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Compliments of

HOUSEHOLD
INDUSTRIES
IN SOOCHOW



By ELIZABETH A. LOVE.

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Since nearly all the industries of Soochow are at the homespun stage, it has been difficult to decide which ones to consider in this paper. In order that some reasonable limit be set, the paper is chiefly concerned with the work of women, girls and boys in the homes, or in home factories or shops. Some attention has been given, however, to the beginning of the ^{finger} modern factory system; because conditions prevailing in them so vitally concern the Chinese women and children now employed in these factories, that there is a growing conviction in the minds of many of the foreign missionaries of China that they and the Chinese Christians, have a moral responsibility to investigate and meet, with all the strength of Christian helpfulness, a labour problem which threatens to enslave here, just as it has elsewhere, the poorer members of society.

Because the same problem is being met and solved elsewhere, it is believed by facing it boldly, by investigating and meeting its difficulties at its beginning, this problem can be solved all the quicker here. Now as never before

has the world begun to realize that chains, binding laborers in far distant corners of the earth, have links leading to every other man's door.

The study of household industries in Soochow is a most fascinating one. Where, but in the walled cities of the changing Orient, can one find the pageant of the industries of nearly all times, of nearly all ages? The cave man is not here, but his brothers of the mud and straw huts are, while his nomadic, aquatic friends of the boats drift in and out through the towering water-gates, and their more stable descendants herd buffalo or till nearby fields.

Arts of the Bronze Age and other primitive industries flourish side by side with modern machinery, and are brought into the same fierce competition that has both fed and bled men of other lands. Pagodas to the deities of the ancient literati are falling into bat-infested ruins, while towering smoke stacks belch forth wreathing black clouds, a sweet savor, to modern Molochs of wealth. When dim-eyed priests toll out early morning masses, shrill shrieks

from these newer shrines call pale creatures to come sacrifice the strength and light of their lives to enrich another's coffers.

The Kitchen god gazes placidly out from his well sheltered niche. Behind his peaceful, flat face is the satisfaction that lies in knowing his domain will be the last invaded. Of late, however, he too, has some uneasy jolts, for the chair in which he makes his annual ascension, has begun to take on a more modern aspect. In Shanghai this year, he went off in a paper Ford. Doubtless in a few more years, he will be taking his fiery flight in an aeroplane, and then perhaps, he will select from this strange, moving pageant of age-old industries, and carry off into mystic realms, ancient arts and ancient fashions, along with his own special knowledge of the preparation of toothsome dainties from all that is savory in forest, field and sea.

In Soochow homes, where this Kitchen god still presides, there is no regular schedule of daily duties. Should there be a woman of forceful character at the head of the household, she binds together unruly elements, by appointing certain of the daughters and daughters-in-law to work at special tasks for ten days. By thus assigning turns, she varies for them the monotony of a shut-in life and brings some order out of chaos. Two are appointed to cook together, or to draw the water from the well, or to clean house, or to do some tasks as partners.

Early in the morning these younger women must rise, quietly slip from

their bedrooms, light the bean-oil lamp and the straw fire, prepare the rice and boil the water. When all is ready, meals are served, to men, first. Women must eat at separate tables, and sometimes in separate rooms. Then dishes must be washed; if greasy, with a lye solution; and tables and chairs must be dusted. If, by this time, the children have awakened, their faces must be washed, and their rice-bowls served. After these tasks have been completed, the women clean the bed-room. The quilts and pillows must be neatly rolled or folded on the beds; and then they have time to comb their own hair.

Other hours of the day must be given, in these middle-class homes, to sewing, embroidery, or piece work from shops, to help out the family income; while of course, at other hours more must be prepared.

In homes of the wealthy, the tasks mentioned are given to servants, while each child must have a maid. Unless there is a trained amah an outside hair-dresser is employed to come to the house every morning. For her work she receives \$1.20 a month per head. It takes her nearly an hour to comb and arrange the hair in a stylish way. *Bah moh* lotion must be put on neatly with a brush. If touches of silver show in the lady's hair, they must be carefully obliterated with rubbings from black paper soaked in water, or with strong applications of Chinese ink. Not one hair on the lady's head must be allowed to stray out of place. Once a year on the seventh day of seventh month, if the lady wishes

her hair to be luxuriant, she must have a shampoo prepared from the green leaves of the *kyung zz*. These leaves are softened and mashed in lukewarm water until sticky and foamy; the strained juice is then used for the shampoo.

