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THE HISTORY OF THE VEDIC RELIGION.¹

BY PROF. H. OLDENBERG.

THE fundamental nature of the primary Indian religion, surviving from the very remotest antiquity and rising to the surface of the Vedic times as a more or less ruinous wreckage, is, as we have seen, essentially that of the savage's religion. According to this, all existence appears animated with spirits, whose confused masses crowd upon each other, buzzing, flocking, swarming along with the phantom souls of the dead, and act, each according to its nature, in every occurrence. If a human being fall ill, it is a spirit that has taken possession of him and imposes upon him his ills. The patient is cured by enticing the spirit from him with magic. A spirit dwells in the flying arrow. He who shoots off an arrow performs a bit of magic which puts this spirit into action. The spirits have sometimes human, sometimes animal form. Neither form is nobler or lower than the other, for as yet no distinction between the human and bestial nature has been made. In fact, man is usually looked upon as descended from the animal; the tribes of men are called bears, wolves, snakes, and the individuals of the animal genus after which they are thus called are treated by the tribes as their blood-relations.

As they move hither and thither, the spirits may select a domicile, abiding or temporary, in some visible object. A feather, or a bone, or a stone at different times holds the spirit; and anon the spirit steals into a human being whom it makes ill or throws into convulsions in which supernatural visions come to him and in which the spirit talks through him in confused phrases.

And just as man at this stage of development lives only for the moment, thrown unresistingly to and fro by all sorts of vacillatory influences, such naturally is the way of the spirits. The spirits of savages are themselves savages, greedy, superstitious, easily excitable. The man of skill, the magician, who as yet occupies the place filled at a later period by the priest, knows the art—first anticipatory hints of a cult—of flattering the spirits; he understands how to bar their passage, to terrify them, to deceive them, to compel them, to provoke them against his enemy. They are

washed away with water; they are consumed by fire; even the friendly spirits, whenever they prove themselves intractable, are subjected to the same sort of irreverent treatment. It is apparent that this religion knows of nothing possessing a majesty which at all rises above the level of human life. An appreciation, an estimate of differences of magnitude and of degree have not as yet been formed. Animal, man, spirit, are mixed up together, all more or less equal in their power and in their rights.

But gradually the chaos of these ideas clarifies. The great begins to separate itself from the little, the noble from the base. A calmer survey of the world obtains.

Out of all the confusion of forces working in the shape of spirits, the great powers of nature more and more emerge and assume the first position. Their action, reaching far beyond human control into the farthest regions of space, the same to-day as yesterday and to-morrow as to-day, invincible to all human opposition, is ever more felt to be decisive of destinies;—the more so, as the various branches of human industry (cattle breeding and agriculture) make improvement and intensify man's sensitiveness to the favorable and unfavorable phenomena of nature. It is, therefore, the normal characteristic of vast stretches of historical development that the great powers of nature, such as the heavens, sun, moon, storm, thunder, and with these the terrestrial element of fire and the earth itself (usually first in importance in this class), appear as the highest givers of blessings and rulers of all that happens. They are superior to man and are at a distance from him, as befits divinity. For the embodiment of them into a living personification, the more perfect form of man steadily secures the preference over that of the brute. It was only possible to deify the torpid brute so long as man failed to feel himself as something better than the brute.

Of course the animal figure does not disappear absolutely and at a single blow from the midst of the divinities. Subordinate divinities, standing in the background and thus remaining untouched by the ennobling tendencies, were allowed to retain their old animal form. Or, an animal, which was once itself a god, might, after the god had been exalted to the dig-

¹ Authorised translation from the *Deutsche Rundschau* by O. W. Weyer.

nity of human form, remain to the latter as a special attribute, as a sort of celestial domestic animal,—as, for illustration, demons which were once of the shape of horses, being raised to gods with the shape of man, would thereafter appear as riding upon celestial horses. Or, some *part* of the body of the original animal form might be retained as a part of the newer human form of the god, or something emblematic of the animal be affixed externally in some way, and thus retain a trace of the old conception which had been overthrown. And wherever a plastic art has developed established forms, as in Egypt or in Mexico, and is consequently strongly conservative in retaining venerable traditions, the animal-gods, cut in stone, may expect to maintain themselves for a longer time than they could wherever, as was the case in India in the time of the Veda, they lived in the airy realm of the imagination.

