

CHINESE NEW YEAR'S DAY

BY MRS. P. D. BROWNE.

The morning of the Chinese New Year dawned bright and clear. Friday, February 1st, was a gala day among the Mongolians. Chinatown is cleansed, purified and adorned once a year. Chinese lanterns, gaily dressed children, gorgeously attired men and smiling crowds of visitors are seen everywhere from early morning. The little children with their red caps with black fringe hanging over their foreheads, their purple trousers and peculiar jargon are among the curiosities of the day.

We will pay a few New Year visits, going first to Sooh Ying's. We mounted several flights of stairs, and found a pretty Chinese woman with blue flowing tunic and purple brocade trousers. There was a Bible, gold fish, artificial flowers, etc., on one table. Another table was covered with oranges from China, candies of every kind (all Chinese), nuts, seeds, etc., which were most gracefully passed to the guests. There were two Chinamen beside our host present. They were amusing themselves as we entered by looking at stereoscopic views. There was matting on the floors, pictures on the walls, which, with the little group, spoke of a pleasant home life, a Christian home life. These people once belonged to Bret Harte's "Heathen Chinese."

From thence we went to a heathen den. Crowds of men were gathered about tables playing dominoes, in the midst of filth and smoke. We had been warned by a Chinaman as we ascended the stairs not to go further, but with true womanly curiosity we were the more eager to press on. Looking over the shoulders of the men was one solitary woman, with a babe strapped upon her back. We were invited into another room, where we found the mother of the child reclining upon the bed, a Chinaman, who was a guest, reclining upon a half-sofa, half-bed, near by, the whole room not much larger than a good-sized closet. The smiling-looking woman who was bearing the child around on her back was the first wife and the finely-dressed woman taking her ease was the second. With the Chinese, if the first wife has no children, she soon learns that she must step aside for another. If she does it with a good grace, well; if she rebels it is just as well, no better. This woman, we were told, was at first most indignant, heathen though she was, but it availed her nothing. There was not room for us to be seated, and as we once more found ourselves fairly down the last narrow stairs, we exclaimed: "What has Christianity done for woman?" I wish some of our good New England housewives could have walked down those stairs. Cho Se and the second wife's baby will not soon be forgotten, nor the lesson it taught of the elevating power of the Gospel. What made the difference in the two homes we visited? "Melican women" admit that they do have some "rights," and "Melican men" should be very grateful to their good wives for the comfort of homes.

We went next to the store of a Chinese merchant where we were seated on elegant scarlet chairs embroidered with gold. There as everywhere, refreshments were passed. Two gentlemen were receiving. Two Chinamen entered, and were most courteously received. They did not shake hands, as we would do, but guest and host stood side by side and bowed nearly to the floor. If this class of Chinese had come in such great numbers as the lower class have done, they would have been received more kindly.

We next visited one of the Chinese Young Men's Christian Associations. As we left, we heard some one saying, "How do you do, Mrs. Browne?" and found that it was our old friend Lee Shuck, who had appeared just in time to escort us to a joss house. He took us to one belonging to Hoss Wo & Co. (one of the "six companies"). We joined the throng pressing up the stairs—ladies, gentlemen, "hoodlums" and Chinamen—for every one is bent on seeing. There is Joss himself, with his long moustache, seated far back in an altar. Not one person was doing him homage to-day. Last year in various parts of the temple were devotees. Heathenism in this land is not only destined to fall before the light of the Gospel, but is falling. "What is this?" we ask, pointing to a huge bell beside Joss. "Oh, that is a bell they ring when they want Joss to come and hear them." All this seems as absurd to many of the Chinamen as to ourselves. There were bowls of candy spread out before Joss, exquisitely made flowers, carvings of wood, everything requiring time and patience, with bright-colored walls and altars, which would make one for a moment almost forget that they were in a Christian land. But, looking upon the crowd about, it was plain there was no worship there.

