

New Year's Day with Chinese Boys and Girls.

(By the Rev. Frederic Poole, in 'Sunday-School Times'.)

The great day of all days for the children in China is New Year's Day. I think, if you were to ask a little Chinese boy what he meant by 'New Year's,' he would say, 'Noise, and plenty of it.' For weeks the Chinese are preparing for this great event. Houses are cleaned, and the shopkeeper looks forward to it with great satisfaction, because he knows that his customers, if they have any self-respect, will be sure to pay their debts before the new year; for it is considered a great disgrace to start the new year in debt.

Lots of firecrackers are laid by in readiness, but none must be let off before the proper time. No body goes to bed that night, but all sit up waiting for the hour of the new day, when the father, and his wife and little ones, all worship before the spirit tables of their ancestors, and then at the shrine of the household gods.

Then the door is opened, and the whole family and servants go outside and bow down to a certain part of the heavens which has been indicated in the Chinese calendar, and so worship heaven and earth, and receive the spirit of gladness and good fortune, which, they say, comes from that quarter of the heavens.

Then the noise begins, and when I was in China I often used to think that it was a good thing that the country was so big, for every one of the four hundred millions are setting off firecrackers at the same time. This is to frighten away evil spirits, and I have thought many a time that those spirits must have a bad time of it during the dawn of the Chinese New Year.

Yet, notwithstanding the noise, I always liked the New Year's in China, for after the first day the noise stops, and the shops are all closed for one or two weeks, for it is unlucky to do business during the birth of the new year (except at the back door,—but don't say anything about this).

Then, too, we Americans could walk along the streets for once in the year feeling sure that nobody would curse us, or call us 'foreign devils,' for it is unlucky to use that bad word at such a happy time. Dear me, how I did wish that New Year's would last twelve months!

But the first day has come, and the little Chinese children get ready to enjoy it for all it is worth. They are dressed in their best and gaudiest clothes, which are only worn on this occasion. The father has got from the pawn-shop his finest silk gown, which that obliging 'relative' has taken good care of during the past twelve months, and thus splendidly attired, the proud father and his little boys start out on a little visiting trip to his relatives and friends, to 'Kung Hi, Fah Tsoi,'—wish them a happy new year and many riches.

'What,' you say, don't the little girls go too?

No; they must stay at home, because the little girl is not so important as her brother, and besides, she would have difficulty in walking far in her tiny 'golden lily' shoes which do not measure more than three inches in length.

But what a day it is for the little boy! He has already got his first present when Santa Claus, that is to say, the boy's father (same thing, you see, as in this country), gave him a little string of copper cash tied on a red cord; for it is unlucky to start the new year without money in your pocket, and that is something both you and I agree with,—isn't it?

But our little Chinese boy could never carry home all the money that is given to him, for it is the custom for every one whom he visits to give him presents of money, as well as candy and cakes. Of course, the father takes charge of this,—I mean the money—and I have often wondered if his little son ever sees his money presents again. I really think that a little Chinese boy must be a good investment for his father on New Year's Day in China.

But the visiting is soon over, and then the little Chinaman is off, sometimes with his sister, to see the sights in the streets. They look at the peep-shows and the Punch-and-Judy shows,—which, by the way, is a Chinese invention. They spin their tops and fly their kites, until the sound of gongs and drums tells them that there is a theatre or a juggling-show somewhere near, and off they go, and soon are to be found in the front row, clapping their hands in childish glee at the funny antics of the performers, until the man comes round with the hat, and then there is a patter of small feet as the youngsters scurry away, for the Chinese boys have no use for the hat,—like some other boys I know.

But twilight finds the tired little folks at home, for they are afraid to be out at dark; and little John Chinaman closes the day in eating sweetmeats, or in taking his turn at beating the unmusical gong, or in diving among the mass of red paper in the courtyard, where the fireworks are let off by his father and big brothers, in the search for unexploded single crackers, which he at once puts to their proper use, until, tired out with his day's exertions, he is put to bed, and is soon sound asleep, dreaming of cakes and candy, copper cash and Punch-and-Judy shows, and 'Cr-cr-cr-crack—bing—bang—boom!'

