

imposing gateway. There are roads traversing the grounds in various directions, which are paved with dressed stone. There are gates on the roads in all the division walls. The grounds are sown with grass, interspersed with flower-beds. The eastern division is intersected by a transverse wall running east and west. There is an altar to Heaven in each of these subdivisions, and they are distinguished as the southern and northern altars. The two altars are the same in structure. But on the top of the northern altar there is erected an imposing three-storied building, with three domes to represent the canopy of heaven. This can be seen from many places about the city, and it is commonly called the Temple of Heaven.

The altar to Heaven is built of white marble, and is of mammoth size. It is circular in shape, and it is built with successive terraces, one above the other. The lowest one is 210 feet in diameter; the second is 150 feet, and the topmost terrace is 90 feet in diameter and 27 feet above the ground, as the first one is nine feet above the ground, and each successive terrace is nine feet above the one below it. The outer circumference of each terrace has a balustrade of carved marble. The ascent to each successive terrace is made by four marble stairways, one from each point of the compass. The highest terrace has a circular space of 90 feet in diameter, and the lower terraces have each a circular balcony of 30 feet in width. The top surface and the balconies have arrangements for the erection of the required tents. There are holes in the marble flooring for the tent poles, and there are heavy blocks of marble with holes to which the tent ropes are fastened. There are marble stands on which the incense-holders and offerings are placed. A table before which the emperor stands when reading the annual prayer and making the offerings is placed near the south side of the terrace. There are large openwork iron urns placed in different parts of the grounds around the altar, in which the silk and other offerings and the written prayer are burned; and to the south-east of the altar is a large furnace, in which a whole bullock is consumed as a burnt-offering.

On the day before the worship nine tents, covered with sky-blue silk cloth, are erected on the northern side of the highest terrace for the tablet to Heaven and for the tablets of eight of the imperial ancestors, who are worshipped conjointly with Heaven. On the middle balcony tents are erected for the tablets of sun and stars on the east side, and for the tablets of the moon and rain, clouds, thunder, and wind on the west side. On this same balcony, near the top of the southern stairway, a tent covered with yellow silk is erected to be used as the imperial robing tent.

On the north of the altar is a round building enclosed with a high wall. It is called the temple of the Imperial Expanse. In it there are nine handsomely gilded and carved cases, where the tablets to Heaven and to the eight imperial ancestors are safely deposited. I was so fortunate as to obtain an entrance to this depository, and to get a sight of these tablets.