

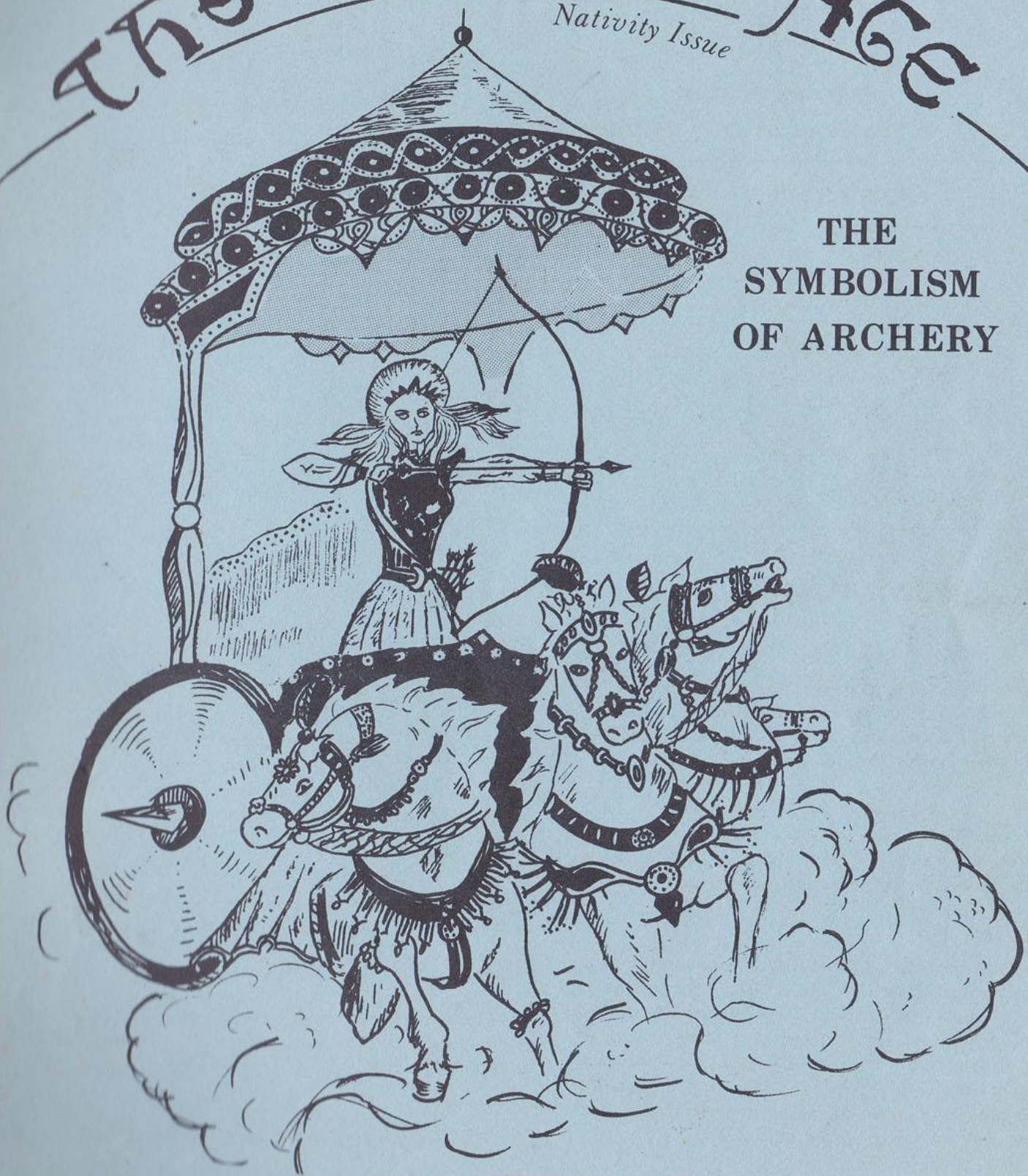
No.

THE COMING AGE

13.

Nativity Issue

THE
SYMBOLISM
OF ARCHERY



THE COMING AGE



40, St John St., Oxford.

No 13 - Nativity Issue - Astraea 5081

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Meditations

DAY OF HESTIA

Firm-founded house, may we live in thy bosom
As in the heart of the sure-fixed world,
With all of our people, maids, childer and menfolk,
Firm in their bodies and sound in their souls.

Lofty thy roof, and thy grain stored in safety;
Of all good things thou art sanctum and ward;
May the calf come to thee in the cool of the evening,
The little girl singing, the cattle in streams.

MOURA

Place your trust not in the power of your own hands,
and be not raised up with the pride of self-possession,
but cast yourselves down and give yourselves to Me in
quiet humbleness. To be raised up is to be cast down,
but to be cast down is to be raised up. For I was cast
down into the very depths; and even as the tears of
My mother's sorrow raised me up from death, so shall
the tears of my suffering deliver you.*

A Nativity Carol

Hail to the light of the glorious morning,
Hail to the first gentle rays of the dawn,
Hail to the star that has guided us onward,
Hail to the Princess of Light that is born.

Deep in the dark night of death we have fallen,
Far from the Mother from Whom we have turned;
Still in the darkness, a clear voice is calling,
Back to the Homeland for which we have yearned.

Hail to the light...

Over the valley the starlight is streaming,
Over the mountains and over the sea,
Waking the world from its slumberous dreaming,
Bearing the glory of God's Mystery.

Hail to the light...

White as the snow are the angels descending,
Bright as the sun are their banners unfurled;
Through the earth's darkness their voices are rending,
Echoing clear to the ends of the world.

Hail to the light...

FEAST OF LIGHTS

My Mother, Who is Light, has sent one light upon the
world, and I am that light; and none shall find her soul
except in the light.*

* From the Teachings of the Daughter.

SNAKES & LADDERS

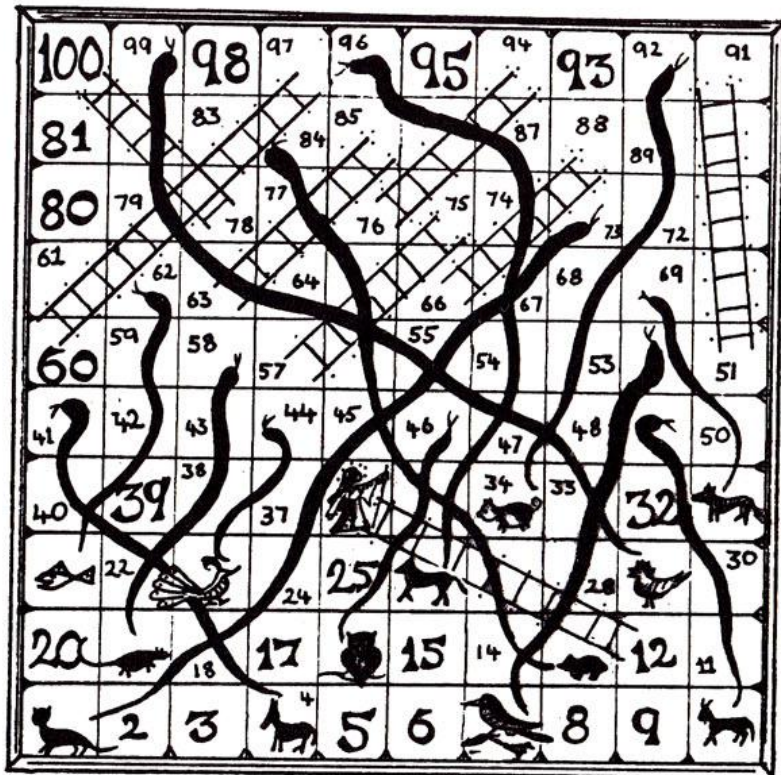
The Meaning of the Game

SNAKES AND LADDERS is a popular fireside pastime for this time of year; yet of all the people who play it, perhaps only a fraction is aware that its origins go back to matriarchal times, that it is a game with a very definite spiritual meaning and that it has been used for thousands of years in the teaching of the spiritual principles of life to children and adults alike.

Of course, the game does not have anything like the almost inexhaustible depth of metaphysical significance that we find in chess and other more "serious" games, but on its own simple level it is a mirror of the soul's Quest which contains a great deal more detail than at first meets the eye.

Modern versions of the game are, of course, designed haphazardly, any number of snakes and ladders being arranged in any order which will give a good chase. But in the traditional game, eight ladders and thirteen snakes are always arranged in the same positions on the hundred-square board. The hundred squares are in themselves significant, since a hundred years is the traditional length of a maid's life. The number is made up of 10 x 10, ten being the number related to the duration of an historical cycle. Thus the board represents a journey through time; the journey of the soul through her life to her final goal of union with the Mother.

The squares around the perimeter of the board number thirty-six - 6 x 6. Six is the number of Moira, and the predominant aspect of the game is representation of the fate, or moira, which affects the life of each soul in the form of good and bad "luck" (ladders and snakes). These seem to be merely chance occurrences, but in fact are the direct result of good and bad actions performed by the soul in this life or in previous incarnations. The dice, with its six faces, is the chief agent of "luck", or moira, in the game.



Square thirty-six is a turning-point on the board. Before this square various pictures of animals appear. On it appears the picture of a maid. Beyond it are no further pictures. This square lies approximately one third of the way along the path. The first third of the board relates to the sub-human state, the second to the human and the third to the supra-human. Those who have read "The Wheel of Moira" (TCA 11) will know that this threefold division is closely related to the moiraic six.

Each of the snakes-head squares represents a human vice, and each square from which a ladder rises, a virtue. The animals at the snakes' tails show symbolically the type of rebirth to which each vice leads. The snake squares are: 41 disobedience; 44 vanity; 46 views; 49 impurity; 52 idleness; 58 untruth; 62 joylessness; 69 envy; 73 murder; 84 anger; 92 greed; 96 pride; 99 desire. The ladder squares are: 12 faith; 51 steadfastness; 57 almsgiving; 60 devotion; 63 good conduct; 66 compassion; 76 knowledge 78 non-attachment.

The position of the snakes and ladders on the board reflects so many truths that one can only begin to expound them in the short space available here.

The first virtue, faith, is the only one which rises from below square 36. This is because the impulse

toward God is the defining characteristic of humanity. Without some semblance of spiritual intuition (or "faith") a creature is sub-human even if she inhabit a human body. Faith may also be translated as *themis*, or adherence to the divine Law. It is through this *themis* or faithfulness that we attain the normal human state - the platform from which all true spiritual advancement may be made. Through faith, or *themis*, the soul attains the normative state of maid from which she sets out upon her spiritual quest in earnest.

