

A LOST LEGEND RECONSTRUCTED.

BY THE EDITOR.

GEOLOGISTS reconstruct the history of the earth by drawing conclusions from the nature of the strata in its crust, and in a similar way philologists have reconstructed the history of language, and even the thought that underlies the formation of words. There are many problems that are solved by philology, among which we ought to mention above all the question of the cradle of the Aryan race.

Old errors die hard and they die gradually, one piece after another. Formerly there was a consensus of the most competent minds that the Aryan race must have had its pristine home in Asia somewhere around the Hindu Kush. It was an old traditional notion still based on the idea that the site of the paradise described in Genesis ought to be located in the vicinity of the Euphrates and Tigris. While the idea of a paradise was abandoned, the belief in an Asiatic home of mankind was retained until a British scholar by the name of Robert Gordon Latham pointed out that for philological reasons the cradle of the Aryans should be sought in northern Europe. Among other arguments he pointed out that in India, Iran, Greece, Italy and northern Europe, all the northern animals and trees have common names, while the terms of southern plants and creatures are importations of a comparatively late date, in Latin and Greek as well as in German and Celtic.

Sometimes there are slight changes of meaning in the old words, but the words remain in approximately their original significance. For instance *vulpes* or *volpes* (fox) is the same word as the Teutonic "wolf," also preserved in "whelp." Further *fagus* (beech), derived from the root *FAG*, "to eat," is the tree with edible fruit. The German *Ecker* or *Buchecker* (beachnut) is ety-

mologically the same as the English "acorn," (the kernel of the oak); both were eaten in primitive times. These instances are enumerated here to characterize the drift of Latham's speculation and not as fully established facts, for we must grant that philologists of a later date have doubted the etymological connection between *volpes*, "wolf" and "whelp" and are inclined to regard the homophony of these words as purely accidental. But even if this be so, we do not doubt the northern European origin of all these words and other similar ones, while the words "lion," "elephant," "palm," the Latin *vinum* (= vine, the plant of the wine), etc., have been imported from the southern east. Philologists rejected, or rather ignored, Latham's theory which however gradually gained ground by being supported by archeologists for archeological reasons and may now be considered as safely established.

Moreover it stands to reason that emigrants always seek a more pleasant home, and so the ancient Asiatic Aryans can scarcely be suspected of having moved to the dreary cold north, while *vice versa* in northern countries there were always people ready to exchange the inhospitable land of their birth for sunnier and brighter climes in the more fertile Asiatic fields.

The truth that mankind originated in Northern Europe was taught us first by a study of language and then corroborated by archeology and anthropology. We have arrived now at the conclusion that the territory from the Baltic to the Pyrenees with its cold winters was the school of mankind, and a severe school it was because man had to progress under penalty of extermination.

There are treasures in the bowels of the earth, and so there are treasures of historical information in language, and we will communicate here one conclusion which can be drawn from the name of the pretty little beetles called lady-birds or lady-bugs. The very word presupposes a legend now lost, and we can reconstruct it in the tenor of the Christian tradition of apocryphal literature. Indeed it is probable that the underlying conception of the name presupposes a still older legend which dates back into the pagan antiquity of the Saxons, or of mankind in general.

The word lady-bug suggests that the little creature which bears the name had originated by coming in contact with Mary, the mother of Christ, commonly called "Our Lady"; and we must assume that while traveling the Holy Family once reached a place where they were bothered with bugs, but these bugs changed in such a way as to give origin to this new species of beetles which somehow bore a resemblance to bugs but had lost all the ugly quali-

ties that make bugs a pest to the poorer population in inns where cleanliness is unknown.

That such is the meaning of the English word "lady-bug" is proved by its German name which is *Marienkäfer*, which means "the beetle of Mary"; or *Marienwürmchen*, "the little worm of Mary"; or *Frauenkäfer*, "lady-bug."

Preserved in *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* is a German folk-song on the *Marienwürmchen* which Schumann has set to music. It runs thus in Dr. Theodore Baker's English translation:

"My Lady-bird, come, light awhile
Upon my hand, upon my hand,
You never need to fear me;
I will not harm you, pretty thing,
Only let me see your gaudy wing,
Gaudy wings I love so dearly!

