

Mission Correspondence of James Scarth Gale to Frank F. Ellinwood

Secretary of the Board of the Foreign Mission, The Presbyterian Church in the USA, New York

Transcribed by Sung-Deuk Oak

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Dear Dr. Ellinwood,

Work on the publishing of the dictionary has kept me so busy that I have not had an opportunity of writing fully since I came to Japan. At the October meeting the Mission gave me instruction to go to Japan and get the work done as soon as possible, and on the completion of the mission house, I started for this port, arriving with my wife and family on Dec. 18th. Shortly after arrival I took sick with what proved to be dispensary the doctor said caused by influenza, and that held me fast a bed for a month and more. I was afraid for a time that I was going to be unable to undertake close proof reading, and the doctor ordered me absolute rest for two months. Gradually however by the use of quinine and principally I rid myself of the disease, and have been as well as ever for the last two weeks. Printing goes along, but the work is neat and I trust it will be through by July or August at the latest. I enclose a sheet or two to you that will give an idea of Japanese printing. There will be about 1,000 pages altogether.

We feel very much excited by being in Japan and long to be back in Korea especially now since the country seems passing through such changes. In view of our having to be here for some months printing, the Mission asked furlough for us, thinking it best that our absence should include both printing and return home. The change already has done my wife and little girls good after ten years and more in Korea, and for this reason and because the work can be left for a little now as well as any time later I thought it the best time for furlough. In view of our being in Japan as we are, I think perhaps we shall ask the Board to shorten our furlough in America if it seems best when we get there. I desire very much to be back in Gensan [Wönsan] and look forward to home going whenever it may be with more of dread than anything else.

On my return I hope to have more time for traveling in the country and doing direct evangelical work. Sitting over a desk is a necessary part of our life out here and translation must be done, but I never expect to have quite as close and trying a task as the dictionary again though I have enjoyed it very much. There are perplexities in the language in the way of spelling when you have no standard to go by and the only method available is to father evidence direct and indirect, usually the latter, from the old book printed. This takes time and very often does not answer your question after all. Bible translation is easy and pleasant after you once have a dictionary, the spelling etc, of which you can

depend on, and so I expect my desk work to be less difficult on my return to Korea.

I have letters each mail from the Christians in Gensan and the interest in the Gospel seems on the increase notwithstanding political unrest. A month ago an order was issued to cut off their top-knots which caused a great deal of commotion and some loss of life through the country. When we remember that a Korean's religion and most cherished customs are associated with the top-knot which came down to time from the Mins of China or as some hold with Kija who was a contemporary of king Saul, we cannot wonder that they are back to past with it. Yesterday I had a letter from my helper Kim in Gensan from which I translate. "You will of course know of affairs in Korea and yet I must tell you of the disturbance caused by cutting the topknots. Though the king and all the officials have done so, the people have not followed, but have risen in Kangwŭn Province, destroyed the telegraph, and created a general disturbance. The Japanese soldiers marched inland and killed a number of natives at Ch'unch'ŭn, and for this reason we hear that the Japanese soldiers have been ordered to leave the country. A servant in the telegraph office has also been killed. In Wŭnsan [Wŏnsan] the magistrate and yamen writers have cut their hair and issued several orders for the people to do the same, but they refuse. Among the people most of the Roman Catholics have cut the hair, and among our own Christian company, Mr. Sŏ [Sŏ Kyŏngjo] from Whanghādo (Mr. Swallen's helper), Mr. Chŭn (Mr. Swallen's teacher) [Chŏn Kunbo], Mr. Yang (my former teacher), Kamyong (our cook) and other—in all seven have given up the topknots. The people in Wŭnsan say "It is the Romanists and other Christians alone that have cut their hair. These fellows have caused all the trouble in the country. They and their teaching and thus do they blaspheme against the Lord." Kim goes on to say "I have not yet decided what to do. I have been slow to follow the orders of the magistrates, and so have done very badly, but if hair cutting becomes indeed the law of the land, I shall not hesitate to follow." This will give an idea of how serious a matter it is for them. Other parts of these letter and other letters to me show that the disturbances cause no lack of interest in the Gospel, but that the people grow earnest in their desire to know the truth and life grows serious to them.

