

# The Christian Messenger.

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WHOLE SERIES.

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## Poetry.

### Trust.

It is easy to trust  
When our sky is all clear;  
When our treasures of dust  
Are surrounding us here;  
But when clouds gather darkly,  
And fierce sweeps the blast,  
When alone in the darkness,  
Does faith anchor fast?

It is easy to smile  
When flowers strew the way;  
We can trust even while  
Some few blossoms decay;  
But when shrouded around  
By the dark winter's night,  
Is our faith shining clearer  
Than when in the light?

With sorrowful heart,  
Too oft onward we go,  
We trust but in part,  
Till by faith taught to know  
That our mighty Redeemer,  
Our infinite Friend,  
Through darkness or light,  
Will still guide to the end.

## Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

### Letter from China.

#### CHINESE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

Mr. Editor,—

Perhaps none of the customs of the Chinese show in a more marked manner the difference between them and enlightened America, than the customs concerning marriage. The young people here have nothing whatever to say in relation to their own marriage. It would be considered highly improper for a young man even to suggest that he would like a wife. A young man in Miss Fielde's employ, having taken a wife, when asked by her if it had been in accordance with his wishes, he replied that he would not dare even to wish for one, but his uncle had seen fit to get her for him. This matter is arranged wholly by the parents or nearest relatives with the assistance of a "go-between" who is usually a female relative of one of the families interested, or some old female acquaintance. The girl chosen to be the future daughter-in-law, must not, according to Chinese law, have the same surname as her future husband, notwithstanding she may be no relation. This usually makes it necessary that she be taken from another village, since it frequently happens that all the residents of a single village belong to the same clan.

Except in one case the bride always enters her husband's family. I have heard of instances where in the same house were ten daughters-in-law, each with children of her own. As the family increases in size the house is enlarged by building additions until the same roof covers quite a community where may be found persons belonging to three and even four generations. The exceptional case in which a bride does not go to her husband's home is when in her own family there are no sons and she is the only daughter. In this case she marries a husband into her family. This is in order that the aged parents may not be left alone and unsupported in their old age. For, in whatever else the Chinese are lacking, they do not lack in respect for their elders. This is, indeed, one of their acknowledged virtues.

Here in China the wife is actually bought although the Chinese do not so consider it. They regard the price paid either as a sort of compensation for rearing the girl, or as paid back in the wedding outfit. The price paid for a wife varies in different localities and according to the number of girls destroyed in infancy. If infanticide be comparatively rare, girls will be plentiful and, hence, bring a small price; on the other hand they will be scarce, and consequently a wife will be a more expensive luxury. In this district girls bring from \$10, to \$50; although the presents made to the bride's parents and the wedding feast often bring the

cost of a wife up to \$100. This is especially the case in one portion of this district where infanticide is very common.

The betrothal usually occurs a year before the marriage, and is considered almost, if not quite as binding. At this time a written contract is made in which the amount of the betrothal money, the value of the presents, and of what they shall consist, is stipulated. Of the betrothal money a part is paid down in order to bind the contract, and the remainder at such time as decided in the written agreement. The presents are sent at the time the bride is taken to her husband's home, and consists of articles of food, of which fish, pork, and immense loaves of cake form important items. These presents often amount in value to \$20, or more, and are supposed to be sent in small portions to the friends of the recipients' family. For a year after the betrothal the girl remains with her mother, preparing her wedding outfit, and undergoing the terrible torture of having her feet bound, providing her future mother-in-law wishes her son to have a small footed wife. She is then, with appropriate ceremonies, taken to the bride-groom's home, where the wedding feast, lasting several days, is given.

Although the betrothal often takes place a year before marriage it is not unusual for it to occur when the children are yet very young. It is not unusual to hear a little girl spoken of as a certain woman's future daughter-in-law. The age of betrothal depends largely upon the circumstances of the parents. Often debt makes it necessary to seek a husband for the daughter, not according to the moral qualifications of the future son-in-law, but according to the price his parents may be able to pay for a wife for him. On the other hand, to obtain a daughter-in-law the parents frequently incur a debt which burdens them for long years. Many cannot afford to get even the cheapest kind of a wife for their son. Therefore it is not unusual for such to buy a little girl of six or seven years of age and take her home to bring up as a daughter-in-law. Such can easily be obtained for six or seven dollars. Those who cannot afford even this often buy an infant from some Foundling Home and bring it up. The children from this home are hawked through the street by a man who starts out in the morning with a basket of little girls a week or ten days old. As he cries his babies through the town, any woman who wishes a wife for her little son and is too poor to get it in any other way looks through the basket, selects the brightest, and gives the man perhaps, a dollar. Often, also, little ones who would otherwise be destroyed, are saved by a poor woman's offering to take it and bring it up for her son.

