

CURIOSITIES
OF
SUPERSTITION,
AND

Sketches of some Unrevealed Religions.

BY W. H. DAVENPORT ADAMS, AUTHOR OF "HEROES OF
THE CROSS," ETC.

"To my mind there is no study more absorbing than that of the Religions of the World,—the study, if I may so call it, of the various languages in which man has spoken to his Maker, and of that language in which his Maker 'at sundry times and in divers manners' spake to man."—Max Müller.

"Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor."—Statius, *Thebaid*, 661.

LONDON: J. MASTERS AND CO., 78, NEW BOND
STREET. MDCCCLXXXII.

LONDON: PRINTED BY J. MASTERS AND CO., ALBION BUILDINGS,
BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE.

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CURIOSITIES OF SUPERSTITION.

CHAPTER I.

BUDDHISM: ITS ORIGIN AND CEREMONIES.

Prayer-Wheels of the Buddhists.

TRAVELLING on the borders of Chinese Tartary, in the country of the Lamas or Buddhists, Miss Gordon Cumming remarks that it was strange, every now and again, to meet some respectable-looking workman, twirling little brass cylinders, only about six inches in length, which were incessantly spinning round and round as they walked along the road. What could they be? Not pedometers, not any of the trigonometrical instruments with which the officers of the Ordnance Survey go about armed? No; she was informed that they were prayer-wheels, and that turning them was just about equivalent to the telling of beads, which in Continental lands workmen may often be seen counting as homeward along the road they plod their weary way.

The telling of beads seems to the Protestant a superfluous piece of formalism: what then are we to think of prayer by machinery? The

prayers, or rather invocations, to Buddha—the Buddhists never pray, in the Christian sense—are all closely written upon strips of cloth or paper; the same sentence being repeated some thousands of times. These strips are placed inside a cylinder, revolving on a long spindle, the end of which is the handle. From the wind-cylinder depends a small lump of metal, which, whirling round,

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communicates the necessary impetus to the little machine, so that it rotates with the slightest possible effort, and continues to grind any required number of acts of worship, while the owner, with the plaything in his hand, carries on his daily work. His religion requires that he should be all his time immersed in holy contemplation of the perfections of Buddha, but to a busy man no such self-absorption is possible. He is content, therefore, to say the sentences aloud at the beginning and end of his devotions, and in the interval twirls slowly, while a tiny bell marks each rotation, and reminds him if he should unconsciously quicken his pace.

Tennyson finely speaks of Prayer as that by which

“The whole round world is every way Bound by gold chains around the feet of God;”

but no such efficacy can be ascribed to the cylinders of brass, copper, or gold, which are fashionable among the Buddhists. Yet we must not condemn too unreservedly: Prayer, even among Christians, is apt to degenerate into a dull, mechanical uniformity, and to become scarcely less perfunctory than that which the Tibetans grind out of their prayer-machine.

In a Lama temple, Miss Gordon Cumming once saw a colossal prayer-wheel, which might almost have sufficed for the necessities of a nation. It was turned by a great iron crank, which acted as a handle. The cylinder measured about twelve feet in height, and six to eight feet in diameter. Circular bands of gold and vermilion adorned it, each band bearing the well-known Buddhist ascription, or invocation, “To the jewel on the Lotus.” Of this inscription, multiplied on strips of paper and cloth, the cylinder was full, and each time that it revolved on its axis, the devotee was accredited with having uttered the pious invocation just as often as it was repeated within the cylinder. The

whole history of Superstition offers scarcely any fact more curious or suggestive than this method of prayer by machinery; and that such a grotesque extravagance should have emanated from so subtle and metaphysical a faith as Buddhism is an anomaly not easily to be explained.

Each votary who is too poor to possess a prayer-wheel of his own, attends the temple, does homage to the head

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Lama, receives his benediction, and then, squatting in front of the great wheel, he turns the crank on behalf of himself and his family. But if there be a considerable number of worshippers, the priest himself works the handle, that all may participate simultaneously in the act of prayer.