We are in receipt of telegram from Korea within the last week that changes matter altogether and causes us all anxiety though not one of us but what is glad to see. Japan turned out after her base murder of the Queen, for all foreigners in Korea and the large majority if foreigners elsewhere in the East are convinced that Japan sent Miura on his murderous mission well knowing what he meant to do. They also had their papers filled with fierce tirade against Underwood and other missionaries pretending that they investigated a riot in November all a fabrication. Dr. Allen was represented by his Government for acting the only part that a man with a Christian heart in him could not in his effort to save the king from a like fate to the queen, and yet he was reprimanded such being the influence of the Japanese even in Washington. After three months of

such an effort to civilize Korea we are glad to see them turned out bag and baggage. General Miura is tried and notwithstanding that he confesses he plotted to murder the poor queen of Korea, they have let him off and restored all his official rights to him. Japan is not civilized much less as she Christianized. It seems to me the work here needs more prayerful earnest effort on the part of the missionaries than ever in Korea. What Russia means no one seems to know. We hope that the liberty of all foreigners may be carefully guarded.

Last night I had a walk with Prince Eui Wha who is here in Japan. He is undoubtedly the heir to the throne of Korea, the Crown Prince being almost an idiot. This Prince Eui Wha is greatly delighted over the change the Japanese having entirely alienated him by the way of treating him since his coming to Japan. He is a very bright boy 19 years old and most exemplary in his behavior. He talks me he wants to be a Christian, and do his country good. I have seen him often though the Japanese have been opposed to his seeing other foreigners. We are all disappointed in Japan last year at the time I was hoping to see real reforms and blessing brought in Korea and desired to see Russia kept out, but Japan defeated all reforms by her resorting to old methods of the dark ages forgetting altogether that she was born with a new civilization. She is powerless to oppose Russia. Please pardon me for going into politics. It is a subject I keep completely clear of and with the exception of the Board I never write so to anyone. It does not help matter for missionaries to write on politics, and it may hinder their work to have their private opinion made known, and so I write to no one this but to the Board and I write to add one more voice to justify Underwood and Dr. Allen and other missionaries who have befriended the poor persecuted king of Korea through all the trials of the last few months.

I am surprised that the Board has not full particulars of the death of the queen. I reached Seoul the day before and Mr. Jones and I slept the next night in the palace to be a sort of guard to the two American Generals there. I saw the King at that time and had a chance to receive his kind greeting, but the sad hopeless expression in his face I shall never forget. Hope died for him within the palace when the queen was killed. That night when I was sitting with General Dye and General Legendre in the next building to His Majesty, an attendant who spoke the only Korean came in and told me to tell the Generals that the king saw the murderers strike the queen and that they were Japanese and that he knew their names for they had had audience before. I said, "Get His Majesty to write names in Chinese and I will give it to the General." He returned with the names. The first of which reads in Japanese Skamoto [?] the fellow who confessed to have murdered the queen, the king's message then ended thus "tell the foreign office that if they will avenge the death of the queen and rid me of these Japanese. I will cut off my hair and wear sandals from it for them." It was the most imploring message that the Korean language was able to convey for him.

The last note from the Board speaks of Mr. Swallen's proposed house site and offers a number of objections. 1st the letter suggests that he might live in a

rented house. However it may be in other countries it is very difficult to live in a rented house in Gensan. Mr. Knott is trying to seek and expects to. If he should where would Mr. Swallen be? Mr. and Mrs. Gibson's house is also there, but she has one or two applicants to purchase already. A missionary in Korea needs to be located permanently before he can do good work and I should hope to see the Board provide a house that Mr. Swallen would not be constantly afraid of being turned out of with no place to go to.

The letter says that one agreement for the choice made was that the present site was not suited for work. It seems to me after what Messrs. Moffett, Lee, Vinton, and I have written no argument of that kind could have occurred to anyone. The site of the present house is an admirable one. It is healthy, central, and located where it can be known to all the natives on all the roads passing Wūnsan. Not because this is unsuited for work, but because Mr. Swallen's choice now is better all round I think than any remaining one do I vote for it. We will be close enough to be in easy call of each other and yet far enough away to prevent the same natives visiting me that visit him. That was the idea--to widen our influence by occupy really two points in the same station. If this choice were so isolated as to prevent Mr. Swallen's itinerating I would certainly not vote for it as itinerating work is to be our principal missionary effort in the north. I hope the Board may see their way clear to make this appropriation in the spring and we shall feel that our hands are strengthened for work out through the country.

Should the Board grant our furlough I shall have an opportunity to explain a good many points I hope not only in reference to Gensan but in reference to all the work in Korea that is so hard to put clearly in a letter.

I shall be in constant communication with the Christians in Korea and in that way shall hope to teach them still by letter, but Annie cries herself to sleep at times wanting to go home (to Korea) and my wife and I feel much like her notwithstanding the comforts of civilization and the many friends that we have not have in Yokohama. This is a quite a foreign city with its pristine surroundings and beautiful home and certainly we find a great change in a sojourn here but most beautiful of all to us are the brown faces of those poor ignorant Koreans who have learned to trust us and the Savior we came to tell them of.

With kindest regards,

Very sincerely yours,

Jas. S. Gale

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