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THE GODS OF THE VEDA.¹

BY PROF. H. OLDENBERG.

WE have reviewed in the preceding article² the steps by which the deified forces of nature were transmuted into immortal masters, and protectors of the different conditions and interests of human life. The process is readily comprehended. The lively feeling of owing everything good to the powers of nature, in itself no mean advance upon the earlier crude conceptions, unavoidably dulls with time. The growing cohesion and order of society, the more extensive character of all the enterprises of peace and war at this stage, allows new trains of ideas to press to the front. The power of the king and war-hero now forces itself upon the attention as decisive of destiny; and accordingly in those divinities who personified nature in the forms of preternatural men, the element of nature recedes more and more before the element derived from man. The suggestion of the morning star, or of the moon, pales before the stronger consciousness of being under the merciful protection or the corrective power of heroic and royal divine masters.

These divine lords, as they are pictured in the Veda, all possess strong family resemblances. They are all very powerful, very glorious, very wise, very ready in aid. They all stand out in uniformly Titanic stature, each one like his fellows, but poor in the possession of that matchless beauty in which the Greek saw his gods standing glorious before him. Zeus knits his dark brows, his ambrosial locks tumble forwards, and the Olympic heights tremble; the barbaric god of the Veda "whets his horns and shakes them powerfully like a bull," the same sort of expression as that with which an early Chaldaic hymn, standing at about the same point of evolution, says of its god, "that he lifts his horns like a wild bull." As yet, religious thought and feeling have not advanced the idea of divinity from the point of grandeur to that of infinity, from power to omnipotency, and have not in particular taken the step from multiplicity to unity.

A *single* God is created by a history like that of the Old Testament, which, in the stress of great national experiences, in triumph and in defeat, so intimately

binds a people with the divinity that controls its destiny, that beside it all other gods disappear. Or, a *single* God may be created by reflexion seeking over and beyond the heights and depths of existence the one loftiest height or the one inmost germ of all things. The former is the god of heroes and patriots; the latter the still, calm divinity of the solitary speculator. But the bards of the Veda were neither patriots nor philosophers. The peace and comfortable existence of ancient India, the dispassionate character of the popular soul, to which, a deep and intense attachment to its own national existence remained unknown, were but rarely disturbed by national misfortunes or passions such as those with which the history of Israel is filled.¹ And that impulse of philosophical reflexion toward unity in the confusion of phenomena is as yet foreign to the age whose religious beliefs we are here describing. Such an impulse does not begin to show itself until the time of some of the latest poems of the Rig-veda, then, however, growing in the succeeding era to irresistible strength.

The same multiplicity of gods, therefore, prevails in the Veda as of old—not the clean-cut result of a

¹ To appreciate thoroughly the difference in the whole tone of historical and religious sentiment in the Veda and in the Old Testament, compare two songs which in a measure occupy corresponding positions in the two literatures—the Song of the Victory of King Suda (Rig-veda, 7, 13) and the Triumphal Song of Deborah (Judges, v). Both belong to the earliest poetical monuments—are possibly the oldest—of the nation from which they emanate. Both glorify hardly-won victories; the details of the two battles bear great resemblance to each other, so far as may be judged from the vacillating floods of the two hymns of victory. In each a swollen stream brought destruction to the foe.

But how differently does the song of the heroic-souled Jewish patriotes resound from that of the Brahmanic drunk-priest and poet. In the former, every word glows with passion, with a drunken joy of victory. Every whit of its energy is strained for the fight, the people staked its very soul upon the issue. Jehovah marched forth and all nature joined in the combat; the clouds deluged the earth with waters; the stars in their courses contended against Sisera. We see the hostile leader collapse before the shepherd woman, who gave him milk when he asked for water, and struck him down with her hammer. We see his mother gazing after him and moaning at the window lattice, "Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?"

How different is the atmosphere of the Indian poem! In the foreground stands the priest, busily and successfully performing his office,

"As in pasture rich and fat the cow
Drips milk, so Vashtha's song dripped over thee,
O Indra! Master of the herds art thou,
All say. Incline, accept our noblest offering."

The foe fled like cattle from the pasture when they have lost their herder. Indra struck them down the moment the votive offering was cast upon his altar; all the offered sweets he gave to Sudas to enjoy. What glimpse do we catch here of anxiety and of the outburst of prodigious passion on the part of a people battling for its existence!

