



SUNDAY READING

HEATHENISM IN AMERICA.

he Chinese Joss and Its Surroundings in New York City.

The Chinaman's religion from an American's point of view seems to be a belief in inspired luck, says the N. Y. Sun. This is the way it looks to any one who has visited the joss house in Mott street, and heard the aged and bald-headed Chinaman in charge go through the services for his edification. So much does it seem to be a matter of luck, that policy players and others who believe in luck and superstitions have begun to make visits to the joss house to find out from the bones and the sticks what to do to win.

This joss house is upstairs at 16 Mott street, in one of the old high-stopped, three-story brick houses which date back to the time when Mott street was a semi-fashionable neighborhood and the grandfathers and great-grandfathers of present New York's distinguished citizens lived there. The house has been allowed to run down steadily since. It is doubtful if any money at all has been spent on it for repairs since the Chinese tenants came in. The stone steps are worn and clipped, the iron railing is so weak and rickety that it is not to be relied on, there are holes in the floors, and the staircases are wobbly, lopsided, and uncertain. Pasted on the outer wall are layers of the light-red paper used by the Chinese for official and religious notices. One notice has been pasted over the other until there is a little bulge on that section of the brick from the successive layers of paper.

Within there was a Chinese shop on the first floor, a Chinese restaurant on the second floor and the joss house on the third floor. The Chinese restaurant and shop is one of the ordinary Chinese shops to be found around Mott street, with its different grades of tea, its dried meats and fish, and its curious dried vegetables which are not raised in truck gardens near New York, but are imported from China, as is almost everything else in the shop. Two or three Chinamen of that uncertain indication of age which comes into the face of every Chinaman as soon as he ceases to be a positively young man sit around this shop smoking tobacco and opium while they wait for customers.

This is one of the many Chinese restaurants, with its high tables, broad-legged stools without backs, and its Chinese loafers lounging in the corner and smoking opium as do the American loafers who hang around the corner saloon. In this way the Chinese restaurants correspond to a New York saloon, for it is a club house and loafing place for the idle and dissipated. When an unknown American enters the restaurant the opium smoking is stopped and the pipes are hid behind the cushions which lie on the broad bench along the wall. This is not the best known restaurant in Chinatown, nor the biggest, for there are several larger and more famous ones, especially the restaurant around the street, but this one is a fair sample, and the prices are as moderate as at Beefsteak John's.

Up another flight of the stairs is the joss and his hiding place. The house in which the joss lives must have been rather better than its neighbors, for there is a balcony on the third floor made of iron work which must have been better than the common in its time, and is floored over with planks which are now rotten and broken. The entrance to this balcony is from a door in the main room where the joss lives. By the door is a vessel which looks like a flower pot, filled with earth and burned joss sticks. These joss sticks are burned to propitiate the joss and to keep away evil spirits, as well as to encourage good spirits to enter. From the balcony there is a view up and down Mott street of the Chinamen, the curious half-breed Chinese children, an occasional woman with an opium face, the policemen and the crown of white meat at the end of Mott street around Chatham square with the elevated road and the Chatham square hacks.

The regular form for holding services in the joss house includes the joss sticks, the services of the officiating attendant and a luck card. The room occupies the full width of the building. At the rear is the shrine of the joss covered with carved figures and tapestry. Before the shrine there is a row of pots with earth in them, where the joss sticks are put and a little tray with holes to hold the pink wax tapers which are burned in connection with the joss sticks. A large frame shuts off the view of the joss from across the street. In this frame there is a carving which is said to represent the history of China, the great figures in rows showing the successive dynasties and the principal events. In the corners of the room there are carved chairs, a huge umbrella about eight feet in diameter, and little shrines where also joss sticks may be burned.

On the east wall hooks are arranged in regular order and numbered. On every one of these hooks there is a package of pink paper printed in Chinese characters. The papers are about 3 1/2 inches long by two wide, with five rows of Chinese characters and a superscription, also in Chinese. They are numbered according to the hooks they are on. These are what the Americans call luck cards. On either side of the pots in which the joss sticks are burned is a long tin cylinder filled with long strips of wood and ivory several inches longer than the cylinder. But in front of the joss there are two oblong pieces of wood, resembling in appearance a large red banana split in two.