Complementary to this, the most elementary sin is that of disobedience. In a normal matriarchal civilisation, God has arranged everything to help the soul; She has laid down laws and customs to guide her, and set Her servants over her in the social hierarchy, which is one great chain leading down from Heaven to earth. A soul does not need to be clever or perfect in the early stages; she only needs to obey her mother and her mistresses, and to obey God's law. Then she will quickly progress to higher stages. The Tradition and social order ordained by God Herself will support her. But if she disobeys, this providential support is lost. In the game she slips back from square 41 to square 4. In the modern world, this disobedience is practised not by a few children, but by the whole of society, from the heads of governments downward. All of them are in disobedience to God and Her laws. That is why the world is in such a chaotic state.

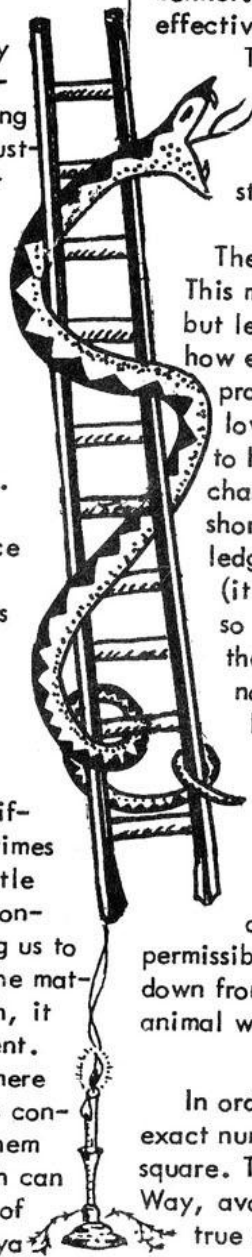
Among the other elementary sins, vanity is quickly followed by views. This fault is often difficult for the modern mind to understand. Sometimes it is explained as "false views", but this is a little misleading. A better phrase would be "mental conceit". Mental speculation alone can never bring us to the Truth. It can reveal certain lesser facts of the material realm, but when it reaches for higher Truth, it merely circles round and round in barren argument. On the mental level, everything is reduced to mere relativity. Different philosophies and ideologies contend, and there is no way of deciding between them beyond personal preference (or "opinion"). Truth can only be established in the light of the Tradition of teaching passed down through the ages from Ranya

(Mistress) to pupil, and established in the beginning by God Herself. The modern world has cut itself off from the Tradition and revels in its own barren mental speculations, which it calls "science", "philosophy", "psychology", etc. A glance around the philosophy section of any public library will reveal dozens of "thinkers", each with her own views, each presenting her own solution to the cosmic mystery, dictated by the particular set of bees buzzing in her particular bonnet. Nothing holds a soul away from Truth so effectively as a silly pride in "her own opinions".

This pride is closely bound up with vanity, which is separated from it by a single square on the board; but as we can see, it is more dangerous, for it leads to a much steeper fall.

The longest ladder on the board is devotion. This may be attained quite early on the path, but leads right up nearly to the end. This shows how even a small soul, not advanced in spiritual practice, can, by a sincere and full-hearted love and adoration of our Lady, ascend rapidly to Her sacred realm. True devotion, and the chanting of Her holy names, are the swiftest shortcut to our Lady's heart. The path of knowledge, though also very great, is more difficult (it starts from a higher point) and is not quite so rapid. But the path which leads directly to the Goal - to the Spirit Herself - is that of non-attachment. This may be realised through love or knowledge. It is the point at which the soul lets go of the ego and all its material desires, and becomes her true Self - that Self which has never left her union with the Mother. It is for this reason that desire is the final sin. At the lower levels, a little desire for the things of the world is permissible, but at the end it may drag the soul down from the very gates of heaven back into the animal world.

In order to end the game, one must throw the exact number required to land on the hundredth square. This indicates the need to tread the Middle Way, avoiding both too little and too much. The true ascetic, for example, both avoids making



Work-in-Progress

NATIVITY CARDS: Various different designs on Nativity themes. The cards have been made self-explanatory so that they can be given to non-Madrian friends. 60p for a set of five, plus 10p postage.

DOUBLE CALENDARS: Next year's calendar will really be two calendars in one. The first will be the usual big page-to-month one, illustrated in beautiful traditional style. The second will be a more condensed page-to-season guide with secular dates included for easy reference. This can be put to daily use by those working outside a Madrian environment. The calendars include all major and many minor festivals, natural Rites, a complete conversion table for sacred and secular dates, and much other information. It will be available for the new year in early spring at 75p post free. Order yours now.

herself too comfortable and all extremes of self-torment. Her aim is to be unattached to either extreme. At this stage in the game, the player can "rebound" by up to five squares, which means that even in this final stage she is vulnerable to two snakes' heads. One is desire, as we have seen. The other is pride. Spiritual pride is the "grown-up" counterpart of the vanity which we encountered in the early stages. The temptation to congratulate oneself on one's advancement, or to revel in psychic powers attained through contemplation, if heeded, immediately puts the conquered tyrant Ego back on the throne, and the soul topples back to the sub-human level.

The game may represent many stages in the soul's journey, from the simplest levels of self-improvement to complete Realisation. There is one further rule. If, having gone down a snake or up a ladder, a player cannot say which vice or virtue it represents, she misses a turn. This helps every child to learn the meaning of the game. And the game, in turn, will help her to learn a great deal about the true meaning of life.

Sister Alethea

CHANTING BEADS: The traditional set of sixty-four glass beads used for the chanting and recital of the Holy Name of Inanna. Chanting Her Name is the perfect method that She has given us, by which we may come to Her in the Dark Age. Glass beads not only help us to count our recital according to traditional number symbolism, but also act as a repository for the devotional power built up by our chanting. These beautiful, magical beads are a perfect traditional aid to devotion and meditation. £3 post free with introductory/instructional leaflet.

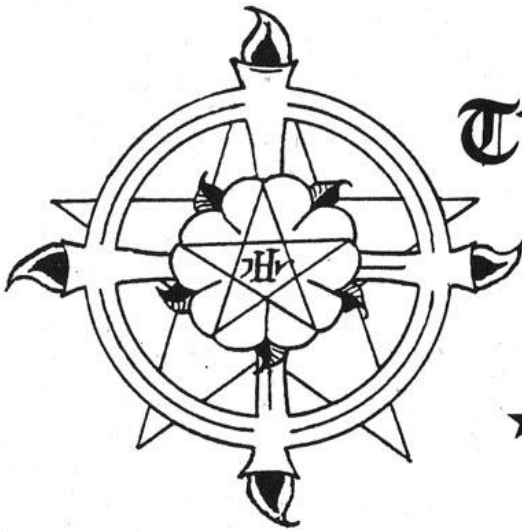
THE COMING AGE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME
Under this new scheme, members will be sent ten back issues of TCA at monthly intervals. This is a perfect way of learning about Madrian tradition, faith and philosophy. Each issue is a permanent work of reference containing articles of enduring interest on all aspects of the primordial matriarchal religion, teaching and way of life. Receiving them monthly via this scheme will make them more digestible than getting them in a bundle, and will also bring you some rare early editions now only available through the Programme - as well as giving you an exciting package to look forward to each month! Membership fee £3.50.

HALF-CALENDARS & ERRATA: The full calendar for this year is still available at 60p post free; half-calendars covering the autumn, winter and Moura seasons are available at 45p. Those who have current calendars please note the following corrections: the New Moon in Brighde falls on the 25th and not the 24th of the month, and the Day of Artemis in Moura on the 2nd and not the 1st. This being a leap year, there is a double (two-day) Hiatus.

EXTRA PAGE: As from this issue we have an extra page of text due to the discontinuance of our exchange advertisement section.

THANK YOU for your response to last issue's emergency appeal. We are solvent again now, but we still very much need your financial support.

The One True Ancient Faith



"Madrianism is the only logical possibility open to a serious person."

★ **MADRIANISM** seems so new to me. It is hard to accept that this new cult could be the One Truth.

You are right to be suspicious of new cults. No group of human

beings could ever "dream up" the Truth, especially in this Dark Age. No modern thinker can hope to compete with the wisdom of the ancients, because the ancient wisdom comes from God Herself, while modern knowledge is only the product of limited human minds.

But Madrianism is not new at all. It is the world's oldest civilisation. Look at archaeological remains of the most ancient societies. Take Catal Huyuk in Turkey. It is over 9,000 years old. The Deity in every Temple is female. Women were the heads of households and the heads of state. This is the civilisation that God gave us in the beginning. Madrianism is this religion and way of life, passed down from mother to daughter, from Ranya to pupil without a break from the beginning. Because we have been persecuted by the patriarchal regimes, we have had to be underground for many years. That is why Madrianism is new to many people. But don't forget - when you become a Madrian you are just picking up an old family tradition. You come from a lapsed Madrian family. Everyone comes from a Madrian family if you go back far enough, because Madrianism was the way of life of the whole world for hundreds of thousands of years - long before patriarchy was thought of.

★ But it is hard to believe that Madrianism is right and all the other faiths are wrong.

No, all the other faiths are not wrong. In the beginning there was one primordial religion given to maid by God Herself. This lasted for thousands upon thousands of years. Then, very late in human history, things began to break up. New patriarchal states broke away from the central Truth. Each of them retained a part of the Truth, but none had the whole. But it was

still a part of the Truth. Every civilisation except the present one (and also the "classical" decadence of Greece and Rome) has been based upon spiritual Truth. As times became more decadent, great people like Jesus and the Buddha re-stated these Truths in simpler forms to help people. But all orthodox traditions are reflections of the one Truth.

★ Then why do they seem to contradict each other?

Because they are only partial truths. Suppose you say that the sky is blue and full of clouds, and I say that it is black and full of stars. Who is right? We are both right, but we each have only part of the truth. We might argue very fiercely, but that would be only because we did not know the whole truth.

If we want to know the whole Truth, we have to go back to the primordial Tradition. Suppose somebody sends a message. One messenger says that it is one thing, another says another. How do you find out the truth?

★ Go back to the person who sent the message, I suppose.

Yes. We have to go back to the original Tradition. The matriarchal tradition. That is where we find God's message just as She gave it. It is logical. If you can see that there is truth in Christianity and in Buddhism and the other religions, it makes sense to seek out the origin of all of them. That is where you will find "the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth".



★ But don't they all claim to be the original Tradition?

No, they don't, and they can't. Christianity was founded late in history, less than 2000 years ago. Buddhism 500 years before that; Islam 500 years after. Judaism about the same time as Buddhism. Archaeology shows that before a certain date, religion and society were matriarchal all over the world. That is why we have to go back to the matriarchal Tradition if we want the whole Truth. It is the only logical thing to do.

★ And this means accepting that God is feminine?

Yes.

★ Most people today cannot understand what this means. They say that God must be beyond gender, or else a balance of female and male.

That is because they do not understand the science of symbolism.

★ Then it is only symbolic?