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

² No. 453 of *The Open Court*.

methodical partition, so to speak, of the administrative offices of the world's affairs among divine officials, but the complex product of manifold historical processes, of a kind of "struggle for existence" between ideas, on the one hand, whose value for the religious consciousness has dwindled away but which often maintain themselves more or less by a sheer faculty of pertinacity and those ideas which press into prominence through being favored by the advance of intellectual and material life.

A final very marked characteristic of these divinities is that the phantasy of their adorers by no means raised them to the highest level of moral majesty, as they did to positions of the greatest power and highest glory. This step of incomparable importance in the evolution of religion—the association of the ideas of God and good—as yet can be descried in but a few faint signs, and this state most surely marks the religion as still a barbaric one. At this stage, the thing most essential to the needs of the devout is that the God be a strong and kindly ruler, and of an easily influenced disposition. But how was it possible that the mighty thunderer of pre-Vedic times, or the mighty warrior and bestower of blessings of the Vedic religion, Indra, should be formed of other ethical stuff than they, whose image he was, the terrestrial *grands seigneurs*? The savage battles which fill his existence alternate with savage adventures of love and drink. Very little does he inquire into the sinfulness or rectitude of mankind; but all the more is he desirous of knowing who has slaughtered oxen on his altar and brought as an offering his favorite drink, the intoxicating soma, whose streams "pour into him as rivers into the ocean," and "fill his belly, head, and arms." And it occasionally happens that he is not over particular about remembering the wishes which his worshippers have preferred in their prayers, as when returning in the best of humor to his dwelling from a sacrifice in his honor, he says: "This is what I will do,—no, that: I'll give him a cow!—or shall it be a horse? I wonder if I have really had soma from him to drink?"

Still, if one were to contemplate the picture of the Vedic divinities from this position only, he would be apt to falsely appreciate the manifold complexity of the intermingling currents. Distinct, it may be they were, originally, from the conceptions formed of the gods, yet the ideas of right and wrong, the sympathy naturally felt with the candid and fair man, the repudiation of tortuous treachery, dread of the chains imposed by guilt whether deliberate or unintentional, all this, of course, is well known to the Vedic world, and is expressed with sufficient vivacity in the Vedic poetry. And why, indeed, should not this domain of human interests and laws also find its rulers and representa-

tives among the heavenly beings as well as war, or man's daily occupation, or his domestic life?

Although, therefore, the Vedic divinities as such and taken as a whole manifest no special character of holiness or rectitude, properly speaking, there is among them one particular divinity, Varuna,—originally a lunar divinity, as already said,—who assumes, as peculiarly his own, the office of caring for the mundane moral order—assisted by a circle of less prominent companions, who were originally, it is possible, the sun and the planets. This moral order is looked upon as having been originally established by Varuna, and by Varuna's strong arm and sorcery it is preserved. Varuna detects even the most secret transgression; his snares are set for the treacherous; he sends forth his avenging spirits; he threatens the guilty with misfortune, illness, death. He suffers his forgiveness and pardon to shield the penitent, who make effort to appease him.

In a song of the Rig-veda, a guilt-laden one, pursued by disaster, cries: "I commune thus with myself: When may I again approach Varuna? What offering will he deign to accept, without showing anger? When shall I, my soul reviving, behold again his favor? Humbly, as a servant, will I make reparation to him, merciful that he is, that I may be once more blameless. To them that are thoughtless, the god of the Aryans has given prudence; wiser than the knowing man, he advances them to riches."

Varuna is here called the Aryan god. The historian, however, can hardly approve the bard's claim, for I believe we can discover in the apparently Aryan form of this god the signs of an un-Aryan derivation. This much at all events is certain: that faith in their chief protector of the right extends backward into the epoch when the ancestors of the Indians still formed one people with the ancestors of the Iranians, as they hesitated on the threshold of the Indian peninsula. This god appears among the Indo-Iranians as Varuna, among the Iranians (in the religion of Zoroaster) as the chief ruler of all that is good, Ahura Mazda, or Ormuzd. We cannot trace Varuna beyond the age of the Indo-Iranians into the prior time of the Indo-Europeans. Among the related peoples, like the Greeks or Teutons, we find no signs of him. Much, on the contrary, seems to me to agree in favor of the view that the Indo-Iranians had received this god from without, from the regions subject to Babylonian civilisation. If I am right in this conjecture, is it to be looked upon as merely fortuitous that right at the time when the remotest Semitic and pre-Semitic civilisation had fructified the religion of the Aryans, the point lies where the figure of the sin-avenging and sin-forgiving Varuna begins to separate from the primeval coarseness of such bruiser and

tippler divinities as Indra, and to be distinguished by the sublime traits of sanctity and divine mercy?