The betrothal once made, either by the payment of money or by adoption, cannot legally be broken except by the consent of all parties concerned. One of the girls in the school here was betrothed when very young. Afterwards her parents became Christians and then felt they were doing wrong to marry their daughter to a heathen. But they had received ten dollars of the betrothal money. After having used, in vain, every argument in their power to induce those to whom their child legally belonged to abandon their claim, they sought Miss Fielde's assistance. Miss Fielde took the sum to which the principal already received would have amounted if put out at Compound Interest, went to the boy's parents, and besought them to accept this money and release the girl. This, they finally consented to do, providing the girl's parents would go through the streets declaring in a most humiliating way that they were guilty of a very great wrong in thus violating their contract. But release on such terms could not, for a moment be entertained; therefore, the matter stands as before. The girl herself declares that she will never marry her betrothed.

It is by no means unusual for the daughter to rebel against marrying the man selected for her. Last year a heathen girl in one of the country dis-

tricts begged Miss Fielde, who was on one of her county trips, to assist her in running away that she might thus escape the fate of marrying a man with a loathsome disease. Miss Fielde used every lawful means in her power to help the poor girl, but without success. The girl was stout and healthy and thus would be too valuable as a servant to be given up. Upon her declaring that she would not be married, though, she eventually did, her mother advised her to hang herself, and even urged her to do so. It is not unusual for girls to put an end to their lives sooner than to be married. Not very long ago, and not far from Swatow, to escape such a fate, five girls, having fastened themselves together with cords, drowned themselves. This seems very dreadful, but indeed, if a woman does not want to marry, a single life is considered so disgraceful that even death is preferable.

After a girl is married her duties, not so much those of a wife as of a daughter-in-law, begin. Taken no notice of by her husband in the presence of others, she at once becomes the drudge, or rather, the slave of the family, until the birth of sons bring for her consideration and respect.

The life of a Chinese woman cannot be otherwise than sad. Neglected in infancy because she is a girl, while yet of tender age made to bear heavy burdens such as carrying all day long her little brother on her back, suffering for long weary months the almost intolerable pain of foot-binding which leaves a heretofore robust girl thin and weak, married at fifteen, and often younger, to a man whom she has never seen; going out of a loveless home into one with still less love, and more hardship providing she is so unfortunate as to bear only girls, her lot is sad indeed. The highest and only good to which a Chinese woman can look forward is that she may have sons to respect and honor her.

The question that naturally rises is, "Can anything be done to brighten the lives of these women?" Yes, one thing we may surely do. We can bring or send to them the gospel. One of Miss Fielde's Bible women said to her a few days ago, "Since this religion has come into my heart I have lost seven or eight parts (tenths) of my sorrow," and she had known much.

To the Christian women of Western lands is committed the sacred duty of sending light into the darkened lives of our sisters in this distant East. Would you know how this is being done? Look in an upper room in a small house within our Mission Compound and you will see, any day from nine o'clock until noon, Miss Fielde surrounded by about twenty native women. Five years ago the most of them were ignorant, superstitious women. In their various villages they heard from the lips of the missionary the Words of Life, and received them. By Miss Fielde they were gathered into a class, taught the simple story of the Cross, and then sent out, two and two, to carry the glad news from house to house in hundreds of heathen villages. During the warm months of this summer Miss Fielde has brought them together for further teaching. Then they will again go forth to do their Master's bidding. These women receive, each, two dollars a month. This is barely sufficient to buy their rice and clothing. Even this they receive only when they work in villages other than their own. The money necessary for their support is given by the Christian women of America.

Dear sisters of my native province, you find, I doubt not, ample opportunity for expending all the money you can raise for missionary purposes, in the new mission stations of Cocanada. Yet, something you can also do for China. You can pray God's blessing to rest upon all the efforts that are being put forth for the evangelization of this country with its four hundred millions of inhabitants, of whom but a scanty number have even heard there is a Saviour. This then I earnestly ask of you. SOPHIA A. NORWOOD.

Swatow, China, Aug. 10, 1878.

For the Christian Messenger.

### "Thy Will be Done."

Strange language! How unlike to any of man's natural aspirations. How entirely foreign to any of this world's vernacular. The language is of heavenly origin, and thence breathed back into the ear of God.

It is the pinnacle of prayer's loftiest temple, almost too high to be shadowed in the depths of the human soul. This sentence may be considered as the centre of a complete circle, the key-stone of a perfect arch, the topmost point of the highest summits in the whole range of prayer. It is the very climax of a prayer that comprehends, though in a few, brief, simple sentences, the whole compass of prayer. A prayer so absolutely perfect, that independent of all other evidences, it is sufficient to prove conclusively the Divinity of its author. A prayer given by our Saviour, as the model to his disciples, when they said, "Lord teach us to pray."

The soul that can without any reserve, and from its inmost depths, offer this prayer, can reach no higher attainment. He needs no further lessons. The highest point that can be possibly reached, in this world, or, as far as we can conceive, in the world to come, is to say fully, "Thy will be done." Not even the highest note in the strain of archangel or of seraphim, nor yet the final prayer of the perfected Redeemer, could rise higher than this.

