

# The Chinese Chimes

Worst Number

Techow, Shantung, China

June, 1938

## When Worst Meets Worst.

Since all civilizations have their good points, and their bad points, it is logical to assume that each one must have its worst feature. To be sure, there may be some question as to what that feature is and each individual is free to have his opinion of what is worst. If he has been fortunate enough to live in more than one civilization he will probably be in a better position to evaluate his own than if he has always lived at home. Being, as I am, the product of the Occidental civilization, and having lived some twenty years in China, I find myself making comparisons, and recently my attention has been directed to what seems to me to be the worst in these two civilizations.

I am willing to grant that I may be mistaken, but from my point of view the worst feature of our so-called Christian civilization is MODERN WARFARE. There may be something worse, but if so I don't know what it is, and I hope that I may I may never have to get acquainted with it. Not only do I consider it to be the worst but it seems to be getting worse and worse all the time. Can anything be worse than that?

As for the worst feature of the Oriental civilization it is my humble opinion that the low estimate which is put on human life should be placed at the very extreme of all that is bad. Mules and men killed in a coal mine are considered to be of about the same value, with mules possibly having a slight margin over men. And one should see the mules in order to fully appreciate this comparison. An Iowa mule would be ashamed to admit that he belonged to the same family!

It isn't an original idea of mine that these worst features of two civilizations are meeting in China these days, but the more I see of what is taking place the more I am convinced that such is the case. Here's a new conundrum: When worst mates with worst what will the offspring be? Answer: What we now have in China. Modern warfare is bad enough in the Occident but I believe that it is worse in the Orient. If I am not mistaken prisoners are still taken in modern warfare in the Occident. In fact I read not long ago that Paul MacBachron with whom we lived in Peking our first year in China, and who lived in Techow with his parents for a while was recently taken prisoner in Spain, but how many prisoners have you heard of having been taken in China? Wholesale slaughter of soldiers and civilians is not uncommon here where human life counts for so little. If there is still any question about that, get hold of some of the reports of eye-witnesses in Nanking when that city was captured. I don't know how you can get them, for they were only for private circulation, and don't look for them unless you want to have a horrible picture before your mind's eye for days to come. Nanking is not an isolated incident. There are similar acts of beastliness in other places.

I wish that I could believe that the worst is over but my best reason tells me that the worst is yet to come. The atrocities of the past and present have created so much hatred that I dread to think of what will happen if and when an opportunity presents itself. I do not for a minute approve of the T'ungchow massacre, which has been greatly misrepresented and misunderstood, but it shows what one may expect when hatred and opportunity chance to meet on an Oriental highway.

## Anarchy Stalks Abroad.

The Japanese army has invaded China along the railways and as the Chinese army has retreated it has left on both sides of the railway bands of armed men. Unemployed men who have no way of making a living, many of whom have had some experience as bandits, have joined these bands and have demanded that they be fed by local people. Red Spears, and other organizations, have sprung up among the country people and warfare between one group of Chinese and some other group has made the countryside rife with anarchy.

A few weeks ago I was in Hsia Chin county and saw three men from a village in the west part of that county in which a battle had been fought between the Red Spears and bandits. Thirty people were killed and about ten more wounded. About half the buildings in the village were burned, and over 200 carts, with about the same number of farm animals, were carried away. This has happened over and over again and neither the Nanking government nor the Japanese have been able to do anything to improve conditions.

Recently there has been some improvement in this area because the Eighth Route Chinese Army (formerly known as China's Red Army) and Japan's arch enemy, has come into Hopei and Shantung provinces from Shansi and is taking many of the uncontrolled bands into its fold.

I have met and talked with some of these Eighth Route Army men and they have impressed me as the finest type of Chinese soldiers that I have seen. Their work in this region is largely that of converting other groups of armed men to their cause and carrying on propaganda among the country people. They lecture and distribute printed information, saying that the reason that they fought Chiang Chieh Shih is that he would not fight Japan. When he agreed to take a stand against Japan they elected him as their leader and are now taking orders from him. They say that it is necessary for all to sacrifice and resist and those who have must help those who have not, otherwise these who have not will turn bandits and help themselves. The cavalry has loaned its horses to farmers for ploughing and planting crops, and in some cases the soldiers have helped farmers themselves. They ask for food but they eat the same as the farmers and live simple and frugal lives. They are telling farmers not to plant cotton as it will be bought by Japan for military purposes. They should plant grain instead, for that can be eaten by their own countrymen.

A few weeks ago I met a group of those soldiers in a city where we have a church. Most of them were of the student type and they were doing what might be called "missionary work", making converts to their beliefs. I was told that they had just shot a man who was selling some of the heroin that Japan is spreading throughout the country. One of them in that city is a graduate of Tsinghua College, and I have no doubt that many of the students and teachers of North China are working in that army. Unless I am greatly mistaken it is going to be a long time before such people are going to be conquered by the "friendly nation" from across the sea.

