

THE SMALL FOOT TO GO

THE CHINESE WOMEN ARE TAKING OFF THE BANDAGES AND ADOPTING LOOSE SHOES.

(Special Correspondence.)
NANKING, December, 1909.—The new woman promises to be a live figure in the future of China. Today she is practically a slave in the hands of her husband or father, with few rights that men are bound to respect. She is a cripple, hobbling about on bound feet. If she is rich and high-class, she is not allowed to go on the streets, and if poor she works in the fields and does all sorts of drudgery. The average Chinese girl is uneducated and not one woman in a hundred can read and write. The new China is to be full of girls' schools, its girls are to be allowed their natural growth and its women are to take their part in the work of the world. Girls are already employed in the telephone offices of Hongkong and Shanghai. They are teaching everywhere in the kindergartens and primary schools, and medical colleges have been established to fit them for trained nurses and doctors. The viceroys of Wuchang has a school in which the boys and girls study together, and the same is true of Tuan Fang, the viceroy of Nanking. There are several large girls' schools in Peking, and one of the Manchu princesses, a member of the imperial family, has established a girls' school in Mongolia. All the missionary establishments are now teaching girls and the demand for educated women as wives is far greater than the supply.

THE ANTI-FOOTBINDING MOVEMENT

The sentiment against binding the feet is very rapidly growing. The great empress dowager sent out an edict shortly before her death denouncing the custom, and advising all the girls and women of the empire to do away with it. Chang Chi Tung has written an article on the subject, and before he died Li Hung Chang advised the custom to be discontinued. Many of the viceroys and governors have sent out proclamations favoring the abolition of footbinding, and a number of societies have been started in the different provinces in favor of the natural foot for all women. In all the girls' schools the government regulations provide that a girl must come with her feet unbound, and a system of gymnastic exercises has been instituted which are impossible for a crippled-foot pupil. In talking last night with one of the high officials of Nanking, I was told that the foot-binding would soon disappear, and that the sentiment against it is rapidly growing. The man I refer to was educated in the United States. Said he:

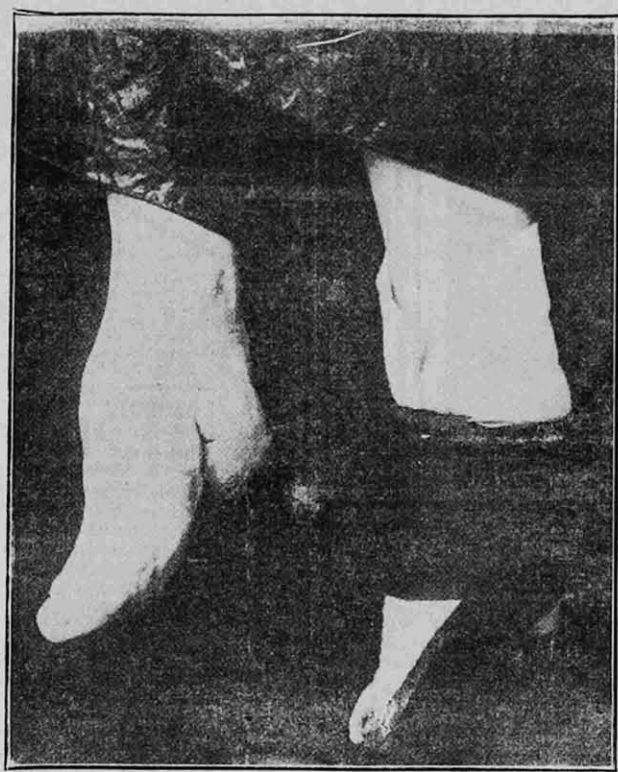
"I have two daughters, and one is 19 years old. Neither have bound feet. The same is true of many well-to-do girls in my city, and especially so with the children of high officials all over the empire. The edict of the empress dowager had a wonderful effect. It has made the big foot respectable, and the ordinary Chinese parent will give up the custom as soon as he finds his daughters can get husbands without it."

THE BIG-FOOTED MANCHU.

As it is now footbinding is confined to the Chinese. The Manchus, who are the reigning family of this empire, have never bound their feet, and the great empress dowager, all the court ladies of Peking have feet which are less pinched than those of the average American belle. They wear shoes of silk and satin beautifully embroidered, and when they go visiting have gorgeous slippers with heels in the center of the sole about two inches high. The average Chinese woman has naturally a beautiful foot, and the same is true of the Manchus. It is smaller than that of the Caucasian, and the instep is usually such that water could run under it without touching the skin. So far I have seen none which corresponds with the old darkey song about his sweetheart:

"And de hollow oh her foot makes a hole in de groun."