"My Lady-bird, now fly away,
Your home's afire! Your children cry
So sadly, cry so sadly.
The naughty spider lies in wait,
He'll catch them if you come too late;
And your children cry so sadly.

"Now, Lady-bird, fly on to see
Our neighbor's child, our neighbor's child,
Fly on, you need no warning;
They will not harm you, kindly things,
They only want to see your gaudy wings;
So bid them all good morning."

There is no question that the first portion of the name "Lady," or "Mary" refers to the Mother of Christ, for the use of "lady," and in German *Frau*, in this sense is quite common. The latter part varies in form, and the almost ostentatious use of other terms than *bug* in both the English and the German languages is noticeable and suggests the idea that people avoided calling the creature by its original name, as too inappropriate to bring it in close connection with one who all through the Middle Ages was the object of a most devout veneration. Hence it happened that the name "lady-bird" in defiance of our zoological nomenclature was preferred in large portions of England to the more correct term "lady-bug," the latter form being preserved mainly and almost exclusively in the United States; but in both countries the children sing the old nursery rhyme:

"Lady-bird, lady-bird,
Where are you roving?"
"Over the sea!"

"Lady-bird, lady-bird,
Whom are you loving?"
"All that love me!"

A similar rhyme runs thus:

"Lady-bird, lady-bird,
Fly away home.
Your house is on fire,
Your children alone."

We may be sure that the idea is older than Christianity, and that in pre-Christian days the same story was told of some divine mother, perhaps the Saxon goddess of the earth, Hertha, or the queen of heaven, Frigga or Freya. We cannot tell whether the legend hails from southern or northern countries; nor is it impossible that it was once common all over the pagan world but forgotten, and a last trace of it is now preserved in the name alone. It stands to reason, however, that the legend did not exist in ancient Italy, for the Romans called the lady-bug after its color *coccinella*.

The trace of a similar story may be found in another word which denotes the long spider webs called "gossamer" which in the fall fly about in the air.

Gossamer really means "the godly fabric," and we may be sure that it refers to the webs of a divine spinner, presumably again the chief mother-goddess of pre-Christian times. That the gossamer does not refer to a god but a goddess appears from its German name which is *Altweibersommer*, also sometimes called *Mariensommer*, *Mädchensommer*, *Mechdildissommer* or *Mariengarn*, and in Latin *fila divae virginis* or *filamenta Mariae*.

The Scandinavian *gosummer* shows a popular misconception of the original meaning of the word as it denotes the gossamer to be an indication that the summer is about to go. The Danes too connect the meaning of the word with the summer season, and call it *Zomerdraden*, i. e., "summer threads."

However, the word *samer* in *gossamer* and *Altweibersommer* has nothing to do with the warm season, called in English "summer" and in German *Sommer*. The word *samer* in *gossamer* means a fabric or a web, a thread, the product of spinning, used for sewing. The word is most probably derived from the root SIW, traceable

in the Sanskrit *sutra*, "thread," and also in the Teutonic languages where it appears in the English verb "to sew" and in "seam" and its German equivalent *Saum*. However, the meaning of this old German word *Samer* or *Sommer* is forgotten in the linguistic consciousness of both the English and the German people of to-day.

The first part of the German word *Altweibersommer*, viz., "old women," does not denote any old cronies but obviously can refer to no other than the mother-goddess Frau Holle, who appears so often in German fairy tales. We read, for instance, that when Frau Holle, like a model housewife, shakes the beds in the home of the gods in heaven, the snow-flakes fall down like feathers from heaven to earth.

The name "Holle" is probably the same as the modern German *holde*, the feminine of *hold*, "benign." The same root persists in the name Hulda. The plural, *die Holden*, was used down to Goethe's time in the sense of benign spirits or goddesses, a kind of angels of the old Teutonic pantheon.