What can we, as Californians, do for the Chinese? What can we, as Christian Americans, do for the Chinese? was the thought of every one on our way homeward. Can they influence America in years to come? They are influencing China now. The region about

Canton already has a little mission-station here and there, the preachers being converted Chinamen from California. There is much earnest, prayerful testimony, as well as bitter hatred among the Californians. At Placerville is a school conducted upon the Muller plan. The teacher is from Dr. Cullis's Home, in Boston. This is under the care of the Presbyterians. The Congregationalists also are doing a good work, notwithstanding a few of them are quoted everywhere as being opposed to the Chinese because of the unwise remarks of one or two of their clergymen at a recent Conference. A Chinese church belonging to Dr. Eells, and near his beautiful church in Oakland, is to be dedicated next Sabbath. A Chinese church in America! The pastor, Rev. Mr. Condit, is one who from his residence in China knows what a power for good these men may be in their own land, and works untiringly and most successfully that they may be "heart-Christians." Dr. Eells is in most hearty sympathy with this, as with every other good cause. At his communion service (last Sabbath) the pure juice of the grape was used.

There are, doubtless, very wicked people in California, but more earnest Christians are not to be found this side the "better land." The powers of light and darkness seem here to be struggling for the victory. Which shall be triumphant? Who can doubt?—SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 7.—N. Y. Witness.

CURIOUS JAPANESE CUSTOMS.

A letter from Mr. De Forest, dated October 12th, 1877, states:—

"Yesterday was a high day with the 1st Church in Osaka. The meetings were held for the last time in the chapel we have hired for three years. The example of independence set by their daughter-church has led to the desire, on the part of this church, to lean no longer on foreign money; and though I told the Christians that they could have the old chapel until winter, they have rented a place about the same size, on the same street, and in about as good a locality for half the rent of the old chapel, and are fitting it up for the first services next Sunday. It is wonderful how well the Christians take to the idea of self-support. This church, that raised not \$50 in all last year, is now raising about \$20 per month; and that, too, while they have been obliged to excommunicate their ablest speaker and writer, whose preaching has often held the house full of interested hearers; and while a few of the weak ones are discouraging every step towards self-sustentation.

"The public service of yesterday was of unusual interest for several reasons. It was a union service of the two churches; two men united with the church; the services were conducted almost exclusively by Japanese; and we had our little girl baptized by Sawayama San.

"One of the men admitted yesterday is a physician, and his examination was certainly a letting in of light upon the customs of this land. He said he had debts, but as he paid interest on the money he borrowed, it was a gain both to him and to the lender, and so could not be wrong; but if he should die suddenly, the lender would lose his money; and as that would not be right, he would arrange so that, in case of death, there would be no loss anywhere. He had followed the customs of the country in sake-drinking, but hereafter he would neither give nor take, not even on New Year's, when not to drink and treat is regarded as certainly an insult. He had freely visited singing girls in former times, but now would give his influence towards the overthrow of one of Japan's greatest sins. He had married a wife this summer; and although Japan allows seven causes for divorce, he would take the law of God for his guide in this matter also. The Sabbath would only be hard for him to keep when the Sabbath and the Japanese day of settlement came together; but he would then refuse to accept the presents of money that naturally would come to him. When the government summons a man for a slight offence, if he can only get a physician to sign a paper signifying ill health, he will be excused for his slight fault, and all doctors sign such papers. Heretofore this man had disliked to do it. Again, he had worshipped idols and had had them in his house; but some time ago had destroyed, instead of selling them. He still had the ancestral tablets in his house, and at first thought it no harm to keep them, but on second thought he said he would destroy them all on the morrow. He would associate with the low and uneducated Christian women, and help them all that he could. He was slightly opposed by some of the Christians in that he would not take his fees on Sunday, but he explained that if he did so the merchants in the church would also take in their dues on Sunday; and as already there was one doctor in the Naniwa church who would not take fees on Sunday, there should also be one in the 1st Church.