In the same manner, the practice of considering stone and wood as fetishes embodying the spirits, while not disappearing suddenly and wholly, yet unavoidably withdraws from the foreground. The spookish, magical conception of spirits slipping stealthily from one home to another in matter of every shape and kind loses ground. The figures of the divinities obtain surer forms, each with peculiar outlines of its own, and their dignity, at once human and supernatural, is firmly established. Though far from approaching to that ideal of sanctity to which a later age will attain; though they are still animated by egotism, passions, caprices of every sort,—yet, accompanying it all, a certain amount of constancy becomes manifest in them, and in all their doings there is evident the steady growth of connected deliberation and plan. Very often the tendency develops of transferring to these divinities the rôle of kindly dispensers of bounties, while, on the other hand, the occupation of doing injury, of causing illness and harm of every sort is still allotted to inferior demons, gnomes, goblin spirits, which in their essentials keep on a level with the sorcery of the earlier religion and against which the old arts of spell and exorcism are effective,—arts, which, be it observed, are of no avail against the higher power of the new great divinities.

The intercourse of man with these new gods attunes itself to another key. He is studious to gratify the immortals, powerful beings, willingly inclining themselves to favor, when approached with gifts. He invites them to food and drink and they yield to his solicitation; not, however, with the bluster and din of the spirits exorcised by the old sorcerers, but in calm grandeur the invisible gods approach their adorers. The distinctive seal, now stamped upon cult, is henceforth and for long periods of time sacrifice and prayer.

It is at this point that it becomes clear what the

proper position of the Vedic religious belief is. Not all perhaps, but yet all the chief and dominant of the Vedic divinities are based upon a personification of natural forces, in forms of superhuman magnitude. The dwelling-place of the most of them is the atmosphere or the heavens. The word *devas* (the god), which the Indians had received from the Indo-Germanic past and which is to be found among many of the related branches of the family,¹ meant originally "the heavenly one." And thus the belief, which elevates the divinities above human kind to a heavenly height, was firmly fixed and long antedates the times of the Veda.

From it all, we see at the first glance that we are dealing with a stage of development which must have been preceded by a long prior history. And we find a confirmation for such a view, which, as was explained above, might be expected in a case of this kind: the types of divinities, or rather of spirits, characteristic of more primitive stages of development, are profusely apparent throughout the world of Vedic divinities. The divinities themselves—heavenly human beings, exalted to a colossal magnitude, in agreement with the general religious thought of the Vedic age—retain numerous, not wholly obliterated, marks of their ancient animal form. Demons of animal shape, like "the serpent from the earth," "the one-footed goat," surround the world of man-resembling divinities, and form a background for them. And the gods themselves are, in certain rites,—although exceptionally, as may be imagined,—represented fetish-like as embodied in animals, sometimes too in inanimate objects. A steed represents Agni, the fleet god of fire; an ox, Indra, who is strong as one.

Further, there are plain relics visible in the Veda of the belief so characteristic of the savage races: the belief in the blood-relationship between certain human families and certain animal species.

Again, in India as elsewhere, there appear along with the grand divinities, which are mainly beneficent and are raised by the advance of thought to purer forms, those spirits by which the savage imagines he is encircled. They are those cobolds, malicious spirits, spirits of illness, which we may say belong to the Stone Age of religion, which are obdurate to any historical growth, and yet are found with the same characteristics among all peoples; gliding about in human and animal forms and misshapes—by day and by night, but especially night—everywhere, but with a marked partiality for cross-roads, grave-yards, and other such dismal places; stealing into man, cheating him, confusing his mind, gnawing at his flesh, sucking up his

¹ Thus, Latin: *divus, deus*. Ancient Gallic: *devo-, divo-*. Lithuanian: *devas*. Old Prussian: *deivwas*. Ancient Norse (in which, according to rules of consonantal change, *t* instead of *d* appears): *thvar*, the gods.

blood, waylaying his women, drinking up the milk of his cows. And finally, along with these spirits, and characteristic of the same primitive notions, there appear, in the belief of the Veda the souls of the dead,—those of ancestors kindly watching over the destinies of their children,—and treacherous, inimical souls: a domain in which the Veda has retained in especial abundance, and scarcely concealed beneath the veil spread over them by its advanced ideas, the remains of a savage and most crude religious life.

