

## ORIGIN OF BRAHMINS.

## A Description of the People of India.

The following is one of a series of articles contributed to The Collegium, by Professor E. Hughes, the talented son of Mr. J. W. Hughes, of the Justice Department, at Ottawa. The author is only nineteen years of age, and yet he holds a professor's chair in the leading Catholic College on Prince Edward Island.

Having learned in the former chapter that the Brahmins are the most noted of the Hindoo castes, it is only proper to devote a few chapters to them in particular. As the real origin of the Brahmins, like that of the other Hindoo tribes, is not distinctly known, we are compelled to rely on fables of mere conjecture. The most universally accepted tradition in this tribe is that they have sprung from the head of the god Brahma. The Brahmins, emanating, as they believe, from the noblest part of their god, consider that they, in preference to all other castes, are entitled to bear the sacred name of this much venerated deity. Desirous of having still stronger claims to their name, they say that the perfection of Brahma was first comprehended by them, and that they alone have the distinguished privilege of perusing the books that treat of him.

A Brahmin differs much from a Raja, a Vaisya or a Sudra, who are not eligible to a more honorable vocation than that in which they are born; whereas a Brahmin becomes such only after the ceremony of the Cord. Till then he is merely a Sudra, and by birth possesses nothing that raises him above the level of other men. After this rite he is called Dwija, meaning twice born. The first birth admits him to the common rank of mortals; the second, which he owes to the ceremony of the triple cord, exalts him to the lofty rank of the tribe to which he belongs.

Each of the seven castes, into which the Brahmin are divided, traces its immediate origin to one of the seven rishis, or penitents. These penitents are acknowledged by the Hindoo to be the holiest and most venerated personage that ever existed in that nation. They were favored in a special manner by the gods, particularly by Vishnu, who preserved them from destruction during the deluge by taking them aboard a ship which he himself guided. After having, by their holy lives on earth, exemplified all the virtues, these holy penitents were taken up into heaven, where they still retain their place among the most brilliant stars. Those who desire to see them have only to look at the seven stars in the Great Bear, commonly called the Dipper, for these the Hindoes maintain are no other than the seven rishis, not emblematically, but in strict reality. Moreover, there is a belief extant that, without ceasing to sparkle in the firmament, they can descend, and actually do pay an occasional visit to the earth to know how matters stand.

The idea of preserving the memory of their great men, and of making them immortal, by assigning them a place among the constellations which shine in the heavens, appears to be common to all ancient peoples. The worship of the stars, accordingly, seems to have been universally and most religiously observed amongst all idolatrous nations ancient and modern. This species of idolatry being the least unreasonable of any, and of the longest duration, the law-givers of antiquity and the founders of some false religions, perceiving the powerful influence which it had already acquired over the human mind, made use of it as the most efficacious means of perpetuating the memory of their heroes. By thus transforming them into stars, they set them up as objects always to be seen and always to attract the attention of the observer. Thus it was that the Hindoes placed the seven famous rishis in the brightest zone of the starry heavens, being sure that this was an infallible method of preserving their memory amongst a people insensible to all objects but those that vividly strike their senses.

Since, among civilized nations, the honor of having sprung from an illustrious family sometimes causes its descendants to look down with contempt upon lower classes, can we wonder at the arrogance and haughtiness of the Brahmins, and the great disdain which they show to every caste but their own? Again, if civilized people glory in tracing

their origin to some famous personage, have not the Brahmins an equal right to do the same, or is the privilege of vaunting a noble pedigree to be denied them? Certainly not, at least it should not, for it is a matter of no great consequence to us what their lineage may be, so long as it pleases them, be it fabulous or otherwise.

## THE FRANCISCANS.

Every intelligent Catholic reader should be familiar with the principal events in the lives of the saints. Alas! the contrary is too often the case. Beyond the names repeated in the litany, how many have even the slightest knowledge of how those holy men and women spent their time while here on earth.

