

beauty that is now rare in a creed where so many of the cults have degenerated.

One of the popular legends in late Hindu mythology is that of Krishna's sport with the *gopīs* or milkmaids—a story with all the sensuous charm of the Greek, with the same undercurrent of religious mysticism. Here are verses from the song of Rādhā, Krishna's mistress, after Mrs. Naidu's visit to his shrine at Mathurā. Krishna, the divine cowherd and musician, usually represented in Indian art as playing the flute, is also known as Govinda; and the worshippers of his image pilgrim, as all India yearly pilgrims to various shrines, to his holy ground on the banks of the Jumna.

I carried my pots to the Mathurā tide. . . .  
How gaily the rowers were rowing!  
My comrades called "Ho! let us dance, let us sing  
And wear saffron garments to welcome the spring,  
And pluck the new buds that are blowing."  
But my heart was so full of your music, Beloved,  
They mocked when I cried without knowing:

*Govinda! Govinda!*  
*Govinda! Govinda!*

How gaily the river was flowing!

I carried my gifts to the Mathurā shrine. . . .  
How brightly the torches were glowing!  
I folded my hands at the altars to play:  
"O shining ones guard us by night and by day". . . .  
And loudly the conch shells were blowing.  
But my heart was so lost in your worship, Beloved,  
They were wroth when I cried without knowing:

*Govinda! Govinda!*  
*Govinda! Govinda!*

How brightly the river was flowing!

In a "Rājput Love Song" she recaptures all the passionate chivalry of this proud desert race:

O Love! were you the hooded hawk upon my hand that  
flutters,  
Its collar band of gleaming bells atinkle as I ride,  
O Love! were you a turban-spray or floating heron-feather,  
The radiant, swift, unconquered sword that swingeth at  
my side.

O Love! were you a shield against the arrows of my foe-  
men,  
An amulet of jade against the perils of the way,  
How should the drum-beats of the dawn divide me from  
your bosom  
Or the union of the midnight be ended with the day?

Haste, O wild-bee hours, to the garden of the sunset!  
Fly, wild-parrot day, to the orchards of the west!  
Come, O tender night, with your sweet, consoling darkness,  
And bring my Beloved to the shelter of my breast!

Choice, and of small compass, there is no mistaking her authentic inspiration. Mrs. Naidu distills the spirit of her ancient country, the absorption of its religions in contact with western idealism.

W. G. TINCKOM-FERNANDEZ.

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## The Unfinished Play-House

*The Night Cometh, by Paul Bourget. Translated from the French by G. Frederic Lees. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$1.35 net.*

THE house became suddenly gloomy that summer morning, and no one had time for my questions. I found Sister's door ajar, but when I tried to enter they pushed me gently aside. As I stood there, hesitating, expectant, she turned her white face toward me. I was cross, for if she had wanted me to come she would have called my name. Stealing out, I ran down to the big cottonwood tree to think it over. Was it because her eyes were blue and her hair gold they let her lie in our best four-poster bed? I envied her, for my cheeks were grimy and my hair was always in tangles and my eyes persistently black. Within the little play-house of brick she and I had begun to build under the tree, just yesterday, I fell asleep. At noon when I came back they were going from room to room, softly calling me. But I did not understand what they said, for they spoke to me of death. What was death? It was beauty, like the sad smile on my mother's lips when she had seen me come. It was mystery, like the breath of the summer wind that dried my cheek. It was change, like the summer sky so deep and far whose shifting blues had shrunk into an ominous black. I slipped out of our silent home and back to my cottonwood tree. Death was there. I looked at the little play-house and I knew it would never be finished. For I was alone. And then occurred the most fatal of childhood tragedies. I grew wise beyond my years. With the merciless delusion of youth, I understood the

meaning of death. Death was universal: death was the end of all.

To-night, upon reading M. Paul Bourget's "The Night Cometh," an extraordinary tale of love and death, I have seen my unfinished play-house again. The scene is different; the drama is conceived on a scale that includes all mankind. For it is wartime and it is to-day. The play-house has become a French Military Hospital, in the Rue Saint Guillaume. In the background are soldiers fighting, fighting in the trenches from Lille to Verdun. The human lava that poured forth with enthusiasm to the front is sent back to the hospital in cattle-trucks to die, steeped in foul odors of sweat and blood. M. Ortegue, the famous head surgeon, performs miracles, all the while stilling in his own soul the cankering truth that the most dreadful of all diseases will have completed its ravages in his own body and soul within a few weeks at the most. His wife, the beautiful Catherine, ministers to the wounded, never once betraying the love-pact with her husband to commit suicide on the day of his death, that together they may go to the eternal annihilation. Her young cousin, Lieutenant Le Gallic, is stretched out on a bed in the hospital, his head enveloped in several layers of gauze, there to hope, to suffer, to die. The liberal Abbé Courmont receives confessions from the dying, murmurs prayers over those that are dead.

The voice of religion is heard in the faith of the Abbé and of the young lieutenant: death is only change. The voice of patriotism, in the heavy breathing, the moans, the suppressed sighs of the soldiers who had given their lives for an ideal: death is beauty. The voice of love and human devotion is heard in Catherine's sacrifice which yields to fear, "He cannot stop, poor man! There is only me in the world who can help him, by walking by his side, and by lying near to him in his tomb"; death is mystery. Finally the cry of science, in the scepticism of Ortegue: death is the end of all. "I desire no other survival than that my name be attached to a scientific discovery, small or great . . . That is the only immortality." He laughed at the thought that a god, in his justice and goodness, was presiding over the massacres. Religion and the war were irreconcilable. Mockingly he cried: "But the Gospel—applied to someone who returns from the battle-field! I don't often read that book, to whose most astonishing success in the publishing world I bow. I recollect, however, a certain Sermon on the Mount: 'Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.'"

What is death? Is it beauty, mystery, change? Is it a prolongation or a termination—consummation or annihilation? M. Bourget's story, exquisitely told, does not give the answer. The beautiful Catherine cries, "When I am worn out with fatigue, after being on day and night duty, I say to myself: 'If Le Gallic's belief is true, if there is another world, if my husband's soul is not extinct, if it is in suffering somewhere, perhaps the little help I give others will fall on him.' It is but a wish and full of doubt. When I give way to it, an inexpressible feeling of calm fills me, as though a word of thanks were coming to me from somewhere . . . But whence?"

What is life? A play-house that death leaves unfinished. Sometimes we call it home; again we call it work. Then suddenly something happens and our vision widens: the play-house is civilization, and death is war. Its sweep is cataclysmic.

A.

[NOTE: We regret that our reviewer of "Green Mansions," by W. H. Hudson, mistakenly identified the author with William Henry Hudson, critic and historian.—The Editors.]

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