If we turn, now, from these survivals of a distant past, to the great divinities, which are characteristically the figure-heads of the religion of the Veda, we shall find that the stage at which the work of deifying the powers of the air and of the heavens is usually accomplished, has been quite appreciably passed. While these divinities, too, have sprung from early ideas of nature, the roots which they there struck have withered or are at least touched with incipient decay; the original meaning taken from nature is either forgotten or misunderstood. The mightiest of the Vedic gods, Indra, was once the thunderer, who batters open the cloud-cliffs with his weapon of lightning and frees the torrents of rain;—in the hymns of the Veda he has faded into the very different figure of the divine *hero*, physically strongest of the gods, the conferrer of victories, he who performs all the most powerful feats and lavishes inexhaustible treasures. The Vedic poets do, indeed, tell that legend of Indra, which was once the legend of the thunder, of the slaying of the serpent and the opening of the cliff; but in their recital it is all distorted. The cliff, which Indra's weapon splits, is no longer the cloud, but a literal terrestrial cliff; and the rivers which he releases are actual terrestrial rivers. The conception of thunder has thus wholly disappeared from the myth of Indra and there has only remained the story that the strongest of the gods had split a wall of rock with his marvellous weapon and that the streams had poured forth from it.

The same process of fading out has befallen a number of other of these great natural divinities. The two *Asvin*, the *Dioskuroi* of the Greeks, have lost their meaning of morning and evening star. In the Vedic creed their essential characteristic is that they are the deliverers of the oppressed from all kinds of suffering. Varuna, in his original character a lunar divinity, was transformed into that of a heavenly king, the observer and punisher of all sins; and the single characteristic, that he is the divine ruler of the night, alone shows an obscure mark of his long-forgotten real nature.

WHAT IS REPUBLICANISM ?

BY PROF. E. D. COPE.

THE criticism of my article on the "Monroe Doctrine in 1895" in a previous number of *The Open Court*,

by Prof. Calvin Thomas in the number of the same journal of April 25, indicated two things. First, that time and space were not wasted in enumerating some of the A, B, C's of Republicanism; and second, how easily an American citizen may lose sight of them when confronted with the many good things to be found in old Europe. Professor Thomas has well repeated the reply which is usually given by the European who is satisfied with the system under which he lives, and he displays the inability to meet his arguments which is too often found among Americans.

The objections to monarchical institutions which I enumerated are little more than a repetition of those which Samuel the Judge presented to the Hebrews long ages ago when they demanded a king. The objections appear to many people to be sound to this day, and they cannot be disposed of so readily as Professor Thomas seems to think by the curious assumption that the people who live under monarchies necessarily prefer them; and further, that if they prefer them therefore they ought to have them.

In dealing comprehensively with a large subject one has to use generalities. Professor Thomas very properly asks for more exact definitions. These I will endeavor to give, but concisely, since much time and space can be devoted to such an inspiring theme.

First he asks, "What are human rights?" To this I would reply, *the right to pursue a course of progressive evolution without obstruction by unnecessary obstacles*. Among primitive peoples with small rational capacity, it is possible that aristocratic establishments, as "royal families, aristocracies, and State Churches" may be aids to this progressive evolution, but of this I am by no means sure. The military despotism is the primitive form of government, and from this the republic might emerge without the intervening aristocratic and monarchical stages, but as a matter of fact it has not generally done so. The military freebooters have divided the land with their friends, and have enacted laws granting them monopolistic and other privileges, and thus gave origin to the privileged classes referred to in my article. Professor Thomas finds it unpleasant that I should call these classes "robbers," and refers to the Archbishop of Canterbury and other estimable gentlemen who are now enjoying the privileges so acquired by their ancestors. (He forgets that I used the word ancestors in my article). There is no doubt that many of the privileged classes of Europe are excellent people, just as many of the old-time slaveholders of the South were real gentlemen. But this does not excuse the systems under which they live or lived, nor does it excuse Professor Thomas now, nor did it excuse Clement Vallandigham during the war of the rebellion, for taking so superficial a view of the situation.

