

THE CHINESE CHIMES

Adversity Number

"Adversity is the first path to truth"

T'unghsien, Peiping, China.

November, 1934

H. W. Robinson, Pretending Editor, James W. Robinson, Sport Editor.
Mary S. Robinson, Busy Manager, Harold S. Robinson, Cub Reporter.
Elizabeth A. Robinson, Treasure.

Prelude.

To those who will read these lines the statement that the American Board has for some years been sailing "against the wind" will hardly be news. We recall that unpleasant fact at this time as a major reason for the long silence of the Chimes. It also partly explains our diminished correspondence of a more personal nature, although we realize that it may not be a very adequate excuse.

We don't know whether we can compose a "Tune to Adversity" for the Chimes or not but "Adversity" seems to be the word that comes to mind as we search for a name for this number. The very fact that in spite of its length Anthony Adverse has had such a sale leads us to believe that perhaps present conditions have something to do with the popularity of that book. The Adverse family seems to be a big one these days.

If Byron is correct when he tells us that adversity is the first path to truth we may be able to learn lessons of great value as we journey along that path.

A Bit of Personal History.

Last spring cablegrams from Boston brought the sad news that not only must there be further drastic cuts in funds from America but that eighteen members of our mission must be withdrawn. It was not an easy task to decide who should go, and for some weeks the question "Who will it be?" was in the minds of many of us. While we were considering that question Mary and I received a letter from the Executive Committee of the Board of Managers of the North China American School inviting us to join the staff of that institution. We didn't know whether we would be among the eighteen or not but if so we would be glad to have as good positions in China as the School offered us. In case we were not among the eighteen our acceptance of the offer would make it possible for two of our colleagues to remain with the mission. After a letter had been sent to the Board in Boston a cable from them advised us to

accept the offer and the Mission Council finally voted to loan us to the School for three years. In that way it has not been necessary for us to sever our relations with the Board and we hope that by the end of three years the Board will be in a financial position which will make it possible for us to return to the regular work of the mission. In the meantime we are with a school which is partly supported by the Board, and are living in one of the mission compounds. We came here September first, after a delightful holiday at the seashore.

The North China American School.

Our new home is a school primarily for children of missionaries from Seventh Grade through High School, and this year there is a special class for Sixth Grade. We have 66 students and there are seven full-time American teachers, besides one Chinese teacher and a Chinese nurse. Some of the missionary mothers who live in the compound also give part time to teaching in the school.

Our three children are studying here, but as a family we are still somewhat scattered. Mary and I live in a dormitory with smaller boys, Elizabeth is in the girls' dormitory, James in another building and Harold in still another. We eat in the school dining room and of course it is good to be living in the same school. This is probably our last year as a united family for Harold is a senior and expects to go to America for college next fall. This year he is president of his class, Editor of the School Annual, member of the Boy Scout Patrol, member of the Choir and of the Dramatic Club. James is also in Boy Scouts, Choir and Dramatic Club and is getting some very practical training by helping to run the school store. His main job this year seems to be "increasing his stature". He is already taller than his Dad and if he doesn't outweigh him now he probably will before the winter is over. Elizabeth is a member of the special Sixth Grade class and enjoys life with old friends, as well as new ones. Gladys Hubbard with whom she grew up in Paotingfu, Jean Hunter who was her "Twin" one year in Paotingfu and Margaret Wickes who was one of the "Tchow Trio" (See the Missionary Herald for September for their picture) are here.

Mary has charge of the studies in the grades, teaches five periods a day, is "mother" to all the boys and has charge of the school dining room, kitchen and laundry. As for my own little self I teach 20 periods of Algebra, Geometry and Solid Geometry each week, besides a Bible Class, a Sunday School class and give a Chapel talk once a week. As Business Manager for the school my "spare time" is filled with looking after repairs, accounts, supervising servants etc, etc.