The use of these machines is traced back for fully fourteen centuries, and is supposed to have originated in the belief that it was a meritorious act, and a patent cure for sin, to be continually reading or reciting portions of the sacred books of Buddha. But as many of the people could not read, a substitute had to be found, and it came to be considered sufficient if they turned over the rolled manuscripts which embodied the invaluable precepts. And as a vast amount of time and trouble was saved by this process, a further simplification became possible and popular,—the invention of wheels termed *Tehu-Chor*,—great cylindrical bands full of prayers; a cord being attached to the base of the band, which, when the cord was pulled, twirled like a children's toy. Prayer-wheels of this kind are set up in all public places in Tibet, so that the poor who do not possess little pocket Wheels of Devotion may not lose their chance of accumulating merit. In some of the monasteries the rows of small cylinders are so arranged, that the priest, or any passer-by can set them all in simultaneous motion, by just drawing his hand along them.

According to Miss Cumming, who is confirmed by other travellers, the cylinders vary in size, from tiny hand-mills, about as big as a policeman's rattle, to huge machines, eight or ten feet in diameter, worked by a heavy iron crank, or sometimes by wind or water power. The wind prayer-mills are turned by wings, which, like the cylinder, are plentifully covered with prayers. The water-mills are placed over streams, so as to dispense with human aid, and allow the running

water to turn them for the general welfare of the village. Through the cylinder passes a wooden axle, which is fastened to a horizontal wheel, whose cogs are turned diagonally to the water.

“One such group of little mills we noticed,” says Miss Cumming,^[1] “set in a clear stream half-way between Rarung

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and Pangi, a lively, rapid river, rushing headlong down the mountain side to join the Sotlej. Having never then heard of prayer-mills, we assumed them to be for corn, as perhaps they were. At all events, we passed them without inspection, to our subsequent infinite regret. These wheels rotate with the action of the water, and so turn the cylinder, which must invariably stand upright. Sometimes several of these are placed almost across the stream, and the rudest form of temple is built over them.

“They are so placed that the wheel must invariably turn from right to left, following the course of the sun; to invert that course would not only involve ill-luck, but would amount to being a sin. Hence the exceeding unwillingness of the people we met to let us tend their little wheels, knowing from sad experience that the English sahibs rather enjoy the fun of turning them the wrong way, and so undoing the efficacy of all their morning’s work.

“Some of the little pocket cylinders are very beautifully wrought; some are even inlaid with precious stones. I saw one great beauty which I coveted exceedingly. The owner would on no account sell it. I returned to the temple next morning, wishing at least to make a drawing of it, but I think he mistrusted me, for he and his plaything had both vanished, and I had to be content with a much simpler one of bronze, inlaid with copper. The people have the greatest reluctance to sell even the ugliest old mills. They cling to them as lovingly as you might do to your dear old Bible; but, as I said before, not merely from the charm of association, but from a dread lest a careless hand should turn them against the sun, and so change their past acts of merit into positive sin. So there was a great deal of talk, and many irons in the fire, before I was allowed to purchase two of these, at a price which would have supplied half the village with new ones.”

The prayer-mill sometimes contains the Tibetan prayer, or litany, for the six classes of living creatures, namely, the souls in heaven, the evil spirits in the air, men, animals, souls in purgatory, and souls in hell; but, as a rule, the Lama worship begins and ends in the famous inscription to which we have already alluded—*Aum Mani Padmi Hoong* (to the jewel in the lotus.) These mystic words are raised

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in embossed letters on the exterior of the cylinder, and are closely written on strips of paper inside. All the sacred places are covered with them; the face of the rock, the walls of the temple; just as the Alhambra glitters with its *azulejos*, its blazoned inscriptions from the Kúran.