Take for instance the great St. Francis of Assisi. Very few lay persons outside the Third Order know anything of his life and works. Yet no other saint is more deserving of our love and gratitude. Leo the Thirteenth, the present Pope, speaking of this illustrious servant of God, says: "Like Jesus Christ, it so happened that St. Francis was born in a stable. A little child as he was his couch was of straw on the ground. And it is related that at that moment the presence of angelic choirs and melodies wafted through the air completed the resemblance. Again, like Christ and His Apostles, Francis united himself with some chosen disciples to traverse the earth as messengers of Christian peace and eternal salvation."

Bereft of all, mocked, cast off by his own, he had his great point in common with Christ, he would not have a corner wherein he might lay his head. As a last mark of resemblance he received on his Calvary, Mt. Alverna, (by a miracle till then unheard of) the sacred stigmata and was thus, so to speak, crucified."

We see by this how minutely St. Francis resembled his Divine Model. The chief interest of his biography centres in the beautiful and consoling devotions that he and his Order bequeathed to Holy Mother Church. Who amongst us can think of the sweet and simple devotion of the "Christmas Crib" without heartfelt emotion. How often during the season of Christmas have we watched the little ones approach the "Babe of Bethlehem" and entered into their spirit of "reverent wonder and deep delight," as they gazed on the Holy Child; but did we ever pause to think or inquire the origin of this Christmas grace?

St. Francis, ever on the alert for the greater honor and glory of his Creator, being in Rome in the year 1228, asked and obtained from the then reigning Pope Honorius the Third, permission to honor the birth of Christ in some new manner. Hastening to Greccio to carry out his idea, he built a rough stable on the mountain-side, placed therein carved wooden images of the Holy Family, covered with straw the floor and erected an altar. Shepherds arrived and tied an ox and ass in the stable. People flocked from far and near. Priests, friars and monks came to assist at this ideal midnight mass. St. Francis acting as deacon, the flaming torches of the shepherds, the wild sweet music of their instruments, the fervor of the people, combined to make this celebration the most solemn of its kind. St. Francis preached such an eloquent sermon on the wonderful love of God for His creatures that the vast multitude was moved to tears. During the Mass the Divine Infant was seen by all present to repose in the arms of our saint and lavish him with caresses. The news of this miracle spread and Greccio became a place of pilgrimage. Thus was inaugurated the beautiful and touching devotion of the "Christmas Crib."

In 1587 the "Forty Hours" was instituted by a Franciscan Friar of Milan. Some years later the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan (St. Charles Borromeo) drew up the instructions for the proper observance thereof, which are contained in the acts of the Council of Milan. The "Forty Hours" is one of the most consoling devotions of the present day. Here our Lord Himself holds His court. His courtiers, the poor and the lowly, flock round His throne, and place their prayers and tributes at His feet. He listens and consoles. "In silence holy, Himself the Infinite Grace."

The Blessed Cherubim of Spoleto, a Franciscan, established the procession of the Blessed Sacrament on the first or the third Sunday of the month, still in use

in many churches. He also invited the faithful, by the ringing of the bell, to follow the holy Viaticum.

Another Franciscan, the Father Evangelist of Pistoia, caused the bells to ring at night for the holy souls of purgatory, thereby inviting the faithful to pray for them.

Aymon of Favisham, the fifth General of the Order, was instructed by Gregory IX. to amend the Roman breviary and Missal, and to revise and arrange the rubrics. The Pope who ascended the Papal throne in 1277 was so pleased with the excellence of the work that he ordered the use of the revised edition in the Universal Church, it having been for some time in use in the Pontifical Chapel and by the Franciscans.

The final Anthem after Compline was established by Blessed John of Parma, who was the seventh General of the Order.

In 1260 the great Feast of the Immaculate Conception was established by St. Bonaventure, although it was not proclaimed a dogma of the church until the 8th of December in the year 1854. Pius IX. of Holy Memory, who sat in the chair of Peter at the time, is known as the Pope of the Immaculate Conception.

