

Family Reading.

Beyond.

Never a word is said
But it trembles in the air,
And the truant voice has sped
To vibrate everywhere;

"Pagoda Shadows."

This is the title Miss Fielde has chosen for her book just published on China. Joseph Cook gives these "Shadows" an introduction, which, as well as the interesting narratives, will be read with interest.

When leaving China for Australia, on a tour of the world, there were placed in my hands several pamphlets, containing autobiographies of Chinese women. The narratives were translated with great literalness, from verbal statements made to Miss Fielde, the authoress of the present volume, by women to whom she had been permitted to bring the light of Christian history and faith.

I have great delight in commending Miss Fielde's work to the public; for I hope that a near view of China, such as she gives, may affect others as it did me. I had read much of Chinese history and statistics; I had examined the best sources of information as to the Chinese religions and social life, I had studied such translations of the Chinese classics as had come in my way; but I found that the simple, vivid autobiographies, written out by Miss Fielde from the actual dictation of Chinese women, brought me nearer to a clear view of Chinese wants than any thing else I had used as a guide.

If a traveller wishes to understand a strange people, let him write out a score or more of authentic narratives of their typical daily lives, in minute detail. I wrote to Miss Fielde from Australia, begging her to prepare and authenticate a hundred specimen autobiographic narratives of Chinese lives, and thus interest the world in China by a near and clear view of it.

In "Pagoda Shadows," Miss Fielde has given a near and vivid view of

woman's life in China. Her methods of religious labor have included many original and most successful measures for enlisting Chinese women in effort for the amelioration of the condition of their own sex. Women in China have only of late been taught to labor religiously for the spread of Christianity. Miss Fielde is a pioneer in enlisting this new kind of laborers. She has instructed Chinese women in the Bible, and sent them from house to house as missionaries. Their success has been most remarkable. They have access to circles which only they can at present reach. They quicken the hope that woman's work for woman in Asia may, in due time, be very largely performed by native women themselves.

Women in China have sorrows and disabilities, which Miss Fielde sets forth with pathetic justness of statement; but they are, in some respects, better fitted to assist in religious reform than their sisters of India and Western Asia. They are not oppressed by caste; they are, in general, not degraded by the harem. In all Asia, no women, except the Japanese, are treated with more respect in their homes than the Chinese.

It is the high duty of the women of China and Japan to lock hands with those of America and Europe, in labor for the social and religious regeneration of Asia. Miss Fielde, in this volume, endeavors to place the hand of woman in the East in the hand of woman in the West. God grant to her, and all others who labor for this holy end, success such as the high merit of their aim deserves. And may Orient and Occident, clasping hands around the globe, draw it so closely into God's bosom as to make the sound of his pulses the marching-song of all the ages!

Boston, June 24, 1884.

THE STATUS OF WOMAN.

Life, in China, is a stern thing for both men and women; but, as in all places where Christ is not, the heaviest burdens are put upon the weakest. The Chinese woman does not walk in the street with her husband; she does not eat with him, but takes what is left after the men of the family have finished their meal; she has no legal right to anything whatever, apart from her male relatives. Yet her condition is, in some respects, better than that of her sisters in neighboring countries. She is not a sufferer through any system of caste, as in India; she is not shut up in a harem, as in Turkey; she is not denied the possession of a soul and the religious privileges of men, as in Burma; she is not degraded by polyandry, as in Tibet; she is not in a climate which keeps her bare and lazy, like the woman of Siam. Her virtue is as carefully guarded and as highly esteemed as in any country in the world. Female children and elderly women associate with persons of the same age and of the other sex, on terms of apparent equality. Girls, though not kept in such seclusion as in India, do not go out alone, nor appear before male visitors. The customs concerning young ladies are French rather than American. The amount of freedom that may be wise in social intercourse between the sexes must depend on the degree of purity in each. The Chinese do the best they can under their circumstances, and give woman all the social freedom that is discreet for her in a land where the cleansing and controlling power of Christian principle is unknown.

In a country where extortion is the chief use of office, and fear of it the main spur to obedience, neither women nor men claim political rights. But there is no law preventing women from following any occupation in which they may be skilled.