The Chinese women were binding their feet when the Manchus came in, and the men then wore long hair all over their heads. The Manchus compelled them to shave their heads, excepting the pigtail, as a sign of servitude, and before long the practice became so popular that they adopted it themselves. It was different with the binding of the feet. The Tartars have always denounced it, and sev-



A GOLDEN LILY WITH THE BANDAGES OFF.

eral of the emperors of the past have tried to abolish it. The custom among the Chinese began, it is said, more than a thousand years ago, having been introduced by an empress, who had goat's feet covered with hair, and who bandaged them, and thus set the fashion. She clothed them in yellow satin and they came to be known as golden lilies, which is the term for the celestial crippled tottler-wootie of today. Of course, the people did not know of the deformity. They thought the empress had natural feet, and they bound up their children to make them like her. At any rate, the custom of the binding of the feet came into vogue, and to this day it is common.

HOW A BOUND FOOT LOOKS.

No one who has not seen a golden lily with the bandages off can appreciate how one of these deformed Chinese feet looks. In the satin shoe embroidered with gay silk or silver and gold it is more like a stuffed club than a foot. The big toe only rests on the ground, and the size of the foot is measured by this rather than the full length of the foot. I know of one woman who has a foot so small that she can stand on a silver dollar and the sole will not come outside of the edges. The wife of one of the viceroys has feet an inch and a quarter long, and the favorite concubine of another has feet an inch long and half an inch wide; while the average bound foot is not over two inches in diameter where it rests on the ground. Taking off the bandages, one sees that the part of the foot which touches the ground is never more than the toe and heel, and often only the toe. The binding is done so that the foot is crushed out of shape. The instep is thrown up and the toe and the heel tied together, while the other four toes are bent under the foot in the crack between them. It is very difficult to see a Chinese girl's foot unbound, but I once had the opportunity to examine one. It was in a hospital, and I posed as a consulting physician. The patient was a high class girl of 16 who had sprained her ankle, and she had taken off the bandages to allow the doctor to dress it. Her leg was not swollen, but the foot to me was a horrible sight. The four small toes had almost grown into the sole and there was a crack about three inches deep where the heel and big toe came together. I could have slipped a silver dollar into that crack and the flesh would have hidden it. The skin over the instep was as rough as though it had been chafed with the cold, and it was cracked and sore. The girl's leg was bare half way to the knee. It looked like a pipstern, or rather a baseball club. It had no

One of the live questions which is now before the women of China is whether their feet can be cured if they take off the bandages. In the case of the older women it is impossible, although even they can be relieved of pain. Their deformed feet, however, cannot be made over again, and they must walk with canes or hobble to the end of their days. The feet of the younger women largely resume their natural shape, although they have none of the beauty of those which have not been bound. The unbinding has to be carefully done, and the feet must be rubbed and massaged to increase the circulation. It is difficult to persuade the women who have been binding their feet to stop, but the young girls are wild for the change, and that especially as it is now becoming possible to get a husband if one's foot is large. Indeed, the big foot, or rather the unbound foot, is liable to be a beau-catcher. As a Chinese official said to me, the men of the new regime are anxious to have their wives go about with them, and those who have a chance to travel abroad would like their company. This is not possible with the small-footed woman, who has often to walk with a cane or to have servants support her when she goes out from home.

ANTI-FOOTBINDING SOCIETIES.

This movement against foot-binding is being pushed by associations of native men and women in different parts of China. There is an organization in Canton, known as the Anti-Footbinding Society, to which 10,000 fathers belong. They have pledged themselves not to bind the feet of their daughters and to object to their sons marrying girls with bound feet. Many of the wives of the members have taken off the bandages, and literature denouncing the custom is being distributed.

There is a similar organization in far western China on the borders of Tibet, and for some years a propaganda against this evil has been carried on at Shanghai. There is an Englishwoman of Shanghai who has done much for the cause. She has organized a society for the female cripples of this nation than any native man or woman. I refer to Mrs. Archibald Little, who has written several excellent books upon China. It was she who originated the Tian Tsu Hui society, which advocates natural feet for the women of China. This was started about 15 years ago, with branches all over the empire. It was supported by the missionary women and other foreigners, and it has distributed tracts, picturing the evils of the practice everywhere. It memorialized the throne, and was largely instrumental in getting the empress dowager to send out the big foot edict. Among other pictures made by this society was the photograph of a bound foot by the X-ray process. This shows how horribly the foot is deformed, the bones being crushed out of shape.

