1909 V-7

THE CHINESE WOMAN AT HOME

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THE home life of a people is too sacred to be touched except by the hand of friendship. Our doors are closed to strangers, locked to enemies, and opened only to those of our own race who are in harmony and sympathy with us. What then shall we say when people of an alien race come seeking admission? They must bring some social distinction,—letters of introduction, or an ability to help us in ways in which we cannot help ourselves.

In the case of a people as exclusive as the Chinese this is especially true, so that with the exception of one or two women physicians and the wife of one of our diplomats no one has ever been admitted in a social as well as professional way to the women's apartments of the homes of the better class of the Chinese people.

A Chinese home is different from our own. It is composed of many one-story buildings, around open courts, one behind the other, and sometimes covers several acres of ground. Then it is divided into men's and women's apartments, the men receiving their friends in theirs and the women likewise receiving their friends by a side gate in their own apartments, which are at the rear of the dwelling. A wealthy man, in addition to his wife, usually has one or more concubines, and each of these ladies has an apartment of her own for herself and her children,—though all the children

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of all the concubines reckon as belonging to the first wife.

I have heard Sir Robert Hart tell an amusing incident which occurred in Peking. He said that the Chinese minister appointed to the court of Saint James came to call on him before setting out upon his journey. After conversing for some time he said:

"I should be glad to see Lady Hart. I believe it is customary in calling on a foreign gentleman to see his lady, is it not?"

"It is," said Sir Robert, "and I should be delighted to have you see her, but Lady Hart is in England with our children, and has not been here for twenty years."

"Ah, indeed, then perhaps I might see your second wife."

"That you might, if I had one. But the customs of our country do not allow us to have a second wife. Indeed they would imprison us if we were to have two wives."

"How singular," said the official with a nod of his head. "You do not appreciate the advantages of this custom of ours."

That there are advantages in this custom from the Chinese point of view, I have no doubt. But from certain things I have heard I fear there are disadvantages as well. One day the head eunuch from the palace of one of the leading princes in Peking came to ask my wife, who was their physician, to go to see some of the women or children who were ill. It was drawing near to the New Year festival and, of course, they had their own absorbing topics of conversation in the servants' courts. I said to him:

"The prince has a good many children, has he not?"

"Twenty-three," he answered.

"How many concubines has he?" I inquired.

"Three," he replied, "but he expects to take on two more after the holidays."

"Does n't it cause trouble in a family for a man to have so many women about? I should think they would be jealous of each other."

"Ah," said he, with a wave of his hand and a shake of his head, "that is a topic that is difficult to discuss. Naturally if this woman sees him taking to that woman, this one is going to eat vinegar."

They do "eat vinegar," but perhaps as little of it as any people who live in the way in which they live; for the Chinese have organized their own home life as nearly on a governmental basis as any people in the world.

In addition to the wife and concubines, each son when he marries brings his wife home to a parental court, and all these sisters-in-law, or daughters-in-law, add so much to the complications of living, for each must have her own retinue of servants.

Young people in China are all engaged by their parents without their knowledge or consent. This was very unsatisfactory to the young people of the old régime, and it is being modified in the new. One day one of my students in discussing this matter said to me:

"Our method of getting a wife is very much better than either the old Chinese method or your foreign method."

"How it that?" I asked.

"Well," said he, "according to the old Chinese custom a man could never see his wife until she was brought to his house. But we can see the girls in public meetings, we have sisters in the girls' school, they have brothers in the college, and when we go home during vacation we can learn all about each other."

"But how do you consider it better than our method?" I persisted.

"Why, you see, when you have found the girl you want, you have to go and get her yourself, while we can send a middleman to do it for us."

I still argued that by our method we could become better acquainted with the young lady.

"Yes," he said, "that is true; but does n't it make you awfully mad if you ask a lady to marry you and

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she refuses?" And it must be confessed that this was a difficult question to answer without compromising one's self.