Bath water for the home may be prepared by the servants, or bought from the shop. Two or three coppers' worth will buy a reasonable bath, and it is not necessary to have one every day in the year.

In wealthy homes some handwork is usually taught to the girls. In ancient times, before girls went to school, it was the custom for all Soochow women to learn embroidery.

In middle-class homes, thrifty mothers and grand-mothers begin to teach little girls as soon as their tiny fingers can hold materials together. The first task may be twisting strings, or just helping older persons hold their own work. Children usually begin to sew on a handkerchief or a Chinese stocking. The top of a cotton shoe, the trousers, upper garments, and simple embroidery, follow closely in order. Most of the girls can make shoes when they are ten, and a whole outfit of clothing before they are fourteen. Of course, padded garments and the finer kinds of clothing are more difficult to make, and usually come last in the home course of instruction.

School girls report that boys do very few tasks in the home. Perhaps these girls are exaggerating the case; but boys are usually given some schooling until ten years of age, unless the family is very poor. If possible, they are kept in school

later; if not, they may be apprenticed when nine or ten years of age; that, however, is another story in the industrial life of Soochow, and will doubtless furnish interesting details to an investigator.

Girls usually begin to help with the cooking by the time they are twelve years old. Later they take the heavy responsibilities of that occupation.

An investigation of Chinese cookery brings the realization that this art is at a parallel stage of development to that done by Westerners two or three centuries ago. For this kind of work, the European, who landed on the various Plymouth Rocks along the coast of America, had no better array of culinary utensils than the Soochow housewife of to-day. Grant that in some of their great chests, American pioneers brought with them, pewter dishes, a few spoons, and perhaps fewer cherished knives, iron ovens and spits, brass and copper kettles. Yet dare any of their descendants point with scorn at chopsticks, after prying into the history of individual forks? Should not every one who has the blood of over mountain settlers, who carried their whole household outfit on pack ponies, hold in respect people whose cooking utensils consist of more than a knife and a frying pan?

Chinese cooking utensils are few. Wooden basins, heavy earthenware, iron or copper pots set into the brick stove, a brass or copper kettle, porcelain bowls, chopsticks, a basket to wash the rice, a few bamboo brushes, and a clumsy brick stove

whose one purpose seems to be the pouring of as much smoke as possible into the room--these are considered a rich array, if crowned with a vegetable lamp and a presiding God of Kitchens.

Before the invention of tin cans and glass jars, before the days of Count Rumford, Louis Pasteur, Maria Parloa, and Mrs. Ellen Richards, kegs of sour kraut, jars of salted vegetables, sacks of dried fruit, bunches of herbs, and tubs of salt fish and pork were the main-stays in varying the bill of fare during the long winter seasons in Europe and America. Baking, boiling, brewing, preserving, salting, and drying or smoking, were the methods used for preparing and preserving foods. With perhaps the exception baking and smoking all these methods are in use in Chinese households to-day.

Easy rocking-chairs and the "Ladies Home Journal" do not tempt weary Chinese women to neglect drying vegetables and herbs, making *tsiang* cheese, and preserving needed foods or medicines for her household. The Chinese woman fits beautifully into the picture painted by a wise man long ago. Her husband is known in the tea-shops, when he sitteth among the elders of the land; for she looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the rice of idleness.

It is the general custom of Soochow mothers to teach their daughters and daughters-in-law these many methods of caring for and preparing foods. Recipes have been carefully handed down from ancestral mothers

or mothers-in-law. While Chinese men have demonstrated the strength of the Chinese memory in the examination halls, the women with less noised about, but just as great ability, have carried stored up in their hearts, complicated culinary processes that were handed down through the ages.

The process of making *tsiang* is one of these. *Tsiang* is usually prepared in every home. There are slight variations in the methods. This recipe has been compiled from the methods used in four households. *Tsiang* should be prepared in warm weather. Large green beans are softened in water overnight. The next morning, the skins are carefully rubbed off. The beans are then cooked until they completely disappear into paste. This paste is cooled and kneaded with wheat flour to form a dough. The dough is cut in small pieces and placed to steam in a bamboo frame above boiling water. After the cakes are sufficiently steamed, they are cooled and kept in a large covered basket several days until a proper coat of mold has formed. The mold should be yellow or gray; if it is black, the product will be bad in flavour. These moldy cakes are then dried in the sun six or seven days, to arrest the growth of the mold. When dried, they may be stored for some time in cold weather, but if the weather is hot, the *tsiang* should be made at once. The cakes are weighed, and to sixteen ounces of cakes about four ounces of salt are added, dissolved in enough water to cover the cakes, which have been previously packed in earthenware jars. These may be

