

furrow, then rakes the ground and sows it with seed. This being accomplished, he, and his officials, proceed to the Temple of Agriculture near by, which is dedicated to Shang-ti (the Supreme Being, as most scholars understand the term to mean), who is here worshipped under the form of Shin-nung, the "Divine Husband-man." Bullocks, swine and sheep are slaughtered; their flesh is cooked, and first offered in the Temple, and afterwards eaten. At the same time prayers are said to Shin-nung, and to the gods of land, of grain, of ocean, wind, thunder and rain.

On the same day that the Emperor is thus worshipping in the Temple of Agriculture, in all the great cities of China the Mandarins gather the people near the south gates, address them from pulpits upon carefully cultivating the soil, and, in the name of the Emperor, give gifts to those farmers who have distinguished themselves; much after the fashion that prevails among us of giving premiums and medals at agricultural fairs and exhibitions.

Thus among the Chinese "God has not left Himself without a witness among them, in that He does good, and sends them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." Yet, alas! they worship Him not; and even the worship of the gods of their own devising is half-hearted and careless.

That august body, the Tsung-li Yamen (Foreign Office) pays visits to the Envoys on state occasions, at which times the peaceful compound is overflowing with chairs, carts and ragamuffin retainers, who flatten their noses against every window-pane, or if the door is incautiously left unlocked, they walk in. Meanwhile the masters are treated to an unappreciated foreign tiffin. When it is their turn to entertain the foreigners, they never receive them at their private houses. Instead, there is a spread at Yamen, where a few Chinese delicacies come in play, such as bird's nest soup, shark's fins, preserved eggs—which are kept in straw till they turn perfectly black—parched watermelon seeds and apricot kernels.

It seems little short of a miracle in these days that in the twelfth century that uncommon adventurer, Marco Polo, could have gained such influence over them as to have been made governor of a province, and that the Jesuits in the latter part of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries should have been permitted to build the observatory and the most beautiful palace in China, which, such is the sarcasm of destiny, was destroyed later by their own people.

At present there is a halo of mystery that hangs about the court and all appertaining thereto. All state affairs at the palace