The attainments of women in literature are much lauded and respected. Practically, such attainments are uncommon; but historians refer with pride to the scholarship of a few, and novelists are fond of representing their

heroines as skilled in writing both poetry and prose. Knowing writers about China tell us eloquently and truly of its system for the examination and promotion of scholars, and lead one to infer that education is nearly universal. In almost every village there is a private school in which a few boys are taught to read; but the proportion of those taught is very small, and native girls' schools are almost unknown. Of the men, not more than one in a hundred can read; and of women, I have seen few outside the Christian mission-schools who could read, except those despised little girls who act in theatres. In the whole empire, probably not more than one woman in a thousand knows how to read.

For acts of heroism or for exalted virtue a woman may, like men, have an honorary portal erected for her with the emperor's sanction. She may even aspire to deification, since many of the richest and most popular temples are those of the Queen of Heaven, the Protector of Sailors, and of other goddesses who were once earthly women.

In one thing the Chinese woman is exceptionally blessed. She has inherited from former generations a style of dress at once modest, economical, healthful, and becoming. It covers the whole person, and unlike many Western costumes, which make more noticeable what they profess to conceal, it shields the contour of the body from observation. It takes but eight yards of yard-wide cloth for a complete suit of winter garments; and there is no waste in cutting nor in unnecessary appendages. Its true economy, however, is in that saving of mental worry which comes from always cutting by the same pattern, and the obviation of all need of fitting. It allows unrestricted play to every muscle, is of the same thickness over the whole body, is not in the way when at work, and it has little weight while it has all needful warmth.

Children are sometimes betrothed in infancy, but as betrothal is as binding as marriage, the Chinese have learned wisdom, and usually defer it until a year or two before the marriage, which takes place when the girl is about fifteen.

The proposals of betrothal are made by the parents of the young man, through a matrimonial agent or go-between whose business it is to know the history and expectations of the marriageable people of the neighborhood. Sometimes the selection of the bride is left wholly to the go-between, and sometimes she simply carries messages between the parents who have formed their plans previously. The betrothal is often made without either of the persons concerned being aware of what is being done in their behalf, and the bride is brought to her husband's home without ever having seen him or any member of his family. Having arrived there, she is at once incorporated in her father-in-law's household, and thenceforth has little association with her own kin. Her happiness depends more on the character of her mother-in-law than on that of her husband, for by her husband's mother and grandmother she is wholly ruled. She is domestic servant for the whole household and especial waiting-maid to her mother-in-law. Sometimes very strong attachments are formed between these women. I have seen a woman weep at being separated for a time from her mother-in-law, and express no pleasure when her husband was coming to see her. On the other hand, there is often tyranny on the part of the elder woman and dislike on that of the younger one.

A husband may beat his wife to death, and go unpunished; but a wife who strikes her husband a single blow may be divorced, and beaten a hundred blows with the heavy bamboo.

So greatly does the welfare of the wife depend on her having sons, that it is not strange that they are her greatest desire, and her chief pride. For them she will sacrifice all else. Her daughters leave her and become legally and truly an integral part of another family for ever. For domestic service, care in sickness, help in old age, and offerings for the sustenance of her spirit after death, she must rely on her son's wife, while her own daughter performs these services for some one else. The prosperity of a Chinese household is in proportion to the number of its sons.

One source of great unhappiness to Chinese women is the law which forbids the breaking of betrothal contracts, even though these be made in the infancy of the parties involved. At one of the chapels somewhat remote from Swatow, a beautiful girl nineteen years old fled from her home to me and begged me to adopt her as my daughter. She said she would serve me as a slave if I would but steal her and carry her away concealed in my boat. She had been betrothed in childhood to a boy who had since developed a loathsome and incurable disease; and though she had not seen him, she knew how horrible he was, and would die rather than marry him. Her parents were not willing to carry out the contract they had made many years previously, and the boy's parents would not release them from the bargain. Her mother urged her to kill herself, as the only solution of the question. I sent agents to negotiate with the boy's parents, but could make no terms with them; and I also sought the officials and learned that they would not condone the withholding of a bride from even such a bridegroom. There was no legal way in which this child could be saved from her fate. Some weeks later she was taken to the house of her husband's parents, and soon after I heard of her death. Whether she died of grief or by suicide, I do not know. Suicide is not uncommon among brides, nor among older women. Some years ago, seven young women, at a village near Swatow, entered into a compact to drown themselves together. Three of them had been lately married, and after spending the customary four months at the houses of their father-in-law, had come to visit their own mothers. They had been playmates, and were neighbors, and so they spun and sewed together, and rejoiced in their reunion. Mutual confidences revealed mutual griefs. One was married to an opium-smoker, a yellow bundle of bones, vibrating between besotted sleep and sottish waking. One was wedded to a gambler, who spent his days and nights wasting the family substance. One had a mother-in-law so stern and cruel that life was torment to those under her authority. All three of the brides were miserable, and as they mingled their lamentations, their four unmarried friends and companions said to each other, "This is such sorrow as we must feel by and by. How much better to be dead!" All agreed in this, and entered secretly into a covenant to end their lives together.

