripped his arm and asked him to turn back with us as we had something important to talk about. I don't know what the lad thought, but I was a few paces behind with what looked like a gun, and with very slight hesitation the lad turned back with us. Soon Din had told him
of our escape (it was soon evident that the whole countryside knew of our capture) and the boy closed with an offer to see us to Fowchow for a sum equal to gold $15. The lad at once passed me his large rain hat as a further disguise. In a half hour or so we were escorted into the back door of his house and introduced to his father and they got us a little rice that had been left over from their breakfast. A younger lad in the house was watching me intently and soon came and spoke to me with his face just beaming. He was a cousin of our host and had been a mason's helper here as the house was being renovated here last year after having served as military barracks and as hospital. There was no doubting the genuineness of his joy at our escape.

We had made about 10 miles before reaching the farm house, and as we had full 40 miles yet to make were soon on the way again. During the 25 minutes or so spent at the farm house getting a bit to eat, completing our disguise etc., I had made friends with the grandmother,—a dear motherly old soul,—and the youngest baby who smiled up at me and gripped my hand as though he had known me always. As we resumed our journey pastor Din was disguised with some older Chinese garments and a Chinese farmer's rain hat, and I with a strip, of cotton about my head in true Chinese style, a pair of Chinese trousers as well as the gown and rain hat, and a bamboo staff instead of the gun stock. We passed through different market towns thronged with people, I as an old man quite stooped, limping slightly and leaning heavily on my staff, following my escort who, contrived when possible to get in behind some carrier with a load that was wide enough to clear quite a space.

Poor Din's feet were sore and his legs ached so we had to accommodate ourselves to his pace. We passed for many miles through as beautiful scenery as I've ever known,—up a ravine with a clear mountain stream breaking in innumerable cascades, beautiful trees on every side, wild pink and white roses, white honeysuckle, beautiful azaleas by the thousand in their full glory lining both sides of the ravine, sword ferns and bracken everywhere, abundance of stag horn moss and various other mosses and ferns, wild begonias in abundance, in cleared spaces the oranges and pomeloes in full bloom and with their rich fragrance that is beyond my descriptive powers.

At the end of 20 miles with our escort poor Din's feet and legs were in such a condition that every step was an agony. He was white to the lips. We stopped for dinner. I judge it was about 3 P.M.,—20 miles yet to go. It didn't look much like
Fowchow that night. We knew we must get some conveyance for Din if possible, and finally succeeded in securing a pony, but could not get another nor any other means of transportation except our legs. I then knew it was up to me and devoted every energy to eating up the trail. I knew it was important that our own speed should if possible outstrip the news of our escape and that it was perilous to stay on that side of the river over night. I soon found I could outwind the pony and contented myself with keeping a reasonable distance ahead of him. Our escort kept the pace easily, but even the father was several years younger than I, had not been shackled and half-starved for many days, and was fresh when we had already covered 10 miles of the worst road we passed that day. I thanked God for an iron constitution, for years of honest toil on the farm, for a clean-blooded, clean-living ancestry, and for the care and wholesome food that had kept me in good condition.

For 13 miles I kept the pace. Din's pony which had by that time covered that 13 mile stretch with a rider for the second time that day, was tired out. I told them to get him a fresh horse if there was one to be had and that I'd take a second if available. For the last 6 miles we had fresh mounts for both and I never enjoyed a ride as I did that one. I took the lead and soon found I had as highly intelligent an animal as I ever drew rein over. As I patted his neck his ears went forward and as soon as we came to a smooth stretch of road for a few rods he started to show me what he could do. I then knew that all I had to do was to give him his head as he knew the road well and wanted to get us to the river and get back to his stable before night.

Well, we made it. As nearly as I can judge I made 44 miles on foot and 6 miles on horseback. For the first half the roads were very slippery and I think every place in my body capable of aching from physical exertion did so at times, but somehow I usually managed to change the gait and put the stress on some other muscles and get a slight relief.

