

CHINESE NEW YEAR.

FIREWORKS AND FEASTING.

The Chinese New Year commences to-day. That it is a time of rejoicing is apparent to the stranger entering the house of any Chinese resident of Sydney. There are signs of festivity on every hand, and the rejoicings will continue for a week.

Mr. Lean Fore, manager of the "Tung Wah Times," remarked last night that the Chinese had many holidays in the year, the principal being the birthday of their Emperor, that of Confucius, the Festival of the Dead, the Dragon Boat Festival, and the Mid-autumn Festival. Notwithstanding that all these were recognised as national holidays by the Chinese, there was not the interest taken in them as in the one they were now celebrating.

The new year was ushered in at midnight by the displays of fireworks and the sharp reports of crackers, and, in accordance with ancient custom in every house, a farewell supper to the old year was held. In this respect it is interesting to note the dishes which make up the festive meal:—Roast, boiled, and steamed duck, fowl and ham, birds'-nests soup, stewed shellfish, mushrooms, crabs, shark-fins, beche-de-mer, and sliced pigeons.

After the Post Office clock had struck 12 the New Year began, and the Chinese of Sydney commenced their customary exchange of visits. Their greeting was invariably "Koongey Fat Choy"—a prosperous new year. In every case the visitor would leave his new year card, a piece of red paper of a uniform size, on which his name was inscribed. Every visitor is bound to accept of hospitality—a glass of wine, spirits, or light refreshment.

This period of the year brings out the love for flowers inherent in the Chinese people, for every Chinese house in Sydney at an early hour this morning contained, or was expected to contain, a table decked with all kinds of seasonable flowers; and in addition, fruits, preserves, and so forth for the entertainment of visitors.

Most of the Chinese business-houses of Sydney will be closed until Monday. The ensuing year is of more than ordinary interest, as it is the first of the reign of the new Emperor.

It is customary with the Chinese to calculate dates from the year the reigning Emperor was installed. Thus all letters written to-day will be dated "The first day of the first month of the first year of the reign of Puyi."

On behalf of the Chinese Empire Reform Association, of which he is president, Mr. Ping Nam sent the following cable last night to the Minister of Commerce at Peking:—"We request you to convey to the new Emperor and to Prince Ch'un, our wishes for a happy new year, and we also request Prince Ch'un to bring about as speedily as possible the necessary reforms for the maintenance of the Chinese Empire."