The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE


Founded by Edward C. Hegeler

APHRODITE WITH RABBIT.
Relief from the Villa Albana. (See page 644.)

The Open Court Publishing Company

CHICAGO

Per copy, 10 cents (sixpence). Yearly, $1.00 (in the U.P.U., 5s. 6d.).

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CONTENTS:

Frontispiece. The Immaculate Conception by Murillo.

The Mother Goddess (Illustrated). Paul Carus .................. 641

Omar Khayyam and Christianity. Twenty-six Quatrains of the Rubaiyat Contrasted with Twenty-six Christian Hymns. Walter C. Green .. 656

Omar Khayyam and the Transiency of Life. Paul Carus ............. 680

Apollos, the Disciples at Ephesus and Dr. W. B. Smith’s Theory. A. Kampmeier ................................................. 683

Professor Loofs on “What Is the Truth About Jesus?” William Benjamin Smith ..................................................... 689

Currents of Thought in the Orient. B. K. Roy ............................. 702

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THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING CO.
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Send for complete illustrated catalogue.
THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

By Murillo.

Frontispiece to The Open Court.
THE MOTHER GODDESS.

BY THE EDITOR.

We may be sure that the cult of Venus or Aphrodite, the female deity, a goddess-mother, played a more important part in the world of primitive mankind than the cult of a God the Father, the male deity of a later age. The goddess of love and life under whatever name she may have been known, as Our Lady, the Queen of Heaven, the Mistress of the World, as the mother of all living creatures, the Great Goddess or Magna Dea, or under any other designation, was practically the same all over the world. We may not be mistaken if we attribute the height of her worship to the age of matriarchy. In prehistoric times she was looked up to with awe and reverence, possibly even with devotion, more than in a later period. The Ancient of Days or diei-pater, i. e., Jupiter, the father of time and of light, was symbolized by the all-embracing sky and also by the sun. The Greeks called him Zeus, a name pronounced dseus, connected with the Latin deus and dies, and Sanskrit deva, the creator and ruler of the world. The Magna Dea was the all-mother, and it is but to be expected that when the social conditions of matriarchy changed into the age of the patriarchs the reverence for an all-mother was superseded by the worship of an all-father.

The Magna Dea was all in all to mankind. Her emblem as the goddess of vegetation and of the sustenance of life was the apple or pomegranate. As the goddess of the human soul she is represented as a bird like the Egyptian representation of the soul, a human-headed hawk, or as a dove, the symbol which later on represents the gnostic Sophia, the mother of the child-god, and in Christian dogmatology, the Holy Ghost.
THE OPEN COURT.

CARRYING IN PROCESSION THE SYMBOL OF ISTAR.

ASTARTE AND THE DOVE.
Wings have always been the symbol of thought, and serve as a simile to represent the soul not only in Egyptian mythology but also in Babylon and on the Greek islands. A human-headed bird attributed to a primitive period of Babylonian civilization has been interpreted as the soul of Semiramis, and may represent either a dead person or the goddess of the dead, and the same idea is expressed in a little figurine of the Greek islands which shows us a female deity with a dove on her head. We can scarcely be mistaken if we interpret this little figurine as an amulet denoting the goddess whose emblem is the dove. Whether the figure represent the goddess herself with her emblematic bird or whether it be the portrait of a dead person protected by the dove, is of secondary importance. The main truth on which we insist here is that the dove is the emblem of the great goddess to whom people look up for salvation in the dark beyond.
Another emblem of the female goddess is the fish, as is fully described in Lucian's most interesting treatise "On the Syrian Goddess." In some parts of Greece the hare or rabbit has also been sacred to Aphrodite, unquestionably on account of the fertility of that animal. Even to-day in Christian times the Easter hare and the egg are the symbols of spring, and the Easter festival can not be celebrated without them.

A remarkable monument has been discovered in Boghaz-Köi in Cappadocia. It represents a procession of gods standing on their symbolic animals, and what interests us mainly is that it portrays the meeting of a god and a goddess, he standing on human beings, she on an animal which is apparently a lioness. Among her followers is a man on a leopard and two figures standing on a double-headed eagle, an emblem the idea of which was carried to Europe
by crusaders and became the coat of arms of the Holy Roman empire; it is still retained in the imperial arms of Austria and has also been accepted by the Czar of Russia. The subject of this

RELIEF FROM BOGHAZ-KÖI.

monument in Cappadocia is still considered as under question. There is no explanation and there are no Phenician books that can throw light upon it. But the composition speaks for itself. We see here the great goddess meeting the heroic god—whatever names they may have borne. Marduk or Bel or Baal is a deity who rises to sovereignty through his victory over the powers of evil, and the climax of his life consists in his marriage. Can this great relief
refer to any other topic than the festive occasion of his marriage ceremonial with the great bridal goddess?¹

THE GODDESS OF NAVIGATION.
Sidonian Coins reproduced from Calmet No. 6.

A LATER ASTARTE.
With swastika emblems on her dress.

A LEADEN IDOL.
From Schliemann's Ilias.