But to look further into the subject; do "royal families, aristocracies, and State Churches" obstruct human evolution? By obstruction of evolution, I mean the hindrance of correct, i. e., logical or just thinking; hindrance of ethical conduct; and hindrance of material prosperity of the greatest number. Here one has to remember that the different stages of evolution may require different governmental forms. What is good for a primitive people is certainly not good for a fully developed people; and what is good for the latter will not be adapted to a degenerate people. This language implies that human evolution depends primarily on conditions other than forms of government; and this is a truism. The rise and fall of human excellence depends on conditions some of which are not as yet understood, but social relations are among those which are fundamental. The maintenance of ideals is of first importance, and sex and the family are primary sources of ideals. But superposed on this foundation, the governmental system has much to do with accelerating or retarding human evolution.

In all nations we have primitive, developed and degenerate persons and families, but the percentages differ with the nations. It is easy to perceive that the peasantry of Europe is not a developed type, whatever they may be. Perhaps most of them are primitive; some of the lower classes from the cities are degenerate. Why do they continue to exist in such millions on a continent which is the home of modern civilisation and which has had for centuries the benefits of "royal families, aristocracies, and State Churches"? It is not because they are incapable of development; for when transplanted to America in a generation or two one would not know them as the same people. Most of them undergo a development of the intelligence which is remarkable, and from a generally stupid, and often a besotted condition, they become industrious and relatively temperate. Their condition in Europe is evidently not due to isolation, as is sometimes to be found in out-of-the-way places in America, for they live in more or less dense societies.

The opportunities offered to industry by the opening up of a new country has much to do with the rapid improvement to be seen in the European immigrants who come to us. The question arises, why should they not find similar opportunities in Europe? Europe is not over-populated. Large tracts are uninhabited. Why are not these vacant lands occupied? Because they belong to privileged classes. Hence industry is depressed, and the people are poor. Why are the ideals of these peoples so low? Because the ideal of excellence is artificial and false. Excellence is conferred by title and to a limited degree only by merit. In ninety men out of a hundred in Europe ad-

mission to the ranks of the nobility would be more valued than intellectual or ethical superiority. In spite of this, the true excellence presses the false hard in Europe to-day, but it has had a long and severe struggle, and it has not yet penetrated the masses. If some of the privileged classes are aiding in this progress it is because they see that it is inevitable, and they have risen to the situation. But that does not make their system a good one.

Much European progress may be traced to America. We have shown that the status of the peasant is not necessarily a permanent one. The development of the lowest classes of Europe on American soil has been an object lesson to both extremes of European society. The influence of this lesson on Europe must not be lost sight of. If Europe had possessed free institutions after the downfall of Rome, would the long stagnation of the Middle Ages have been possible? Possibly the people did not wish to create and sustain such institutions, but that does not make the situation any better, or the Dark Ages less dark.

We are perhaps now in shape to see wherein the republican form of government is best. By a republican form I mean a constitutional and representative form, without a "royal family, aristocracy, or State Church." In a republic the people can have laws made and executed which they believe to be of the greatest benefit to themselves, unhampered by the immense appropriations of money demanded by the aristocratic institutions enumerated, for the maintenance of their privileges; unhampered by the false ideals created by those institutions; and unhampered by the false and foolish standards of thought or conduct made authoritative by State Churches. So soon as governors in a republic cease to represent the people who elect them, they can be retired from office, and new men may take their places. In this last sentence lies the A, B, C of the republican system, and although everybody knows that such is the case, the article of Professor Thomas shows that it may be temporarily lost sight of. Bad rulers of European and other monarchical countries cannot be easily retired from office! As to personal tyranny not being a serious matter in Europe to-day, as asserted by Professor Thomas; have we not imprisonments for *lèse-majesté* in Germany, and injustice of many kinds in Russia? In England a man is forbidden to marry a deceased wife's sister, and divorce can be had for one cause only. In fact, personal liberty prevails in Europe in proportion as their systems approach that of the United States. We are not free from evils here, but they have many additional ones in Europe.