It has been remarked that the cult devoted to divinities, at the point of the evolution of the Veda, chiefly assumes the form of the sacrifice. The gods have so far grown beyond human dimensions that the magic spells which could compel them at the will of man, no longer appear as the proper agency with which to influence them. And on the other hand, they are as yet too far removed from pure spirituality for a purely spiritual form of adoration. The worshipper may and must make himself acceptable to them by the simplest measures, industriously, loudly, even obtrusively. Resembling man as they do, they eat and drink like men. Accordingly offerings of food and intoxicating drink were needful, in order to fortify them and to stir them to mighty actions. They had to be flattered; they were to be addressed in the most artfully agreeable style, and in the most superlative expressions possible as to their grandeur and their splendor. Thereupon is the proper moment for the worshippers, who sit around the sacrificial ceremony "like flies about honey," to lay their desires before the gods: desires which—corresponding to the spirit of the age—are ever directed to the palpable goods of earthly existence,—a long life, posterity, the acquisition of property in horses and cattle, favorable weather, triumph over all enemies. The art of properly performing these sacrifices and prayers is the main theme about which the whole spiritual life of the poets of the Rig-veda revolves. To them the sacrifice is the embodiment of all mysteries, the symbol of all the most important and profound of the phenomena of life. "By means of sacrifices, the gods offered sacrifices,—those were the first of all laws," says the Rig-Veda.

The external marks of the Vedic sacrifice are so far simple, that as yet all the elements are wanting to it, which follow in the train of urban life and especially of the development of the fine arts. There are no temples, no images of the divinities. The cult of shepherd tribes, whose migratory manner of life has not yet entirely become a fixed one, is as yet satisfied with a very simple altar,—established with the same facility everywhere,—the level, cleared greensward, over which soft grass is strewn, about the holy fires, as a resting-place for the invisible gods, who quickly collect from the atmospheric regions around.

But there is no lack of artful embellishment of another kind in the Vedic sacrifice,—or even of an over-embellishment, according to Oriental custom. The song of praise and prayer, delivered at the sacrifice, is fashioned after the rules of an elaborate art, growing ever more intricate. It is overladen with obscure allusions, in which theological mysticism parades its

acquaintance with the hidden depths and crannies of things divine. To utter such a prayer and to offer up such a sacrifice not every one is called or fitted whom the inner impulse moves, but only the trained priest, one belonging to certain families who have formed an exclusive spiritual caste from time immemorial,—the priest who alone is accounted equal to the perilous, sacred duty of eating of the sacrificial feast, and to drink of the soma, the intoxicating drink of the gods. At sacrificial ceremonies of greater importance priests of this kind appear in throngs, singing, reciting, and performing the immense number of prescribed acts with that painful, purely external nicety which is peculiar to every cult standing at this point of historical development, and the displacement of which by the inner soul-life is everywhere the product of protracted later evolution.

Religious ceremony of this sort is, indeed, far from having attained to the "affair of conscience" of the devout believer—to the elevation of a force which exalts and clarifies his inner life. It is—conducted on a large scale and with reference to human interests as a whole—simply what the cult of sorcery of an earlier age had been in a small way and with reference to some particular human want: a practice which any one, who could bear the expense, might have put into motion for himself by the skilled practitioner, to enrich one's self, to prolong life, to avert sickness and all harm.