Among the ruins of ancient Babylon we find great numbers of figurines which represent Beltis, viz., "the lady," and sometimes she carries a baby in her arms.

¹ For further details with regard to this relief see the author's The Bride of Christ, p. 8.
ASTARTE IN CYPRUS.
From Ohnefalsch-Richter, Kypros.
The name Istar has been traced also in the Phenician word *Astarte*. The goddess was held in high esteem in Phenicia and was regarded also as the patroness of navigation. Coins represent her standing on the prow of a ship, and, strange to say, very frequently she carries a Latin cross in her arms. Beside the cross her emblems are also the moon and the swastika, and the latter is frequently found on her dress, and in one very archaic leaden figure discovered in the ruins of Troy, it is placed on her body to indicate the mysterious power of procreation.

From the excavations of Cyprus we reproduce the picture of a well-preserved statue of Astarte which must have been the recipient of offerings before an altar in some of the ancient temples.

A beautiful modern picture of Astarte has been worked out by Sargent in his frescoes on the walls of the Boston Public Library, and we can see on this very picture her similarity to Murillo's ideal of Mary in his many paintings of the "Immaculate Conception."

In Egypt the ancient mother goddess developed into Isis, who is frequently represented as suckling the child-god Horus. In India she is known as Lakshmi, the goddess of love and beauty. Among the Greeks the artistic presentation of Venus has reached its highest
perfection, and also its degeneration into a representation of lascivious sensuality. We limit ourselves here to reproducing one of the most beautiful Venus statues that have come down to us, the so-called Venus Genetrix, made after Alexandrian prototypes and now preserved in the Louvre at Paris.

A most beautiful relief pictures the birth of Venus from the foam of the ocean. She appears as a young maiden covered with a diaphanous dress, and is lifted out of the water by the Graces. The marble is preserved in the National Museum at Rome, and
was discovered by excavations in the grounds of the Villa Ludovisi in 1887 (see page 654).

VENUS GENETRIX.
In the Louvre.

There is a counterpart of the western Magna Dea in eastern Asia, but we no longer know it in its primitive form and have it only as it is represented in art in the shape of a Buddhist deity, a
BENTEN, THE JAPANESE GODDESS OF DIVINE LOVE.
From a relief preserved in the Field Museum.
KWAN YON.

By Li Lung-mien (11th cent.). From the original painting in the collection of Charles L. Freer in Detroit.
kind of female Buddha, called in China Kwan-Yon and in Japan, Benten. Here again in some cases we find that the fish is her symbol as of the Syrian goddess, and she frequently presents a remarkable similarity to the Christian Virgin Mary. She is never pictured naked as the Greek Aphrodite but is always dressed in the most scrupulously decent fashion.\(^2\)

One picture of Kwan-Yon with the fish bears an inscription which is a verse on the mystery of incarnation and reads in an English translation as follows:

"Untidy o'er her temples
Falls her disheveled hair.
The maid is easy-going—
In sooth she does not care.
She carries in her basket
A fish to the market place,
Not decked in precious jewels
Nor dressed in gaudy lace.
Who thinks that Buddha were
Made human form in her!"

The northern Venus, called Freya, the mother goddess of the Teutons and in fact of all the Teutonic races, did not share the fate of the Venus of classical antiquity. She never deteriorated into the goddess of sensuality. H. A. Guerber in his Myths of Northern Lands describes her as follows:

"Although goddess of love, Freya was not soft and pleasure-loving, for the ancient northern races said that she had very martial tastes, and that as Valfreya\(^3\) she often led the Valkyrs down to the battle-fields, choosing and claiming one-half the heroes slain. She was therefore often represented with corselet and helmet, shield and spear, only the lower part of her body being clad in the usual flowing feminine garb.

"Freya transported the chosen slain to Folkvang, where they

\(^2\) See the author's article, "The Fish as a Mystic Symbol in China and Japan," The Open Court, July, 1911.

\(^3\) Val means "the battle-field"; the name Valkyrie designates "the one who chooses," viz., the maiden of Odin who selects heroes for Valhall, the great hall of the god of battles. The root Val is still preserved in the modern German word Wahlstatt, "place of battle."
were duly entertained, and where she also welcomed all pure maidens and faithful wives, that they might enjoy the company of their lovers and husbands even after death. The joys of her abode were so enticing to the heroic northern women that they often rushed into battle when their loved ones were slain, hoping to meet with the same fate; or they tell upon their swords, or were voluntarily burned on the same funeral pyre as the beloved remains.

"As Freya was inclined to lend a favorable ear to lovers' prayers, she was often invoked by them, and it was customary to indite love songs in her honor, which were sung on all festive occasions,
her very name in Germany being used for the formation of the verb *freien*, i. e., 'to woo.'"

When the conception of the mother goddess of antiquity began to decay, a new faith spread and under a new name the old ideal was revived as Mary, Mother of God, *Maria Theotokos*; the star of the sea, or *Stella Maris*; and the Italian fishermen sing to her the beautiful lines,

"O sanctissima, O piissima,
Dulcis mater amata."