

A Smiling Idol

by Ambrose Bierce

An Idol said to a Missionary, "My friend, why do you seek to bring me into contempt? If it had not been for me, what would you have been? Remember thy creator that thy days be long in the land."

"I confess," replied the Missionary, fingering a number of ten-cent pieces which a Sunday-school in his own country had forwarded to him, "that I am a product of you, but I protest that you cannot quote Scripture with accuracy and point. Therefore will I continue to go up against you with the Sword of the Spirit."

Shortly afterwards the Idol's worshippers held a great religious ceremony at the base of his pedestal, and as a part of the rites the Missionary was roasted whole. As the tongue was removed for the high priest's table, "Ah," said the Idol to himself, "that is the Sword of the Spirit--the only Sword that is less dangerous when unsheathed."

And he smiled so pleasantly at his own wit that the provinces of Ghargaroo, M'gwana, and Scowow were affected with a blight.