But here there is repeated, in matters purely of cult, the same characteristic which confronted us in another connexion. Alongside of and interwoven with the formations which carry the special imprint of Vedic culture, everywhere and often in compact masses, there are the remains of hoary constructions, traceable to remoter and even to remotest times. As just remarked, it is a peculiarity of the Vedic cult of the sacrifice, that it concerns itself chiefly with human interests viewed as a whole; but still it was an unavoidable retention, that the supernatural forces should be put into action, upon occasion, for individual and particular situations, in behalf of want or suffering at some particular moment. It is here that the old witchcraft especially retained whatever was left to it of its former importance, in the Vedic age. He who wished to drive away evil spirits, or the substance supposed to have brought an illness, or, similarly, some guilt, had recourse still, as in former ages, to fire, which consumes the hostile thing, or to water which washes it away, or he chased the spirits away with din and alarms, blows and bow-shot. He who wished to produce rain, proceeded much like the rain-conjurer among the savages of our day. He put on black robes, and slew in sacrifice some black-colored beast, in order to attract the black clouds with which it was de-

signed to cover the sky; or, he threw herbs into the water that the grass of his pastures might be splattered by the divine waters. He who wished to prepare himself for particularly holy rites, acted just as the modern savage does, when he strives to transport himself into the exalted state in which man may enjoy communion with the gods. One about to perform the sacrifice of the soma, prepared himself for his holy labor, clad in dark-colored skins, muttering in stuttering speech, fasting until "there is nothing left in him, nothing but skin and bones, till the black pupil disappears from his eye," maintaining his position beside the magic fire which frightened away the evil demons, thus producing within him the necessary condition of inner fever (*tapas*); a practice, which lies in the midst of the Vedic ritual as an unintelligible relic of by-gone ages, but which a modern American Indian or a Zulu would comprehend at once, since very similar customs are familiar to him.

Thus, the religion and the cult of the Veda point on the one hand to the past of the savage religion; on the other hand, they point forward. We have seen that the majority of the Vedic divinities had long since lost their original meaning. Indra is no more the thunderer; nor Varuna the night-illuminating planet. For a time the faded images of the powers, which were once effective in their influence upon human faith, maintain their entity by the sheer force of pertinacity—similar to a movement, which, receiving no fresh impulse, gradually dies away. The point will come at which the motion will cease. The intellect, pressing onward, recognises other forces as the effective. New exigencies of the soul require to be satisfied by other means than those proffered by the benevolence of Indra or Agni.

THIRD STAGE OF FREE THOUGHT—SECULARISM.

BY GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

"Nothing is destroyed until it is replaced."
—*Madame de Staël*.

SEEING this wise maxim in a paper by Auguste Comte, I asked my friend Wm. de Fonvielle, who was in communication with Comte, to learn for me the authorship of the phrase. Comte answered that it was the Emperor's (Napoleon III.). It first appeared, as I afterwards found, in the writings of Madame de Staël and more fully expressed by her.

Self-regarding criticism having discovered the insufficiency of theology for the guidance of man, next sought to ascertain what rules human reason may supply for the independent conduct of life—which is the object of Secularism.

At first, the term was taken to be a "mask" concealing sinister features—a "new name for an old thing"—or as a substitute term for scepticism or athe-

ism. If impressions were always knowledge, men would be wise without inquiry, and explanations would be unnecessary. The term Secularism was chosen to express the extension of free thought to ethics. Free thinkers commonly go no further than saying, "We search for truth"—Secularists say we have found it—at least so much as replaces the chief errors and uncertainties of theology.

Harriet Martineau, the most intrepid thinker among the women of her day, wrote to Lloyd Garrison a letter (inserted in the *Liberator*, 1853) approving "the term Secularism as including a large number of persons who are not atheists and uniting them for action, which has Secularism for its object. By the adoption of the new term a vast amount of prejudice is got rid of." When it was found that the "new term" designated a new concept.

Secularism is a code of duty pertaining to this life—founded on considerations purely human—intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable.

Its essential principles are three:

1. That the improvement of this life is possible by *material* means.
2. That science is the available² Providence of man.
3. That it is good to do good. Whether there be other good or not, the good of the present life is good, and it is good to seek that good.

Individual good attained by methods conducive to the good of others, is the highest aim of man, whether regard be had to human welfare in this life or personal fitness for another. Precedence is therefore given to the duties of this life.

Being asked to send to the International Congress of Liberal Thinkers, held in Brussels (1886), an account of the tenets of the English party known as Secularists, I gave the following explanation to them.

"The Secular is that, issues of which can be tested by the experience of life.

