

Ellen—she was the oldest of the girls—told them of a plan she had “made up.” “I don’t mean to let mama do a single bit of house work when she comes back,” she said. “I’ve been making the beds a long time, you know, and, now, I’m going to sweep and dust. I like that sort of work anyway.”

“And I am going to darn all our stockings every Saturday,” said Elizabeth, “like a girl I read about in a book. I don’t mean mama shall touch them until she gets good and well.”

Esther, the youngest—she was nine her last birthday—seemed lost in thought. She knew how much her mama disliked dish-washing and nothing had seemed to tire her more than this three-times-a-day task, no light one either, for there were three boys as well as girls in the little brown house, besides father and mother. And, so Esther wanted to take it for her work.

“But it’s too hard for you to do all alone,” cried Mary Ellen, “and you always said you *hated* dish-washing.”

“Well, I did, but when I do it for mama it’ll be different, you see.”

“You won’t hold out a week, Esther Page,” declared Elizabeth, “and, besides, your hands are too little.”

“They’ll grow bigger with hard work, grandma says so,” went on the child, “and mama’ll *know* that I love her *dearly* when I do *that* for her.”

And mama did. Nobody knew better than she how much poor little Esther disliked “doing” the piles of dishes, knives and forks and spoons in the hot little kitchen all that long summer, but she said nothing.

Love’s magic helped, you see, and made it all different.—Exchange.

### Babies in Honan

By Mrs. Gillies Eadie

When a little baby boy is born in Honan, his parents, relatives and friends rejoice and make a feast to celebrate his birth. The friends have something nice to say about him,—that probably, when he grows to be a man, he will be a magistrate, or a man of great influence.

His grandmother makes him a little bonnet,

and trims it with tiny bells and little Chinese cash with a hole in the centre. Every time the little lad moves his head the bells and cash jingle, and amuse him. Like Joseph, the little Chinese baby wears “a coat of many colors.”

Sometimes, however, his parents dress him in a little black coat like that of a Chinese priest. They think thus to deceive the gods, who, seeing him dressed in this fashion, will think he is going to be a priest when he grows up, and so they will watch over and protect him from all harm. At other times they dress his hair like a girl’s, and put earrings in his ears, so that the evil spirits will think he is a little girl, and will not trouble about him.

When a baby girl is born there is no such rejoicing nor birthday party for her. Many baby girls come into the world as unwelcome gifts, and sometimes, if there are a number of girls in the family, and “too many mouths to feed,” as the Chinese say, they are not taken care of, but are left to die.

If the little life is spared the happy freedom of childhood is cut short by the custom of binding the feet. When the child is small, her mother makes long bandages of cotton cloth and binds the little foot. Of course this is very painful, and the child cries a great deal with the pain, and begs her mother to take the bandages off, but the mother shows no pity, and scolds and whips her when she cries.

“Why is the mother so cruel?” you will ask. “Does she not care for her little daughter, nor love her?” She does, but custom is strong in China, and the custom of foot-binding is over one thousand years old. Heathen mothers do not think it respectable for their daughters to have large feet, and are afraid, if the feet are not bound, they will be unable to find husbands for them, so they shut their ears to the cries and tears of their children. These little girls often have to take care of their baby brothers, and carry them about, which makes an added weight on the poor little crippled feet. What a difference there is in a Chinese Christian home, where the mother has heard the gospel, and does not follow this cruel custom of foot-binding, and the little girls enjoy the same freedom as their brothers!