

# THE CHINESE CHIMES

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Sian, Shensi, China

University Number

## The End of Another Chapter.

My first intimate contact with a university has come to a close. When Daniel Webster successfully defended Dartmouth College in a famous lawsuit which prevented the college from becoming a university he also prevented me from attending a university. But I forgive him for that and will make use of his classic quotation, "It's a small college but there are those who love it". I want to change only one word and apply it to the university where I have just closed a very interesting chapter of my life: "Yenching is a small university but there are those who love it." I am glad to count myself among the Yenching lovers.

## Fools Rush In.

When I accepted, the invitation to become Controller of Yenching a year ago last January I had no idea what I was letting myself into. Had I known then what I know now I would have hesitated about undertaking what I did. My ignorance, however, has given me a post graduate course in a university where I learned much by bumping my head against one wall after another. As Controller I sometimes thought of myself as an aviator who had a plane in the air but didn't know how to land it. I managed to keep the ship right side up until Albert Hauske, who has had more training and experience in business and finance, came and took over the controllership. Perhaps it was a reward for not crashing the ship that I was asked to remain in Yenching to work with the Christian Fellowship, which I was glad to do. In addition to my duties as Controller I had been asked to act as adviser to the Fellowship and I very much enjoyed that part of my work. For doing religious work it was a distinct advantage to have a position which gave me a natural contact with students and faculty, as the controllership did. My work with the Fellowship will always remain as a pleasant memory of a very satisfactory experience.

## A Year Of Retrospect.

There is a series of high points in my work with the Fellowship which I shall record. The first one is Christmas week when the Fellowship was busy with a very fine Christmas Pageant, a Christmas party for the parents and children of the neighborhood in which we lived, the servants' party to the group of students who had run a night school for them, the faculty "open house" which had been a custom in the north; and the impressive church service Christmas morning when eight students were baptized.

Then there was the spring conference at Chinese New Year when a group of Yenching students joined groups from other universities in a

student conference several miles north of Chengtu. I was able to be there for only two days but it was long enough to catch the fine spirit of the conference, which was brought back to the universities and resulted in a series of activities that lasted throughout the year.

Easter was also a memorable occasion. We had a Sunrise Service on the city wall which was attended by about 60 Yenching people. The following Sunday the Fellowship had a Retreat at a private garden outside the city of Chengtu. President Wu Yu Fang of Ginling College was our speaker, and about 170 people attended the Retreat. In addition to Dr. Wu's inspiring address we had a picnic lunch, small group discussions and a final meeting of reports followed by a service of worship.

In June there was another impressive service when five students and one teacher were baptized.

The Kan Lin T'uan (Refreshing Showers Group) is one of the dozen or so small groups which make up the Yenching Fellowship. It has been my privilege during the past year to act as adviser to the Kan Lin Group and I think that I have never enjoyed playing, working and communing with any group of young people more than with this one. There were ten boys and ten girls and we met nearly every week with very few absences. Each meeting began with a short service of worship, followed by a program of music, an address by some outside speaker, reports of work that the group was doing in social service, or simply a social time with games and light refreshments. Most of the members were from north China with no home life possible and these meetings came to be more like family gatherings than anything else they had. I was adopted as "Uncle Robbie" and it was worth going around the world to spend a year with such fine "nieces and nephews". Two of the girls have entered the West China University Medical School this fall and another has entered the P.U.M.C. Nurses Training School. Two of the boys volunteered for war work and expected to leave before Christmas so we had a special baptismal service for them which was one of the most impressive services of its kind that I have ever had. Another boy volunteered as an interpreter for the Allied forces and is now with the British army in another part of China. The leader of the group graduated from Yenching in June and is now doing a fine job in the Student Relief Office in Chengtu. He was one of the five who were baptized in June. My relation with the Kan Lin Group is convincing proof to me that there are no unsurmountable barriers of race or nationality where there is a real Christian Fellowship, and such fellowship is the hope of the present world problems.