The rigor of the old régime was apparently modified by giving the young lady a chance to refuse. About ten days before the marriage, two ladies are selected by the mother of the young man to carry a peculiar ornament made of ebony and jade, or jade alone, or red laquer, to the home of the prospective bride. This ornament is called the *ju yi*, which means "according to my wishes." If the lady receives it into her own hands it signifies her willingness to become his bride. I have never heard of a girl who refused the *ju yi*.*

Very erroneous ideas about the life and occupations of the Chinese ladies of the noble and official classes are held by those not conversant with their home life. The Chinese woman is commonly regarded as little better than a secluded slave, who whiles away the tedious hours at an embroidery frame, where with her needle she works those delicate and intricate pieces of embroidery for which she is famous throughout the world. In reality, a Chinese lady has little time to give to embroidery. Her life is full of the most exacting social duties. Few American ladies in the whirl of society in Washington or New York have more social functions to attend or duties to perform. I have often been present in the evening when the head eunuch brought to the ruling lady of the home (and the head of the home in China is the woman, not the man) an ebony tablet on which was written in red ink the list of social functions the ladies were to attend the following day.

She would select from the list such as she and her unmarried daughter could attend, — the daughter always going with her mother and not with her sisters-in-law, —and then she would apportion the other engagements to her daughters-in-law, who would attend them in her stead.

The Chinese lady in Peking sleeps upon a brick bed, one half of the room being built up a foot and a half above the floor, with flues running through it; and in the winter a fire is built under the bed, so that, instead of having one hot brick in her bed, she has a hundred. She rises about eight. She has a large number of women servants, a few slave girls, and if she belongs to the family of a prince, she has several eunuchs, these latter to do the heavy work about the household. Each servant has her own special duties, and resents being asked to perform those of another. When my lady awakes a servant brings her a cup of hot tea and a cake made of wheat or rice flour. After eating this a slave girl presents her with a tiny pipe with a long stem from which she takes a few whiffs. Two servants then appear with a large polished brass basin of very hot water, towels, soaps, and preparations of honey to be used on her face and hands while they are still warm and moist from the bathing. After the bath they remove the things and disappear, and two other women take their places, with a tray on which are combs, brushes, hair-pomades, and the framework and accessories needed for combing her hair. Then begins a long and tedious operation that may continue for two hours. Finally the hair is ready for the ornaments, jewels and flowers which are brought by another servant, on a large tray. The mistress selects the ones she wishes, placing them in her hair with her own hands.

* [From here on, the text, though it has passed through Professor Headland's hands, is really Mrs. Headland's, the details described being such as neither her husband nor any other foreign man is permitted to observe. Few foreign women, indeed, have ever had an opportunity of witnessing the intimate family functions to which the writer, as physician to a number of the great ladies of the court, has had access.—THE EDITOR.]

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Some of these flowers are exquisite. The Chinese are expert at making artificial flowers which are true to nature in every detail. Often above the flower a beautiful butterfly is poised on a delicate spring, and looks so natural that it is easy to be deceived into believing it to be alive. When the jasmine is in bloom beautiful creations are made of these tiny flowers by means of standards from which protrude fine wires on which the flowers are strung in the shape of butterflies or other symbols, and the flowers massed in this way make a very effective ornament. With the exception of the jasmine the flowers used in the hair are all artificial, though natural flowers are worn in season—roses in summer, orchids in late summer, and chrysanthemums in autumn.

The prevailing idea with the Chinese ladies is that the foreign woman does not comb her hair. I have often heard my friends apologizing to ladies whom they have brought to see me for the first time, and on whom they wanted me to make a good impression, by saying:

"You must not mind her hair; she is really so busy she has no time to comb it. All her time is spent in acts of benevolence."

At the first audience when the Empress Dowager received the foreign ladies, she presented each of them with two boxes of combs, one ivory inlaid with gold, the other ordinary hard wood, and the set was complete even to the fine comb. One cannot but wonder if her Majesty had not heard of the untidy locks of the foreign woman, which she attributed to a lack of proper combs.