Religious Building at World's Fair.

ORGANIZED EFFORT MADE TO HAVE A SPECIAL STRUCTURE FOR EXCLUSIVELY RELIGIOUS EXHIBITS.

St. Louis, Dec. 11.—The movement to secure a Religious Building at the St. Louis World's Fair, in 1903, is being vigorously prosecuted by the representatives of the various churches in St. Louis.

Addressing President Francis of the World's Fair, a few days ago, in favor of a separate building for the religious exhibits, one of the reverend gentlemen on the special committee of the general committee of Church Workers, which has the matter in hand, said:—'Religion has done as much for the advancement of civilization within the Louisiana Territory during the past one hundred years as education has done. You have arranged for the educational exhibit by providing at least two large buildings. The religious workers want one building.' The application of the committee is for a building to be not less than 330 by 460 feet, at an estimated cost of \$400,000. In this building they wish to include all exhibits of a religious nature. It was also stated that there was a general sentiment among church workers against having religious exhibits distributed among the department buildings. Among the exhibits suggested was a collection of the relics of the Vatican, including the tiara of the Pope. The movement for a religious building is entirely apart from that for a congress of religions.

President Francis assured the members of the committee that he was in favor of their

proposition, and that he would present the matter to the Board of Directors at its next meeting. In addition to the endorsement of Mr. Francis, a letter from Mr. John Schroers, chairman of the World's Fair Committee on Education, was filed for reference to the directory. Mr. Schroers says:—

'As far as I am concerned personally, I do not hesitate to commit myself unequivocally in favor of your petition, recognizing the fact that the coming glory of the World's Fair in 1903 should not only be an exhibit of the material triumphs, industrial achievements and mechanical victories of man, however magnificent that display may be, but something higher and nobler is also demanded by the progressive spirit of the age. It would be proper to consider the foundations of religious faiths, to review the triumphs of religion in all ages, to set forth the present state of religion among the nations and its influence over literature, art, commerce, government and family life; to indicate its power in promoting social purity, and its harmony with true science, to show its dominance in the higher institutions of learning, to make prominent the value of the weekly rest day on religious and other ground, and to contribute to those forces which will bring about the unity of the race in the worship of God and the service of man.'

The membership of the various religious bodies represented on the petition is more than 25,000,000 in the United States alone. In addition, the Sunday-school enrollment is 9,718,432; Young Men's Christian Association, 238,568, making a grand total of 35,129,257.

Ask Now of the Days That Are Passed.

Ask of the year that so swiftly has passed,
Ask of the days that have flown;
What is there left that forever will last,
Where, oh, where, have they gone?

Swiftly the months and the moments have fled,

Never again to return,
Oh, have they left us—these days that are dead,

Naught but the dust of the urn?

Tell they of souls that from darkness have passed?

Tell they of fights that were won?
Tell they of deeds that forever will last,
And of the Master's 'Well done?'

Over the days that have vanished away,

Over the months that have flown,
Jesus is tenderly asking to-day,
Where, oh, where, have they gone?

—A. B. Simpson.

John Wesley Anniversary.

The Southern Methodist preachers of St. Louis have appointed a committee composed of the Reverend Doctor W. F. McMurray, the Reverend Doctor R. D. Smart, the Reverend Doctor J. W. Lee, Mr. Sam. Kennard and Mr. Murray Carleton, to confer with a like committee appointed by the Methodist Episcopal ministers for the purpose of arranging for the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of Wesley in connection with the World's Fair. This matter came before the recent Ecumenical Council of Methodism in London, and it was referred to the several branches represented for action.

The Find-the-Place Almanac

TEXTS IN PROVERBS.

Dec. 29, Sun.—Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.

Dec. 30, Mon.—To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

Dec. 31, Tues.—Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure and whether it be right.