There is no "only" about it. People do not understand the science of symbolism, and so they say "only" symbolic. The rose is a symbol of our Mother. Profane people think that the rose came first and then maid invented a pretty meaning for it. This is the product of ignorance. God came first. The rose is one of Her acts of Self-expression. The perfect form of a rose is the expression of a Divine Idea. God can create a perfect form to express Herself just as easily as we can speak a word. When we know the symbolism of a rose, we are knowing what God meant by it and that is its real meaning. The Reality which the rose expresses existed aëons before the first physical rose was made, before this earth was born, and it will exist when all the worlds are dust.

It is the same with the physical sexes. They are merely the expression of a supra-physical Reality. The female is the spiritual Principle, the male the mater-

ial. In this world there must be a balance between them for material existence to continue; but the spiritual must govern the material. That way we have harmony. What happens when this is turned upside-down and men govern society? We have discord, wars, tortures. The balance of nature is upset. We have an ecological crisis. Patriarchy has been one long crisis from the start. What happens when God is pictured as male? Religion dies. You cannot build a religion on the material principle. Religion has been declining since the end of the matriarchate. When the Protestants abandoned Mary they signed the death warrant of Christianity. This is the science of symbolism at work.

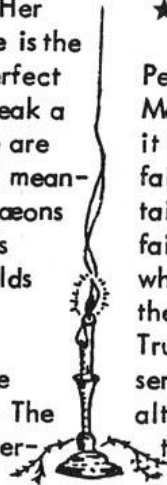


Archaeology shows that maids ruled the ancient world. Matriarchy was universal from India to the Americas.

God shows Herself to us as feminine because that is what She is in the symbolic language of humanity. A symbol is a thousand times deeper than words. There may be other planets, and there certainly are other planes of being, where sex has no meaning. On these God does not appear as a human female; but She does appear as the precise equivalent of that in the symbolic "language" of that place. In France we say *lait*, in Germany *milch*, but milk is still the same thing. When we can understand that God is our Mother, then we can understand God.

★ Why is Madrianism so much like Christianity?

People with a Christian background often say that Madrianism is like Christianity. Buddhists say that it is just like Buddhism; Hindus that it is like their faith. Why is this? It is because Madrianism contains the essential Truth behind all religions. The faith which says that the sky is blue and the one which says it is black both find their portion of the truth in Madrianism, because it is the whole Truth. That is why, although to a superficial observer Madrianism may seem like a rather eccentric alternative to the established religions, it is really the only logical possibility open to a serious person.





Our Lady's Creatures

Maid and the animal realm

THE CENTRALITY OF THE HUMAN STATE is affirmed in all traditional teaching. A human life is hard to obtain - it (in common with all analogous "central" states on other worlds and levels of being, which are also designated by the term "maid") presents the greatest challenge of all possible forms of incarnation, and also the greatest risk. Maid means "she-who-

chooses"; and the power to choose God and the Good is also the power to reject God and the Good. Maid, with her ability to choose, is at the pivotal point of change. From this life she can attain the greatest heights or the lowest depths. She stands at the very centre of the universe, and thus contains all its potentialities. She is the perfect microcosm and the Princess Regent of the earth. This we know.

What then of the animals, the sentient and often intelligent creatures who live and work, suffer and know happiness with us? What is their meaning in the universe? What is their relation to us, and how should we regard and treat them?

Insofar as animals are without choice, they live inevitably within themis - within the celestial harmony. An animal moves in the rhythm of its life just as the star moves within its fixed sphere; and the pattern is Divine. There is no "virtue" in it as we understand the term, for without moral choice there is neither virtue nor vice. But it is good, for it mirrors spiritual Reality.

Thus it is that like the sun, the earth, the trees and the sea, each animal mirrors some aspect of the Divine Whole. The dog's loyalty, the lion's courage, the ox's strength, the dove's gentleness, the cheetah's swiftness, the ant's industry, the cricket's joyfulness: all present us with models of perfection. Even the negative symbolism of certain animals - the pig, the cock and the mule, for example - while not reflecting on the moral state of the animal itself, reveals the lower possibilities of human action, while the more complex symbolism of the horse, the bee, the spider (whose web-spinning reflects the activity of Moira) and other beasts is a living manifestation of metaphysical Truth and enhances our under-

standing of the meaning of the universe. We can learn from the animals in a way that they cannot learn from us, for while a dove cannot manifest the qualities of a fox, nor an ass those of a lion, we, as maid, can choose to be what they by nature are.

Individual animals can, nonetheless, have character, as anyone who has ever kept a pet must know. It would also seem that those animals which have most contact with human beings - such as horses, dogs and elephants - have the most character and the most individuality; which must be more than coincidence. A modern pseudo-spiritual belief holds that the souls of such animals are in process of evolution, and will in time develop into human souls, just as some scientists claim that the human body has evolved from animal forms. Such a belief is incompatible with an authentic metaphysical understanding of the soul, and must therefore be discounted. It is, however, a traditional belief that those maids who fall short of human status in this life may be reborn as animals - a belief very effectively illustrated



in the game of snakes and ladders. It surely makes sense to regard those animals in our charge as possible vehicles for a soul which is capable of re-attaining the human state. Such an attitude could not help but affect the way we treat them.

It is a temptation to treat a pet, as it is to treat a child, with a mixture of indulgence and occasional bad-tempered severity, and like all temptations, it must be firmly resisted. The truest kindness is a thorough training, especially in obedience, the first of the virtues, which disciplines the errant will. But a discipline which is not founded in love can be worse



than a loving indulgence, for it is the love and trust which develops between a trained animal and her mistress which is the most valuable fruit of the training. We see this at its best in working animals such as sheep-dogs, farm-horses, cavalry

horses and draught oxen. Merely to "exploit" animals as though they were no more than tools (or rather pieces of modern machinery, for every traditional craftsmaid has a special reverence for her tools) can do nothing but harm on either side; but to work with an animal in true harmony and understanding can be a genuine craft and a way of spiritual advancement for maid and beast alike.

The animals who are our companions, who do our bidding and act with intelligence and affection: these are our special charge. But it is not with them that our responsibility ends. The bird with a broken wing, the trapped hare, the wounded deer - all make demands on our compassion in the love of our Lady, Who has said: "and you, My children, if you love Me, are friend to every creature" * We should always remember to live according to this; not to trap or hunt beyond our needs, nor cause suffering through carelessness to any living being. "Walk gently on the earth, for the earth is thy sister, and the creatures thereof are thy kin. I have set maids to watch upon them; treat them not, then, with hardness" * It is a part of our function as maid, as Princess-Regent of the earth, to care for the animals, and indifference is as much a failing as cruelty.

The disruptions of themis which mark the latter end of the Iron Age have their effect not only on humanity, but also on the animal world. Wildlife is endangered to the extent that some species are on the point of extinction, and many more are becoming rare, through overpopulation, urbanisation and pollution. The balance of nature is disturbed by the impact of modern life, so that everyone suffers. These are the indirect results of humanity's indifference to nature, caused by the abandonment of traditional ways in the quest for efficiency and maximum profit.

*From The Teachings of the Daughter.

More directly, themis is perverted by the adoption of factory farming techniques which destroy the craft of animal husbandry. The battery, the veal unit and many less publicised devices attempt to maximise production for the market without regard for the suffering caused or the inhumanity of the methods. Spiritual consequences are ignored in the search for material benefits. The same principle (or rather lack of principle) applies in the vivisection laboratories, often with a nightmarish cruelty which far exceeds the worst horrors of the factory farm. Although often motivated by nothing more than morbid curiosity, the vivisectors justify their actions by the application of "findings" to human situations. In both cases, the defenders plead the advantages to humanity, claiming that as animals are "inferior", we are entitled to torture and sacrifice them in our own interests. Some of their opponents counter this by accusing them of "species-ism", the exaltation of one species, in this case maid, over all the others, and by claiming "equal rights" for animals. Both these arguments are a perversion of themis and the true authority exercised by maid in the name of the Divine Law. Maid is the Princess-Regent of the world, and it is precisely because this is her position that she must care for and protect and refrain from harming the animals. In the first argument, the Princess-Regent has become a merciless tyrant; in the second she has abdicated her position in the golden chain which links Heaven and earth.

It is only when maid takes her true place in the universe as Princess Regent, living within themis as the animals do, but through choice rather than necessity, that the balance of nature can finally be restored. The work of the ecologists and animal protectionists is vital in this field, but, acting as it does purely on the material level, it can only achieve piecemeal and temporary results. The material problems are only the symptoms of a deep-seated spiritual disease which can be cured only when maid returns to God and lives according to Her Law.



Donna Chrysothemis



The Gentle Way

"Offering everything to God, we can find contentment in Her created world"

WINTER IS UPON US. The harvests have been gathered in. In our little community we have passed through a tardy spring and a glorious late-summer. We have worked the land that our mothers have worked for a thousand years before us in almost exactly the same way that they have worked it. In sunshine and in rain, the fruits of the earth have flourished, and we have worked in harmony with their Creator and ours, according to Her law.

And now the year draws on to its night-time. Yet what a night is this. We shall see the chaste white blanket of the snow upon the

land, and bright-cheeked children shall skate on icy ponds. We shall hear their crystal voices cleave the air with songs of a glorious festival; telling us the story of how God came to maid that maid might return to God. Bright fires shall blaze, old stories shall be told; good ale shall pass, sweet-scented lamps shall burn. These are the darkest days in all the year, and who shall say they are not beautiful?

As these thoughts pass through my mind, I recall how many times I have been taught and have taught others that this world is but a shadow, a valley of dust through which we pass on a brief journey; I remember also how many sacred teachings enjoin us to turn from the sense-pleasures of the world in the single-hearted search for God.

The first of these teachings presents no problem, of course - for we know that all the beauties and wonders of this world are but reflections of transcendent Reality. We know that it is the inner recognition (conscious or otherwise) of this reflection that makes us love all beauty. We know also that those who see this world as a thing-in-itself and strive for beauty and satisfaction on the purely material level destroy automatically all the beauty of the world. If the this-world-only materialists of the modern world could get their hands on our home and land, they would quickly turn it into an urban concrete desert or a factory "farm". They would replace the hearth-fire with some electrical device and the stories and songs with the vulgar and alien chatter of a television set.

But is it necessary for us to turn from all the beauty of the world in order to come to God? There can be no doubt that the path of asceticism and pure contemplation is the swiftest and surest way to Her. But for many this way is too hard; we may try, but continually we will fall. God sees our weakness and has compassion on us; and for this reason She has given us another way: the Gentle Way. "Love the world" She tells us "but love it for that it is an echo of Eternity". She has given us fasts and joyous festivals; She has given us the traditional crafts and agricultural methods, each one a mirror of the divine Act of Creation, a contemplative path and a deeply absorbing vocation. In short, She has given us the means to make the whole of our lives a Sacrament.