"The ground common to all self-determined thinkers is that of independency of opinion, known as free thought, which though but an impulse of intellectual courage in the search for truth—or an impulse of aggression against hurtful or irritating error—or the caprice of a restless mind is to be encouraged. It is necessary to promote independent thought—whatever its manner of manifestation—since there can be no progress without it. A Secularist is intended to be a

¹M. Aurelius Antoninus said, "I seek the truth by which no man was ever injured." It would be true had he said mankind. Men are continually injured by the truth or how do martyrs come or why do we honor them?

²The phrase was a suggestion of my friend the Rev. Dr. H. T. Crosskey about 1854. I afterwards used the word "available" which does not deny, nor challenge, nor affirm the belief of others in a theological providence—who therefore are not incited to assail the effectual proposition that material resources are an available providence where a spiritual providence is inactive.

reasoner—that is as Coleridge defined him—one who inquires what a thing is, and not only what it is, but *why* it is what it is.

“One of two great forces of opinion created in this age, is what is known as atheism,¹ which deprives superstition of its standing-ground and compels theism to reason for its existence. The other force is materialism which shows the physical consequences of error supplying, as it were, beacon lights to morality.

“Though respecting the right of the agnostic and theist to their theories of the origin of nature, we Secularists regard them as belonging to the debatable ground of speculation. Secularism neither asks nor gives any opinion upon them, confining itself to the entirely independent field of study—the order of the universe. Neither asserting nor denying theism or a future life, having no sufficient reason to give if called upon; the fact remains that material influences exist, vast and available for good, as men have the will and wit to employ them. Whatever may be the value of metaphysical or theological theories of morals, utility in conduct is a daily test of common sense, and is capable of deciding intelligently more questions of practical duty than any other rule. Considerations which pertain to the general welfare, operate without the machinery of the religious creeds, and over masses of men in every land to whom Christian incentives are alien, or disregarded.”

WITCHCRAFT AND THE RELIGION OF SCIENCE.

Witch prosecution appears to us as rascality pure and simple, but it was not. It was the result of a firm and deep-seated religious conviction, as may be learned from the *Antipalus maleficiorum*, a work of John Trithemius, Abbot of the Monastery of Sponheim (1442–1516), who at the request of Joachim, Markgrave of Brandenburg, investigated the subject, and after years of conscientious study presented to the world his views in a volume of four books, which was completed October 16, in the year 1508, when the pious abbot had reached the mature age of sixty-six years.

Trithemius distinguishes four classes of wizards and witches: (1) Those who hurt and kill others through poison and other natural means. (2) Those who injure others by *Eucunitta*, which is the art of using magic formulas. (3) Those who converse with the Devil personally. (4) Those who have actually concluded a contract with the Devil and have thus procured his assistance for evil designs. Trithemius believes that there is no other way of protecting the commonwealth against the obnoxious influence of these

malefactors than by extirpating them, but best by burning them alive. He says:

“It is to be lamented that the number of witches in all countries is very great, for indeed there is not a village, be it ever so small, without harboring at least one of the third and of the fourth class. But how rare are the judges who punish these crimes against God and nature.”

And in another passage the abbot utters the complaint:

“Men and animals die through the infamy of these women, and none considers that it is due to the malignity of witchcraft. There are many who suffer from serious diseases and do not even know that they are bewitched.”

The great dangers of witchcraft seemed to demand extraordinary means for combating its evils; and thus the torture, which had formerly been applied only in exceptional and special cases, began to be developed in a most formidable and barbaric way.

Who can without indignation and holy wrath contemplate the instruments of torture used by inquisitors in their infamous vocation? There are thumb-screws, there are blacksmith's tongs and pincers to tear out the fingernails or to be used red-hot for pinching; there is the rack, Spanish boots, collars, chains, etc., there are boards and rollers covered with sharp spikes; there is the “Scavenger's Daughter,” also the “Iron Virgin,” a hollow instrument the size and figure of a woman, with knives inside which are so arranged that, when closing, the victim would be lacerated in its deadly embrace.

