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ANGEL AND IMP.

One is a little angel,
An angel full of grace,
For he makes almost beautiful
A homely, careworn face;
The other is an imp perverse,
Who keeps an evil vow
To make as ugly as he can
The smoothest, whitest brow.

You know the angel and the imp;
You know them both so well
Their dictionary names it seems
Superfluous to tell;
And yet, to make my riddle clear,
I'm forced to write them down:
The angel is a smile, of course;
The little imp, a frown.

THE SHINTO RELIGION OF JAPAN.

BY REV. FRANK S. DOBBINS.

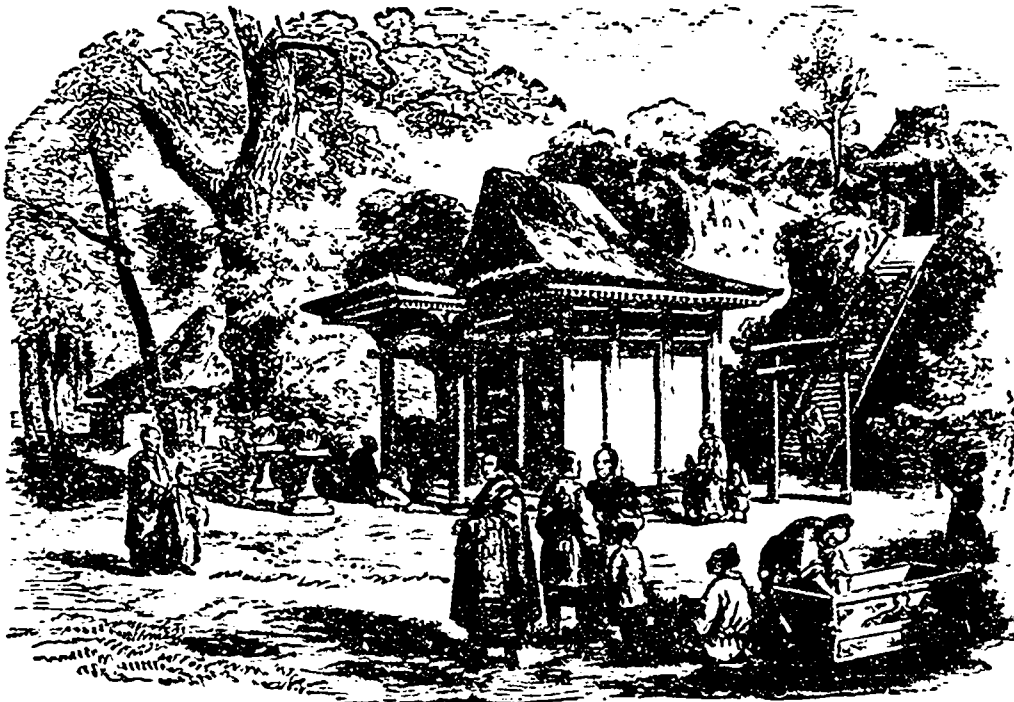
The Shintoism of Japan is an ancient system of nature worship. As far as Japan can be said to have a national religion, Shintoism is that faith. Buddhism has more followers, but Shintoism claims the Royal Family and nobility among its adherents, and it derives some support from Government aid. The Mikado is esteemed the chief of the religions of the Shintoists, and the head of the religion. The sacred books of the Shintoists are the chronicle of the history of ancient Japan. These books were committed to writing more than eleven hundred years ago, though they were composed before that many hundreds of years.

These works are full of stories about the gods; some of them not fit to be read to decent ears. The books describe the creation of the world as beginning in Japan, where the god Izanagi dipped



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his long, jewelled spear into the ocean, and from the drops which trickled from it, the country of Japan was formed. After this other lands were formed, and then the god Izanagi made eight million lesser gods to occupy the country. The Mikados are believed to be the direct lineal descendants from the god Izanagi.



SHINTO TEMPLE, JAPAN.

In the Shinto temples the only object of worship is a metal mirror. There is a very pretty story connected with this, which is described in the sacred books of the Shintoists. At Ise, which is the Mecca of Shintoism, in the centre of the innermost shrine of the most sacred temple is a box, said to contain the very mirror in which the Sun-goddess looked. On festival days this box—but not the mirror—is exhibited. Strictly speaking, the mirror is the only object of worship in a Shinto temple. Strips of paper (representing the clothing used by the Sun-goddess) are used in worship.

The temples are very plain structures, built of wood, with roofs of thatch. They contain no idols, and have no relics. Once in a while one sees in an outer room, or in the temple enclosure, some images of animals. In 1874 the Government sought to revive Shintoism, and ordered the priests and temple keepers to avoid the use of any Buddhist forms of worship, and to practice only pure Shinto.

Before the temples, or one side of them, stand the peculiar gateways made of two upright posts with two horizontal beams on the top. These are called "torii," or "rests," and were originally used for the cocks to roost upon to awaken the sun-worshippers. The worshipper passes through the "torii," and standing in front of the temple (he never enters it) strikes his hands together, and then kneels in prayer. It is a very vague sort of worship, indeed, a vague sort of religion. Prominent Japanese scholars do not feel sure that it is a religion at all, so uncertain is its history and teaching.

Every scholar should pray for his teacher every day, should give something in the class-offering every Sabbath, and also attend the church.