

traditions of their fathers, so that the New Year, which is with them a great civil and religious holiday was celebrated even in this far-away corner, with befitting honors.

Before, however, I describe the New Year festivities and our call on Mr. Soo Wah, it may be well to make a few explanatory remarks on the Chinese method of computing time which is as unerringly accurate as it is complicated and difficult to understand.

The Chinese civil year, like that of the Hindoos, is regulated by the moon, and since the Han dynasty, two centuries before Christ has begun with the first day of that moon during the course of which the sun enters their sign of the Zodiac corresponding to our sign Pisces. They have also an astronomical year which is governed by the sun, and for the adjustment of these solar and lunar years instead of our leap year plan of an extra day in every fourth year they have an inter-calendary month occurring every third and second year in periods of nineteen so that the year contains either thirteen or twelve months as it has or has not an inter-calendary month. The same Chinese character is used to indicate both month and moon and a month has either twenty-nine or thirty days, the number of days being intended to correspond with the number of days which the moon takes to make the revolution around the earth. A convenient feature of the system is that the age of the moon at any time denotes the day of the month, thus there is no moon on the first, a full moon on the 15th, etc., and the moon accordingly presents the same appearance on the same day in any month from year to year.

This year the Chinese New Year's Day fell on the 29th January of our calendar. Festivities in connection with it lasted, as is the custom, for three days during which the shops were all closed, labor ceased, and the time was given up to feasting, to the interchange of calls, the giving and receiving of presents and occasional outbursts of fireworks. A generous hospitality marked the occasion bearing out well the Chinese saying, "that during the first part of the first moon no one has an empty stomach."

The day before was a busy day. Signs had been re-painted and gilded, mottoes appropriate to the season, of black hieroglyphics on an orange or red background covered the lintels of the doors and windows and everything possible was draped

in red, which is not only the Chinese festal color, but is supposed to possess the power of keeping off evil spirits. Gorgeous lanterns were hung before the doors and nearly every window and door had its dish of the favorite Chinese lily, the narcissus, in full bloom, and refreshments were laid ready for serving. With knitted brow and pre-occupied faces, Celestials went rushing hither and thither making purchases and settling debts, all of which according to a wise Chinese custom must be cancelled before the New Year. New clothes were donned, those who could not afford to buy them borrowed them, and silk and satin replaced the ordinary cloth and cotton garments, fresh white stockings and new thick-soled slippers adorned the feet, heads were well shaven and every pig-tail received an extra dressing.

Once early in the afternoon we encountered Soo, he was returning from a marketing expedition, and held, one in either hand, firmly clasped by their yellow legs, two wriggling, angrily clucking chickens, while visions of delectable compounds of chickens and rice on the morrow, flitted through his mind, and transformed his sad countenance.

"How do," he called out cheerily, as he caught sight of us. "Heap good time," waving the indignant fowls in our direction. "You come visit tomolly, certain."

By set of sun of the old year everything was in readiness, and festivities began then. Crack! bang! fizz! Fire-cracker, bomb and rocket rang out gaily in the clear evening air, and before each one of the low adobe buildings where the laundry work was done, and before each one of the Chinese curiosity shops and restaurants there blazed and cracked a small pile of fireworks. This was followed later in the evening by a feast in each household, when food was partaken of with certain mystic ceremonies, including an offering to the deceased ancestors and before the household idol Joss-sticks, mock money and pieces of red paper covered with printed prayers were burned. At midnight a perfect bedlam of noises, gongs, tom-toms, bombs, rockets, and fire-crackers ushered in the new year, the deafening outburst of sound being intended to drive away all evil spirits from its birth.

At an early hour the next morning Celestials in gorgeous apparel of purple, blue and olive green started out to pay