### **The Best Of Friends Must Part.**

I was looking forward to another year with the Yenching Fellowship when fate decreed otherwise. Alice Reed and Margaret Dow, who spent over ten months getting from America to Chengtu on their way to Sian, were prevented by the American Embassy from completing their journey. The situation in Sian was not such as to make it wise for women to go there. I was sent in their place and am now teaching and helping in other ways in our American Board Mission School, Lu Ho, which has been running here a year as a union school for all our middle schools in north China. Alice and Margaret found need for their help in Chengtu

and they may be able to proceed to Sian later in the year. I left Chengtu September 17 with Jim Hunter who was here in Sian with Lu Ho last year. We made the trip in very good time for these days, five days. Jim is leaving soon for a furlough in America and is expected to return next fall so that I can go home. My experience at Yenching taught me that you can't have high class universities unless there are good middle schools and Lu Ho, as well as the other schools represented in it, is meeting a great need of the universities by preparing good students for them. Lu Ho has made a good name for herself and the American Board here in the northwest and I am glad to be connected with it. I feel that the work here and that in Chengtu are one and it doesn't much matter where one is located. I am looking forward to a year in Sian and am glad to have a chance to get acquainted with this ancient capital of China.

### **University vs Diversity.**

In an interesting sermon which I heard in Chengtu last summer the speaker said that someone has remarked that the modern educational institutions which we call universities might better be called "Diversities", since there is so little to bind the various colleges and departments into an integrated whole. It is easy to become so enthusiastic about one's own branch that he forgets that it is only a part of the whole institution. My experience in Chengtu bears that out and I believe that it is true of other universities of which I know.

Is there nothing that can unite the various members of a university body and give it real unity? I believe there is and I believe that that power is religion. The Christian Fellowship at Yenching does in a remarkable degree help to create a oneness in the university which no other activity can do. Students, faculty and servants are bound together in the Fellowship as in no other activity. The Fellowship not only helps to integrate the university but it also helps to integrate the university with the outside world. Yenching in Chengtu is located right beside a slum section of the city where people live in want and squalor but it furnishes a laboratory for social study and social service. Many of the Fellowship students are helping the local people to realize that a university is not something set apart from the rest of society but is a part of the social strata in which it is located.

As a Christian institution the university is also running a Rural Station outside of Chengtu where research in education, social and political organization is going on and where service is being rendered by the university to the local community. A similar piece of integration with the outside world is the work for the blind that Yenching is doing. Courses are offered which train young people to work with the blind, and a magazine in Braille is published by the university. This is carried on in cooperation with the School for the Blind located in Chengtu.

While it is true that not all students and faculty who are engaged in these social activities are Christians, it is the Christian spirit that has inspired this work and it is a credit to the Christian religion that even non-Christians see its value and take part in it. The Christian universities have set the example which has been followed by other universities. The Christian religion at its best does integrate individual lives with the lives

of others, it integrates educational work with the rest of the community and it should integrate one nation with the others, one race with other races. It is the greatest integrating force in the universe and its purpose, as I see it, is to awaken in the minds and hearts of individuals and institutions, the fact that we live in a "Universe", not in many separate little worlds.

The Christian Religion is the child of the Jewish religion and the great contribution of the Jews to the world is their consistent belief that the Universe is "One", and Jahweh, Jehovah, God, or whatever name be used, is over *all*, in *all* and through *all*. When they failed to realize the full significance of that belief God chose another people to carry out his purpose.

### **My Truth and The Truth.**

I had the good fortune last summer to get hold of the second volume of Reinold Nebuhr's "Nature and Destiny of Man". (We don't get many books here printed as late as 1942). I had already read the first volume but enjoyed the second volume even more than the first. Much of it is over my head but there are parts which seemed like real gems to me. One of them is difference between "My Truth" and "The Truth". It is easy for individuals, or groups, who think that they have discovered a bit of truth to forget that what they have discovered is a very small part of truth and it may look quite different from the part that some other individual or group has discovered. Hence the chaos and diversity in the world today. Something to think about, is it not?

Another point in the book that seemed excellent to me was his contention that all saints are sinners. As soon as a person believes that he is a sinless saint he has lost the humility necessary for sainthood. Pride has become his downfall. This also, I would say, is something for us to think about today as we ask ourselves how this diversified universe can be made one again, how mankind can be made conscious of the fact that fundamentally we are all here for a common purpose, God's purpose of a universal brotherhood on earth. We can become "one" with each other only as we become "one" with God. Religion is the highest common factor by which we may become integrated, if we will.

