

Dear Friends of Steele Creek
Ladies Missionary Society.

Suchien, China.
May 12, 1909.

You have heard that foot-binding is dying out in China but if you were here you would see plenty of it. Nearly all of the women have very small feet and walk with a great deal of difficulty. Try to walk on your ~~feet~~ heels not letting your feet touch the ground and you will know something of how these women look and feel. The children of christians are not foot-bound of course and there is a strong sentiment against it among others but it is still practiced very much. There is more of it among the better classes. It is rather a sign of respectability. They fear that without small feet the girls will not be able to get married well, for who wants a girl with big feet? Some have almost no feet so that they hobble along most pitiably but they are considered beautiful.

Yesterday I heard the music of a marriage procession and stopped in my study to get my chinese teacher to tell me about it. They may not see each other before the marriage as the engagement is made by the parents or a middle-man. Often the marriage is spoken while they are very small children. Mrs. Patterson tells me she has acted as middleman for one couple. She visited the girl and asked her all the questions she could think of finding her satisfactory in every way with this exception, her teeth were black. On inquiry she learned that this was no ground of objection so the match was made and turned out well.

There is an old man here at Suchien eighty years old who has never let his beard grow. A beard is honorable but he has not allowed his to grow because he has no son. His only daughter forty years old has never been spoken in marriage because she has no brother to escort her to her mother-in-law's house her future home. This is the chinese custom. The women are not counted much. Girls are not welcomed as babies. Often they are thrown out to die. Women do not eat at the same table with the men but wait until the men finish.

Also the men and women sit in separate apartments in church. There is a partition dividing them, so arranged that both can see the preacher. Besides the Sunday School teaching and preaching there is a special service for women every Sabbath afternoon as well as a mid-week prayer-meeting. Then the lady workers, the missionaries, visit from house to house teaching the Bible and catechism. Last week five women from the country came in and stayed nearly a week learning the way. They came from ten to fifteen miles on wheel-barrows.

Speaking of this reminds me of some of the hard things women here have to endure. They come in from forty and fifty miles in the country bringing sick women and children to Mrs.

P

Patterson for treatment.

Every day I see the wheel-barrow standing out in front of the dispensary. If the patient is too sick to sit up they set a large basket on top of the barrow and make the bed in it. Sometimes they are brought from twenty to thirty miles with all kinds of terrible diseases. The native doctors know very little. The needle is one of their favorite remedies. The evil spirits cause the trouble. By sticking a needle in these spirits are let out.

You may be interested to know how the lady missionaries work here and with what success. At Suchien there are five ladies, three married and two single. The two latter are Scotch ladies supporting themselves but working in connection with our mission. Their work is teaching the women and children. This they do in prayer meeting and Sunday school, as they visit the women in their homes and as the women come to their homes. They talk to them, teach them to sing, pray with them and comfort them in their troubles. Mrs. Patterson has five children. How can she do any thing? In the mornings she teaches the children; in the afternoon she is in the dispensary working hard with the sick and visiting some too. All the women here are working earnestly and effectively in the Master's vineyard.

I am writing this from time to time as I have opportunity. It is Saturday night. Mr. Patterson is out in the country preaching. Mr. Jurkin who has had his leg broken is just able to be about on crutches. This afternoon we went over to the canal and spent the time resting from our labors. It is getting very warm now so we stretched several sheets on poles to make a shady spot. We also ate supper there. We have been home an hour perhaps. The spring weather is magnificent in this part of China though it does get on your nerves if you don't slow up in work.

Mrs. Patterson was the first foreign woman at Suchien. She has been telling me some of the trials and hardships of the first days here. Mr. and Mrs. Patterson, Mr. Sydenstricker and Mr. Crier opened the station in 1893. They were not able to buy property and so had to live in a Chinese inn in the rough part of town and preach in the same place. Their coming was opposed very bitterly by the leading citizens of the place. When they went to walk for exercise boys and men threw rocks at them and for days and months rocks could be heard falling in the yard day and night. Mrs. Patterson went out in her chair one day to see a patient. While she was in the house a mob gathered and began pulling down the door. Finally the friends told her it would be better for her to start on home which she did. The curtains were pulled off the chair and rocks were thrown at her but she got home without injury.

