LETTER TO H. P. LUCE
from
MR. H. K. MURPHY, Architect to Peking University

PEKING

(Written at Shanghai after his special visit to Peking. "Yenching" refers to the name of the University used in China, it being the ancient name for Peking a thousand years ago and has a very classical sound in Chinese ears.)

INDEXED

TRANSFER

Shanghai, 16 May, 1926

Not quite the bull's-eye, but only stones to start the Mecomacks. Thought that parts of I know — which now done H.K.M.

My dear Dr. Luce:-

I have just got back here from my month's stay at Peking, and I cannot refrain from getting a letter off to you on the "Canada" tomorrow telling you something of my Yenching enthusiasms; and to let you know how very worth-while I feel my trip to have been.

My immediate reaction at my first visit to the new Yenching - (which I made entirely alone, by special request to Dr. Stuart) - when I saw for the first time the realization in actual buildings of the first part of the picture I had worked out five years ago, was one of exaltation - with perhaps an unbecoming amount of exultation, also. Dignity, stately, beauty, seriousness of purpose, the true scholastic atmosphere of a University - could see all these qualities in the group and I knew at once that we are on the right track. I could see, also, that these qualities do not yet appear to the ordinary observer as they do to me, because of the unavoidable confusion and mess attendant on an unfinished building operation...

I explained, at my meeting with the Buildings and Grounds Committee on 22nd April, that my decision to extend my visit for at least another week was due to my feeling, resulting from the study I had already made of the Yenching work, that the thing is so fine that I was inspired to make it still finer, by putting in still more work, on my present visit; not only in critical analysis of what has been done, but in constructive cooperation and initiative.

And this brings me to the real point of this letter to you, a point on which I feel that you have an opportunity to do more for the immediate needs, architecturally, than in anything else you have yet done. WE MUST HAVE, IMMEDIATELY, THE RECITATION BUILDING TO COMPLETE THE CENTRAL COURT. It is impossible to over-state the vital importance of this matter. Here is the whole architectural keystone of this great group incomplete - so incomplete that not a single person, from the outside, whom I took over the group, or with whom I discussed the Yenching development, really got the picture at all.. Thereby was left a void in the main composition which completely ruins the effectiveness of the whole.

I cannot stand the idea of Peking University opening next September, with all the public eye critically upon it, without enough of a start on the construction of this Recitation Building so that the