

best servants. The shouters are employed by the merchants, in effect, and their oracles depend upon the commercial interests of their masters. I remarked upon this fact to one of their greatest philosophers, and he replied that it was the greatest proof possible of their bona fides, that the spiritual side of the prophets should be in such perfection of harmony with their material welfare. "What in the Abyss could be better?" (It is the custom to affirm belief in the existence of a place of eternal punishment by introducing its name into every question, since certain heretics doubted it of yore.)

"Should one prophesy against himself, it would show disunion in his being, which is no other than madness."

The test of truth is therefore exclusively its utility. This fact is of wide bearing, and applies directly to their theory of law.

This is as simple in this country as it is complex in others. The first principle is that everything is forbidden. For example, said my interpreter, no man may carry arms. I pointed out that (on the contrary) every man was armed to the teeth. True, said he, therefore if any man displease the ruling power, it is easy to destroy him. If he pay not ample tribute, or if he lend not his wives to the right people, or if he err in thought upon political or social questions, there is no trouble in condemning him. There is always some crime, which all alike commit, of which he may be conveniently accused.

This rule holds good of all laws. None are in force, unless it be to satisfy the greed or spite of one of the ruling class. To this there is however one important exception. There are certain classes of Shouters whose duty it is to call attention constantly to the evil-doer. These wisely concentrate their energies on some one trivial matter—it is not pleasing to the gods to mention serious affairs at all, in any connection—and they enforce the laws most drastically for the moment, while the attention of the people can be held. Thus, on my arrival, they had just condemned a medicine man to Ten Years of Imprisonment for "conscientious-advice-giving."

Other points were also most strange, even to me, an old explorer of many of the dark places of the earth. One essential point of law is that a forbidden thing is no longer forbidden, if it be called by another name.

Thus, it is the custom of the country to drink arrack from a calabash, coffee from a coco-nut; and it is forbidden to drink arrack upon holy days. Those therefore who wish to do so drink it from a coco-nut, and it becomes technically coffee. Similarly, in calling for the arrack, one must say: bring bamboo-shoots. Thus is the law satisfied.

The object of enforcing laws in this sporadic manner is obvious. Suppose a merchant spend years of labor in the building up a big trade in silk. The Shouters then say: "Behold this villain, the greatest rogue that walketh upon the earth! Lo, he conducteth to luxury and to vanity; and the morals of our women, the purest albeit the fairest that be in all the world, are by him corrupt." The indignation of the people is thus aroused, and they bethink them of the law against silk. The merchant must then pay all that he hath to the Shouters, so that they may not see him.

This is a most salutary custom of this people. The merchant hath ever the fear of the Law before his eyes. He is taught constantly the instability of human affairs, and so from a merchant he becometh a philosopher.

The greater merchants, however, have found higher truths. They themselves employ armies of Shouters, and none dare offend them. In their hands they have gathered all the images of the God of the country, without which none may do aught without blasphemy, and blasphemy is the one crime that is always and in all places punished, usually by death.

It is they that have destroyed or sequestered all the specimens of *Aquila Duplex*, which is not fabulous at all, and may still be found in the western districts of the country. But it has been to their interest to persuade the ignorant that the bird is but a fable, and that the oblong squares are the true God.

The evening being now come, I went forth into the market-place to take the air; but no sooner had I come into their main way, which they call broad (though it is narrow enough if one compare it with the main street of any civilized town), and white, although it has hardly a white building in all its length, than I was assailed by the fearsome beast which is justly the dread of the whole country, the terrible man-eating chicken . . .

(The remainder of this account has been deleted by the Censor.)

ABSINTHE

By JEANNE LA GOULVE

Apollon, qui pleurait le trépas d'Hyacinthe,
Ne voulait pas céder la victoire à la mort.
Il fallait que son âme, adepte de l'essor,
Trouvât pour la beauté une alchimie plus sainte.
Donc, de sa main céleste il épuise, il éreinte
Les dons les plus subtils de la divine Flore.
Leurs corps brisés soupirent une exhalaison d'or
Dont il nous recueillait la goutte de l'Absinthe!

Aux cavernes blotties, aux palais pétillants,
Par un, par deux, buvez ce breuvage d'aimant.
Car c'est un sortilège, un propos de dictame;
Ce vin d'opale pale avortit la misère,
Ouvre de la beauté l'intime sanctuaire
—Ensorcelle mon cœur, extasie mon âme!

LAST NIGHT.

By FAITH BALDWIN

Within a dim and starlit room last night,
Your heart to mine, astir like frightened wings,
Your dear lips saying mad, enchanting things,
I saw your strange eyes fill with faery light.
And suddenly I slipped from out To-day
And we were in some green and moon-mad place,
And as you smiled, and bent to kiss my face,
I knew that, somehow, we had found the way
Back to a Pagan passion and desire,
Back to an Age of golden, free-limbed Youth,
All Song and Rapture and courageous Truth,
The world at Springtide—and the night on fire.
And we were bound no more by Time and Space,
No longer slaves of Subterfuge and Man.
And you who held me in your arms were Pan,
And I a dryad crushed in your embrace!