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1927-05-05, Letter from Frank Keller to Fellow Workers

Frank A. Keller

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Room No. 214, Missions Building
23, Yuen-Ming-Yuen Road
Shanghai, China

May 5, 1927

Dear Fellow Workers:

Last week the mail went out a day earlier than I thought it was going and I had a great hustle to get a few lines off to you. I had to stop just as I was telling about the events of Monday, April 4. When I went to the house for supper I found Messrs. Ho, TTu and Y waiting for me. I think that Hu was with them, I cannot remember positively. They told me of the conditions in the city and once more begged me to leave. I did not give them a positive answer and after a long series of arguments they left. I sat down to supper, late and tired, I had just gotten nicely started when I walked Mr. Lingle, he said that he had already had his supper, so would not join me in eating, but he sat by the table, as close as he could get to me, and talked until I had finished my humble repast. He said that an anti-American strike was being called to start the next day. His cook had told him about it and said to him that the servants union had given him permission to get simple meals for Mr. Lingle, for if he did not do so Mr. Lingle would not have anything to eat and would starve, and that would not do. Mr. Lingle said that he had told the cook that he was perfectly willing to remain in Changsha and be shot if it came to that, but he was not willing to stay and starve to death, so he thought he had better pack up and leave. He got away next day on a Chinese launch, he did not lose any time. He had a nice new felt hat he had purchased in Shanghai, this he carefully packed with a new straw hat in a box so as not to get them wet as it was raining when he left, then he put on his old hat and came away leaving the two new hats nicely packed in his house! April 5, Spent most of the day packing and arranging business matters in the offices. Early on Monday morning I had sent three boxes, namely, a steamer trunk and two pig-skins, over to TPC's. On Tuesday morning I sent these down to the Japanese steamer, Dr. Dubs was there and received them for me and had them checked with his luggage. He sent word back that conditions in the city were very bad, and that they were making every effort to get all their luggage down on Tuesday as it would not be possible to secure coolies on Wednesday. I went down with three more boxes at about eleven o'clock p.m., then hustled back to finish packing. At 3:30 a.m. on Wednesday I went down with three more small trunks containing books and files of letters, etc. The baggage man was sleeping and I sat there in the cold on a bag of rice waiting for him to awake, he kindly did so at about 6:30 a.m., I turned the boxes over to him and went back to the compound for a strenuous day's work. LS-Fu told me that he had received permission to give me simple food if I remained, and said that they would be able to pump the water and keep things going in a way. But the Foreign banks at Hanko had not opened, there was no communication with Shanghai, and it seemed that it would not be possible to get any funds, moreover war seemed immonant [*sic*], in which case I would be made a prisoner and would be of no use to anyone, and would be out of communication with the world at large, it seemed best therefore to get away and try to arrange some way at Hankow to get funds up to Changsha and so keep on the work as long as possible. We had a big day's work, and CY was a perfect jewel, how he did plan, and how he did help, I can never forget his kindness that day. Among other things, he got all the telephones down, and the big exchange case and stored them in the vault, with all the telephone equipment that

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had been stored in other places. This was his own suggestion, and he did the major part of the work. I cannot give you the details of this day. Before I left the ship in the morning the men on the ship assured me that they could not possibly leave that night, still, I worked with all my might to get down to the ship in the evening if possible. At a little past midnight I could not work a bit more, and could not go another step. I said, "Well, if I cannot get away I will just stay, I cannot do another thing, so I just lay down and fell asleep at once and slept through until about six a.m. Then a hasty bath, shave and one orange and I went at it again after a little quite time of Bible study and prayer. Thursday, April 7, at about nine o'clock Mr. Vincent phoned me, he had spent the night on the gunboat and had just returned to the Consulate to seal it up. He said that the Japanese steamer had left in the night, also the Japanese gunboat and he wanted me to get down as quickly as possible, all other Americans were out of the cith [sic] and had with left or were on the Socony launch. He said that they would not leave before one o'clock p.m., but wanted me to be sure to be there by that time. How I did work! There was a lot of detail that had to be gone over with Mr. T and TPC who were taking charge. I still had two suit cases, with important business matters in them that I did not want to trust to the trunks, a Japanese coorie, or courie, and my hand bag. At eleven o'clock [sic] I asked them to call coolies but there was not a coolie to be had as there was a general strike on, and our servants said that pickets were all around watching and that it would not be possible for them to carry the things. HMS and Mr. T said that the coorie looked like as ordinary Chinese thing and they thought they could get that over to the Consulate, Mr. Y thought he could get my overcoat over there, and I started out with my big handbag, it seemed to weigh about fifty pounds and it was the hottest day of the season. Just as we were going out some workmen were coming in and I asked them if one of them would venture to carry the bag over to the river, I told them that if any pickets came along they might drop the bag and run. One old fellow was willing to tackle the job. We got about half way without trouble then some pickets met us, they yelled at the old man and at me, and cursed the old man and started toward him, he handed the bag to me but did not move quickly enough and got his face slapped on both cheeks. The pickets asked me if I did not know that there was a general strike on, and why I had asked the man to carry for me. They said that they would not interfere with me, that I might go on to the river with my bag, but that I must not ask any Chinese to help. A little further on another stalwart coolie was willing to make the venture, but he only succeeded in carrying a little way when he too was stopped. After a hard struggle I got as far as the Foreign Office, I went in there and asked for an escort to the river. Mr. W was most kind and secured an escort for me, the old man had gone a round-about way and met me at the Foreign Office, he carried the bag on ### [sic] to the river without any further incident as we had the escort with us. Soon we met Hu and T'ien on their way back, they had succeeded in getting the coorie to the Consulate and left it there with CY, they said "Goodby" [sic] to me there on the street, they were afraid to go back to the water front with me, for they might be attacked the moment I was gone. PC and one other had marched on ahead of us to see that the way was clear, they too came back, reported all clear, and returned to the city, PC was as white as this paper, I never before saw a human being so white, how scared they were. Only CY stayed at the water front and helped me get the things down to the hautsz.