set in the sunniest part of the courtyard; but most women think the *Tsiang* ripens better on the tiled roof. Every morning for two or three weeks the mixture must be carefully stirred with chopsticks before the sun rises. If stirred too late in the day by a lazy housewife, the *tsiang* will have a bad flavour, because this neglect will cause the fermentation to proceed too rapidly. When the mixture becomes a thick red paste, it is ready for use. If boiled and bottled, this sauce will keep for months. If mixed with water it is called *tsiang yoen*. *Tsiang* is used both as a condiment and as a preservative.

In preserving hams, it is used after the ham has been salted down for about a month. The *tsiang* is smeared thickly over the ham, which is then sunned until it becomes shiny and oily on the surface. After this the meat is hung under the eaves in a windy place for a month or so. Ducks, geese and chickens may be prepared in a similar way.

The recipe for salted duck's eggs reveals some more preservatives used by Chinese. Nearly all Chinese families prepare these before New Years. It is not considered worth while to prepare less than one hundred; three to five hundred is the usual number. For each hundred, sixteen ounces of salt, 100 cash worth of *kau liang* (wine made from *kau liang*) and the ashes from straw are mixed together to form a thick paste. A little water may be added if the wine is not sufficient to moisten the ashes. Each egg is rolled in this paste, and then placed in a large jar, as the eggs form a

layer, paste is poured in to fill the air spaces between the eggs until the jar is full. The lid is pasted over with strong paper, and after one month the eggs are ready for use. If properly preserved, the yolk of the egg will be hard and yellow. These eggs are served cut in four pieces, to accompany the breakfast rice. In the preparation of these eggs, three preservatives, salt, ashes and wine are used.

Curds and cheese prepared from beans are also popular dishes in Soochow. The fresh curds are prepared by families living in the shops where it is sold. The process is too tedious and inconvenient to be undertaken in every home. Soaked beans are skinned and then ground between large stones by donkey power. The bean meal produced is mixed with water and strained through a coarse sieve. The residue is fed to pigs. When the strained portion is cooked, scum rises to the top and thickens; this is removed several times, each piece being dried on a straw. These pieces are cooked around meat balls. The residue in the kettle may be eaten in soups without further preparation; but usually the protein is precipitated out by means of the addition of salt or gypsum. If the water is not pressed out of this, it is sold under the name of *su deur voo*. Usually it is pressed in cloth-lined frames to form *keur deur voo*, or bean curd. This is bought and used in many dishes by the housewife.

From this bean curd bean cheese is prepared during the fifth month, or in *Waung mai tien*. Fresh pieces

of curd are laid on straw spread out on wide basket trays, and left for seven days to mold; when properly molded, each piece is salted, and all are laid in a big jar. After two or three days enough rice wine and *kau liang* are poured into the jar to cover the pieces. Then the jar is sealed with strong paper, pasted on with thick flour paste. This cheese will keep a year or more; but is ripe enough for use in about a month. One very small piece is eaten with the tasteless breakfast porridge.

Another method used to prevent foods from spoiling is interesting. Fruit cooked with sugar is poured into small jars. These are then set into a large covered jar containing lumps of lime.

These recipes are given as proofs that through experiment Chinese women have learned the use of salt, sugar, alcohol, ashes, and lime as preservatives; and the processes of sun-drying, cooking and sealing from the air, as means of lengthening the time that foods will keep. The fact that they use such enemies as mold and fermentation as allies towards producing flavors, and know how to stop their work when the stage is not too far advanced to be palatable, also indicates their intelligence. The precipitation of protein from the bean in making bean-curd, might also interest any chemist.

A quick review of some more of the materials from which the Soochow cook chooses the ingredients for the score of dishes served at feasts may help show still further that cooking is a real art in Chinese homes.

Lard is prepared in a way that resembles the process used in America; but housewives prepare smaller quantities here and cook the fat a shorter time.

The sesamum oil, hawked about the streets by men carrying it in small buckets, and beating little brass gongs to attract trade, is made of two kinds of sesamum, black and white. The best is prepared from white seeds, and is said to have five flavors. The seed are heated in a large iron pot. While still hot, they are ground between two stones. Then the oil is pressed out in a large jar. The thicker portion settling down resembles peanut butter. The oil is used on cooked vegetables as Westerners use olive oil. The sesamum seed are also used in many kinds of candy.