### **Unite To Survive.**

Some twenty years ago when the National Christian Council of China was organized Dr. T. T. Lew presented a formula for integration which has often been quoted and is still pertinent today. He said "Let us agree to differ and resolve to love". Later he added "and unite to serve". Those three steps belong together but doesn't the situation in the world today present a more serious condition than existed twenty years ago? Is there not only a need to unite for service but also for survival? It is not a case of service or self-seeking; it is a case of survival or extinction. Certainly the United Nations learned that they must get together if they were to survive. Isn't it a lesson that the whole world needs to learn? Nations, denominations, mission boards, colleges and universities will do well to heed this clarion call of this hour of history, Unite to Survive.

## Back To The Starting Point.

Let us return to the university from which we started. Yenching is one of five Christian universities in Chengtu, which with several others in China are united in the Associated Board for Christian Colleges in China. The universities in Chengtu have a common treasurer, their courses are planned with the idea of preventing overlapping as much as possible, the five presidents meet each week to discuss their common problems and programs. All this is good but there ought to be much more cooperation than there is. This is common knowledge and many meetings have been held for the purpose of finding ways for more integration. Not only does the matter concern the period while the refugee universities are in Chengtu, it concerns them after the war. Shall each university return to its own former site and continue in its little sphere? Or should there be a unified program for all the Christian universities in China? At present a large part of the financial support comes from the United China Relief funds raised in America and similar funds raised in England. How long will people continue to contribute funds for the individual universities? Will there not be a larger response if there is a united program for Christian Higher Education in China? Those who pay the fiddler ought to have some voice in calling the dance. Now is your time to let it be known what kind of a dance you want.

## Christmas Greetings From Sian.

I hope that this will reach the friends to whom it is being sent before December 25 but whether it does or not it carries my very best wishes for the Christmas season. I am writing in Sian, Shense, one of the oldest capitals of Ancient China. It is here that the Nestorian Tablet is located, which as many of you know, was discovered near Sian about 300 years ago after having been buried in the ground some thousand years. This tablet is evidence that Christianity came to China thirteen hundred years ago and after considerable growth the whole movement was blotted out. Far be it from me to undertake to explain why that first type of Christianity failed to survive in China, but I am concerned about the matter. It raises the question "Can we reasonably assume that the type of Christianity that is in China, or in the whole world for that matter, is sure to survive?" Perhaps the answer is more in the hands of mankind than we realize. Certainly there is more likelihood of its survival if we as individuals, and as groups, realize that "my truth" may not necessarily be "the truth", and that we so-called Christians are sinners too. We all need God, the God who led the Israelites through war and captivity but did not hesitate to "call" another "people" when they refused to recognize that His purpose in the world is world-wide. Christmas is not for any one nation, nor for any one race. Christmas is a universal experience. So may this Christmas season bring to each one of us a deeper realization that Emmanuel (God with us) means God with all mankind. That is what Christian missions is trying to say. Mankind is one in Christ, and through Christ is one with God.

H. W. ROBINSON

**POSTSCRIPT By Mary S. Robinson.**

The Chinese Chimes was mailed last Christmas from Long Beach, California; this will be sent from Cambridge, Massachusetts. I lost my father in February, and came in March to Auburndale, where I lived at Walker Missionary Home until September.

Some of the highlights of life since March have been a visit to New York with James; two weeks in Vermont, one visiting Robinsons with Elizabeth, one at a young people's conference; six weeks of home life in a missionary apartment with Elizabeth, while she worked in a defense plant. The brightest highlight was the return of Harold from his "tin can" on the Pacific to spend four weeks with us, and the most memorable event of that visit was a delightful week end at Cape Cod, where the four of us, Harold, James, Elizabeth and I could imagine we were looking out to sea from Peitaiho, China. The "children" sun bathed and swam, and threatened to throw me in, but I had my fun feeding the family. The next week Harold returned to his duty as ship's medical officer, and I came to Lesley School where I am happily busy as house mother for twenty-four college girls. On September 25, when James graduated from Harvard Medical I saw him receive his commission as a lieutenant in the navy. That afternoon he turned in his uniform to become a civilian interne for nine months. Occasionally I see Elizabeth who has a heavy schedule at Wellesley as a senior art major.

From the widely separated places and varied duties all of us Robinsons send Christmas Greetings to all of you.