Professor Thomas's reference to industrial classes, rich people etc. in America, as "privileged classes" is simply dust-throwing. If the majority of the vo-

ters in the United States think it to their interest to grant subsidies to any class, believing that they are thereby also voting advantage to themselves, such class does not come under the head of "privileged." If a man becomes rich by fair means, he is not thereby a "privileged" person. Every one is at liberty to do the same if he can. As to our "aristocracy" which monarchists are fond of extemporising for the sake of their argument, everybody knows that nothing of the kind exists in America. If undue respect is paid to the rich, it is a respect which has its foundation in respect for merit. The accumulation of money implies intelligence and industry, both highly respectable qualities. A certain amount of man-worship is natural to humanity, and in a republican community it is more likely to be directed toward merit, than in any other social system. And the proper direction of human admiration, is one of the most important factors in human evolution.

In maintaining the Monroe Doctrine, we are not alone sustaining the South American Republics. That is a minor issue. We are guaranteeing to all settlers on American soil a republican form of government, providing they choose to maintain it. The American continent is henceforth open to all nations, the Teutonic as much as the Latin, who desire this form of government. Probably the English and German peoples will be as much the beneficiaries of our action as the Spanish Americans; perhaps even more so, for it is the Teutonic peoples who are populating America most rapidly. We certainly do not wish a quarrel with England, our nearest of kin among the nations. But we may sometimes influence her rulers for good, and when they are deaf we may speak loudly. President Cleveland will occupy an enviable place in history for the position he took in this matter. The character of the issue cannot be belittled by contemptuous references to Venezuelan swamps. We have more personal friendships with English people than with any other, and to insist on their respecting republican institutions in America is to do them good and not evil. England will scarcely go to war with us for such an act. She may be some day a republic herself. Professor Thomas's reference to Canada is then probably irrelevant, but as he does so, I will do so also. We have with that country a frontier of four thousand miles in length. Under such circumstances the chance of war at some future day is considerable. To avoid such a probable contingency, a fusion of the two countries is desirable. Prof. Goldwin Smith is right in stating that we are not a land-hungry people. We do not want Canada or Mexico. But it is manifestly to the advantage of both countries that Canada and the United States should be peaceably united. And why not? We are one in race and in language.

Our separation is like the separate occupation of the same house by two brothers.

I must not fail to refer to the fact that the permanence of republican institutions depends on the character of the people. If the people fall below a practicable level of rational self-restraint, through degeneracy of their intelligence and excess of their passions, the republican form of government must be soon supplanted by the military. It has been temporarily so replaced at certain times and places in our past history. We should then guard the franchise with greater care than we have done. We must put a stop to the unspeakable folly of permitting the half-civilised hordes of Europe to vote at our elections. Most of the evils which have befallen this country are to be traced to this source. The civil war would probably have never been fought, had it not been for the ignorant foreign vote of the North which allied itself with the Southern slaveholders. These people furnish most of the purchasable vote which corrupts our politics. It is to be hoped that Congress will speedily pass a good bill for restricting immigration; and that all the States will adopt an amendment to their constitutions imposing some qualification for voting. Unless this is done we may be thrown back on the systems of government which these people have made more or less necessary in Europe.

CONQUESTS OF INVESTIGATION.

BY GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

"The secret of Genius is to suffer no fiction to live."—*Goethe*.

THEOLOGIANs had so choked the human mind with a dense undergrowth of dogmas that it was like cutting through an African forest, such as Stanley encountered—to find the paths of truth.

On that path, when found, many things unforeseen before, became plain. The sirens songs of orthodoxy were discovered to have strange discords of sense in them.

1. The guide of God seemed to be very human—not authentic, not consistent—containing things not readable nor explainable in the family; containing pagan fictions, such as the Incarnation and reluctantly believable as the device of a moral deity. Men of genius and of noble ethical sympathy do however deem it defensible. In any human book the paternal exaction of such suffering as fell to Christ, would be regarded with alarm and repugnance. Wonder was felt that Scripture, purporting to contain the will of deity, should not be expressed so unmistakably that ignorance could not misunderstand it, nor perversity misconstrue it. The gods know how to write.

