

First Letter

Steamer Alaska, Pacific Ocean

Aug 10. 1874. Lat 36 Long 178°

To the Sabbath School of the
Presbyterian Church,

Dear Friends,

A series of letters has been promised you from the Mission House, written during my tour of observation round the globe. The first shall relate to our Mission among the Chinese in California.

Before proceeding let me tell you of my surroundings as I write. We are out in the middle of the North Pacific Ocean. The nearest land is the Sandwich Island group, lying about 1200 miles to the South East. Japan is nearly 2000 miles West. The Aleutian Islands are perhaps 1400 miles North of us, while about 2000 miles due South is Feejee. We have left California 2700 miles to the Eastward, & about the same distance to the South West would bring us to New Guinea.

Thus from the deck of our vessel, though our eyes have seen only the same circular disk of the ocean, without sight of land, or even of a vessel for thirteen days our thoughts look forth to every variety of country lying beyond the unbroken expanse of waters. Our own father-land is in one direction, and heathen Japan and behind in another. Frozen Alaska and Siberia are on the North and the palmy groves of Tahiti on the South.

I cannot resist the feeling that ere long now in our Sabbath Schools shall grow to manhood, this great Pacific Ocean will have become the scene of important movements, which shall hasten the coming of Christ's Kingdom - It is a wonderful sea, in its facilities for commerce, so smooth and every way easy of navigation

And then what improvements have been made for the comfort of ocean voyagers! This great steamer, so large that a walk seven times round its deck measures a mile, seems like a moving city, with a various population of Americans, English, Germans, Africans, Japanese and Chinamen. Of the latter we have over three hundred and fifty.

We have on ~~the~~ board nearly every vegetable product which is of service to man, and almost every variety of brute beast, which can be of use for the table from an ox to a chicken.

The great engine having the power of six thousand horses, seems a miracle of human contrivance, in the complexity of its mechanism and at the same time in the regularity & perfection of its movements.

Not for an instant, since we left San Francisco, nearly two weeks ago, has this great throbbing heart of our steamer ceased to beat. While we have read & written, and waked and slept, while the week-day and the sabbaths have come and gone, the huge walking beam

of the engine has continued to heave its giant shoulders, skyward, as it grasped the crank of the great paddle wheels and drove us on our prosperous voyage to Japan.

I said we had seen neither land nor sails but a half a dozen sea gulls have followed us from the California coast. And considering the circles which they make in their flight, they must have made twice our distance or about 500 miles a day, besides taking time for rest upon the waves.

By the way, this will be a memorable week with us as having no Tuesday. As we retire this evening we shall say good night for Monday, but we shall awaken tomorrow morning and find it Wednesday. Each young inquiring mind must seek from parents or others the reason why on reaching the 180th degree of longitude we drop a day in going West and add a day in going East. I have not space for an explanation, but will only say, that we have gradually lost so much time while traveling from the sun's rising, that when we retire tonight you will already have entered upon a new day, and therefore, if we skip a day and adopt your date, we shall agree with you in time, when we get round again to New York, and shall not be subjected to the awkwardness of keeping our Sabbath, while you are busied with the affairs of Monday.

In a few weeks this steamer will return over this same pathless deep, with at least a thousand China men, bound for your country and mine. And so steamer after steamer carries its throngs of heathen to our shores, for some great purpose. Can you doubt that this is a part of God's plan for bringing the millions of China to the knowledge of the Gospel?

From all that I have said you are prepared to see the importance of our Chinese Mission in California. Were you to visit San Francisco, you would be struck with the great numbers of China men who would meet you on the streets. Some whole streets are occupied with their stores and shops. Most families employ them in the kitchen or as waiters. You would find them on the benches in the shoe shops, or running sewing machines, in the clothing establishments. I saw three hundred and fifty eight of them engaged in a large woollen factory. They learn quickly and are faithful and well behaved. They are nearly all young men and many of them are eager to learn English. Being strangers in a strange land they are susceptible to kindness & may be easily influenced for good.

What a field for usefulness is thus opened before us! Do you ask what kind of a religion they bring with them? I would like to accompany you to one of their temples in San Francisco and show you

the kind of nonsense they practice. The mimic life of dolls & doll-houses of our smallest children is not so childish as the worship of these Chinese. The temple is full of idols, each having a separate shrine. One is the god of health, another is the god of money-making & good luck.

Before each idol is to be seen a heap of presents, or offerings. One which we saw had been presented with several pairs of doll's shoes, one inch or two long, & made of thin paper. Another had received numerous gifts of money, but this money did not make him very rich. It was merely slips of paper with a little gilding on them, precisely as when children play, buy and sell, with bits of paper, which they call money.

How absurd in these heathens to palm off such trash on the pretense that God, being a spirit, cannot use solid gold and silver.

These people have bright minds. They are intelligent and shrewd in many things but in their religion, how utterly foolish!

Even on our steamer we witness daily illustrations of this folly. A Chinese woman amused some of the passengers the other evening by stepping to the side of the ship and casting into the waves a handful of rice and some small sticks. She was about to try her hand at gambling and this was her means of securing good luck. Many of the men adopt similar devices, after which they gamble from morning to night.

But the blessed encouragement is, that the Chinese in California can be reached with the truth and led to Christ.

For proof of this, go to the Mission House, on Stockton Street and you will hear a young Chinese preacher, proclaiming the gospel to his country men, many of whom also believe in Christ and some of who also take part in the service, by leading in prayer, or joining in the singing of hymns. A church has been gathered of over fifty members.

This is but a beginning, but it shows that the millions of the heathen may rejoice in the same salvation which we possess: that they are capable of joining with us in our songs of praise. And if one, or two missionaries have already gained so large a number, what might be expected, if all who love Christ would unite in winning the benighted to a knowledge of the truth?

It is but little that one man, or one child can do, but the great lesson which we have to learn is that each and all must do that little.

The present generation of the Chinese, numbering four hundred millions, will live upon the earth but thirty or forty years. All that can be done in their behalf, for time & for eternity, must be

done within that time. To accomplish so great a work, will require the prayer and effort of every church and every Sabbath school, nay, of every Christian, old or young. Shall we not remember especially the twenty thousand of these people whom God has sent to our own shores?

Yours in Christian love,

F. J. Ellinwood.

The kind of measure they practice. The woman's life of stable business of our greatest children is not so decided on the work of their business. How abundant in their business to pass off such words on the business that had been a spirit, cannot we build gates and doors. These people have bright minds, they are intelligent and discern in every thing but in their religion, how utterly foolish! Even on our steamers we witness daily illustrations of this folly. A business woman conversed with the passengers the other evening by stopping to the side of the ship and conversing with the women as they passed. It was about to get her hand at good. It was a means of securing good luck, many of the men except similar services, after which they gambled from morning to night. But the blessed encouragement is, that the business in California can be reached with the truth and led to Christ. For proof of this go to the Mission House, on Stockton street and you will hear a young business preacher, proclaiming the gospel to his countrymen. Many of whom also believe in Christ and some of who also take part in the service, by taking in prayer or singing in the singing of hymns. A church has been gathered of our fifty members. This is but a beginning, but it shows that the millions of the heathen may rejoice in the same salvation which we possess. That they are capable of joining with us in our songs of praise. That if we or two missionaries have already gained a large number, what might be expected if all who have Christ would unite in winning the heathen to a knowledge of the truth? It is but little that we mean or our churches can do, but the great lesson which we have to learn is that each one of us must do that little. The present generation of the business, numbering four hundred million, will live upon the earth but thirty or forty years. All that can be done in their behalf, for time is for eternity, must be