SMALL FEET VS TIGHT WAISTS.

I have talked with many Chinese about the natural foot woman. The men of the old regime, the custom of foot binding, and all say that it is bound to go. At the same time they get even with me by denouncing the practice of tight lacing, so common among the women of the United States, saying that it is worse to compress the vital organs than the feet. They consider the small waist ugly, rather than beautiful, and say both customs have their foundation in depraved ideas of the beautiful. One Chinese remarked:

"Our men have been accustomed to consider small feet beautiful. The women think the men like it, and that the girl who has a golden lily foot will have a better chance for marriage. Therefore they undergo the pain of binding. You men think the wasp-like waist is beautiful, and therefore your women squeeze their bones by tying one end of the corset rope to a bedpost and pulling on the other in order to lace it tighter. You may call our people a nation of cripples because the better class of women have to hobble around on bound feet. From tight lacing your people are a nation of invalids. Three-fourths of your women are under the care of the doctors half the time, and that from the bad practice of lacing. I venture that on the average the Chinese women are healthier than the American women. Why do you not stay at home and advocate an anti-waist-binding society instead of coming over here to write about foot binding?"

THE ABOLITION OF THE QUEUE.

Connected with the anti-foot-binding movement is another relating to the men. This is for the abolition of the queue. The high-class officials and the better element of the people are seriously discussing doing away with the pigtail. This was not favored by the old empress dowager. It was proposed to her in 1893, but she replied that no edict favoring it should be issued while she lived.

Now that she is dead the question is again agitated and the queue will eventually go. Some of the school-boys are already cutting off their hair, and there is a strong sentiment that this should be enforced in the army. The soldiers find their pigtails very inconvenient in warfare. They must be wrapped about the head before going into battle, and the constant shaving and braiding necessary to keep them in order cannot be done during a campaign. Besides, in the case of a hand-to-hand fight the man who wears the queue is at a disadvantage, as he can be jerked this way and that by his enemy. The Chinese policemen now coil their queues like a snake inside their caps. They seriously impede their attempts at arrest, and they want to get rid of them. It is the same with many of the leading statesmen. Said Mr. Cheng, the former adviser of one of the viceroys, to me: "I should like to see my queue cut for all officials to cut off their queues. I can tell you that mine will go off the first day it comes, and that there are millions of other Chinese who will be glad to get it. We only keep them because it is according to the fashion and the law, and we shall be glad to see them go."

The queue came into China as a badge of servitude to the Manchus, and it is still compulsory. In some of the secret societies which have been recently organized to do away with the Tartar government the candidates for membership are requested to cut off their queues, and they sometimes do so. This, however, is dangerous, as it might be looked upon as a sign of rebellion. Many of the students who go to America adopt foreign clothes and cut off their hair while abroad. They use false queues when they return. Such things are sold in every Chinese city. The hair is hung up on sheets and one can get a very fair pigtail for from 50 cents to a dollar. Many of the Chinese wear false queues, and not a few reinforce their hair with black silk thread.

WILL THE CHINESE WEAR PANTS?

And all this brings me to another question that is agitating the men of this empire. This is, will the Chinese wear trousers? I answer yes. The women have had them from time immemorial, and the workmen of the lower classes are wearing them now. It is only the gentlemen who are always clad in long gowns. They wear silks, satins and velvets, but they often have on trousers under their dresses, and by the new movement they will abolish the latter and come out clad like the Japanese or ourselves.

Already the soldiers have uniforms of coats and pantaloons of wadded cotton, and the dress of the school-boys is much the same. These new trousers are far different from those of the old Chinese cut. They are sewed up in the back and are gradually approaching the shape of our western unmentionables.

I wonder if you have ever seen a pair of Chinese men's pants? The

regulation cut is a cross between wadded drawers and bloomers, with a slice cut at the back. They make one think of little Dickie Doot, "with his shirt-tail out." They bag at the knees and wrinkle down the leg, reminding one of the farmer's remark about the elephant. This farmer had gone to the circus, and upon his re-

turn was asked what he thought of the animals. He replied that they all suited him well with the exception of the elephant. And it too, was a right, but it had too much slack in its pants. Well, that is the trouble with the Chinese trousers, and it is so also with the new styles now coming in. FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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