This mystic sentence is composed as follows: *Aum* or *Om*, equivalent to the Hebrew Jah or Jehovah, the most glorious title of the Almighty; *Mani*, the jewel, one of Buddha's appellations; *Padmi*, the lotus, in allusion to his lotus-throne; and *Hoong*, synonymous with *Amen*. The Buddhists regard this "six-syllabled" charm as a talisman of never-failing efficacy; but by some of the sects it is more or less varied. For instance: the Chinese Fo-ists read it as *Aum-mi-to-fuh*, which is also one of Buddha's titles; and every devout Fo-ist aims at repeating it at least three hundred thousand times in the course of his life. Some of their priests will shut themselves up in the temples for months at a time, and devote themselves to the dreary task of repetition, hour after hour, day and night. Sometimes, ten or twelve devotees will voluntarily sequester themselves, and continue all day to cry aloud in chorus; and at night they undertake the task successively, one person droning through the monotonous chant while the others sleep. Thus do they think to be heard for their much speaking! Similar excesses of formalism, however, are recorded in the history of mediæval Christianity,—in the biographies of saints and ascetics who have substituted for a practical Christianity and the active performance of social duties the dreary vanity of an unprofitable solitude, spent in the discharge of useless penances.

The Buddhist prayer which is consecrated to Buddha as the Chakravarta Rajah, or King of the Wheel, proves, on examination, to be closely related to that Sun-worship which prevailed in the early ages of the world. The wheel is, in many creeds, the symbol of the

sun's chariot, that is, of the revolution of the heavenly bodies. In a sculpture, nearly two thousand years old, on the Bilsah Tepe, Buddha is represented simply by a wheel, overshadowed by the mystic *chattah*, or golden umbrella, which is a common emblem of his power. His worshippers are represented as making their offerings to the King of the Wheel. "This sacred

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Wheel of the Law, or Wheel of Faith, is found again and again among the Jain and Buddhist sculptures in the caves of Ellora and Ajunta, in most cases projecting in front of Buddha's Lotus-Throne. In one instance an astronomical table is carved above the wheel. In another it is supported on either side by a stag, supposed to represent the fleetness wherewith the sun runs his daily circuit, 'going forth from the uttermost part of the heaven, and running about unto the end of it again.'"

The Hindu Temples.

Visiting the Temples at Hardwar, one of the sacred cities of India, Miss Gordon Cumming remarks upon the number of their hideous idols, painted and carved, their multitudinous brass bells, their brazen horns, their sacred courts all covered with elaborate carving, and their mythological sculptures.

She says:—"I frankly confess that there is something startling in the rapidity with which one gets quite at home amongst all this paraphernalia of heathenism, and how very soon idolatry ceases to shock the mind, and becomes merely a curious study with picturesque adjuncts. Six months previously the sight of a veritable temple with its hideous idols and devout worshippers was a thing from which one shrank in shuddering pity." But she soon became a connoisseur, and "l lounged from one temple to another, inspecting jewels and exquisite stone carving, and anything wonderful the priests had to show, and quite forgot to be shocked, it was all so perfectly natural, and seemed so entirely in keeping with the tastes of the people." In this remark there is a wonderful *naïveté*; for it may reasonably be supposed that the tastes of the people would be in accord with a religion which, during its career of two thousand years,

must have exercised so great an influence in forming them!

In some of the temples, according to the same writer, there are sacred bulls, carved in white marble and adorned with costly necklaces. In others the attendant priests spend the whole day in pouring single drops of precious oil on holy pebbles brought from the Nerbudda and other sacred

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streams, and here arranged in little trays. Amongst the privileged inhabitants are the monkeys, who frolic about incessantly with their babies in their arms, or sitting on their backs, and twining their little arms round the parental necks.

The ceremonies in the different temples are, on the whole, very similar; and the following description, taken from the Rão Mālā, applies, except in minor details, to all.

