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S

POETRY.

They sin who tell us love can die!
With lie all other passions fly,
All others are but vanity.
In heaven ambition cannot dwell!
Nor avarice in the depths of hell!
Earthly these passions, as of earth,
They perish where they have their birth!
But love is indestructible,
Its holy flame forever burneth,
From heaven it came, to heaven returneth.
Too oft on earth a troubled guest,
At times deceived, at times opprest;
It here is tried and purified,
And hath in heaven its perfect rest:
It soweth here with toil and care,
But the harvest time of love is there.
O! when a mother meets on high,
The babes she lost in infancy,
Hath she not then for pains and fears,
The day of woe, the anxious night,
For all her sorrows, all her tears,
An overpayment of delight?

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

BRAHMANISM AND BUDDHISM.

In considering the nations of the East, nothing impresses us more deeply than their various religions; and, among these, the Indian creeds especially attract our attention. Brahmanism and Buddhism? What dark and gloomy thoughts arise in our minds, even at the mentioning of the names! What mysterious associations are connected with them! To us there has always been something appalling conjoined with them. Believed in by millions, those doctrines contain a strange combination of grandeur and absurdity. The thousand rites and ceremonies shadow forth vague ideas, and the whole religion is rendered indistinct to our minds, by the veil of mystery and secrecy which the Hindoo imagination has thrown around it. The awe which we involuntarily feel at the contemplation of such mysterious creeds, is heightened by the thought of their great antiquity. Thousands of years we know them to have existed: Oriental exaggeration declares their age to be far greater. Hoary and venerable are they, with millions upon millions of followers. Thousands of temples are dedicated to them, and countless numbers of priests pass their lives in adoring the greatness, and celebrating the idolatrous rites of Buddha and Brahma. An enquiry into the origin, nature, and resemblance of these two religions, Brahmanism and Buddhism, is interesting to every lover of truth. And although it would require a much larger space than we can occupy to give a full account of them, yet enough can be related to give some idea of their character, and to enable the reader to judge whether it be possible for them to withstand very long the power of Christianity.

The Brahmins take their name from the God Brahma, who is the first person in their "Trinurtie," or trinity. The fundamental doctrines and truths of their religion may be found in their sacred books, called the "Vedas," which are to the Hindoo what the Bible is to us. The period when they were written is not known for certain, being lost in the depths of antiquity. They are four in number, and form the basis of the Brahman religion. Each book is subdivided into three parts: the first, containing prayers and hymns in honor of God—the second, the doctrines and precepts of religion, and the whole of their theological system—and the third is an abstract of the others. These books were composed by various authors, whom the Brahmins believe to be the holiest of the holy. The various parts were composed at different times, and there of course exists a great dissimilarity in style and thought. If you were

earth Peace, good will toward Men."

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and at one time overspread all Hindos. Before Buddhism arose, it had become rooted in a whole nation. But being it had also lost that comparative purity which it once possessed. Monotheism (we have shown) degenerated into a polytheism, and countless gods were worshipped by the Hindos. New doctrines had arisen, and gained strength—doctrines who was not eternal? It may be that some sects of Buddhists may entertain this belief, but according to very reliable authorities, the true spirit of Buddhism seems to be that there is one Supreme Being, Eternal, and Almighty. This Being has created all things, and having formed the laws of nature, set them, as it were, in motion, and having performed this, no longer interferes. He exists in a state of eternal repose. The God of the Brahmins, on the contrary, pervades all things; being omnipresent, he busies himself with the affairs of many, judges them, rewarding the good and bad according to their actions. But since the God of the Buddhists is careless of our actions, it is evident that he has in store for us neither rewards nor punishments. How then shall the virtuous and the vile meet with their respective deserts? How shall injustice meet with condemnation, and righteousness find a reward? The Buddhist will answer you thus: "Virtue brings with it temporal rewards, and the constant practice of it will always confer happiness. In the same way, Vice will invariably bring misery upon those who engage in it." Such doctrines, however, would prove poor incentives to virtue. Every man can look around him, and see the wicked triumphant and happy, while the innocent are trodden down and oppressed, and one might well doubt the truth of this theory, and disbelieve that temporal happiness will flow from virtuous actions. Besides, what is mere "temporal happiness?" Can the presence of that still the longings of the undying soul, or satisfy its craving after immortality? Hence the Buddhist has recourse to new doctrines. They endeavor to find satisfaction in metempsychosis and the absorption of the soul, in thinking upon the gradual increase of the soul's happiness, until the glorious period when it becomes united with Divinity. This doctrine, shadowy as it may be, unfounded as it may be, is the subject of their profoundest meditation, the theme of their most enlightened discourse, the object of their loftiest aspirations. For this the Hindoo mother will slay her child, and the son his aged parent; for this the devotee will readily kill himself, or linger out long years of untold agony.

Since the Supreme Being is careless of the condition of man, it follows that prayers addressed to him can be of no avail. To what, therefore, shall the soul address itself, or whence shall it hope for mercy? They pray and offer up sacrifices to those Buddhas, those deified men, who by their righteous lives have won for themselves perfect bliss. The Triad is the first object of their adoration; the Buddha is second. To the Buddha do all the prayers ascend, and he receives the far greater share of homage and attention. It is probable that the lower classes have no idea of a being superior to Buddha, especially since temples are every where devoted to him. Possibly these circumstances have misled travellers, and caused the belief that their only God was Buddha.

What, therefore, is the character of this religion, and what comfort is there for the Buddhist? For the common man the future is dark and dreary. He believes that no sooner shall he be called away from the unhappy state of present life, then he must return to undergo a similar, perhaps worse fate. Even the devotee who has practised all the requirements of the sacred books, and is worshipped as a saint by others, has little to cheer him. He must spend an unknown period in transmigration, before he is fitted to enjoy that longed for bliss. And at the best, their minds must be victims of doubt and uncertainty.

Buddhism is divided into a great number of sects, whose various shades of opinion, and articles of faith, it would be vain to attempt to understand fully. To us many of their distinctions would be incomprehensible. One of the points concerning which they dis-