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CHINESE

CHIMES

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AUTUMN LEAVES

Nov. 1929



ladies in our mission station. Just at present Miss Phelps is in the hospital with scarlet fever. She is not very sick but probably will have to stay there for some time to avoid spreading the disease.

An outstanding <sup>event</sup> even for our station this last summer and fall has been the construction of a new school building. It contains twelve large class-rooms and is going to be a great relief to the present crowded condition in the school. We have about 500 students this fall and in spite of the inconvenience of being terribly crowded the school has been running very smoothly. The new building will be completed within a few days now and it will be a great addition to our school plant.

#### A LEAF GONE FROM THE FAMILY TREE.

Speaking of falling leaves, we are minus one from our "family tree" this year. The Cub-Reporter is now studying in the American School at Lungshien, near Peking. The school has about fifty students this term and from all that we can learn there is a splendid staff of teachers and a fine bunch of "leaves" that have blown in from various missionary and other homes in North China. At least two have come from places as far away as Henkow and Shanghai.

We find it hard to realize that we have been in China long enough to have a son who was born in Pootingfu old enough to be away at school but the evidence is hard to doubt. Certainly there have been changes in China sufficient for a life time but we expect that there are many more to come. As we look back over the thirteen years that have passed since we arrived in China we admit that some of the enthusiasm that brings new recruits to China has disappeared but we believe that in its place there have come a better understanding of the real situation in China and a clearer comprehension of what Christianity has to do if it is to win out in this great land. We hope that we have mellowed and ripened somewhat in these thirteen years since we were transplanted to Chinese soil.

## EVEN CHURCH LEAVES FALL.

It is no secret that the Christian church in China has been passing through a trying period these last few years. The result is that the actual church membership, and the Sunday church attendance have "shed not a few leaves". The vacant pews in many a Chinese church on Sunday mornings is a disheartening sight to more than a few missionaries. The liberty of choice which has been granted to students as to whether they will attend church or not accounts for part of the situation but there are fallen leaves that did not come from the educational branch.

A member of the National Christian Council of China who visited Paotingfu recently reported that a study of the Shanghai church rolls that has just been made reveals the fact that only about 50% of the registered members can be located. How far this condition prevails in other parts of China we do not know, but we suspect that Shanghai is not very different than other places. We are planning to make a study of our Paotingfu church rolls and then we shall know better how we compare with the great metropolis at the mouth of the Yangtze.

According to reports in the newspapers not long ago Dr. Ch'eng Ching YU, who is one of the greatest and best posted Chinese Christian leaders, did not hesitate while speaking in America this fall to state that the condition of the Christian church in China is in a rather deplorable condition. We are glad to see that he has been so frank and honest, for nothing is to be gained from suppressing the truth. The sooner an ailment is recognized and treated, the better for the patient.

The National Christian Council is now promoting a "Five-Year-Program" with a two-fold purpose. For the people in the church the aim is to enlighten the understanding and deepen the spiritual life. Such lines of work as Mass Education, Religious Education and Better

Homes Societies will be emphasized. For those outside the church the aim is to bring into church membership enough to double the enrollment in five years. Personally, we hope that the stress will be put on the aim to deepen the spiritual life of those in the church, and higher standards of Christian living and knowledge will be required of those who are taken in, whether the numbers be doubled or not. We should like to see the terms "Christian" and "Church Member" made more nearly to coincide.

### THE GLORY OF AUTUMN.

What we have written above may seem like strange "Christmas Greetings", but we are not as pessimistic as our pen may have led you to believe. One fact that sustains us is the knowledge that autumn is but a temporary season, it isn't going to last forever. Of course winter has to follow autumn and we shall not be surprised if conditions in China become worse before they get permanently better. We have already stated that we expect our family tree to shed another leaf next year. The present civil war in China may develop into a life-and-death struggle between the conservative and radical groups of the national leaders. The Nanking Government has really been rather conservative in its attitude towards foreigners and the Christian church. If the more radical group should succeed in getting into the saddle we might be dealt with some pretty hard kicks in the ribs. Or to return to our former simile the autumn atmosphere in which the foreign and Christian people now find themselves in China might easily turn into real winter weather. It will be but for a season, however, and to quote Shelley, "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

There is also a deeper reason than the transitoriness of autumn that bears us up, and that is that Autumn has a splendor all its own. Wasn't it a happy thought when the Creator chose to paint

the autumn leaves with the most wonderful colors of his palette? If there is any time of year when we are inclined to be homesick for New England it is in the autumn. Those of you who have been there at that time of year know the reason why, and those who have not been there, or in some other similar place, when the "Little Leaves" put on their "dresses of red and gold" - well, we are sorry for you.

We have failed completely if we have given the impression that we are downhearted or discouraged, or are looking for pity. It really is great to be in China these "autumn" days; we believe that there are still more glorious days ahead. A snowy and drifted road may lie before us but what Christian would ask for a perpetual road of roses? The Christ Child was not born in a steam heated hospital nor did he choose for his path a smooth and easy one. The glory of Christmas, to us, is the fact that the Bethlehem Babe has taught the world that he is Lord even of the Autumn.

Every autumn day in our compound there is a motly group of happy Chinese children who are busy gathering leaves as they fall from some wonderful old poplar trees along our main road. The children string the leaves one by one, and drag them along home.

We string our Autumn Leaves to send to you our joys and our sorrows, our disappointments and our hopes. They do not glow and shine with the brilliant colors which autumn paints in other lands, but rather are dull and dusty and brown, like the poplar leaves which the children gather. But as the children take home their strings of leaves to add to the store of winter fuel, may our string of Autumn Leaves warm your hearts, because they are strung on strings of mutual faith and love and prayer -

"For so the whole round earth is every way,  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