They calculated the time when custom would again bring the married ones to their mothers' houses, and fixed the full moon of the seventh month as the night for their escape from life. When the time arrived, six of them dressed themselves in festal garments, with flowers in their hair, went hand in hand in the moonlight to the shore, bound themselves together with a rope, and threw themselves into the sea. The seventh, only thirteen years old, was discovered through some noise she made in searching for her best clothing in the night, and was prevented by her mother from leaving the house. From her the fate of the other six was afterward ascertained, and their bodies were recovered and buried in one grave. These are cases of extreme though not uncommon unhappiness, under the Chinese marriage-system.

An interesting discovery has just been made in the parish church of Stourmouth, near Wingham, Kent, in a hive of bees being found in the roof of the chancel, a somewhat romantic history being attached to them. The existence of the hive was known to the church officials, but no idea seems to have been formed as to its actual extent. The living has been held for many years by Mr. Drake. Some time ago it came to his knowledge that a swarm of bees had settled in the roof of the chancel, but he would never allow their retreat to be disturbed. A few months ago however, the vicar died, and the church has now been undergoing general repairs, and the bees, no longer destined to remain in possession of their quarters, were destroyed by fumigation. On the honey being taken there was found to be nearly two hundredweight of it, and the bees filled two moderately large barrels. It is stated that during hot weather the honey used to drop down into the church.

What I saw in Zenanas.

BY MISS RAUSCHENBURGH.

The other day, Mrs. Jewett took me to a number of her zenanas. In the first one which we visited there was mourning. The mother had died lately; and the oldest daughter, a girl of about thirteen years, received us. Such a sad face; Her little sister, a child who seemed too heavy for her to lift, clung to her; and she took it on her hip in native style, and petted it tenderly. She told about her mother's death. Mrs. Jewett had seen her only a few times; but, from what the girl said, she hoped the mother died in Christ, though her faith may have been very weak.

In another zenana, we saw what I supposed to be a nice young girl; but she proved to be the mother of a little child which was then in its grandmother's arms. Here were baby, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. The husband of the latter, the head of the house, was at home; and I was astonished at his politeness. As Mrs. Jewett was showing them a picture of the Pharisee and publican, he asked, "Who is that gentleman?" meaning the Pharisee in his long robes. "He is fat." That means rich with the natives. He was very proud of his grand-daughters' accomplishments, and asked her to show us the fancy-work, she had done. I found all of the zenana pupils were doing gay pieces of fancy-work. They were very fond of bright colors; and, if they can learn how to work with pretty wools, they are willing to listen to religious teaching. In many cases, this is the only way in which our missionaries can gain access to the zenanas.

People in that street seemed to know Mrs. Jewett. One young woman stood in the door to make sure that we would not pass her by. I asked her in Telugu whether she loved Jesus, and before all who stood around her she boldly and heartily said, "Yes."

Then, we went to Thyarammah, who had had such a history. Our missionaries were at first permitted to teach her as much as they wished; but, when she became filled with Christianity and talked about it constantly, her people became alarmed, and told the missionaries they must not come any more. Some time after, Mrs. Jewett lost her daughter, Mrs. Nichols, and Thyarammah's little sister died; and one day, as Mrs. Jewett was riding past, she suddenly determined to go in and see the family. The bereaved mothers met, and each sympathized with the other in her loss. The heathen mother's heart was softened, and she asked Mrs. Jewett to come as often as she wished. Thyarammah is married, and her husband seems to be kind to her. She looks very bright, and laughed almost constantly, she was so glad to see us. She examined the buttons of my dress, and looked at my hand to see whether I had the marriage-ring.

I found all those zenanas, as I had heard them described, to consist of a large court in the centre with very small rooms opening from each side. Quite a number of women belong to one household, and these little apartments are divided among them. When the missionary enters, the women gather about her, though at first some of them stay in their little rooms through fear. I saw one girl tremble and draw back, because this was the first time in her life she had seen a white face.

High-caste women only are secluded in zenanas: those of the lower classes are permitted to go about as they please. The zenana women in Calcutta are kept very strictly. Those in Madras have more liberty, although they are secluded and closely watched.

