



On Initiation and The Mysteries

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The Great War and the Great Initiation

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Readers of the THEOSOPHICAL QUARTERLY who are acquainted with the Bhagavad Gita have been struck, again and again, with the likeness between the events portrayed in that most martial of Scriptures and the happenings of the World War: the opposing armies, drawn up in battle array; on the one side, Arjuna and his brothers; on the other side, the forces of the Kurus. The one army, Arjuna and the Pandus, ill-equipped and poorly organized; the other army, the Kuru forces, magnificently ranged in order so strong as to fill even Arjuna with dismay, so that, valiant warrior though he was, he sank down broken-hearted in his chariot, ready to give up the fight; the typical “defeatist” of the Kurukshetra field.

Here are the prototypes of the armies of the Allies and of Germany, as they faced each other on the new Kurukshetra, the battle plains of France and Flanders. And, to complete the parallel, with the armies of the Pandu Allies was Krishna, the Avatar, the plenary Incarnation of the Logos, the visible representative of the Lodge of Masters, Supreme Agent, for that decisive war, of the invincible White Lodge; inspiring, dominating, leading, as the White Lodge, through its present Agents, has dominated the present war.

It would be of high value to push the comparison in detail, for this comparison would bring into relief the spiritual forces in the present war; while, on the other hand, since the details of recent fighting are fresh and living in our minds, it would give to the doings at Kurukshetra

a new reality and significance. But there is another aspect of the matter that more vital. The Bhagavad Gita has, without doubt, as its first of nucleus, a cycle of war-ballads, dating, in all likelihood, from the days of the contest itself, and thus presenting an authentic record of that momentous struggle. But the Bhagavad Gita is something more than a “war book” of Ancient India; it is a “war book” also of another sort, a Scripture of the eternal spiritual warfare, the conflict of the Soul with the Powers of Evil. The original nucleus of war-ballads has been taken and worked over by those who were masters of these high themes, It has been so remodelled and dramatized, in the light of the authentic experiences of those who had passed through the eternal conflict and won the victory, that it represents, not only a history of the battle of Kurukshetra, but a history also of the supreme mystery, which has been called the Great Initiation.

The best explicit account of that mysterious ceremony, which is, at the same time, something far more than a ceremony, is, perhaps, that which is contained in the closing dramatic chapters of *The Idyl of the White Lotus*. That account, tradition says, was dictated to an Initiate, by a still higher Initiate, a Master. *The Idyl of the White Lotus*, so far as the writing of it is concerned, was begun by a candidate for discipleship, who, later, strayed far from the true path into the dangerous by-ways of psychism. But this candidate-disciple was unable to complete the task of writing down what the Master, who inspired the story, dictated; the work, therefore, was taken up by H. P. Blavatsky, who wrote the concluding chapters under the direct guidance of the Master who later inspired the golden sentences of *Light on the Path*.

Those who know *The Idyl of the White Lotus* will remember—and those who do not would be well-advised to ascertain—that the candidate for the Great Initiation passed, as a preparation for it, through great trials, great temptations, through grave moral failure and valiant spiritual recovery; until the point was reached for the final and decisive struggle between that disciple’s Soul and the mighty and arrogant Forces of Evil. When the disciple, having passed through the earlier trials, with many failures and many brave recoveries, saw clearly the impending contest and determined to enter it—to overcome or die—the hour for the Great Initiation struck. The scene that follows is

one of great splendour and solemnity, a high water mark in theosophical literature, containing sentences that every student of Theosophy should know by heart; should, indeed, inscribe upon the tablets of his heart, against the trials of the Great Day.

There appear to the candidate for Initiation the Souls of those who have already passed through the gates of the death of self into the world of the Eternal, and the candidate enters into reverent communion with them. This scene, it is said, represents the central fact of the Great Mystery, in which the Soul of the candidate is united with, and shares the full consciousness of, not only his own immediate Guru or Master, but also of that Guru's Guru, of the greater Guru above both, of all the Masters on that ray, in ascending series, up to, and beyond, the holy portals of Nirvana; sharing, thus, during the ceremony of Initiation, the full consciousness of the Logos, the host of the Dhyān Chohans. During the ceremony, it is said that full sunlight of splendour irradiates the disciple's consciousness, so that he perceives even his final goal, the highest conceivable attainment in the life of the Eternal. But, when the ceremony is ended, there is a sudden narrowing of the horizon: the disciple now sees only that part of the path which is immediately before him; his consciousness is limited to a clear vision only of his proximate goal—with the terrible toil, the hard trials which must be overcome, before that proximate goal is reached. When that new victory is won, after prolonged and courageous fighting, there will dawn the holy day of a new Initiation, a new and plenary revelation of the splendid vision of the Eternal. And thus, by arduous step after step, the mountain of the Eternal will be climbed.

This same vision of the Eternal is the theme of the central episode of the Bhagavad Gita, when Arjuna, after many heart-breaking trials, is vouchsafed the revelation of Krishna's everlasting Being; is caught up into the vast and splendid spiritual life of his Master, and, through that Master, becomes one, for the time being, with the full consciousness of Avalokita-Ishvara, the august life of the Logos manifested, which, in the mystical language of the Himalayan Schools, is called the Host of the Dhyān Chohans. It would be profitable, perhaps, to study these great and mystical chapters of the Bhagavad Gita precisely in this light: as an unveiling of the mystery of the Great Initiation, and of its central event, the blending of the consciousness of the disciple with the full

consciousness of that disciple's Master, and, through the Master's consciousness, with the plenary consciousness of the Logos, the manifested Eternal. And it would be well, perhaps, clearly to understand that this blending is possible solely because the Soul of the disciple is, in the ultimate analysis, one with the Logos; the Great initiation rests on that supreme dogma: "the identity of all souls with the Oversoul." The Great Initiation is simply the revelation of that already existent reality, bringing into the consciousness of the disciple that supreme and ultimate oneness, which has been from all eternity; the fundamental reality, through which alone that Soul, that disciple, has real and spiritual Being. Therefore the Great Initiation, while it is a ceremony, is also far more than a ceremony. It is the revelation of the final spiritual reality, the great and everlasting rock on which the Universe rests.

But if the Bhagavad Gita, and the conflict which it depicts, be a representation of the Great Initiation; and if there be a deep and fundamental likeness between the war at Kurukshetra and the great World War, through which all the more vital nations of the world have passed; then it would seem to follow that there must be certain deep and close relations between the World War and the mystery depicted in the Bhagavad Gita, the mystery of the Great Initiation.

And, as we look closer into the World War, we shall see the analogies multiply; the fundamental likeness stands out clear. There were the preliminary temptations, humiliating failures; valorous recoveries. There was the supreme vision of the Eternal, of the Logos, the Lord, as the true combatant. And it would seem that not so much the individual leaders, or even disciples in the Allied armies were the candidates in this Initiation; but rather the collective soul, the *logos*, of each of the allied nations. It is quite true that there were individuals—such a one, perhaps, was Marshal Foch—who quite clearly recognized, each his own Master, as Protagonist in the conflict, and with full consciousness united his will to the will of his Master, throughout the struggle. So, perhaps, we may think that, if, among the large were disciples, these men may have consciously and quite rightly recognized the leadership of Masters of the Indian Lodge; so also with forces from Egypt, or from territories within the sphere of influence of the Far Eastern Lodges.

Yet it would appear to be true that, if these possible exceptions be

excepted, the real candidates in the Great Initiation of the World War were the *logoi* of the Allied nations, their collective souls. And if this be true, and it is well worth considering, as a good hypothesis, then we shall have a new clue, and one of the highest value and interest, to the purpose of the Lodge of Masters, in allowing the World War to take place, and in guiding it as they did. We may in this way gain a most valuable insight into the further elements of that purpose, as it affects the time to come.

There is one prospect which is of the utmost importance dearly to see and understand. In what was said of the tradition of the Great Initiation, it appeared that, after the solemn ceremony is ended, there remains in the consciousness of the candidate, no longer the clear vision of the Eternities, the immensity of the Supreme Soul, but rather a strictly limited view of the proximate goal, the next immediate objective of that disciple's effort, the task immediately in hand; yet with the haunting presence of the greater vision, as a well-spring of perennial inspiration. But, in the concrete, there is a clear view only of difficult problems, of serious dangers, of grave trials and temptations. And tradition affirms that these temptations must be immediately faced and fought. And here lies the gravity of the danger: of our own danger, as embers of the Allied nations, the *logoi* of which took part in this Great Initiation.

Perhaps the most formidable danger, as it is the most subtle temptation, is—vanity. Let each of us look well to this; seeking to clothe ourselves in the armour of humility. But there will be, also abundant temptation to the latent materialism in each one of us, and to all the persuasive passions and appetites in us, by which that materialism expresses itself. Temptations, also, of cowardice, suspicion, unfaith; all the batteries of the lower self and the Powers of Evil. Let us not, because of this, suffer the least discouragement; nor for a moment lose the haunting memory of our vision; for the instant incidence of these temptations shows this and this alone: that we have already begun the inevitable contest, the necessary advance, towards our proximate goal. The trials on the way are our best guide-posts. And, if we fight our way valiantly forward, and win that goal, this will mean victory and a still more splendid regaining of our vision of splendour, a new and higher Initiation into the Eternal Good.

A Drama of the Great Initiation

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Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* was completed, so far as the essential part of it is concerned, on April 6, 1819—that is, an even century ago—Shelley being then in Rome, and writing much of the great drama amid the ruins of the baths of Caracalla. *Prometheus Unbound* is not only Shelley's greatest work—a judgement in which the best critics of pure literature concur; it is not only greater than any other work belonging to one of the greatest and richest periods of English poetry—and this means the best poetry of the modern world; it is, in a certain deep and true sense, the greatest poem, the greatest drama in the English tongue; greater than anything since Dante, and to be compared, in all literature since Homer's day and in the Western world, with two poems only: the *Divina Commedia* of Dante and the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus.

