

# The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the  
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER

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DIONYSUS CROSSING THE CELESTIAL SEA  
in a fish-shaped boat, surrounded by seven fishes. (From Gerhard, *Auserlesene Vasenbilder*, I, 49.)

*Frontispiece to The Open Court.*

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## AN IBERIAN JEANNE D'ARC.<sup>1</sup>

BY VINCENT STARRETT.

FEW of the world's heroines perhaps have escaped such dubious immortality as is conferred by a printed biography. Some there have been who for years eluded the official biographer, the authorized memorialist, only to stumble at length into the arms of the historical essayist, sinfully joyous at the opportunity presented by a bit of unhackneyed copy. Many survive in paragraph notices in arid encyclopedias: some in obscure monographs embalmed in the dust of university bookshelves. Few indeed are as profoundly unknown as Andamana, First Queen of Canary. For the most part, such treatment as our heroines have received has been adequate. Joan of Arc has had her enthusiasts and her detractors, and a small library has grown up around her name and fame: Florence Nightingale has been apotheosized and denuded in copious chapters. Lesser heroines, like Elizabeth Canning and Moll Cutpurse, have been the subjects of excellent *feuilletons* in the best manner of Messrs. Andrew Lang and Charles Whibley. It is a pleasant adventure to cross the trail of an authentic heroine apparently as unknown to the Langs and Whibleys as to the professional writers of history and biography. Jeanne d'Arc and Napoleon might have learned from Andamana of Canary.

<sup>1</sup>AUTHORITIES. Spanish: *Historia de las Canarias*, Ab. Gal; *Historia de la Gran-Canaria*, Melleres; *Genealogia de la casa de Guzman*, Rodriguez; *Historia del Descubrimiento y la Conquista de las Yslas de las Canarias*, Galineo; *Titulos de Castilla*, Berny; *Monarquia Española*, Riverola; *Teatro Universal*, Garcia; *Asturias Ilustrado*, Trellos; Archives of the houses of Teva and Montijo.

English: *The Canarian, or Book of the Conquest and Conversion of the Canarians in the year 1402*, by Messire Jean de Bethencourt, Kt., F. P. Bontier and J. Le Verrier (trans. by Richard Henry Major); *Andamana, the First Queen of Canary*, William B. Whiting, U.S.N.; *Madeira and the Canary Islands*, A. Samler Brown.

History and tradition unite to make the Canary Islands fascinating to the student and traveler—islands which for two thousand years prior to the first successful colonization had been the subject of poetical allusion. Much of speculation still surrounds their early history; but whether they were really the abodes of the Hesperides, and the scene of Hercules's apple-dragon exploit, whether the summits of a mountain chain now slowly rising out of the sea, or the remains of the sunken continent of Atlantis, it is impossible that they should have been unknown to the Ancients. It seems more than probable that the great peak of Teneriffe is the Mount Atlas of mythology, and that it was the Canary Archipelago old writers had in mind when they referred to the Happy Islands and the Elysian Fields.

Homer speaks of the discovery and colonization by Sesostris, King of Egypt (*ca.* B. C. 1400), of an island beyond the pillars of Hercules, to which the souls of the departed heroes were translated, calling it Elysium; Hesiod asserts that "Jupiter sent dead heroes to the end of the world, to the Fortunate Islands, which are in the middle of the ocean." Herodotus, in his description of the lands beyond Libya, says that "the world ends where the sea is no longer navigable, in that place where are the gardens of the Hesperides, where Atlas supports the sky on a mountain as conical as a cylinder." That the places referred to in these various instances were those islands now known to us as the Canaries, students are fairly well agreed. At any rate, being rediscovered by the Romans, shortly before Christ, they were dubbed "*Insulæ Fortunæ*," a name which has clung to them since.

A complete history of the Canaries is unnecessary to the story of Andamania, but a brief sketch of that colorful chronicle is at least desirable. Juba II, King of Mauretania (*circa* 50 B. C.), sent ships to inspect them, and later described them in a book. He seems to have described them as islands clothed in fire, placed at the extreme limit of the world, as, although his writings are lost, he is freely quoted to that effect by Pliny, Plutarch and others. Pliny, it is true, says the islands were uninhabited; but elsewhere it is stated that buildings were found upon them, evidencing a fair degree of culture. The most accurate record of the geographical position of the Fortunate Islands is left us by Ptolemy, A. D. 150, who drew his imaginary meridian line on the extreme west of the known world and through the island of Hierro. But it can scarcely be doubted that the islands were known to the Phœnicians and probably to the Carthaginians long before Juba's time.



