

They are made of precious wood, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height and 8 inches in width. They are finely carved near the top and bottom, with a smooth surface for the lettering, on which is written in Chinese and Manchu the name of the being to which each one is dedicated. On the tablet to Heaven there are four words, "Imperial Heaven, Ruler above." In other buildings in the same enclosing walls the tablets to the sun, moon, stars, etc., are deposited.

In different parts of the grounds are buildings for storing all the different utensils, vessels, musical instruments, etc., which are used at the time of worship or in preparation for it. There are slaughter-houses, and the instruments and the utensils for slaughtering the animals and preparing them for the time of the offering of them. On other parts of the grounds are buildings in which the high officers who attend the emperor and the musicians are lodged. There is a special building, styled the Palace for Fasting, prepared for the emperor.

On December 20th the emperor comes forth in great state from the palace, and proceeds—part of the way in a sedan-chair carried by sixteen men and part of the way in a chariot drawn by an elephant—to the park by one of the broad streets of Peking. He is attended by a large retinue composed of members of the royal family, some of the nobility, civil and military officers of high rank, to the number of nearly two thousand. The emperor proceeds to a place to the south of the altar, where he descends from the chair and goes to the building where the tablets are in deposit. He burns incense before them, and worships the tablets of Heaven and of the ancestors. He then inspects all the preparation which has been made for the worship of the next morning, to see that they have all been properly prepared, according to the statutes. The retinue have retired to their respective places, and the emperor repairs to the Palace for Fasting, and spends the night in meditation. The service commences at three o'clock in the morning. The emperor is informed of the hour by the official messenger, and proceeds in an imperial chair to the south gate of the outer wall which encloses the altar. From there he proceeds on foot, and ascends by the flight of steps from the south to the robing tent. The retinue in official robes take their respective places. The members of the royal family are on the south side of the highest terrace, the higher officers on the south side of the middle terrace, and others on the lowest terrace, and others still on the ground on the south side of the altar. The grounds are all lighted by lanterns suspended from poles and the marble gateways.

When everything is ready and all are in their places, the services are commenced with music. The tablets are brought out with reverential ceremonies and placed in their respective tents. The fire is lighted in the furnace where the burnt-offering is consumed. The rolls of silk and all the various offerings of meats, grains, wines, fruits are placed before the several tablets. All the exercises are performed at the call of the master