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SYMBOLISM AND SCIENCE.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE

GERMANTOWN SCIENCE AND ART CLUB.

BY

LLOYD P. SMITH.

SINE PARABOLA AUTEM NON LOQUEBATUR EIS.

PHILADELPHIA:
PRIVATELY PRINTED.

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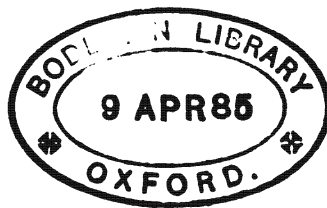
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TO
MAJOR-GENERAL J. G. R. FORLONG,
F.R.G.S., F.R.S.E., M.A.I., A.I.C.E., F.R.H.S.,
F.R.A. SOCIETY, ETC. ETC.,

AUTHOR OF
"RIVERS OF LIFE, OR SOURCES AND STREAMS OF THE FAITHS
OF MAN IN ALL LANDS :
SHOWING THE EVOLUTION OF FAITHS
FROM THE
RUDEST SYMBOLISMS TO THE LATEST SPIRITUAL
DEVELOPMENT :"

THIS
CRUDE ATTEMPT TO POPULARIZE SOME OF THE RESULTS
OF MODERN RESEARCH

Is Inscribed,

IN TOKEN OF THE GRATITUDE AND RESPECT
OF
THE WRITER.

BRAMHAM COTTAGE,
Germantown, Phila., Dec. 21, 1884.

SYMBOLISM AND SCIENCE.

I BEG to call your attention this evening very briefly, and rather by way of suggestion than otherwise, to the subject of the esoteric or symbolical method of teaching pursued anciently in the East, and the pernicious effects which that method has had on the progress of true knowledge, even down to our own time.

The subject is as important as it is obscure; and, while it is so vast that a lifetime does not suffice to master it, it is at the same time so involved with matters not adapted to a mixed audience, that all I can hope to do to-night is to raise one little corner of the veil of Isis. Taking, however, as a basis the undeniable proposition of Heyne that "from myths all the history as well as the philosophy of the ancients proceeds," I shall try to show you that that vast system of pre-scientific thought was not confined to the ancients; that it played a great part even in the Middle Ages; and that its confusing influence is not yet exhausted.

*

I.

In casting our eyes over the history of human knowledge, it is clear that in India, in Chaldea, and in Egypt, religion, philosophy, and science were originally one; that is, an attempt to account for the mysteries of the universe. In this attempt, one of the first facts which must have started the wonder of infant man is that some things are alive, and some are dead. A stone lies still, an animal moves. Fire moves, the sun, moon, and planets move. There is, therefore, men reasoned, a mysterious something in the animal which there is not in the stone; something in the fire which there is not in the wood; something in the sun, moon, and planets, which there is not in the fixed stars. From recognizing in the moving things around and above him hidden and living beings who perchance might harm or bless, to propitiating them was but a step. "Fear," said the ancient philosophers, "first created the gods on earth." Accordingly, we find that the Indo-European race, as far back as we can go in history, worshipped the fire, the sky, the sun, the moon, the dawn, the tempest, lending to them, as savages do to-day, a soul, an intelligence, a free will, and feelings of friendship or hate for man. When, even in this enlightened age, we find that a profound thinker like Schopenhauer can attribute to lifeless things a will-power like that of man, and that this system receives a cordial welcome from cultivated men, we find no difficulty in understanding that the like ideas may have pervaded the minds of the mammoth-hunters in the quaternary period. Of that far-off age we have,

it is true, no literary records, but we have (what comes to the same thing) the opportunity to watch the natural workings of the human mind, in the case of savages and children.

At the very dawn of history, the facts which meet us confirm the view that our ancestors regarded some heavenly bodies as alive, and fire as an animal. The Sanskrit names of the divinities throw a flood of light on the origin of mythology. The good are the shining ones (devas); hence, by the way, the Latin Deus and our deist. Indra (the Jupiter of the Greeks) is he who makes it rain. The other supreme god is Agni (ignis), the fire, the moving flame, at times beneficent, at times destructive. The solar gods of the Aryans are born from the names which its poetry gave to the sun: Surya, the brilliant, Santar, the producer, and Pushan, the nourisher; while Varuna (the Greek Ouranos) is the concavity of the sky or the starry heavens.