After the hair has been properly combed and ornamented, cosmetics of white and carmine are brought for the face and neck. The Manchu lady uses these in great profusion, her Chinese sister more sparingly. No Chinese lady, unless a widow or a woman past sixty, is supposed to appear in the presence of her family without a full coating of powder and paint. A lady one day complained to me of difficulty in lifting her eyelids, and asked me what the reason was.

"Perhaps," said I, "they are partially paralyzed by the lead in your cosmetics. Wash off the paint and see if the nerves do not recover their tone."

"But," said she, "I would not dare to appear in the presence of my husband or family without paint and powder; it would not be respectable."

The final touch to the face is the deep carmine spot on the lower lip.

The robing then begins. And what beautiful robes they are! the softest and most delicate silks, lined with the lightest of furs in winter. Over these come the rich satin embroidered garments, each season calling for a certain number and kind. She then decorates herself with her jewels—earrings, bracelets, beads, rings, charms, embroidered bags holding the betel-nut, and the tiny mirror in its embroidered case with silk tassels. When these are hung on the buttons of her dress her outfit is complete, and she arises from her couch a wonderful creation, from her glossy head, with every hair in place, to the toe of her tiny embroidered slipper. But it has taken the time of a half-dozen servants for three hours to get these results.

To one accustomed to the Chinese or Manchu mode of dress, she appears very beautiful. The rich array of colors, the embroidered gowns, the bright head-dress, make a striking picture. Often as the ladies of a home or palace came out on the veranda to greet me, or bid me adieu, I have been impressed with their wonderful beauty. Our own dull colors, and cloth goods, suffer greatly in comparison, and I could not blame these good ladies for looking upon us with more or less disdain.

It is now after eleven o'clock and her breakfast is ready to be served in another room. Word that the leading lady of the household is about to appear is sent to the other apartments. Hurried finishing touches are

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given to toilets, for all daughters, daughters-in-law and grandchildren must be ready to receive her in the outer room when she appears leaning on the arms of two eunuchs if she is a princess, or on two stout serving women if a Chinese.

According to her rank, each one in turn takes a step toward her and gives a low curtesy in which the left knee touches the floor. Even the children go through this same formality. All are gaily dressed, with hair bedecked and faces painted like her own. She inclines her head but slightly. These are the members of her household over whom she has sway—her little realm. While her mother-in-law lived she was under the same rigorous rule.

In China where there are so many women in the home it is necessary to have a head—one who without dispute rules with autocratic sway. This is the mother-in-law. When she dies the first wife takes her place as head of the family, unless she be weak and there is some other strong character in the home. A concubine may be the favorite of the husband. He may give her fine apartments to live in, many servants to wait on her, and every luxury he can afford; but there his power ends. The first wife is head of the household, is legally mother of all the children born to any or all of the concubines her husband possesses. The children all call her mother, and the inferior wives recognize her as their mistress. She and her daughters and daughters-in-law attend social functions, receive friends, extend hospitality; but the concubines have no place in this, unless by her permission. When the time comes for selecting wives for her sons, it is the first wife who does it, although she may be childless herself. It is to her the brides of these sons are brought, and to her all deference is due. In rare cases, where the concubine has had the good fortune to supply the heir to the throne or to a princely family, she is raised to the position of empress or princess. But this is seldom done, and is usually remembered against the woman. She is never received with the same feeling as if she had been first wife.

One day I was asked to go to a palace to see a concubine who was ill. In such cases I always went directly to the princess, and she took me to see the sick one. As we entered the room there was a nurse standing with a child in her arms, and the princess called my attention to a blemish on its face.

"Can it be removed?" she asked.

I looked at it and, seeing that it would require but a minor operation, told her it could.

While attending to the patient, the nurse, fearing that the child would be hurt, left the room and another entered with another child.

