

## Buddhist Maxims.\*

THE comparative study of religions, like the comparative study of languages, is of recent date. It takes two forms and directions, one historical, the other philosophical. Max Müller, Professor of Sanskrit in Oxford University, an Anglicized German scholar, is an acknowledged authority in both, but more particularly in the history of the ancient religions of the East as connected with the languages of the East. The "Sacred Books of the East," which he is editing and publishing through the Oxford University Press, furnish the authentic material for this important and interesting study of the science of religion. The "Dhammapada"—a collection of Buddhist maxims, some wise, some otherwise—is the tenth volume of this series, which includes also the "Sutta-Nipāta," translated by Fausbøll. Buddhism is the most powerful of all heathen religions, and in its ethics comes nearer to Christianity than any other except the Jewish. Its founder, Sakya Muni, the Buddha, led a life of self-denial and devotion to humanity which in some respects resembles the life of Jesus. Buddhism arose from a democratic and humanitarian revolt against the spirit of caste and priestcraft of Brahminism, about six hundred years before the Christian era. In its organization and institutions it has a striking resemblance to the Roman Catholic Church, so much so that early Catholic missionaries regarded it as the devil's caricature of their own religion. The Buddhists have the monastic system, celibacy, voluntary poverty and obedience, a sort of pope, prayers for the dead, confession and absolution, pilgrimages, almsgiving, penances, and a variety of ceremonies and customs similar to those of the Catholics. They put the chief end of life in Nirwana, that is, pantheistic absorption into a state of absolute freedom from all desire and want, which is the cause of all suffering. This absorption is to be obtained by a life of ascetic self-denial and active benevolence, in imitation of the example of Sakya Muni.