

Missionary Journal, Chinese Culture

This article was published in a missionary journal printed in the cities of Fuzhou and Shanghai. *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* operated between 1868 and 1912. It was read by English-speakers living in the major cities of China as well as abroad. In this article the editors reprint a letter from Miss Porter, who lives in Shandong province in north China, in which she describes Chinese domestic life. The language of this piece is intriguing, offering praise and condemnation at the same time. In her description, Chinese culture is just shy of “admirable,” needing only the polish of Christianity to give it shine. Chinese women are similarly depicted, presented as self-reliant and well-mannered, yet ignorant, and superstitious. The author finds that their lives suit them “in their present condition” and predicts great improvements when all of Chinese society has wholly embraced Christianity.

Source: “Domestic Life of Woman.” *Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* 17 (1886): 153-154.

DOMESTIC LIFE OF WOMAN.

Miss Porter of Pang Chia, West Shantung, writes to the *Missionary Herald* of Chinese houses in that vicinity:—

The main features of Chinese domestic and social life are quite the best for them in their present condition. Not only not opposed to the gospel, their theories and standards are such as, if tempered by its spirit of love, would be truly admirable. The Shantung women are self-reliant, self-helpful, faithful wives and affectionate mothers. The young women are, as a rule, modest, and, accepting the position of subordination to mother-in-law and husband cheerfully, they rise out of it as the years go on, to a place in the family counsels. One would hardly desire for them a larger freedom until a gradual change has

come in all the conditions of society. Nor would one desire to see that change other than gradual. I imagine that their morals are far higher than those of the majority of the peasantry of Europe, and their manners are incomparably superior. Yet they are ignorant, superstitious, and give way to fits of passion, in which they use the vilest of language and seem utterly to forget that regard for appearances which is generally such a controlling motive.

The time has hardly come to look for much change in their homes. There are some households in the mission, living in most carefully kept houses—the husbands and wives mutual helpers—the children trained to a loving obedience—little touches of taste and culture showing themselves in the appointments and ordering of the home; but as yet I know none such except when the money which supports it comes from the foreigners. These men are young helpers in the employ of the mission—their wives Bridgman School girls. This is no test. When I see a native home where the family live away from foreigners, supporting themselves without aid from abroad, growing more neat and caring to make home attractive, I shall count that the effect of the gospel: *and this will come!*—but slowly. As yet in Shantung we do not see the dawning of that day. Our helpers all have farms, and their families work them. They are industrious and thrifty, but neither neater nor more comfortable than their neighbors.

These things are all secondary. Personal love to Christ will work the same changes in these women that it has wrought the world over. When that fills their hearts the hoes must grow pure and bright. These burdened, weary-laden ones will find 'rest,' and that rest will work outward, finding expression in gentle works and acts first; later, in making the external things of the home attractive.