The day is marked by five services: the first at sunrise, when bells are rung in the temple, and drums or conch-shells sounded, to rouse the Du, or god, from his slumbers. After performing copious ablutions, the officiating priest enters the holy place, and swings before the idol a lamp with five or seven branches. An hour or two later, the Du is attired in raiment appropriate to the season. He wears a quilted coat in cold weather, and has a lighted brazier placed beside him; whereas, in hot weather, he is anointed with sandal-wood dust and water, clothed in fine linen, and decked out with gems and flowers. Placed close to a cool fountain, he is assiduously fanned by his attendants. In rainy weather, he is wrapped about in scarlet cloth and shawls. When he is dressed, a light breakfast of rice and milk is served up, and his votaries perform "the sixteen acts of worship." At noon a third service takes place. The Du is again rubbed with oil of sandal-wood, or sandal-dust and water, and adorned with fresh flowers. The lamps are trimmed; incense is burned; and his dinner is set before him: after which he is supposed to indulge in his noonday sleep, and profound silence is maintained throughout the temple.

At three in the afternoon a drum beats, and the god awakes! His attendants hasten to serve fruits and sweetmeats, and perform various games for his amusement. At sunset he is enshrined: his feet are basted, he is sprinkled with water, his mouth is washed, and

another offering is made of sandal-wood dust, and flowers, and incense. He is once more clothed; an elaborate dinner is spread before him; betel leaves are presented; and again the many-branched candlestick is waved, while all the votaries present for the second time perform “the sixteen acts of worship.”

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The last service takes place at night, when the image is supposed to sup on bread and water. After receiving the usual oblations of incense and flowers, he is undressed, and if he be movable, put to bed, or if not, is warmly covered with shawls and quilts.

Not the least remarkable objects in the Hindu temples are their great statues of bulls in marble or in metal. It is worthy of note that “in the great Brazen Laver, which Solomon was commanded to make for the use of the Temple at Jerusalem, the symbols selected for the adornment of that consecrated Molten Sea should have been those which in later ages were to hold so prominent a place in the symbolism of faiths so widely spread as those of Brahma and Buddha. That huge laver was supported by twelve oxen of cast metal, three looking to each point of the compass, while the brim of the great sea itself was all wrought with flowers of lilies, much the same as the pattern of lotus or water-lily with which the shrine of Buddha is invariably edged.” The bull is another symbol which seems to connect the creed of the Hindu with the old nature-worship; for the vernal equinox takes place when the sun enters the sign of Taurus, and this event was always and everywhere a signal for feasting and rejoicing.

But, as Max Müller observes, the ancient religion of the Aryan inhabitants of India started, like the religion of Greece and Rome, of the Germans, Slavs, and Celts, with a simple and intelligible mythological phraseology.[2] In the Veda, the names of all the so-called gods or Devas undisguisedly betray their original physical character and meaning. Under the name of Agni (ignis) was praised and invoked the fire; the earth by that of Prithvî (the brave); the sky by the name of Dyu (Zeus, Jupiter), and afterwards of Indra; the firmament and the waters by the name of Oûpavóç. Under many appellations was the sun invoked, such as Sûrya, Savitri, Vishnu, or Mitra; and the dawn by the titles of Ushas, Urvasî, Ahanâ, and Sûrya. Nor was the moon forgotten: for though not often mentioned under its usual name of Kandra, reference is made to it under its more sacred

appellation of Soma; and a particular denomination

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was reserved for each of its phases. There is hardly any fact of nature, if it could impress the human mind in any way with the ideas of a higher power, of order, eternity, or beneficence,—whether the woods, or the rivers, or the trees, or the mountains,—without a name and representative in the early Hindu Pantheon. No doubt there existed in the human mind, from the very beginning, something, whether we call it a suspicion, an innate idea, an intuition, or a sense of the Divine. What distinguishes man from the rest of the animal creation is chiefly his ineradicable feeling of dependence and reliance upon some higher power; that consciousness of bondage, from which the very name of “religion” was derived. “It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.” The presence of that power was felt everywhere, and nowhere more clearly and strongly than in the rising and setting of the sun, in the change of day and night, of spring and winter, of birth and death. But although the Divine Presence was felt everywhere, it was impossible, in that early period of thought, and with a language incapable as yet of defining anything but material objects, to conceive the idea of God in its purity and fulness, or to assign to it an adequate and worthy expression.

