

CHINESE CHILDREN.

CHILDHOOD.

When a daughter is born into the family, the event is regarded rather as a misfortune than otherwise. Etiquette obliges the father to look as if he had not heard the announcement, and quietly to finish his pipe, that the entrance of the little stranger may not possibly be supposed to interest him. Friends, like those of Job, keep silence, or if one more intimate venture a remark, it is one of condolence rather than congratulation.

The cradles in which they spend their infant hours are made of straw rope coiled up in the form of a barrel, only much wider at the bottom than at the top. This is firmly stitched: the inside is nicely padded, and a little seat fixed in it. The mouth of the barrel is just wide enough to accommodate the child; and here it sits for hours, either asleep or awake. Infants are rolled up with their arms down at their sides, in garments which in winter are so thickly wadded with cotton, that these atoms of humanity look like animated bundles, only that their little heads, with their obliquely-set twinkling black eyes, and flat noses, proclaim their connection with the human race.

NAMES.

In China, household names are not handed down from generation to generation, as with us. Parents distinguish their children in a most singular way; the girls are generally numbered, one, two, three, four, &c. according to their age; and boys receive the name of some animal, such as a dog, a cat, a tiger, or, if they are more aspiring, they give them the name of birds, as an eagle, and such like. The boys get their names at a feast, which is made in honour of them when they are a month old, which feast is also the birthday of their tail; for on this occasion a knight of the razor is called in, and the little black head is entirely shaven, except a small spot on the crown, from which that appendage grows. The girls are in nowise honoured, and receive their name at no particular time. The first names which the children receive are called their milk names. They are retained till they go to school, when the teacher gives them a book name; but if they are not thus provided, their milk names continue. These book names are not taken from an understood category,

as Mary, Jane, &c. &c. but are at the option of the school-mistress. They are fanciful but pretty. The girls who came to my school, were named by the native teacher—one, Bright Pearl; another, Little Phoenix; another, Glistening Snow; another, Red Jadestone, and so on.

SMALL FEET—GOLDEN LILIES.

The first special attention paid to a girl by her mother is the cramping of her feet. This is considered the most important part of her duty to her female offspring. The custom commenced only about 950 A. D., and there are various myths, more or less probable, relating to the origin. Some say it gradually sprung up from the desire of small feet; others that it was imposed by some edict, to prevent gadding. The one commonly received among Chinese ladies, and the one narrated to me by themselves is this: The most beautiful and favourite wife of an emperor of one of their old dynasties had remarkably small feet. They just covered the flower of the golden lily, and when walking in her garden she was accustomed to step on them. Hence small feet are called "golden lilies" by Chinese ladies. From this time small feet became a prominent point of female beauty, and where nature had denied the delicacy, force was employed to produce it. The process is often misrepresented, and therefore, it may be well to describe it. It begins when the child is two years old. At this period the four toes are bent under the foot, and then they bandage them tightly with strong strips of calico. As the toes accommodate themselves to their recumbent position, the ligature is drawn tighter, and still tighter, until in the course of three years they sink into the flesh, and the foot looks just as if they had been cut off. This is the first process, and here it ends in the case of many, and the foot, though disabled, is yet competent for much work. The second process is still more painful. The great toe is bent backwards, and the foot is now drawn towards the heel; gradually these two parts are forced together until they conjoin, the hollow of the foot entirely disappearing, leaving only the mark, as of a wound in the centre, and so the child walks on the ball of the great toe and the heel. The process is extremely painful; the foot swells and inflames, and many die during the second operation. The

only comfort the child receives is the constantly reiterated assurance of the mother, that small feet are indispensable to respectable marriage; and the children come to desire them. Once when taking a walk in the suburbs of Shanghai, we came upon a little girl sitting on the step of a shop and crying bitterly. On asking the reason, she said, "Oh! my feet! my feet!" I offered to untie the bandages, or to loosen them; she exclaimed, "No, no! I would not be fit to be seen." By and by the foot becomes quite cool; circulation goes on unimpeded, and little detriment to health ensues, as is proved by our medical men; the foot loses all the shape of a human foot, and becomes like a club foot. Of course they are unable to walk any distance, or ascend a step, without help from their servants. Their walk is a swinging gait.

They are enjoined to imitate the waving of the willow branch; and it is wonderful how elegant their movements are. In our drawing room, I have been amazed to see how beautifully they moved hither and thither; and yet we cannot wonder. As elegance is their life-long study. In wealthy families, all the daughters have their feet cramped: among the middle-class, all pass through the first process, but only the eldest steps on the golden lilies; whilst among the poor, the feet are allowed to grow naturally, in order to fit them for work. But so powerful is the force of custom, that at marriage, small pieces of cork are fastened on the natural feet, that even they may have, at least, the appearance of being fashionable.

It is often asked, Is there no probability of this pernicious and absurd custom being given up? Can we not dissuade them from it? We dare hardly allude to it. Tight waists are at once referred to, and a merry ring of laughter peals through the room. They say it is far worse to compress the stomach, heart, and lungs—the vital organs of our frame—than the feet, and to this there is no reply.

TRIAL.

No man is a man till tried—till he has passed through the ordeal, through deep waters and scorching fires. A man surrounded with comforts, friends and relatives, food and raiment—whose barns are filled with plenty, and whose presses gush out with new wine—who eats to the full, sits and reads, doles about, takes his ease and his pleasure, smokes his pipe, or