

ground. The second one, placed on the top of the lowest one, is 150 feet in diameter, and the third platform, erected on the second one, is 100 feet higher than the second one—is 80 feet in diameter and 27 feet above the ground. Each platform is surrounded by a marble open work railing, except where the stairways are placed. Of these there are four, one from each point of the compass, and they continue in three successive flights of steps to the top of the altar. The altar is enclosed by two concentric railings of open marble work, each railing having four gateways opposite the steps, which are for the ascent of the altar to its successive platforms.

To the south of the altar there is a furnace large enough for the whole carcass of an ox to be placed on the wood to be consumed as a burnt offering at the hour of worship. On the outside of the railings are high poles on which lanterns are suspended. The time for the worship is at four o'clock in the morning. The Emperor goes to the park on the day before. He is drawn in a carriage from the entrance to his palace by an elephant. On his arrival at the place he makes a tour of inspection to all places to see that the preparations for the grand ceremony of the morning are in readiness. Among the places thus inspected are the musicians' lodge, the stables in which the sacrificial animals are kept, the hall in which the sacred tablets are deposited, and the buildings in which all the sacred utensils are deposited. He then goes to the Hall of Fasting, where he spends the time in meditation and fasting till he is called by the master of ceremonies the next morning in time for the worship. The Emperor, when he goes to the park, is attended by a large number of high officials in their official dress, who find accommodation in various buildings in the park till the morning, when they all assemble at the altar and take their respective places among the worshippers.

On the highest platform there are nine tents of blue silk, prepared to receive the tablets which are to be worshipped. The principal one is the Tablet of Heaven, which is made of wood, carved and gilded. It is about two and a half feet high by eight inches wide. On the front face four characters are carved: "Imperial Heaven, Supreme Ruler." There are placed also the tablets of eight of the ancestors of the reigning dynasty, four on one side and four on the other side of the tablet to heaven, according to their rank in the list of ancestors. They are considered in the ritual as the joint and equal receivers of the worship rendered. There are special offerings of silk, meats on trenchers, five kinds of grains, wine, fruits, fish, etc., spread before each tablet. A very special object placed before the tablet of heaven is a round azure gem, which, by its color and shape, is to represent the object of worship. On the second platform are placed

the secondary objects of worship. On the east side are placed the tablets of the sun, stars and planets, on the west side of the altar are tablets of the moon, clouds, rain, thunder and wind, in their respective tents. There is also, on the middle terrace, a tent of yellow silk, which is the imperial robing tent.

In front of the Tablet of Heaven are placed an incense urn, two candelabra, and two vases for flowers, and near the southern side of the altar is placed the table at which the ritual prayer is read.

When the hour of service arrives, the Emperor proceeds from his robing tent, arrayed in robes of sky blue silk, to the place of worship before the tablets on the highest platform. The attendant worshippers are arranged in their respective places, according to their rank, on the middle and lower platforms, and on the adjoining grounds on the south-east and west sides of the altar to the number of nearly two thousand. The sacrificial fire is lighted to burn the whole burnt offering; the grounds are lighted all around by lanterns; incense is burning in many places; the music is playing according to a programme enjoined in the official ritual. At the call of the master of ceremonies, the Emperor takes his place for worship, and bows three successive times before each of the nine tablets, knocking his head three times during each successive kneeling. In this worship he is accompanied by the whole crowd of attendants, at the cry of the master of ceremonies, in their prescribed order. The ritual prayer is read and then burnt, that it may thus be wafted heavenward, and the rolls of silk and other objects are burnt in the numerous cast-iron urns that are scattered about for that purpose. The different parts of service are interspersed with music from the orchestra performing the prescribed pieces.

When the various ceremonies are all performed the Emperor retires to his robing tent, and after resuming his usual imperial dress, returns first to the hall of fasting, and from thence, in the imperial carriage, to his palace, having, as the high priest of the people and as the heaven-appointed ruler of China, ordered the appointed worship to the chief god of China.

This is one of the most imposing religious ceremonies in the world. It perhaps more nearly resembles the ceremonies at the dedication of the temple by King Solomon than any other with which we are familiar.

A similar worship is paid to earth, as the head of the female principle in nature, at the summer solstice, on the 21st of June, at the altar to earth, in a park on the north of Peking, by the Emperor. When the sun has reached its farthest northern limit and begins to return south, it is supposed that the female principle in nature commences its sway. The work of earth is to produce and ripen the