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1927-08-17, Letter from Frank Keller to HBI Staff

Frank A. Keller

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[Written on Hunan Bible Institute Letterhead]

Shanghai Postal Address
Care of China Inland Mission
9, Woosung Road
Shanghai, China

Shanghai Cable Address
Keller, Inland, Shanghai

PRAY ONE FOR ANOTHER

I will instruct thee and teach thee
In the way which thou shalt go:
I will counsel thee with mine eye
upon thee. Ps. 32:8.

August 17, 1927.

To the Hunan Bible Institute Staff.

Dear Fellow Workers:

This morning I awoke with the strong conviction that I ought to write and lay before you some of the problems that we are facing and ask that we might give ourselves to earnest prayer for one another. When I picked up my copy of "Daily Light" for a morning message I was really startled to find the first words at the top of the page "Pray One For Another", at once I thought of another verse, a verse that has been an encouragement and help to me for many years and a verse that you have heard me quote many times: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee." The letters which I have been writing to you for the past few weeks have not been written either for the sake of filling in time or of entertaining you, for many times they have been written at the cost of one or two meals omitted and curtailed sleep, but they have been written in the earnest desire to give you as many concrete facts as possible which you might add to the general information you get from the press and which might help you in formulating your plans for the future. Suddenly the whole situation in China has changed, due to the resignation of General Chiang Kai Shek and the entire Nanking Staff. Northern troops are pressing on towards Nanking in a victorious march, what the outcome will be no one knows. General conditions at Changsha continue good, mails are coming through in five and six days, but there are some special conditions there and in outlying cities and districts as well as in other provinces that call for every sober and prayerful consideration. On Monday Mr. Leavens called on me and said that he had just received word from his Chinese Business Manager at Changsha that the government had issued orders that all mission

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property must be registered, its value stated and taxes paid on the same. In case of failure to pay the taxes promptly a fine will be imposed and if this fine is not paid within five months the property will be confiscated. Mr. Leavens expects the full text of this mandate by an early mail. In my last letter I wrote you about the educational conditions in Chekiang, the government demanding that all educational plants be turned over by the missions before September 1st. This noon at luncheon Mr. Gordon Harding, of

Hiangcheng, Honan, showed me a notice which he had just received from the Honan Bureau of Education, this notice was written in official style and properly sealed with the government seal, it informed him that his school would not be allowed to open this fall unless it was registered and that if it was registered no religious teaching could be given in the school. On August 12th Mrs. Lingle's daughter, Mrs. Dorothea Brannon, told Mrs. Meinhardt that the homes of Ray C. Roberts and of the single ladies had been completely looted. Mrs. Meinhardt was not sure whether this had occurred before or after Mr. Lingle's return to Changsha. In this item I have been particular to give you the source of my information. Yesterday Mr. Derr called on me and said that he had just received a letter from Chenchow, dated August 1st. The soldiers who had been occupying their two houses had just left, taking with them two iron beds, two large mirrors, a number of framed pictures and other small articles that struck their fancy. They also took the piano down to the river but found it too big and too heavy so they left it and the evangelist took it back to the house. Mr. Spiker was American Consul at Swatow before the Nationalist war broke out, he was compelled to leave Swatow very hurriedly and under circumstances that prevented his bringing very much of his personal effects with him. He had a very complete outfit of Community silver including all the little odd pieces needed for a big formal dinner, this silver was nicely packed in wooden cases. When the situation had cleared up somewhat he sent for these cases, the cases came to hand promptly but contained nothing but newspapers, every piece of silver was gone. On her way from Foochow to Shanghai Mrs. Price, wife of the American Consul at Foochow, lost the rubber tires from her baby carriage. On August 4th Mr. Owen Warren, of Hankow, wrote me that some two thousand soldiers had just occupied the Jardine and Matheson go-down (warehouse), this in spite of the presence at Hankow of a British consul and British gunboats. On August 12th Mr. H wrote me that about twenty thousand Communistic soldiers had gone into Kiangsi, they captured and held Nanchang for a few days, from July 31st to August 4th, Nanchang was like a city during Chinese New Year, all shops tightly closed and the streets empty. Many communistic leaders have also fled to Kiangsi, these soldiers were formed into two armies