### **Guerilla Warfare.**

Although this is not a new type of warfare it is something new in my own personal experience. More and more it is being used by the Chinese army and it looks to me as though it can be kept up for an indefinite period. A few weeks ago when I made a trip to Tsinan I saw scores of telephone and telegraph poles which had been cut down so that wires and insulators could be destroyed. It was the work of the guerillas. They come in at night and do their destruction before they are caught. Sometimes they destroy bridges and cut the railway, and even kill or capture Japanese.

Nearby villages have to pay the penalty and when I returned from Tsinan the next day I passed between two villages which were in flames. The smoke came into our car and it was right near the place where the telephone and telegraph wires had been cut. The Japanese army informs such villages that they will hold them responsible for any damage that is done to the railway or telephone lines and I suppose they think that in so doing they will make the villagers hate the guerillas. My opinion is that they are making the villagers hate the Japanese, and I heard one well-known Chinese say that the more villages Japan burns the more China's cause is helped, because there will be more hatred toward Japan.

April 11 I met a group of Eighth Route Army soldiers about 25 miles south of Techow. Two days later, along with other armed bands with whom they were cooperating, they attacked Techow. We were awakened at about midnight by gunfire and when we went outside we saw that the sky to the north was all aglow. The guerillas had set fire to the buildings at the Japanese airfield. I don't know whether there were any planes or not but the fire lasted for several hours. The Japanese got out machine guns and cannon and for four or five hours we watched and listened to the battle. There was at least one cannon not half a mile from us and we could see the flash, hear the screaming shell and see it burst when it hit. Another cannon a little farther away managed to land a shell just outside our compound where it was picked up the next day. Instead of bursting, the tip blew off and the three-inch shell makes a nice souvenir.

In retaliation for this attack on Techow, about 20 truck loads of Japanese left Techow a few days later and went in the direction from which the guerillas came. They came to a large ditch across the motor road so they turned their cannon on the nearest villages, killing and wounding several people. Their next objective was a walled city which they shelled until most of the people had fled or were killed. They then went in and set fire to most of the buildings. I haven't been there, but people who have say that more than half of the buildings were burned. Then the Japanese went east towards the railroad. On the way they shelled and burned some dozen or more villages. This was partly in retaliation for a raid that had been made on a city near there in which some thirteen Japanese and Koreans had been captured. They were well treated, and according to newspaper reports, were taken all the way to Hankow. Perhaps they were used as evidence that the guerillas were carrying out orders from Hankow.

### Bounded by Bandits.

As a schoolboy I learned that Vermont is bounded by Canada on the north, by New York on the west etc. I was reminded of that fact a few weeks ago when I was bounded by bandits on the north, by bandits on the south and by bandits on the west. The reason that there were none on the east was that there were no buildings in which they could live. That was when I visited Lintsing on the Grand Canal, where we have a mission station.

When I was there early in April the Japanese were in the city and had lived for a while in our mission compound. While there they had burned most of the chairs, tables, doors and other wooden articles, as they have consistently done in all places which I have been which they have occupied. When they left the compound they made two holes in the wall so they could come in and go out at will. They had also made many small holes through which they could fire their rifles and machine guns. They had intended to use our compound as a fort if they were attacked from the north. I called on the officer in command and explained that it was very unsatisfactory to have our compound so that anyone could come in day or night and we wanted to close up the holes. "No", said the officer, "you mustn't close up those holes. We shall have to use them if we are attacked from the north." I explained that America was a neutral country and that the church property should not be used for war purposes but I was informed that I had never carried on a war and didn't know what was necessary. After much argument I was told that we might put some wire up over the large holes so that people could not come in, but later when it was put up the Japanese soldiers tore it down.

About two weeks later Lintsing was attacked by guerillas but they did not succeed in capturing the city. Apparently they did give the Japanese quite a scare for on May 13 they evacuated the city without having to do any fighting there. They left Weihsien the same day but before they reached the Peking Hankow railway where their countrymen were in control they met up with Chinese soldiers, and I was told that very few of the Japanese escaped alive. They lost 30 or 40 motor trucks, and the report was that some of the captives were taken to Shansi to be trained in Communist doctrines.

Whatever may have been the fate of the Japanese, the Lintsing people were glad to see them go, and they had hardly been gone an hour when a band of Chinese bandits arrived to take their place. There were about 2700 of them, and later three other groups of Chinese soldiers reached Lintsing and were there when I made my second visit, April 20. The Lintsing people had to provide food for nearly 6,000 "visitors" and there was no knowing how long they would stay.

When the first bandit chief, named Chi, reached Lintsing his men went to our mission compound and chucked up the buildings, including the foreign residences, in which they intended to live. A son of one of our Chinese pastors (not in good standing) had been working for the bandit chief as a "doctor", although he wasn't even a nurse. Through him the Christian leaders were able to get in touch with the chief and explain that when the Japanese had lived in the compound they had done considerable damage and we were in the process of trying to get a settlement with the Japanese. If the bandits moved in before the case was settled they might be blamed for all of the damage. The argument had some force and the chief told his men not to occupy the compound.

