

August 23, 1939.

Dear Yigdal:

I am enclosing a copy of my general letter, which is pretty dumb as it was written at two or three different times, and so lacks coherence.

I didn't get a letter ~~from~~ off to you last week, but my conscience doesn't hurt me too much for I didn't get one from you either. Evidently, you got snowed under in one of your institutes for your last letter was written from East Tawas. I don't see how you managed to write at all in such a place. It sounded very thrilling what you were doing there and I shall be interested in the mimeographed copy of your young people's findings.

I had a regular orgy of reading while I was in Chinkiang. I found a lot of old Christian Centuries of the last few months, since I left U.S.A. and I went through those and read all my favorite writers, also read several copies of "Time" and "News-week" and several declamatory stories, and finally ended on a rather high note by reading a biography of Francis Asbury. I couldn't help but think that it is quite a big jump from a hardy old guy like him to some of us pampered modern missionaries. *Chinese*

I heard about a girl while there, who walked in about fifteen miles. She wanted to join the "Fourth Route" army which is supposed to be in this vicinity, and needed a little money which she borrowed from someone there. This just shows how far the occupation of China extends from the railway. That town had been a center of recruiting and had been recently taken again by the other side, so that she felt it was no longer safe to stay there. To escape the sentries on both ends, at that village and into the city, she traveled by night, walked practically all night, all alone, and was going back the same way. Then she was going to join a party and go on interior where she will probably do propagandao and education work in the villages. She expected to go three or four days journey, by sort of an "underground" railway, being passed from one place to the next.

I had a nice letter from Miss W. and also her picture. I found a frame for her picture and have it on my dresser, but perhaps I shall not leave it there. At times she makes me a little uncomfortable! (I mean uncomfortable)

I find I am going to loose two of my Junior Church workers. One is the girl I told about in my other letter, and the other is going to Shanghai to college. They are not the most important one, whom I may also loose, but I have not heard definitely. The girl who has been leading the singing is the one I swear by. I expect I shall have to more or less reorganize both that and the S. S. by the time school starts as there will be some changes in the faculty here from which I draw. Fortunately I lost the leader of the S.S. who was rather a thorn in the flesh to me. I heard that she has gone inland to teach in a school where she will have no one to try to supervise her.

Hoping you are the same, lovingly, but terribly lazy. Jessie

It is hard to say just exactly what I mean. For example here in this city, everyone remarks about the "comb-back" which the Chinese people have shown. How quickly life adjusted itself to new conditions. I think it is a thing which it is easy to forget that there is a continuity to life, that it goes on even if we stop, even if we are thwarted, or killed. That in the end nothing can make much difference. I talk like a communist. They also have this very strong sense of an evolutionary process. It gives them the courage to fight against very overwhelming odds.

But the one lesson I have learned from life, it is in that poem, but perhaps not very clear, is to wait. That the thing which I cannot understand now will become plain to me in time.

You ask about the people with whom I live and work. I live with only one fellow-missionary, a very large lady, aged 59. She is very kind to me but I have very little real fellowship with her. We get along very well by not seeing anything of each other except at meals. I try not to make her over or to apologize for her. She is not my responsibility. But I also try not to let her interfere too much with what I am trying to do. But she is really very good about it. There is the possibility of an addition to our family soon, of some "up-river" missionaries who because of the war cannot return to their own stations. These two would be more nearly my age and point of view. For companionship I turn to Chinese. But they are mostly girls much younger than I am and while I have a good time with them, it is somewhat like my relationship to Mary Davis. We enjoy each other, but it does not go so much further than that. I hope that I can make my friendship mean something to them, but it seems to me that I have no so far. But it is hard to evaluate such things. It is not always what we say that counts, sometimes it is just as much what we are. I suppose they understand my struggles more than I know and are also inspired to strive for higher things.

But my relationship with these girls has been a very happy one. I shall count it as one of the high rewards of my life. For one thing I have found out what I meant to my students in the past. They regard me with an affection and respect which surprises me. And those that I did not know before are getting to feel very friendly. It seems to me that there has been quite a change in attitude of the girls toward their Sunday Service in the Sunday School or junior church. In the beginning they all tried to get out of it, and now they all seem eager for it. If I have occasion to invite another one, she accepts with apparent pleasure.

I don't mean to be boastful, but you can see that it would give one a sense of satisfaction. The Sunday School is still pretty much of a mess. Now that school is out, the attendance has dropped off a half or more, all of which goes to show how little real hold we had on them. I'm trying to think out ways and means of making it possible for them to do some real teaching. Their weakness is that they tend to as we say in Chinese (preach the doctrine) which often is a little more than a sort of haranguing the children. Saying trivial and very obvious things over and over. I'm thinking now of breaking up the group into several smaller ones, and having them sit about a table, with not more than twenty in a class. I know that is too many, but it is at least twice as good as having fifty, or is it? The girls think that if they don't have a large group, it is not worth while.