These three poems stand at the head of the three great poetical literatures of Europe—Greece, Italy and England—because each one of them adequately embodies the greatest theme: the tremendous theme of the Great Initiation. Spiritual life, in the widest sense, is the real theme of poetry; though there abound poems—the psychic counterfeit of real poetry—which know nothing of spiritual life, unless it be that side, vital and real, but too often unconscious, which is expressed in beauty and the music and magic of words; for the true music of verse is always an expression—even though unconscious—of the inner music; an echo, even though distant, of the music of the spheres, “Still quiring to the young-eyed Cherubim.”

If Shakespeare, from whom this verse is taken, cannot be counted the equal of Dante, of Æschylus, of the author of *Prometheus Unbound*, it is because, in his dramas there is so little revelation of spiritual life; so slight a realization of it in his many-sided insight into man that the immortal is almost unknown to him. He has written comedies full of mirth and charm; in how many of them do his persons find the soul through joy? He has written tragedies full of terrible beauty; in how many of them do the victims of tragedy find the soul through pain? It is true that a Master has cited Hamlet as expressing one side of the disciple's life; but it is the side, not of redemption, but of failure; a despondent weakness, like that of Arjuna; but a weakness over which there was no victory, like Arjuna's victory.

And it is because *Prometheus Unbound* reveals not only the life of the disciple, but the trial and triumph of the Master, and this with the utmost truth and beauty, that it seems right to hold this poem not only the greatest in a great poetic epoch but the greatest in all modern poetry since the *Paradiso* of Dante. And in the whole cycle of Western poetry we shall find nothing to rank with these two, until we come back to Æschylus.

The *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus has come to us complete, perfect in all its austere beauty. Of his *Prometheus Unbound*, we have only fragments. This moved Shelley, who was saturated with the spirit of Æschylus, to take in hand to write, not a conjectural completion of the lost work of the great dramatist of Athens, but rather a complement, a fulfilment, of Æschylus' *Prometheus Bound*; the completed revelation of the spiritual cycle of which *Prometheus Bound* is a part.

The drama of Æschylus, in the very spirit of Æschylus, and with all his majesty and music, is summed up by Shelley in the speech with which Prometheus opens the new drama:

PROMETHEUS

Monarch of Gods and Daemons, and all Spirits
 But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
 Which Thou and I alone of living things
 Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
 Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou

Requiest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair—these are mine empire!
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O, Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

Before we go further, let us try to fix the Persons of this great Drama of Initiation, with their significance. Who is Prometheus, thus nailed, a sacrificial victim, to the rock, doomed to suffer “pain, pain ever, for ever”? Who is the Zeus of Æschylus, the Jupiter of Shelley, “Monarch of Gods and Daemons, and all Spirits but One,” by whose decree the sacrificial victim was thus offered?

We may best seek the answer from Æschylus, whose symbolism—taken, we may believe, from the Mysteries which Hellas received from Mother Egypt—Shelley has used with such magnificent truth. Zeus is “the Son of Chronos,” who is the Son of Ouranos; that is, the Son of Heaven. But Chronos, identified with Saturn, is Time, and Time, for the mystic, for the Master, is, and must always be “the Great Delusion.” These three Gods: Ouranos, Time, Zeus, reigned successively over the world of gods and men; Chronos dethroning Ouranos, and in turn dethroned by usurping Zeus. These three divinities thus symbolize at once three great successive epochs in the

cycle of Life which is depicted by *The Secret Doctrine*, and the successive powers or emanations which dominate these epochs. To put the matter in the terms of the Seven Races: Ouranos represents the early spiritual races; Chronos, God of the “Golden Age,” symbolizes the later, semi-ethereal races, not yet fallen; while Zeus stands for the period beginning with the Fall, as *The Secret Doctrine* depicts it: the period of the Atlanteans, which saw the formation of the hierarchy of Adepts, and, at the same time, of the hierarchy of Darkness, the “Brothers of the Shadow.”

Looked at from the side of the Principles, both cosmic and individual—both macrocosmic and microcosmic—Ouranos represents the higher sphere, the principle of Atma-Buddhi and its universal source, but still passive, not yet active and conscious; Chronos, (“Time,” the Great Delusion), represents Manas, “Slayer of the Real”; for through the activity of Manas, the illusion of Time comes into being. Zeus, then, represents the principle of Kama, and the cosmic force of which Kama is the expression, that power which Christ personified as “the Prince (Archon) of this world,” and to which he also gave the name of Satan, “the Opposer,” and of Mammon; opposing and set against the spiritual power which Christ embodied and revealed. The Adversary, Son of Time the Great Delusion, is, then, the Power which nailed Prometheus to the rock.

Who, then is Prometheus? Æschylus, in *Prometheus Bound*, makes this quite clear. Prometheus brought “fire” to mankind. But he had first brought fire to the gods, including Zeus himself. He is not merely an adventurous Titan who purloined a possession of the gods, and bestowed it upon mankind. He is far more and greater than that. For it was Prometheus who gave to the gods their own power, which Zeus and those who stood with him then perverted. Nor is it merely physical “fire,” appearing in the hand of Zeus as the lightning, and among mankind as the “fire on the hearth.” that Prometheus bestowed on gods and men. According to the allegory present everywhere in the great Upanishads of India (which appear to embody the still older mystic wisdom of Egypt), “fire” represents the triple power, spiritual, psychic and physical; the light of the Sun, first of the “three fires,” stands for spiritual fire; lightning, the light of the mid-world, stands for psychical fire; while “the fire on the hearth” stands for physical fire,

both the vital fire of the human body, also called Prana, and actual physical fire. The “fire on the altar,” most beautifully symbolized in the religion of Zoroaster of the Parsees, is the creative fire in the human body, once perverted, but afterwards purified by sacrifice, by consecration.

But the natural “fire,” in the Sun, in lightning, in the body and in the hearth, is not merely the symbol of its spiritual counterpart; it is actually the same force, externally manifested. For there is no chasm between Spirit and Matter, but rather a fundamental identity between them. Both are manifestations of the One. The chasm between them is part of the Great Illusion. Nor is there any fundamental chasm between the spiritual fire and its lower counterpart, the passionate fire of perverted creative power. The latter is the perversion of the former, not an antithetical, opposing force; not an eternal and independent Ahriman, set against Ormuzd, as in the Manichean misunderstanding of Zoroastrianism. As the passionate fire is the perversion of the spiritual fire, so the redemption comes not through the annihilation of the perverted power but through its re-transformation and transmutation. Until this transformation is accomplished, the soul is chained to the rock of its desires, the divine fire entering into its perversion yet scorning it. This is at once the Great Sacrifice and the cause of that long-enduring pain, “pain forever,”—pain, that is, until the end of Time, the Great Delusion—of which Prometheus speaks.

Prometheus, then, bestows this fire, as divine power, upon Zeus and his brothers, the “Sons of Time”; who on one side symbolize the Atlantean epoch, and on the other the middle principles of man. And when Zeus and his brothers have perverted this divine power, Prometheus then bestows it on mankind, giving them spiritual life and intellectual light. From one point of view, mankind here stands for the Fifth Race, humanity on the upward cycle of spiritual progression: mankind in process of redemption.

But to what Power does mankind in fact owe this infusion of spiritual fire? What Power is in fact working out the redemption of humanity? Surely the answer is: the Great Lodge, which is the power of the Logos—the Life and Light of the Logos—in Incarnation. Prometheus would seem, then, to stand for the White Lodge, the

united Life of the hierarchy of Masters. And this should suggest, what appears to be the reality: that it is not one Master only who is crucified, but the whole Lodge of Masters, whom that one Master represents, both symbolically and in fact; that it is the White Lodge that is nailed with outstretched hands to the Rock, or to the Cross; that the fact of this Crucifixion constitutes the very being and nature of the Master—of every Master in the Lodge, and of the Lodge as a whole; the very process of Crucifixion is that which constitutes the Master, and is, in fact, the Great Initiation.

It would seem to be a fundamental error, and a highly dangerous one, to think of the Great Initiation as a gain of knowledge only, as nothing more than the revelation of mysteries of new insight, the communication of mysteries and far-reaching powers. An initiation on the side of Darkness may be this, an initiation on the Left Hand Path. But the true Initiation, the Initiation of the Right Hand Path, of the White Lodge of Masters, while it is a revelation both of wisdom and of power, is fundamentally a Sacrifice, a Crucifixion. And it is the grasping of power and knowledge without Sacrifice, which is the essence of the Left Hand Path; as, for instance, the prostitution of science to the powers of evil, the use of intellect for the purposes of evil, which was exemplified on one side in the Great War.

Not only is the true Initiation, the Initiation of a Master of the White Lodge, a Sacrifice, a Crucifixion; it is an unending Crucifixion, the acceptance of “pain, pain forever”; pain that must be borne until the end of Time, the great Delusion. Therefore it has been truly said that the wounds of the Master, the wounds of the Crucifixion, can never be healed until the wounds of humanity, our wounds, have first been healed. And this is true of all Masters. For the Master, having, through the long trials and purifications leading up to the Great Initiation which makes him a Master, through the sevenfold cycle of discipleship, completely purified his own nature, consummated all Sacrifice in himself, and restored to its pristine purity the spiritual fire within himself, then makes the supreme Sacrifice: laying aside the reward which he has fully earned, and which is justly his, he assumes a burden which is not justly his: the burden, namely, of the sins of others, “the heavy Karma of humanity.”

This, then, the heavy burden of the world's evil Karma, would seem to be the Cross to which the Master freely allows himself to be nailed, the Rock to which Prometheus is chained. And the Sacrifice consists in this: that the Master freely assumes this burden, which is not in justice his, knowing full well that he must bear it, in all its crushing weight, until Humanity has been redeemed. He must bear his Cross, he must remain chained to the Rock, until the consummation of the ages, until "the time of the end," until "the great day Be-with-Us," when Humanity, purified by suffering, is re-united to the Masters' Lodge, there to remain forever.

