

## Chapter 8

### “WE BROTHERS” ‘Make the World Our Home’

*J. Russell and Gertrude Morse*

*Typically Victorian, in the post-Victorian era, was the usage of ‘brothers’ to indicate all humankind, including ‘sisters’; one of the last symbols to be challenged. Yet, we, who had parents of that era, understand the lack of discrimination was not truly indicative of their compassion necessarily. I neither feel demeaned, as some do, by the Victorian usage nor intend to demean any Victorian. It was not meant in that sense by my parents nor many others. Their good qualities far out-weigh their mannerisms or their modes of thought and action. Their characteristics which hampered their relationships with others and the rigidity which in some ways limited their vision was not the sum total of the meaning they brought to theirs and others lives. Those qualities, that prevented the resolution of certain problems that came to the Mission, were also those very qualities that the determination and courage they showed, were based upon. This author firmly believes that many difficulties the Morses had at Batang were the result of immaturity. Unswerving faith is good, but if that brings a rigidity which makes one unable to accept change it brings hardship. Faith must see beyond the needs to the possibilities of a vision that will bring change. Certainly their later work showed their ability to change to meet the needs of the world of faith they built.*

Justin Russell was born Feb. 4, 1898 in South Dakota, but grew up in Tulsa, Okla. He received his B.A. degree from Phillips University in 1920, did graduate work at Henry Kendall College of Tulsa in 1919 and was again at Phillips in 1920-21. He was a pastor for different churches and YMCA Secretary for one summer. He was a Christian Endeavour Life-Work Recruit and a Student Volunteer.<sup>39</sup> He wanted to go to Tibet because of Dr. Shelton’s influence. In answering the question, on his missionary application as to whether he could

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<sup>39</sup> Terms from within the programs of the Christian Church used to recruit ministerial and missionary volunteers from among the young people.

accept a majority decision in planning for work with other missionaries he qualified his answer that such decisions must not interfere with his communion with Christ nor with his own Christian influence.

Born Dec. 19, 1897, Gertrude married Russell May 26, 1920 in Ottawa, Kan. She grew up in Oklahoma as a Baptist, graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1919 and attended Phillips University. She had courses in piano and voice which became a great asset on the mission field. She was a Student Volunteer and worked as a YWCA Secretary. She had experiences in teaching. She also qualified her acceptance of majority decisions, "unless it is contrary to my belief in Christ and the Bible." She felt she could adapt to life in a foreign field since she had lived on the frontier in Oklahoma. Both her and Russell's stands are indicative of their strength of faith and determination.

Both had excellent health except Gertrude was subject to nervousness and Russell had very poor teeth. Health conditions and weaknesses are exaggerated in foreign cultures and climates- any weakness is exaggerated. Comments were uniformly good in their references for Russell with but a suggestion that he needed maturity.<sup>40</sup> This is why that it was suggested he take another year at Phillips. Certainly Batang gave them both exercises in growth and self-knowledge. A unique determination of theirs was that they would marry but if marriage would hinder them from becoming missionaries then they would not. They did the extra study and then took a year at the College of Missions where they met the Duncans and began a life-long friendship. At the Ivy Chain Ceremony, quoting: "As God has been with these and with us in our past lives, so He will be with us in the future, that we may win souls for Him in His Kingdom." GM. "As we go to Tibet, we trust that the glorious Son of God will use our little lives as he used the loaves and fishes by the Sea of Galilee, to feed the hungry multitudes there in His name." JRM. Then they took ship together for Tibet with the Sheltons.

When they reached Shanghai where the Sheltons parted, with Flora taking ship for India, Russell described their parting as a travail of their souls. It was as if Flora felt they would not meet again.<sup>41</sup> "Only Jesus could give them a love like that." Dr. Shelton he described as "the genius of the mission, the leader in every good work." He loved to talk about the future of the mission. He was the most sincerely loved man on the Tibetan border."

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<sup>40</sup> Application papers which are on file for all missionaries. Morse 1921 File.

<sup>41</sup> "Dr. Shelton, as a New Missionary in Tibet Saw Him", J. Russell Morse, *World Call*, Feb. 1921, pp. 24-25.

The Shelton party arrived in Batang Dec. 24, 1921. Duncans and the Morses began language study in Feb. The job of settling into their new homes and to understand the people they were to work among was begun immediately.