2. The origin of all things has excited and disappointed the curiosity of the greatest exploring minds of every age. That the secret of the universe is un-

disclosed, is manifest from the different and differing conjectures concerning it. The origin of the universe remains unknowable. What awe fills or rather takes possession of the mind which comprehends this! Theism takes wonder out of the universe.

3. Pleasant and free from anxiety, life would be were it true, that Providence is a present help in the day of need. Alas, to the poor it is evident that Providence does not interfere, neither to befriend the good in their distress, nor arrest the bad in the act of crime.

4. The power of prayer has been the hope of the helpless and the oppressed in every age. Every man wishes it was true that help could be had that way. Then every just man could protect himself at will against his adversaries. But experience shows that all entreaty is futile to induce Providence to change its universal habit of non-intervention. Prayer beguiles the poor but provides no dinner. Mr. Spurgeon said at the Tabernacle that prayer filled his meal barrel when empty. I asked that he should publish the recipe in the interests of the hungry. But he made no reply.

5. There is reason to think that original sin is not anything more than original ignorance. The belief in natural depravity discourages all efforts of progress. The primal imperfection of human nature is only effaceable by knowledge and persistent endeavor. Even in things lawful to do, excess is sin, judged by human standards. There may be error without depravity.

6. Eternal perdition for conscientious belief, whether erroneous or not, is humanly incredible. The devisors of this doctrine must have been unaware that belief is an affair of ignorance, prejudice, custom, education, or evidence. The liability of the human race to eternal punishment is the foundation on which all Christianity (except Unitarianism) rests. This awful belief, if acted upon with the sincerity that Christianity declares it should be, would terminate all enjoyment, and all enterprise would cease in the world. None would ever marry. No persons, with any humanity in their hearts would take upon themselves the awful responsibility of increasing the number of the damned. The registrar of births would be the most fiendish clerk conceivable. He would be practically the secretary of hell. The theory that all the world was lost through a curious and enterprising lady, eating an apricot or an apple, and that three thousand or more years after, mankind had to be redeemed by the murder of an innocent Jew—is of a nature to make men afraid to believe in a deity accused of contriving so dreadful a scheme.

Though this reasoning will seem to many an argument against the existence, whereas it is merely against the attributes of deity, ascribed to him by Christianity. If God be not moral, in the human sense of the

term, he may as well be not moral at all. It is only he whose principles of justice, men can understand, that men can trust. Prof. T. H. Huxley, conspicuous for his clearness of views and dispassionateness of judgment, was of this opinion, who says: "The suggestion arises, if God is the cause of all things he is responsible for evil as well as for good, and it appears utterly irreconcilable with our notions of justice that he should punish another for that which he has in fact done himself." The poet concurs with the philosopher when he exclaims:

"The loving worm within its clod,
Were diviner than a loveless God
Amid his worlds."¹

Christianity indeed speaks of the *love* of God in sending his son to die for the security of others. But not less is the heart of the intelligent and humane believer torn with fear, as he thinks what must be the character of that God who could only be thus appeased. The example of self-sacrifice is noble—but is it noble in any one who deliberately creates the necessity for it? The better side of Christianity seems overshadowed by the worse.

7. Future life is uncertain, being unprovable and seemingly improbable, judging from the dependence of life on material conditions. Christians themselves do not seem confident of another existence. If they were *sure* of it, who of them would linger here when those they love and honor have gone before? Ere we reach the middle of our days, the joy of every heart lies in some tomb. If the Christian actually believed that the future was real, would he hang black plumes over the hearse, and speak of death as darkness? No! the cemeteries would be hung with joyful lights, the grave would be the gate of Paradise. Every one would find justifiable excuse for leaving this for the happier world. All tenets which are contradicted by reason had better not be.

Many preachers now disown, in controversy, these doctrines, but until they carry the professions of the platform into the statute book, the rubric and the pulpit, such doctrines remain operant, and the Churches remain answerable for them. Non-conformists do not protest against a State Church on account of its doctrines—which include all those enumerated. When the doctrines which conflict with reason and humanity are disowned by authority, ecclesiastical and legal, in all denominations, the duty of controverting them as impediments to progress will cease.