Ships could hardly pass along the coast of Africa without encountering them sooner or later.

Ossuna, quoting the lost writings of the Arabian historian Ebu Fathyma, asserts that the Admiral Ben Farroukh, having received information of the existence of land to the west of the African coast, landed at Gando Bay, in Canary, in A. D. 999, and found a people willing to trade and already accustomed to the arrival of visitors. Edrisi, the Arabian geographer, A. D. 1099-1164, quotes Raccam-el-Avez as authority for the statement that in clear weather the smoke issuing from the island of the two magician brothers, Cheram and Cherham, was visible from the African coast. That smoke might be seen at this distance was clearly demonstrated, centuries later, by Humboldt.

It has been argued that the Canaries were visited by a Genoese expedition about A. D. 1291; but as this fleet never returned the matter is difficult to prove. Again, the islands are reported to have been discovered by a French ship about A. D. 1330, on hearing which King Alphonso IV of Portugal sent a party to take possession of them, in 1334, which was repulsed at Gomera. This expedition was followed by another from the same quarter in 1341, again without result, although valuable information concerning the islands was gathered. It is all rather incoherent, but so great was the turmoil and confusion of the rest of the world, during the Middle Ages—a situation accounted for by the fall of the Roman Empire and by the protracted struggles of Christianity against Mohammedanism—that perhaps the miracle is that anything has come down to us regarding the Canaries. Tradition would suggest that these delightful islands constituted a sort of pastoral Arcadia, save perhaps for Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, which were more exposed to attack from Africa and by European slave-hunters. Too, in these islands, civil wars seem to have been frequent.

In an evil hour for the Canaries, Europe, recovering from the Crusades and overrun with unemployed soldiers, turned its attention their way.

In 1344, a certain Louis de la Cerda, a French nobleman of royal Spanish extraction, was created "King of the Fortunate Islands" by Pope Clement VI, and given full power to Christianize the natives as best he could. The English ambassador resented this papal decree, and intense discussion resulted. However, nothing came of the fanfaronade; but in 1360, missionaries sent to Gran Canary, converted some of the natives and taught them many useful arts, although the majority subsequently suffered martyrdom. In

1393, an expedition from Spain was repulsed off the same island, but met with greater success further west, Lanzarote being sacked by the raiders on the way home. Beyond question, the islands were frequently visited during the fourteenth century; either for pillage or trade.

The modern history of the Canaries practically begins in 1402, when Jean de Bethencourt, Kt., a Norman gentleman, fitted out a ship with the express purpose of conquering them and settling there. And at this point we may take up the consideration of Andamana, who reigned in the island of Gran Canary prior to the coming of Jean de Bethencourt, although just when she began to reign is not exactly clear.

The island of Gran Canary, in early times, was divided into ten petty districts or villages, called, respectively, Galdar, Telde, Aquimez, Tejeda, Aquejata, Agüete, Tamaraceita, Artibirgo, Ateacas, and Arucas.<sup>2</sup> Each district was governed by a chief called Guanartemé, who maintained a body of armed warriors under his control, and united in himself the offices of dictator, legislator, and executive; calling, however, at his option, an advisory council of old men of the village, who also met at his death to appoint his successor. This subdivision into petty independent sovereignties, and the naturally warlike character of the inhabitants, were the occasion of many internal dissensions and a number of sanguinary conflicts.

In the village of Galdar lived a young girl called Andamana,<sup>3</sup> who, according to legend, possessed extraordinary wisdom. Her judgment often was consulted on the most weighty matters, and her reputation, at first local, soon spread through the surrounding country, so that deputations from a distance came frequently to the village where she lived, to consult her on disputed points. Litigants appealed to her before bringing their cases before the magistrates, and sometimes the magistrates themselves appealed to her before making their decisions. It was not long, so great was her success, until her judgments were regarded as inspired, and Andamana herself was looked upon with respect and awe. The situation was not lost upon this good-looking girl (for legend says she was that, too), in whose breast was kindled a shining ambition, which probably grew slowly but which certainly directed her subsequent conduct.

<sup>2</sup> Galineo says there were twelve, but does not give their names.

<sup>3</sup> Ab. Gal calls her Atidamana; Galineo calls her Antidamana; other Spanish writers call her Andamada, and some Andamanada; but the name generally accepted as correct, and the one alone prevalent in the island of Gran Canaria, is Andamana.



