

ANGELUS SILESIUS.

BY THE EDITOR.

MYSTICISM is, as it were, a short cut of sentiment to reach a truth otherwise inaccessible under given conditions, and since writing an article on the subject for a recent number of *The Monist*, I have devoted more time to a renewed perusal of one of the most prominent and interesting mystics of Germany, Johannes Scheffler, or as he is better known by his adopted name, Angelus Silesius, who was born in 1624 at Breslau, and died in 1677. While mystics of the type of Jacob Boehme and Swedenborg present their views in long essays of a philosophical nature which read like the dreams (or if you prefer, the vagaries) of a prophet, Angelus Silesius condenses his views in short apothegms, written in a somewhat archaic style, mostly in simple verse, and often with crude rhymes.

For an explanation of my view of mysticism, I refer my readers to the above-mentioned editorial article published in *The Monist* of January, 1908, pages 75-110. I have there attempted to translate some of the lines of Angelus Silesius (on pages 104-109). Since this mystical thinker is little known in the countries of English speech, and since only a few of his verses have been translated, we present here to our readers an additional selection which will serve as instances of the peculiar God-conception of the mystics, so much like the Buddhistic Nirvana; also the mystic ethics of quietism, the mystic psychology and mystic religion which teach man to seek salvation through breaking down the limits of the ego. By overcoming egoity it is promised that man shall attain divinity. Particularly noteworthy is the mystic's sensual conception of piety, and the representation of the soul's relation to God as a kind of mystic marriage. All this is typical of a certain kind of mysticism which exercised such a powerful influence at the end of the Middle Ages, but has now entirely lost its influence on mankind.

Johannes Scheffler was born of Protestant parents at Breslau, the capital of Silesia, in 1624, and was baptized in the same year on Christmas day. Having passed through the usual course of education at a gymnasium he went to the Universities of Strassburg, Leyden and Padua where he studied medicine and philosophy. At the last mentioned place he took his doctor's degree in 1647. For three years, 1649-1652, he served as Court Physician to Duke Sylvius Nimrod of Oels, who was a pious but decidedly onesided Protestant.



DR. JOHANNES SCHEFFLER.

From a caricature of 1664. (Considerably reduced.)

Scheffler's mystic inclinations had long before alienated him from the dogmatic and anti-artistic spirit of the religion of his birth which during the middle of the seventeenth century was more severe and bigoted than ever before or afterwards. At the same time there was a religious revival in the Roman Catholic world which proved attractive to him, and so it was but natural that finally in 1653 he severed his old affiliations, and joined the Church

that by the mystical glamor of its historical traditions was most sympathetic to him.

The zeal with which Scheffler embraced Roman Catholicism made him unjust toward the Protestant persuasion and implicated him in very unpleasant controversies.

Having become *persona grata* in the aristocratic circles of Austria, Scheffler became Court Physician to the Emperor in 1654; ten years later, in 1664, he was appointed chief Master of Ceremonies at the court of the Prince Bishop of Breslau, with the title Counsellor.

His devotion led him in 1661 to enter the order of St. Francis, commonly called the Brotherhood of Minorites. Having fallen a



DETAIL OF CARICATURE.

(Somewhat enlarged.)

prey to consumption, he died July 9, 1677, in the institution of the Knights of the Cross of St. Matthews in Breslau.

Though by education a physician and a scientist, Johannes Scheffler was a mystic and a poet. His most famous book is entitled "The Cherubinean Wanderer," and it is from this that the present selection has been made. It was followed by another pious effusion entitled *Heilige Seelenlust oder geistliche Hirtenlust der in ihren Jesum verliebten Psyche*. He is also the author of several church songs which breathe fervor and piety.* Like Newman's "Lead,

* The two best known songs of his which are still used are:

"Mir nach! spricht Christus, unser Held,
Mir nach, ihr Christen alle,"

and

"Liebe, die du mich zum Bilde
Deiner Gottheit hast gemacht."

kindly Light!" these have become the common property of both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. Some of his songs have been translated into English, notably, "Earth has nothing sweet and fair."

We have tried in vain to find a likeness of Johannes Scheffler. The only portrait that we can discover is a caricature in an invective lampoon entitled *Wohlverdientes Kapitel* ("Well deserved Chapter") published in 1664, in which our mystic is represented as a pedler of spectacles, rosaries, cards, dice, and other similar wares. No attempt has been made to disfigure the expression of his face, and we have reason to believe that it bears a certain likeness to the man. In his signature he calls himself "*Archiater et physicus Olsnensis*," which means that he was court physician and surgeon of the small duchy of Oels in Silesia.

We will now let Angelus Silesius speak for himself:

What has been said of God
Does not suffice, I claim.
The Over-Godhead is
My life, my light, my aim.

God is my final end;
Does he from me evolve,
Then he grows out of me,
While I in Him dissolve.

God loves me more than Him;
Than me I love God more.
So He gives me as much
As I to Him restore.

In Spirit senses are
One and the same. 'T is true,
Who seeth God he tastes,
Feels, smells and hears Him too.

In God nought e'er is known,
Forever one is He.
What we in Him e'er know,
Ourselves must grow and be.

God never did exist
Nor ever will, yet aye

He was ere worlds began, and
When they're gone he'll stay.

God Father is a point,
God Son the circuit line,
And God the Ghost does both
As area combine.

God is all virtue's end,
Its mainspring He's likewise.
He too is virtue's cause,
He eke is virtue's prize.

