



CHINA INLAND MISSION

Wuhu, Anhwei, China,

August 13, 1934.

Dear Friends :

"For a great door and effectual is opened unto me
and there are many adversaries." I. Cor. 16:9.

Our last letter told of our trip together to our new field, Tsingteh. We are not there yet, but are spending the summer here in Wuhu, taking the place of our Anhwei Local Secretary while he and his wife are off on their first trip to the hill country in some years. The verse has been running in my mind for some time, and I think that I can best let you know some of our opportunities and difficulties by telling you of my last trip to our new district, when we got to know the people and some of their problems better.

Kuan In Ch'iao was our first stop again,—and I never spent a more miserable weekend in my life. I trust the telling of this story will make you thank God more than ever that you were born in a country with a Christian background. The old father in the Li family had originally arranged a marriage for his second son with one of the local families. The lad grew up with the girl, went to school with her, and looked forward to marrying her. When the time came, the old man changed his mind, (probably for money reasons) and married him off to another young girl in the neighborhood. The lad was heartbroken; but there was nothing to be done but to take the girl his father had

arranged for him to marry. Undoubtedly he never gave that girl a chance from the beginning; for he didn't want her; and the result has been that she reacted as badly as could be expected, and has turned out to be sulky, lazy, bad tempered, etc.—and very little wonder, either. She probably is not as bright as the other two daughters-in-law in that household, nor as capable; but things might have been different had she had a chance. The result has been revillings on both sides, and beatings,—and the Lis were on the verge of a lawsuit with the girl's father at the time I arrived on the scene. The very fact that I turned up at the psychological moment stopped that proceeding. I didn't know this till later, but the atmosphere of that home did give me a most troubled weekend. As these folk have a different dialect, I couldn't even get the whole of the story until later on; but I knew where their trouble lay, and, though not knowing how far the matter had gone, I could give them Ephesians five on the duties of husbands and wives. Friends and the village elders suggest sending the girl back to her father, who is willing to take her; but she declares she will not go, saying that, while she lives she is a member of their family, and will ever be a "family spirit"—to plague them if they mistreat her—after she is dead. So they will not force her to go home with such a threat. From a human point of view they are incompatible, but that leaves out the transforming power of God in the lives of men. Their father was a real Christian, and God has on at least three occasions kept that family out of danger just in the nick of time. Will not some of you friends take this family to God in prayer; for if, or rather when, that young man and his wife are really happy together, that valley will have one of the strongest possible testimonies to the grace of God.

I left that village feeling a bit down in the mouth, and it was the "Hallelujah Chorus" that my Heavenly Father used to put me right again. In my mind myself back in Moody Bible

Institute, with Prof. Bitnikoff leading the Choir in that great anthem. I hummed it, whistled it, and did all but sing the four parts simultaneously,—and it worked. Who can be blue, with the remembrance that He shall reign, Kings of Kings and Lord of Lords, forever and ever and ever?

My next stop, in the home of Mrs. Wang in Miao Sheo, was a real tonic to me. She and her husband, many years ago, at their first hearing believed the gospel, and said to the missionary at the time, "How can one help believing, when told of such love?" Her husband used to go to the nearest Gospel Hall every few weeks for the Sunday services, making the twenty miles there on Saturday, staying all Sunday, and coming back again twenty more miles on Monday. Would you walk that far to go to church? God has wonderfully blessed that childless widow and her adopted son, and the relations between that mother and daughter-in-law were beautiful to see. The other half of the house in which they live is occupied by one of the worst-tempered, vilest-mouthed creatures I ever have seen. His own clan seems to be able to do nothing to stop him from starving, and beating his own aged mother,—the fact of the matter is that she has had and still has a frightful temper of her own. My first night in the Wang home, with all its peace and quiet, found hell broken loose next door; for from night-fall till morning light that old woman moaned over her own troubles, and howled and raved at her unfilial son. Heaven and Hell under one roof—and a great gulf fixt. Pray much for this Wang family, and for Mr. Lo, our evangelist and co-worker; for they do have a hard place in this town.

We had a really delightful surprise, on a side trip of two days, and, incidentally, an added revelation of how much you folk at home can really help us here by prayer. Mr. Warren, whose place we are taking in Tsingteh, has been having its friends in England and Australia pray for a town by the name of Peh Ti. We went to see the place, and experienced the

greatest welcome we've ever had in a strange place. From the local magistrate down to the school boys, all were very cordial, without a trace of the sneer that the foreigner often gets since super-nationalism has taken hold of China. We sold gospels galore, and that evening had a most interested audience listening to the message just as long as we cared to stay and talk. I had to start over again two or three times before the crowd even began to melt away. We were conscious of the fact that this town had been specially prepared for us.

In the next town, Kiang Ts'uen, we were made the butt of jokes and laughter,—so that we were the more conscious that people had been praying for Peh Ti. Still another town, Hu Loh Si, which we visited on the trip, offered us real opposition. The government school children had been given quite a dose of nationalism and anti-foreignism by their teachers, and in consequence did their best to disturb the meetings. The trades people on the street and the children from the private schools heard us gladly, but this place will need a lot of prayer and some careful handling.

The country here has been suffering from a severe drought with the result that a very large part of the rice crop has been destroyed. This will mean famine among the people, with its concomitants of disease and increased brigandage. We are hoping in December to join with our nearest neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Kohfeld, about sixty miles away from us, for joint endeavors in some large center, intensively working the town and its outlying villages. We plan to try to visit every home, and to hold evening meetings simultaneously for both old and young, trusting that, with your help in prayer, God will gather out a group of enquirers and believers whom we can leave as a nucleus for a local church. We have not decided on the exact town yet, but do be praying about this.

We are looking forward with great expectations to our new field. It's a great open door, with its many villages scattered all through our parish of more than two hundred square miles, and we look to God to use us for His glory. Adversaries?—Yes, you know our great adversary. Besides him there is the same awful indifference that you have to face at home, and, added to that, superstition among the ignorant, and a type of nationalism among the educated young folk that scorns foreigners for everything except science and machines.

Thank God with us

For His own daily presence with us, and care for us.

For excellent health, and happiness.

For such a gospel to preach.

For help in language study.

For blessing on the work in Suancheng.

For the answer to our prayers for a good Christian servant woman to take with us to Tsingteh.

Pray with us

For His blessing on the Christians in our district.

That some stumbling blocks may be removed or transformed.

For the Li family at Kuan In Ch'iao.

For the church at Miao Sheo, the Wang family, and Mr. Lo.

For the towns of Peh Ti, Kiang Ts'uen, Hu Loh Si, San Chi, and for Tsingteh where we are to live.

For the six weeks' meetings before mentioned.

For protection as we move goods and family to Tsingteh.

For spiritual power so that we may be truly effective.

My wife joins with me in sending you all our heartiest greetings.

Your in His Happy Service,

John C. Stam.