Vegetable oil (rape seed) is used in food, for lights, and for machines. Much of this oil is produced around Soochow, and sold in other parts of China.

Roses, wild daisies, honey-suckle, orange, sweet olive, and magnolia flowers are used in tea and as flavorings. Rose candy and cakes are especially like. The magnolia appears in the New Years' beverages, while honey-suckle tea is a summer drink. Sage tea is especially recommended as an accompaniment to a crab feast.

Cinnamon, cloves, ginger, nutmeg, thyme, mint, salt, mixed spice, mustard and pepper are also used. Ginger and cinnamon are "good for drive away the coldness." Too much mustard is considered bad for the

eyes. Wine is flavored with orange-peel and laurel.

Several other kinds of flavoring for which the English equivalent could not be found have been reported.

Housewives also know many ways of preparing home remedies from plant and other sources.

Many of the foods used in Soochow kitchens are produced locally; but a long list might be given, of dainties from Southern Seas, Western Hills, and far-off lands, such as sea blubber, shark fins, sea slugs and sea weeds, bird's nests, dates, nuts, and fungi. Many of these do not appear on the daily bill of fare, but they usually grace wedding and birthday feasts or the three feasts for the spirits of man, or the three greater feasts for the gods.

Tsoong Tsu are prepared on the fifth month and a special kind of sun cake on the ninth of the ninth month; while at New Years much food must be previously prepared, and new shoes and new clothes made ready for the family. For christenings eggs must be boiled and dyed red. Tiny boxes of sweetmeats for guests are distributed at wedding feasts.

The preparations for religious feasts are similar, except for a few minor details in the menus. A table and six chairs are arranged; fourteen to sixteen small wine cups, three sticks of incense, two candles, five large bowls and eight small dishes containing food are each set on the table in order and the chopsticks made ready.

The woman must wear her skirt and bow three times profoundly

when she has the table set. If the spirit to be worshipped is of a recently departed mother or father-in-law, she must cry loudly, or if her own life is unhappy because of ill-treatment from her husband, she may cry at this time to let the spirits know, that they may punish him.

When all is finished and the candles become dim, the woman burns ghost money in an iron pan on the floor. She removes the food, heats it again, and her family are served with the delicious offerings. Whether the food be served at home for the spirits, or offered at the grave, it must not be lost to the larder.

The housewife generally learns some way of keeping accounts in mind, and if she is thrifty, whether she buys at her own door or goes out to shops, she will carry her own steelyards on which to weigh the purchases. Early in the morning, at the house doors or at the fish and vegetable markets scattered through the city, women may be seen both buying and selling.

One strong lass with two large baskets of fish said she walked from Fu Mung to Tsang Mung to sell them, and that she had helped to catch them too. Hundreds of women make their living by fishing or boating.

The farming classes who have bits of land under cultivation within the city and in outlying suburbs have both woman and girls engaged along with men and boys in practically all the tasks that men do in the fields. From dawn until twilight their backs are bent in the

cultivation of vegetables, rice or whatever crops may be at hand; or they are side by side with the men at the foot pump paddling away to save the thirsty crops. At harvest times these women, though busy, seem especially happy. Old women with beaming faces paddle out in wooden tubs to harvest *ling*.

Millet would have enjoyed painting the Chinese gleaners? On a cold morning about the last week in February, Mr. Wang and his tribe finished their amphibious task of harvesting *buh zee*. Boys, girls and poor old women and men who have been hungrily gazing from afar as the choice morsels were extracted from the sticky clay, now gather to trample again foot by foot, row by row, mud to the knees, while they grub with half-frozen hands in the sticky, oozy field. The foreigner watching from the bank shivers in his winter coat; but it is a joyous crowd gleaning down in the mud and slime of things. Laughter ripples out then a slippery little fish or eel is caught to go into the gleaner's basket along with the *buh zee*, to flavor tomorrow's rice. Some of the hungry little boys cannot wait to test the day's gleanings, and as they scrub the mud off by the canal's side, they wash some of the *buh zee* and plunge their white teeth into the brown rind with the same joy that an American youngster has over the first chestnuts in autumn.

The care of chickens and pigs frequently falls on the women and girls. Not many pigs are kept within the city. Chickens, however, are raised on nearly every street.

It is perfectly proper to set the basket-coop out in the busy, narrow thoroughfares; the only difficulty the foster mothers have is in getting the chicks properly trained to come back to their own basket at night. These chickens are bought when newly hatched from peddlers sent out by incubator shops.