After three years they were able to buy a piece of property but the citizens when they learned that the purchase had been made went to the officials and had the property

had been made went to the official and had a deed drawn up at a date prior to theirs and officially sealed so the seller had to give back the purchase money.

Later on they were able to buy and the work has been making gradual progress. Since the famine the way has cleared up considerably. Now we have a girls' school with twenty five pupils and a boys' school with about fifty. At present a new building is being erected for the boys' school to accommodate a good many more boys and Mr. McCutchan is here studying the language to take charge of it. Then there is the woman's dispensary which I have already spoken of and a hospital for men. Many attend the hospitals daily and the Gospel is preached to them as they wait and portions of the Bible sold. In this way friends are made and the glad tidings spread.

In 1900 there were seven members of the church at Suchie now there are sixty-five. Then there were two out stations; now ten. Then one native helper; now eleven. Then there were ten thousand patients a year; last year there were twenty thousand. A few weeks ago thirteen were baptized in the church here the largest number ever received at one time. In all there are now about one hundred and seventy-five. Last Sunday there were 187 at S. S.

There are still many difficulties in the way of believers and some opposition but no open hostility. False reports are often spread abroad about the foreigners. For instance during the famine season the provisions were in the hands of the missionaries. They made it a rule to give work such as they could to the Chinese as they fed them from day to day. Quite a number of women were employed in making small dolls with left over material to sell on the streets here and perhaps in other countries. Some one started the report that these dolls were being made to send to America and there they turned to soldiers and would come back to fight against the Chinese. The merchants in town refused to buy on account of such reports and this had to be suspended at once.

Mrs. Vinson visits among the women a great deal. There is one group of young ladies living close together that she has been teaching. They come to services and are inquirers. She goes to their homes. The mother-in-law of one of them bosses the ranch and is bitterly opposed to the Gospel. She has been saying evil things about the church and doing all she could to prevent their coming. It turned up the last time she was teaching them that they had been deceiving the old lady, telling her they were going some other place when they really were coming to preaching. They seemed to think that just one little lie would not hurt but Mrs. Vinson told them that it would do no good for them to study the Bible and catechism and tell and live a lie at the same time, that must not fear man more than God. They are still coming.

You would no doubt like to ask me something about the chinese christians. Are they faithful? Do they stand fast? It would seem unnecessary after the wonderful testimony of the thirty thousand who gave up their lives in /~~1900~~/ 1900 rather than deny their Lord, but instances of faithfulness in life and service are interesting and inspiring. they are not rare among the chinese.

A chinese doctor makes enough in half his time to support his family and gives the other half to spreading the Gospel.

~~A~~ A man in one of the out stations of this field was an opium smoker, so bad that he rose and smoked at night. He also was accustomed to fust with and beat his wife. Now he holds family prayer and is an earnest christian. He has ceased the opium and his wife now has peace. He has built a special room to his house which he calls the prophet's chamber.

One of the women heard the Gospel and believed. Her husband forbade her attending services when he heard of it and told her he would beat her if she went again. The following Sunday she went. On her return he asked her where she had been. She told him and he gave her a beating. She took it patiently, cooked his supper as usual, and tried to do her duty faithfully. The following Sabbath she went again. On her return she was given a harder beating which she bore and went on with her work. The next Sunday he beat her so hard when she returned that she could not work for several days but she went again next preaching day. He decided he would go too and see what it was. As the men and women are separated he knew that she would not know of his presence. He heard and saw there was no harm in it so went again and now is a christian himself and his family. There are no doubt many husbands in the homeland who would be mightily moved by such faithfulness on the part of their wives.

The Gospel is still the power of God unto salvation for the Chinese and for the whole world. The difficulties over here are many. On the one hand there is much ignorance and superstition, on the other there is a great deal of pride national and intellectual.

I am face to face every day with an ardent Confucianist. He believes that Confucius was a good man as well as CHRIST, so he burns incense to his tablet and worships his ancestors. He is too proud to walk out with me through the town. There are many such here and all over this vast empire.

I will close with this thought: It may be that the reason there is so large a part of the world unconquered for Christ is that there is so large a part of our own hearts unsubdued.

Yours sincerely, G.F STEVENS.

G. P. Stevens,
Suchien, China.
via Shinkiang.



Mrs. Atwood Freeman,
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U. S. A.

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