The ferryman at our place of crossing,—a mile above the city, recognized me at once and was delighted at our escape. We stopped at Han Lin Ba, the Women's Missionary Society's compound, to borrow money to pay the boatmen. (We had got along thus far with money borrowed from our escort), and to tell the glad news. Our friends were beside themselves with joy. Chairs were called to bring us the remaining mile or so home and we sorely needed them, though at the time I scarcely realized how sorely.
Oh the joy of the home coming! We’re both making a good comeback. Cleaned up, de-fleas, de-bugged, with best of care that loving hearts and hands can give. It is touching to see the genuine affection of the Chinese Christians, and to realize that different ones of them were quite ready to run all risks involved in seeking our release if any way had seemed to offer any hope, and had offered to give such service at anytime and in any way that seemed to be worth trying.

Many a warm hand clasp spoke volumes. Ordinarily Chinese do not greet one another this way, but this seemed a special occasion that needed a special expression. Then, too, customs are rapidly changing. The pupils’ eyes shone with joy and many a wee tot plucked my sleeve to get a chance to just look their love and gratitude. Din and I though tired, as you may well imagine, felt that we must bear witness to the sustaining power of the Christ in the trials through which we had passed, and at the special service of praise and thanksgiving on Sunday,—the day following our arrival,—each spoke for 20 minutes to as attentive an audience as one could wish to address.

The news of our release was passed on by our friends after our arrival here to the Chinese authorities who had apparently been doing their best. It seemed incredible to them that we should have escaped. From what we hear on our return of the efforts of British and Chinese authorities who apparently cooperated in their efforts on our behalf to bring pressure to bear in the right quarter, we believe it quite possible that this pressure frightened the bandits from the first place and saved us from a longer period in that terrible dungeon where we could not long have survived.

We’ve been back a week. The newly levelled recreation grounds are turned into a parade ground where twice during the week well over 2000 troops have been lined up for inspection, and where we daily hear for hours the rip of the rifles at target practice. The people on the main street who had been forced to pull down and rebuild further back and were heavily taxed for the new road besides, before having their new shops and homes completed have had them requisitioned for the soldiers. The people over 10 miles from the city are in constant fear of the bandits. Those nearer and many who come from points outside are in constant fear of the military. Our escort feared only one thing,—that they might be seized and made to become soldiers or be made burden bearers for the army. While their brothers in the North are dying by the million in the throes of one of the worst famines in the history of the human
race, there is enough good wheat land given over in Eastern Szechwan alone to grow the wheat to save those millions from starvation, and there is many times the energy expended in transportation of troops and arms about this country to get that same grain where it is needed.

It is refreshing to turn from such melancholy facts to the Christian group in this city, typical of other groups throughout the length and breadth of this land who have caught a vision not only of their country’s need but have an unflinching hope for and faith in a steady advance of the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men and women. It is a joy to work with such and to realize that here is set loose and working powerfully a force beside which the utter folly and futility of militarism will become increasingly apparent and before which it will ultimately be broken.

C. A. Bridgman
Fowchow, Szechwan
May 5th, 1930.

"HE FOLLOWS IN THEIR TRAIN"

It is a long way from Nanking Road, Shanghai, to the West China Union University campus, but hatred travels far and lasts long. It is a still longer way from King’s Mead and London to Chengtu, but love travels just as far as hate and farther, and is the only force that can finally claim victory.

After the work of the day had been completed, the families of several of the university faculty members celebrated two birthdays by taking a boat-ride on the Min River. It was May 30th, anniversary of the tragedy on Nanking Road, but with the optimism born of faith in their own good intentions, every one was going about his business or recreation without apprehension. Upon their return home at about 8:30 P.M., Clifford M. Stubbs of the Friends’ Mission Council and Dean of the Science Faculty, rode on his bicycle to the Biology Building and from there was apparently on his way to the home of a fellow faculty member on the southern part of the campus for consultation. At about 9 P.M. he was passing the conduit bridge in front of Hart College when one in ambush struck him on the head from behind with a carrying-pole, probably knocking him unconscious and hurling him from the bicycle upon his face in the cinders of the road.