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1909-08-06, Letter from Frank Keller to Ralph Smith

Frank A. Keller

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Changsha, Hunan, China
Aug. 6, 1909.

Mr. Ralph D. Smith
Bible House of Los Angeles,
Los Angeles, Cal.

My dear Ralph:

Yesterday I received a letter from Mr. Blackstone from Kuling enclosing your kind letter of introduction. He expressed much disappointment at not finding me at Kuling, and a strong desire to see me. A letter from me to him giving him a cordial invitation to visit us here probably crossed his letter, possibly reaching him late on the very day he wrote me, and I hope for another letter from him in a day or two. I earnestly long to see him, it seems very important as the difficulties confronting us are many and his counsel by God's blessing will be of great value. I am praying that God may open a way for us to meet. My text this morning for the Gospel talk at the hospital was from Acts 7:9, "And God was with him." Blessed words, with him when his brothers sold him, when Potiphar's wife tempted him, when Potiphar threw him into prison, when the baker forgot him, "God with him" every moment, and at just the right time, God set him on the throne of Egypt. And God gave us His Son. "Immanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us." This text, this fact, and the little leaflet you sent in the letter of introduction to Mr. Blackstone, have been a great comfort and strength to me. The leaflet contained an extract from a letter from Mr. Wright, to Mr. Henry Payne. Read the leaflet over again if you do not remember it perfectly, and see how it fits into my case at the present time. There is a strong probability that I shall have to return to America within a few months. Word has come to me that my father has had a retinal hemorrhage in one eye making him blind in that eye. The cause is arterio-sclerosis, and that condition, from that cause, in a man of his age is a premonitory sign of cerebral hemorrhage, which means paralysis and helplessness. He is 77 years old, and my mother 74, and they are all alone, so if he became helpless it would be simply impossible for mother to care for him, and after much prayer Beth and I both feel that our duty is at home in the near future. Father is under the care of one of the best oculists in New York State, and under his treatment the arteries are improving somewhat, and I do not feel that there is immediate danger of a crash, but we do not feel that we are put off our return many months, and in the meantime Beth would go home to them on short notice in case of urgent need, and I would follow as quickly as the work would permit. Mother has a niece who, though herself an invalid, would be glad to give them temporary

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help until one of us could reach them. You can see then, in all our plans, and work we must keep this in view, I can see now why God would not permit me to accept your proposal of three years ago to start three Bible Schools in China. How I longed to do it. I could hardly give it up. It is the work in which God has given me most blessing in China, and work that is very dear to me, and yet I knew that it was not His will for me then. What a misfortune it would have been had I followed my own desires and accepted your kind and urgent proposition. A big enterprise [*sic*], "The Missionary Supply Association", has just collapsed in China, at large financial loss, because the work was put in the hands of one man, and he has broken down under the strain. And then, had the three Bible schools been started, property purchased and buildings up, and work under way, what a predicament we would be in at this time. How important then, as you wrote in a recent letter, to be guided each moment by our all wise Father, and to be ever willing to follow Him, and not seek our own way, however attractive it may seem. It seems wondrous strange that this home-call should come just at a time when the hopes of years seem about to be fulfilled, and the prayers of years about to be answered in the provision so generously made for the widespread preaching and distribution of God's Word in Hunan. The blow would be almost crushing were it not for the glorious

fact that has been becoming more and more real to me during the past days, that "God is with us." He knows, He loves, it is His work, not ours, and all is well. For this reason I was glad to receive the cablegrams instructing me to co-operate with the American Bible Society if possible I publishing the Gospels, for should I be recalled from China suddenly, the publication work would still be in perfectly reliable hands, and the published Gospels would be where they could be gotten easily by missionaries whom we might be able to interest in the work of distribution. You see the American Bible Society has several centers in China, and Agents constantly in the offices at these centers to forward Bibles, and Portions as ordered. How I must stop in order to get this in the mail which closes in a few moments. I have to continue to-morrow, and trust that the letter may catch the same Express Steamer out of Shanghai, if it should not, it may reach you a couple of weeks later than this one. Please do not reply to this until the next one reaches you. With warm Christian love to you all, Affectionately yours.

Frank A. Keller