"This taking of fees on Sunday, perhaps, needs a word of explanation. Japanese phy-

icians fix no price upon their services; but their patients, on the last day of each month, bring them money folded up in a neat envelope, and marked as a present. If, then, Sunday and the last day of the month come together, what shall a Christian physician do? Shall he stay at home and take his fees? Shall he leave some one at home to collect for him? Or shall he tell his patients that when those days come together he will receive either the day before or the day after? That is where the case stands; and if there ever is to be a Christian Sunday in Japan, all Christians, whatever their business, must be ready to suffer loss if need be, and by their losses, manifest their faith and joy."—Missionary Herald.

A BIG PARROT.

A bird which stands absolutely alone, without a relation in the world, is the kakapo, or ground parrot, the largest of all the parrot tribe, being upward of two feet in length. It has much of the owl in its appearance and habits. The small face is very owl-like, and it is the only parrot which, like the owl, has a facial disk of feathers. It is strictly nocturnal in its habits, and its beautifully-mottled green plumage so perfectly harmonizes with the green mosses on which it feeds that, if it should be accidentally surprised outside of the hollow trees or burrows in which during the day it secretes itself, it is impossible to detect it. A colonist told me that on one occasion, in the early morning, he heard the note of the kakapo, and marked the spot. He carefully quartered the ground with his eye, for he was certain the bird could not have escaped from the little plot of moss. He stood watching for half an hour; but could not detect it, until, at length, it incautiously winked its eye, and he found the bird had been all the while within two yards of his feet. Even then, he said, had he taken his eyes off for a moment, he should have lost trace of it. The kakapo, like many other birds of New Zealand, has no power of flight; but, unlike other flightless birds, has fully-developed and well-formed wings, with good pinion feathers. How should it have wings which it cannot use? On examining the muscles, it has been found that, though fully developed, they are mere masses of fat, without any strength or power. Here we have a clear instance of long-continued disuse of an unnecessary organ, ending in inability to use it. The mosses cover the ground and the roots or trunks of prostrate trees require to be sought for on foot; and to a night-feeding bird, in a country where there are no beasts of prey, flight was a superfluous exertion. Anatomically there is no reason why the kakapo should not be as good a flyer as any other parrot.—Good Words.

GENEROSITY AND HONESTY.—A young man who manages his small income, as if it were equal to that of somebody who has ten times as much, comes to a place where he must choose between generosity and honesty. He cannot do beautiful, graceful things in a lavish way, unless he can get money, either by earning, begging, borrowing, or stealing it. The first is the only legitimate and manly method. The latter two are almost synonymous, since to borrow or to incur debt, without in the least knowing where you are to obtain funds to settle the obligation, is another name for theft.

A young gentleman admires a young lady. He likes to pay her courteous attentions. He brings her flowers, tickets for concerts or opera, and expensive presents. If she accepts, she signifies that she is willing to take what prompts these delicate gifts, the young man's heart. Her father or brothers perhaps object that a carriage, a supper after an entertainment, and the costume a carriage implies, are extravagant luxuries for a young fellow in Tom's place, but the pretty young woman, to whom these are incense, does not view it as they do. She offers no objection, and does not, as with womanly tact she might, put aside these adjuncts of her pleasure, and suggest economy. Many a time her little white hand could save a man, if she knew enough and thought enough to put it forth, and this without there being anything forward or unmaidenly in her behavior.

There are merchants, druggists, florists, jewelers and others in every town, who could tell of unpaid bills, run up by young gentlemen, who bought their wares in good faith, that they might make presents to young ladies, their sisters perhaps—but oftener others than sisters, dear and valued friends. Sisters are usually clear-sighted enough where their own brothers are concerned. It is other girls' brothers about whom they are blind.

If this meets the eye of any young man whose conscience tells him that he has yielded to the weakness indicated, I beg he will neither drift nor temporize, but come to a full stop. Be just before you are generous. Dare to be honest, even though somebody call you mean. And if a girl reads it, I hope she will consider what are her responsibilities.—Margaret E. Sangster.