What ingenuity has not been displayed in the invention of these instruments of torture; and one of the executioner's swords, which still hangs in the Torturers' Vault at Nürnberg on the left side of the door, shows in bad Latin the blasphemous inscription, “*Solo Deo Gloria!*”¹

The hangmen took pride in their profession and regarded it as a shame if they could not make their victims confess whatever the inquisitors wanted. Their usual threat was when a heretic, a wizard, or a witch was handed over to them: “You will be tortured until you are so thin that the sun will shine through you.” The instruments look horrible enough, but the practice was more horrible than the wildest imagination can depict.

Before the torture began, the accused were forced to drink the witch-broth, a disgusting drink mixed with the ashes of burnt witches, which was supposed to protect the torturers against the evil influence of witchcraft. The filth² of the dungeons was a very effective means to make the prisoner despondent and prepare him for any confession upon which he could be condemned. He was frequently locked up in iron

¹Huxley's term agnosticism implies a different thing—unknowingness without denial.

¹It ought to be *Soli Deo Gloria!*

²*Carceris squalores* is the expression of the Witch's Hammer.

cuffs fixed in the wall or placed under heavy timbers which prevented the free use of his limbs, rendering him a helpless prey to rats, mice, and vermin of all sorts.

Consider only the fiendish details of the torture applied to a woman in the year 1631 on the first day of her trial:¹

"(1) The hangman binds the woman, who was pregnant, and places her on the rack. Then he stretches her till her heart would break, but had no pity on her. (2) When she did not confess, the torture was repeated, the hangman tied her hands, cut off her hair, poured brandy over her head and burned it. (3) He placed sulphur in her armpits and burned them. (4) Her hands were tied behind her, and she was hauled up to the ceiling and suddenly dropped down. (5) This hauling up and dropping down was repeated for some hours, until the hangman and his helpers went to lunch. (6) When they returned, the master-hangman tied her feet and hands upon her back; brandy was poured on her back and burned. (8) Then heavy weights were placed on her back and she was pulled up. (9) After this she was again stretched on the rack. (10) A spiked board is placed on her back, and she is again hauled up to the ceiling. (11) The master again ties her feet and hangs on them a block of fifty pounds, which makes her think that her heart must burst. (12) This proved insufficient; therefore the master unties her feet and fixes her legs in a vise, tightening the jaws until the blood oozes out at the toes. (13) Nor was this sufficient; therefore she was stretched and pinched again in various ways. (14) Now the hangman of Dreissigacker began the third grade of torture. When he placed her on the bench and put the "shirt" on her, he said: "I do not take you for one, two, three, not for eight days, nor for a few weeks, but for half a year or a year, for your whole life, until you confess; and if you will not confess, I shall torture you to death, and you shall be burned after all. (15) The hangman's son-in-law hauled her up to the ceiling by her hands. (16) The hangman of Dreissigacker whipped her with a horsewhip. (17) She was placed in a vise where she remained for six hours. (18) After that she was again mercilessly horsewhipped. This was all that was done on the first day."

Enough! This is not barbarous, this is not bestial, it is satanic. And such deeds could be done in the name of God, for the sake of the religion of Jesus, and by the command of the highest authorities of the Christian Church.

Witch prosecution with its terrors of torture and the fagot were only the main result of the belief in a personal devil. There are other consequences which, though less important, are sometimes bad enough in themselves. We mention a few of them: (1) there were persons who actually tried to make contracts with the Devil; (2) people possessed of a lively imagination began to dream that they stood in all kinds of relations to the Evil One. There are cases in which imaginary witches surrendered themselves voluntarily to the Inquisition; (3) soldiers entertained the hope of rendering themselves bullet-proof; and (4) there were plenty of fools who tried to become rich by magic.

The most remarkable case of bestial demonolatry with all its incidental crimes, is recorded in the annals

of France where Giles De Rais (also spelled Raiz and Retz), one of the greatest dignitaries of the State, a descendant of the highest noble families of Brittany, and a marshal of France, was charged with kidnapping about one hundred and fifty women and children, who, after being subjected to all kinds of outrages, were solemnly sacrificed to Satan.¹ The facts seem impossible but the complete records of the case are still extant, according to which Rais was convicted and executed in 1440. The history of his life has apparently contributed to the formation of the legend of Bluebeard.

Among the persons who gave themselves up to the Inquisition we mention Katharine Jung of Amdorf, Hessa, who confessed to her own father that she was a witch. The poor man regarded it as his duty to denounce her, and after ten days, on May 11, 1631, the girl was executed.