Encouraged by the deference shown her, and by the constant reference to her judgment of public matters, Andamana proceeded after a time to pronounce decisions, in addition to giving advice; but whereas the wisdom of her opinions had not been questioned, had indeed elicited unanimous applause, the magistrates complained of her later actions as an infringement of their privileges. Particularly was this complaint induced by the fact that their receipts were seriously affected. Andamana charged no fee, while charges by the magistrates were heavy. Not infrequently, the litigant who was able to give the largest fee obtained a verdict in his favor, without reference to the merits of the case. Litigants now preferred to take their troubles to the inspired village maiden.

So great, however, was Andamana's popularity among the people of her district that the Guanartemé feared openly to take measures against her, on his own responsibility; so he called a council to consider her pretensions and encroachments. As it developed, nothing better calculated to further the ambitions of the shrewd native girl could have been devised. Instead of quailing before the judicial measure, so fraught with apparent danger to her, Andamana made it a means of advancing her power.

The Council met and went solemnly into session; when suddenly the door was flung open and Andamana, splendidly attired, entered, and calmly assumed a seat as presiding officer of the assembly. The effrontery of the action struck the councilors dumb. No word was uttered. The legend of her "inspiration" weighed heavily upon her accusers, and her conduct on this occasion tended to confirm their belief in it. After a pause, she rose upright and began to talk. In bitter, scornful words she upraided them as unworthy of all she had done, and dared them to cite one instance where, in the judgments or decisions rendered by her, she had been swayed by personal advantage. Then she resumed her seat and awaited a reply. As none came, she arose again and quietly pronounced the Council dissolved.

After this astonishing and successful stroke, Andamana was unmolested. There was no further opposition in the district to her assumption of power, which henceforth she exercised with regal sway.

Andamana's next step was to revise the judicial code of her district, abolishing many laws which she did not approve, altering others, and introducing new ones. She established special punishments for offenses which before had been left to the discretion of

the magistrates, defined the duties of those officers, and appointed punishments for bribery and the perversion of justice.

Pursuing the bold course she had begun in her own district, she sent copies of her code of laws to the surrounding villages, directing observance thereof in the future administration of justice there. By this time, she was all but idolized in her own district; but by the other districts her instructions were treated with scorn, and in some cases her messengers were punished. Unperturbed, Andamana laid aside the robes of Portia and donned the armor of Jeanne d'Arc. The time, she saw, now had come for prompt and sharp action.

Upon the return of her couriers, she listened to their stories. Then she went forthwith to one Gumidafé, known as the Knight of Facaracas, a nobleman whose habitation was a fortified cave in the neighborhood of Galdar, and who was said to be the greatest warrior on the island.<sup>4</sup> Gumidafé had control of a large force of armed men; and to him, it is related, Andamana offered her heart and hand in marriage, on the condition that he espouse her cause and fight her battles. The stipulation seems to have pleased the war-lord as much as the initial proposal; he accepted without cavil.

Andamana called the people of her district to arms, and when they were assembled had the marriage ceremony uniting her with Gumidafé performed before the multitude. She at once installed her husband in command of the army, made up of his own troops and those of Galdar, and placing herself by his side, swept down on the offending villages. In a short time her warriors had overrun the island, and she was the supreme power in Canary. Wherever she went she proclaimed immunity to such as would join her standard, and destruction to all who opposed her progress. In this way, her forces increased as she advanced, towns threw open their gates and received her with acclamation, and what little opposition developed was speedily overcome. When every district in the island had submitted to her sway, she returned to Galdar and proclaimed herself and Gumidafé queen and king of Canary.

The reign of Andamana was long and beneficent. Her first act was to establish a uniform code of laws for the entire island. Apparently she did not again find it necessary to use violence upon her people, and probably she died deeply loved and respected. Legend would suggest this, but even legend does not record her

<sup>4</sup> Fabulous stories are told of the stature of the Canarian warriors—one early Spanish writer asserting that a chief of Gran Canaria was fourteen feet in height, and another nine.

death. It is asserted, however, that she and Gumidafé were succeeded by their son Artemis (or Artemi Semidan), who is said to have been killed in battle with the French in 1400.

This gives us a clue to the date of Andamana's reign. It is probable that Artemi Semidan actually fell in 1402, when Jean de Bethencourt made his attempt on the island. Canary was not conquered at this time. Fuerteventura, Lanzarote, Gomera, and Hierro of the Canary group, fell before the French arms, but Canary, La Palma, and Teneriffe proved too powerful for attack with the forces at the Frenchman's disposal. These were not occupied until years later. It is likely, however, that it was during De Bethencourt's initial attack that the son of Andamana came to his death. As this son had two sons of his own, and as his mother's reign had been long (according to legend), it is safe to assume perhaps—without too close figuring—that Andamana flourished after the year 1300; more probably a quarter of a century after that date.