It must also be remembered that the influence of the genius and forces of Nature would necessarily be greater in an age when the human mind was occupied by few objects of thought, than now when it ranges over the whole world of art and science. Moreover, to the eye of ignorance everything seems large and portentous, or dim and inscrutable. The fire from heaven, the reverberating thunder, the gale that crashed down the mountain ravines and felled great trees before it, the planetary bodies steadily revolving in their courses, the stream with its glow and its ripple, the dense shadows of the haunted forest, the recurring rush and roll of the sea,—all these were things which for early man had a constant novelty and strangeness, and seemed incessantly to claim his reverent consideration. He could not account for them: whether a bane or a delight they were equally unintelligible. They represented, therefore, some Power which he could regard only with awe and reverence. And of that Power the sun would necessarily be the chief type and symbol. All life and love seemed dependent upon it. The

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trees throve, and the flowers bloomed, and the banks rippled, and the birds sang, and the harvests ripened, through the sun. It was the source of light and heat, of the vigour and activity of nature. While it shone men's hearts leaped with joy, and the wheels of labour revolved with pleasant toil; but when it disappeared, and the darkness usurped the heavens, the spirits sank, and humanity felt in the change of scene a presentiment and presage of the darkness of death. All vitality, all motion centred in the sun. "It was like a deep furrow," says Max Müller, "which that heavenly luminary drew, in its silent procession from east to west, over the fallow mind of the gazing multitude; and in the impression left there by the first rising and setting of the sun, there lay the dark seed of a faith in a more than human being, the first intimation of a life without beginning, of a world without end." Who can wonder that the Chaldean, and the Celt, alike ascended to the high places, and paid their worship of symbolic fires to the great fountain of life and light, the central force of the universe? Who can wonder that all the Aryan tribes made it, so to speak, the nucleus of their religious systems? The Hindu peasant, centuries ago, addressed it in his heart in much the same language which Gawain Douglas afterwards employed. As its glorious orb rose above the gleaming horizon, he sent forth to it a message of welcome:

"Welcome, the lord of light and lamp of day; Welcome, fosterer of tender herbes green; Welcome, quickener of flourished flowers' sheen; Welcome, support of every root and vein; Welcome, comfort of all kind fruits and grain; Welcome, the bird's green beild upon the brier; Welcome, master and ruler of the year; Welcome, welfare of husbands at the ploughs; Welcome, repairer of woods, trees, and boughs; Welcome, depainter of the bloomit meads; Welcome, the life of everything that spreads."

And because it was all this, and more, the Hindu saw in it something greater than a mere luminary,—a planetary body; he endowed it with Divine attributes, he made it a god, he gave it his worship, and by an elaborate symbolism kept it ever before him.

A necessary consequence of this deification of the sun

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was the deification of the other bodies that shared with him the firmament; but as they were inferior in splendour and utility, they naturally became recognized as inferior gods. And when once the religious feeling of humanity had gone thus far, its further development became only a question of time. The homage given to the stars was soon extended to the winds and streams and groves. A legion of gods sprang into existence, and for a while they seemed to satisfy the needs and aspirations of humanity. But as the thoughts of men expanded, as their intellect ripened with the ages, and grew strong enough to doubt, and bold enough to question the conclusions of the common faith, a revolt took place against “the contradictions of a mythological phraseology, though it had been hallowed by sacred customs and traditions.” Men grew tired of so complex and cumbrous a religious system, and having observed a definite fundamental unity of nature in spite of the diversity of its operations, they came to believe in a similar unity of the Divine Power. The idea of a supreme authority once entertained, men soon understood that supremacy meant oneness; that if there were a God over all, He must be one and indivisible. One of the earliest proclamations of this sublime truth is found in the Rig-Veda, which says:[3]—

“That which is one the sages speak of in many ways—they call it Agni, Yama, Malarisvan.”