Another case of comparatively recent date happened in Alvebrode, Hanover. An old spinster, daughter of the widow Steingrob, had a brother who suffered from attacks of asthma. Her mother was blind and lame, and her sister had died of consumption. Some people in the village suggested that the attacks which came upon her brother were due to witchcraft, and at last the old spinster herself declared she was a witch and described her relations with the Devil in the minutest terms. She was convinced herself that she had bewitched her mother and sister and could injure people by a mere glance. Anxious about the welfare of the villagers, she warned them to avoid her, and tried to drown herself in an attack of melancholy, but she was rescued and imprisoned. The physician, a sensible and humane man, declared, judging from bodily symptoms that she suffered from a disease which had confused her mind, but she could not be prevailed upon to submit to treatment; she insisted that she was as healthy as a fish and that the Devil could not be driven out by medicine. She said: "It is in vain to try to cure a witch. I deserve death and shall gladly die, but please do not burn me, have me dispatched with the sword. Everything will be well when I am dead." Thereupon the physician resorted to a stratagem. He persuaded her that her neck was sword-proof, and succeeded in inducing her to take medicine to make her neck soft again for decapitation. She was then treated according to the prescriptions of her physician, with bodily exercise and regular diet and sleep until her mind improved, and she forgot all about witchcraft and her sword-proof neck.

Christian Elsenreiter, a student of Passau, palmed off upon credulous soldiers for making them bullet-proof a slip of paper upon which he wrote, "Devil help me, body and soul I give to thee!" The paper

¹Translated from König, *Ausgeburten des Menschenwahns*, p. 130. See also Soldan, *Hexenprozesse*, p. 269-270.

¹See *Encyclo. Brit.*, Vol. XX., p. 258.

had to be swallowed, and Elsenreiter claimed that he who would die of it within twenty-four hours would go to hell, but he who survived would be bullet-proof all his life.

A Saxon Colonel had been hit twice during his military career by a bullet, but in each case a Mansfeld-Thaler had protected him. This incident gave rise to the notion that Mansfeld-Thalers make one bullet-proof, and there was no officer in the imperial army during the Turkish wars who did not carry at least one of them about his person. The price of Mansfeld-Thalers at that time was fifteen times their face value.

Various kinds of magic wands and divining-rods which were supposed to indicate the place where treasures lay hidden, were made in great quantities. There are innumerable magic formulas and exorcisms, most of them invoking God or the trinity, or Jesus Christ, in Hebrew or Latin; especially the words Jahveh (J h v h) and Adonai play an important part and were believed to be very effective. Among the magic symbols which are met with in old documents the triangle, the cross, the pentagram, and the signs of the planets are preferred; but other figures such as squares, hexagrams, circles, and fantastic combinations of irregular lines are also quite frequent. Conjurations were made according to various prescriptions; a circle was drawn at midnight where two roads cross; it was lit with wax candles made after specific recipes. The conjurer had to prepare himself by fasts and prayers, sometimes by partaking of the holy communion at church, and when at last he failed to find the treasure or to accomplish his purpose, whatever it may have been, he had reason to believe that he made some trifling mistake in his preparations.

The facts of witch prosecution with its kindred superstitions are an object lesson. How much mistaken are those who believe that religion has nothing to do with ethics, and that a religious conviction exercises no influence upon a man's conduct! There are ethicists, professors of ethics, and ethical preachers, who imagine that they are able to teach ethics without referring to religion, and to make people good without touching their convictions as to the nature of the world and the import of life. But a wrong world conception will beget a wrong morality; a false religion will un-faillingly produce bad and injurious ethics; and even the grossest errors will, if they have their way, find expression in the grossest abominations of misguided conduct.

The inquisitors and witch prosecutors were by no means scoundrels pure and simple. Most assuredly there were scoundrels among them; but there is no doubt that the movement of the inquisition and witch prosecution took its origin from purer motives. It was to the popes and grand inquisitors and to many

princes and other people who promoted the policy, a matter of conscience; they simply attended to it as a religious duty, sometimes even with a heavy heart and not without great pain.

