

1931

(A MUTE MESSAGE.)

Techow, Shantung, China, November, 1931.

WHY THE CHIMES DID NOT—DO NOT—RING.

I. Personal.

Although your bell-ringers have in general followed a policy of ringing the Chimes whenever the urge to play was on them they have usually had a rather regular schedule of a spring and autumn broadcast. Since it has been nearly a year since the last peal, perhaps some of you are asking, "Why the long silence?" The answer is that last spring some of the notes seemed to be out of tune, and we felt that a golden silence was far better than an inharmonious clang.

Perhaps one reason why the Chimes couldn't "get on the air" was because the ringers were "up in the air". The quiet tenor of their lives was broken by an unexpected vote of the North China Mission Council requesting them to move to Techow for a year. That station was left without a single foreign family and after the arrival of the Leetes in the fall, Paotingfu would have three. We felt the call and were willing to go, but the Paotingfu station refused to release us. We did appreciate the fact that two stations wanted our help, and our hearts were touched by the love and loyalty and friendship of our Paotingfu colleagues, but we did not feel like bursting into song over the suspense in which we were kept for several months. Nor until the question was settled in October, did we feel that we had anything to tell the world.

The actual tearing ourselves away from Paotingfu last month was an ordeal of the heart. Little did we realize how deeply our lives had become rooted there until we tried to depart. Our many friends certainly outdid themselves to impress us that they want us to come back, and we surely hope to do so on our return from furlough in 1933. Their expression of affection left us with thoughts too deep for words.

We are now out of the air and on "terra firma" again—actually located in Techow, Shantung, until we start on furlough next July. Sometimes a new environment inspires a new song but

it hasn't been so with us. Living in a big compound with five empty foreign houses we are constantly haunted by the memories of the friends who have built their lives into this station, some of whom have been called to a higher realm. As we think of them instead of waxing eloquent we realize better than ever before how Zacharias must have felt when he was stricken with speechlessness.

We are making our home with Miss Alice Reed and Miss Lucia Lyons; and the only other foreigner here, Miss Myra Sawyer, who lives at the hospital, has two meals a day with us. Miss Lyons does country evangelistic work and as the Pretender is in the country some of the time it seemed foolish for Miss Reed to occupy one large house while the Busy Manager and the Treasure lived in another during the absence of those of us who are out in the country. The Busy Manager has school for the Treasure in the morning and teaches at the Porter Middle School in the afternoon. As we try to become acquainted with our new home and work we find ourselves longing not so much for "words" to express our new feelings, as for understanding hearts that we may be of some comfort and service while we are here.

II. National.

But our "dumbness" is not simply the result of personal reasons. Conditions in both our native land, and in the land of our adoption, are anything but inspiring. With constant news from America telling of the great sacrifices that are being made there, and the American Board facing a \$100,000.00 deficit, we can't help feeling the effect of the depression here on the opposite side of the globe. But, friends at Home, if you feel down in the month we advise that you get all the literature you can on the flood in the Yangtze Valley and read it. We haven't been there, but we have read the reports of some who have, and we can't forget the sights and conditions that they described. Your lot may seem hard, but if you were a Yangtze flood victim we believe that you would feel that you are in heaven now. The patient endurance of the Chinese people in times of catastrophe is an admirable quality and impresses one with the truth, "How golden is silence".

III. Planetary.

When we looked at the calendar and realized how near we were getting to Christmas we at first imagined that we felt an

urge to "Ring the Chimes". It seemed to us that the present situation in Manchuria called for something "louder than words" and that being "Dedicated to the proposition that the world needs more harmony" we ought to pull the bell rope with all our might and main. For the trouble in Manchuria isn't simply a problem between China and Japan; it's a major crisis for this whole planet. If one of the "strong powers" in the family of nations can with her superior military strength help herself to whatever she wants from a sister nation, who is from a military point much weaker, what is the use of the League of Nations, the Peace Pact and International Agreements?

BUT, if world-opinion can bring enough pressure to bear on the present crisis to preserve justice without the use of military force, then what's the use of the armies and navies that are now so oppressing the tax-payers of the planet? Certainly the outcome of this contest between "Militarism" and "A Better Way" that is now taking place in Manchuria is going to mean much in deciding what this old globe is headed for in the future.

Should we not, then, ring with all the force we have? No, we don't think so. We have noticed that in many controversies the side which makes the most noise is not necessarily the side that deserves to win. In times of dispute it seems to us that the tendency is to say, and to write, too much. Right sometimes speaks not through might, but louder than words, through a "tongue of silence". In this age when so many are itching to "express themselves" ought not there to be some who know how to listen?

When we thought so recently that the urge to write was on us and we sought for suitable words to express our thoughts the phrase that kept running through our minds was "What a Mess! What a Mess!" and somehow, we couldn't fit such words into a Christmas Greeting. We have therefore decided not to try to "Ring a Merry Christmas" across the waves to you, but to invite you to join us with bowed head and listening ear, to pray that in Golden Silence we may hear a still, small voice bearing once again the glad tidings of Peace on Earth, Goodwill to Men".