*Marion H. and K. Louise H. Duncan*

Of all the missionaries coming to Batang many were Scots and; luckily, many married wives of good, calm, German or English descent. The irascible Scots had to learn to guard their tempers which was easier for some than others. Two of them, Dr. Hardy and Marion Duncan took years to accept the worth of each other, but it did happen. Dr. Hardy and Russell Morse did not. In the beginning, though, it was not easy for Marion. Marion was to be known for his brashness and Louise for her gentleness- they were in love for the entire 56 years of their lives together; just as Morses came to be known for their love and steadfastness for each other.

Marion, born Jan. 17, 1895, in Celina, O. was orphaned by the age of 12, both parents dying of tuberculosis. His mother died at the birth of his sister, his father remarried and then having gone to New Mexico for a cure, died there. His stepmother married his uncle, but she could not, even before his father's death, manage the three brothers, so she farmed them out to neighboring farmers. Marion's foster family, the Jim Bode family, were very good people so they became a real family to him. He finished in the three-year high school there in East Liberty, O., but in order to be able to go to college he needed a fourth year. This he got by going to a four year high school in Bellefontaine by train every day. Earning his livelihood on the Bode farm he sold books in order to earn tuition for Hiram College. At 12 he and his two brothers were baptized into the Christian Church by Rev. Freer in whose home his brother John had been fostered.

Marion worked his way through Hiram College and a month before graduation he was inducted into the army for World War I as a medical aide. He had had a hard life but it toughened him for the mission field in far-off Tibet. He wanted to marry Louise Habecker but could not do that unless he joined her in being a missionary. She had always intended to be a doctor like Dr. Susie and go to Tibet. Marion loved her too much not to accept that challenge.

**"My Fear"** by Marion H. Duncan  
Sure some would say 'twere better far  
To crown their life with sleep,  
Than face the wind, the rain, the snow,

Or cross the swelling deep;  
 But storm, nor wind nor driving rain,  
 Can keep me from that view;  
 I only fear that death will stop me,  
 Keep from me that rendezvous.

Louise was born Sept 7, 1892 in Sanborn, NY, also on a farm. She dropped out of school to become a nurse-companion to an aunt of hers. Then, realizing she would never be more unless she went back to school she entered high school in Buffalo and then to Hiram College graduating in mathematics.

Since Louise had to pay all her own expenses and had borrowed to go to college, she refused to marry until she had paid it all. She taught high school mathematics at Berkeley Springs, W.Va. Marion joined her there as principal of the high school after returning from WWI. They were accepted by the UCMS and went to the College of Missions in 1920-21. Quotes: June 1921 at the Ivy Chain Ceremony, "When God is in Tibet, all will be right with the world" MHB "I will not fear, for the Lord, my God will be with me even in Tibet, even on the roof of the world. With this promise ringing in my soul, and with the knowledge that we have the prayers of the best group of people in the world, we go forth to Tibet." KLHD

They married Feb. 2, 1921. Louise had to give up her dream of being a doctor, but she was going as a missionary, and had the honor of going out with Dr. and Mrs. Shelton. The other new missionary couple, the Morses, sailed with them from Vancouver, B.C. on the R.M.S. "Empress of Japan" for Yokohama and Nagasaki, Japan to Shanghai and Hong Kong.

In Louise's diary of the trip she was exceptionally vivid in describing the first impacts of Oriental culture as she found it. First, the teeming millions of Japanese, then Chinese and Anamese stirred her compassion. There were the struggles with French customs and officials, the seeming hopelessness of making any progress both because of the delays and the slowness of the trains, the heaviness of the monsoon rains, but also because of the washouts of the tracks. She did also enjoy the beauty of these countries they passed through, all combined to make the trip memorable. The sounds and smells, "Gertrude and I hold our gentle noses in disgust" at the "57 varieties" of odors. We "pray for pure oxygen while Marion says, 'Got to get used to it sooner or later.' Says I 'Later for me'. I believe in postponement of the evil day!"<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Diary of the Trip to Batang. K. Louise H. Duncan, Aug. 4, 1921 to

In this "unspeakable climate, everything rustible, rusts, everything mould-able, moulds or, mildew-able, mildews." All this time Louise, being pregnant, worries over their delays which may make them too late for the baby to be born in Batang.