After the joss sticks have been lighted and while they make the room fragrant with their perfume, and the pink wax tapers are burning in the tin tray, the officiating attendant prostrates himself before the joss and bows a number of times. Then he takes the two oblong pieces of wood and throws them in the air. The

way they fall decides in a general way the luck of the applicant. One side of each is round and the other flat. For both to fall on the floor on their round side is one kind of luck, their flat side is another kind of luck, and one round and one flat side is a third kind of luck. This is a decision in the main as to whether the one who is consulting the joss should or should not do what he has in mind and come to consult about.

For further inquiry into his luck the visitor can consult the ivory and wood sticks in the tin cylinders. The officiating attendant twirls the cylinder round rapidly until the centrifugal force causes one of the sticks to fall out of the cylinder and drop on the floor in front of the joss. The number of this stick corresponds to a number of a hook in the wall. The attendant goes to this hook and takes from it the pink slip of paper with the Chinese characters, or the luck card, which tells in more detail the luck of the applicant to the joss. He will also translate this card if he will confess to his knowledge of English.

A fee of 25 cents pays for this. It is an interesting visit to make to joss even if one does not believe that the divinity has advanced information about what is to happen.

THE SYRIAC GOSPELS.

How Mrs. Lewis Found Them in a Convent Near Mount Sinai.

An interesting account of Mrs. Lewis's discovery of the Syriac Gospels is given in the London Queen. Mrs. Lewis is now engaged at her home in Cambridge in developing the photographs of the famous manuscript which she found early last year in the convent of St. Katherine at Mount Sinai. Mrs. Gibson, the companion of her sister in her travels, is now writing a little book entitled, "How I Found the Codex." Photographs of the convent, the desert march, the Bedouins, and some of the scenery through which they passed will illustrate the book.

It was not chance that led Mrs. Lewis to find this valuable manuscript, so old and worn that the leaves stuck together. Her eye caught the word "Evangelium," and although the first writing had been erased to make place for the second, she saw by intuition that it was of great value. After working patiently for days with the steam kettle she succeeded in separating the leaves, and found a complete version of the four Gospels, with the exception of about eight pages. The only other relic of the kind is in such a poor state of preservation that it is of very little value.

Mrs. Lewis is mistress of ten languages, and it was her book entitled "Glimpses of Greek Life and Scenery," translated into Greek, which gained her admittance to the convent. The monks have of late years jealously guarded their sacred treasures. The difficulty of access is explained by the desire of the monks for self-protection against Englishmen who have endeavored to force purchases of sacred relics by threatening them with the power of the British Government. These two ladies were allowed free entrance, and the freedom of the library, where they were ultimately trusted to remain alone and examine the manuscripts at their leisure. There are three mountain peaks rising about a thousand feet above the convent, and the ladies hunt the feelings of the monks by climbing Mount Sinai instead of their special peak, dedicated to the monks' patron saint, St. Katherine, which is visited by long trains of pilgrims every year.

THE MOST WONDERFUL BOOK.

Many Languages Into Which the Bible has Been Translated.

That most wonderful, most beautiful, and most sacred of all books, the Bible, says Harper's Young People, exceeds all others in the extent of its circulation not only in numbers, but in point of territory over which its circulation extends.

Translations of it have been made into almost every known language. The American Bible society alone has printed it in the following tongues: English, Welsh, French, French Basque (Pyrenees), Spanish, Catalan (eastern Spain), Portuguese, Norwegian (German type), Arabic, Syriac (ancient), Syriac (modern), Arabic (Mesopotamia), Ebon (Marshall Islands), Kusaiian (Strong's Island), Gilbert Islands, Ponape (Ascension Island), Swedish (in German type), Finnish (in German type), Dutch, German, Polish, Hungarian, Bohemian (in Roman type), Italian, Bulgarian, Estonian (Russian), Estonian (Dorpat), Armenian (ancient), Armenian (modern), Mayan (Yucatan), Mortlock, Hawaiian, Zulu, Benga (West Africa), Grebo (West Africa), Mpongwe (West Africa), Dikele (West Africa), Mohawk, Choctaw, Cherokee, Seneca, Dakota, Ojibway, Muskokee, Delaware, Nez-Perces.

The British and Foreign Bible society has, besides printing the books in the languages above-named, put forth editions in two hundred tongues and dialects, including two dozen native African dialects, and including every nation in Europe, Asia, Africa and Australasia.