How do we go about this? The answer is very simple - if we cannot follow the Contemplative Life, we can at least live contemplatively. The secret of this is to remember Inanna as often as possible: to offer ourselves to Her throughout the day; to make little sacrifices to Her - perhaps getting out of bed a minute earlier than we need to, or doing some irksome task - in order to conquer our lower selves and submit our will to Hers. All the time we are doing this, She will be leading us along the Gentle Way - not stopping us from enjoying the beauties of the world, but showing us how to enjoy them through Her and for their true meaning.

The Gentle Way is the way of childlike love. We who are too little to bring to our Lady the tremendous spiritual gifts of the great saints and heras at least bring

Her the little things we have. We gather flowers to decorate Her shrine, perhaps in summer we may rise half an hour earlier each morning to bring a fresh tribute of Her works of art to Her. We chant Her Name and sing to Her, perfecting our music as a perfect gift for Her. Even so do we perfect all that we do, that it may be worthy of our dearest Mistress.

But the gift which She craves more than any other is

the gift of ourselves; and so, before all else, we strive to make ourselves a worthy gift to Her. We purify and adorn our souls that they may be clean and beautiful offerings to Her. How can we do this? Again, we have Her own words to guide us: "Speak words of love and innocence, of mildness and of hope, and you shall weave a raiment of peace about your soul and a veil of gentle light" and again: "Let your ways be gentle as the milk-white dove, and graceful as the gliding of the swallow." For the Gentle Way is also the Way of Gentleness. Let our every action be controlled and graceful. Let our steps fall softly on the earth, nor our voices be raised unless it be in song. Let us banish all unkindness from our thoughts. There is so much for our Lady to forgive us; let us forgive our sisters freely. Let us approach all things joyfully and without complaining, letting energy and diligence: for even the humblest tasks cast out idleness. Let "our souls be simple as the running deer, and our hearts as little children filled with wonder". If we can give to Inanna a soul thus chaste and simple, She will receive it gladly.

I do not mean to pretend that the Gentle Way is easy. It is simple, but it is not easy. We will be tempted often away from the path of gentleness and simplicity; we will be tempted away from kindness and purity and assailed by anger, greed, idleness, pride lust and the spirit of joylessness and complaining,

and sometimes we will fall. But if we pick ourselves up with meekness and humility and ask Inanna to set us back upon the path, all the work of the keres and demons in tripping us up will have been for nothing.

The Gentle Way demands discipline and a strong will to overcome the lower self. But it is the way by which we may enjoy all the glories of the world; and the practice of moderation and a little asceticism will

only make them the sweeter. As we live upon the world as our Lady's little child-servants, we begin to learn that there is only one Enjoyer of the world, and that is our Lady Herself. She who is perfect has perfect enjoyment, and therefore to enjoy the world through Her is the best way, and in the end the *only* way to enjoy it. That is why She wants us to follow this way - because She loves us even more than we love ourselves.

Sister Julia

Discovering the Goddess

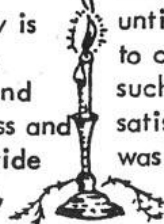
By David Holton, practitioner of homeopathic & botanic medicine.

THE EFFECTS of the vast abyss of religious emptiness are apparent in practically every aspect of modern society and most certainly contribute to the varied psychological and psychosomatic disorders

suffered by so many today. "There is just nothing to turn to..." is a phrase I am hearing all too commonly nowadays.

Throughout my life, for all my study and practice, I had deep, profoundly disturbing religious difficulties until the Madrian religion came my way. I struggled to come to some understanding of Reality, and realised such truths as reincarnation. But this brought no inner satisfaction. It seemed detached and disjointed. There was no conscious *involvement* with Deity. No sense of *belonging* to the great scheme of the Divine.

Contd. p. 14





THE COMING festival meaning

Winter

Correspondence of the sacred and secular calendars for the seasons of Winter and Moura:

Astraea: Nov. 28th - Dec. 25th

Hestia: Dec. 26th - Jan. 22nd

Brighde: Jan. 23rd - Feb. 19th

Moura: Feb. 20th - Mar 18th

Major Festivals

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LADY: 8th Hestia (Jan 2nd, full moon)
FEAST OF LIGHTS: 10th Brighde (Feb 1st)
EVE OF MOURA: 28th Brighde (Feb 19th)
PASSION: 28th Moura (March 18th)

Minor Festivals

GENIAD: 28th Astraea (Dec 25th)
HESTIAD: 6th Hestia (Dec 31st)
DUODECIMA: 19th Hestia (Jan 13th)
PURPLE MONDAY: 6th Brighde (Jan 28th)
MOURA DAY: 1st Moura (Feb 20th)
MED-MOURA: 14th Moura (March 4th)

Nativity Season

"And a star rose above the sacred grove that lay about the cave, brighter and more resplendent than all the stars of the heavens. And the star was seen over all the earth; and the children of the earth were filled with wonder, and they came to the place where the star stood in the sky."
(*Mythos* Chapter II, 2-3)

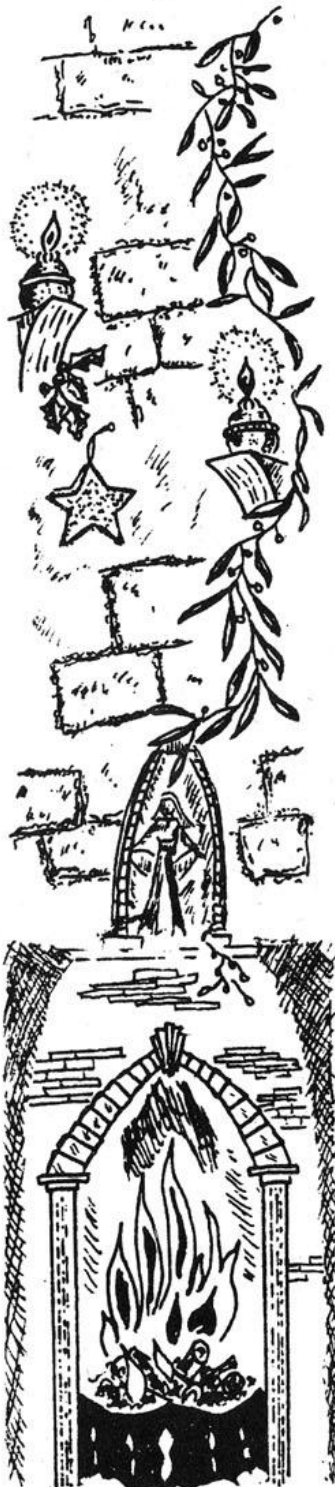
Winter is the season of the star: the five-pointed star of Advent and Nativity, which gives the first winter month its name. The Star is the herald of the coming of our Lady, Inanna, our Princess, who shall rule both earth and Heaven. The symbolism

of the star closely corresponds to that of the sacred Pentacle. The light of the star is the promise of life, love and hope, the joy of the season. The Star stands eternally over the Sacred Grove; our Lady Inanna is forever born in our hearts. This is the Mystery of Nativity: that God is with us even when we are not with Her.

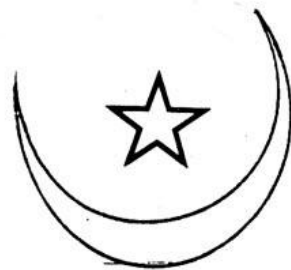
ADVENT

In Advent, the month before Nativity, we prepare ourselves for one of the greatest festivals of the year. Spiritually, we make preparation of our hearts and souls, purifying them through daily prayer and acts of adoration and self-discipline. We attempt to rid ourselves of material concerns that we may be ready to honour the presence of the Divine Child. The better our preparation, the greater will be our enjoyment of the Feast, for we will be more truly aware of its deepest meaning.

During Advent we also prepare our homes for the festival season, decorating with evergreens, candles, garlands and pictures. Many of the decorations each year are made during the Advent as acts of love, and all have their meaning. Some are scenes from the *Mythos*, some represent the symbols of Divinity, such as the moon and the star. Candles symbolise the birth of the Light of the world; evergreens - holly, bay, mistletoe, ivy and fir - the presence of life among the seeming barrenness of winter. The fir tree, with its ruler the Star Fairy, stands always in the heart of the home. By tradition, representations of the Mother and Child appear only from the beginning of Hestia, when the day of the Divine Birth draws nigh.



SEASON & celebration



GENIAD

This is the Day of All Geniae, when we remember and pay honour to the pure and perfect children of Heaven, those who are not separated from our Mother. Alethea, Genia of Truth, Athene of wisdom, Hebe of childhood, Hestia of the home, Moira of fate, the Geniae of the seven celestial spheres - all are perfect reflections of the Spirit. So too are the personal Geniae, one of whom guides each of us along the path to Heaven. She leads us to develop our own capacity for expressing the Divine.

HESTIAD

The Day of Hestia, Genia of hearth and home, is celebrated today in every Madrian household. The yule log, which burns in the hearth at this season, unites Hestiad and Nativity. The house is blessed by making the Pentacle in the four corners of each room while all pray that the home may be protected, and may become a centre and beacon of our Lady's love. Visitors are greeted with home made bread and home made or mulled wine or ale.

NATIVITY

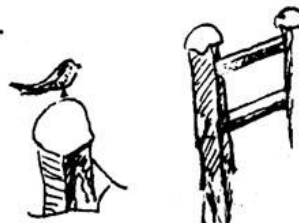
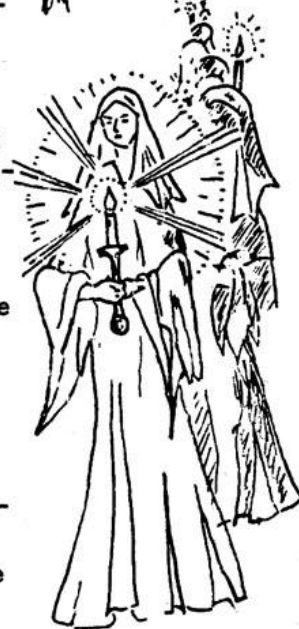
NATIVITY EVE: A white candle is lit at sunset to burn throughout the night and be extinguished at dawn on Nativity morning. At midnight the first of the three Nativity Rites is held. The Altar cloths are white and the incense is sandalwood for Mother and Daughter. Children sometimes leave small offerings of food and drink for the Star Fairy, to refresh her on her travels.

NATIVITY: We celebrate the birth of Inanna, Princess of the earth and Queen of Heaven, on one of the greatest feasts of the year. She will guide and help us on our way back to our true home in Heaven. Two further Rites are held, at dawn and at dusk.