The incubator business is a flourishing one in Soochow. At one of these incubators near *Fu Mung*, the proprietor announced that they hatched one hundred times ten thousand a year, including ducks, chickens and geese in the count. The incubator proper is a room back of a small shop. The outer double doors are well pasted over with paper; while a filthy, grimy, half worn out cotton quilt hung outside, and a heavy burlap hung within, baffle any stray currents of air that might unwittingly come through. Inside the room, the air is hot, stuffy, reeking of eggs and of the filthy bedding of the men who care for them. In this room there are seventy-seven large earthen jars of eggs, each containing three hundred and several tens. These are heated with charcoal, and covered over the top with thick rush or straw covers. The eggs are turned six times in twenty-four hours, three during the day and three during the night. At the end of the tenth day they are removed from the jars to the loft above, where the chicks hatch out. By this method about 69,000 eggs can be carried through the incubator in a month.

Chicks are sold for from fifty to one hundred cash, weak ducklings

bring ten cash, strong ones, one hundred. Young geese bring five hundred cash, while the ganders are worth only two hundred. All eggs that fail to hatch are sold. If they do not contain chicks they bring lower prices. Chicks cooked in the shell are eaten with salt after being skinned. They are especially recommended as a cure for headache.

Two many household industries carried on near the *Tsang Mung* are the cutting of jade stone and the making of spectacles. Men and boys do much of this work, but since women do some of it, and since they are both household industries that directly concern Soochow trade, they have been studied in detail.

The jade stone imported into China comes from Hongkong and British India. Soochow takes from one-ninth to one-seventh of all the stone imported each year. There are three grades of the stone used.

About 1,000 men, 100 boys and 50 to 60 women are employed in the industry. Nearly every family engaged in this work has one or more apprentices. These boys begin when thirteen years, Chinese count, about eleven foreign years of age. 95% of the jade cutters are very poor. Some of the men make ten cents a day; some of the boys ten coppers. The people engaged in the work have very pale faces and stooped shoulders, yet they report that men seventy-four years of age are still at work. The men and boys usually do the cutting, grinding and polishing, while the women cut holes in the jade; some women also make cigarette holders. No chemicals are

used in the polishing. Sand and water are rubbed on until the stone shines.

About three-tenths of the traders in jade are Mohammedans. They sell the jade in small shops, and at the Jade Temple, it can be bought between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. Most of it is exported to Szechuan. Merchants come to Soochow from other places to buy.

Hair ornaments, ear drops, cigarette holders and small bars are the principal articles made, though many small pieces are cut. Special patterns are cut to order. Thirty cents was paid for cutting a small heart-shaped piece. Foreigners would have to pay more. Modern atrocities are taking the place of beautiful ancient designs. The Soochow men copy Shanghai patterns.

The value of the jade exported through the Soochow customs in 1916 was 21,251 taels, an increase over previous years; but the Chinese report that the trade has fallen off considerably this year. Doubtless this downward trend will affect the prosperity not only of these eleven to twelve hundred workmen, but also of the traders.

The other household industry closely related to the jade-cutting, is located in the same part of the city. This is the spectacle making. Soochow does a thriving business in manufacturing spectacles. During the five years ending 1916, more than 200,000 pairs were sent to other places from Soochow. From five hundred to one thousand people are engaged in manufacturing them.

The lenses are made from *Szu Tsin*, a stone which is said to be invisible when dropped into water. This stone is also said to be imported from Kwangtung and Szechuan.

The report from a Chinese man on the process was as follows: "The stone is cut in thin slices by means of a wire fastened tight across the ends of a bamboo bow. Sand is sprinkled on the stone, and the iron bowstring is rubbed over the sand to make it grind through the stone. Each man in the shop does a special part of the process. The stone is then rounded and polished on concave and convex wheels of *bah tih* with a paste of fine sand. Women beat holes through the lenses with a diamond-pointed steel set in a bamboo handle. To test if the lens is properly rounded, the workman holds it up before a paper with printed characters, to see if it magnifies. After the lenses are ground, polished, and pierced, they are taken to the shops where they are set in frames of gold, silver, steel or white metal. In ancient times tortoise shell frames were more common. A pair of lenses set in white metal sells for about twenty or thirty cents. These are bought by poor old men and women.