Two more Powers in this great Mystery Drama may be interpreted along the same lines: the Earth (or, the Spirit of the Earth) and the most mysterious Being called Demogorgon. In Act I of the drama, in answer to a question of Prometheus, the Earth speaks thus:

"I am the Earth,
Thy mother, she within whose stony veins,
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud
Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy!"

This is, one may say, a deeply occult description of the living Earth, which has its inner principles, its ensouling spheres, as has the microcosm of man. It is this, but it would seem also to be more: namely, Maya, as "the active power of God," the power of manifestation, of differentiation, without which the manifested Universe could never be brought forth from the Eternal; the power without which even the Masters, as individuals, could not come into being. Just as Maya is the name given to the sinless mother of the Buddha, as Avatar, while the immaculate mother of the Western Avatar bears a name of similar import; so the Earth here, in the same mystical sense, is rightly called the mother of Prometheus. She is, in one sense, the feminine aspect of the Logos; the power called, in the Mystery Teaching of India, the feminine Viraj.

This is perfectly conformable with a later passage in the same

wonderful speech of the Earth, in which that mysterious being says of the defiance uttered by Prometheus against the tyranny of Zeus:

“Aye, I heard
 Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
 Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
 Mountains and caves and winds, and yon wide air,
 And the inarticulate people of the dead
 Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
 In secret joy and hope those dreadful words,
 But dare not speak them.
 They shall be told. Ere Babylon was dust
 The Magus Zoroaster, my dead child,
 Met his own image walking in the garden.
 That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
 For know there are two worlds of life and death:
 One that which thou beholdest; but the other
 Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
 The shadows of all forms that think and live
 Till death unite them and they part no more:
 Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
 And all that faith creates or love desires,
 Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.
 There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,
 ’Mid whirlwind peopled mountains. All the gods
 Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds,
 Vast, sceptred phantoms; heroes, men, and beasts;
 And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom;
 And he, the supreme Tyrant, on his throne Of burning
 gold.”

Who, then, is Demogorgon? The most suggestive answer, perhaps, may be given by a simple quotation from Murray’s Dictionary: the name, literally translated, means: “terrible to the multitude.” The name is not found in the older classical writers, but appears first in the

fifth century of our era, in the note of a scholiast, as “the great nether deity, invoked in magic rites”; in more modern times, Demogorgon appears in Boccaccio’s *Genealogy of the Gods*, and from this source the name was probably derived by Ariosto. Milton, Shelley and others. From its connection with magic (this author suggests), Demogorgon may be a disguised form of some Oriental name. One more suggestion: In Keightley’s *Fairy Mythology* (1850) it is recorded that, according to Ariosto, “Demogorgon has a splendid temple palace in the Himalaya mountains, whither every fifth year the Fates are all summoned to appear before him to give an account of their actions”; surely a most suggestive phrase.

This Power, enthroned in a splendid temple in the Himalayas; this Power of the occult world, invoked in magic rites; this Power, which is in truth “terrible to the multitude”; which brings about the punishment of the Tyrant and the liberation of Prometheus, would seem to be none other than the great Lodge itself, which, tradition tells us, has indeed a dwelling place in the Himalaya mountains.

The Katha Upanishad and the Great Initiation

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Many Scriptures have been inspired by the Great Initiation; with these are to be counted the *Prometheus Bound* of Æschylus and the *Prometheus Unbound* of Shelley. In many is embodied the wisdom gained in the Great Initiation; were it not so, they would not be true Scriptures. There appears to be but one, known in the world today, which has taken the Great Initiation as its central theme: the Katha Upanishad, translated under the title *In the House of Death*.

The Hymns of the *Rig Veda*, which were simply rearranged to make up the *Sama Veda* and the *Yajur Veda*, belong pre-eminently to the Brahmans, the white race that entered India by the Hindu Kush passes, descending from Central Asia where they had dwelt for ages, in close contact with the ancestors of the Chinese and Babylonians. The Upanishads have their origin in quite another source: they were handed down among the red Rajputs, as an immemorial teaching, of which Krishna speaks thus in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

“This imperishable teaching of union I declared to the Solar lord. The Solar lord imparted it to Manu, and Manu told it to Ikshvaku. Thus the Rajanya sages knew it, handed down from Master to disciple. This teaching of union has been lost in the world through long lapse of time, O consumer of the foe. This same immemorial teaching of union I have declared to thee today; for thou art my beloved, my companion; and this secret

doctrine is the most excellent treasure.”

The stock of the red Rajputs was not Asiatic but Egyptian. From Egypt, they came to Western India, bringing with them the holy knowledge of the occult schools which, as a Master of the Egyptian Lodge has said, “were the secret splendour of Egypt.” This very truth is contained in the sentences quoted from the *Bhagavad Gita*, for the Solar lord is Ra, the Logos, the Sun God of Egypt. Manu is the genius of the older Egyptian race, the race which came from Atlantis, in the period of its submergence, and for this reason Manu is the central figure of the Indian tradition of the Deluge. Ikshvaku is the leader and founder of the Rajanya race in India, through whom, as King Initiate, the occult wisdom was handed down.

In this way was founded the Lodge of Masters in India, which, therefore, drew its occult knowledge from Egypt. It is true that the White Brahmans, who entered India from the Central Asian tableland (whither they had fled from Atlantis ages earlier), were in possession of secret wisdom, embodied in the mantras which were afterwards collected in the ten Circles of the *Rig Veda*. But, while they had the casket, they had lost the key. This key was restored to them by the red Rajanya sages, who had brought it with them from the occult schools of Egypt.

The secret wisdom of Egypt, thus brought to India by the Rajanya or Rajput race, had two forms; or, perhaps, it would be truer to say that it had a living soul and an outer vesture. The living soul was the actual process of the Great Initiation, with the complete practical training leading up to it; the vesture was the ritual of Initiation, the form of that august ceremony, together with the body of teachings of the Lesser Mysteries. Both were perpetuated in the Indian Lodge, which the red race from Egypt then formed. And while the soul of this Indian occult school was withdrawn, after the lapse of millenniums, to the heart of the Himalaya mountains, the outer vesture remains in India today.

“The Upanishads contain all wisdom,” a Master has said, as recorded in *The Secret Doctrine*, “they no longer reveal it.” The Upanishads are, in fact, in their most vital part, the very ritual of Initiation brought from Egypt, and later translated into Sanskrit. They

embody both the Greater and the Lesser Mysteries, and much of their substance is cast in the form of dialogues between Guru and Chela, between Master and disciple, or disciples. Such are, for example, *Prashna Upanishad* (“A Vedic Master”), the episode of *Chhandogya Upanishad* containing the teaching “That thou art,” and the superb section of the *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* which has been translated under the title *The Song of Life*, a title borrowed from that supremely occult book, *Light on the Path*. While the dialogues in the great Upanishads lead up to the Great Initiation, one only, *Katha Upanishad*, gives the actual substance of the Great Initiation. It is, therefore, in a sense, the highest of all occult scriptures; and one is struck, at the outset, with the likeness of its plan to that of another document of very different character, the Apostles’ Creed.

“He descended into Hell and rose again the third day,” may stand as a description of the progress of Nachiketas, the candidate for the Great Initiation in *Katha Upanishad*, the type of all Initiates. Nachiketas is the son of Uddalaka Aruni. His father has offered a sacrifice of cattle, an ineffectual sacrifice. He at last determines to sacrifice his son. Exactly the same idea is expressed by St. Paul, who speaks of the sacrifices of the Temple, likewise sacrifices of cattle, as being superseded by the sacrifice of the Son, whom the Father sent into the world. The same thought is contained in the parables, where the King, after he has sent his servants, sends his son, who is put to death.

There are two meanings contained in this symbol; indeed, many meanings, among which two stand out. The first is the universal, macrocosmic: the creative Logos is the Father. The Logos, having sent the lesser creatures into incarnation, sees that this is an ineffectual offering. “Nature unaided fails.” Then the Logos sends the divine soul, which is, in truth, the Logos himself. This is the incarnation of the Solar Pitris, the Manasa Putras, spiritual man. The soul descends into the House of Death: into incarnation; and dwells there “three nights.” These are the “three times,” past, present, future; the three facets of the great Illusion of Time. When this illusion is conquered, the soul rises again to the immortal world, and enters into the Great Beyond.

There is also the individual meaning, the personal history of the Candidate for Initiation. Here, the cattle first offered have their

symbolic meaning. They are the senses, the bodily powers, which graze in the pastures of the natural world, the fields of sense activity. An austere ascetic may offer the sacrifice of the senses in the fire of self-control. But he may thereby merely strengthen his self-will, his wilfulness, as many ascetics have done. This is true of the class called in India Hatha Yogis, or Yogis of the market-place; and this is the reason why certain extreme forms of penance are forbidden by the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The disciple must sacrifice, not his senses, but himself. He must offer up the lower self in the fire of perfect self-denial, self-abnegation, to the Higher Self. In this sense, the Higher Self, as Father, sends the personal self, the son, into the world; and the son must willingly submit himself to crucifixion. He must enter of his own will, which has for this purpose become one with the will of his Father, into the House of Death. He must descend into hell, to rise again the third day.

There are preliminary trials. These are dramatically represented, in those dialogues of the Lesser Mysteries in the Upanishads, already described; the Initiator offers the candidate three wishes. These are exactly the same, both in substance and in purpose, as Christ's temptation in the wilderness. It seems certain that that great Initiate himself enumerated these temptations to his disciples; casting them, as is the invariable method in all records of the Mysteries, into the form of a dialogue between himself and the tempter.