Some of the women were dressed very richly in native costumes, which is very graceful as well as becoming; and all wore a profusion of jewels. I was surprised to see the air of nobility about some of them. The girls met us in a very lady-like manner, some making the native salaam, others holding out their hand to greet us. There was one little Brahmin girl, very proficient in her lessons, who ruled the servants like a little queen. Presently, the mother came out; and the little girl was commanded in the same style, and this time she had to obey. The mother was an example of Brahmin pride, with her haughty look and manner. The beauty of her face was only marred by a proud curve of the mouth. She offered us a plate of fruit and some deliciously dried cocoanut, which we thankfully accepted.

In most of the zenanas which we visited there was no furniture. The natives do not use chairs, but sit on mats instead. Everywhere, they had a chair or two for the missionary's use, when she comes. Some of the very rich natives live in the European houses, furnished in European style; but I doubt whether the women use the sofas

at all. In two places there was a piano. I tried one, just to hear how a piano would sound in India. The girls cannot play, but they like to have the instrument in the house.

When we came home from our round of visits, we told some of the missionaries what we had seen. They thought we ladies were greatly privileged that we could do such interesting work, from which they are entirely secluded. The reflection that we alone can bring to these secluded heathen sisters of ours the glad tidings adds a charm to this work in the zenanas. They have no opportunity whatever of hearing missionaries or native preachers. Yet one cannot help feeling, in watching these women and girls, that they have minds thirsting for knowledge and truth. Whatever these women believe, they are sure to impart to the household. They are the ones who principally uphold heathen worship and customs; and they would be just as loyal and true to Christianity, were they taught, to love its teachings. The cause of Christ is progressing here. One zenana after another is entered by the missionary ladies. The husbands and fathers cannot help feeling that a new light shines in their homes, and may God grant that they also may learn to love its radiance. — Helping Hand.

Fretting.

This morning I got up cross as a bear. I felt as rough and tingly as a cheesnut burr. I was all out of sorts, and it seemed to me it would be a pleasure to snap up anybody who spoke to me as short as I could.

Most likely I would have done so and set the whole household by the ears for the rest of the day, but that I have had such moods before, and learned by experience the best way to manage them. "Now," thought I, "my best plan is not to influence the whole family, but to remain neutral, and let them influence me." Accordingly, I tried to control myself a little, and await events.

Well, the two elder children got up merry and as happy as crickets; papa was in a pretty good humor; and the baby sat in her high chair and displayed all her little airs and graces, and her newest funny little capers, and we must all look and admire; and so by the time breakfast was over, I was laughing and smiling as cheerfully as the rest, and I passed a comfortable day after all.

And as I was thinking of this at evening, I thought how easily a little fretting might have upset the whole family and spoiled the day.

Now, fretting is useless and unnecessary; it does no good and a great deal of harm; yet it is almost a universal sin. More or less we are all given to it. We fret over almost anything: in summer because it is too hot, and in winter because it is too cold; we fret when it rains, because it is wet; and when it does not rain because it is dry; when we are sick, or when anybody else is sick. In short, if anything or everything does not go just right to suit our particular whims and fancies, we have one grand refuge—to fret over it.

I am afraid fretting is much more common among women than among men. We may as well own the truth, my fair sisters, if it isn't altogether pleasant. Perhaps it is because the little worries, cares and vexations of our daily life harass our sensitive nerves more than the extended enterprises which take the attention of men. Great wants develop great resources, but little wants and worries are hardly provided for, and like the nail which strikes the saw, they make not much of a mark, but they turn the edges terribly. I think if we looked upon all the little worries of one day as a great united worry, self-control to meet it would be developed. But as they generally come, only one or two little things at a time, they seem so very little that we give way, and the breach once made in the wall soon grows larger.

I know many a mother has turned her son against her own sex, and made him dislike the society of women, by her example constantly set before him. I know that many a mother has brought up and developed a daughter just like herself, who, in her turn would wreck and ruin the comfort of another family circle. And knowing this, I know that we ought to set our faces like a flint against this useless, selfish, peace-destroying and home-disturbing habit of fretting.

A certain poetess is said to "make good jellies as well as good poetry." It is suggested that she send her jellies to newspaper offices and can her poems.

If we would have powerful minds we must think; if we would have faithful hearts we must love; if we would have strong muscles we must labor. These include all that is valuable in life.