Thou needst not cry to God,
The spring wells up in thee.
Don't stop its fountain head:
It flows eternally.

Who without God as well
As with Him e'er can be,
He is at any rate
A hero verily.

Abandon winneth God.
But to abandon God
Is an abandonment
Which must seem very odd.

Eternity is time
 And time eternity,
 Except when we ourselves.
 Would make them different be.

Things in eternity
 Are all at once in prime,
 No after nor before
 Is there, as here in time.

Who would expect it so?
 From darkness light is brought,
 Life rises out of Death, and
 Something comes from Naught.

Two eyes our souls possess:
 While one is turned on time,
 The other seeth things
 Eternal and sublime.

My heart below is strait,
 On top 't is wide and stout.
 It must have room for God.
 But earthly things keep out.

O Christian once thou must
 Down into Hell be led.
 If not while still in life,
 Thou must go down when dead.

Trust me, my friend, if God
 Should bid me not to dwell
 In heaven, I'd stay here
 Or go, as lief, to Hell.

When quitting time, I am
 Myself eternity.
 I shall be one with God,
 God one with me shall be.

What did eternal God
 Before time had begun?
 He loved Himself and thus
 Begot He God, the Son.

What you for others wish,
 You for yourself suggest.
 If you don't wish them well,
 Your own death you request.

A soul redeemed and blessed
 No more knows otherhood.
 It is with God one light
 And one beatitude.

In Heaven life is good:
 No one has aught alone.
 What one possesses, there
 All others too will own.

Plurality God loathes,
 Therefore He has decreed
 That all men should in Christ
 Be only one indeed.

Beware man of thyself,
 Self's burden thou wilt rue.
 It will impair thee more,
 Than thousand devils do.

Three enemies has man:
 Himself, Satan, the world:
 The first will be the last
 That to the ground is hurled.

Were e'en in Christ himself,
 Some little will at all,
 However blessed he be,
 Surely from grace he'd fall.

The highest worship is
 Like unto God to grow,
 Christlike to be in life,
 In habit, and love's glow.

Like unto Christ is he
 Who truly loves his foe,
 For persecutors prays,
 And renders good for woe.

What shame! The silkworm
works
And works till he can fly,
While you a man remain
And still on earth will lie.

Pure as the finest gold,
As rock so rigid hard
And clear as crystal, keep
The soul within thy guard.

Had Christ a thousand times,
Been born in Bethlehem,
But not in thee, thy sin
Would still thy soul condemn.

He who before the Lord
With envy comes and hate
Will hatred with his prayers
And envy impetrate.

I say it speeds thee not
That Christ rose from the grave,
So long as thou art still
To death and sin a slave.

Golgotha's cross from sin
Can never ransom thee,
Unless in thine own soul
It should erected be.

Man, thou shalt be St. Paul!
In thee must be fulfilled
What Christ has left undone
And where wrath shall be stilled.

The resurrection is
In spirit done in thee,
As soon as thou from all
Thy sins hast set thee free.

Thou must above thee rise
All else leave to God's grace:
Then Christ's ascension will
Within thy soul take place.

If neither love nor pain
Will ever touch thy heart,
Then only God's in thee,
And then in God thou art.

Who not with others bides
And always lives alone,
If he's not God himself,
Must into God have grown.

Man should not stay a man:
His aim should higher be.
For God will only gods
Accept as company.

"Where is my residence?"
Where I nor you can stand.
"Where is the final end
Where I at last shall land?"
"T is where no end is found.
"And whither must I press?"
Above God I must pass.
Into the wilderness.

Indeed, who of this world
Has taken the right view,
Must be Democritus
And Heraclitus too.

The saint is rising higher;
He's changed to God in God;
The sinner downward sinks,
Is changed to dirt and clod.

To own much is not wealth,
For he is rich alone
Who losing all he hath
Will not his loss bemoan.

Thy will 't is makes thee damned,
Thy will that makes thee saved:
Thy will that sets thee free,
Thy will makes thee enslaved.

The nearest way to God
Leads through love's open door;
The path of knowledge is
Too slow for evermore.

Love maketh bold; and he
Who God, the Lord, will kiss,
With love alone should kneel
Before His throne of Bliss.

Child, be the bride of God,
And be thou His alone.
Thou shalt His sweetheart be,
As He's thy lover grown.

Will pregnant be of God:
His spirit verily
O'ershadow must my soul
To quicken God in me.

The angels are in bliss,
But better is man's life,
For no one of their kind
Can ever be God's wife.

You ask what manhood is?
'T is plainly understood,
For in a word it is
The Over-angelhood.

God kisseth but himself.
His spirit is His kiss;
The Son 't is who is kissed,
The Father who did this.

Thou wishest to behold,
O Bride, the bridegroom's face;
Pass by God and all else,
And thou wilt him embrace.

The God-enraptured man—
One only pain hath he;
He can not soon enough
With God his Lover be.

To bear a child is joy:
God's sole bliss is that He
Brings forth His only Son
From all eternity.

God e'en Himself must die
That you may live thereby.
How can you gain His life
Unless like Him you die?

Death is a blessed thing!
The stronger death chastises,
The much more glorious is
The life that therefrom rises.

Oh ponder well on death!
Too many things you try!
Naught can more useful be,
Than how one means to die.

Friend it is now enough.
In case thou more wilt read:
Thou must the Scriptures be,
The essence eke, indeed.