It was not long, moreover, before it dawned upon those early thinkers, who already bowed down before the mysterious agencies in reproduction, that the sun in the heavens is the great begetter, the universal father. The conclusion of the ancient world that all life is due to the rays of the sun, is fully borne out by the investigations of our own day; and hence, that star being supposed to be alive, it is not wonderful that under the names of Dyaus-Piter (or Jupiter) the shining father, Ormuzd the Creator, and Osiris the king of life, the orb of day became in high Asia, on the banks of the Euphrates and on those of the Nile, an object of study and worship; according to some, even its English name (the sun) means the creator. The early phi-

been discovered on the site of Nineveh, and Godfrey Higgins claims that even the telescope itself was known to a very few of the Egyptian priests, and kept by them in private for the use of those only who were initiated in the higher mysteries. In Greece, Thales of Miletus is famous for having foretold an eclipse of the sun. That the Druids also closely watched the movements of the heavenly bodies, is shown at Stonehenge, by the avenue of rocks leading to the great circle, which avenue is accurately directed to that point of the horizon at which the sun rises on the longest day of the year.

From these and countless other historic and pre-historic monuments and records, it is clear that the philosophers, in other words the priesthood, of antiquity, attained to a very considerable knowledge of the movements of the sun, moon, and planets. It is not so clear—and this is the point to which I would especially direct your attention—that they outgrew the childish fancy that these heavenly bodies are living beings, of like passions with ourselves, who, as Shakespeare says, “in their motions like an angel sing, still quiring to the young-eyed cherubim.” If they did outgrow it, they were careful to keep their knowledge to themselves. The facts of astronomy were among the great professional secrets of the priestly class, though hinted at in allegories, and in part confided to the initiated in the various mysteries—so-called—of antiquity. “Have we lost anything,” says Max Müller, “if, while reading the story of Hephaestos splitting open with his axe the head of Zeus, and Athene springing from it full-armed, we perceive behind this savage

imagery, Zeus as the bright sky, his forehead as the East, Hephaestos as the young not yet risen Sun, and Athene as the Dawn, the daughter of the Sky, stepping forth from the fountain-head of light, in full armor, in her panoply of light, driving away the darkness of night, and awakening men to a bright life, to bright thoughts, to bright endeavors?" Certainly not; we have gained much in learning the hidden meaning of the oriental myths; in finding out that, before the separation of the Aryan race, before the existence of Sanskrit, Greek, or Latin, before the gods of the Veda had been worshipped, one supreme deity had been found, had been named, had been invoked by the ancestors of our race as Dyaus, and later on as Zeus, Jupiter, Tyr, all meaning light and brightness, sky and day.

But what we gain from the quite modern practice of searching out and freely telling the truth in reference to these matters, the people of antiquity lost in the universal practice of concealing it. It was the general sentiment of the ancients that the common people should not be taken into the confidence of the learned. Philo says: "Naked truth can only be received by very wise men; it must be in the form of lies before the multitude can profit by it." Doubtless this aversion to giving out knowledge grew, at the start, out of the difficulty of doing so, and the use of allegory began innocently, just as we now-a-days tell a child that Kriss Kingle comes down the chimney, and that Jack Frost will catch him if he goes out in the cold. In such personifications we but repeat the guesses of early man, to whom, as Wordsworth says:—

Sunbeams upon distant hills,
Gilding space with shadows in their train,
Might with small help from fancy be transferred
Into fleet Oreads, sporting visibly.

We still speak in poetry of King Death, and Father Time, and Mother Earth, and John Barleycorn; but as soon as children are of age to understand these figures of speech, we teach them better. We still tell the young ones the charming story of the enchanted castle where men, women, and children, dogs, swine, chickens, and creeping things were bewitched and turned to stone, until the fairy Prince came home and brought them back to life; but we end—if we are wise—by telling them that the enchanter is Winter, which freezes up everything and everybody, and the youthful Prince is the Sun in spring which thaws them out. Our interpretations, it is true, do not always convince. I was once, for instance, explaining to a Sunday-school class that there are no such beings as fairies, and pointed out that the belief in their existence grows out of a lack of scientific knowledge, when a little boy of Irish extraction exclaimed: "Oh! but my father has seen them." Thus, in our day, and in the western world, the teacher finds his scholar's mind too often preoccupied by eastern fables, which he persists in taking literally. The difficulty, indeed, which true science has ever met with in the task of enlightening mankind is not the mere ignorance of the people, but the fact that they "know so much that ain't so." Thus, to take a homely illustration: it happened one evening—so I read in a newspaper the other day—that Ethel's mamma lit the nursery gas, in-