Besides sounds and smells, there are the mosquitoes and other insects, endless delays for bargaining for sedan chairs to be built, for horses and mules to carry them and their freight, for an escort for protection, for permission to travel, for the endless packing and re-packing of goods to fit into the boxes for the mules and to repair whatever are damaged on the trip. *This all taught them the one big lesson of the Orient - patience - the Orient cannot be hurried!*

Everything slows to a stop in the monsoon rains. First, they are held up in Haiphong by the landslides to be cleared from the railroad tracks. Louise gets dysentery in Haiphong and the cure seems to be almost worse than the disease. When they finally start they are amazed at the engineering done to create this railway with its numerous bridges, 104 tunnels and viaducts. It was said that an Anamese died for every tie put in. At one point a landslide had taken out the round under the tracks for 120' above a 100' chasm! They had to carry their own luggage through a tunnel of slippery mud behind the chasm. Louise is distressed to watch the rough treatment given to the Anamese - she is told they have to be roughed up or they will not work! Upon reaching Yunnanfu they had to wait for the freight before they could hit the trail west.

Waiting not so patiently, Marion had to wantonly kill the mosquitoes which get under the net at night. Louise tries to ignore the smells. It is still raining despite the cannon being fired to stop the rain and that the North Gate, from which direction the rain was coming, had been closed. Gertrude and Russell have their young son, Eugene, with them and he has not been well. But sedan chairs have been ordered, shopping is being done, cash is obtained and the negotiation with officials for escort and permission has been started. Finally patience is rewarded, the freight has arrived and re-packing begun. Negotiations are completed, bargaining done and an escort of 30 soldiers are ready to march. Oct. 31st they move out to begin the long trek west and then north. Numerous reports of robbers abound.

Ogdens pass them as they are on their way out for furlough and a short, pleasant contact is made. Talifu is reached Nov. 13th and Louise gazes with wonder at her first snow peaks near Chou Chow. They stop to catch their breaths at Wei Hsi near where Bakers

relocated. We learn that Duncans know Bakers; they having come from the Buffalo, NY area also. (Nov. 28th.)

The party arrived at YenGin Dec. 13th and they delayed a day to bathe and wash clothes and to see the famous flats where salt is dried. Now only seven days to Batang! The traveling was not easy for Louise as the motion of the sedan chair was uncomfortable, but walking was uncomfortable, too. They all had partaken of a Chinese feast before leaving and Louise was sick the next day. One good thing, though, the YenGin officials had arranged for oo-la (the custom of providing animals and escort from one town to another) to last all the way to Batang. No long stops on the way.

They crossed the highest pass at 15,600'. Finally they began seeing the devastation of war on the way as they passed houses destroyed by the opposing armies. One woman had had her feet boiled until her toes fell off to make her tell where her possessions were hidden. Dr. heard that many people had left Batang on account of the new officials arriving.

It was very cold daily in the higher altitudes. Their last stay for the night was in a Buddhist temple where many of the idols had been destroyed to get out the hidden valuables. They saw where the Batang River flows into the Yangtze, this joining point called the 'Elephant's Nose'.

Batang people began meeting them on the road. Mr. MacLeod and Dr. Hardy came, bringing their mail from home- so far away! That day they had dinner (at noon) with the MacLeods and supper with the Hardys. Marion meantime went over to their new home in Ja-ra-nong to set up their beds and then Louise was carried over - their new life in Batang was begun!

One thing was shown over and over - how the people loved and revered Dr. Shelton! They came out with happy faces and gifts for him at every village in the Batang Valley!

They had arrived Dec. 24, 1921. Herbert Franklin Duncan was born Dec. 29th. Louise had spent time in the Hardy home when it was feared that the delivery might start and Dr. Hardy not be immediately available. Then as per custom new mothers did not get out of bed for two weeks and only gradually took up their work.

Since the Ogdens were on furlough, and the Shelton family were not there the MacLeods had moved into Ja-po-ding from Ja-ra-nong. Dr Shelton took rooms in the Mill House, the old school building. School had begun in the new school building with Mac in charge. The rug industry is closed; its funds put into the fund for the new chapel except for \$400 to repay Mr. Baker for the personal funds he used.