Nativity is celebrated with games, singing, feasting, presents and story-telling. Many Madrian homes have their favourite "Nativity" stories, which are told every year and have an inward meaning related to the seasonal Mystery. Nativity songs are sometimes known as "yules", from the Greek *yoelos*, a carol in honour of the Mother and Daughter (as Demeter and Persephone), and the name extends to the season as a whole.

DUODECIMA

Duodecima comes at the end of the twelve days of Nativity celebration. For the twelve days when the Star appeared in the sky we make merry. On the thirteenth day, which represents Moura, the month of purification, we keep fast. Before midnight on Duodecima, all images of the Star are removed, and every last decoration must be taken down. Only the greenery remains until Purple Monday. The fast, however, does not begin until dawn, and the removal of the decorations is one of the characteristic events of the Duodecima party. This traditional party is probably the gayest and noisiest celebration of the Madrian year, making a fitting end to Nativity.



The Three Caskets



ONCE UPON A TIME, long, long ago, when the world was young, the maiden Cliona lived with her stepmother and stepsister in the heart of the forest. Now Cliona was as lovely a sweet tempered child as one could ever hope to meet, and it was small wonder that all the neighbours loved her dearly. Yet her stepmother loved her not at all, but favoured her own daughter, who was as ugly as her own self. She praised her when she behaved ill and encouraged her when she was selfish until the child grew as greedy and bad-mannered as Cliona was the opposite. And as year followed year, the difference between the sisters grew more evident.

At last the stepmother could bear no longer to hear the neighbours sing the praises of Cliona while for her own child they had nothing but abuse and criticism. So she called the two maidens together and set them to spinning on the edge of the well in the courtyard. "Woe to her whose thread breaks first," was her warning, "for I shall cast her into the depths." But you may be certain that it was to her own daughter she gave the fine strong

Discovering the Goddess

The Madrian faith brought everything in my life into perspective. The great love of the Goddess strikes out from the depths of the soul and illuminates all the fears and dark corners of ignorance and doubt. The inner torments vanished like mists before the rising sun. I came to realise that I had never known true religion or philosophy, true peace or tranquillity, before.

The deeper I go into the Madrian faith, the more profound is the peace that I feel. Deity seems so near at hand, and the love of our Lady sweetens my bitterest thoughts in my weakest moments.

Madrianism brings resurrection into a dying masculinist world. As the shadows deepen in a civilisation darkened by its own materialism, the age-old Light and Love of our Lady shines forth anew.

flax and to Cliona the coarse stuff which the meanest of the village spinners had rejected. So it was that Cliona's thread snapped the soonest, for all that she was the more skilful, and her stepmother came up behind her and threw her into the well. "There's an end of you, wench!" she called after her. But she was wrong, for it was only the beginning.

Cliona tumbled, head over heels, down and down it seemed for ever - but at last her feet touched solid earth and she stood beneath a clear blue sky. It was a strange land and a bright and beautiful country wherein she found herself. She walked a little way, until she came upon an old hedge which looked so frail that it would scarcely support a wren, and the hedge cried out: "Maiden, strange maiden, step lightly over me, for I am old, so old that I have not much longer to live."

"That will I do with a heart and a half," answered Cliona, and skipped over the hedge so lightly that not a twig trembled. "My blessings go with you, gentle maiden," said the hedge gratefully, and on Cliona walked, down a path between tall and graceful trees.

Ahead of her at last she saw an oven standing over an open fire, and as she came closer, the oven cried: "Maiden, strange maiden, take out my loaves. They have been baking for seven long years and will be burnt except you make haste." "That I will with a heart and a half," answered Cliona and took out the loaves laying them gently on the grass side by side, though her heart was like to break with hunger from the smell of them. "Take a loaf and welcome, gentle maiden," said the oven, "and my blessing go with you." So Cliona chose the smallest loaf and went her way.

A long and weary way it was, and the sun past her height before she came to a meadow where a cow grazed with a pail hung on her horns. "Maiden, strange maiden," said the cow, "please milk me, for I have not been milked these seven long years." "That I will with

a heart and a half," answered Cliona, and milked until the pail was quite full. "Drink what you will, throw the rest over my hooves, and hang the pail upon my horn again," said the cow, and this Cliona did, thanking the cow for her kindness with a kiss. "My blessing go with you, gentle maiden," called the cow as Cliona walked on across the meadow.

fine and white as virgin snow. The mistress of the farm was well pleased with her servant and wanted to make a trial of her skill. So one day she gave Cliona a sieve and bade her use it to bring water from the stream. Cliona tried and tried again, but she could not make water stay in the sieve. Then she heard a whirr of wings and piping sparrow voices singing: "Ashes, ashes!" Cliona understood and ran back to the kitchen to fill her sieve with ashes, and then it held the water perfectly. "This is wise work beyond my expectation," said her mistress. "Perhaps it is that you had help." But Cliona said not a word and continued with her work as before.

Soon it was then that Cliona came to a cottage where an old crone sat in the sunlight. "Greetings, mother," called the maiden politely and the crone looked at her through bleary eyes. "Well, it's manners you have indeed, but I wonder will you be good enough to comb out my hair before you go on." "That I will with a heart and a half," answered Cliona, and gently combed the thin white hair until the sunlight spangled it. "You have done well, gentle maiden" said the crone. "If you are seeking a position, you will find one at the farm over the hill, and my blessing go with you." Cliona was sweet in her thanks and over the hill was engaged at once to milk the cows and sift the corn. She ate well and slept well in the softest of beds and wondered at her good fortune.



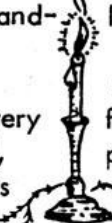
After a full moon's passing, Cliona's mistress gave her a black thread and a white thread. "Wash these in the stream until the black is white and the white black," Cliona was told. She went again to the stream, but had no more success than before. She was all for giving up in despair when again she heard the sparrow voices: "Black to the east, white to the west," they repeated, and Cliona, understanding, drew the black thread against the current to the east and the white with the current to the west, and the colours changed at once. Her

mistress could scarce believe her eyes and said: "It is well and wisely done, but I wonder whence the wisdom came." But again Cliona said nothing.

At first light she was up to milk the cows. She gave them sweet hay for their eating and fresh straw for their standing, and was so gentle and sang so calming a song that the cows were quiet and willing at the milking, and the pails soon filled. All at once a crowd of cats surrounded Cliona. "It is milk you are wanting," she said, and found saucers for all of them. At noon, when Cliona was sifting the corn through a sieve, there was a sudden rustle of wings and a flock of sparrows descended around her. "It is corn you are wanting," she said, and scattered them a fine handful over the ground.

The moon waxed and waned before Cliona was set a final task by her mistress, who gave her the threads she had washed and told her to weave them into cloth by sunset. Simple enough it seemed, but the threads twisted and tangled, and all Cliona's skill was of no avail. "This I shall never do," sighed Cliona and wept aloud. But the cats came and pushed themselves against her lovingly. "Let us do it, little mistress," they cried, and taking her place at the loom they wove so fast and so skilfully that the cloth was woven in an instant and was fit for a princess's robe, so soft and smooth it felt. "This passes my understanding," declared her mistress in wonderment. "What help have you had that you could do this?" But Cliona would not answer her.

All in all, Cliona worked with a will and every creature was her friend. The cows, well-tended, gave milk to overflowing, as sweet as a summer's day, and the flour from the corn she sifted was





When a year and a day had passed, it was time for Cliona to leave the farm. It was with tears in her eyes that her mistress bade her farewell. "You must choose one of the three caskets in the upper room as payment for your work," she said, "but do not open it until you reach the place in which you want it to stay." Cliona went to the upper room and saw the caskets, gold, silver and lead. She picked them up in turn, but was at a loss which to choose when the cats filed in through the open door. "Leave the gold and leave the silver. Choose the lead," they mewed insistently, and so it was the lead casket that Cliona tucked under her arm.

Cliona made farewell to her mistress, the cats, the cows and the sparrows, and all were heavy with sorrow at the parting. She trod the path that had brought her to the farm, and the old crone gave her greetings and a cake for her journey, the cow gave her milk and the oven a fresh, crusty loaf. So with a full heart and a merry she stepped lightly over the hedge, and in an instant - though how it happened was a thing she never could tell - there she was sitting on the edge of the well in the courtyard of her stepmother's house.

You may be sure that her stepmother and stepsister were not over-pleased to see her still alive. Indeed, so far from it were they that they drove her out with brooms to live in the henhouse. There Cliona swept the floor and dusted away the cobwebs until everywhere was bright and clean; then it was that she opened the casket and all in a moment there was a glow and shine about the place that brought everyone running, for the casket was full to the brim with jewels and treasures, some big, some small, and all as radiant as the stars of heaven. So enraged with envy was the stepmother that she pushed her own daughter down the well, instructing her with threats to bring back a prize as great if not greater.

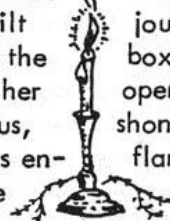
All was as before, save that the maiden was not the same. For she did not heed the hedge's appeal, but pushed through, breaking branches and tearing roots; she took the largest loaves from the oven and left the rest to burn; after drinking her fill of milk she spilt the rest on the ground and kicked the pail across the meadow; and to the old crone she was as rude as her tongue could fashion, which was not a little. Thus, then, although she found the farm herself and was engaged like her sister to milk the cows and sift the

corn, it was curses and not blessings went with her.

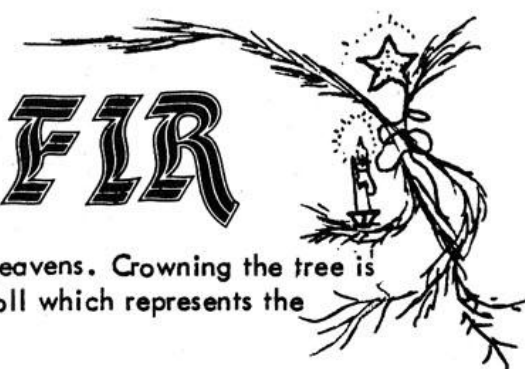
Never was work more badly done, when it was done at all, nor time more wastefully spent; and all the creatures suffered from the stepsister's ill-treatment. The mistress was hard put to keep her temper with the sullen and lazy child, and at last decided that it was time to make a trial of her skill in other work. "You cannot tend cows, nor sift grain from chaff," she told her servant, "but take this sieve and fill it from the stream and bring it back to me." Without the sparrows' advice - and they had long flown away - she found the task beyond her and was angry that she had been asked to do it. Nor was her mistress any more pleased, but she let her be. A month passed, and she made trial of her servant again with the black and white threads, but with no more success than before; nor could she weave the cloth, but at sunset was found sleeping amid a dirty tangle of wool. "It is as I expected," her mistress said. "There is nothing in the wide world you can do." And she let her go her own way and never troubled her again.