stead of Minna, the German maid. "What makes the light come, mamma?" queried the child, with the air of one who knew already, but wished to test her parent's knowledge. "Why," exclaimed mamma, rather vaguely, "it is a sort of air that burns. It is shut up in the pipe, and when we turn the knob it rushes out, and we light it with a match." "I thought you didn't know," the little one remarked, "or you'd be more afraid of it. I know all about it. Minna told me. A dragon lives in that pipe, and his tongue is made out of burning fire. He is a friend of Minna; so when she turns the knob he just sticks out the tip of his tongue, and makes us a nice little light; but he hates children, and if Bobby or I should turn the knob, he would rush right out in this room and eat us all up in a minute. This is true, because Minna told me."

The ancient philosophers and priests, unlike ourselves, encouraged all such infantile ideas. They did not, as a rule, try to raise their followers to their own level. If they believed they seldom acted on the theory, alike of Socrates and of Sakya-Muni, that all evil comes from lack of knowledge. Those astute spirits who, from the beginning, have subdued the million by working on their fancies and their fears, looked upon science rather as dynamite, ready to blow their gainful leadership to the winds, and therefore to be handled with the greatest care. As the knowledge of the learned grew in the progress of the ages, so their opinions in respect to the mysteries of nature differed in proportion from those of the vulgar. To have published their views of the philosophy of the universe, or their discoveries in science,

would have been to turn against themselves the venerable prejudices which their predecessors had taught the ignorant to respect, and would have ranged in hostile array against them those very classes of society which it had always been the object of their profession rather to govern than to teach. All who tell unpleasant truths are unpopular, and hence it can scarcely be a matter of surprise that men of science, acting on the precept that "when you are with wolves, you must howl," should substitute fables for facts to amuse the people, while, under the veil of allegory, they conveyed lessons of instruction—sometimes beautiful enough—to those who understood their metaphorical language.

In accordance with this time-honored principle, it would not do for the leaders of the people to teach astronomy as a science. No! the men of science, ignoring realities and using an "economy of truth" which may well be characterized as niggardly, suggested that the moving power of the sun, in his daily course, is one Sisyphus, who was condemned to roll a stone forever to the top of a heavenly hill, from which it immediately begins to roll down again to the unseen land of darkness. As for the yearly progress of the sun through the heavens, they taught that the groups of stars through which the sun passes in his annual course is a zodiac or circle of animals; and the progress of the orb of day through the twelve constellations was hinted at in the story of the twelve labors of Hercules. This allegory may be traced back, according to Prof. Sayce, to the adventures of Gisdhubar, as written down in the twelve books of the great epic of early Chaldea, about 2000 B. C. As it has come

to us in the Greek mythology, the interior meaning of some at least of the labors seems to be as follows: In the constellation Aquarius in February, Hercules or the sun cleanses the Augean stables by turning the rivers Alpheus and Peneus through them; in March, when he crosses the equator, he carries Cerberus from Hades to the upper world; in April, passing through Taurus, he captures the Cretan bull; in July, wrestling with the constellation Leo, he slays the Nemean lion, and clothes himself with his skin; in August, in the house of Virgo, he seizes the girdle of Hippolyte, queen of the Amazons; in October, grappling with the constellation Scorpio, he destroys the Leonean hydra; while in November, in the character of Sagittarius, he wounds and captures the Arcadian stag.

II.

All this charming and witty nonsense is directly opposed to the scientific method. It was in Athens, among a people innately incredulous and inquisitive, that science in the modern sense of the term was born. According to Cuvier, before Aristotle science did not exist. Thales, however, seems to have used the inductive method, and Archimedes was as truly scientific as Herschel or Huxley, while the philosophy of Anaximander foreshadowed that of Darwin himself. Anaxagoras, who flourished when Socrates was still young, declared, in the true philosophic spirit, that those occurrences, such as eclipses of the moon or monstrous births, which filled men with alarm for the