Thus in analyzing the words *gossamer* and *Altweibersommer* we learn that the old Germans explained the threads floating around in autumn to be the fabric of the old woman Frau Holle, corresponding to the Christian Virgin Mary; and this again teaches us that there existed an old legend which had a story to tell of a divine spinner and the threads of her distaff that were flying about in the air. These gossamer threads may again be related to the legend of Samson where we read that Samson, the sun-god, before his final defeat, tore to tatters the ropes with which he had been bound by the cunning art of Delilah.

Grimm in his *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Vol. X, 1, pp. 1518-1519, s. v. "Sommer 14") reports that popular belief credits the elves and dwarfs with having woven the gossamer. He adds: "It is said that these threads are the relics of the cloth which Mary took up with her when being carried up out of her grave to heaven. In the air she let it go, as Elijah dropped his mantle, whereupon it was separated into innumerable fine threads which every summer fly about as a perpetual commemoration after the day of her assumption, August 15."

The explanation that the name *Altweibersommer* indicated that in autumn the summer had lost its youthfulness and had become feeble, like an old woman, is based on the idea which originated when the term "the old woman" ceased to be used in the sense of mother-goddess.

As a result of a consideration of the etymology of the word

“lady-bug” the writer of these lines has reconstructed the underlying legend in a humorous little poem which reads thus:

When Joseph into Egypt came
 He arrived at a filthy inn, ho!
 Such as he'd never seen before
 Nor e'er had entered into.
 Maria cried: "O Baby dear,
 I'm sure it is not kosher here.

"The bread is sour and musty too,
 The pantry is teeming with vermin,
 Uncounted mice the kitchen holds,
 Who can their tale determine!
 St. Patrick help! That is a fright!
 We'll lose here all our appetite.

"Behold the beds are full of bugs
 And the crannies alive are with roaches;
 Here breeds disease, woe to our Boy
 That he this place approaches!"
 Maria said unto her spouse,
 "Come let us flee this nasty house."

But suddenly from heaven came
 The angels, and were rubbing
 The dirt from dishes, pans and plates,
 They were sweeping and washing and scrubbing.
 Oh! what relief in sore distress!
 Yea, next to God is cleanliness.

Bugs in the bed that Mary touched
 Lost all of their horrible features;
 The mice ran out and fell a prey
 To cats and other creatures;
 Clean are the dishes and the mugs.
 How pretty are Our Lady's bugs!

Mine host and hostess stand aghast,
 So quickly all is mended.
 How wondrous are their Hebrew guests!
 Even sages will scarce comprehend it.
 All Christendom exults with joy,
 Blest be Maria and her Boy!

When Joseph Into Egypt Came

Melody by
the Author

Playfully



mf



mf

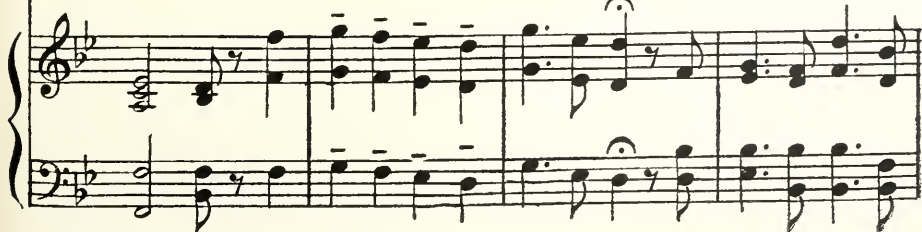
1. When Jo-seph in - to E-gypt came He ar-rived at a fil - thy
2. "The bread is sour and mus - ty too And the pantry is teeming with
3. "Be - hold the beds are full of bugs, And the crannies a - live are with



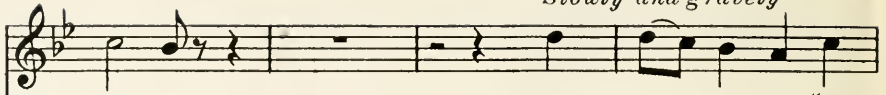
mf



inn, ho! Such as he'd nev - er seen be - fore Nor e'er had entered
ver - min, Un - count - ed mice the kitchen holds, Who can their tale de -
roach - es; Here breeds disease, woeto our Boy That he this place ap -



Slowly and gravely



in - to.
ter - mine!
proach - es!"