And again:[4]—

“In the beginning there came the Source of golden light—He was the only true Lord of all that is—He stablished the earth and this sky:—Who is God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

“He who gives life, He who gives strength; whose blessing all the bright gods desire; whose shadow is immortality; whose shadow is death:—Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

“He who through His power is the only King of the breathing and awakening world; He who governs all, man and beast:—Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

“He whose power these snowy mountains, whose power

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the sea proclaims, with the distant river—He whose these regions

are, as it were, His two arms:—Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

“He through whom the sky is bright and the earth firm—He through whom heaven was stablished—nay, the highest heaven—He who measured out the light in the air:—Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

“He to whom heaven and earth, standing firm by His will, look up, trembling inwardly—He over whom the rising sun shines forth:—Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

“Wherever the mighty water-clouds went, where they placed the reed and lit the fire, thence even He, who is the only life of the bright gods:—Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

“He, who of His might looked even over the water-clouds, the clouds which gave strength and lit the sacrifice, He *who is God above all gods*:—Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?

“May He not destroy us—He the creator of the earth; or He, the righteous, who created Heaven; He who also created the bright and mighty waters:—Who is the God to whom we shall offer our sacrifice?”

The creed of a plurality of gods was one that carried in itself the seeds of its destruction. But there was another cause of weakness in their mortal attributes. Deriving their existence from the life of nature, they were subject to the accidents which that life involved. Thus, the sun at noonday might glow with splendour, but at night it was conquered by the shadows, and in winter it seemed to yield to some stronger Power. The moon waxed and waned, and was frequently eclipsed. As nature is subject to change, so also must be the gods that represent its forces and aspects. Such instability, such inherent weakness could not long satisfy the human mind; having risen to the height of the idea of one God, it next demanded that that God should be immutable. What rest, what contentment would it find in the supposition of deities as changeful as the winds? Tossed about by the currents of passion and feeling, buffeted by adverse

circumstances, the soul yearns intensely for

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something fixed, something absolute, something unaffected by vicissitude, and finds it in the Divine Being, the same to-day as yesterday, and the same to-morrow as to-day.

These two opposite principles did not come into immediate collision; the priests of heathendom laboured long and earnestly to avert such a catastrophe. In Greece they succeeded by transferring the mortal or changeable element from “the gods” to “the heroes.”^[5] The human details in the characters and lives of Zeus and Apollon were transferred to the demi-gods or heroes represented as the sons or favourites of the gods. The two-fold character of Herakles as a god and a hero is recognized even by Herodotus; and indeed, some of the epithets applied to him sufficiently indicate his solar and originally divine personality. But to make some of the solar myths of which Herakles was the centre intelligible and conceivable, it became needful to depict Herakles as a mere human being, and to raise him to the seat of the Immortals only after he had endured toils and sufferings incompatible with the dignity of an Olympian divinity.

In Peru the same treatment was adopted, but with different results. A thinking, or, as he was called, a free-thinking Inca, remarked that the sun's perpetual travelling—he knew nothing, of course, of the Copernican theory—was a sign of servitude, and he threw doubts on the divine nature of aught so restless as the great luminary appeared to him to be. These doubts led to a tradition, which, even if unhistorical was not wholly untrue, that in Peru had existed an earlier worship—that of an Invisible Deity, the Creator of the World—Pachacamac.