"Now," said the princess when we had finished with the patient, "we will attend to the child," and she called the woman to her.

"But," said the woman, "this is not the child."

"There," said the princess, "you see I do not know my own children."

But I left our friend receiving the morning salutations of her household. These over, she dismisses them to their own apartments, where each mother sits down with her own children to her morning meal, waited on by her own servants. If there are still unmarried daughters, they remain with their mother; if none, she eats alone.

Since Peking is in the same latitude as Philadelphia my lady has the same kinds of fruit—apples, peaches, pears, apricots, the most delicious grapes, and persimmons as large as the biggest tomato you ever saw; indeed, the Chinese call the tomato the western red persimmon. She has mutton from the Mongolian sheep (the finest I have ever eaten), beef, pork or lamb; chicken, goose or duck; hare, pheasant or deer, or fish of whatever kind she may choose. Of course these are all prepared after the Chinese style, and be it said to the credit of their cooks that our children are always ready to leave our own

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PRINCESS KA-LA-CHIN, SISTER OF PRINCE SU, WIFE OF A MONGOL PRINCE, AND FOUNDER OF A SCHOOL FOR MONGOLIAN GIRLS

table to take a meal with the servants.

After her meal she lingers for a few minutes over her cup of tea and her pipe. In the meantime her cart or sedan chair is prepared. Her outriders are ready with their horses; the eunuchs, women and slave girls who are to attend her don their proper clothing, and prepare the changes of raiment needed for the various functions of the day. One takes a basin and towels, another powder and

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MERICAN AND CHINESE LADIES. MRS. HEADLAND IN THE MIDDLE OF REAR ROW

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rouge-boxes, another the pipe and embroidered tobacco pouch, not even forgetting the silver cuspidor, all of which will be needed. When she eats, a servant gives her a napkin to spread over her gown; after she has finished, another brings a basin of hot water, from which a towel is wrung with which she gently wipes her mouth and hands. Another brings her a glass of water, or she washes out her mouth with tea, and finally with the little mirror and rouge-box she puts the paint upon her lip if it has disappeared.

When ready to start, her cart or chair is drawn up as close as possible to the gate of the women's apartments. A screen of blue silk eighteen or twenty feet long and six feet high, fastened to two wooden standards, is held by eunuchs to screen her while she enters the cart. The chair can be used only by princesses or wives of viceroys or members of the Grand Council. But whether chair or cart it is lined and cushioned with scarlet satin in summer, and in winter with fur. It is an accomplishment to enter a cart gracefully, but years of practice enable her to do so, and as soon as she is seated in Buddhist fashion, the curtain is dropped; her attendant seats herself cross-legged in front; several male servants rush up, seize the shafts of the cart, place the mule between them, fasten the buckles (it reminds one of the fire-department), the driver takes his place at the lines, two other male servants take hold of the sides of the mule's bridle, and all is in readiness to start. Female servants and slave girls crowd into other carts, outriders mount their mules, and the cavalcade starts with my lady's cart ahead.

As they pass along the streets they are remarked upon by all foot passengers, and as they near their destination, a courier on horseback spurs up his steed, makes a wild dash forward, leaps from his horse, and announces to the gate-keeper that the princess will soon arrive. The news is at once taken to the servants of the women's apartments, where the name is given to a eunuch, who bears it to his mistress.

In the meantime the party has arrived. The mule is unhitched, cart drawn to the gate, screen spread, servant descends from front, and the princess with the help of a couple of eunuchs is escorted through a long covered walk into the court, where the ladies of the household are waiting on the veranda to receive her. As she enters the gateway the hostess begins slowly to descend the steps. The others follow, and they meet in the centre of the court. Low curtsies are made by each and formal inquiries as to each other's health. There is a short stop and certain formalities before the guest will ascend the steps ahead of the hostess. The same occurs again on entering the reception hall, and taking the seat of honor. The luckless foreigner sometimes makes the mistake of conceding to her guest's modesty and allows her to take a lower seat, which is a grievous offence, and she is only pardoned on the plea that she is an outside barbarian, and does not understand the rules of polite society.