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The plan was that when I arrived at the water front and signalled [*sic*] the gunboat would send a sanpan to take me to the Socony launch. There was quite a delay in getting the sanpan started from the gunboat and a big crowd gathered around me in the dock, the people on the gunboat and on the Socony got very much excited fearing that something might happen to me. But the crowd was simply an ordinary Chinese crowd, not a mob, and they were most friendly, we chatted away pleasantly until the sanpan came up to the dock. At the Foreign Office Mr. W had said to me that if I would go back to the house personally he would send an escort with me and get the two suitcases, but he could not send an escort with PC alone. A young american [*sic*] officer was in charge of the sanpan and as soon as they came to dock I asked him how soon they would be sailing, he replied that he did not know, possibly not until evening or the following morning, but he did not state the reason for the delay. So I said to him that I had two important suitcases still at the compound and that if he had no objections I would go back and get them since it would not cause any additional delay. He replied that he could not give me permission to do so as the captain was already very much annoyed because I was so late, and that if I wanted to go back I must first see the captain. I would [*sic*] him that Mr. Vincent had given me until one o'clock, and that it was just one o'clock when we were talking, therefore I was not one moment late, and if the time of sailing was uncertain I did not see what difference it would make even if I was a little late. However, I had already arranged with PC that he and one other should come to Hankow by train in a day or two, as soon as matters got a little more quiet, and bring the two suitcases down to me, so I dropped the matter and quietly went aboard the Socony launch. When on board I learned the cause of the delay. All the Chinese engineers and other workers on the Socony launch had been forced to strike and they had wired to Hankow for another launch, so they were waiting for that. At about two o'clock there was a great shout of joy as the "Mei Chuen", one of the most powerful of the Socony launches, was sighted rushing toward us. There was quick work and at about three o'clock we started with five Socony launches in tow and the U.S. "Palos" steaming on behind. About thirty miles down river we found the Japanese steamer and gunboat anchored and waiting for us, so we dropped anchor and stayed there overnight. Dick Leavens came on the "Mei Chuen" with me, but Dr. and Mrs. Dubs and Mr. Talbott, Dr. Vanderburg and Mr. Mitchell remained on the Japanese S.S. April 8, We arrived at Yochow about noon, and there we saw a fine piece of administration. Telegrams that had been sent had failed to reach there, but within two hours the manager had packed his own effects, or had at least sent them down to the "Mei Chuen", many of them just tossed wholesale into boxes, among these being a lot of victrola records, and yet the manager expressed wonder to me why his records got spoiled so quickly!! Two large pontoon wharfs were dismantled, disconnected from the big tank on the shore, the tank still containing oil amounting to about two million dollars was sealed, many barrels of oil were transferred to the launch, and in less than three hours we were off. How those coolies did work, it was wonderful, and most pathetic too, for unconsciously, I suppose, they were just working to end their own job. April 9, at five a.m. we were steaming into Hankow. I had

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risen at 4 a.m. and had finished my bath and shave, so was free to take things in as we sailed along into port. After breakfast Dick Leavens and I went ashore and went to the American Consulate to secure what information might be available. We learned that the Suiwo would be leaving that night and the Loongwo