When one of the spectacle shops on *Tien Kyau Pau* street near *Tsang Mung* was visited by the foreigner, the master kindly escorted the visitor around the block to his house to see the work going on. The visitor was all eyes to see the wire saw set in the bamboo frame, and the piles of precious "clear rock," from which the spectacles were

made. There were eight men at work in three different rooms; the wire saw was not there, but the shop-keeper cut a stone on a thin steel wheel with the aid of a lump of sand paste to daub on it. It was difficult to learn whether the stone was really quartz. As a proof that it was not glass, the shop-keeper proudly displayed a beautiful specimen of crystallized quartz, which he valued at more than ten dollars. After he had showed the visitor through the rooms of his home factory, where the men and boys were cutting and polishing lenses on the steel wheels with sand, and she was ready to leave, she asked him to sell her a small piece of the "clear rock." He turned to a tiny room which had not been shown, and the stupid visitor followed to see.

In that room sat a man carefully sorting thick pieces of broken glass dishes, bases of water glasses and decanters, and other bits of various kinds of clear white, green and blue glass. In a dusky corner were some pieces of quartz. The polite visitor was of course, careful not to see too much; but once outside again, she asked, "Are the spectacles really made of stone?" The wise shop-keeper said, "The best ones are;" and he sold the discreet visitor some specimens to take home with her as souvenirs.

Practically every shop in Soochow, except those dealing in imported foreign goods, has a home manufactory; but it would be tedious to take up each of these in turn, just to find the bits of work done by the women and children. Perhaps it

would be more to the point to consider some of the work carried from the shops into the homes.

Many of the women and children of the city do piece work at home for the shops outside *Tsang Mung*, a whole village of women and children shell pine nuts. Some women separate beans from the sprouts to make them ready for the restaurants. Peanuts are hulled, walnuts cracked and hulled. The shopmen are careful to weigh what they give out, and both hulls and nuts are usually returned to be weighed. Tea and tobacco leaves are sorted both at home and in shops.

In several parts of the city women take knitting for the shops. The thread is weighed when given out, and all the ends must be brought in to be weighed with the finished article. This year four dong pah has been paid apiece for making yarn caps. Last year the same cap brought the maker five dong pah, and the year before, six. Fast workers make as many as seven caps in a day. Knitted garments bring the makers from 4 to 7 dimes.

Near the *Tsang Mung* the shops cut out the six piece velvet caps. They pay women twelve cash apiece for sewing these up at home. Very fast workers can make 360 cash a day doing these. A high grade of middle class women take in this kind of work.

Strange to say although women and girls make flowers of chenille, satin and sateen for cap ornaments, men in shops finish the women's head-dresses.

Silk thread is given out by shops

to be made into hair-nets, cords, tassels and fringes. The cord is paid for in ten foot pieces. A stool like machine is used, and the cords are tied to a cash on a string to be twirled for the twist.

Flax stalks are bought and picked apart in a very primitive way. The stalks are wet, laid across the lap on a black apron, and the fibres are picked out by hand. As they are pulled out, they are twisted together end to end, making a long thread which the worker lets fall into a basket at her side. Workers peel out from two to four ounces of this flax in a day and receive forty to eighty cash an ounce for it. The country people have a special day just before New Year's when they get this flax to peel. If it rains on the third day of the new year they have a superstition that the flax will not be good.

About 1000 women tread rice pounders for 40 cash a day in Soochow.

Silk reeling, spinning, weaving of ribbons and of silk fabrics, in addition to silk embroidery are done both as piece work and as regular household tasks in Soochow homes. Some girls learn embroidery from their mothers; others go to embroidery schools in homes. Mrs. Koo near Kong Hong has one of the best known Chinese embroidery schools of the Republic. She has about fifteen pupils from thirteen to seventeen years of age, who pay a little tuition and eat at home. They are taught silk embroidery, Chinese classics, designing, cutting, filet lace, Irish crochet and some cotton

embroidery. Experienced women are also employed working under Mrs. Koo's direction. She shows some originality in her work in designing patterns and in dyeing the threads so as to have the hues required. Last year she copied some luna moths, preparing the design and dyeing the threads herself. Mrs. Koo's exhibition of embroidery won a first class prize at the Panama Pacific Exposition. Among the Chinese so well thought of is Mrs. Koo's work that in the fall of 1915, she was employed by Yuan Shih-kai to prepare the court robes for the resuscitation of imperial pomp.

