

## TALKS ABOUT CHINA.

**I**N China on every New Year's Morning each man and boy, from the emperor to the lowest peasant, pays a visit to his mother. He carries her a present, thanks her for all she has done for him, and asks a continuance of her favor another year. The Chinese are taught to believe that mothers have an influence for good over their sons all through the year.

The farmer lad gets very little schooling, but the son of a merchant or teacher or official has a better chance. School keeps nearly all the year, and there are no Saturday or Sunday holidays. Early in the morning, at sunrise, the boy starts for school, and with but two intermissions remains there until sunset. The boy commences to go to school when six years of age. Girls are seldom sent to school.

A Chinese school makes itself heard long before it is seen, for each scholar is learning his task off by heart, repeating it over and over again in a loud, sing-song tone of voice, till it is fixed in the memory, and when thirty or forty boys are doing this at the same time it sounds as loud as the roaring of the ocean.

A Chinaman, in greeting you, instead of shaking your hands, clasps his two hands together and moves them up and down a few inches in front of himself several times. When he is very polite the hands are raised up as high as the forehead while he makes a profound bow. Ladies do not do this, but clutch the left hand sleeve with the right hand and imitate the same motion.

A Chinaman frequently has several names. A month after his birth he receives his "milk name." When he starts to school he is given a "book name." When he is married he is given a "great name." On taking a degree or on entering official life he receives his "official name." After death he is known by his posthumous name in the Hall of Ancestors. There are also "house names," "flower names," etc. Girls are given a "milk name," a "marriage name," and nicknames.

The beggar boy is common. Summer or winter he is up early and out on the road, watching for the carts or litters carrying travellers to and from the great cities. He hails the occupant with a cry, "Venerable sir, venerable sir! give me a cash!" It does not matter whether the traveller is old or young; he calls him old, as no other mode of address would be respectful. Perhaps the traveller does not give at once. Then the boy runs ahead, drops on his knees for an instant, knocks his head to the ground, and scrambling to his feet again, runs after the cart with the same cry as before. The greater part of the year the little beggar is clad only in a suit of brown which nature has provided.

On some of the holidays you will see a group of boys in front of some temple playing at shuttlecock. The game is played by only one at a time. The object of the game is to see how many times the player, who stands on one foot, can knock the shuttlecock into the air with the other foot without once falling to the ground.

The Chinese wear nothing that is tight-fitting. The workingman in summer wears a loose-fitting pair of cotton trousers and a loose jacket, and in winter wears quilted cotton clothes, and sometimes over all a sheepskin robe. The wealthier classes wear garments much similar in shape, but made of silk or linen in summer, and woollen or fur in winter. The mandarins are distinguished by badges worn on the breast and back of their robes, and by the knobs or buttons on top of their caps. The men shave the forepart of the head and the rest of the hair is plaited into what is called a cue. The feet of the girls, except among the Manchus, the poor classes, and the slave girls, are bound tightly to prevent the feet growing, so that the women of the wealthy classes are not able to walk well, but can only hobble along.

Fortune tellers go through the streets offering to tell for money what will take place. One class tells fortunes very much like some we have seen in the streets of New York. Sixty-four cards are prepared. On one side of each card is drawn either a god, a beast, a bird, or a man, and on the other side is written a stanza of poetry. The cards are then spread on a table, a trained bird is let out of a cage and picks up two of the cards and presents them to his master, who, after studying the pictures and the poetry, gives an answer to the inquiry made of him.

Many of the people in China live all their lives on boats in the river, and live chiefly on fish that they catch. A missionary in China writes: "Some of the boats are called slipper boats, and they look very much like big slippers, and a whole family lives in each boat. Look into one of them and you will see the old grandmother in the back of the boat with the little two-year-old playing near her, tied to the boat, so that if he falls overboard she can have something to pull him in by. Her daughter-in-law with the baby on her back, stands in the front part of the boat rowing, and one of the little boys sits near trying to help row, and the other children are all in the back part of the boat with their grandmother."

There are three different kinds of religion in China. They are called Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. The first has much to say about the relations of people to each other, and with it is connected the worship of ancestors; the second has many idols, and