future, were merely natural phenomena, having no connection with human acts or destiny. Although the germ of scientific thought was latent in the Aryan mind, and may be traced even in the Vedas, yet it was the Greeks who, in point of fact, were the first to look at nature with clear and healthy eyes; and they originated what we now call the Baconian philosophy, that is the system of carefully gathering all the facts relating to a particular subject, weighing them, and thence inferring the law which governs them. The ground of all scientific induction is the fact, first suspected by the Greek philosophers, and now established by the experience of centuries, that nature is uniform. What has happened once will happen again, provided the same circumstances and situation of things are exactly repeated, "truth differing from error, principally in the capacity of being rediscovered." Induction, therefore, or the Baconian philosophy is the only process by which we pass from the known to the unknown, and discriminate between the true and the false; it is one of the great means of arriving at scientific truth, indeed the only process of real inference, and it is distinctly the growth of western civilization. The orientals, on the other hand, seem never to have cared for scientific, or, indeed, any other kind of truth; they were forever personifying natural phenomena, and their philosophy, which left many an unlucky trace on Greek thought, well-nigh mastered the learning of the Middle Ages, and is to-day the chief stumbling-block in the path of science.

The oriental method is a system of symbols, the scientific

method is one of reality; the one is based on fancies, the other on facts; the one is obscure, the other clear; the one is the method of the Masonic Temple, the other that of the University; the one seeks the Why of things, the other the How;—above all, the one is barren, the other fruitful. The great, the crowning glory of the inductive method is that it treads no step backward. The discoveries of one age form the sure foundation for the discoveries of the next, so that in our day man's knowledge of the universe and his mastery over nature are progressing in a geometrical ratio. This mastery, it is needless to say, would have been almost impossible in ancient times. The locomotive, for example, could hardly have originated among a people who propitiated the God of fire by sacrificing their children to Moloch.

The teacher now-a-days, moreover, wishes to spread knowledge, to multiply common schools; the Egyptian priest jealously guarded even the art of writing from the profane. The magi of India, Chaldea, and Egypt undoubtedly had made some progress in real science, but the people, as we have seen, were put off with allegories and parables.

This system seems to have originated, like Æsop's fables on the one hand, and black magic and the cholera on the other, in Hindostan, whose obscene symbolism and pessimistic philosophy have infected the whole world of thought. Unchecked by outside truth, the Hindoo mind has a fatal facility for ensnaring, entrapping, and entangling itself. The sacred books of the East are professedly esoteric, saying one thing and meaning another, so that the Brahmans them-

selves are generally ignorant of the mysteries of their own faith. *Gopanyum prayatnena*, "to be kept secret with the greatest care," is the refrain of all the ancient Hindoo writers on philosophy. The Buddhist writings are equally obscure. They teach, for example, that when Sakya-Muni was about to come into the world, a white elephant entered his mother's side, the meaning being that an adept was re-incarnated, though, according to some, a still deeper mystery is concealed in the monstrous legend. One of the simplest truths in philosophy is effectually hidden in the Hindoo allegory that the world rests on an elephant, and the elephant on a tortoise. This system of darkening thought by words without knowledge has borne its legitimate fruit; for, in spite of "esoteric Buddhism," the common people of the favored lands of Thibet and Hindostan are fearfully degraded. "I never met an honest and upright Thibetan," says Prejavalsky. As for India, "not only," writes Sir Alfred Lyall, "does the husbandman pray to his plough, the fisher to his net, the weaver to his loom; but the scribe adores his pen, and the banker his account books." Nowhere, moreover, is sex worship, doubtless one of the earliest religions of oriental man, more shamelessly practised than in Hindostan. If India is to have any future, it must come from western civilization, western science, and western religion; and hence the Brama Somaj, born of the freedom of thought secured by the British rule, deserves our sympathy; there being every prospect, according to Max Müller, that that movement will in the end lead to a complete regeneration of the mental life of India.

Meantime, it is with the gross and misleading symbolism of the Orient, I repeat, that the Greek and the Teutonic mind have been struggling for two thousand years. The two systems—the symbolic method of the East, and the scientific method of Greek philosophy—contended in the womb of the early church, and unfortunately the oriental system in a measure triumphed. Constantine was, in fact, both pagan and Christian; and his church was more a union of the two than a substitution of the one for the other. I mean to say that, under pretence of the adoration of Christ, the old pagan worship of the sun was kept up in the third century by teachers imbued with the old ideas; under the name of the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, the bright constellation Virgo was still adored; and under the name of divine service the ceremonial of the Buddhistic monks crept, unobserved, into the early church. The esoteric method was in the air. Even Plato, who borrowed much from the oriental school, said that he meant to cover up his meaning in such obscurity that only an adept should fully understand it; and truly he has done so. Not only Plato, but Pythagoras and all the Grecian philosophers were well assured, for example, of the oneness of the Divine Being, but none of them, except Socrates, had honesty enough to tell the people that God is the supreme and perfect Reason, who, though invisible to the eye of man, is everywhere present, and to be apprehended in his works—a truth which was held back for the initiated in the higher mysteries. The early Fathers went further still in this crooked path; they not only covered up the truth, but many of them revelled in