Everywhere in the world the Holy Writ is being sent. When Stanley made his tour of Central Africa, tons of volumes were to be found among his supplies, and the authorities quoted announce that thousands of copies are even now travelling on pack and on sledge through the frozen polar regions to people who have not only never heard of this book, but to whom books of any sort whatever are entirely unknown.

It is estimated that in ninety years the Bible societies of America and abroad have distributed over 230,000,000 copies. There are more missionary societies represented in India than in any other country of the world; there are more missionaries, more school, more churches, more communicants, a wider opportunity for every Christian endeavor, the use of every weapon of Christian warfare, the application of every Christian principle. And well may it be so; for the population numbers 288,000,000, and the idols worshipped 330,000,000. And besides, India is under the special care of Christian Britain.

NEWS AND NOTABILLIA.

The highest church steeple in the world is that of the Cathedral of Antwerp, 476 feet.

In 1720 the first clocks were introduced, to be placed in churches, the hour glass having been previously used.

St. Paul's episcopal parish, Chestertown, Kent county, Md., is about to celebrate its bi-centennial anniversary. A history of the parish has been written in memory of the anniversary, and the celebration will occupy two days.

In his "Vital Statistics" Dr. Arthur Newsholme says that of every 1,000 clergymen between the ages of 45 and 65, only 15.93 die annually. But of every 1,000 doctors between the ages of 45 and 65, no fewer than 28.03 die every year.

Bishop Thoburn says the number of persons in the three zillas (counties) Meerut, Bulandshahr and Aligarh, who from some cause are desirous of becoming Christians, is 30,000. He told the Bengal Burmah Conference that the illiterate adult converts in north India learn to read with marvellous rapidity.

A committee of the English Presbyterian church is considering the feasibility of inaugurating a system of change of ministerial spheres by which ministers may be transferred from one church to another in cases where such change is desirable, either for the sake of the ministers or the congregations, or both.

Wesleyan Methodist returns show that there is now a church membership of 427,739 in England—an increase of 2,780 on the year. The increase is evenly spread over the country, except in Cornwall, York, Lincoln, and Macclesfield, where, through agricultural and other depression, there is a decline in numbers.

The statistics of the Presbyterian church, in England, presented recently, show a membership of 66,971, an increase of 200. The number of congregations remain the same, 290. In the Sunday schools there are 7,334 teachers and 78,542 scholars. Nearly one-fourth of the membership are engaged in active Christian work in the Sunday school as district visitors, etc.

It is probably a grief to Cardinal Vaughan that he has had to forsake his beloved omnibus and descend to the dignity of a private brougham. Yet such is the inexorable decree of the Vatican. No cardinal may be afoot; his rightful chariot is drawn by two horses in the Eternal City, but indulgence allows one of these to be dispensed with in protestant countries. Cardinal Manning always went out in a single brougham.

A society called "The United Christian Mission," has lately been started in Europe. Its object is to send at least one clear Gospel message into every home. This society is in a sense an outcome of the Evangelical Alliance conference in Florence. During the past year it has carried on its work in twelve languages, has sent through the newspapers and in other ways clear, distinct Gospel messages into more than 2,750,000 homes.

Speaking in Exeter Hall, London, General Booth said the Salvation Army is now established in thirty-three countries, its work is carried on in twenty-one languages, it has forty newspapers and magazines with an annual circulation of 43,000,000 copies, it numbers 3,070 stations or societies controlled by 10,816 officers (excluding 19,758 non-commissioned officers and 12,229 bandmen), and it reaches an estimated number of 7,000,000 persons every week.

According to "All The World," work among the Maoris in New Zealand is carried on by twenty officers and one hundred and twenty-six soldiers and recruits of the Salvation Army, who are now kindly received, being allowed to "rub noses" with the Maoris, though the pioneer, Captain Holdaway, had five years ago to stand his ground in face of threats that his hands and feet should be tied, and he should be placed in a boat to drift down the Jerusalem river.

Some late gossip about the Pope says that he takes a keen interest in mundane affairs. In the evening, his favorite secretary, Mgr. Angell, goes to his bedroom with the day's newspapers and reads aloud, sometimes late into the night, while the Pope sits on the bed enveloped in woolen wraps, and follows the reader attentively. His Holiness is reported to be growing very feeble. When he celebrates mass, as he does every morning at half-past six, he has to be assisted through the service by two attendants, and he ascends and descends the steps of the altar with difficulty.