In the *Katha Upanishad*, the tempter is one with the Initiator, the Master who tries and tests his disciple. The name given to the Initiator is Yama, Death, Son of the Sun. Yama, according to the tradition of India, was the divine King of the first human race which was fated to taste death; the earlier human races, the first and second and the earlier third, having had no death in our sense, since they lacked the dense material vesture which is subject to the throes of dissolution. King Yama, therefore, when the time came for men to die, himself accepted the first ordeal, and first descended into the house of night, where he has ever since reigned as King.

He passed the trial first himself, as every Master does; in the most literal sense going through the whole experience in his own person,

and thus, if the metaphor may be allowed, pre-digesting it for his disciples. This is true in general of the whole of the disciple's training. It is supremely true of his Initiation, which is the goal and climax of that training. Therefore Yama, who first offered himself and passed through the pains of death, is the forerunner and type of every subsequent faster, the Lodge as a whole passing in advance through all the experiences which are pre-ordained for humanity for ages to come, up to the culmination of Nirvana.

The order of certain parts of the *Katha Upanishad* appears to have been purposely confused. What are really the preliminary trials—sons and grandsons, long life, wealth, the gifts of beauty—now stand after the passages which record the ceremony of Initiation. That ceremony begins with the first wish of Nachiketas. He asks for reconciliation with his Father. This includes two things: first, the Father stands for the sum of his past Karma, an account which must be balanced and closed before the Great Initiation can be entered; second, the Father stands for the Higher Self; the son, the personal life, must be at-one with his Father, the Higher Self. This is the true etymological meaning of at-one-ment, or atonement.

The second wish concerns the heavenly world. The Initiator reveals the heavenly world to Nachiketas, in all its majesty and splendour. This is, in the deepest sense, the critical point in the Great Initiation, far more vital and decisive than the earlier trials. For that heavenly world is no less than Nirvana. The new Initiate has fairly won it, and is, in a sense, fully entitled to enter in, to dwell in immeasurable bliss for measureless time.

Yet if the new Initiate accepts that right and elects to enter into Nirvana, the Initiation has, in a certain high sense, failed; and he, the Nirvaneer, has also failed. But he succeeds in the supreme spiritual sense, if he refuses all the splendours of Nirvana, and elects instead to return to earth, to take up of free will his part of the heavy burden of the world's bad Karma, which is the sum of mankind's wilful disobediences, with all the penalties that they entail. Then he joins the active ranks of the world's Saviours, who suffer that enduring pain of which Prometheus speaks.

The third wish of Nachiketas, to know "what is in the Great

Beyond," is thereon granted. For the Great Beyond is the mysterious life, of terrible toil yet of great and ever increasing delight, which the Master enters when he has passed beyond Nirvana; when he has renounced and laid aside his right and title to that supreme and fully earned reward. Little remains to be said concerning the *Katha Upanishad*. The whole heart of the theme is contained in these three wishes, with the symbolic narrative leading up to them. But much remains to be done. Those who would tread that path must read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the teaching. They will find there faithfully represented their own trials and temptations; the abnegation and sacrifice which are demanded of them; and some foreshadowing of the surpassing reward: the goal which those seek who offer sacrifice.

Dramas of the Mysteries

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Let the king resolve to change the face of his court and forcibly evict the animal from the chair of state, restoring the god to the place of divinity.—*Through the Gates of Gold*.

Throughout all ages, there has been the tradition of a glorious possibility for mankind, an illumination that makes man immortal and divine. The oldest mythologies of the remotest peoples, the great scriptures of all ages, ring with this high inspiration; there is, indeed, no other theme in all religions.

Our own age, with its skepticism and fever, has heard the great tidings. The word has been clear, insistent; clearer, perhaps, than in any period for millenniums, in part because of the greater need created by our darkness, in part because our age has rid itself of some of the shackles and cruelties of superstition.

Man has worked his way up through innumerable ages, the unconscious Spirit co-operating with the animal nature in his development; through endless struggle and striving, in satisfaction and in suffering, man comes to clear individuality, the intense realization of his personal existence. The light drawn from many realms has been brought to a sharp focus.

When this full individuality is reached, the glorious possibility arises: taking firm hold of his individual nature, man may surrender it to gain a greater. Ceasing to be man, he may become divine, entering into the infinite being and power and wisdom of Divinity; but on

condition that he shall at all points, the least as the greatest, surrender his own will to the Divine Will, emptying mind and heart of every lingering shadow of self-seeking, so that there shall be room only for selfless wisdom and beneficence. It is the perfect offering that all ritual sacrifices foreshadow, the attainment of a divinity forecast by all that has been told of the gods.

In the path to this divine event there are tremendous difficulties, all of man's own making, even though he did not create them of deliberate purpose. Just because, from the beginning, unawakened Spirit has been working in man, together with animal perception and desire, there have been immense possibilities of harm: the distortion of spiritual force in the perversion of animal powers; the exaggeration of individuality into egotism, envy, hatred; malice, ambition.

Therefore, when man catches a glimpse of his possible divinity, when the universal message of the glorious future that may be his, awakens his heart, he does not find himself free, unshackled, a light-hearted spirit, ready to speed forth toward the Light; on the contrary, with the vision of the goal, he becomes aware of the impediments, the tremendous drag of the personal self which he has built up, and of the kindred impulses in mankind all about him. He realizes that it is not a question only of enthroning a king; there is first a usurper to be driven out, who will fight every inch of the way, and who has innumerable allies in the man himself, in the human nature about him, and in those older powers of darkness, carried forward from remote spiritual failures in the past.

The Eternal is there, one in essence with his Spirit, drawing him toward divine union; inimical powers, into which he has put so much of his own life, are there also, entwined with the sloth and cowardice and allurements of mankind; the perception of the Eternal is the signal for the battle.

The Eternal is the very essence of humanity, it is Divine Humanity itself, that which mankind shall be when man has become immortal. Therefore, if in the battle the warrior be able to make complete surrender of self, the surrender of cowardice as well as of desire, so that he wins the victory and loses himself in the Eternal, he thereby becomes one with Divine Humanity. Thereafter, through the very

essence of his being, he is bound and compelled to toil for the redemption and liberation of all mankind, knowing that the heavy task will not end until all human beings, with hearts and spirits cleansed, have sought for and attained the Light. He accepts that age-long sacrifice with eager love. A part of the true Nirvana is the renouncing of Nirvana.

Since the oneness of man's essence with the Divine Essence is the central fact of all life, and the attainment of that unity is the one true goal of all effort; it is but natural that human records should be full of that great adventure, innumerable writings tell something of the Light and the way thither; some few have undertaken to reveal, so far as may be, the whole of the battle, to chart to the end the pathway to Divinity. The best books have this one theme; the worst books cannot escape from the battlefield, since they depict the mire from which we must rise, the bonds we have created to hold us back.

Because the Eternal is Divine Humanity, because he who gains the Eternal, thereby enters into Divine Humanity, so that the redemption of every human being becomes his concern, his most ardent longing—therefore those who have won the victory, who have become Masters of life, are impelled by their very nature, the new, divine nature into which they have entered, to stretch out a helping hand to us, to put on record for our better guidance, the incidents and dangers of the way they have passed, the perils of the battle, which are behind them, but still before us. So it comes that we have, among the best books, many Dramas of the Mysteries, or of the one great Mystery of man's redemption.

That the dramatic form is natural, almost inevitable, is suggested by such a sentence as this, toward the end of *The Crest Jewel of Wisdom*:

“Thus, through this dialogue of Master and disciple, the revelation of the supreme Self has been made, to awake to joy the souls of those who seek liberation.”

Dialogue is the first step toward drama, and when the disciple says: “I was wandering in the great dream forest of birth, decay and death created by delusion, day by day afflicted by many pains, stalked by the tiger, egotism; through infinite compassion awakening me from my dream, thou, Master, hast become my saviour!”—the picture which he

has evoked almost demands dramatic treatment.

Take another expression of the same conflict, this time from the letter of a living Aryan Master, written forty years ago:

“The path has to be trodden laboriously and crossed at the danger of life; every new step in it leading to the final goal, is surrounded by pit-falls and cruel thorns; the pilgrim who ventures upon it is made first to confront and conquer the thousand and one furies who keep watch over its adamantine gates and entrance—furies called Doubt, Skepticism, Scorn, Ridicule, Envy and finally Temptation—especially the latter; and he who would see beyond has first to destroy this living wall; he must be possessed of a heart and soul clad in steel, and of an iron, never-failing determination, and yet be meek and gentle, humble, and have shut out from his heart every human passion that leads to evil.”

These enemies are all of our making; they are the substance of unregenerate human life; therefore, he who fights toward regeneration is inevitably in conflict with them; the conquest of Doubt and Envy and Temptation is that regeneration which carries him forward toward the Eternal.

Just because these enemies are of the essence of human life not yet redeemed, the stuff that human beings are made of, it is easy to find human types that embody them, and thus to turn the contest into drama. As it stands, the Aryan Master’s sentence is the argument of a mystery play.

The Crest Jewel of Wisdom is cast in dialogue form, which is the first stage of drama; the Master and the disciple embody the Divine Being, and the human being straining toward the Divine, the Universal Soul and the individual soul, Divine Humanity and one of its fragments seeking union with the whole. The Master and the disciple are not merely personifications of these; they are the realities themselves; unless the Master be one with the Universal Soul, he is no true Master; and in the disciple is every strand of human nature, the evil with the good. It follows that his fight is a fight for humanity; his victory is a victory for all mankind, and in that degree enriches and heals mankind.

The *Katha Upanishad* is also a revelation in dialogue form; the effort has been made, through translation and commentary, to show that it is a true Drama of the Mysteries. Much more in the great Upanishads is of the same texture.

The *Bhagavad Gita* represents a further development. It is, as regards its central theme, a dialogue between Master and disciple. But, while the *Crest Jewel* does not set the stage of the dialogue, nor even name the speakers, the *Bhagavad Gita* does both. The setting is a battlefield; the Master Krishna and Arjuna his disciple are the central persons; the enemies are not so much personified as embodied in the leaders of the opposing host.

