

I met a young bonze, of a good mien, who stood upright in a sort of sedan, the inside of which was stuck so full of nails, that he could not move without being wounded. Two fellows carried him from house to house, while he endeavoured to excite compassion, by telling them that he was shut up in that chair for the good of their souls, and would never leave it till they had bought all the nails, amounting to two thousand, at the value of sixpence each, with which he purposed building a temple to the god Fo. The bonze directing his discourse to me, I advised him to leave his prison, and to go to the temple of the true God, where he might submit to penances less severe, but more wholesome. He thanked me for my advice; but added, that he should be more obliged to me, if I would buy a dozen of his nails. Here, hold your hand, says he, take these on the faith of a bonze, they are the best in all my sedan, for they prick me the most; yet you shall have them at the same rate as the rest. The tone in which he uttered these words, on any other occasion, would have made me laugh; but I left him with a mixture of pity and contempt*.

These sects are, however, only tolerated. The religion of the court consists in following the precepts and doctrines of Confucius, an excellent moral philosopher; but with his purer dogmas, they have intermixed many idolatrous customs.

It is well known, that the Chinese had the art of printing many ages before it was practised in

* Might not Le Compte have been a little more charitable, had he reflected on the greater impostures of his own craft! Those who sully the true religion by pious frauds, are certainly more criminal than the ignorant followers of Fo.

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