

# The Chinese in America

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**I**N the early years of our Chinese immigration, California was not only the port of entry, but the point of destination.

Here they came, and here they remained, crowding together, living much the same life they had lived in China, eating the same kind of food, and wearing the same kind of clothing.

Walking the streets of Chinatown, one saw as truly an Oriental city as if he were walking the streets of Canton, China. There were the stately priests with gorgeous flowing robes, the rotund smiling merchants with garments perhaps a little more modest in color, but with plaited queues, eager to show the beautifully embroidered garments, the exquisite carvings in ivory, the hideous yet wonderfully carved idols and dragons, and the many other strange things displayed in those fascinating shop windows.

There were little women with bound feet, gorgeously arrayed, with painted lips and hair richly decorated, hobbling along attended by women slaves. There were dainty little maidens in the gayest of colors, flitting along beside the more somber trousers and tunics of the mothers.

There were the street peddlers with their loads of fruit and vegetables and fish carried in large baskets swung from a bamboo pole and balanced on the shoulder. There were then, and there are now, temples and joss houses where monstrous idols are enthroned, where incense never ceases to burn, and solemn rites are performed.

In the homes are set up many idols and ancestral tablets and pictures, before which incense continually burns. Some of these gods are very practical. The "kitchen god," for instance, watches over the family life and proves to be a means of restraint to the children at least, for only obedience and good behavior is rewarded by promises of plenteous food from the "kitchen god."

The "earth god" is placed at the entrance door to keep away sickness and harm. These and many other kindred superstitions proclaim San Francisco to be the citadel of heathendom in Christian America.

Many changes have come to Chinatown in recent years. The most noticeable perhaps are in the street scenes. One no longer sees the swinging queue and the flowing robes. Chinese men wear the latest cut in American clothes, with hair trimmed to the proper lines, topped with the prevailing fashion in hats.

The strong sentiment in regard to the change in wearing apparel brought about an amusing incident recently. Commissioner Hwang came from China with thirty-two artisans to construct the Chinese Palace on the exposition grounds.

Soon after the work was begun he was waited upon by "Young China," who said, "Make

your workmen take off those absurd purple and pink pantaloons and blouses and sandals. Be more progressive. You are in America now. We of the more advanced China do not like those costumes. American clothes for us and American clothes for your workmen. We suggest that you buy them overalls." Commissioner Hwang said later, "The matter is settled; my men have overalls."

This is but one of many changes that indicate new ways, new thoughts, and new purposes brought about by contact with Western life and education. The Chinese have become migratory. There is scarcely a city in the United States of any considerable size that has not some Chinese shops and a greater number of Chinese laundries.

Chinese students are enrolled in almost all the colleges, including West Point and Annapolis.

All are set toward the serious purpose of getting the best America can give in education and training for use in the new Republic.

San Francisco is the center of Chinese social, commercial, and political life. A number of secret societies and organizations, notably the "Six Companies," dominate its entire life. The political situation is rather acute. Officially they are supposed to be loyal to the present régime in China under Yuan Shi Kai. Really they feel it to be no better than the monarchy under the Manchus and are still hoping for a real republican form of government.

They are therefore ardent revolutionists, giving their sympathy and money to the movement on foot under Dr. Sun Yat Sen.

With all these changes and the spirit of

unrest, San Francisco still remains the great center of Chinese family life and influence. This makes it the strategic point for organized Christian effort among them. It is of international importance and will have a decided influence on the evangelization of the Orient.

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