The Apostle Paul's first prayer, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do," was but, the Alpha of the alphabet of prayer of which "Thy will be done," is the Omega. That prayer of his, although arresting as it did the attention of heaven; a prayer at which we may believe angelic harps grew silent, was but the key-note of a sublime life-strain of devotion which finally culminated in the "earnest expectation and hope that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death." Between those two notes, so widely separated in the Apostle's experience, with how many varying chords did his soul throbb; nor was it till long years of discipline had been experienced, that he could thus calmly say, "I am now ready to be offered." Like his Divine Master in the garden, with the cup of infinite bitterness in his hand, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt."

Indeed, it may be questioned whether He in whom the human and the Divine were so mysteriously united, who "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man," who was made perfect through suffering," did not also reach, through the same process of discipline as ourselves, that complete submission, self-surrender, and devotedness to his Father. Or, whether at any previous period in his earthly history, he was prepared to have said, under exactly similar circumstances, and as he did say in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Suffice it for us, that his hour was not yet come, nor was he till then, similarly tested. And so let it be enough for us, that He who "is able to make all grace abound," and has promised, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," will yet enable each and every child of his, to say, out of a full heart, and with all that it involves,—"Thy will be done."

It is said, that when the refiner sees his image in the silver, and the seething mass becomes still in the fiery crucible, he takes it out. And so with us, when from our hearts we have learned to offer truly this prayer, the fires of discipline for us will cease, and lifting us quickly to himself, our "Refiner" will say "it is enough."

W. H. P.

A sea captain of Swansea has been fined five shillings a day for fifty-five days, and costs, for neglecting to serve out lime juice during the voyage between Bombay and Rangoon.

For the Christian Messenger.

CANNING, Sept. 24, 1878.

Dear Bro.—

I herewith forward, by request of the Sabbath School Convention, the Address of Welcome presented by the Pereaux Baptist Sabbath School, through Bro. W. Manning Sandford, the writer, for publication in the *Christian Messenger*.

We were sorry you were not present. We had a very agreeable time, and hope that an advance will be seen all along the line as the result.

Yours truly,  
S. MARCH.

Central Association Sabbath School Convention.

Address of Welcome by W. Manning Sandford, on behalf of Pereaux Baptist S. School.

MR. PRESIDENT, DELEGATES OF THE SABBATH SCHOOL CONVENTION, AND FELLOW-WORKERS, CHRISTIAN FRIENDS:

I have been selected on behalf of the Upper Pereaux Baptist Sabbath School to extend to you a hearty welcome to our community and the hospitality of our home, during your stay among us. We were much gratified when you responded to our invitation, given last year, to hold the Sabbath School Convention in Pereaux. We were glad to be recognized as engaged in the same holy cause with yourselves,—pleased with the opportunity afforded of mutually considering and promoting Sabbath School work.

We hail your advent, dear Brethren, to this Convention with emotions of peculiar joy, and sentiments of unalloyed satisfaction. We welcome you because of the information you can supply, and the inspiration you can impart. Looking at some of the grandest issues of this heaven-born movement we are forced to exclaim, "If you do not meet at the specific bidding of a divine law, you do meet with the clear assurance of Divine sympathy. If there is commandment from heaven requiring you to come together, there is no approbation in heaven that you are here to deliberate upon the glorious work committed to your hands, and endeavour to secure its best results. If this Baptist Sabbath school Convention be not a divine institution, and its meeting with the Sabbath School under the auspices of the 5th Baptist Church of Cornwallis, a divine appointment, it is made by men, by whom the Divine blessing has been earnestly solicited, and to whom that blessing has been promised and guaranteed.

For over 35 years a Sabbath School has been in successful operation in this community, and although many of the early supporters are now gone to their eternal reward, the movement they inaugurated in this locality has continued to exist with unabated vigor up to the present moment; although comparatively unnoticed we have not been unmindful of our duty and have sought with interest the valued aid of other minds to give impetus to the noble work to which we have set our hands and strength of will to maintain and carry out the suggestions and improvements which this progressive age demands. Possessed with these feelings of fraternal regard for Sunday School workers and coadjutors, we heartily repeat *You are Welcome*. We welcome you as a body of Christian workers animated by a holy and lofty enthusiasm, possessing the spirit of Christ, which is essentially the spirit of work. To be a Christian is to be a worker, for strange and anomalous would be the position of a church without this agency, the material for its future church lie in its Sabbath School its best building material are drawn therefrom, therefore the Sunday School ought to be the pride of the church as these are committed to its fostering care and influence. Some of the dearest interests of our homes and hearts; and to you Christian workers is committed a sacred truth,—a responsibility of deepest import; as to the manner in which you deal with this work,—influence