

local Roman Catholic missionaries, called on me. He practically forced me to pack up my belongings again and move to another inn in the outer town, known among Europeans, like the street it lies on, by the name of Karius in honour of a business man, Mr Karius from Eastern China. He spent a few months here about a year ago and it is probably due to his energy that my room boasts a shelf fixed to the wall which adds considerably to its comfort. The horses had come off best and were able to rest after their exertions in an airy and large shed, but my men and I were also comparatively comfortably installed. I felt ill and had a pain in the right lung.

Chinese New Year's Day was celebrated a day or two after our arrival. The rumble of drums, the clash of cymbals and banging of percussion caps could be heard in my room throughout the 24 hours with a short respite during the night, the noise announcing that a great event had occurred. When I went out for the first time a day or two after New Year, the town was unrecognisable. All the shops were closed, doors and columns in front of houses were decorated with Chinese words decoratively inscribed on red paper, paper lanterns and other paper adornments. A crowd of men moved carefully along the streets, which were alive with elegant little carriages.

These little carriages, with their boxes covered in dark cloth, sometimes with a broad band of a lighter colour at the bottom, look very pretty, as they bounce on their narrow, but solid wheels and shake between the enormous stone slabs paving the streets. The metal fittings of the harness sparkle in the sun, the hood is tricked out with paper flowers and silk ribbons in bright colours and the plump mule with its slender legs and high-held head hurries over the rough street paving, urged on by the bareheaded driver who runs by its left side. Through the tiny windows of the carriage you catch a glimpse of a figure dressed in silk, and in front, on one of the shafts, sits a servant in his finery with a red leather portfolio of imposing size for visiting cards, unless he makes way on horseback for his master's equipage. Everything that is not new is impeccably clean and polished. Most of the clothes are of black silk and all heads are covered by the traditional black felt hats with their low knobs hidden under red fringes. The wealthier men have brims of short-haired fur, shining like silk, to their hats. You see people in the street stop and greet each other with the ceremonious «tching ngan» bows (a kind of curtsy with the knees spread out, while the right hand seems to fumble for something on the ground). Occasionally you see a group of visitors in front of a house, bidding farewell to the host who stands at the top of the stairs, while they bow stiffly with their arms pressed to their sides. No women are seen. It is difficult to recognise the dirty Chinamen of yesterday in this crowd arrayed in rustling silk, and yet — what uniformity even here. It is just as though they had been cast in the same mould, from the mandarin to the street porter, the same dress, the same manners, the same customs in connection with the festival. Class distinctions are far less striking here than among us.

The Chinese, whether of high or low rank, is very much addicted to forms and ceremonies, i.e., to play acting; give him the right costume, and he will play any part you like. If you did not see a mandarin's blue, red or green litter, preceded by a numerous retinue with red sunshades and various insignia, moving through the crowd occa-