Through the Gates of Gold suggests, in the sentence quoted at the outset, that the problem is not only the enthroning of a king, it includes also the eviction of a usurper; and this is the motive of many Dramas of the Mysteries, including the *Bhagavad Gita*. The names, as so often in the Orient, are symbolic: Dhritarashtra, "he who has seized the kingdom," is the father of the usurping Kurus; Duryodhana, "the foul fighter," is the leader of the usurpers; of the two counsellors of the Kuru brothers, Bhishma is "fear," while Drona is the "dark cloud" of delusion, the name meaning also "raven" and "scorpion," both of evil omen. It is as though the enemies in the passage quoted from the Aryan Master had taken form and come to life. So, on the side of the Pandus, Dhrishtadyumna means "he who has seen the splendour," the gleaming of the Gates of Gold, called in the *Gita* "the door of heaven." Arjuna's son, Abhimanyu, means the kind of "self-consciousness" which is akin to self-conceit. Fitly, he is slain in the great battle. Finally, though Arjuna is fighting for the kingdom, the throne is not for himself, but for his elder brother. Not the individual self, but the Higher Self, attains the throne; not the man but the god, whom the man thereafter reverently serves.

As compared with the *Crest Jewel*, the *Bhagavad Gita* is not only more dramatic, richer in action and in colour; it has also a fuller content. The *Crest Jewel* limits its purpose to two things: the lucid revelation of the Eternal as the real Self, not of one man but of mankind; and the undermining of the unreal "me," which is the root of all evil. The supersession of the false self by the Eternal, is the

motive of the dialogue. The *Bhagavad Gita* adds more of human feeling, more of religious passion also; it appeals to spiritual valour as well as spiritual wisdom. But both have this in common: they record real experience, the experience of a Master who has fought the battle and attained the victory, and who can, therefore, speak of that high and immortal consciousness which comes with the entry into the Eternal, so far as words can compass it at all. Lacking that immediate experience, the realized consciousness of one who has attained, who has been initiated into the Most High, we cannot have a genuine revelation, an authentic Drama of the Mysteries. The revealer must have made the journey, before he can tell authentically of the way. He must be in the full mystical sense an Initiate.

There is, therefore, a special significance for students of Theosophy, in the declaration of *The Secret Doctrine*, that “old Aeschylus was an Initiate, and knew well what he was giving out,” when we come to consider certain of his plays as Dramas of the Mysteries. Aeschylus was born at Eleusis, 525 years before our era, and a formal accusation of revealing the Eleusinian mysteries was brought against him before the Areopagus. But *The Secret Doctrine* suggests that the revelation made by Aeschylus was concerned, not with Demeter or Ceres, the central personage of the mysteries at Eleusis, but with the sacred allegory of Prometheus. Aeschylus wrote three dramas with this theme: *Prometheus Bound*, *Prometheus Unbound* and *Prometheus the Fire-bringer*, of which only the first has come down to us; of the second, we have a bare outline, while of the third we know practically nothing.

The Secret Doctrine makes a profound study of *Prometheus Bound*:

“The *crucified* Titan is the personified symbol of the collective Logos, the ‘Host,’ and of the ‘Lords of Wisdom’ or the Heavenly Man, who incarnated in Humanity. . . . Zeus represented in the Mysteries no higher a principle than the lower aspect of human physical intelligence—Manas wedded to Kama; whereas Prometheus—the divine aspect of Manas merging into and aspiring to Buddhi—was the divine Soul. Zeus, whenever shown as yielding to his lower passions, is the Human Soul and nothing more—the jealous God, revengeful and cruel in its egotism or ‘I-am-ness,’ . . . ‘The lower Host,

whose work the Titan spoiled and thus defeated the plans of Zeus,' was on this Earth in its own sphere and plane of action; whereas the superior Host was an exile from Heaven, who had got entangled in the meshes of Matter. . . . This drama of the struggle of Prometheus with the Olympic tyrant and despot, sensual Zeus, one sees enacted daily within our actual mankind; the lower passions chain the higher aspirations to the rock of Matter, to generate in many a case the vulture of sorrow, pain and repentance."

The whole study should be read and pondered over, and the drama of Aeschylus with it. Of the three parts, we have only the first, wherein is depicted the spirit of man chained and bound by the Enemies already enumerated, the Enemies which spring from unregenerate man himself; the spirit of man straining toward liberation. Aeschylus has given, in majestic symbolism, the history of the binding of that spirit, and has foreshadowed the redemption. When Prometheus says of himself:

"Behold me
Fettered, the god ill-fated,
The foeman of Zeus, the detested
Of all who enter his courts,
And only because of my love,
My too-great love for mankind . . ."

he reveals the oneness of the immortal Self with Divine Humanity; he records something of the toil of the Masters in the work of Humanity's liberation.

Plato was one of those, we are told, who had passed through the Gates of Gold. Plato's books are full of the Mysteries, and contain many explicit references to the Mysteries. Yet there appears to be no one of Plato's dialogues that is in form a Drama of the Mysteries. The Trial and Death of Socrates describes the Via Dolorosa, but without the Resurrection. When we come to the history of the Master Christ, which our last reference suggests, we have not so much a Drama of the Mysteries, as the enactment of the supreme Mystery, with the precedent Temptations, and the hard trials of the three years' mission;

not the symbolic record, but the Reality. The Apocalypse is rather a Drama of the Mysteries, a symbolic record of spiritual experience.

Whether or not the sixth book of the Aeneid is a true Drama of the Mysteries has been debated for generations. It would appear to introduce us to a phase of the subject upon which we have not yet touched. The accusation brought against Aeschylus, that he had revealed the Eleusinian Mysteries, may remind us that the word is used in two senses: first, the actual divine experience, the great Initiation, through which the Spirit of man becomes one, in consciousness and power and love, with the Eternal; in that Initiation, the Spirit of man is the Eternal. This is the true Mystery.

But, before this profound experience, and as a preparation for it, there are symbolic representations of this experience, such as the ceremonies at Eleusis; and, as a third step, we may have a graphic description of these symbolic ceremonies. Such a description, the sixth book of Virgil's Aeneid would appear to be; not, therefore, a record of spiritual experience; probably not the work of an Initiate at all.

The mention of Virgil in connection with the Mysteries brings us almost inevitably to Dante, and the *Divina Commedia*. The first thing to be noted is that Virgil does not complete the threefold journey; he does not ascend to the Celestial World. It would seem, then, that Dante thought of Virgil as one who had a human knowledge of the Mysteries, not a divine knowledge; that he had not passed through that supreme spiritual experience, that complete entry into the being of the Eternal, which we think of as the great Initiation.

To speak with confidence of these tremendous realities would be presumption; but Dante reveals the Divine with a sureness of touch, that indicates direct experience. Only true spiritual vision could have created these lines:

“Tis the essence of this blessed being to hold ourselves within the Divine Will, whereby our own wills are themselves made one. So that our being thus, from threshold unto threshold throughout the realm, is a joy to all the realm as to the King, who draweth our wills to what He willeth; and His will is our peace; it is that sea to which all moves that it createth and that nature maketh.”

So of all that Dante says of the Divine World, the realm of the Eternal; it has the ring of authenticity, the stamp of immediate experience, that Virgil seems to lack. We should be inclined, then, to think that. Dante is an Initiate, while Virgil is not.*

It may seem strange that, in the *Divina Commedia*, there is no dominating representation of the Master Christ, as Krishna, for example, dominates the *Bhagavad Gita*. There is one fugitive reference, among others, in the eighth Circle of the Inferno: "Our Lord demanded nought but 'Follow me!'" There is the symbolic figure in the Pageant of the Earthly Paradise. There is the Light in the supreme realm of the Paradiso.

This reticence is in all likelihood due to profound reverence; but it is also true that the Master Christ may be thought of as permeating the whole poem, because Dante sees human life as we may conceive that Master sees it.

There is, in the Inferno, the life of the unregenerate will, obdurate in sensuality and disobedience; that side of human life which Zeus typifies in the story of Prometheus; those qualities and powers that can never enter Heaven. Then, in the Purgatorio, the painful task of transmutation and redemption begun by that complete reversal of the obdurate will, which brings the escape from Hell. Finally, the will redeemed, become one with the Divine Will, the individual losing himself to find himself in the Eternal. It would be difficult in all literature to match Dante's living revelation of the ascending spiritual realms.

In *The Secret Doctrine*, Shakespeare is bracketed with "old Aeschylus the Initiate" as a Sphinx of the ages. He is cited with Plato, as one who passed through the Gates of Gold. There has for centuries been a haunting sense of mystery about him, which has been the impelling force of the myth-making that has centred round him. A good many years ago, a student of Theosophy put forth the theory that *Hamlet* was a true Drama of the Mysteries, and there was this to support the theory, that it repeated the age-old theme of the lawful king and the usurper, with the passionate struggle to overthrow and cast out the usurper.

* N. B. *Initiate* does not necessarily mean *Master*.

The parallelism was worked out in detail. The murdered king, representing the Higher Self driven from the throne by egotism, appeared only when the usurping king was asleep or drunk. Polonius was the lower human reason, Ophelia, the personal emotional nature, both meeting death in the fierce conflict. Hamlet, the Soul straining toward liberation, wages an agonizing battle against Doubt, and, though he slays the usurper, perishes himself in the inconclusive contest. That there is more than a tinge of mysticism in Hamlet, is universally admitted; his soliloquies have been accepted as the supreme expression of the struggling mind.