pious frauds, while their successors, the mediæval scribes and pharisees, of set purpose took away the key of knowledge. They entered not in themselves, and them that would enter in they hindered. Ignorance was expressly called by Gregory the Great the mother of devotion. All translations of the Scriptures into the vulgar tongue were in the Dark Ages consigned to the flames, as indeed they would be to-day, if the obscurantists had their way. De Maistre expressly says: "If a society were being established to buy up and burn all the Bibles in the vulgar tongue, I should be very much tempted to join." Learning, in the "ages of faith," was denounced, and philosophers—sometimes telling droll stories to put their readers off the scent, or "giving sugar to the parrot" as Rabelais did—prosecuted the study of science at their peril. Looked upon as engaged in a diabolical pursuit—plucking the fruit of the tree of knowledge—they were forced, like Roger Bacon, to employ a jargon to hide their thoughts from all but their own adepts. Every philosopher, every mathematician, every naturalist had to keep the secret of his discoveries, if he would keep his head. The makers of books had a small and select audience; they wrote only in a dead language, and even then they did not dare to say plainly what they meant, the words in the margin—*caute lege*—"read carefully,"—being sometimes added to call attention to the hidden sense, or else the passages which had a double meaning were underscored. Very commonly, adopting the method of the church itself, the discoveries of science were veiled in the language of allegory. In vain did the vulgar try to find the philoso-

pher's stone by following the directions of alchemists who, when they wrote mercury, did not always mean quicksilver, and when they wrote gold, did not always mean one of the precious metals. In those days, the metals were suns and moons, kings and queens, red bridegrooms, and lily brides. Gold was Apollo, "son of the lofty dome;" silver, Diana, the fair moon of his unresisting career, who chased him weekly through the celestial grove; quicksilver was the wing-footed Mercury, herald of the gods, "new lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;" iron was the ruddy-eyed Mars in panoply complete; lead was heavy-lidded Saturn, "quiet as a stone within the tangled forest of material forms;" tin was the *diabolus metallorum*, the very devil among the metals; and so on in unmeaning mystery. There were flying birds, green dragons, and red lions. Gold was called King Sol, and silver Queen Luna, and the processes of mixture and heat were spoken of as personal struggles, in which some elements were conquerors, some conquered. Again, gold cannot be drunk, and therefore the phrase *aurum potabile* gave the clue to the initiated, who alone understood "the theory and practice of exaltation," that is to say, the innermost meaning of the phrase, "the transmutation of metals." The philosophical stone was said to be younger than the elements; yet at her virgin touch the grossest calx among them all could blush before her into perfect gold. In vain, therefore, did Ponce de Leon seek in Florida for the Fountain of youth, for only the wise could understand the mystery wrapped up in that arcane word. Ponce de Leon was no Rosicrucian, or he would have understood that Truth

lies at the bottom of *that* well, that it is the mystical "pool of Bethesda," the "fountain sealed" with Solomon's seal. In vain also will the modern reader think to master all the meaning of Dante and Chaucer and Spenser unless he knows something of the symbolism of the Middle Ages. It is certain that Petrarch's pastorals are all allegorical. The Beatrice of Dante, the Fiammetta of Boccaccio, the Lady of Shakspeare's sonnets, to say nothing of Sidney's Stella, and all the platonic loves of the sonneteers of those periods,—these were no mortal women. Dante says: "Let it be understood that by 'my love' in this allegory is always to be understood this study—which is the application of the mind to that thing of which it is enamored." And again, more plainly: "By my lady I always mean the subject of the preceding canzone, that is Light, whom Pythagoras called Philosophy."

Was it not—perhaps, unconsciously to themselves—this self-same embodied Light, this Queen of Beauty, this lovely Flower of Chivalry, who appeared to Raffael and Murillo when they painted the *Maria purissima sin peccado concebida* of the mediæval monks? And, to come nearer home, was she not also the maiden Sophia of the German mystics who, a century and a half ago, made their home in Germantown and Ephrata? In the sacred poems of Ludwig Höcker, the schoolmaster at Ephrata, the "lonely turtle dove" thus addresses his heavenly mate:—

Sophia, Jungfrau, edle Braut,
 Ich möchte wohl was sagen
 Wer deine Schönheit nur geschaut
 Kann allem sich entschlagen.

