

smouldering in trays, bamboo boxes, with bundles of small sticks, on the end of which are inscribed certain cabalistic characters, surround the figure. At certain hours in the morning the temple becomes sacred. It is the hour of divination. Any one now about to undertake a journey or make a purchase, and desirous of knowing if he will arrive in safety or make a profitable investment, comes to Joss. He pays his obeisance by profoundly bowing and salaaming, then lights a certain number of matches or tapers, and makes a present; after a while, when it is thought Joss is conciliated, the suppliant takes the box of marked sticks, and, after shaking them about, selects half a dozen and passes them to the priest, or Sheong-ti (son of heaven), in attendance, who refers to the book of mysteries, and there reads the will of Joss. If he is warned of misfortune, he forbears the journey, or declines the bargain, and waits for a more fortunate day. If Joss advises otherwise, and a good profit is the result, the happy merchant makes a substantial present. Joss is therefore (as will be seen) a fortune-teller, and nothing more, and Sheong-ti is only a sensible, cunning fellow, who prefers to live by the credulity of his neighbour rather than by the labour of his hands.

Buddhist temples literally swarm over China. The officiating priests are consequently very numerous. The gods they worship are the three precious