More recently, a thoughtful and valuable effort has been made to sustain the same thesis with regard to *The Tempest*, by Colin Still, in *Shakespeare's Mystery Play*, published in London in 1921. Summing up his case, the author says:

“Broadly considered, the meaning I have ascribed to *The Tempest* is certainly not one which is in the smallest degree peculiar in itself and inconsistent with the history of the drama up to Shakespeare's time, nor is it one which makes the Play utterly unlike any other masterpiece of art or literature. There is nothing odd or fantastic, nothing that the trained intelligence immediately and instinctively resists, in the essential idea I have sought to establish—namely, that Shakespeare wrote a dramatic version of the one theme which has appealed unfailingly to the imagination of mankind through all ages. There is nothing contrary to reasonable expectation in the argument that such a work must inevitably be found to contain points of resemblance (whether intended by the Poet or not) to those parts of the Bible, of the pagan mythology and ritual, of the writings of Dante and Virgil and others, which demonstrably deal with the same great theme. Nor can it be denied that there is a singular fitness in the suggestion that the zenith of the drama, as represented by the climax of Shakespeare's power, was marked by a Mystery Play corresponding very closely to the ancient religious ceremonies with which the early art of the theatre was allied.”

There are two main elements in the author's argument. First, there

is a gathering together of many fragments concerning the ceremonies called the Mysteries, which have come down to us in the Greek and Latin classics, and which were brought together in Warburton's eighteenth century effort to prove the same thesis for the sixth book of the Aeneid. A consistent, interesting and, on the whole, very convincing attempt is then made to show that, in *The Tempest*, all these signs and passwords of the Mysteries, so to speak, are used correctly, in their right places, and with their true mystical meaning. Second, there is a philosophical study of the spiritual essence of the Mysteries, avowedly based on the theosophical teaching of the Seven Principles, including the "four bodies," as set forth in the *Mandukya Upanishad*, though that most mystical text is not named. The author seeks to show that *The Tempest* conforms not only to the verbal passwords the Mysteries, but to the spiritual tests also; that it does, in fact, describe the way of liberation, the entrance of the individual Soul into the Oversoul.

There is also, to sustain the mystical view of *The Tempest*, the consistent portrait of Prospero as the Magician, almost the Adept, and, to crown all, the superb expression of the Oriental doctrine of Maya:

These our actors,
 As I foretold you, were all spirits and
 Are melted into air, into thin air;
 And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
 The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palace.
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
 Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
 As dreams are made on, and our little life
 Is rounded with a sleep.

Are we, then, to say, on the basis of *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, both of which can be consistently interpreted in terms of the Mysteries, that Shakespeare is an Initiate, as we may say that Dante, or Aeschylus is an Initiate, that Sankaracharya is an Initiate, that the revealer of the *Bhagavad Gita* is an Initiate; and that *The Tempest* is a Drama of the

Mysteries in the same sense, and to the same degree, that the *Katha Upanishad* is a Drama of the Mysteries?

Let us consider first what we have called the signs and passwords of the Mysteries. Regarding these, we may quote Conington's analysis of the famous attempt of Warburton to prove that the sixth book of the *Aeneid* was a record of initiation:

“The circumstances connected with initiation were one thing, and the grand secret itself another: and while the latter has been so successfully preserved as to have perished with its depositories, the former meet us openly in ancient literature, in allusion or in detail, so that we may be sure that they were perfectly at the service of any uninitiated poet who chose to avail himself of them to garnish and authenticate his narrative.”

To what Conington says regarding the “grand secret” we shall presently return. In the meantime, we wish simply to make the point that what Conington says of Virgil, may be equally true of Shakespeare: “the circumstances connected with initiation” were largely available for his use. Shakespeare may not have been a skilled classical scholar, but he had an immense knowledge of the substance of classical literature; beginning with the Renaissance, it was in the air, and Shakespeare's works are saturated with it. The author of the very thoughtful study of *The Tempest* does not undertake to show in detail the ways in which Shakespeare may have gathered the fragments of technical knowledge regarding the ceremonies of the Mysteries, which are to be found in the poem; but there is no great difficulty here. Shakespeare was familiar with Plutarch's *Lives*, in the English version of Sir Thomas North, who translated the French of Amyot; it is not difficult to believe that Shakespeare may also have had access to some version of Plutarch's treatise on *The Mysteries of Isis and Osiris*. Or, to put it more generally, the research into the traditions of the Mysteries which was possible for Warburton in the eighteenth century, was equally possible for Shakespeare, or for some scholar among his many friends, perhaps even Bacon himself, in the early seventeenth, though the ferocious spirit of persecution may have made it expedient to preserve greater reticence.

Going somewhat deeper than the catchwords and phrases of the

ceremonies, to the spiritual content of the Mysteries, there is much evidence, which is being constantly added to, that no period, either before, during, or since classical times, has been without knowledge of the Mysteries, both as ceremonies and as spiritual realities. There are, for example, the traditions of the Freemasons; there are schools like the Rosicrucians, of whom the Aryan Master already quoted writes: "These expound our Eastern doctrines from the teachings of Rosenkreuz, who, upon his return from Asia dressed them up in a semi-Christian garb intended as a shield for his pupils, against clerical revenge." Traditionally, this was about a century before Shakespeare's birth. During the reigns of James the First and Charles the First, the doctrines of the Rosicrucians, avowedly based on the Mysteries, attracted much public attention and excited keen controversy. Robert Fludd published his well-known *Apologia Compendiaria Fraternitatem de Rosea Cruce* in 1616. In Elizabeth's time, although discussion of the subject was not carried on quite so publicly, Europe was honeycombed with small "secret societies" of scholars, avid of knowledge, who studied everything they could lay their hands on, exchanging information widely, and particularly anxious to explore the secrets of Greek, Roman, Arabic and Jewish authors who referred in any way to the Mysteries, or to the correlated subjects of the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir Vitæ. It is certain that there were branches of these societies or "schools" in Shakespeare's England, and it is entirely possible that Shakespeare may have belonged to one or more of them. His powerful, many-sided intellect, open to all impressions, gathering materials from all possible sources, and at the same time free from dogmatic bias, makes that quite credible.

It is easy to believe, therefore, that Shakespeare may have written a drama conforming to the plan of the Mysteries, and embodying the signs and passwords of the Mysteries, and that he may have done this of deliberate purpose.

Is Shakespeare, therefore, an Initiate? To begin with, how are we to understand the declaration, already quoted, that Shakespeare had passed through the Gates of Gold? We may understand it best, perhaps, in terms of the definition given in that wonderful treatise itself:

“The Gates of Gold do not admit to any special place; what they do is to open for egress from a special place. Man passes through them when he casts off his limitation.”

It is truer, perhaps, of Shakespeare than of anyone in all literature, that he has cast off his limitation. He transcends his own personality so completely that it is in fact a subject of debate among scholars, whether the personality of Shakespeare had any existence. He has taken into his vast, sensitive intellect, all the men and women of all the ages, from the dawn of Hellenic civilization in the days of Theseus and the Heroes, through Homer’s Troy, later Athens, the Egypt of the Ptolemies, Rome of the Kings, of the Republic, of the Empire, many European lands through many centuries; all these men and women are equally near to him; neither race, creed, caste, colour nor sex is a barrier; neither space nor time. He has cast off his limitations. In that sense, he has passed through the Gates of Gold. Perhaps this is the reading of his riddle, as “intellectual Sphinx.”

To come back to what Conington says about the “grand secret” of the Mysteries. We do not agree with him that it has perished, or that it can ever perish, if we are right in thinking that the supreme secret is the unity of the Soul with the Oversoul, of the Spirit of man with the Eternal, not as a doctrine formally conveyed, but as a profound experience, to be gained only through the intermediation of Masters, in the great Initiation of the Lodge. On that basis, to have passed through this experience will mean a spiritual illumination, a transformation of consciousness, which will reveal itself in such a spirit, let us say, as that of Dante, and, on a much greater scale, in the spirit of Sankaracharya, of the Buddha—a spirit of wisdom and fervour and love and power, a spirit of Divinity revealed in humanity.

Certain qualities of this spirit, it seems to us, Shakespeare conspicuously lacks. Where is the religious passion in him that inspires Dante? Where is the living intuition of Divine Humanity? From one sonnet, we may quote:

Then, Soul, live thou upon thy servant’s loss,
 And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
 Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
 Within be fed, without be rich no more:—

So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,
And death once dead, there's no more dying then.

This, it may be said, if pushed far enough, will lead us to the *Elixir of Life*; but did he push it far enough? Is there more here than the understanding of a luminous intellect, which understood to that degree all human life? Is there the transformed, divine consciousness, which is the "grand secret" of the true Initiate?

The answer is, No. For all his transcendent genius, he lacks that fine spiritual quality which is the hall-mark of the Initiate of any degree. His emotional and intellectual powers are beyond question. His inner knowledge is second-hand.

It is not necessary to make a plea for the spiritual content of the *Divina Commedia* or the *Upanishads*; the impossible task would be, to prove them anything else. But it can hardly be maintained that *The Tempest* reveals the consciousness become divine, though it may follow a consistent plan that symbolizes it. But the ultimate Real is not there, though the symbol may be: at least so it seems to us.

There is, then, this high hope, this divine Reality, announced by the supreme Scriptures, the spiritual lining of our human life. Now, as always, living Masters of wisdom and power and love are ready to help the pilgrim, making their life the bridge for him to pass over; now, as always, there is the invitation, insistent, perhaps, as never before.

Stories of the Mysteries

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Besides the great Books of the Mysteries, we may recognize, in the spiritual records of all peoples and all times, a supplementary class of Stories of the Mysteries.

The Dramas of the Mysteries are primarily records of Initiation. Their purpose is, to record, so far as that may be possible, the tremendous spiritual realities that are revealed in Initiation through the transcendental powers of perception which are unfolded by the process of Initiation; to record these realities both for the general instruction of mankind, and for the particular guidance of students of spiritual life, who are consciously working and fighting their way toward Initiation.

