

**TALE OF CHINESE CHRISTMAS**

Moslem of China Has Not Changed for Ten Thousand Years.

CELEBRATION ON DECEMBER 4

Great Official Feast of State, Which is Celebrated with Great Pomp and Splendor by High and Low.

By TOW-CHE-TEI.

"Master and model of 18,000 centuries" is the inscription you read on the front of Confucius' temple, for his name indeed means master.

He was born into this world 2,500 years ago in the village of Kion-iso, which means "the sound hill." This village is part of the province of Chang-long, which adjoins Peking.

His parents having been childless for many years and desiring a son, they offered a sacrifice. On the mountain Ngnikion they placed a whole cooked chicken. At the side of this, on a tripod, they placed an incense burner filled with burning aromatic sandal-wood.

Now, shortly after this there appeared in the hamlet of Kionou an animal called ki-ling. It was a kind of unicorn, but covered with scales like a fish. It carried a book in which was announced the coming birth of Confucius, the reformer of the world. It was a wonderful miracle. And when he was born spirits were heard singing in the air and on his breast were written these words: "This is he who has come to regenerate the world."

This was the event the anniversary of which is celebrated annually on December 4. It is the great official festival of the state, which is celebrated with great and solemn splendor; savants and civil officials adore Confucius as if he were a god, for Confucius is considered divine by the emperors, the sons of heaven, who hold the power to defy.

Thirty days previous the preparations begin. First the front of the temple is covered with red ink, for red is the color of the festival, while the interior is hung with innumerable ribbons on which are printed eulogies of the deified, and from all the ceilings are suspended lanterns of all kinds of shapes covered with silk.

When the great day approaches, a cow, a sheep and a pig are slaughtered, their haws taken out and on the evening before the festival they are placed on a table in front of the altar.

Before that eight young people have practiced chanting Confucius' hymn and twenty-four others have rehearsed the sacred dance to be performed in front of the altar on the tablet on which are written the titles granted Confucius by the sons of heaven. Below this tablet are his names who accept honors and sacrifices.

Melodious and sweet sounds of eight flutes accompany this chant and make a profound impression. Two enormous and richly ornamented torches burn on the altar and fill the air with aromatic fragrance. Tears are falling from the eyes of all those present.

Then there is the dance. Twenty-four young people perform it in the courtyard in front of the altar in couples dressed like warriors from Confucius' time.

Lining up in front of the altar they prostrate themselves three times, accompanied by the sound of bamboo flutes which play incessantly.

The next day comes the solemn procession and performance. The theater is built at the end of the court of honor, opposite the altar.

The procession walks through the streets of the village. In front ride a score of horsemen armed with lances, as they were at the time of Confucius. Then a crowd of foot, carrying banners covered with inscriptions, multicolored lanterns on long sticks, red silk parasols, signs of Confucius' high dignity in the government of Lou, which at his time was a vassal state. Then follow three groups of young people in the age of from 12 to 15, disguised as young girls, carried on richly ornamented stretchers, three and three together.

After these follow one hundred children, from 5 to 7 years old, in costumes of ancient silk. Some of them, representing mandarins, wear at the top of their bonnets buttons and peacock feathers.

All the children are the saint's cortege of honor. They remind one of Confucius' commandment to perpetuate the family and of his word that to remain childless is a sin against filial piety, which is the foundation of all morals.

Then a troop of soldiers, some on horseback, some afoot, followed by a great mandarin surrounded by a number of satellites waiting on him, bearing a zodiacal sign in carved wood, gilt or silvered.

At last comes the great tablet of the deified, also in gilt wood, carried as in other countries are the statues and effigies of saints. Confucius was physically very ugly and the law forbids the making of an image of him.

His family has been perpetuated to our days in the places where he lived and all his belongings have been respectfully preserved by them—urns, bronze tripods, manuscripts written on bamboo plates, for paper had not been invented. (Translated by the Mandarin Ly-Chau-Pee.)

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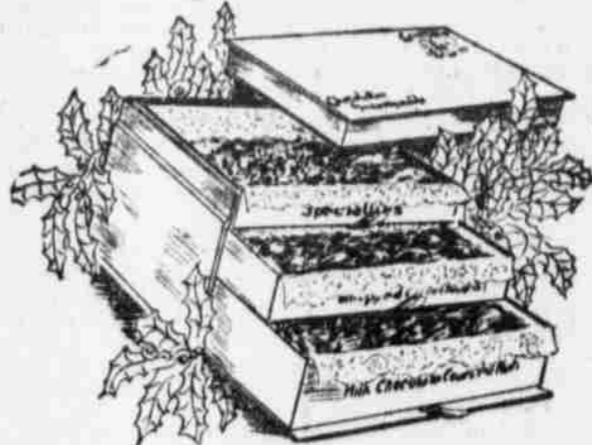
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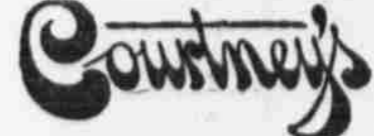
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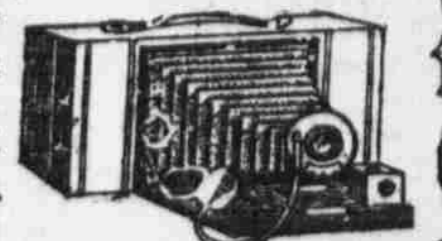
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