Of the influence which religion exerts over the daily life and actions of the community, it is less difficult, although not easy, to form an estimate. The uneducated are manifestly idolaters; nor do the better classes seem to rise much above the superstitions of the vulgar. In fact, the Chinese have no acknowledged system of religious belief, except a compound or farrago of all the strange vagaries which falsehood, priestcraft, mysticism, and fear have combined in diffusing alike among Budhists, Taouists, and Confucians. Their notions are wild, vague, and confused; and they are ready to ingraft on the multiplied absurdities of their belief any unmeaning practice which may seem likely to procure a lucky omen, or the favour of chance. Of this character are the numerous illuminations, theatricals, and offerings; which at this season of the year abound in Canton. The destructive ravages of fire among whole streets, rendered still more destructive by the light combustible materials of which their houses are composed, have led to the practice of propitiating the tutelary deities of the neighbourhood by a yearly offering at the commencement of the winter season. Subscriptions are collected to raise a fund for this purpose; and whole streets may be seen in their turn; night after night, brilliantly illuminated for a general holiday. Public companies are also formed for supplying the usual lamps, festoons, musicians, images, and other accessories, which grace the festive occasion. At the end of some of the streets the effect to the eye is magnificently grand, where the tradesmen have been unusually successful in business since the former similar occasion, and, as an acknowledgment, subscribe their money for a festival of more than ordinary grandeur. In walking through the streets, the attention is suddenly arrested by ingeniously-contrived machinery, performing, by means of images, many of the acts of ordinary life, to the gratification of the crowd below. A little further on, a company of living musicians, in a retired recess or gallery, accompanying the voice of some artiste of song, rivet the attention of silent admirers. Suddenly, in some wider part of the street, numerous drums, gongs, and the shrill tones of the peculiar Chinese falsetto voice, indicate the principal centre of attraction. On an elevated stage may be seen mandarin processions; battles between the Celestials and Barbarians (in which the former, of course, are always victorious); native heroes slaying their thousands, and whirling round in the violence of martial fury; and horsemen whipping their unruly steeds, as well as the whip and the action can compensate for the absence of the imaginary animal. Soon, again, imperial councils and the politic measures of sage rulers, together with an occasional introduction to an interior view of Chinese social life, may be seen acted in all the pompous majesty of actual reality, amid the plaudits of the enthusiastic assemblage. On one occasion, the mal-practices and ambitious career of *Tsaou-Tsaou*, a wicked Mandarin in the Han Dynasty, the Napoleon of his age and country, were the subject of representation.