A part of the Scriptures of all races and peoples consists of these records of spiritual reality based on knowledge gained through Initiation. The sacred cosmogonies; the descriptions of the remote past and future of the world; the teaching of the spiritual powers, latent in the uninitiated multitude, active in the Initiate; all these must, in so far as they correspond with reality, be records of the wisdom gained through Initiation. They may have been defaced or obscured by transmission; they may have been added to or curtailed; but the central nucleus, if it be real, can have no other source.

This part of the Scriptures we may think of as a record of spiritual science for the general teaching of mankind. The true Scriptures contain, in addition, teaching, the direct purpose of which is the particular guidance of disciples who are treading the path leading to

Initiation. And the Scriptures might, in a sense, be graded by the validity and practical availability of these directions, and the distance they will carry the disciple toward his goal, aiding him to prepare for Initiation.

This direct practical purpose of the Sacred Books is described with eloquent simplicity in one of the discourses attributed to the Buddha, which is named *The Fruit of Discipleship*. As is so often the case in the Buddhist books, it is introduced by a story. King Ajatashatru, namesake of a far earlier king in the period of the older *Upanishads*, desires to find the true way; he visits the famous teachers of religious doctrines, putting to each in turn this question:

“All practical arts and sciences show visible and immediate fruit. Thus the potter makes vessels which are useful to mankind, and the sale of which brings him money. So with the carpenter, the builder and others. Now, I wish to know whether there is in the life of the disciple any visible, tangible and immediate fruit like the fruit obtained by the potter, the carpenter, the builder.”

Each of the famous teachers avoids giving a direct answer; one discusses the origin of matter; another, the indifference of all things; another, the complete extinction of consciousness. Ajatashatru protests, with humorous perplexity, that it is as though he had asked about a mango, and had been told about a breadfruit. Finally he comes to the Buddha, who thus replies:

“In this world, O king, a Tathagata is born, who sees and knows the universe face to face, the worlds above and the worlds below; and, having known it, makes his knowledge known to others. The truth, lovely in its origin, lovely in its progress, lovely in its consummation, he proclaims, in the spirit and in the letter; the higher life he makes known in its fullness, in its purity. Thence comes the awakening of him who hears, his renunciation of the world, his self-discipline in act, word and thought, his conquest of avarice, anger, sloth, perplexity, his attainment of joy and peace as he rises through the higher realms of consciousness to truth and mastery.”

A later passage speaks of the disciple “calling forth from this body another body, having form, made of mind, having all limbs and parts, not deprived of any organ”; the body of the disciple on the way to adeptship. “It is as if one were to draw a reed from its sheath, a sword from its scabbard.”

Here, then, is the origin and purpose of what is most real in the Sacred Books: coming from Initiation, they lead to Initiation. The Stories of the Mysteries are guide posts along the sacred way; they reveal and record some aspect of the Mystery Teaching, telling something of the realities which are seen by those who know the universe face to face.

Stories of the Mysteries form a considerable part of Sacred records of Buddhism; they are held to be the words of the Tathagata himself, drawn forth by the questions or acts of his disciples; very often they are cast in the form of an account of the past births of those whom the Buddha is addressing, to throw light on the circumstances of the present birth.

One of them, not, however, the story of a former birth, is known as the Sutta of Kevaddha. It has that rich quality of humour so constantly present in the teachings of the Buddha; a humour which is more characteristic, perhaps, of that great Master, than of any other among the highest Teachers of mankind:

“Once, when the Master was at Nalanda, in the mango garden, a certain Kevaddha, a landlord’s son, came to him and said:

“‘Master, this our city Nalanda is great, rich, prosperous and devoted to the Master. Would it not be an excellent thing for the Master to bid one of his disciples who possesses occult powers to perform some phenomenal wonder here? Thus would our Nalanda become even more devoted to the Master.’

“But the Master answered: ‘Kevaddha, I do not teach my disciples to perform phenomenal wonders for the multitude.’

“Kevaddha said: ‘I do not wish to offend the Master, but what I said was that Nalanda is great, rich and prosperous, and that it would be an excellent thing for the Master to bid one of his disciples who possesses occult powers to perform some phenomenal wonder here, for thus would our Nalanda become

even more devoted to the Master.’

“Again the Master answered: ‘Kevaddha, I do not teach my disciples to perform phenomenal wonders for the multitude.’

“For the third time Kevaddha said: ‘I do not wish to offend the Master, but what I said was that Nalanda is great, rich and prosperous, and that it would be an excellent thing for the Master to bid one of his disciples who possesses occult powers to perform some phenomenal wonder here, for thus would our Nalanda become even more devoted to the Master.’

“The Master answered: ‘Kevaddha, I teach three wonders: occult powers, occult insight, and occult training. What are these occult powers? They are the powers by which a disciple takes many forms, becomes invisible, rises in the air, walks on the water. If a believer who had seen this should tell it to a skeptic, might not the skeptic say, “Oh yes, that is the Gandhara trick!”’

“‘He might say so, Master.’

“That is why I am opposed to exhibitions of occult powers. And if a disciple should read the thoughts of another, and a believer who had seen it should tell it to a skeptic, might not the skeptic say, “Oh yes, that is the Jewel trick!”’

“‘He might say so, Master.’

“That is why I am so opposed to the exhibition of occult powers. But the third wonder, occult training, teaches a disciple that he should think in this way and not in that way, that he should keep this in mind and not that, that he should shun this and not that. When a Tathagata appears, this is what a disciple should learn. A certain disciple desired to know how the four elements, earth, water, fire and air, dissolve and leave no residue. He meditated so deeply that the inner worlds were revealed to him.

“He came to the angels of the Four Regents and asked them how the four elements dissolve and leave no residue. But the angels of the Four Regents answered: “Disciple, we do not know how the four elements dissolve. But the Four Regents are more advanced and more perfect than we; they will tell you about the

four elements.” So the disciple went to the Four Regents and asked them. But they answered, “Disciple, we do not know how the four elements are dissolved. The angels of the Thirty-three are more advanced and more perfect than we; they will tell you about the four elements.” So the disciple went to the angels of the Thirty-three, who sent him to the Thirty-three, who sent him to Indra, who sent him to Yama, who sent him to Suyama; and so it went till he came at last to the world of Brahma.

“He asked the angels of the world of Brahma concerning the four elements, but they answered: “Disciple, we do not know; but Brahma, mighty Brahma, the surpassing; the unsurpassed, the all-seeing, the omnipotent, the Lord, the maker, the creator, the most excellent ruler, the Father of what has been and what shall be, is more advanced and more perfect than we. Brahma will tell you about the four elements.”

““Where is mighty Brahma?”

““Disciple, we do not know where Brahma is, or whereby Brahma is, or why Brahma is. But where the shining and the radiance appear, there Brahma will appear, for these are the signs of his presence.”

“In no long time there came the shining and the radiance, and mighty Brahma appeared. Thereupon the disciple, approaching, asked him:

““How, Sir, do the four elements, earth, water, fire, air, dissolve without a residue?”

“When the disciple had thus spoken, Brahma said:

““I, O disciple, am Brahma, mighty Brahma, surpassing, unsurpassed, all-seeing, omnipotent, Lord, maker, creator, most excellent ruler, Father of what has been and what shall be.”

“A second time the disciple addressed Brahma, saying: “Sire, I did not ask thee whether thou art Brahma, mighty Brahma, surpassing, unsurpassed, all-seeing, omnipotent, Lord, maker, creator, most excellent ruler, Father of what has been and what shall be. I asked thee where the four elements, earth, water, fire, air, are dissolved without a residue.”

“A second time mighty Brahma said to the disciple: “I, O

disciple, am Brahma, mighty Brahma, surpassing, unsurpassed, all-seeing, omnipotent, Lord, maker, creator, most excellent ruler, Father of what has been and what shall be.”

“The disciple put the same question a third time. Then mighty Brahma took the disciple by the arm and led him to one side and said to him: “Disciple, the angels of the world of Brahma think that there is nothing that Brahma does not know, nothing that Brahma does not see, nothing that Brahma does not understand. Therefore I did not answer in their hearing. But the truth is, disciple, that I do not know where the four elements, earth, water, fire, air, are dissolved without a residue. But go, disciple, to the Buddha, and ask him. As the Buddha answers, so it will be.”

“So, swift as a homing bird, the disciple came to the Buddha and put his question.

“The Buddha answered him that there is surcease of the four elements in the spiritual consciousness of him who attains Nirvana.”

So far this Story of the Mysteries. It has a good many lessons. It shows, for example, that the desire to witness occult wonders was much the same twenty-five centuries ago as in our own days, and that much the same arguments were used to persuade the Masters to produce or permit them. There is a striking likeness of tone between the argument of the Buddha and that of a living Master, who is reported to have written: “It adds no force to our metaphysical truths that our letters are dropped from space on to your lap or come under your pillow. Put that conviction into your consciousness and let us talk like sensible men. Why should we play with Jack-in-the-box?” And this Master goes on to insist on occult discipline, just as the Buddha did. It is further worth noting that, confronted with the report of occult wonders, our modern skeptics replied, as of yore: “Oh yes, that is the Gandhara trick.” The Gandhara trick seems to have been a bit of juggling, which created the illusion of invisibility; the Jewel trick had to do with apparent thought-reading; both may have been familiar feats of hypnotism.

It may well be that the Buddha told the story of the disciple to give

a graphic picture of the ascending planes of consciousness, and to stress the truth that not all their denizens are possessed of ultimate knowledge, or can solve ultimate problems; yet another lesson which is relevant to many latter day revelations.

Finally, it would seem to be the Teacher's purpose to show that there is only one path along which we can proceed to the solution of cosmic problems, even those which appear to be questions of pure physical science. This is the path through the ascending planes of consciousness, the path of Initiation. Only when the highest consciousness is experienced, when the partition wall is broken down and the twain become one; only when Matter and Spirit are revealed as not opposed in essence, but as the two poles of the one Substance, the Life, can the problems even of pure physics find their final solution. Therefore Brahma, mighty Brahma, the personification of the pole of Spirit, sends the aspiring disciple to the Buddha, in fact to seek Initiation through the guidance of that great Master.