“In Greece, also, there are signs of a similar craving after the ‘Unknown God.’ A supreme God was wanted, and Zeus, the stripling of Creta, was raised to that rank. He became God above all gods—*ἄ πάντων κύριος*, as Pindar calls him. Yet more was wanted than a mere Zeus; and then a supreme Fate or Spell was imagined before which all the gods, and even Zeus, had to bow. And even this Fate was not allowed to remain supreme, and there was something in the destinies of man which was called *ὑπέροπον* or ‘beyond

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Fate.' The most awful solution, however, of the problem belongs to Teutonic mythology. Here, also, some heroes were introduced; but their death was only the beginning of the final catastrophe. 'All gods must die.' Such is the last word of that religion which had grown up in the forests of Germany, and found a last refuge among the glaciers and volcanoes of Iceland. The death of Sigurd, the descendant of Odin, could not avert the death of Balder, the son of Odin, and the death of Balder was soon to be followed by the death of Odin himself, and of all the immortal gods."

Such a catastrophe was inevitable, so that Prometheus, the man of forethought, could safely predict the fall of Zeus.^[6]

A similar issue was worked out in India, but with this difference; that the seeming triumph of reason threatened to end in the destruction of all religious belief. At the outset no vehement contention took place. On the basis of the old mythology arose two new formations,—the Brahmanical philosophy and the Brahmanical ceremonial; the former opening up all avenues of philosophical inquiry, the latter immuring religious sentiment and sympathy within the narrowest possible barriers. Both, however, claimed to find their origin and antiquity in the sacred book of the Veda.

It was in the sixteenth or fifteenth century before Christ that the Brahmans, a branch of the white Aryans, passed into Hindustan from the north-west, and mixed with a more numerous race of coloured and barbarous aborigines. Among their immigrants the sacerdotal and the royal or noble classes already occupied an authoritative and a distinct position; and soon after their settlement in India, the lower classes, by a natural process, sank into the markedly inferior condition of the aborigines. Thus was established a singularly rigorous system of caste,—the priesthood and

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the aristocracy combining to oppress and keep down the two inferior orders of the Brahmans and the aborigines. Intermarriage was strictly forbidden, and every device adopted which could be made useful in strengthening and perpetuating the class-distinction.

This revolution in the social world assisted the revolution in the

religious; and the educated classes rapidly abandoned their nature worship in favour of the idea of an infinite and everlasting Godhead, which soared far above the feeblenesses and sins of humanity. To become one with this Godhead by throwing off the personality linked with a mind that was mean and miserable, thenceforth constituted the religious aspiration of the Brahman. And in attaining this object he was instructed to seek the help of the Brahmanical priesthood; nay, he was taught that without that help he would never succeed, and for this purpose a complex and comprehensive ceremonial was enjoined upon him. From his cradle to his grave it dogged his footsteps. Put forward as a stay and support, it was really a clog, an encumbrance. Not an event in his life could take place for which a formula of praise or prayer was not invented. Thanksgiving and sacrifice were alike minutely regulated. For the benefit of the inferior castes the old Pantheon of gods and demons had been retained, and the priesthood allotted to each his share of the worshipper's offerings and oblations. Each was represented as insisting so strongly on certain observances, and punishing so heavily any neglect or violation of them, that the votary feared to approach their shrine unless under the protection and guidance of their priests. Otherwise he might unwittingly rush into all kinds of sins. They alone knew what food might be eaten, what dress might be worn, what god might be addressed, what sacrifice paid. An error in pronunciation, a mistake about clarified butter, an unauthorised arrangement of raiment or hair, might involve the unassisted worshipper in pains and penalties of the most awful character. Never was so complete and absolute a ceremonial system known as that by which the Hindu priesthood obtained an entire mastery over the Hindu people. Never was any law more minute in its provisions, or more Draconic in the severity with which it punished their violation.

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Yet, strange to say, this ceremonial did not interfere with liberty of thought. Any amount of heresy was compatible with its observance. A man might think as he liked so long as he complied with its various conditions. In some of the Brahmanical schools of thought the names of the devas or gods were never heard; in others their existence was ignored, was virtually contradicted. Thus, one philosophical system maintained the existence of a single Supreme Being, and asserted that everything else which seemed to exist was but a dream and an

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