It may be said in reply to what is here set forth as tenets of Christian Scripture, that the writer follows the letter and not the spirit of the word. Yes, that is what he does. He is well aware of the new practice of seeking refuge in the "spirit," of "expanding" the

¹ Browning.

letter and taking a "new range of view." He however holds that to drop the "letter" is to drop the doctrine. To "expand" the "letter" is to change it. New "range of view" is the term under which desertion of the text is disguised. But "new range" means new thought, which in this insidious way is put forward to supersede the old. The frank way is to say so, and admit that the "letter" is obsolete—is gone, is disproved and that new views which are truer constitute the new letter of progress. The best thing to do with the "dead hand" is to bury it. To try to expand dissolution is but galvanising the corpse and tying the dead to the living.

THE ANGEL OF AUGSBURG.

WITCH PROSECUTION was a convenient weapon in the hands of unscrupulous men for accomplishing crooked ends or satisfying some private vengeance. One of the most tragic and pathetic cases is the sad death of Agnes Bernauer, a beautiful woman, the daughter of a barber and the wife of Albrecht, Duke of Bavaria.

Agnes was born at Augsburg in 1410. She was known as the fairest girl of the town, and she was as good and womanly as she was beautiful. In 1428 Duke Ernest of Bavaria gave a great tournament in honor of his son Albrecht, whom his fond mother had endowed with the county Vohnburg. It was on this occasion that the young prince espied Agnes among the spectators and fell in love with her. Albrecht had been engaged to Elizabeth, a princess of Württemberg. But a few weeks before the day set for their marriage Elizabeth eloped with Count John of Werdenberg. Albrecht was greatly disappointed, but being convinced of the unworthiness of his bride, he seems to have consoled himself quickly enough. He made the acquaintance of Agnes Bernauer in Augsburg and courted her; but she was very coy and granted him not the slightest favor beyond the kindness which she showed to every one. He wooed her, won her heart and hand, and took her as his rightful wife to his residence in the county Vohnburg. There they lived in happy wedlock several years.

Duke Ernest, Albrecht's father, knew about Agnes's presence at Vohnburg but he cared little, until he became anxious about having a legal heir to his duchy. Then he requested his son to marry the daughter of Duke Erik of Brunswick, but Albrecht refused, saying that his experience with the Württemberg princess had taught him a lesson.

When persuasion appeared to be without avail, Duke Ernest thought of other means to separate his son from the lowly-born maiden. At a public tournament, he ordered the judges to refuse admittance to Albrecht on the plea that he had seduced an Augsburg

maiden and kept her as his concubine at his castle of Vohnburg. Albrecht was indignant. He broke through the lines, placed himself in the centre of the lists and declared with a loud voice: "I did not seduce the girl! Agnes Bernauer of Augsburg, who lives with me at Vohnburg, is my legal wife and joined to me for ever and ay by the blessing of the holy Church!" A quarrel ensued and at last the young Duke was removed as a disreputable cavalier. Albrecht was greatly exasperated and as soon as he returned to Vohnburg he recognised Agnes not only as his wife but also as duchess. With the consent of his uncle, Duke William, he moved to the castle Straubing, which he donated to her and surrounding her with a ducal court, called her henceforth Duchess Agnes.

The poor Duchess did not enjoy the splendor of the court. She feared the wrath of her terrible father-in-law, and built, in a melancholy presentiment of her sad fate, her own burial chapel, in the monastery of the Carmelites at Straubing.

It happened at that time, in 1435, that Duke William, Duke Ernest's brother, died, and the little son of the deceased fell sick. Here was a chance to destroy the beautiful Agnes. In Albrecht's absence, Duke Ernest seized his son's wife, had her imprisoned and at once accused as a witch. Her defence was dignified, but in vain. She declared that no one except her husband and the Emperor could try her, and concluded with these words: "You may become my murderers—but never my judges." Her condemnation had been decided upon before the trial began, and the verdict pronounced her guilty of having bewitched Duke Albrecht and thus committed a criminal offence against Duke Ernest. The judgment ordered her to be drowned in the Donau, and Duke Ernest signed the verdict.

The hangmen carried the young woman to the Donau bridge at Straubing and thrust her, in the presence of a multitude of spectators, into the river. But the current drifted her ashore and she held up her white arms appealing to the people for help. The people were moved and she might have been saved, had not one of the hangmen seized a pole and catching her long golden hair held her under water until she expired.