HOW DEBTS ARE PAID IN INDIA.—When the Hindoo finds that his demand for money, or anything else, is not complied with within a given time, he hires a Brahmin—either because he is a party personally interested in the claim, or because he is paid for the purpose—to seat himself before the door of the person upon whom it is made, justly or otherwise. He has a cup of poison and a poniard in his hand, and thereby intimates his firm resolution to put himself to death if the offending party tastes a single morsel of food before he has settled the claim in question. The unfortunate debtor has thus no resource left him but either to comply, perhaps with gross extortion or commence a very unpleasant course of fasting and abstinence. If the Brahmin puts his strange threat into execution—and, from the character of these people, and the little value they set on life, there is every probability to think he might do so—he would be honored and revered as a martyr, while the debtor would be covered with obloquy as his murderer. Hence, as the double risks, present and future, are too great to run, the Brahmin and his employer invariably gain their purpose in the end. Another mode of enforcing payment of some simple debt is for the creditor to plant himself before the door of the debtor, and vow that he means to remain there, without food, until his money is paid. "As a point of honor which it is deemed impossible to violate, the debtor must, in like manner, remain without food; and if payment is not made, the parties immediately begin to put their mutual power of enduring hunger to the test. This trial might sometimes prove illusory, and, therefore, the creditor usually makes sure that the fasting of the debtor is real by cutting off his supplies. This kind of dharma, employed by troops against their paymaster, or the prime minister, or the sovereign himself, has often been effectual in obtaining their arrears of pay."—Cassell's Illustrated History of India.

ANTIQUITY OF NURSERY RHYMES.—Many of these productions have a very curious history, if it could only be traced. Some of them probably owe their origin to names distinguished in our literature; as Oliver Goldsmith, for instance, is believed in his earlier days to have written such compositions. Dr. E. F. Rimbault gives us the following particulars as to some well-known favorites:—"Sing a Song of Sixpence" is as old as the sixteenth century. "Three Blind Mice" is found in a music book dated 1609. "The Frog and the Mouse" was licensed in 1580. "Three Children Siding on the Ice" dates from 1633. "London Bridge is Broken Down" is of unfathomable antiquity. "Girls and Boys come out to Play" is certainly as old as the reign of Charles II.; as is also "Lucy Locket lost her Pocket," to the tune of which the American song of "Yankee Doodle" was written. "Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat, where have you been?" is of the age of Queen Bess. "Little Jack Horner" is older than the seventeenth century. "The Old Woman Tossed in a Blanket" is of the reign of James II., to which monarch it is supposed to allude.—The World of Wonders.

BIBLE QUESTIONS.

1. What was the first created thing?
2. What was the first prophecy?
3. Who built the first city?
4. Who was the first judge, according to the Bible?
5. Who was the first pilgrim?
6. Who told the first lie as recorded in the Scriptures?
7. Who was the first Jewish high priest?
8. Who was the first transgressor?
9. Who was the first gardener?
10. Who was the first machinist in brass and iron?
11. Who was the first exile in Bible times?
12. What were the first words recorded in the sacred record as being engraved?

SCRIPTURE ENIGMA.

I.

In many a bosom fondly nursed,
A fiery serpent is my first;
When Jesus came for us to die
He crushed this deadly enemy.

My second is a city's name,
Where Israel's host was put to shame,
Because my first still unrevealed,
Was lurking in their camp concealed.

Upon my whole pronounced by heaven,
The knowledge of my first was given,
The chosen people gathered round,
And trembled at the dreadful sound.

We cannot give the answers to the Bible Questions and Enigmas in the next number of the MESSENGER, as that would not allow us time to acknowledge the answers which we hope to receive from our young readers, but we will give the answers in the MESSENGER for May 1st, with the names of those who have sent in correct answers, of which we hope to have a great many. Answers should be addressed, EDITOR NORTHERN MESSENGER, WITNESS Office, Montreal.