

their race, their freedom, and their faith; and this conviction will never be eradicated.'

'No matter what difficulties the Turks may encounter at the moment, Mohammedanism has by no means run its course. Let us not deceive ourselves. Two hundred million followers of Islam, from Senegambia to India, are in violent agitation; and two hundred million fanatics are a force

not to be despised. We must bear in mind, furthermore, that the last war taught the Mohammedans the secrets of European military art. Recall that the end of the Roman Empire came as soon as the barbarians learned its tactics and its strategy. The French Revolution spelled the independence of the two Americas. Who can say that the Bolshevist Revolution will not spell the independence of Asia, and perhaps of Africa?'

EAST AND WEST: THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE¹

BY MORTIMER STANDING

THERE is a saying by Sir Oliver Lodge that 'the last thing a deep-sea fish would discover would be water.' It is an apt illustration of the principle that to become fully conscious of an environment one must be able in some sort of way to transcend it.

It is, we believe, almost impossible for anyone to get a vivid realization of the essential elements in European civilization without in some way or other getting outside it — that is, by living, either actually or in imagination, in some wholly alien civilization, as for instance that of Asia.

It was the present writer's lot to live for a time in India, and in such a manner — as private tutor — that he was very largely cut off from any European society.

After an intimate contact with Indian social life, there gradually presented itself to the writer's mind one funda-

mental and all-inclusive difference. It is not easy to express it in one sentence; but if the attempt had to be made it would run something like this: 'The fundamental difference between the civilizations of Europe and Asia lies in the fact that the former has the Christian Middle Ages behind it, while the latter has not.' By the term 'the Middle Ages' we refer to a very definite influence, unique of its kind, — a *Zeitgeist*, if you like, — not to be found in any other part of the world.

Without particularizing further, we may say that for a thousand years the spirit of Europe was moulded by organized Christianity. The moulding influence of the Church during this period was so stupendous, so complete, so enduring, so omnipresent in its effects, that for the most part we are unconscious of it; nor can we ever properly realize it until we pass beyond its borders into a pagan world that has never been under its sway.

¹ From the *Month* (English Roman-Catholic review), November

On going out to the East one does not at first realize this profound difference, so deep-rooted in the past. One is more likely to be impressed with a bewildering variety of external differences, at once interesting and picturesque.

Yet these are not the essential matters. The real difference is something spiritual. It is the presence or absence of a peculiar moral pressure which has been transmitted down to the present from generations that have passed away many centuries ago.

Let all these external differences disappear. Let an Indian become outwardly Westernized; yet, in spite of all these external resemblances, the essential cleavage still remains: the East is still the East, and the West the West.

We would not, however, go so far as to say that 'never the twain shall meet'; but it is certain that only by an inner revolution of the most fundamental kind, by a transformation of his whole spiritual being, by a conversion that swings the individual, as it were, centuries ahead of his race, can any Asiatic come to understand and appreciate the essentials of European civilization.

At this point an explanation is necessary to avoid a misunderstanding. We do not deny, for instance, that there are hundreds of thousands of Indians who are more pleasing in the sight of God than hundreds of thousands of Europeans. For many Hindus and Mohammedans are much nobler characters — taken as individuals — than many who call themselves Christians. One has only to think of Kipling's Gunga Din, or the Lama in *Kim*. But our point is that — taken collectively — the moral tone of Europe, as expressed in our institutions, conventions, and ethics, is vastly superior to that of the Orient. Hence the average European — through no merit of his own — is born into a loftier vision of life with

its ideals and obligations than the average Oriental — just as a child, born and bred on the slopes of a mountain range, inherits a loftier and broader physical vision than a child of the plains. It is the contention of this article that it is largely the Christian Middle Ages behind us that have pushed our civilization up the slope of the mountain.

I have met not a few Englishmen in India who will assure you that it is a great mistake to try to convert the heathen to another religion. 'My own belief,' such a one will tell you, 'is that in the long run it does n't make any difference what religion a man belongs to — or if he has any at all. Let him be Buddhist, Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian, Parsi, or even an atheist, it makes no real difference, so long as he is "straight" and "plays the game."' It is best to leave them to their own mode of worship, as this is best suited to their manner of life, and the peculiarities of their environment. Anyhow, all that really matters is that they should play the game. Yet in most cases these very men, even when they have ceased themselves to believe in Christianity, reveal, as it were in spite of themselves, their Christian origin.

