CHINESE LIFE AND CUSTOMS.

BY THE EDITOR.

Illustrated by Chinese Artists.

The more our civilization expands, and with it trade and commerce, the closer will be our relations with Eastern Asia, and it is to our own advantage in our dealings with foreign people, to understand their habits and to be as familiar as possible with their main motives in life. Having long searched in vain for a good source of information concerning life in China, we have at last discovered a book, which was published in Japan by a Japanese publisher assisted by Chinese artists, and entitled, *An Exposition of Chinese Life and Customs under the Chin Emperors* (the present Manchu dynasty). The book bears the title *Ch'ing Hsiü Chi Wen*, or, as the Japanese pronounce it, *Shin-zok-kih-bun*, and is published in Tokyo.

The book before us is fully illustrated and gives as good an insight into Chinese life as can be had in any special work. The illustrations are simply outline drawings after the fashion of Chinese art, but in this way, too, they become characteristic of the people whom they are intended to portray.

The entire work consists of six fascicles, and we will select from it the illustrations that are of special interest.

ANNUAL FESTIVALS.

The Chinese calendar is lunar, but its beginning is determined by the sun. New Year falls on the first new moon after the sun has entered Aquarius, which will never happen before January 21, nor after February 19. The months are strictly regulated by the moon. The first of every month is new moon and the fifteenth is full moon.
New Year's Day is a feast of great rejoicing. It is celebrated with paper lanterns and paper dragons, which are hung up in arbors specially erected for the purpose, and carried about in procession.

On the fifteenth of the first month, the Chinese celebrate the birthday of the "Spirit of Heaven." Among the gods he is the chief of a trinity which is greatly respected all over China, perhaps
as much as are the three Magi among Roman Catholic Christians, whose festival also falls in the first month of the year. The two companions of the "Spirit of Heaven" are the "Spirit of Earth"

and the "Spirit of Water." The blessings of all three are much needed. The Spirit of Heaven confers upon us celestial bliss; the Spirit of Water quenches fire, and the Spirit of Earth procures
forgiveness of sin. The birthday of the Earth Spirit is the fifteenth of the seventh month, and the birthday of the Water Spirit is the tenth of the ninth month.

THE THREE OFFICIAL BODHISATTVAS.
The Water Spirit, the Heaven Spirit and the Earth Spirit.

The five gods of wealth naturally play a prominent part in the Chinese calendar, for every one wants to be rich and curries favor
with them. They have a festival on the second and sixteenth days of every month, which is celebrated by candle and incense burning and by sacrifices of pigs, calves and goats.

THE FIVE GODS OF WEALTH.

Honorariums for services of teachers, and physicians and other professional men, are sent out five times in a year: in the beginning
of summer, in the fifth month, in the seventh month, at the begin-
ning of winter, and on the last day of the year. The honorarium

is wrapped in white paper, as indicated in our illustration, and then
sealed in a little envelope.
Buddha's birthday is celebrated on the eighth day of the fourth month, and in commemoration of it Buddhists keep a canopied bronze statue of the Buddha child, over which eight dragons spout a baptism of scented water—an incident which is told in the legendary life of Buddha.
The Chinese, like the English and the Americans, have their boat races which take place from the first to the sixth day of the fifth month.

On the seventh night of the seventh month the girls have a special festival in which they bring offerings to the “Spinning
Damsel,” whose star is Spica, the brightest star in the constellation of Virgo. After the festival, the girls pass a thread into the eye of a needle, which is hoped will make them proficient in needle work.

\(^2\) See the author's article on “Filial Piety in China,” in The Open Court XVI, p. 759, where the legend of the Spinning Damsel is related
In the eighth month the moon shines brighter than in any other month during the year; so the fifteenth, the night of the full moon, is celebrated as the birthday of the moon. Fruit and cakes, all of them of a round shape, are offered on a veranda in full sight of the moon and then eaten in company with friends and relatives.
The moon is worshipped as a benign goddess and on her festival people exchange congratulations and presents.

It is generally regretted if the moon is beclouded in the night of her birthday, but the fact is not deemed a bad omen, and is
simply taken as an indication that the following New Year’s Day will be bright.

On the coast of South China, a special festival on the eighteenth
day of the eighth month is officially celebrated by the governor of the province in honor of the tide. Offerings are made consisting of a pig and a sheep; however, they are not left to perish in the water,
but after having been presented, are taken away and officially eaten as is customary with all offerings.

On the fifteenth of the twelfth month, the Chinese celebrate their Thanksgiving over which six deities preside. The names of four of the six gods of Thanksgiving are the same as four of the five gods of wealth. One of the five gods of wealth, No Chin ("the
digger of something precious") has dropped out and in his place appears the god of the soil who is the local patron of the town ship, and Chin Lun, i.e., "the pure dragon." The meaning of this change has been lost, but when we consider that the wealth of a primitive people consists chiefly in the produce of the field, we may
understand that the disappearance of the digger of something precious means the loss of the seed corn, while the new comer, Chin Lun, represents the wealth of the new crop, and the local deity joins in the rejoicing of the harvest festival.

On New Year’s Eve, the last day of the year, cards of congratulation are hung up in conspicuous places about the house. They
bear the inscription fuh, “blessing” and picture the heavenly spirit as distributing gifts or pointing to the sun in the heavens. They are called huan lo tsu, i. e., “cards of bliss and rejoicing.”

There is another custom of New Year's Eve which is celebrated all over China, and must be a very ancient tradition. On a bamboo
frame a paper cow is built and painted in five different colors. It contains inside a paper calf made in the same way and is led by a clay figure representing Tai Tsai, also called Man Shen, the deity presiding over the New Year’s Eve festival. Tai Tsai means “the great year,” and Man Shen means “vegetation god.”
This group of the cow led by the god of agriculture is carried in procession under the official guidance of the mandarin into the fields, which are circumambulated to insure their fertility in the coming year. The children throw peas and beans at the paper cow,
because they believe that whoever hits it is sure to become immune from smallpox and other contagious diseases.

On the return to the village the paper cow is carried to the temple of Tai Tsai where this symbol of the old year is torn to pieces and the new year in the shape of the young calf brought to light.
The day ends with an invocation for a rich harvest in the coming year.

On the same day, baskets are put up filled with rice, nuts, and fruit, in which branches of pine tree and arbor vitae are inserted. They are called wan wen liang, or "ten thousand years' provisions."