Women embroiderers are found doing piece work in nearly all parts of the city. Those doing the best work make four or five dimes on a pair of shoes, two or three dollars on an izaung. Some brides pay as high as thirty dollars for the embroidery on their outfit, but changing styles have brought simpler clothing, and the art is not so flourishing as it was in the past. Some Soochow embroiderers are still employed in making clothes for actors, both here and in other places; while the trappings for rich funerals and temple hangings furnish many of them with work.

"Embroidery is one of the oldest arts in the world. It probably originated in China three or more thousand years ago. Books of design have been available since 960 A.D. Some embroidery is still in existence that dates back to the 10th century. The exquisite designs and mellow colours of the ancients are giving place to some Western designs of less artistic

merit, and aniline colours flaunt their crudeness everywhere."

"Some of the embroidery stitches that are strictly of Chinese origin are satin stitch long and short, couching, chain stitch worked first and then applied to the material, stem stitch, split stitch, and the so-called French knot, which is called by some Chinese, the Peking knot, but the most of which has been produced around Soochow and Hangchow."

Drawn work, lace, knitting, crochet and tatting are all done by Soochow women and girls for their own use and for piece work for shop men; but these arts are all of foreign origin.

There are other kinds of piece work given out, but a careful investigation has proved them of less importance.

In addition to the kinds of piece work already mentioned done on silk or with silk threads, there are many tasks for women and children that arise out of sericulture and of the preparation of the silk fibres into manufactured articles.

The raising of silk worms, spinning, weaving, dyeing are claimed by the Chinese to be 4000 years old. The wife of Huang Ti who ascended the throne in 2697 B. C. is supposed to have taught the people to raise silk-worms and to make garments of silk; but perhaps it would be safer in the matter of dates of this kind, just to say with Werner, that reference was made to the use of silk about 1,000 years before the opening of the Christian era.

Down through these ages when the warm suns of mid-April burst the buds and spread the leaves

of the mulberry, the women and girls have considered it a task fit for the queen, to care for the precious silkworms. A busy season it is in one hundred and fifty to three hundred Soochow households that depend upon silk culture for their living. The utmost cleanliness and care is supposed to be taken, and yet, at the present time, in this section of China, there is a great loss through diseased silkworms that either spin inferior cocoons or fail to reach maturity. Silk men have recently petitioned the Government to introduce Pastour's methods. In 1873 Japan was exporting 15,000 bales of silk, Shanghai, 54,000. Now Japan has adopted the Pastour method and during the 1916-7 season exported 226,569 bales while Shanghai had only 65,847 bales for export.

Perhaps some of the mission schools might investigate this method of sericulture further and be of great help to the Chinese in strengthening an industry vital to many people of this and other sections. The Government has some of this work going on outside the city near the 500 god temple at the agricultural school. The best teachers of the industry received their training in Japan. When the school was visited two years ago, there were many silkworms being cared for, and all was, apparently, being done in a scientific way; but that this method is not reaching the poorer families so vitally dependent on the health of the silkworm, seems to be evident from the latest reports of the Foreign Silk men, from Customs returns, and from what the local Chinese say of

the decreasing numbers engaged in silk culture here.

Weaving and other modern textile industries in which women of the city are concerned are perhaps properly classified with household work.

It is difficult to learn the exact number of silk looms in the city. One guild formerly claimed to control 7000 looms for weaving satins and brocades, while another claimed 2000 for making thinner silks. There are said to be many private looms not controlled by guilds, while there are a number of small looms for weaving ribbons, and other machines for braids. As nearly as could be estimated at present, however, there are only 1500 silk looms at work in the city. The reason for the decrease given by the people in the city, is that the steam filatures export silk, and that old-fashioned reelers cannot obtain cocoons enough to reel for the weaving.

The Silk Dealers Guild claims that where they formerly employed 4500 women as reelers, they now have only 1000. The steam filature people are not employing as many as the 3500 who have lost work by the decreasing amount of native satins produced by the weavers, nor has the amount of filature silk exported greatly increased.

Weavers are paid six cents a Chinese foot for thin satin; ten cents for brocade; fifteen cents for the best grade of thick satin. The fastest weavers can make about six feet of cloth in a day. The helpers who pull the heddle strings receive

about 40 cash for a day's work. Besides this weaving done in the city, at a little village, *Lien Kou Auh Dong*, near *Ze Mung*, fine tapestry is still made. The pictures are woven with silk wool carried on small bobbins. The warp is of silk or linen, set up in small loom frames. It takes nearly a month to weave a small panel. Most of the pictures are of mythological and historical subjects. Vegetable dyes of ancient origin are still used. The colors are soft and exquisite; this work is perhaps, of more artistic value than that of any other textile now produced in or around Soochow; but some of the richest Chinese families of the city consider it too old-fashioned to be interesting. Perhaps foreigners should encourage the revival of appreciation of this art, lest it be lost to the world.