After a year and a day, the mistress of the farm told her servant to begone and that quickly, and that she could choose one of the caskets in payment for the little work she had done. It was for nothing else that the maiden had been waiting, and she lost no time in choosing the golden casket, which was so splendid without that it must surely be filled to the brim with glorious treasures that would put to shame her sister's splendour. But before her was a hard and bitter journey, for she received neither greetings nor cake from the crone; the cow kicked up her heels and fled at her approach, and the loaves in the oven were all burnt black. It was tired and hungry and thirsty she was when she reached the hedge, and the brambles tore at her as she stumbled through.

For all that, her mother had eyes for nothing but the casket when she reached home, and she admired it and praised her daughter's cleverness until the journey was quite forgotten. They settled the splendid box in the centre of the finest room in the house and opened it triumphantly. But the glow which suddenly shone in the room was not jewel-light, but living flame which licked about the walls, until all was lost and consumed, mother, daughter and all. So



Naming the NATIVITY FIR



THE NORTHERN POINT of the compass corresponds symbolically to the element of air and the season of winter, and especially to the winter solstice itself. It is for this reason that the winter solstice festival has captured the hearts of people in northerly latitudes such as our own above all the other festivals of the year. Long after the original meaning of Nativity had been forgotten by the patriarchal populations, the great festival continued under a number of different guises, the latest of which is the Christian "Christmas". And even now, when the average person does not even know the dates (and often not even the names) of more than two of the major festivals, the mid-winter feast is still celebrated with as much enthusiasm as it was ten thousand years ago. How delightful, then, are the celebrations of the traditional Madrian households which still remember the true meaning of Nativity.

One custom peculiar to the northern world is that of the Nativity Fir. There is a profound significance to the tree, which is at once the Birth Tree and an aspect of the World Tree, but we shall not expound its metaphysics here. The bringing of the Fir into the household symbolises the deeply personal character of the season, as we open our hearts and our homes to the birth of our Princess.

The Fir is decorated with many pretty trinkets, which are often red and green. Green symbolises the birth and growth of our Lady, while red completes the cycle with a prefiguration of Her Sacrifice, although the Sacrifice is not consciously thought of during this season, for it is a joyous Mystery. Coloured balls in symbolic hues represent the seven sacred planets, and the lighted candles which decorate the tree are called

that was an end of them indeed, and nobody missed them at all. But Cliona lived happily in her beautiful henhouse for the rest of her long life.

the stars of the heavens. Crowning the tree is usually a fairy doll which represents the Star Fairy.

The Star Fairy is the mistress both of the tree and of all Nativity celebrations. Children are told how she flies from house to house on Nativity Eve, bringing presents to those who have been good throughout the year. As they grow older, we do not have the embarrassing task of explaining that she does not really exist, for the simple reason that she does! The Star Fairy is a name traditionally given to the princess of the sylphs, or air-elementals. Sylphs, like all nature-spirits, are closely attuned to the spiritual rhythms of the world (cf "Spirits of Nature", TCA 7). They have not forgotten the meaning of Nativity, even if some humans have. Since they are particularly powerful in the northern world, and since being air creatures, Nativity is in a special sense "their" festival, we feel the influence of their rejoicing very strongly. Although the Star Fairy does not (usually) bring presents, it is her task to foster the spirit of Nativity, and she does her work so well that urbies* still celebrate a festival that has little or no religious significance for them. She makes it impossible to forget Nativity, even when people do not know what Nativity is. And it is she who creates the atmosphere of intense excitement, peace and happiness which reigns in Madrian homes at this season.

When the tree is named, it is given a certain individuality, and the Star Fairy is invited in to protect it and to rule the home and festivities for the season. The name for the tree is usually chosen by the youngest child, with a little guidance if necessary. It is best to choose a name with a wintry feeling or meaning, although custom permits the tree to be named in honour of a particular person, usually if something special is occurring to her. For example, a child born a few days beforehand might have her name given to the tree in her honour.



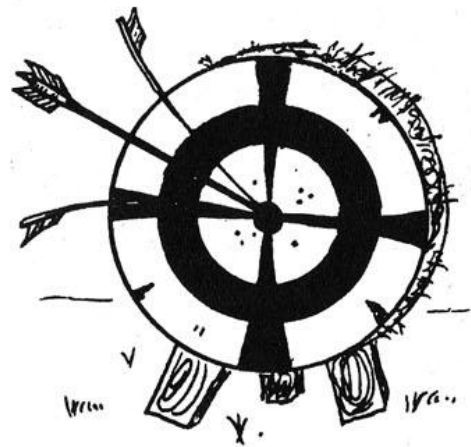
The Symbolism of Archery

IN THE BEGINNING there was no war, for all things were one in God, and conflict could not arise. The descent into manifestation is inevitably, in one sense, a descent into war: that is, the primordial Unity of unmanifest Wholeness is broken, and conflict enters into the now-manifest cosmos.

Nonetheless, it is true to say that physical war was unknown until a very late stage in human history. War between maid and maid was quite alien to the vast majority of matriarchal human civilisations. In the first Golden Age, war raged continually, but it was waged directly against the forces of darkness on the psychic and spiritual levels. This is the authentic archetype of war - the true Holy War; and from this all the glory and nobility later associated with physical battle derives. It is still fought by every contemplative and mystic.

As time wore on and the descent into matter continued, the Enemy began to take on physical or quasi-physical forms. So also did the forces of good. It is from this period, many thousands of years ago, that the "mythological" creatures - dragons, centaurs, unicorns, etc. - found in legends throughout the world, have their origin. Later still, the forces of evil began to incarnate themselves in human civilisations - in the decadent matriarchal and proto-patriarchal states. It is in this period the Holy War descends fully to the physical level and maid first fights with maid. Finally, in the patriarchal age, physical war becomes a condition of life. Increasingly, all remnants of the Holy War are lost, and war becomes merely a manifestation of the chaos and discord of the Age of Iron. This continual conflict is the inverse parody of the fact that the true soul is constantly at war with the discordant forces within her until she wins through to the primordial peace of Union with God.

There is an inverse ratio between earthly and heavenly war. The more strongly the Holy War is fought, the more there is peace on earth among maids. The more peace is made with the forces of darkness, the more war spreads upon the earth. But there are times when the Holy War and earthly war are one. And here we may know the Holy War from profane war by the fact that its very heart is peace. Just as the heavenly war is fought



in order to regain the Primordial peace of divine union, so the Holy War on earth is fought to end disruptions in the themis or harmony of the world, and to restore the *Chrysothemis*, the Golden Order of earthly life lived according to Divine Law.

And just as the Holy War ends in peace, so it proceeds from peace, for all the martial arts of traditional matriarchal civilisations are essentially contemplative disciplines. Skill in the arts of war depends not upon physical strength, but upon the spiritual force generated by contemplation. It is a symptom of the descent into matter that patriarchal war has become increasingly dependent upon physical strength; first that of the body, and then of increasingly powerful devices, culminating in today's nuclear arsenals.

From the foregoing, we may expect that archery, like all traditional crafts, has a profound metaphysical significance. Indeed, archery, since it corresponds to the element of air and to the intellectual Path of Light, is in many respects the most strictly metaphysical of all the martial arts.

The drawn bow is a paradigm of the peace from which the Holy War, and indeed all manifestation, proceeds; for all the tensions are held in equilibrium. Balanced in harmony are the three cosmic "strains": the upward tension or tendency, called *lucia* - that which strives toward the light; the downward, called *omber*, which pulls toward darkness and obscurity; and the outward or fiery tendency of *ignes*. It is from the interplay of these three strains that all manifestation takes its rise. Thus the loosing of the arrow, in which the three strains are simultaneously released, mirrors the act of manifestation.

Envisaged from another and profounder point of view, the arrow is the "winged soul" of the archer,

trapped within the contrary tendencies of matter. It is the task of the archer to wholly identify herself with the shaft in its flight toward the target, which is none other than the spiritual Sun Herself.

It may be noted that in the first symbolism, the World-Axis runs vertically through the bow, connecting Heaven (the extreme point of the direction of lucia) with Hell (the extreme point of the direction of omber); whereas in the second it runs horizontally from the archer, who is Primordial Maid in her central, or Axial, position, with the heart of the solar Target.

The virtue of archery has to do with straightness, or accuracy. To "hit the mark" is to be saved, while to miss is to deviate, to go astray, to sin. Archery has traditionally been the Royal Art, and the princess-archer mounted on her chariot is a familiar traditional picture (see front cover). Thus the Indo-European root word *rju* meaning "straight" is the source of the English Madrian words rayin and raia, both meaning "queen", and also of Ranya, royal, regal, right and rectify.

The moving chariot being a symbol of the world (cf "Symbolism", TCA II), the royal archer leaves the flux of matter in her contemplative identification with the winged arrow and flies into the heart of the spiritual Sun. The bow itself may represent the duality of matter, its two arms signifying all the opposing pairs - light and dark, pleasure and pain etc. - between which the soul must pass in order to reach the Goal, while the grip represents the Middle Way, or narrow path, through which she must travel. Of similar significance are those tests in which the archer must shoot an arrow through a keyhole or "needle's eye", or else must split the first arrow down the middle with a second.

In other tests there are obstacles between the archer and target which must be penetrated. Here