on the following Tuesday, the Consul was anxious that as many Americans should get off on the Suiwo as possible. I told him of the party on the Japanese S. S. not yet in. Dick Leavens went at once to the Suiwo to secure a berth and I saw no more of him until evening. I went to the C.I.M. and Mr. Warren gave me a nice room, then I went to the Japanese S.S. office to see if I could get any information about their steamer, they said that she would not be in before afternoon. I then reported this to the Consulate and they said if I should see her coming in and would let them know they would get a launch from the Admiral and try to get the party to the Suiwo in time to get off. At about 2:30p.m. I discovered the Japanese S.S. coming in, I at once reported to the Consulate, Mr. Butterick started for the Admiral's and I went at once to the Japanese hulk to greet the friends and tell them that the launch would be coming for them. They talked the thing over and Messrs. Vanderburg and Mitchell decided to make a try for the Suiwo while Dr. Dubs and party decided to go on board the Loongwo. We made a big hustle, several of us were tugging away at the luggage, first we got the Presbyterian luggage and passengers down to the Suiwo which was advertised to leave at four p.m., but did not leave till nine. Then we got the Evangelical and my own luggage to the Loongwo, also Dr. and Mrs. Dubs and Mr. Talbott. I did not yet know that Beth was sailing that very day, and was planning to send my luggage down to Shanghai in care of Dr. Dubs. Saturday night I slept at the C.I.M., but the Consul insisted on my going on board the Kiangwo which had been chartered for Americans, so I slept on her Sunday and Monday Nights. The Consul was very insistent that I should finish up my work in Hankow as promptly as possible and leave for Shanghai. A few weeks before I had sent some gold checks to the H. & S. Bank in Hankow but had never heard from them, so I got in the bank by the back door to inquire about the checks. The young man with whom I talked was most cordial and told me that the gold had just been exchanged and credited up to our account the day before. he [sic] asked me if I wanted to draw some out, to which I replied that I would be glad to do so, and in reply to my question he said that Mr. Warren would be able to draw money on our checks at any time. At the Post Office they told me that they could sell us money orders on Changsha up to one thousand dollars daily, this seemed to fix things up nicely and I began to plan to leave on Tuesday night. I drew some money and gave Mr. Warren several checks for four hundred dollars each, asking him to send four hundred dollars to Mr. Steybe every Monday. Everything seemed to be most favorable and I started off to Shanghai in a spirit of much thankfulness and content. We learned that a committed had been appointed at Changsha to come to Hankow and take Mr. H back "Dead or alive", so it seemed best to have him go along to Shanghai. Mr. Wood secured a permit from the British Admiral for Mr. H to travel on the Loongwo with me and he packed up hastily, though he had been ill in bed for three days, and we go off at nine o'clock Tuesday evening. The ship was very full, some 160 passengers on a ship with normal accommodations for twenty-six. (79)----79 Norwegians were on from the Lao-Ho-Kou mission, they had had one of our bands for a year and were much pleased to meet me.

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They arranged a meeting for Thursday forenoon and asked me to speak and tell them about the origin and development of Biols Evangelistic Bands. On the next morning, Good Friday, they arranged another meeting of which a most excellent address was given by the founder and superintendent of their mission, at both of these services a Norwegian male quartette sang most acceptably, they were very fine singers. Although very crowded we had a real happy and helpful time going down stream. I slept on one of the

saloon settees, had two steamer rugs and my own pillow, Mr. H slept on a cot by my side. Others slept on the settees, on cots and on the floor. The trip down had a few "Thrills" of course, but nothing very serious. We docked at Shanghai Saturday morning at 9:30. I had wired Hugh but the Company had misinformed him as to the time of arrival, after waiting for about an hour I asked Mr. H to go over to the Astor House and he soon returned with Hugh. I had a lot of luggage with me for the C.I.M., and about the same time as Hugh arrived, Mr. Davies of the C.I.M. arrived to receive the luggage, Hugh had kindly secured a room for me at the C.I.M., I could only have it for five nights, the Missionary Home was full. We were somewhat rushed in getting off the baggage on accounting of the ### [sic] delay, and in my hurry in stepping from the dock to the steamer, which was moving to turn around, I had a bad fall, I dropped between the dock and the steamer and just caught myself by the left arm over the iron rail of the steamer. Three fountain pens were smash and my left side was severely injured. Fortunately no ribs were broken but for ten days I just dreaded to sneeze, cough or make any sudden movement, it even hurt me to talk. I massaged the side twice a day with Iodex and Salicylate of Soda, and it is very much better now, though there is still a little pain. A sailor who fell in the same way on May 2nd was drowned, but I imagine that he was loaded a little more heavily than I. For the past two weeks I have been at 58 Ward Road, one of the fifteen outside houses rented by the C.I.M. Mrs. Crofts is at this house as housekeeper and Miss Loosely is assisting her. The Misses Twizell, Rowe, Collins, Lajus and Dr. and Mrs. Cox are there also. Mr. and Mrs. Kauderer of Nanchang arrived a couple of days ago. Hugh's father and mother arrived yesterday and have rooms only a short distance away. Next week a large Australian party will be leaving and I will be transferred to one of the little back rooms at the C.I.M. as the room I now have is really a double room and will be wanted for a married couple. Mr. and Mrs. Longden leave tomorrow for America, and Mr. Longden has very kindly give me desk room in the Stewart Evangelistic Fund offices, this is in the Missions Building and is most convenient as it is a fine center, an easy place for Mr. Hsiao to get to, and brings me into contact with many important people, I am most grateful for this place. Mr. Warren succeeded in sending one money order to Changsha, then orders were put out by the Nationalists that no money could be taken out of Hankow, pickets were again stationed around all the banks, and the Post Office refused to sell orders. This is a good place to say "To be continued in our next", so I will leave you guessing for a week. God has provided a way, a wonderful and unthought of provision. The secretary in this office has kindly made carbon copies of letters from Mr. Steybe and Mr. Wilhelm which I will enclose giving you up to the moment information. There is not time to read through the effusion so please pardon any slips, I have cut my lunch to get this much done.

[Handwritten on bottom right side of page 5]

Much love to you all, Frank