While this art that is perhaps 3,000 years old is quietly dying out, new arts and newer methods of carrying on old ones are being introduced.

Modern methods of industry that affect women and children of Soochow homes, are chiefly concerned with cotton and silk textiles. There is a large cotton yarn factory near *Bur Mung*; a hose factory is on *Tih Bee Aung*; four cotton cloth factories having from twenty to thirty semi-modern looms each, are also located inside the city, while in many homes there are from one to ten such looms.

There are four silk filatures outside the city, one near *Zi Mung*, two near *Fu Mung*, and one at *Bur Mung*.

The cotton cloth factories are primitive. Those visited were in households, cleaner and better kept, perhaps, than the homes from which the weavers came.

The cotton yarn factory and the silk filatures however, present unsanitary conditions that are difficult to speak about especially when one has a great bias of sympathy for women and children working long hours for a small wage in rooms that are either full of the dust of flying cotton or else steaming hot and reeking with odors.

The cotton yarn factory has both day and night shifts. Men, women, boys and girls are employed. The women and children are nearly all working in the spinning rooms. The machines upstairs are placed very close together. Perhaps memory has become dim in regard to similar places seen in America, but the place looked more of a fire trap, the air seemed more nearly saturated with flying cotton, and the people had a more unkempt appearance than those remembered back home.

In the silk filatures for every two women working at the reels, there is one child assistant. In all of them the women reelers sit. In one factory these little girls are provided with seats; but in the other filatures the little helpers stand about eleven hours a day. The foremen say that the water in the cocoon vats must be kept just below boiling point, while the air in the reeling room must be between 25 and 30 degrees Centigrade, and average of about 83 degrees Fahrenheit. The humidity of the room makes it seem much

hotter. These conditions are said to be necessary to prevent the silk from breaking. For the day's work the little girls receive 7 to 10 coppers, the women 30 to 35 cents.

The first consideration is given to the fine, fairy-like floss. Human life is so cheap, that little feet that should be at play must ache from weariness; little hands that should be dimpled and pink are blistered in the vats, and little lives that should be the most precious asset of the country are stifled in the humid air.

Surely there must be some invention that can be introduced into these factories to protect the fibres from breaking, and at the same time, to give employees fresh air. Such factories are incubators for disease.

Cotton, silk and other modern factories are in China to stay. With them come the means whereby working people are either going to be lifted into better conditions, or else thrust into deeper slavery. With reasonable hours, a living wage, sanitary precautions and humane owners, these factories can be made profitable to the owners and a blessing to the employees.

Missionaries and Christian Chinese started the immeasurable moral forces that are overcoming the opium traffic. Is it not also their social obligation to China to teach the Chinese both the benefits arising from these uses of machinery and the menace of introducing sweat shop and factory systems without safeguards and protecting laws that have been won abroad after the loss of countless precious lives?

Perhaps persons interested in social service might find it profitable to make an especial study of the changing conditions in the silk and cotton industries and also of sweat shop wages for home piece work, of their effect on economic and social conditions of the Chinese.

It has been a temptation to digress, or to give too much time to these phases of Soochow industrial life; but, since the women and children are being forced into them by changing conditions, and since old household industries are failing under the wheels of modern progress, perhaps the time spent in reviewing them was not wholly outside the limits of this discussion.

Let us hope for the speedy coming of the day when Mrs. Woo, Mrs. Faung, and all their sisters within the Four Seas may have introduced into their homes, modern methods and all the back-saving, humane inventions that have come in with the age of electricity abroad, and when they, with wakened cultivated minds may sit down at the head of the table to pour tea for father, or to discuss with him problems of child labor, prohibition, compulsory education or any other topic of the day.

Through the coming of helpful, labor-saving inventions, modern education and Christianity to China, let us hope that there will come to the Chinese children "the right to declare their dependence, and to appeal through their very helplessness for their inalienable right to play, to dream, to be free for a few years from toil, to be given an

education and an equal opportunity for developing all that is in them of body, mind and soul." Let us also hope that there will come to the Chinese women the same emancipation that is winning for their Western sisters the recognition that with

leisure and with opportunities for development, they can make household industries no longer drudgeries, but loving services that change the word *house* into one of the most intimate and dearest of words, *home*.