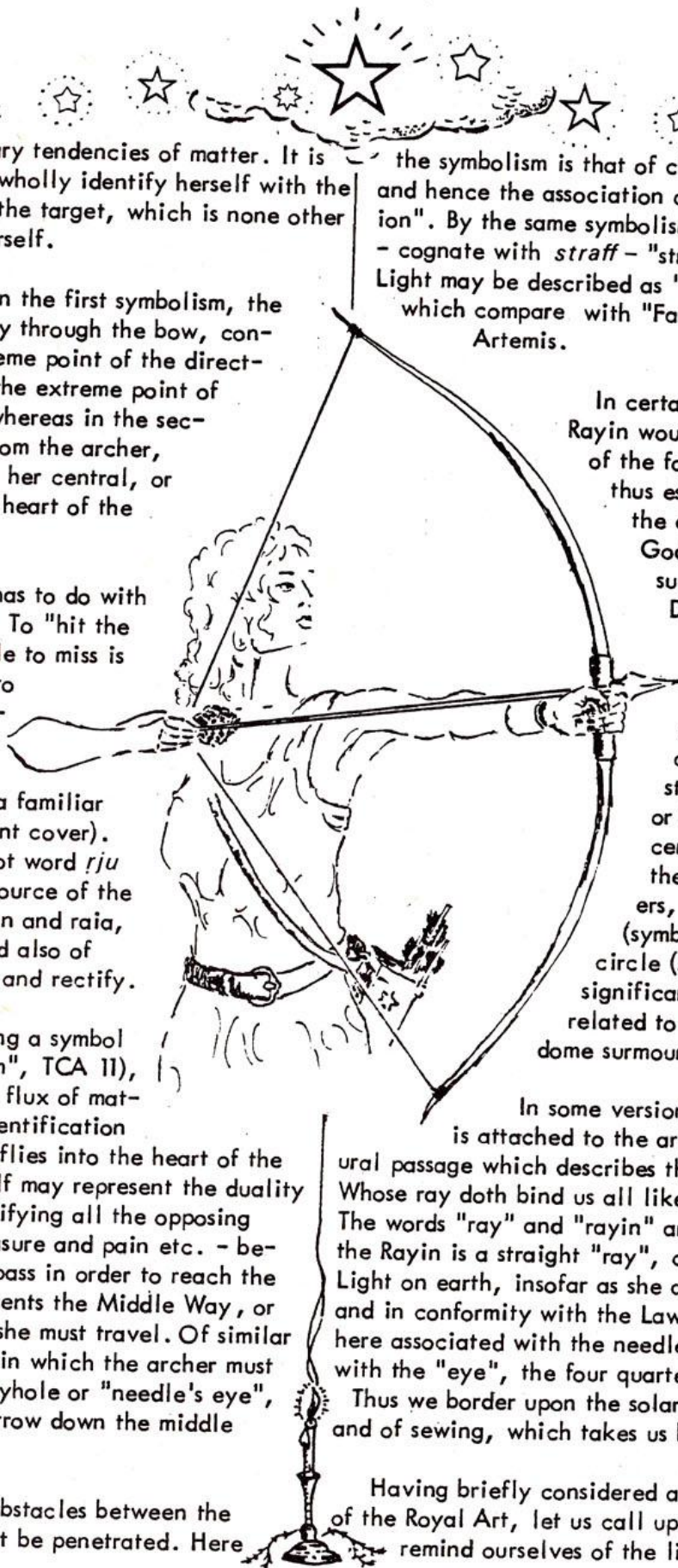
the symbolism is that of cleaving through ignorance, and hence the association of wisdom with "penetration". By the same symbolism, a strave (contemplative - cognate with *straff* - "straight") on the Path of Light may be described as "far-shooting", an epithet which compare with "Far-Darter", a title of Artemis.

In certain royal ceremonies, the Rayin would shoot an arrow in each of the four cardinal directions, thus establishing her rule over the entire land in the Name of God. This Rite reflects the supernatural archery of Diana, the wonderful archer (an avatar of Artemis, the tutelary Genia of archers) in which the four quarters are pierced by a *single* arrow. In this, the archer stands as the quintessence, or fifth element, at the centre of the other four, and the arrow, ringing the quarters, transforms the square (symbolic of matter) into a circle (symbolic of Spirit). The significance of this feat is closely related to that of a hemispherical dome surmounting a square building.

In some versions of this legend, a thread is attached to the arrow, recalling the scriptural passage which describes the Mother as "the Sun Whose ray doth bind us all like jewels upon a string". The words "ray" and "rayin" are closely related, for the Rayin is a straight "ray", or manifestation of God's Light on earth, insofar as she acts wholly in Her Name and in conformity with the Law of themis. The arrow is here associated with the needle, and its flight-end with the "eye", the four quarters being "sewn together". Thus we border upon the solar symbolism of the needle and of sewing, which takes us beyond our present theme.

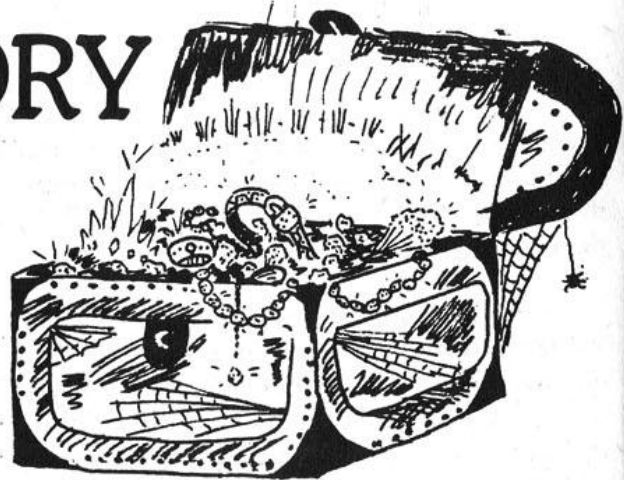
Having briefly considered a little of the symbolism of the Royal Art, let us call upon one further legend to remind ourselves of the limits of this knowledge.

Contd. p. 22



INSIDE THE STORY

A Metaphysical Commentary on "The Three Caskets"



READERS OCCASIONALLY ASK why it is that we regularly publish fairy tales in *The Coming Age*. Whilst we feel no need to justify the inclusion of material which does not conform to modern notions of what is "adult", there is another important point at issue here. It is no less than a question concerning the entire nature of traditional as opposed to modern literature. All modern literature attempts to depict some material occurrence, whether physical, emotional or mental. It prides itself on its "realism". All traditional literature seeks to depict transcendent Realities in one form or another. Behind the deceptively simple appearance of traditional myths and folktales lies a wealth of spiritual science. The modern patriarchal world has banished these "fairy tales" to the nursery not because they are too simple, but on the contrary, because they are so far above the head of modern materialism that it cannot begin to understand them.

In order to illustrate this point, we offer the following commentary upon "The Three Caskets", a story told not only in Madrian homes, but one which has survived in many parts of the world and found its way, in different versions, into numerous folktale collections. It is to be hoped that having studied this, the reader will look with new eyes upon all traditional stories. This tale, in fact, depicts the Lesser Mysteries; the first stage of the soul's initiatic journey to Perfection. It is through this first journey that she sheds her worldly nature, recovers the scattered treasures of her soul and returns to her primordial state of True Maid from which she has fallen, regaining her "central" position on the World Axis from whence she may return to God.

Once upon a time: the first words of the story refer to its setting not in earthly history, but in the Primordial Time.

The wicked stepmother appears constantly throughout folk-literature, often with her equally evil daughters. Who is she? She is Maia-Moira in her dark aspect: the creator and sustainer of the illusion of the material world. In matriarchal tradition a household is a micro-

cosm (little world), therefore the household of the wicked stepmother is the world of matter itself. The heroine does not belong to this world; she is in it, but not of it. She does not forget that she is really the child of her true Mother, who is "in Heaven" both on the literal and symbolic levels of the story. This "true birth" of the heroine is akin to the royal birth of the protagonists of other stories, which is often not discovered until the end (cf Cordelia in TCA 11); for True Maid is the Princess Regent of the celestial Queen on earth (cf "The Power of Imagination" TCA 10). The stepsister, on the other hand, is an infidel; a true daughter of the material world. We may note that the materialism of the modern world, which believes that maid is a by-product of physical matter is the mentality of the ugly sister organised into a doctrine; while the modern progressivism which attempts to derive art from "primitive" scratchings, religion from "fertility cults", language from animal grunts, etc. and ignores the Divine origins (the true Mother) of humanity, produces a bleak and hideous civilisation cut off from all beauty and meaning. It is according to this same metaphysical law that the stepsisters are invariably ugly.

The Spinning contest: spinning is the characteristic activity of Maia, and here represents a purely worldly occupation, though later we shall see something of its higher significance. Fate (Moira or Fortuna in the person - literally per-sona, mask - of the stepmother) is against Cliona, and she cannot possibly win the contest. Yet paradoxically it is here that Moira begins to show her positive side. There is an eternal ambiguity in Moira, and it has been said "when she is best she is worst and when she is worst she is best". It is good moira which has set luck against Cliona, for

through her "bad luck" she shall escape the house of the stepmother and start upon the Quest. Even so, apparent misfortunes in life may actually be good moira, wresting us away from attachment to the world and setting us upon the Path.

We have seen Moira as Maia, the spinner (creator of the world-illusion) and Moira the weaver (its sustainer). Now we see her as Kala who cuts the thread and destroys illusion, at once the "worst" and the "best" of the three. She rushes forward to "kill" Cliona and cuts her off from the household of matter.

Down the well she falls. This is the descent into the psychic world where the soul must recover the scattered fragments of her psychic substance, becoming again her whole self. The first part of the task consists of acts of compassion and kindness. True compassion springs from the knowledge that others are really not "outside" oneself at all. This is shown by the fact that the various creatures are met by Cliona within the inner realms of "her own" psyche - nonetheless they are no less "objective" than the people we meet in the "outer" world. In doing these acts of kindness she is healing the illusory breach of separativity which has kept her from the realisation of primordial Unity for so long (this is the meaning of the symbolic period of seven years for which the cow has not been milked etc.)

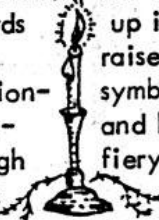
Having passed the test of compassion, she is then confronted with three impossible tasks. There is no means by which fallen maid can, of her own power, achieve the Primordial State. It is only through divine Grace that the task can be accomplished. The birds and cats represent the messengers of that Grace. Birds are frequently a glyph for "angels" in traditional lore. In the first two tasks they give her the instruction needed, even as Inanna, speaking through the Ranya, instructs the initiate. In the final task

She does the work Herself through Her messengers (angel = Gk. "messenger"), for while the preparation for realisation is human (though dependent upon Divine support via the Tradition), the final completion of the task is wholly an act of Divine Grace.

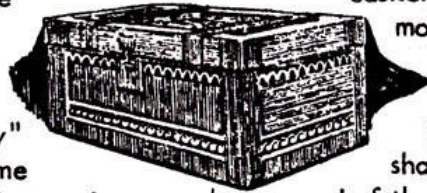
Space prohibits a full exegesis of the meaning of the tasks, but let us at least note two things: firstly that the final task again reflects Maia-Moira, but this time in her higher or "light" aspect. This recognition of her higher nature is due to a transformation of consciousness represented in the earlier counterchanging of the black and white threads, in which the initiate both experiences and transcends the paradoxical ambiguity of Moira. Secondly, this final task, involving the working of an unworkable material, mirrors the task set by the stepmother at the beginning. There is an inverse relation between them - the quest for satisfaction on the material level which seems merely difficult, but is in fact impossible; and the transcendent quest which seems (and in one sense is) impossible, but by divine Grace may be accomplished.