Their creed may have whittled itself down to the aforesaid maxim, 'Play the game'; yet compare their notion of playing the game with that of an educated Indian who has not come under the influence of English society and you will find how great is the difference. And, looking still deeper, you will find that this difference can only be accounted for by the fact that the European carries round with him, as part of his ethical outfit, — part of his very self, in fact, — certain traditional moral values which are the subconscious deposit upon his soul of centuries of Christianity, of in fact the whole of the Middle Ages and even before.

All this may seem an exaggeration; but a few examples will make it clearer. An Englishman, new to India, stands on the verandah of his bungalow; and there heaves in sight a fat and oily Bunya — merchant — coming to display his wares. The Bunya ambles easily along, carrying nothing but his well-fed body; behind him and bearing the burden of his goods there staggers a half-naked woman. She is merely a beast of burden, and he regards her as such. And no one, except the Englishman, seems to have any misgivings that this is not a very right and proper arrangement — not even a Westernized Indian with his B.A. degree at Bombay University.

To take another example. I had been dining at a wealthy Indian's house. After dinner we sat out under a brilliant electric arc-light and coffee was served on the lawn. The warm night air, odorous with the scent of jasmine, was suddenly rent by the sounds of a woman screaming dreadfully. The host ordered a servant to go and find out what was the matter. The man returned after a few minutes and said, 'It's only the horse-boy beating his wife.' Upon the suggestion that he should go and tell him to desist, the servant — with the familiarity of an old retainer — smiled rather incredulously, and answered, 'But, sir, they have only been recently married' — referring to the proverb that a man is not properly married until he has beaten his wife!

This cynical treatment of the subject stirred me to make some rather caustic comments on the Oriental treatment of women generally.

'I don't see why you make such a fuss,' replied my host. 'There are plenty of husbands in England who beat their wives; you have only to read the law-court reports in your news-

papers.' He himself had been in England several times.

'It may be so,' I replied, 'but they do not do so openly and unashamed before an indifferent public.' Then I related to him an unforgettable incident I had witnessed from the carriage of a railway train that had stopped at a crowded railway-station. In the midst of the surging throng of humanity that is usually to be found in any large Indian railway-station, my attention happened to fall on a man who was furiously beating a woman with a stick, driving her along with as little compunction as one would drive a cow. Perhaps the most appalling circumstance about the whole incident was the fact that not one in the crowd — they were all Indians — seemed to be in the least perturbed by this distressing scene; only a few seemed to think it worth more than a second glance, and they only looked on with a mild, spectacular interest. 'There are indeed men in England who beat their wives,' I went on, after having related this incident to my host, 'but no man would be allowed to do it like that, unchallenged, on a crowded railway-platform in England.'

'Ah well,' replied my host in the tone of a man who is making a good excuse, 'that is only because you have a more definite public opinion on the matter in England.'

'Exactly,' I replied, 'but where did that public opinion come from?' And then I realized again — with a sudden flash — the influence of Christianity, coming down through the Middle Ages, through the Age of Chivalry.

It was my privilege when in India to become intimately acquainted with a most refined Indian gentleman and his wife, and their most delightful children, whom they were endeavoring to bring up on Montessori principles. Both

husband and wife were very advanced in their ideas.

One day we were discussing the question as to what was the best kind of education for the modern Indian girl. In particular the point was raised as to how far it was advisable to depart from the immemorial Oriental restrictions on the liberty of women. 'It is very hard for you to realize,' went on this lady, 'how great are the risks we run in allowing our daughters, not only to give up purdah, but also to mix as freely as they do in England with members of the opposite sex. Your social life is surrounded by so many unwritten laws and conventions, which serve as safeguards to young people when they mix together freely in each other's society. But with us it is different. These conventions for the most part are not there; and therefore it is fatally easy for the emancipated young woman of India, as soon as she breaks away from the customary moorings, to be carried away beyond all bounds.'

This discussion, by the way, had arisen in an interesting manner.

