

## THE CHINESE CHIMES

Smog Number

21 Tung Szu Ching Lu, Tientsin (3), China

November, 1949

"Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot, which men call Earth."

WHY SMOG? You probably won't find the word "smog" in your dictionary yet but those of you who live in Southern California will know what it means. That's where I picked it up and some day it may be a part of the English language. Smog is the substance which produces a murky atmosphere when smoke and fog are mixed together. Smoke and fog combined, whether in substance or in spelling, produce smog. It is the result of God and man working together; God makes the fog and man the smoke, - only God can remove it.

Having dealt with atmospheric terms in our "Winter" and "Frozen" numbers of the Chimes it seems appropriate to call this the "Smog" number, thus we can continue to talk about the "weather" without being able to do anything about it.

THAWING OUT. Our weather has moderated considerably since we wrote the "Frozen" number. The military government under which we lived for some months has now been replaced by the "New Peoples Republic of China." This was accomplished several weeks ago when a Peoples' Consultative Conference was held in the new capital, Peking (no longer Peiping). Some six hundred people attended the Conference and the results of it reach far beyond the borders of this land. The representatives came from all parts of China, and from many different groups of people, including eight representatives of religion. Buddhism, Mohammedanism and Protestantism were represented. The spokesman for the representatives of religion was Wu Yueh Tsung, whom I mentioned in the Frozen number as a member of our Peking Congregational church. I am told that of the six hundred delegates to the conference about one hundred have had close contact with the Christian church, and about thirty of them are still active Christians. Dr. Wu Fang, the President of Ginling College, and Dr. Lu Chih Hui, the head of Yenching University, attended the conference, and Dr. Wu called at our mission station here in Tientsin on her way back to Nanking. Mrs. Feng, Yu Hsiang, and Madame Sun Yet Sen hold important positions in the government. We are glad to be able to report this favorable news and we hope for better weather ahead, but we are still in the "smog" at present.

SOME CLEAR SPOTS. When we wrote our last number last July Mary and I were dreading our move to Tientsin. Experiences of some friends led us to believe that it might be a very troublesome operation. As a matter of fact it was surprisingly easy. We were able to ship most of our household things by Railway Express and the heavy articles by freight. There was very little police inspection, everything came through promptly and in good condition, while we ourselves had a good trip by train and spent a night in Peking. Our cook came with us and later went back to T'unghsien and brought his wife and four children. A few days ago his wife went to the hospital and presented him with another daughter. His two older daughters are in school and the older son attends the Nursery School which Ruth Van Kirk conducts in what was formerly the Chandler residence.

OUR TIEN TSIN MISSION WORK. The American Board has two churches in Tientsin, both of which are carrying on a varied and active program. At the Kang Wei Lu Church near us there are in addition to the regular activities, such as Church School and Sunday morning worship service, a weekly woman's meeting, Bible study twice a week, morning devotions two days a week, a daily class for poor children who are unable to attend school, and a Study-Work class for about fifteen teen-age girls from the country. Other mission projects are a Primary and Junior Middle School, with a total enrollment of about 640, Ruth Van Kirk's Nursery School, a splendid Public Health program for all students supervised by Helen Disney who comes occasionally from Peking.

The second church is in the northwest part of the city where Pastor Chang conducts the church work, Mr. Lu the educational work, Dr. Hu the medical work. There is a large primary school, a clinic, a class in rug making and a poor school besides the regular work of the church.

My work is that of treasurer for the station, teaching Bible to the girls in the Study-Work class, preaching occasionally, leading Bible classes and attending many meetings and committee gatherings. I am free to ride my bicycle anywhere in Tientsin.

and I get a lot of exercise doing that. There is a Missionary Association in Tientsin which meets once a month and a Union Church which has weekly Sunday services in English. I am a deacon in that church, the first time in my life I have ever had such an honor. I am writing this the day before Thanksgiving and have to speak at the Thanksgiving Service at Union Church tomorrow morning.