She was buried in St. Peter's cemetery of Straubing.

When the young Duke on his return was informed of the terrible death of his wife, he fainted. Then he swore vengeance, and in alliance with his cousin Duke Ludwig of Bavaria-Ingolstadt, began to wage a vigorous war against his own father. Through the mediation of the Emperor, however, he was reconciled with his father at the council of Basel. Duke Ernest built a chapel over the grave of his innocent victim and

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had an annual mass read over her for the welfare of her soul. Duke Albrecht thereupon agreed to marry Anna, Princess of Brunswick, by whom he had ten children, although it cannot be said that his married life was a happy one.

In 1447 Duke Albrecht had the body of "his honorable wife Agnes, the Bernauerin," transferred to the chapel which she had built for herself in the Carmelite monastery; and he had the resting-place of her remains adorned with a beautiful marble image of her in full figure with the simple inscription:

"Obiit Agnes Bernauerin. Requiescat in pace."

It is difficult to say why Duke Albrecht did not on the tombstone call her duchess and his wife; but this much is certain, her maiden name was nobler than the title which her husband had a right to bestow on her, and which he had inherited from his high-born but low-minded father.

Poets who have immortalised her name, and the people of Bavaria among whom her memory is still cherished, call her "the angel of Augsburg."¹ p. c.

BEATA VITA.²

BY CHARLES ALVA LANE.

To-day I gave the winds my soul
To lull or waft at will;
And life was lapsed from Care's control
To moods that throb and thrill.

The dreamy heav'ns awakened hope,
As beauty kindles love;
And fash'ning futures limned the scope
Of brooding blue above.

The Summer sent her herald-beats
In zephyrs oversea;
And Fancy felt the pinion-beats
Of swallows that shall be.

Across the meads and thro' the woods
A courier promise passed,
That pierced the prison-solitudes
Where flower-souls are fast.

And all their wistful, wintry dreams
Awoke within the seeds
Of langorous life amid the themes
The sheeny summer breeds.

¹Folksong on Agnes die Bernauerin. Count Törting (1780), Böttger (1846), Melchior Meyr (1862), Friedrich Hebbel (1855), Otto Ludwig (a posthumous fragmentary design of a drama begun in 1852). See also Chr. Meyer's article on Agnes Bernauer in *Die Gartenlaube*, 1873, and König, *Ausgeburten des Menschenwahns*.

²It is doubtful if the psychic condition indicated in these lines will be readily interpreted. All minds, I believe, experience a certain intuitional sense of the unity of the cosmos: not only a more or less rational credence in some monistic world-conception, but an experiential, though subtle, feeling of affinity with the All. There are moments with me when the subjective and objective seem to coalesce in *medias res*. *Ego* melts into *ens entium*. A sort of temporary *Nirvana* or *Avidhaga* state is established.

Some such psychic abstraction as this probably furnished the "ecstasies" of Plotinus and the religious mystics. Perhaps every introspective and psychically-sensitive mind has experienced such "beatific visions." The apperceptive and abstractive Aryan races cannot be strangers to these moments. Indeed certain of their *Samadhi Yoga* practices would seem to superinduce just such psychoses.

C. A. L.

The prophet winds had caught the hints
Of songs of birds unborn,
And sunshine's prescience wrought the tints
Of flowers by far hours worn.

And, mingling with the milk-warm air
And silence of the spring,
I seemed a sentient ether rare,
A wide and willess thing;—

An errant ecstasy arisen
From some divinest Deep,
Caught up as perfume flow'rs imprison
When morn calls down the steep;—

A mood whose thought has lost the world,
Its days and deeds and dreams,
Till Care has all her passions furled,
And Hope desireless seems.

Oh! rich and rare to mix and mingle
With th' elemental play,
And feel the multitudes are single
Of earth's phenomena!—

To join in rapport strong and strange
With Nature's moods and powers,
And lose the weary pulse of change
That throbs along the hours.

Till, fusing life with Nature's soul,
The self and world and mote,
In raptures that are rest, enthrall
Love's universal note.

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