There are in Plato many echoes of the Mysteries and of the records of Initiation, the tradition of which was commonly current in Plato's day. The story of Atlantis admittedly comes through Solon from the hierophants of Egypt, and it would be well worth while to gather from Greek literature all the traditions in which Pythagoras, Solon and Thales and other founders of Greek philosophy and science are said to have gained their wisdom from the sacred schools of Egypt. It is probable that in Egypt, rather than in Greece, we should find the real source and foundation of Hellenic thought, which in its turn is the source of so much of what is best in modern thought, both philosophy and science.

In the *Republic* of Plato there are two famous passages which appear to fall within our category of Stories of the Mysteries. The first is the often quoted parable of the cave dwellers, at the beginning of the seventh book. Humanity in this earthly bondage is likened to men in a cavern-like dwelling, seated with their backs to the entrance, and so fettered and chained that they cannot turn to the light. At some distance behind and above them is a great fire. Between the fire and the cavern men pass carrying all sorts of utensils and human statues and figures of animals, so that the shadows of these are cast on the wall

in front of the fettered men, and the wall further sends them back echoes of the speech of those who are passing outside the door of the cave. Shadows and echoes are their world. Plato goes on to describe the great liberation:

“When any one should be loosed, and obliged on a sudden to rise up, turn round his neck, and walk and look up towards the light, and in doing all these things he should be pained, and be unable, from the splendours, to behold the things he formerly saw the shadows of, what do you imagine he would say, if one should tell him that formerly he had seen trifles, but now being somewhat nearer to reality, and having his face turned toward what was more real, he saw better; and so, pointing out to him each of the things passing along, should question him, and oblige him to tell what it was, do not you imagine he would both be in doubt, and would deem what he had formerly seen to be more genuine than what was now pointed out to him? And if he should oblige him to look to the light itself, would not he find pain in his eyes, and shun it; and turning to such things as he is able to behold, reckon that these are really more certain than those pointed out? But if one should drag him from thence violently, through a rough and steep ascent, and never stop till he drew him up to the light of the sun, would not he whilst he was thus drawn, both be in torment, and be filled with indignation, and after he had even come to the light, having his eyes filled with splendour, he would be able to see none of those things now called genuine. But he would need to be accustomed to it some time, if he were to perceive things above. And, first of all, he would most easily perceive shadows, afterwards the images of men and of other things in water, and after that the things themselves. And with reference to these things, he would more easily see the things in the heavens, and the heavens themselves, looking in the night-time to the light of the stars and the moon, than by day, looking on the sun and the light of the sun. And, last of all, he may be able thoroughly to perceive and contemplate the sun himself, not in water, nor images of him, appearing in any thing else, but as he is in himself, in his own proper region, such as he is. And after this he would now

reason with himself concerning him, that it is he who gives the seasons and the years, and regulates all things in this visible region, and that, of all these things which they formerly saw, he is in a certain manner the cause.”

Here, once more, we have the path of Initiation, the rough and steep ascent, following which the disciple attains each degree of spiritual consciousness in turn, until at last he enters the light of the Logos, which illumines all things, ordains the successions of cyclic time, and is in a certain manner the cause of all things visible. There need be no doubt about the meaning of the parable: Plato tells us that it represents “the soul’s ascent into the region of Intelligence,” that is, the Logos.

Even more impressive than the parable itself is its conclusion:

“If such an one should descend and sit down again in the same seat, should not he now have his eyes filled with darkness, coming on the sudden from the sun? And should he now again be obliged to give his opinion of those shadows, and to dispute about them with those who were dazzled, would he not afford them laughter, and would it not be said of him, that having gone above, he was returned with vitiated eyes, and that it was not proper even to attempt to go above, and that whoever should attempt to loose them and lead them up, if ever they were able to get him into their hands, should even be put to death?”

Even more celebrated is Plato’s story of Er, son of Arminius, in the tenth book of the Republic, and ending that enigmatic treatise. Er, left for dead on the battlefield, is carried as a shade to the abode of the discarnate, where are visibly presented to him the mysterious workings of the law of rebirth through Karma, the utter destruction of those who are vile beyond redemption, and the liberation of the elect. Er returns to this world on the twelfth day, to reveal what he has seen. Here again, there need be no question as to Plato’s meaning:

“If the company will be persuaded by me, accounting the soul immortal, and able to bear all evil and all good, we shall always hold the road that leads above. And justice with prudence we shall by all means pursue in order that we may be friends both to ourselves and to the Gods, both whilst we remain here, and

when we receive its rewards, like victors assembled together; and, we shall both here, and in that thousand years' journey we have described, enjoy a happy life."

The thousand years' journey is the traditional period between two incarnations. The same period is given in the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid*, which closely follows the lines of the story of Er. It seems certain that the same meaning is conveyed by the thousand years, in the twentieth chapter of the *Revelation*; the serpent, the lower nature, is bound a thousand years, while the higher nature rests in paradise. It may be wise to include the *Revelation* among the Dramas of the Mysteries, a record of Initiation. There is, perhaps, a vision of Masters of the Lodge: the four and twenty elders, "clothed in white raiment."

This brings us back to the wonderful vision in the second book of *Esdras*:

"I, Esdras, saw upon the mount of Sion a great people, whom I could not number, and they all praised the Lord with songs. And in the midst of them there was a young man of a high stature, taller than all the rest, and upon every one of their heads he set crowns, and was more exalted; which I marvelled at greatly. So I asked the angel, and said, Sir what are these? He answered and said unto me, These be they that have put off the mortal clothing, and put on the immortal, and have confessed the name of God; now they are crowned, and receive palms."

Space does not permit us to speak of those authentic Stories of the Mysteries, the Parables of the Kingdom, beyond the suggestion that they fall into that category. The parable of the Prodigal Son not only depicts the return of a penitent soul, it foreshadows the final return of the soul, the "pilgrim of eternity," when ascent of the steep and rugged way is ended and the cycle of wandering is completed.

There is another class of books to which the name, Stories of the Mysteries, might perhaps be given, though not in the same sense. These books are not records of Initiation, nor are they the work of Initiates. They are rather the testimony of eager, intuitive souls ardently striving toward the light and, through the intensity of their aspiration, catching glimpses of the way before them.

Such a book is the *Pilgrim's Progress*, in which John Bunyan's fervent soul and vivid, pictorial imagination has described the journey "from this world to that which is to come." It is based on real spiritual experience, but the experience of one who is at the beginning of the way, not of the victor who has completed the journey. Bunyan was writing from the depth of his own spiritual trials when he described the crossing of the river of death.

"Then they addressed themselves to the water; and entering, Christian began to sink . . . a great darkness and horror fell upon him, so that he could not see before him. . . ."

We might, perhaps, class with Bunyan's allegory some of George Macdonald's stories. *At the Back of the North Wind* has its passages of intuitive vision and poetic beauty:

"It seemed to Diamond likewise that they were motionless in this centre, and that all the confusion and fighting went on around them. Flash after flash illuminated the fierce chaos, revealing in varied yellow and blue and grey and dusky red the vaporous contention; peal after peal of thunder tore the infinite waste; but it seemed to Diamond that North Wind and he were motionless, all but the hair. It was not so. They were sweeping with the speed of the wind itself towards the sea."

And again, speaking of the cries of the drowning in the sinking ship, North Wind says:

"I will tell you how I am able to bear it, Diamond: I am always hearing, through every noise, through all the noise I am making myself even, the sound of a far-off song. I do not exactly know where it is, or what it means; and I don't hear much of it, only the odour of its music, as it were, flitting across the great billows of the ocean outside this air in which I make such a storm; but what I do hear, is quite enough to make me able to bear the cry from the drowning ship. . . . It wouldn't be the song it seems to be if it did not swallow up all their fear and pain too, and set them singing it themselves with the rest. I am sure it will. And do you know, ever since I knew I had hair, that is, ever since it began to go out and away, that song has been coming nearer

and nearer. . . .”

That is a higher and more intuitive note than Bunyan ever reaches. It leads us directly to *Light on the Path*:

“Listen to the song of life. Store in your mind the melody you hear. Learn from it the lesson of harmony. You can stand upright now, firm as a rock amid the turmoil. . . .”

And this leads us, by natural steps, to the most recent of the great Stories of the Mysteries, though it goes back to ancient Egypt, the *Idyll of the White Lotus*, with its final picture of Initiation:

“I went back to my room and sat down, holding the flower in my hand. It was the same over again as when I had, long ago, a mere child, sat in this same chamber, holding a lily and gazing into its centre. I had a friend, a guide; a union with that unseen Mother of grace. But now I knew the value of what I held; then I did not. Was it possible that it would be again taken from me so easily? Surely no.

“For I could understand its language now. Then it spoke to me of nothing save its own beauty; now it opened my eyes, and I saw; it unsealed my ears, and I heard.

“A circle was round me; such as had surrounded me when I had taught, unknowingly, in the temple. These were priests, white-robed, as those had been who knelt and worshipped me. But these did not kneel; they stood and gazed down upon me with profound eyes of pity and love. Some were old men, stately and strong; some were young and slender, with faces of fresh light. I looked round in awe, and trembled with hope and joy.

“I knew, without any words to tell me, what brotherhood this was. . . .”

We have quoted from many books, of widely separated times and lands and races, these Stories of the Mysteries, guide-posts along the way of immortality. Where is the need of other books, less worthy? Should not all true books record parts of this one mighty epic? What other concern have we, what other destiny, what other hope? This is the path, steep and rugged, yet leading to the sunlit summits, on which our feet should be firmly set, as we strive toward the goal.