

THE DUNNING DEVIL OF CHINA AND JAPAN.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE HUMOR of Asiatic devil lore which finds expression in various quaint art productions of China and Japan is particularly manifest in the Dunning Devil, i. e., the demon who presides over the collection of debts. He is well known in both the celestial empire and the country of the rising sun, and the artist who carved the grotesque features of the statue represented in our illustration¹ may, in the financial experiences of his life, have made his personal acquaintance himself.

New Year's Eve is the day on which in China the Dunning Devil is let loose on the world, haunting the houses of the rich and poor alike. M. Huc, the Jesuit missionary, writes in his famous *Travels in Tartary, Tibet, and China* that the New Year's day is celebrated in much the same fashion as in Europe, and he adds regarding the Chinese custom of collecting debts :

"The last days of the year are ordinarily, with the Chinese, days of anger and of mutual annoyance; for having at this period made up their accounts, they are vehemently engaged in getting them in; and every Chinese being at once creditor and debtor, every Chinese is just now hunting his debtors and hunted by his creditors. He who returns from his neighbor's house, which he has been throwing into utter confusion by his clamorous demands for what that neighbor owed him, finds his own house turned inside out by an uproarious creditor, and so the thing goes round. The whole town is a scene of vociferation, disputation, and fighting. On the last day of the year disorder attains its height; people rush in all directions with anything they can scratch together, to raise money upon, at the broker's or pawnbroker's, the shops of which tradespeople are absolutely besieged throughout the day with profferers of clothes, bedding, furniture, cooking utensils and moveables of every description. Those who have already cleared their houses in this way, and yet have not satisfied the demands upon them, post off to their relations and friends to borrow something or other which they vow shall be returned immediately, but which immediately takes its way to the Tang-Pou, or pawnbroker's. This species of anarchy continues till midnight; then calm resumes its sway. No

¹ The statue represented in the picture on the following page is a lacquered wood-carving from the Middle Ages of Japan.

one, after the twelfth hour has struck, can claim a debt or even make the slightest allusion to it. You now only hear the words of peace and goodwill ; everybody



fraternises with everybody. Those who were just before on the point of twisting their neighbor's neck, now twine their friendly arms about it." (Vol. II., pp. 28-30.)