After she is seated tea is served, and servants bring in trays of sweetmeats, fruit, nuts, dried melon seeds, candied fruits and small cakes. One of these nuts is unique. It is an "English walnut" in which, after the outer hull is removed, the shell is self-cracked, and folds back in places so that the kernel appears. While partaking of the delicacies of dried water-melon seeds the object of the visit is announced, which is that her son is to be married on a certain date. Of course official announcements will be sent later, but she wishes to ask if her hostess will act as one of her representatives to carry the *ju yi* to the young lady's home.

After the ladies have chatted for a time about the latest official appointments, some court gossip, the latest fashion in robe ornamentation, and the newspaper news at home and abroad—for the Chinese have ten or a dozen newspapers in Peking, among

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THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW OF PRINCE TING SEATED BESIDE MRS. HEADLAND

which is the only woman's daily in the world—the hostess invites her guest to see her garden. They pass through a gateway into a court in which are great trees, shrubbery, fish-ponds spanned by marble bridges, covered walks, beautiful rockeries, wistaria vines laden with long clusters of blossoms, summer-houses, miniature mountains, and flowers of all kinds—a dream of beauty and loveliness. After returning to the house another cup of tea is served, and the guest rises to leave. But before doing so her servants bring in a bundle of clothing, and there in the presence of her hostess her outer robes are changed for others of a more sombre character.

Her next call is at the birthday celebration of the mother of one of the highest officials in the capital. I was present when she arrived. Instead of entering by the front gate, she went by a private entrance directly to the apartments of her hostess. Many guests (all gentlemen) were assembled in the front court, which was covered by a mat pavilion and converted into a theatre. The court was several feet lower than the adjoining house, the front windows of which were all removed and it was used for the accommodation of the lady guests. On the walls of the temporary structure hung red satin and silk banners on which were pinned ideographs cut out of gold foil or black velvet, expressive of beautiful sentiments and good wishes for many happy returns of the day. The Emperor, wishing to do this official honor, has informed him that on his mother's birthday an imperial present will be sent her, which is a greater compliment than if sent to the official himself.

It was a gala scene. Fresh guests

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arrived every minute. The ladies in their most graceful and dignified curtsies were constantly bending as other guests were announced, while the gentlemen, with low bows and each shaking his own hands, received their friends. The clothes of the men, though of a more sombre hue, were richer in texture than those of the women. Heavy silks and satins, embroidered with dragons in gold thread, indicated that this one was a member of the imperal clan, while others equally rich were worn by the other gentlemen, each embroidered with the insignia of his rank. Hats adorned with red tassels, peacock feathers in jade holders, and the button denoting the rank of the wearer, were worn by all, as it would be a breach of etiquette to remove the hat in the presence of one's host.

It would also be bad form for the gentlemen to raise their eyes to where the ladies were seated; just as the latter, who must look over the heads of the men to view the theatre, would not be caught allowing their eyes to dwell upon any one. But no doubt these gentle little ladies have their own curiosity, and some means of finding out who 's who among that court full of dragon-draped pillars of state; for I have never failed to receive a ready answer when I inquired as to the name of some handsome or distinguished-looking guest whose identity I wished to learn.

The theatre goes on interminably. Like my lady, they change their clothes, and the scenery, in full view of the audience. The plays are mostly historical, the women's parts being taken by men, as ladies are not allowed to go on the stage. One daring company, in imitation of the foreign custom, had a woman take one of the parts; but a special order from the viceroy put the company



PRINCESS SU, WHOSE HUSBAND LENT HIS PALACE TO THE CHRISTIANS DURING THE BOXER SIEGE

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SIXTH DAUGHTER OF PRINCE CHING AND SISTER-IN-LAW OF THE REGENT

out of commission, and the leader in prison.