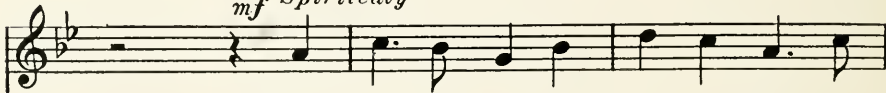
Ma - ri - a cried, "O
St. Pa - trick help! that
Ma - ri - a said un -



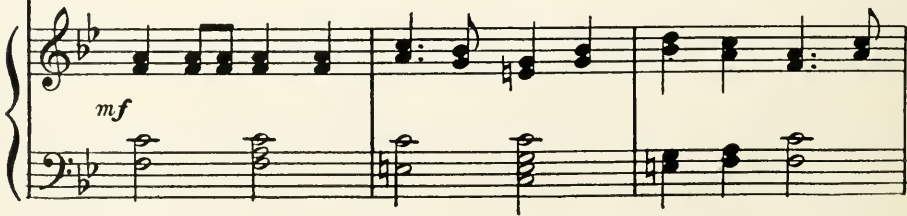
Ba - by dear! I'm sure it is not ko - sher here.
is a fright! We'll lose here all our ap - pe - tite.
to her spouse, "Come let us flee this nas - ty house".



mf Spiritedly



4. But sud - den - ly from heav - en came The



an - gels and were rub - bing The dirt from dish - es

The first system of the musical score consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are "an - gels and were rub - bing The dirt from dish - es".

pans and plate, They were sweeping, and washing, and scrubbing, O

The second system continues the musical score. The vocal line has a fermata over the word "O". The piano accompaniment features a more active bass line. The lyrics are "pans and plate, They were sweeping, and washing, and scrubbing, O".

what relief in sore distress! Yea, next to God is clean-li-ness, Yea,

The third system continues the musical score. The vocal line has a fermata over the word "Yea,". The piano accompaniment has a "rit" (ritardando) marking. The lyrics are "what relief in sore distress! Yea, next to God is clean-li-ness, Yea,".

next to God is clean-li-ness,

The fourth system concludes the musical score. The vocal line has a fermata over the word "ness,". The piano accompaniment has a "rit" (ritardando) marking. The lyrics are "next to God is clean-li-ness,".

5. Bugs in the bed that Ma-ry touched Lost all of their hor - rible

fea - tures. The mice ran out and fell a prey To cats and oth-er

creatures, Clean are the dish-es

and the mugs. How pret - ty are Our La - dys' bugs!

mf Slowly and gravely

6. Mine host and hos-tess stand a-ghast, So quick-ly all is

mf

This system contains the first two staves of music. The vocal line is on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The piano accompaniment is on two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of two flats. The tempo and mood are indicated as 'mf' (mezzo-forte) and 'Slowly and gravely'. The lyrics are '6. Mine host and hos-tess stand a-ghast, So quick-ly all is'.

mend-ed, How wondrous are their He-brew guests Ev-en

cresc

This system contains the next two staves of music. The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'mend-ed, How wondrous are their He-brew guests Ev-en'. The piano accompaniment continues. The dynamic marking *cresc* (crescendo) is placed above the vocal line.

sag-es will scarce com-pre-hend it. All Christ-en-dom ex-

This system contains the next two staves of music. The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'sag-es will scarce com-pre-hend it. All Christ-en-dom ex-'. The piano accompaniment continues.

ults with joy, Blest be Ma-ri-a and her Boy, Ma-ri-a and her Boy!

f *ff rit*

f *ff rit*

This system contains the final two staves of music. The vocal line concludes with the lyrics 'ults with joy, Blest be Ma-ri-a and her Boy, Ma-ri-a and her Boy!'. The piano accompaniment concludes. Dynamic markings *f* and *ff rit* (fortissimo ritardando) are present above and below the staves.