On the death of the son of Artemis (some Spanish writers say of that prince himself), the island was divided into two kingdoms, over which ruled the two sons of the preceding monarch. The northern part, called the Kingdom of Galdar, was assigned to Egonayche Semidan, the elder; the southern part, called the Kingdom of Telde, to Bentagoyhe, the younger. The king of Telde, whose domain was the largest and most populous, was required to attend annually, with his chiefs, in council at Galdar; but after assuming his throne he refused to comply with this condition. This occasioned war between the two brothers. On the death of Bentagoyhe, the kingdom of Telde was usurped by a powerful noble named Doramus (afterward killed by the Spaniards), who caused himself to be elected to the supreme authority by the Gayres or governors of subordinate provinces, in preference to the son of Bentagoyhe, then a child. This boy took refuge with his uncle, Egonayche Semidan, by whom he was kindly received and reared. Whether the young king of Telde who subsequently killed himself at Ansité, was the son of Doramus or this son of Bentagoyhe, the history of Canary does not inform us.

The descendants of Andamana continued to reign in Galdar until the conquest of the island by the Spaniards under Pedro de Vera, during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella in Spain. Guanche Semidan (also called Temisor Semidan) was the last king of Galdar, and had no sons; but his daughter Teneshoya was contracted in marriage to the young king of Telde, who hoped by this

means to unite the whole island under one scepter. Guaneche Semidan and his daughter, however, were captured by De Vera and sent to Spain, where they were converted to Christianity and baptized. Guaneche became Don Ferdinand, or Fernando, and Teneshoya became Doña Catherina, or Catalina. Returning to the island, which De Vera had not yet conquered, Don Ferdinand was instrumental in effecting its complete surrender. This was in 1483, when a miserable remnant of the Canarios were still valiantly holding out.

The invading Spaniards had captured all of the seacoast, but the Canarios had assembled in an inaccessible mountain fastness at a place called Ansité. This stronghold, Don Ferdinand ascended and was received with great joy by the people. Shouts and tears greeted the appearance of him who once had been their king. When the tumult had subsided, Don Ferdinand launched into an eloquent harangue, advising them for the sakes of their wives and daughters, if not their own, to renounce all thought of opposition to the Spaniards. Opposition, he assured them, could end only in their destruction. He told them that if they surrendered without fighting, they would be treated with leniency, and would be allowed to continue as nobles in the possession of their estates. Thus, amid tears, the surrender was accomplished.

The young king of Telde, seeing his hopes blasted, and the old Faycag or high priest of the island, who were among the group on the mountain, advanced to the edge of the cliff and, having embraced, called with a loud voice, "Atirtisma! Atirtisma!"—the Canarian method of invoking God—then threw themselves headlong over the precipice and were dashed to pieces. Don Ferdinand led the rest of the Canarios down to De Vera, who feasted them and ordered a *Te Deum* to be sung. The conquest of the island was thus completed on April 29, 1483.

The subjugation of Teneriffe in 1496 by Don Alonso Fernandez de Lugo, was largely due also to the Canario auxiliaries led by Don Ferdinand, Guanartemé de Galdar, erstwhile Guaneche Semidan, King of Canary. This gentleman, having become a Christian, seems to have developed a passion for teaching his new religion by "apostolic blows and knocks," and his connection with the subjugation of Canary does not seem particularly to his credit. Doubtless his daughter was beautiful.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> An old account says: "The women of Gran Canaria are represented as very beautiful; and the men as well-formed, of good stature, active, and athletic. . . . In complexion they are dark like the inhabitants of the other islands, but not much more so than the Spaniards and Italians."

Doña Catherina, daughter of Don Ferdinand, subsequently returned to Spain, and was married to Don Fernando Perez de Guzman, Señor de Batres (or Vatres), son of Don Pedro Suarez de Toledo y Guzman, brother of Don Juan Ramirez de Guzman, from whom descended the Empress Eugenie of France.

Thus ended the royal line of Andamana. Less worthy heroines have been celebrated in song and story. The unanimity of the legends told of her in Canary, suggest at least a considerable foundation of truth, and fortunately confirmation is found in rare Spanish works. This confirmation was collected many years ago by Commodore William B. Whiting, U.S.N., from whose records much of the present narrative is drawn. There seems little reason to doubt the essential features of Andamana's story, and one wonders that history has so neglected the chronicle of her amazing rise to power, and the Napoleonic *coup d'état* by which she first achieved her supremacy.