

Displaced Persons

*LIKE trees they stood behind a wall of contentment,
The winds knew them, the soil was obedient
To their devoted touch, the years found them
Always the bondmen to place, rooted with the rocks.*

*NO vision raised them above the forbidding hills,
Ambition the incendiary spared their harvest of peace:
No highway to the world, but the gentle roads
Returned them to home, preserved the dear design.*

*BUT the anchor of their desire could not resist
The fiery storm and they were carried like dust
Across the world to rest in a field of pain.
In a hissing land whose stare was very death.*

*BOWED and dumb, lost in a thicket of hate.
How shall they find the way to the lap of home—
While on their shoulder heavy the stranger's hand?
How shall they keep the old appointment with joy?*

—J. R. Hervey.

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Mission for a pittance a year. But one can hardly blame the 'bandits.' They were displaced persons driven desperate by hunger and injustice."

Internment

"You New Zealanders still counted at this time as neutrals. How did Pearl Harbour affect you?"

"We immediately became 'enemy aliens' and as such were forbidden to go outside our property. Actually I did leave on two occasions — by which hang more tales. But the most serious thing was that it cut us off from all funds from New Zealand. Even in that first year, while prisoners in our own homes, we felt the reduction of food standards fairly acutely."

"So it lasted only one year?"

"Yes, after that we New Zealanders were all removed to internment camps in Canton; I to a camp for men of military age and the three ladies (Miss Robertson and Miss Lilburne, who are nurses, and Miss Wilson, a teacher) to a general camp. Miss James escaped all that; she managed to keep always just over the border. Our Chinese staff then carried on alone, with the help of Dr. Gratzner, a European refugee who had joined us and who, being officially a German citizen, though an Austrian by birth and sympathies, was not subject to internment."

"It was out of the frying pan into the fire for you?"

"Yes, but fortunately for us the camp in Canton (the two camps were merged after the first six months) was one of the best conducted of all the Pacific camps. Some members of our Mission staff, for instance, were caught in Hong Kong and spent their internment years in Stanley. They had a much grimmer time of it than we did, due partly to the factor of sheer size—2,500 as against 50—and due partly to the fact that Hong Kong was conquered British territory."

"Did you have any chance of repatriation?"

"Yes, earlier on; but we considered our job to be there, and while any power of choice was left to us we were resolved to stay."

"What about atrocities?"

"Fortunately there was nothing of that sort of thing at all in our camp. I know that some pretty ghastly things happened in other places. In repatriation

centres in Hong Kong and in Australia I mixed with ex-internees from all round the Pacific and heard eye-witness accounts of the whole gamut of atrocities. I don't blink those things; they're nauseating but true. But it is unreasonable to conclude that that is the complete picture of the Japanese. Speaking from my own experience of them I want to record the unexpected kindnesses that I received from many of them, especially as I find most New Zealanders tend to lump the whole Japanese race together as one bad lot. I saw them at close quarters—far too close—over a period of seven years, and I found they varied enormously—just as human beings do everywhere."

"And how did you find things at your Mission Centre when the war was over?"

"We found that in May, 1945, the Jap Army had taken over our buildings for a base hospital. They were expecting counter-attacks from the north. A neighbouring village had invited our staff to function in its Hall of Ancestors and the medical work was carried on from there. We found our property intact. Even furniture, equipment and personal effects were remarkably complete, thanks to the energy and resourcefulness of the Chinese staff, who shifted most of it out to the Ancestral Hall and then back again after the Japs vacated—a Herculean task!"

"And what of conditions generally in China now?"

"People who haven't lived in a war area have little idea of the chaos and economic dislocation that war causes. The fantastic currency inflation that has knocked the bottom out of business stability is just one of the symptoms of that. And it must be remembered that for China the mess that war has brought has been super-imposed upon what was already a period of political and economic transition and the unsettlement of transition has now become turmoil, with its accompanying suffering and destitution. There may even be further disintegration before the forces of integration get properly under way again. It is too early to discern the real trends and it would be rash to make any forecasts."

"Are you going back there, Mr. Jansen?"

"Oh yes, certainly. I have not been holidaying in China; I have a life-work there."

TYPIST'S ERROR

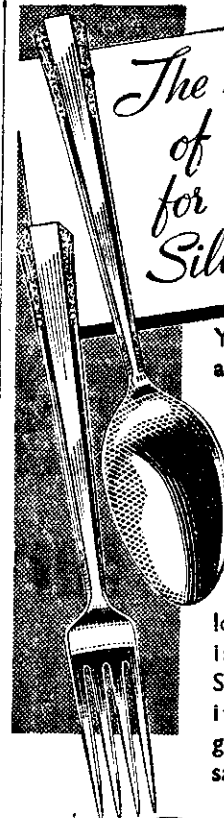


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