Mysticism, in fact, ever expresses itself best in poetry, its central idea—though not all unveiled—still coming out, perhaps, as clearly as elsewhere, in the following lines, wherein Dante is supposed to be addressing the Blessed One in heaven, and where the former may be conceived, in accordance with the esoteric method, as speaking either of the guidance of a mortal woman translated to the skies—

That noble lady mine, who to a sphere
Deserving of her worth, hath turned away—

or of the leading of that kindly Light whom our Protestant monks called the virgin Sophia, while Gabriele Rossetti thinks she stands for our Lord himself.

AD BEATRICEM IN CÆLIS.

Te ducente cùm puella
Vixisti Beatrice bella,
Te ducente vere Deo
Meipsum dabam corde meo.

Te ducente tunc beata
In cœlis O immaculata!
Te ducente quam amabam,
In viis tuis properabam.

Te ducente cùm clamavi
Inimicos superavi,
Te ducente, benedicta!
Non timebo, O invicta!

Te ducente, victrix, fortis,
Portas non formido mortis;
Te ducente quam amabo,
Quoquo vadis ambulabo.

TO BEATRICE IN HEAVEN.

Dear Guardian, when this earth you trod,
 Shining in maiden beauty,
 Your counsels led my soul to God,
 My feet in paths of duty.

When brighter skies reclaimed you, Love,
 Your earthly mission over,
 By angel whispers from above
 Again you led your lover.

To you, when foes rose up, I cried—
 Then lo! they fled before me;
 No ill I fear when by your side,
 Your banner waving o'er me.

Not yet Death's gloomy gates I dread,
 Since, Love, for me you're pleading;
 You'll guide me still, and still I'll tread
 The path where you are leading.

Philosophers were slow to give up this double-tongued method of teaching, and when Leibnitz published in the *Acta Eruditorum* his scheme of differential calculus, he managed to unfold to only two men his method and his object. Newton, in like manner, explained his invention of infinite series, and yet concealed it for a long time by a transposition of the letters which make up the fundamental propositions into an alphabetical order. When the celebrated Jerome Cardan, to take another instance, applied to Tartalea of Brescia for his method of solving quadratic equations, the former was obliged to swear on the true faith of a Christian to commit the formula to cypher, so that even after his death it would not be intelligible to any one. That which

was the rule in the olden time is no exception now ; and there are many contemporary writers, such as Hargrave Jennings, and the late Eliphas Levi, who still keep up that cabalistic style, which means one thing to the initiated, and quite another to the world. Even in the works of men of science one often has to read between the lines, and philosophers still hesitate to tell the truth.

Thus are we suffering to this day from what I venture to call the oriental method of communicating knowledge, a method so crafty and subtle that it ever lands its votaries in a quagmire, from which they find it difficult to scramble out. Let a man, for example, once thoroughly believe in the legend of King Arthur and the knights of the round table, and he resents the teaching of him who explains that King Arthur means the sun, and that his twelve knights, like the twelve paladins of Charlemagne, are the twelve signs of the Zodiac, who encircle the round table of the ecliptic. Arthur's twelve victories are obviously a reproduction of the twelve labors of Hercules or the Sun ; and the statement that the peerless knight never died at all, and that he who had been king should still be king again, proves Arthur to have been "one of that goodly company which numbers in its ranks Charlemagne, Barbarossa, Sebastian of Portugal, the Tells of Rutli, the English Harold, and the Moor Boabdil. None of these is dead, for the sun, while men see him not, is but slumbering under that spell of night which keeps True Thomas beneath the hills of Ercildoune, or Tannhäuser in the caves of the Horselberg, or Odysseus in the grotto of Kalypso."