In Scotland the English church is less attractive as a profession than the Presbyterian churches. In these incomes of nearly £1,000 a year are fairly common. The incomes of the best known ministers are not always the largest. In the established church, Dr. Macgregor, of Edinburgh, receives £923; while his colleagues receive £829; A. K. H. B. receives £606; Dr. Donald McLeod, Glasgow, £1,000. In the Free Church Dr. Alexander Whyte, of Edinburgh, receives £1,153, which is the largest stipend paid in Scotland. The largest paid to any Presbyterian minister is at present the £1,200 to Dr. Monro Gibson, of St. John's Wood, London.

Apathy is not faith. There may be professedly confidence in God with indifference or callousness. With true faith there will be an eye to discern God's dealing with us, and a ready ear to listen to his voice. "A mindless submission, a thoughtless trust, can bring no salvation to a man, who is nothing without his mind; who makes no proper use of his mind if he does not think; who turns his thinking to no good account if he does not will; whose willing is nothing until it is the embodiment of action." Submission to God's appointment is far different from the stolid stoicism generated by a rebellious spirit which acknowledges the vainness of resistance.—[Christian Inquirer.]

Spurgeon's Tabernacle is not yet in a peaceful condition. The Christian World says:—It is whispered that those who have been promoting the election of Mr. Thomas Spurgeon as pastor of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, have not been showing their whole hand, and that their real desire is to see the two brothers associated in the position. If this be the wish of Thomas, as it seems to be that of his mother, the resolution which was passed to the effect that he should secure whatever help he may deem necessary for the discharge of his duties, will enable him to carry it out. It is, however, doubtful if this arrangement will meet with the approval of the majority of the members of the Tabernacle.

Messages of Help for the Week.

Sunday.—Psalm 95, 1-3: "O come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods."

Monday.—Psalm 103, 8-9: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger for ever."

Tuesday.—Romans 12, 10: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love."

Wednesday.—Romans 13, 10: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Thursday.—Hebrews 13, 1: "Let brotherly love continue."

Friday.—5th v.: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

Saturday 6th v.: "So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Not Uncommon in America.

In answer to the enquiry "has a clergyman in this country ever baptized any one in the sea?" London Tit-Bits says: The unusual spectacle of the baptism of two men in the sea at Annfield, Newhaven, Scotland, by the Rev. D. Tait, of South Leith Baptist congregation, was witnessed on a recent Sunday afternoon by about 3,000 spectators. The baptism was advertised to take place at half-past four o'clock, but at that time the water was not sufficiently far up upon the beach, and it was about five o'clock before the ceremony was performed. The minister, followed by the two men, came out of one of the houses at Annfield, and, crossing the roadway, descended the bulwark steps into the sea. It was observed that the minister, was in black waterproof clothing, while the two men, wore dark trousers and white shirts. Taking one of the men by the hand, the minister led him into the sea about half a dozen yards until both were almost waist-deep. Placing his other hand on the shoulders of the man he threw him gently backwards under water, and instantly helped him to regain his feet. He then led him back to the foot of the steps, and returned to the water with the second man, who was similarly immersed. All three afterwards ascended the steps, and returned to the house from which they came.

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Rev. Henry M. Spike, Rector of Musquash, N. B., says: "I am personally acquainted with Mr. Thompson's case, and am greatly pleased that the medicine which I recommended to her produced such remarkable results."

