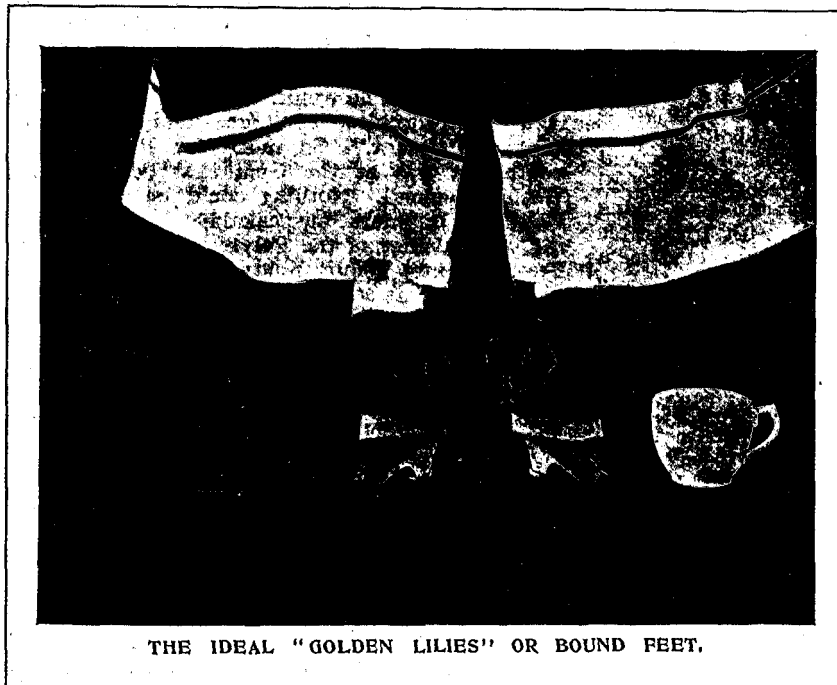


## OUTSIDE THE GATES.

### THE HORRORS OF FOOTBINDING IN CHINA.

J. Macgowan writing in "How England Saved China," the story of changes brought about by European influences during the last fifty years, gives the following interesting account of the horrors and origin of footbinding in China. By the kindness of Messrs. Fisher Unwin, we are able to reproduce from *M.A.B.* the accompanying illustration of the resulting deformity.

When I reached China, over fifty years ago, I found that a custom, more cruel and more relentless than any that had ever afflicted woman-kind in any country or in any age of the world,



THE IDEAL "GOLDEN LILIES" OR BOUND FEET.

was in full force throughout the length and breadth of this great Empire, and that custom was footbinding.

This terrible product of far-off centuries had struck its roots so deeply into the national life, and was so interwoven into its very warp and woof, that to an onlooker it seemed that there was no power that could ever be brought to bear upon it that could tear it out of the heart of the nation.

It was not simply in one particular district or province that it was practised. In the great plains and valleys, alongside the march of great rivers, in the crowded towns and cities, from Canton in the south up to the Great Wall in the far north, and from the Yellow River on the east away to the extreme limits of the Empire in the west, the women everywhere were under the grip of this intolerable tyranny.

The two chief exceptions were the slave-women and the boat-women, but outside of these it was to be found as prevalent in the homes of the poorest as it was in those of the wealthiest and most aristocratic in the land.

The origin of this custom is hidden in the mystery of the past ages. The one tradition that seems more probable than any other declares that it arose at the close of the Ts'i dynasty (A.D. 497-501), and we are inclined to accept it as the most reliable one.

The Emperor who was reigning at that time was Lung Hwen-hau, and one of his concubines, with whom he was deeply in love, was Pan-fei, one of the celebrated beauties of China, whose fame has travelled down the centuries to the

present time. Unfortunately, the feet of this lady were deformed, and in order to disguise her infirmity with deft and cunning fingers she had bound them with silken bands with such exquisite art that only the keenest eye could have seen that there was aught amiss with them.

Her ladies-in-waiting, feeling profound sympathy for her, and wishing to divert attention from her, began to bind their own into the semblance of those of the royal beauty. Before long the daughters of the nobles that were in attendance on the Emperor in the capital, anxious to gain the favour of Pan-fei, took to binding their feet also after the fashion of the ladies in the

palace; and so the custom spread, until every one that desired to be classed amongst the élite in the fashionable world adopted the example that had been set by the royal concubine.

The tragedy of footbinding usually began when the girl was about seven years of age, and never in all the years of her life would it entirely disappear out of it; for from the day when the bandages were first wound around her feet the binding had to be continued as long as she lived.

The first step in this ghastly process was the gentle compression of all the toes, excepting the large one, by long cotton bandages that were deftly wound over and about them, so that there was no escape from the imprisonment in which they were held. The pressure was like that of a tightly-fitting shoe, which after a time becomes intolerably painful.

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