# The Church Monthly

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# Singing Towers

## The Singing Tower and Chapel of The University of Chicago

By Kamiel Lefévere

"For Bells are the voice of the Church;
They have tones that touch and search
The hearts of young and old. . . ."

It was during his wanderings in search of romance and beauty, through the land of Singing Towers, that Longfellow wrote his beautiful poem "The Belfry of Bruges," which may be a worthy introduction for our series of "Singing Towers."

There, most of the towers, besides their exquisite architectural beauty, also possess their sets of bells, giving them rightly the name of "Singing Towers," and a community was not complete without having such a majestic instrument of bells, called a Carillon, in their church- or city-hall-towers.

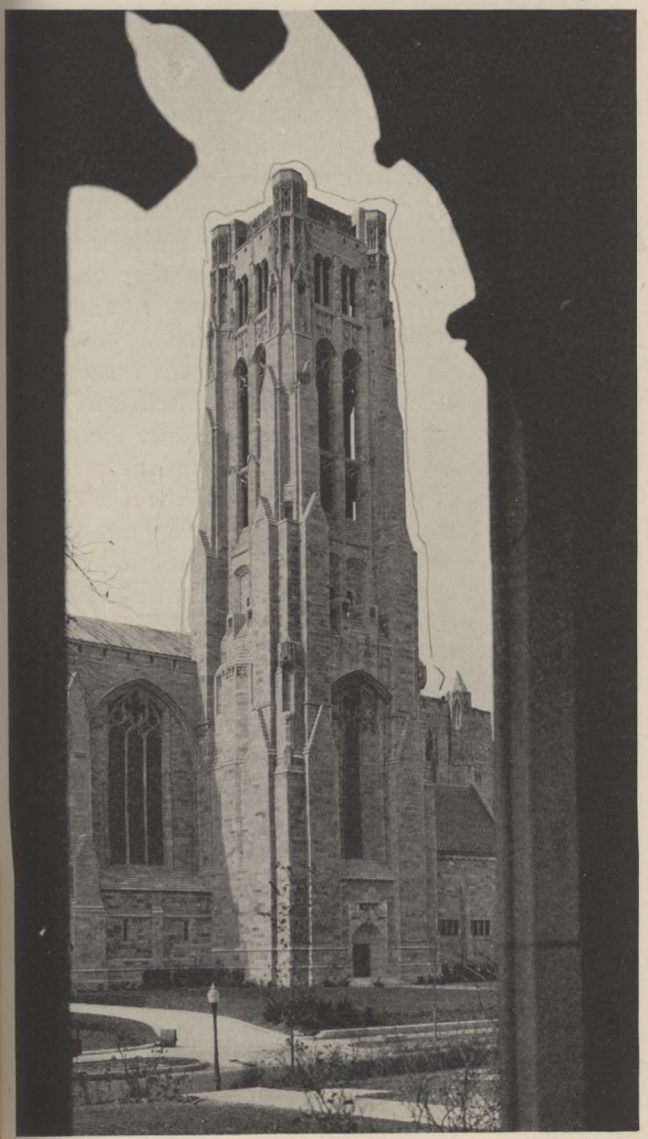
This form of music has been called for centuries the greatest musical expression of community life because they sing the time away, expressing the joys and sorrows of the people, living with them from birth to grave, marking the rhythm of time and life in an atmosphere of artistic beauty, and as one mighty prayer for and over the community.

These towers have been symbols of municipal freedom and expression, of artistic greatness, and have represented the idea of civic solidarity. Always a sign of prosperity to the community, they are, with reason, the pride of its people.

They have stood as the "Guardians" to the people, as they called them to the church services or to other religious functions, giving the signal for the merchants to begin selling their wares on the open market places, calling them to arms to defend their homes and community, or for help when there was a fire, or for joy and celebration with fairs and festivals.

The University of Chicago, with its beautiful Chapel and Singing Tower, is one of the latest additions to the number of Singing Towers in America, which will soon take front place among the countries of Carillons, in number as well as in quality. The Chapel is the commanding feature of a great range of buildings, which has no parallel in the academic world. On July 5, 1918, Mr. Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, of New York City, was commissioned to design the Chapel. He did not see it begun as he died in 1924. Ground was broken on August 28, 1925, and the cornerstone laid on June 11, 1926. The completed building was dedicated on October 28, 1928, three years and two months after the breaking of the ground. Its cost was about $1,900,000.

The Chapel is not copied from any Old World masterpiece, but is an original creative work of Gothic architecture. It is a sound piece of genuine masonry construction. Its great length, 265 feet 2 inches, is broken into five bays only, each no less than 39 feet 8 inches wide, a scale equaled only by two or three Gothic buildings in the world. The building is 120 feet 1½



CHICAGO'S CARILLON TOWER

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO CHAPEL WHERE THERE IS A 72-BELL CARILLON

*Through the courtesy of Dodd, Mead & Co.*

inches in width. The roof line is 102 feet above the grade line. The Tower is 207 feet above the grade line. The foundations go down 80 feet below the floor level, to bed rock.

