



Missionary Mirror.

THE RELIGION OF THE CHINESE.

A stranger, on arriving in China, would think that the Chinese were a very religious people, for they have many gods, and they seem to pay them a great deal of worship. They burn much incense to their gods, and fire off a great many crackers, and do not appear at all ashamed to be seen worshipping their idols in the most public manner.

The Chinese think there are a great many gods, some male and others female. It is hard to say which they regard as their supreme god, or whether they have any such. They commonly worship *Tien*, which seems to mean the same with them that heaven does with us. They also worship the sun and the earth, and the Dragon King, or the god of rivers. They have also the god of learning, the god of riches, and a very great many others. Besides these gods, there are the spirits of their ancestors, and a great many other spirits that they worship. There are, for instance, the spirits of the mountains, and the spirits of the hills, and the spirits of the valleys, and the spirits of rivers and brooks, and the spirits of trees, and the spirits of rocks, and the spirits of roads and bridges, and many others.

The principal way in which they worship these gods and spirits is by burning incense before them, offering them pieces of gilt or silvered paper,

and making sacrifices either of animals or of some kind of food and drink. The incense that they burn is commonly either sandal wood, which gives a very pleasant odour when burnt, or else a kind of composition made of the dust of sandal wood and other substances, which is formed into little sticks, about as large as a common goose-quill. These sticks are called *joss-sticks*. They are sold in almost every shop by the hundred, and there is hardly a person in China who does not use a great many of them every year.

Although a stranger would think the Chinese a very religious people, on seeing their many idols, and how constantly they burn incense before them; they do not care much in their hearts about them. It is very easy work to light a joss-stick before an idol, or burn some silvered paper, or fire off some crackers, or write or print a prayer, and lay it on the altar, or place a cup of tea and some rice before the idol. All this can be done while the heart is thinking about something else. It does not require any repentance or sorrow for sin, any mortification of sinful passions and feelings, any self-denial, or any faith in another for salvation. They can do all this, and yet lie, and cheat, and steal, and be angry, as though they thought their gods did not care whether they were good men or bad men. Now this is a very easy kind of worship. It does not take much