I had been present at the birthday party of one of this lady's children, and had been in fact the only European in the company. To liven things up a little, as the young guests seemed rather shy with one another and their hosts, — just as they often are even at the beginning of a children's party in England, — I suggested that we should go to the tennis court and play some games; and before long we were playing, with great gusto, good old English games, such as 'Nuts in May,' 'Oranges and Lemons,' 'Cross Tig,' and so on. In these games — as everyone knows — it is often necessary for those playing to join hands, or chase after and catch one another. As boys and girls, and youths and maidens, were all playing together, this form of amusement seemed to the parents of some of the children a most

shocking innovation. One must remember that Eastern people do not even touch hands when they salute each other. My hostess — herself a most liberal-minded woman — thought it was an inadvisable proceeding that might serve as 'the thin edge of the wedge' and would, in any case, lead to scandalous gossip among the orthodox Hindus.

I was quite taken aback at this criticism, and assured her that we always played these and similar games in England at children's parties without any serious results.

'Ah, but you must remember,' she replied, 'how many traditions and customs you have in your country that safeguard your young people,' and here she went on as mentioned above. Again I — as on so many other occasions — experienced a strange feeling, as though my eyes had suddenly been opened; and I was made aware of a subtle and sustaining influence in our civilization, almost like an invisible and pervading presence. I had in fact discovered exactly what I read about later, in one of Chesterton's books, where he speaks of the Church as making a ring-fence round the innocent pleasures of paganism.

And, with regard to veneration for the sanctity of womanhood, even Protestants must recognize the tremendous influence which the cult of the Virgin Mother of God must have exercised on the mind of Europe in raising the general conscience to a loftier conception of womanhood.

It is difficult to live in modern India without taking some sort of interest in politics. When I went out first, I confess that it seemed to me that the only fair and logical course for England to take was to grant India self-government. But, in coming into closer contact with the actual conditions, I began to see things in a very different light.

The practice of self-government can only be safely introduced to a people which already possesses — embedded, as it were, in the very texture of its mind — certain fundamental notions as to the nature of mankind. And here again one comes across a profound cleavage between the East and West.

Centuries before the doctrine of the equality of man became a political catchword in the eighteenth century, the mind of Europe had been schooled to the idea that all men were of equal value in the sight of God. For a thousand years the Church had persistently taught this doctrine, driving it home through the labors of millions of priests in every corner of Europe; driving it home so completely that men found nothing extraordinary in a peasant being raised to the Papacy or a king being flogged, barefoot and bareheaded, through the streets as a penitent.

It was the work of the Catholic Church that abolished slavery. Such an institution was, by its very nature, incompatible with the spirit of the doctrine that all men are of equal and infinite value in the eyes of God. It was this teaching too which prepared the way for, and made possible, the practice of a true democracy.

But this slow maturing of the common mind on this subject, the gradual raising of it to a new conception of the nature of mankind through the pressure of a unified and omnipresent Church, India and the East generally have never known.

If anyone doubts whether the ideals of liberty, fraternity, and equality, and the practice of self-government are alien to the mentality of the Indian, and incompatible with his traditions, let him become acquainted at firsthand with the caste system of that country.

It is not possible for anyone living in Europe to realize how seriously this

caste system prevents even the most willing from coöperating toward a common end. Many examples could be cited, but one must suffice. On one occasion, when I had had some guests in to dinner, I suggested to one of the other servants that he should help my table-servant with the washing-up of the dishes. The former was a very good-natured fellow, and would have done anything to oblige, but on this occasion he begged very volubly to be excused, chiefly on the grounds that *his daughter was going to be married the following week!* On being further questioned, it appeared that if he had touched the dishes I had been using he would have lost caste. He would then have had to pay a heavy fine to regain it, and would thus have deprived his daughter of her wedding dowry!

It would seem almost that the very idea of a diversity which is caught up into a higher unity is alien to the Eastern way of thinking. This can be exemplified in other spheres besides politics. If one compares Eastern and Western music, for instance, almost the first thing that strikes the Westerner is that Eastern music is devoid of harmony. It is what you might call one-dimensional music. Indian composers seem to have little or no conception of the beauty that can be obtained by playing two or more notes together, so that their individual values are enhanced by their reciprocal contributions to a chord; even less of the interweaving of melodies, as in much modern orchestration.

On several occasions I have asked Indians if they could play the piano, and they have replied in the affirmative. On being asked to perform, they have, to my great astonishment, seated themselves solemnly at the piano and proceeded to play a tune *with one finger only*. There was, apparently, not the slightest sense that anything was miss-

ing; and the other Indians present applauded these strange recitals as very meritorious performances, which doubtless they were from their point of view.