As soon as we (Alma Cooke went with me) arrived in Lintsing we sent our cards to the chief so that he would know that we had arrived. That evening he sent several of his men to "protect" us, and kept it up each night, though Alma and I would have preferred to go without that kind of protection. When we called on the chief the next day and I told him that I wanted to find out what the possibility was of repairing the dike which broke last summer, he said that he was anxious to help do that job. I said that I was going to call on the other leaders and talk with them about it but he said that it was not necessary to call on them, inferring that he was the one in command.

We did call on them, however, and one of them said openly that Chi was nothing but a bandit. They were all anxious to help repair the dike and one of them promised to give \$10,000 Mex to match the \$10,000 that I have been trying to get. He could afford to give that amount because he got control of cotton that the Japanese had to leave behind, said to be worth \$60,000 Mex. One of the men on whom we called was the county magistrate, and he called on me the next day. He thought that a committee should be formed and suggested that he, the general who had promised the money, and I, send out a letter to the various leaders and organizations inviting them to a meeting for organizing a committee. I agreed to that and the letter went out. The meeting was held the next day, and the chief, Chi, sent a representative. The magistrate and three generals were not present, for they were having a

meeting to discuss what should be done with Chi. I don't know whether he knew about that meeting or not. After our meeting I went to call on Chi again and thanked him for having sent his soldiers to protect us, but said that we did not feel the need of them and he did not have to send them any more. We were having to feed them, and neither Alma nor I cared to have military protection, if such it could be called. He seemed rather cold about the matter and I said that if we felt later that we wanted his protection we would let him know.

We went back to the compound and soon the pastor's son came saying that Chi was very peeved. The son was there when we called, and when we were gone Chi asked what was back of our dislike for his guard. He also asked why his name had not been on the letter that asked the people to attend the meeting for organizing the dike repair committee. Was that my idea, or was it the idea of the magistrate? If it was the magistrate he would have him shot that night. We had quite an exciting meeting and it was finally decided that the pastor's son should go and explain that there was no hidden meaning back of our statement that we didn't want his guard, and I had not realized that it was necessary to have more names on the letter. I went to see the magistrate and while he was not there his representative said that we could add Chi's name without any difficulty and that would probably satisfy him. I went to the compound but didn't sleep very well that night, though nothing happened. When Chi found that his name had been added to the list he seemed satisfied and continued to send his guard for protection, and for meals.

Before I left Lintsing the magistrate called on me again and said that Chi wanted to use his men to repair the dike and get the \$10,000 that I was trying to raise with which to feed his "soldiers". I explained that I feared the CIFRC which had provided most of the money might not approve of that way of using their funds. Later I realized that it might not be a bad scheme. The important thing is to get the dike repaired before the rains come and flood the fields again. At present the Lintsing people are having to feed Chi's men. If they did the work and we fed them it would take a load off the shoulders of the Lintsing people. The matter hasn't been settled yet but Lintsing is certainly in a sad state and I hope that we may be able to get the dike repaired.

Since I wrote the paragraph above, our mission secretary has come in from Lintsing and reports that there are more soldiers now than when I left, and a few days ago there was considerable danger that the other groups would all unite to fight the 8th Route Army, but they finally got things settled.

**Help the Best to Meet the Best.**

Those who have followed me thus far must realize that China is in a bad state. You probably knew that before but had you realized that we Westerners have a share in the catastrophe? It is we who invented modern warfare, making possible the conditions that exist. Shall we not send to the Orient the best that we have to offer, as well as the worst? Some of you are helping to do so in the gifts that you are making for relief work in China, and for mission work in both China and Japan. Keep the good work going, and if possible increase your gifts. They are badly needed.

**The Staff.**

As most of you know, three-fifths of the staff are in America. James is sailing for America June 22 and will enter college this fall as a sophomore. He is not quite certain yet whether it will be at Pomona or at Dartmouth. He is waiting for a letter from Dartmouth. His year at Yen-ching has been very much worthwhile and he wrote recently that it will be with regret that he leaves the place.

Harold has been accepted as a medical student at Dartmouth and will take his first two years' medical course there, beginning this fall. Mary and Elizabeth are booked to sail for China September 15, so if all goes well the balance of power will be in China next year. It has been hard to decide what was best for Mary and Elizabeth to do, but I shall be glad to have a home again and they will be glad to get back to China.

James is taking with him the copies of the Chimes that are to go to America and as he leaves I am reminded of the Irishman who had been in Canada for many years and was writing to a friend in the old country. After telling of the attractions of his adopted country he closed as follows: "But if I live until me dying day, and God knows whither I will or not, I hope to see my own land before I leave this country. Those are my sentiments, too.

Yours, hoping that the worst may soon be over,

H. W. Robinson