Now this may not seem much like a life of Adversity, and we don't wish to convey the impression that it is, but the very fact we are here is evidence that others have met with Adversity, else the Board would not have to make such drastic reductions. If any of

you have undertaken to teach subjects which you studied twenty-five years earlier, and have as good a "forgettery" as I have, you will realize that to give up your own homelife, live in a dormitory with boys in their "teens" while you try to recall what you learned a quarter-century ago is not conducive to letter writing, or the editing of a news sheet. The second month has been easier than the first, and we hope to make more progress in the future, but at our ages adjustments are not as simple as they were in the days of our youth. So even if our new life be not considered one of Adversity we are traveling a rather new "path" and we hope that we shall be able to comprehend some of the truth that we meet along the way, and pass on some of it to the fine group of boys and girls with whom we are living and working; we feel that whether we work with them, or with Chinese, ours is still the problem of trying to live out together the Christian way of life.

A Lesson in Humility.

How can we, and others, learn from the great teacher, Adversity, the lessons which she has to teach? A few years ago an American visitor in China asked a Chinese school principal in our presence what China has to teach the West. The principal is a returned student from Grinnell and Cornell, so he knows the West and should be able to answer that question. His reply was that he didn't think China has anything to teach the West. I tried to explain to the questioner that possibly there was more in his answer than one new in China might be able to see, for his real answer was Humility,—not in what he said so much as the way in which he said it. No true Westerners would be loathe to tell an Oriental what we have to teach this part of the world, for, alas, Humility is not one of our strong points. But if we are to learn the truth which Adversity would bestow upon us we probably shall be able to do so only if we possess very humble minds and hearts. In these days, of Adversity I see more clearly than ever before that China does have much to teach us Westerners. A prayer that swells up in my bosom very often is that I may not miss the lesson that this new experience can teach because I lack a humble spirit.

Would That We Were More Like the Chinese.

China has other lessons to teach us. I once asked Prof. Hodous of Hartford Seminary what he thought China has to teach the West. I can't quote him exactly but the gist of his reply, as I remember it was this: the Buddhist thinks of life as something evil, so Man's salvation is to withdraw from life. The Westerner looks upon life and nature as something controlled by laws. Man's salvation comes through the understanding and control of those laws. The Chinese doesn't think of life as being evil, neither does he think of it as something to be controlled. To him life is something to which man must adjust himself. Escape, control, adjust, take your choice.

I personally believe that the Chinese have learned some lessons in Adversity which we have not yet mastered.

Isn't "Adjustment" a good word for us to ponder over as we sit down with our great teacher, Adversity? If we are truly humble perhaps we can learn to adjust ourselves to our new situations and experiences so that life may be even richer than it has been before. A second prayer that I feel like praying "without ceasing" is that I may be able to adjust myself gracefully to the new life that is mine and I surely wish that I were more like the Chinese when it comes to such a task. They are past masters at making the most of adverse situations.

Attempting a New Tune.

Having "tuned" our instrument to that pitch we wish that we might send out our Christmas Carol in a strain which would find a response in the hearts of all our friends in adverse situations. We know that many of you have adjustments to make which are so much harder than ours that we are ashamed to have mentioned our little difficulties. It may seem to you that your "Chimes" are so badly smashed that you will never be able to make another tune. If so, you need to learn a lesson from the Chinese.

Some years ago I was called at the home of an old clock-maker in Santa Barbara, California, to see if I could tell him where some clocks came from which he had collected. He was sure that they came from the Orient and he suspected that they came from China. One of those old clocks had a bell which had been broken but so skilfully had it been mended that its tone was perfect. Who could possess such skill? I could not say for a certainty but if there is anyone who can mend a bell so that its original tone will be restored I am willing to wager that he was born in China. All around us here in China are men who make their living mending broken, teacups, glasses and other fragile vessels and they are so clever that it is not hard for me to believe that some of them might be able to mend perfectly a broken bell. It takes an artist to do it but it can be done. Is it not so with the bells of the soul? To be sure we usually speak of them as "heart strings" but whatever it is that makes music in the soul, it can be mended, for we have seen it done. Isn't Christmas a good time for such repair work? May the music that you hear, and feel, this year be the most beautiful you have ever heard.

"The trials from Thy guiding hand,
Whose aim we may not see,
Are but the music of our lives;
Thine is the melody".

For the entire staff,

H.W.R.