Torquemada, the grand inquisitor of Spain, was in his private life one of the purest and most conscientious of men, and he was so tender-hearted that he was obliged to leave the inquisitorial tribunal and quit the room as soon as the torture of a heretic began. He would cry about the obstinacy of those who had given themselves over to Satan; but though his heart was bleeding, he condemned thousands and thousands to the cruelest tortures and the most dreadful death for the sake of salvation and the glory of God—of that monster-god in whom he believed, that abominable idol which was worse than the Moloch of ancient Phenicia.

When complaints reached Pope Innocent III. about the cruelty of Conrad of Marburg, the first Inquisitor General of Germany, he said, "the Germans were always furious and therefore needed furious judges." Pope Leo X., referring to cases of witchcraft that happened in Brixen and Bergamo, grieves in a brief of 1521 at "the obstinacy of the culprits, who would rather die than confess their crimes." In the same document the Holy Father complains about the impiety of the Venetian Senate who prevented the inquisitors from performing their duties. And similar expressions are not unfrequent in later papal bulls and briefs, all of which prove that the horrors of the inquisition are ultimately due, not to ill will or even to the desire for power, but to error which had assumed the shape of a deep-seated religious conviction.

Among the Protestants, the Calvinists come nearest in zeal to the Roman Catholic inquisitors. In Geneva, Switzerland, the home of Calvin, five hundred persons were, within three months, executed for heresy and witchcraft. The protocols of the city in the year 1545 declare that the labor of torture and execution exceeded the strength of the hangman; and the complaint is made that, "whatever torture be applied, the malefactors still refuse to confess."

It would not do to say with our agnostic friends that religion is concerned with matters unknowable; and that therefore we should leave it alone! Religion is the most important problem of life, and we can ignore it as little as a reckless storage of dynamite in crowded parts of great cities. We must investigate the religious problem and replace the old errors with their dualistic superstitions by sound and scientifically correct views. At the bottom of all the terrors of the inquisition and witch prosecution lies a serious endeavor to do what is right; and this power can be utilised as well for the progress and elevation of man-

kind as for the suppression of reason and sound judgment.

The truth is that the confidence in science has already become a religious conviction with most of us. The faith in scientifically provable truth has slowly, very slowly and by almost imperceptible degrees, but steadily and surely taken root in the hearts of men. To-day it is the most powerful factor of our civilisation, in spite of various church dogmas which are declared to be above scientific critique and argument; for these dogmas are becoming a dead letter. There are several conservative and prominent churchmen who publicly confess that the dogmas of the Church must be regarded as historical documents and not as eternal verities.

The world-conception of our industrial and social life, of international intercourse, and all serious movements on the lines of human progress has even now to a great extent practically become the religion of science, although the fact is not as yet definitely and openly acknowledged; and any sectarian faith that endeavors to set forth its claim of recognition does it and can do it only on the ground that it is one with scientific truth. For there is nothing universally true, nothing catholic, nothing genuinely orthodox, except those truths that are positively demonstrated by science.

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BY J. ARTHUR EDGERTON.

O, great new poet, the world waits for thee,
To voice the wondrous hopes of all mankind;
To sing the matin song of the To Be;
To reach the heart-chord of the age; and find
A tongue for prophecies and prayers and tears
Of this, our time—its travail and its pain;
But more, to picture forth the brighter years,
That wait across the Future's shining main.
Thy song will echo to the busy roar
Of life and labor, and the city's hum,—
The spirit of these later days,—but more,
'Twill tell the promise of the days to come.
'Twill say, "The world's year only touches spring;"
And all mankind will pause to hear thee sing.

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Macmillan & Co. have made arrangements for the issue in New York and London of a *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* under the editorial supervision of Professor Baldwin of Princeton University. It will contain concise definitions of all the terms in use in the whole range of philosophical study, and such historical matter under each term as may be necessary to justify the definition given, while it will also give very full bibliographies both of philosophy generally and of the special topics which are connected with it. The following gentlemen will contribute original matter: Prof. Andrew Seth, Edinburgh University; Prof. John Dewey, Chicago University; Prof. Josiah Royce, Harvard University; Prof. R. Adamson, Glasgow University; Prof. W. R. Sorely, Aberdeen University; Prof. J. Mck. Cattell, Columbia University; G. F. Stout and W. E. Johnson, Cambridge

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