COUNTRY CHURCHES. The "smog" has been even more dense in the country areas than in the cities. In addition to the political conditions the rural area around Tientsin was badly flooded last summer and tens of thousands of people are left in deplorable conditions. The government has helped some to go to other places and are giving work to large numbers deepening rivers, building roads, etc. Until recently it was not possible for us to learn the real condition of our country churches. A few weeks ago two of our pastors left Tientsin and made trips to the country. They were not restricted in their travels, except at one place where an ignorant minor official told them that they must return to Tientsin. Before they got there they met a higher official who said that they need not go back and could travel freely in the country. They were cordially welcomed by the church members and found that in spite of need for food and clothing nowhere had church members suffered because they were connected with the church. Later when another pastor visited a village church he was taken into custody and is still being held by the government. This pastor is an albino and well known in the area where he is being held. Some years ago a church member gave a piece of land to the church which the village wanted. There was a lawsuit and the church won. A bad feeling was created and that probably is partly the cause for this outburst of anti-church activity. So far as we know the situation in our Tientsin country churches is better than in our other North China stations. The smog in most of those places is so thick that there is very little activity. One pastor in another station asked for permission to visit some village churches and was told by the government that he had better not go lest he be suspected of carrying on political activities. Another pastor in that same area asked for permission to visit some Christians in a nearby village and was told that they were too busy making a living to spend any time with visitors.

ABOVE THE SMOG. While we are enshrouded in this murky atmosphere we are confident that it must have a ceiling and above the ceiling the Sun is still shining. Years ago I spent a night on top of Haleakala, an extinct volcano in Hawaii. The next morning we found that we were above the clouds so we could see nothing below us but a sea of clouds. As the sun pushed back the darkness it flooded the clouds with wonderful colors, making a beautiful sight. We were 10,000 feet above sea level and on the island of Hawaii to the south we could see the two snow-capped peaks of Mona Loa and Mona Kea. Gradually the clouds below disappeared and we had a beautiful view of the island of Maui on which we were located. The memory of that experience cheers us up as we wait for the smog to lift, believing that "We shall know each other better when the mists have rolled away."

BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS. As we approach the Christmas season we realize that China is not the only place where man's activities, combined with natural phenomenon, have produced a smoggy situation. We are glad that we have been permitted to be in China this past year. The darkness around us has helped to make the Light Within seem brighter than ever and we are confident that the Light of Life will eventually dispel all Darkness for those who are looking for a new and better Day. We hope that your skies will be clear at Christmas time but if they are not may you at least have enough Light, even though it be only a star, to bring you near to the Babe of Bethlehem.

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds ye so much dread  
Are big with mercy, and shall break  
In blessings on your head."

H. W. Robinson

Grandma's Postscript

Let's come down from the clouds to mundane family gossip. We are enjoying Tientsin, - the friendliness, the interesting social contacts, worthwhile work to do. We are grateful to all of you who make it possible for us to be here. Our small residence compound is within two blocks of the places where we work, the church, the schools, nursery school. We are living in the nicest and most convenient house we have ever had in China, with electric lights, running hot and cold water, and a telephone. The station even has a tempermental jeep for transportation.

Grandma of course longs to see those four grandchildren. Katy and Jenny Robinson with their father and mother bask in the sunshine at Van Nuys, California where Harold has a position in the Bolander Clinic. Carol Robinson lives with her mother and father at the romantic sounding address, 41 Wigwam Circle, Hanover, N.H. and young Stephen Robinson Ratcliffe keeps Elizabeth and John busy at 64 Maple Street, Framingham, Mass. Grandma is trying to persuade those three doctors to set up their own clinic someplace so that when the grandparents retire they can visit all three families without having to travel across the continent. She joins Grandpa in all his wishes to all of you for peace and joy at Christmas and again repeats the old wish, "GOD BLESS US EVERY ONE."

H. W. Robinson