The choice of the three caskets is a familiar theme. On the simplest level, it has to do with humility and rejection of worldly wealth, but there is a deeper symbolism which at first may seem a little puzzling. Normally gold would symbolise the solar and

spiritual domain, silver the lunar and psychic, and lead the earthly and material. This underlies the inner meaning of the alchemic transmutation of lead into gold. But here it is lead which is chosen. Again, we must bear in mind the inversions which operate in the "mirror-world" of the psychic domain where "to be raised up is to be cast down and to be cast down is to be raised up". Thus the terms are reversed, with gold symbolising worldliness and lead the virtues of poverty and humility. Again, gold symbolises the outward, fiery strain of ignes in its desire-attachment to the world, and it is thus that the stepsister is con-

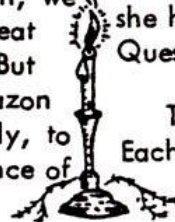


consumed by the flames of her own worldly passion. In other versions it is not fire but a plague of toads, spiders and other vermin which emerge from the casket to infest the house, but these should strictly be the contents of the silver casket and not the gold, for they represent the loathsome denizens of the inferior psychic regions which lurk in the "unconscious". This infestation is the reward of those who enter the Quest neither for material gain, nor yet for the one authentically spiritual End, but driven by morbid curiosity, self-obsession, or the considerations of a profane "psychology" (it is also the reward of those who, having begun the Quest in earnest are turned aside by a fascination for psychic powers attained on the way. In relation to this possibility, the cats represent the Ranya guiding the initiate past this temptation). This point cannot be too strongly stressed, for there are those who will note certain superficial analogies between the doctrines expounded here and those of the school of Dr. C.G.Jung. Indeed, "depth-psychology" does tread, to a certain extent, the same ground as the Lesser Mysteries, but it does so in a purely "experimental" and "agnostic" manner without the light of traditional spiritual doctrine and discipline. Inferior psychism is represented by the dark moon as opposed to the radiant full moon which is Primord-



Archery

When rivals wished to take Diana's place as princess, each of them in turn was invited to draw her bow, and none could bend it even by a fraction, yet Diana immediately loosed four arrows to the four ends of the earth without the smallest effort. As in the drawing of the Sword of Truth (cf "Cordelia and Imogen", TCA 11) the requirement is not physical strength, but firstly purity, and most importantly a deep contemplative understanding and realisation. Without that understanding, and without having become wholly one with the winged arrow in its flight into the heart of the Sun, we can never hope to draw Diana's bow, however great may be our theoretical knowledge of symbolism. But having achieved it we will be able, like the Amazon Ranya-archers, both physically and metaphysically, to cleave one arrow in two with another, at a distance of five hundred paces, blindfold.



ial Maid. And the dark moon is precisely the moon of the psyche unilluminated by the rays of the spiritual Sun, who is our true Mother. For this reason, these forms of "psychoanalysis" are really an inferior parody of the Lesser Mysteries, having no means to discriminate between inferior and superior psychic elements, for this can only be done by reference to traditional spiritual criteria and under the guidance of an initiated Ranya. Like the various modern occult and "new age" movements which adopt quasi-initiatic forms while rejecting all tradition and orthodoxy as "dogma" under the influence of modern progressist notions, it represents a potentially dangerous opening for psychic "infestation".

It may be noted also that since the gold and silver caskets both destroy the house of the step-mother, they provide paradigms of the "end" of the material world (or at any rate, of the present world-era). On the one hand the fiery cataclysm which shall destroy profane "civilisation" at the end of the historical cycle, and on the other the gradual infiltration of inferior psychic influences into the world, to which we have often referred as the next step beyond materialism, and of which Jungianism and the pseudo-spiritual movements referred to above are prominent symptoms.

By contrast, the third casket contains a profusion of jewels and treasures. These are the gathered psychic fragments of True Maid, and the royal raiment of the Princess Regent. Guided by the messengers of Light, she has wielded the sword of discrimination, rejecting the outwardly-attractive inferior elements, and unerringly choosing the True, thus fulfilling the true function of maid (= "she-who-chooses"- cf TCA 10, p. 10), and of religion (which is hermeneutically connected with "rem legere" - "to choose the very thing"). With this treasure she may return to the world of matter, where she may live in contentment, retiring to a humble dwelling to lead others upon the path that she has taken and to prepare herself for the glorious Quest of the Greater Mysteries.

These are but the bare bones of the story's meaning. Each time it is re-read (or, better, retold) contemplatively, it will reveal something new.

Sister Angelina

THE COMING SEASON 2

FROM DUODECIMA to Purple Monday Eve, while the greenery remains, the Spirit of Nativity is still with us, and the season is semi-festive. With Purple Monday begins the great Easter cycle which will end three months later at the Exaltation, the crowning of our Lady as Queen of Heaven. We move from rejoicing at Her birth to preparing and purifying ourselves for Her coming Sacrifice.

ine into every part of creation, even into the nettermost regions of death. This promise is Her acceptance of Her Sacrifice. White is the colour of the festival, the altar cloth, candies and altar flowers are all white, and all maids attending the Rite are dressed in white. The snowdrop is the flower of the festival, for it is said that snowdrops blossomed in our Lady's footprints as She trod the way of Sacrifice, representing the new life that She would bring to the world.

The candles for ritual use in the coming year are blessed at the Rite, after the Lection. The celebrant makes the Pentacle over the candles, saying "May our Lady's blessing rest upon these waxen creatures".

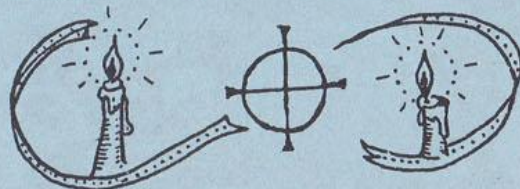
MOURA

MOURA EVE: The final feast before the long fast of Moura, on which we decide upon the acts of self-denial and purification which we will practise during the month before Easter. These vary between households and individuals, although all Madrians fast on the Mondays of Moura. Pancakes are customary on Moura Eve, as are also foot-races, skipping and other lively games.

MOURA DAY: The first day of the penitential month which stands as a season in itself. Confession and purification prepare us spiritually for the approach of Easter.

MED-MOURA: The fasts and penances we have chosen are suspended for this day, and it is traditional to give small presents to natural and spiritual mothers and to heads of households. A fruit cake covered with marzipan and decorated with crystallised violets dominates the table.

PASSION: The last day of Moura and the first day of Easter, this final day of the year is a time of prayer and fasting in mourning for Inanna's death. In our Easter issue it will be more fully treated.



move from rejoicing at Her birth to preparing and purifying ourselves for Her coming Sacrifice.

PURPLE MONDAY

Purple is the colour of penance, and this day opens a short penitential period in preparation for the Feast of Lights. Altar and shrine cloths are purple during this period. The first violets and pansies of the year are associated with this day and with the month of Brighde.

FEAST OF LIGHTS

The "Lights" are the many candles of the festival, symbolic of our Lady's promise to carry the Light of the Div-

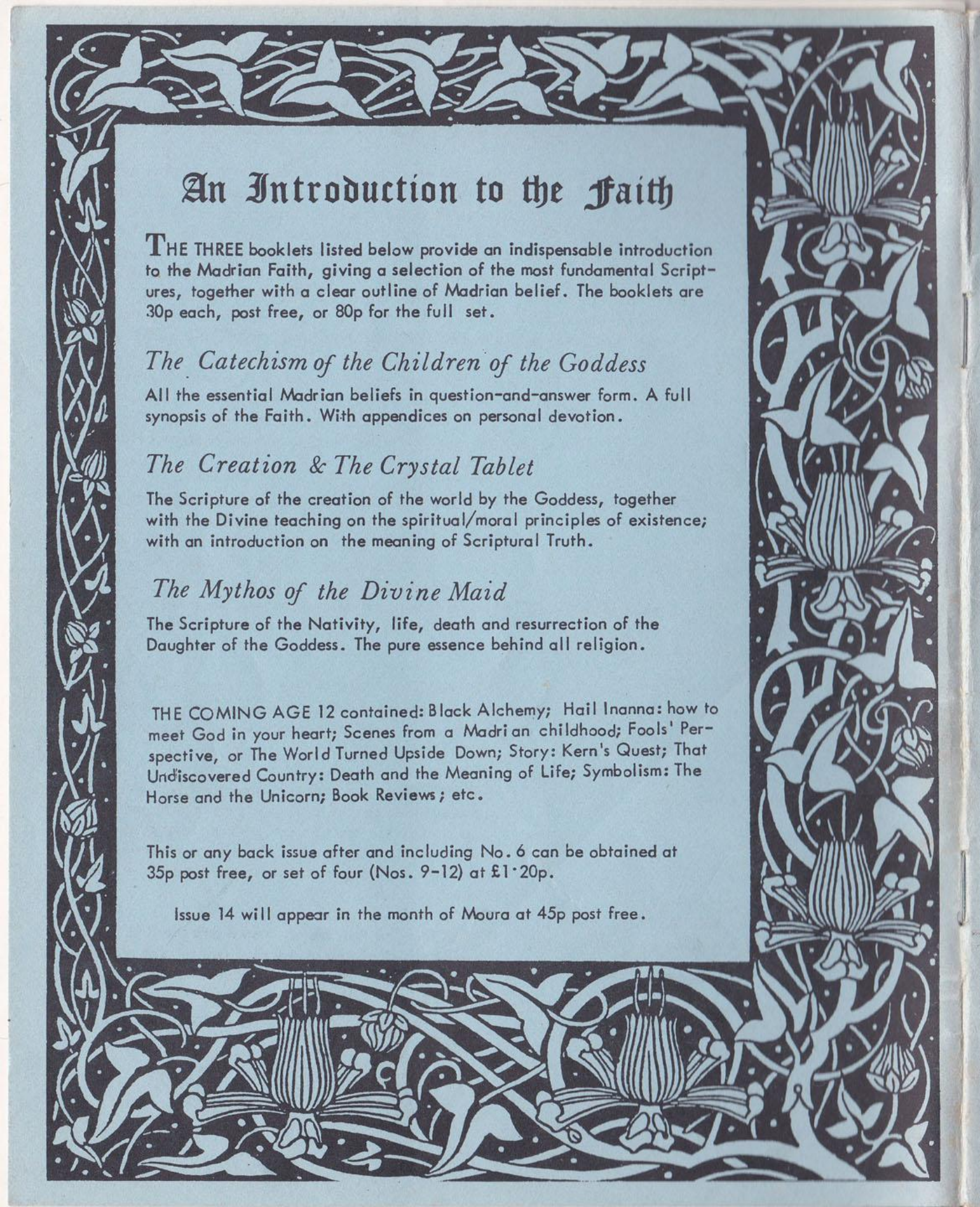
Nativity Fir
Having chosen the name, proceed thus:

Donna (mistress of the household) or child: I name this tree _____ (in honour of _____).
Make ☆ over the tree.
The children may then light the candles.
Donna: Star Fairy, I invite thee into our household.
Mayest thou rule here, and may the Spirit of Nativity be bright.

The tree is then the centrepiece of the festivities until Duodecima, when her final glory is to burn brightly in the hearth.

I hope you have a wonderful Nativity.
Phoebe

* Urbies: Non-Madrians.



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