A Free Mason, to take another illustration, who once clearly understands that the myth—originating only in the last century—of the death and resurrection of King Hiram Abiff, is merely a scenic representation of the yearly death of the sun in winter, and his resurrection at the vernal Equinox; and that the saying that the building of Solomon's temple "without sound of axe or hammer or saw" is merely a poetical way of proclaiming that the universe was created silently and by natural development, soon gets tired of taking part in mystical ceremonies. I am speaking here, I acknowledge, as an outsider on these matters, as one who is "free," but not "accepted." All the symbols of the Masonic Order, it should be noted, are not so harmless as these. The "phre-mazons," or their predecessors, did their best in the middle ages to preserve by symbolic architecture the childish ideas of early India, Chaldea, and Egypt. They were employed all over Europe to build churches, and inheriting the so-called secrets of the East, that is to say, the primitive and barbaric ideas of phallic and sun worship, they symbolized the one in their steeples, their rose windows, and their bells, and the other in the position of their churches, which were always built so that the faithful might worship towards the rising sun. In like manner, on the outside of the churches, they used to carve that mediæval devil whose features may be traced back to an Assyrian bas-relief, which represents the dragon of Chaos, with claws, tail, horns, and wings, pursued by the sun god Merodach; a clear case, by the way, of atavism, or turning back to the ancestral type.

The same poison infected the church itself, which, as Sir

Isaac Newton was the first to point out, arranged its festivals on an astronomical basis, giving, for example, each apostle his feast in a separate month, on the day when the sun enters the sign, and fixing the birthday of the Lord of Glory on the 25th December (the day of the nativity of the unconquered Sun in the Mithraic mysteries) at the moment when, at the winter solstice, the heavenly child gains his first degree of ascension. The feast of St. John the Baptist, on the other hand, is kept on the 24th June, when the days begin to get shorter, because, forsooth, as St. Augustine points out: "He must increase, but I must decrease." The festival of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin has been kept since the seventh century on the 15th August, because at that date the sun is in the midst of the constellation Virgo, and at sunrise and sunset, when the other stars are visible, those which make up Virgo are extinguished by the brightness of the sun, and the Virgin Mary is said to be "raised to the starry seat where her Son reigns." Hence, also, in mediæval art, and notably in a picture of the Assumption in Caxton's *Golden Legend*, the Blessed Virgin is represented as surrounded or "clothed with the Sun." The 8th September, when the head of Virgo, the so-called "Star of the Sea," comes out from the sun's rays, is the festival of Mary's birth. The 21st December, again, when the sun is at its lowest point in the ecliptic, is St. Thomas's day, the apostle who doubted the resurrection of his Lord. Thus did the mediæval church lend itself to the oriental method, and by its festivals, its architecture and its ceremonies, no less than by the vestments of its clergy, hinted at that worship of the

sun and that phallic adoration which originated, naturally enough, in the ages of ignorance, but which must be overthrown by more elevated views of the Creator before the human mind can grasp the reality of things. Nowhere do these survivals show themselves more curiously at the present time than in Naples, where, in the practice of the lower classes, the ideas of pagan Rome still flourish in all their grossness.

The oriental method and the scientific method locked horns in the time of Galileo, and though science suffered a physical defeat, it gained a moral victory. The earth does move, notwithstanding that only the other day the *Dublin Review* remarked that, after all, it is not quite certain that the Copernican system is correct. The earth does move, notwithstanding that a British Association exists for the express purpose of proving the contrary; and its publications are quite voluminous too. The earth does move, notwithstanding the success of brother Jasper, in Virginia, in proving to his colored brethren that "the sun do move." I sympathize with brother Jasper, for I sometimes get puzzled myself with all this talk about sky-scrapers, and making the welkin ring, and catching larks. We half believe, one and all, that "at dawn Aurora gayly wakes," and that Boreas is a "blustering railer;" but still, on the whole, truth tends to take the place of allegory, astronomy has driven out astrology, and science, at last, has gained the upper hand of symbolism.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Science and Art Club, I have no need to exhort you to choose this day which system you

will follow; your name shows that you have chosen the scientific method. Stick to it, I beseech you. Believe nothing on authority; believe only on evidence, and work out that evidence for yourselves. In this day of scientific thought and free speech, summon up the courage to confront the problems of esoteric philosophy in their influence on human thought with the same frankness and ardor with which naturalists approach the mysteries of nature and pierce the veil. Take up, for example, the study of the Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions and draw for yourselves the weighty inferences which you will not find in books. As we all of us know by experience, such investigations form their own exceeding great reward, and they have no drawback. Do not put up with allegories, but drag them out into the broad day, and turn them over. Seek and you shall find; for it is as true in science as it is in religion that "he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened;" and, remembering always that "the truth shall make you free," let your motto be that noble cry of the old Welsh bards:—*Y gwir yn erben y byd*—THE TRUTH AGAINST THE WORLD.