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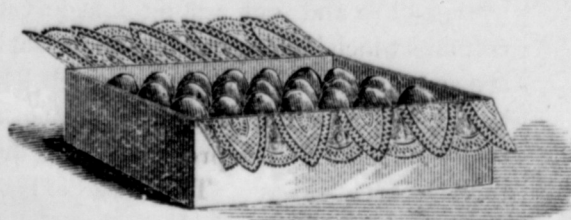
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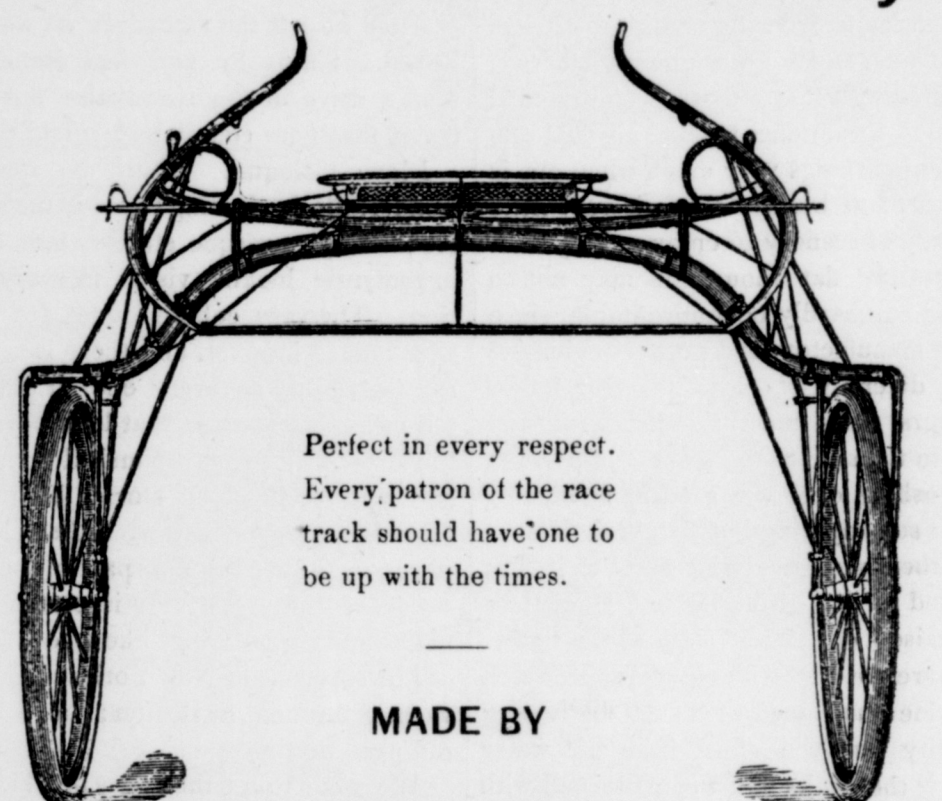
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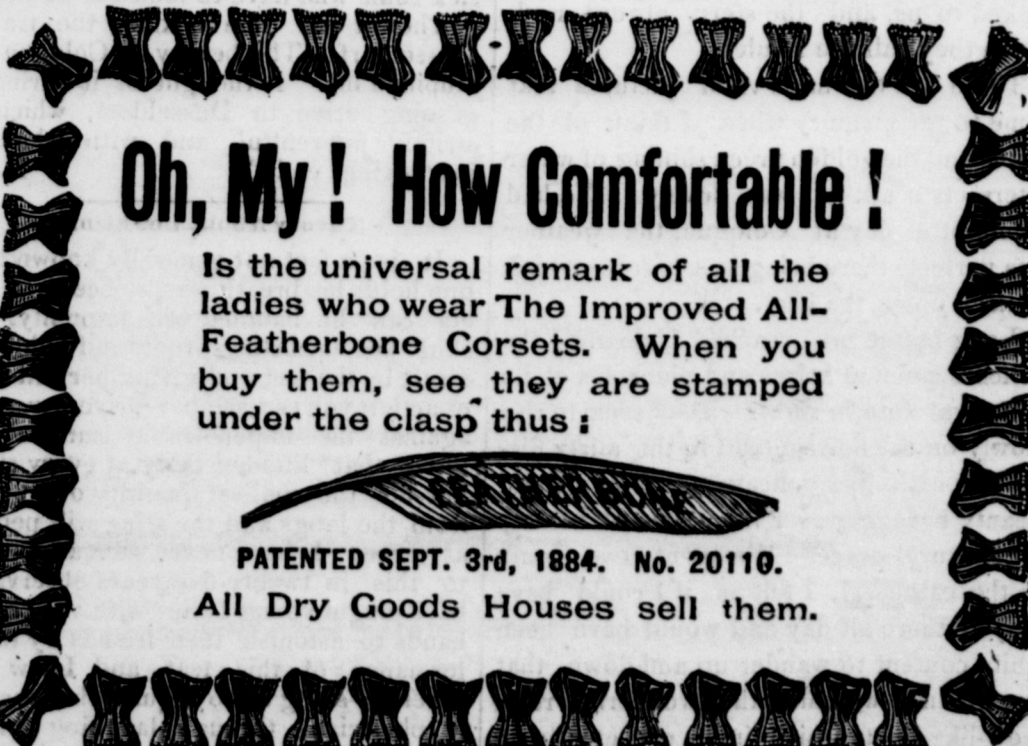
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