Is it not possible to see in this striking difference between the music of East and West the symbol of a still deeper divergence? For it illustrates, exactly, the difference between the Christian and Oriental ideas of Heaven. In the Christian Heaven, individual personalities survive — eternally separate and distinct. At the same time, without losing anything of their individuality, they are caught up into a higher unity, like the component parts of a mighty orchestra or the petals of a flower. There are innumerable saints and angels in Heaven, but 'Number there in love is slain.' Or as Dante describes it in his *Paradiso*, —

*In forma dunque di candida rosa
Mi si mostrava la milizia santa,
Che nel suo sangue Cristo fece sposa.*

Compare this with: —

The dewdrop slips into the shining sea.

In nothing does what we have called the subconscious influence of Christianity in Europe manifest itself more clearly — in contrast to pagan civilizations — than in its reverence for and appreciation of the child.

'It is a strange thing,' remarked a Hindu gentleman to me one day, 'that none of our great pundits and philo-

sophers seem able to write books specially suitable for children; whereas, in England, you have hundreds of such books on all conceivable subjects, and have even special magazines and newspapers for the little ones. Not only that, but many of your greatest authors have written books specially for children, and, apparently, do not think it *infra dig* to do so. I have tried,' he went on, 'to persuade some of our learned scholars to write such books with an Indian setting to them for Indian children, and have offered to pay them handsomely for so doing; but they do not seem able to manage it, though why I don't know.'

In reply I told my friend that I thought that it was probably due to the influence of our religion, which has always inculcated a profound reverence for the beauty and innocence of childhood.

There are, of course, many other points which could be mentioned that bear upon the subject of this article, — such as the custom of keeping *purdah*, child marriages, the licentious rites of certain Hindu temples, — but enough has already been said. And, furthermore, it has been our aim to emphasize those points of difference which are not so much the *direct* results of Christian teaching as the indirect consequences, operating as it were subconsciously as that religion has, little by little, leavened the whole structure of society.

WINTER IN CHINESE POETRY ¹

BY HANS BENZMANN

[THE author, recently deceased, was a veteran critic as well as a poet of standing in Germany.]

It is a strange sensation to read Chinese poems composed hundreds and thousands of years ago and to find in them the same emotional responses, the same moods, that we find in contemporary poetry. The human soul expresses its thoughts and sensations, its emotional and spiritual experiences, similarly among all peoples who possess true culture.

So the Chinese poet describes the six-petaled blossoms of the snow crystals spiraling down through the darkness, the frost needles shot across the water in an alabaster basin on a cold winter's night, a fire burning merrily on the hearth, as we might at the present day.

We know how intimate a kinship the Chinaman feels with earth, water, air, and sky; his sense of being part of Nature herself; and how this feeling will often dominate his mood during a country walk or a ramble through the woods. He has a mystic, conscious unity with the flowers, the trees, and every feature of the Nature that surrounds him. He moves in gentle reverie among her beauties, drinking in with a sort of silent ecstasy his physical impressions of each changing season. The flowers of spring, the summer heat, the autumn storm, the rain and ice and

snow of winter, all present themselves to his imagination as blessings in their respective ways. A Chinese artist's mind dwells with reverence upon Nature's mysteries — air, atmosphere, firmament, the boundlessness of space where beach, forest, mountain, the near and the far, the horizon's sweep, become simple lines and puzzling arabesques. Reverently and attentively he stands in the centre of this wonderful atmospheric infinity that embraces him and sustains him.

Winter, with its broad snow-surfaces, its clinging mists, its bare tree-trunks, its fantastic tangles of black branches, its mountain brooks dancing merrily down between snow and ice, makes a particularly strong appeal to the emotional expression of both the Chinese artist and the Chinese poet. There is a swing of freedom, spaciousness, air, light, mist, and resonance in the poetical literature dealing with this theme. The following verses by Yang I, suggested by a wonderful lyrical painting by Mu Ch'i, his contemporary of the Sung Dynasty, entitled 'Midnight Chimes from a Distant Temple,' have all these qualities — a bare suggestion of sharp mountain-peaks looming through a fog, a delicate silvery tracery of air and billowy mist, and, just visible in the remoter distance, the graceful gables of a temple. As we look at the picture our ears can almost catch the sweet, low resonance of the far-away gongs pulsating through the humid air.

¹ From *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* (Berlin big-industry daily), January 14