The guests were not expected to sit quietly watching the play, but moved about greeting each other and chatting at will. Servants brought tea and sweetmeats and finally a banquet was served. Near the close of the feast it was announced that the imperial present was coming, and the members of the household disappeared. The deep boom of the drums and the honk of the great horns were heard distinctly as they entered the street, and soon the yellow imperial chair, with its thirty-six bearers in

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the royal livery, moved slowly toward us between two rows of the male members of the household who had gone out and were kneeling on both sides of the street, knocking their heads as the chair passed them. The great gates were thrown open and there in the gateway the female members of the family knelt and kowtowed as the chair passed by.

The presents were taken into a room specially prepared for their reception. The head imperial eunuch placed them in position, and, with a low obeisance, departed the richer by several hundred ounces of silver. The gentlemen guests were first invited to view these tokens of imperial favor. In order of their rank they entered, prostrating themselves before them. Later we ladies were invited into the room where the Chinese all kowtowed. What now were these wonderful gifts before which these men and women of rank and noble birth were falling upon their faces?

They were two squares of red paper, eighteen inches across, printed in outline of the imperial dragon, on which the characters for long life and happiness were written with the imperial pen; and a small yellow satin box in which sat a little gold Buddha not more than an inch in height! It was the thought, not the value, which elicited all this appreciation.

Shall we go with this busy little princess to another festal occasion? I was with her again. It was at the home of the sister of one of the sweetest little princesses in the whole empire. Her baby was a month old and she was celebrating what they call the full month feast. Instead, however, of having the usual feasting and theatricals, the mother, who, for days after her child was born, lay at death's door, sent out invitations to her friends to come and fast and give thanks to the gods for sparing her life.



PRINCE CH'ÜN AND HIS SONS—THE LATE EMPEROR AT RIGHT

Though the child was a month old

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the mother was too wan and weak to leave her couch. She was dressed, however, in festal robes, and received her guests with many gracious words and apologies. Of course only ladies were present. The great covered court was converted into a large shrine. One could imagine they were looking into the main hall of a temple, only that everything was so clean and beautiful. From the centre of the shrine a goddess of mercy looked down complacently upon the array of fruit, nuts, sweetmeats and cakes spread out before her. Many candles in their tall candlesticks were burning on every side. Before her was a great bronze incense-burner, from which many sticks of incense sent out their fragrant odor on the air. As each guest passed through the court, she took a stick from the pile, lit it, and, with a word of prayer, added it to the number.

After the guests had all arrived a princess—sister of the hostess—accompanied by two of the leading guests, descended into the paved court and took her place before the altar. Deep-toned bells were touched by small boys whose shaven heads and priestly robes denoted that they, like little Samuel, were being brought up within the courts of the temple. The princess took a great bunch of incense in her two hands, one of her attendants lit it with a torch prepared for that purpose, and the flame and smoke ascended amid the deep tones of the bells, as she prostrated herself before the goddess. She looked like a beautiful fairy herself as she stood with the flaming bunch of incense held high above her head. Three times she prostrated herself and nine times she bent forward, fulfilling all the requirements of the law.

At the close of this ceremony the ladies were invited to partake of a feast prepared wholly of vegetables and vegetable oils. It requires much more skill to prepare such a feast than when meat and animal oils are used. The food furnished interesting topics for discussion. Most of it was prepared by various temples, each being celebrated for some particular dish, which it was asked to contribute.

It is not uncommon for a Chinese lady to take upon herself a vow in which she promises the gods to observe certain days of each month as fast days, on condition that they restore to health a mother, father, husband or child. No matter what banquet she attends she need only mention to her hostess that she has a vow and she is made the chief guest, helping others but eating nothing herself. After this full month feast the baby was seen, its presents admired, the last cup of tea drunk, the farewells said, and we all returned home.



CHINESE TWINS

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