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they were driven out of Nanchang and have moved south in two directions, one army moving toward Hunan. In Hunan armies have been sent to strategic points on the Kiangsi border to guard against their entrance into Hunan. At Yungsin in Kiangsi there has been heavy fighting, the Communists succeeded in scaling the city wall and have driven out the conservatives, fighting is also reported at Kian. This morning Mr. W. H Warren, of the China Inland Mission Staff here, told me of a letter just received from Mr. Easton from Hanchung, Shensi, this letter stated that all was quiet in the city but that all the surrounding country was so full of bandits and robbers that they did not dare to venture out on any itinerations. [*sic*] The China Inland Mission now has nearly four hundred missionaries home on furlough and on leave and Mr. Warren told me that none of these would be returning this fall except a few who have important posts in large centers such as teachers in foreign schools in Chefoo, etc. On Sunday evening Doctor Walter Lowrie, of the American Presbyterian Board, told me that none of their workers would be returning to China this fall except a few special ones as in the case of the China Inland Mission above, he also said that two new workers would be coming out to begin the study of the language, Doctor

and Mrs. Henke. His is a very important point which I hope will not escape your prayerful attention. On April 5th I received the following cable from the Institute: "BIOLA, CHANGSHA, HUNAN, HARRISON, KNOOVABEJC USTERSHODW AYZOYSORIV." This de-coded reads, "Harrison wants to know what he is to do about August, other temporary arrangements pending." This cable reached me after two days and nights of very strenuous work and very little sleep, the second night no sleep at all, it came when I was just in the stress of settling all the local business matters before leaving and I assure you that it was not easy to work out a cable message in reply with a constant stream of persons coming into my office each one with urgent business, however I managed to reply as follows: "Owing to present pressure, our advice is delay coming for the present. Things are in a very bad state, compelled to leave at once. Address until further notice, Shanghai." You will note that the cable received by me said distinctly "Temporary arrangements pending" and my reply said "Delay coming for the present." To my great amazement, before I could get a letter of explanation written, a letter came to hand stating that Mr. Harrison had accepted a call to serve a church in Nova Scotia for a year. This seems to me extremely unfortunate, I am not sure of Mr. Harrison's age, but I think that he is past twenty-five, in which case every year of delay in the matter of language study is of tremendous importance. It seems to me that if he feels sure of God's call to service to China he ought by all means to come out this fall, as Doctor and Mrs. Henke of the Presbyterian

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Board are doing, and begin his language study without delay. Will you all pray very earnestly about this matter. In view of the present conditions and outlook in China regarding which the above statements are suggestive hints, I feel that my previous recommendations regarding the coming out of the Stevens and senior Whipple this autumn demand very serious consideration and earnest prayer and no action should be taken unless the individuals concerned and the members of our Board feel a very clear guidance in the matter. Information that will have reached you through the daily press before this letter comes to hand will give you additional help in coming to a decision. With deepest interest in and much love to you all,
Your fellow worker,

Frank

Frank A. Keller.

FAK/PCT

August 18, 1927.

When this letter was begun it was my intention to personally type two or three sheets discussing the problems confronting the several families of our staff, so that we might unite in prayer on these points. But we all are quite familiar with the points I had in mind, therefore, on further thought and prayer I have decided to write personal letters to each one instead. This morning the papers announce that a conference between the Nanking and Wuhan factions is being planned for September 15th. Do you see what that means? Continued confusion and uncertainty until some time [*sic*] after that conference is over! I feel

more and more convinced that China is no place for women and children at present, and therefore I heartily approve of Walter's proposal that if he comes out this fall, he will come alone, Constance and the children remaining at home. The same thing applies to Otis. There is a constant feeling of uncertainty and tenseness here in Shanghai that is telling seriously on the health, especially of women and children, and on others who are not very actively engaged in definite work. I met Mrs. Derr on the street a couple of days ago and was really startled to see how poorly she is looking. Please let this be absolutely confidential.

F.aK.