This Chapel is richly adorned with sculpture, and the great severity of the architecture is relieved, especially on the south front, by a wealth of figures. High up on the tower are demifigures of the Poet, the Thinker, the Merchant, the Craftsman, the Builder, and the Teacher, since the work of all is, in the broad and deep sense, religious. The sixteen shields, four on each face, below the upper belfry, bear the sym-

bols of the Life and Death of Christ, beginning in the middle of the east face with the Annunciation (the lily), and the Nativity (the star). Demi-figures of Faith and Love flank the upper windows. The birds of Wisdom and of Inspiration, the owl and the eagle, appear near the top; the figures in the centers of the parapets are Thomas Aquinas (east), Erasmus (north), Thomas à Kempis (west), and John Bunyan (south), two intellectuals and two mystics. On each side of them, in the topmost angle of the stonework, the arms of Vanderbilt and Tulane look south; those of Colorado and Kansas, west; those of McGill and Toronto, north; and those of Maine and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, east.

The east (tower) door is flanked by demifigures of Bach, symbolizing Music, and Goodhue, symbolizing Architecture. Upon the doors between them is the inscription, "They shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it."

Funds for the structure were provided by Mr. John D. Rockefeller, the founder of the University, and Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. gave to the University a carillon of seventy-two bells in memory of his mother. These bells were installed in the belfry of the Chapel tower in the autumn of 1932 and were first played on the morning of Thanksgiving Day, November 24th, when thousands of people thronged the Midway and the adjacent quadrangles and streets, listening, greatly moved, to their exquisite music, which seemed to float down from the clouds.

A letter sent to the Editor of the *Plain Dealer,* Cleveland, Ohio, and signed S. S. D., may well be taken as a voice of the people, commenting on this musical expression of community life: "Editor *Plain Dealer,*—Sir: On Thanksgiving Day I was compelled to be in Chicago. In a newspaper, I read that a carillon of 72 bells was to be dedicated that day at the University. To kill time, I took the southside Elevated down to the University, fully expecting to discover that the bells were lengths of brass tubing more or less in tune, which a person, by some violent yank of the imagination, is supposed to kid himself into thinking sound like real music. Picture my astonishment at finding great throngs of people assembled at the new Chapel, which is really a young cathedral in size. From the lofty tower came the most exquisite music that human ear could desire to hear on this earth. It was made by real bells, the largest weighing seventeen tons and the smallest as big as a coffee pot. But such music! Think of 50,000 people standing in mute silence, on a chilly day, listening in astonished admiration, not to a lot of hideous jazz, but to the most sublime chords that they ever heard, on bells tuned as perfectly as the finest organ, and played as easily and rapidly as a piano. No words can describe the beauty of carillon music."

This carillon is second only to that given by Mr. Rockefeller to The Riverside Church, which also contains seventy-two bells, but starting with a large bass-bell, called Bourdon, of twenty tons, which makes The Riverside Church Carillon sound a half-tone lower.

The bells of the Chicago University Chapel range in size from 10½ pounds to the great Bourdon which weighs 36,926 pounds, and has a diameter of 117 inches, or almost ten feet.

Five of the larger bells can swing by

motors, as a call to worship; and their weight is: number 72, C sharp, 36,926 pounds; bell number 68, F sharp, 15,736 pounds; bell number 66, G sharp, 10,973 pounds; bell number 64, A sharp, 7,591 pounds; and bell number 61, C sharp, 4,704 pounds.

The total weight of the bells is 220 tons.

The carillonneur plays from a room almost in the center of the entire carillon. This is always the most advantageous position for the clavier, with the shortest possible connections between the clavier and the bells, to eliminate the weight and sluggishness of long wire connections, which are so harmful to light and delicate touch and interpretation.

The location of this Singing Tower has the tremendous advantage of being at a fair distance from the main road of traffic, this being the Midway, and also in having plenty of open space around the tower, where many people can gather and sit down on the large grass lawns, surrounded by beautiful trees and a background of University buildings of great architectural beauty.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The above article from the pen of Kamiel Lefévere is the first of a series of stories about the "Singing Towers" which will appear in THE CHURCH MONTHLY during the coming year. The illustrations to be used have been made available to us through the courtesy of Mr. William Gorham Rice, author of "Carillon Music," and of the publishers, Dodd, Mead & Co. Mr. Lefévere will write of these towers out of his wide experience as a carillonneur which has taken him on various occasions into the towers to play recitals on special days as the guest-artist.)

# The Kitchen Cabinet

DURING this past summer a lady of our church, spending her vacation in a region at a considerable distance from New York, had the misfortune suddenly to fall a victim to that ever-lurking nuisance, influenza. Being quite ill and not wishing to be a care to the friend in whose home she was a guest, she called in a trained nurse to attend to her.

After she had done this, she fell to thinking. "Dear me!" she worried. "I hope this will not raise ructions in the kitchen." For she remembered how often the sight of a trained nurse in the culinary regions seemed to do something unaccountable to the genius presiding there, calling forth whatever residuum of original sin still remained in her system. So the lady was apprehensive.

The second day of the nurse's stay, however, all anxiety in that direction was relieved by the nurse's heartfelt exclamation, as she returned from the kitchen, "My, but So and So is nice," mentioning the cook's name. "She's just as obliging and kindly as she can be."

The sick person lay back with a sigh of relief. "I might have known that," she said to herself. "So and So is not an ordinary individual by any means. I've noticed that. She shows in every way that she is a superior type of woman. I remember, too, what my hostess told me about her having held a very responsible position previous to the depression. This rôle of cook is new to her and is one she is assuming only until she can find her way back into her own kind of work again. Thank the Lord she has common sense enough to realize that a trained nurse is not necessarily an ogre!" (*Cont. p. 55*)