

December 31

It is five to twelve, five minutes before the New Year begins. Advent and Christmas are behind us, thank God. They have been sad days. I found it impossible to write down anything. We had no Christmas. Although the Directress has always tried to behave absolutely correctly toward us, I shall never be able to forget that on Christmas Eve she went from room to room to see that there was no forbidden little candle burning and that no *wanklanken* (dissonances) should meet her ear. Our Christmas carols were forbidden on pain of special punishment. It was raining outside and everything was dull and gray and quiet, just as it is now. Our lake, too, is sad with us, and the low mist lying on it can tell us nothing about next year, about the future. Almost all the women have gone to bed and have drawn their mosquito nets close around their straw sacks, to be alone, quite alone. Alone with their thoughts about their husbands, their homes, their future. I can hear a clock striking twelve somewhere—the New Year has begun.

March 23

Many weeks have passed again. Many things have happened. Six more healthy

children have been born, and many a friend has been very ill. But on the whole providence has been kind—there has been no death.

There is a new rumor that the gates will open.

March 25

The gates *have* opened. Soon, perhaps next month, we shall be going north on a Japanese steamer, to Shanghai or Kobe, and then on to our homes in Germany. Some of us have even had our wedding rings returned. In brilliant sunshine we blissfully walked in a long procession, slowly, step by step toward freedom, leaving behind us the gray building, seeing only the Blue Lake, looking at it again and again in parting, full of gratitude. On its shores we have lived through much that was new and strange. I believe, however, that the most important thing is that the small, everyday things no longer mean anything to us and that we have moved a little closer to greater things, to the eternal values.

And like a flower of farewell I carry along the simple words spoken to us women as we were leaving by one of the guards: "Through you we have learnt in these months that these words can become true: 'Love your enemies.'"

AFTER THE RAIN

By Wei Li Bo

No sound is heard
But drops falling
From leaf to leaf.
That speck of light
Upon the shrub?
A butterfly.