In 1261 was also established the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity; the Feasts of the four Great Doctors of the Church—St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose and St. Gregory—are due to the zeal of St. Bonaventure. The Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin and also those of St. Ann and St. Martha were introduced by the Franciscans, and were afterward celebrated in the Church throughout the world.

The use of fixing the Paschal wax taper at the right corner of the altar from Holy Saturday until Ascension day is also due to St. Bonaventure.

In 1399 a general chapter of the order was held in Assisi, and established the Feasts of St. Joseph and St. Joachim, in 1530 they obtained the Feast of the triumph of the Holy Name of Jesus, and in 1587 the Feast of the Espousal of the B. V. M. with St. Joseph.

The "Way of the Cross" is another gift of the Franciscans. As early as 1257, Palestine was a Franciscan province. In 1342, the Franciscans were appointed guardians or custodians of the Holy Places—an office they have kept ever since,—in fulfilling the duties of which nearly eight thousand devoted friars lost their lives.

Pilgrimages to Jerusalem were frequent, but the Franciscans in their zeal and far-reaching charity remembered the vast majority who were unable to go. For the benefit of these the friars instituted the devotion known as the Way or Stations of the Cross. It consists of fourteen scenes taken from the life and death of our Saviour.

This devotion was endowed by successive Popes with the same indulgences as those which pertained to the Holy Places. In 1780 Pope Clement XII. extended this devotion to the Universal Church.

The right to erect and bless the Stations being reserved to the Order of St. Francis.

The "Stabat Mater," that sublime hymn to the Virgin Mother, was composed by the Italian poet Jacopo da Todi, who was a devoted member of the First order.

The solemn and soul-touching "Dies Irae," that forms part of the requiem, was written by a Franciscan friar, Thomas de Celano, a companion and biographer of St. Francis.

St. Bonaventure, like St. Francis, was a poet as well as a saint, and is daily and hourly remembered through having composed the "Sacrosanctae," the prayer with which every priest concludes the daily office of the Breviary. The last words of the "Hail Mary," "Now and at the hour of our death," were added by the Franciscans.

The "Angelus," that most beautiful devotion which has been aptly termed "The Poetry of Prayer," was first instituted by St. Bonaventure in the year 1262 who was at that time General of the Franciscan Order.

A great writer has remarked that the only time when all men are equal, rich and poor, prince and peasant, is when the music of the Angelus bell calls a halt to prayer,—a prayer that ascends heavenward like incense in honor of the Mystery of the Incarnation.

The anthem "Sub tunc Praesidium" was drawn from a sermon of St. Bonaventure of Sienna, an illustrious Franciscan.

Another spiritual gift of St. Francis to

the Church is a devotion not so well known as the Angelus, yet is one of the most potent means of grace. Its history is as follows:—

In the 12th century, the Benedictines owned a little church in Assisi called St. Mary of the Angels. It had also the name of Portiuncula because of its small entrance. The former name was derived from a legend that angels were often heard singing within its sacred precincts.

The Benedictines, with that great charity for which they are known the world over, presented the little church to St. Francis. With what holy joy and gratitude the saint received the gift is only known to the angels that hovered over the chosen spot. Thus the Franciscans came into possession of their first church.

In the fall of 1221 St. Francis was kneeling alone in the church as usual, wrapped in prayer, and lo! he was favored with a vision of Our Lord and His Holy Mother, and a divine voice assured him that the humble little church would be henceforth a privileged place of pilgrimage and prayer. The Voice also commanded him to inform the Sovereign Pontiff of the Vision, and obtain from him a confirmation of the Promise. Needless to say St. Francis hastened to Rome and revealing the event obtained the necessary confirmation. The indulgence was proclaimed in Assisi in the presence of seven bishops and was afterwards extended to all the Franciscan churches all over the world. It is called the "Indulgence of the Portiuncula" and differs from all others in having a direct Divine origin. The time for obtaining this indulgence is from the Vesper hour, two o'clock in the afternoon of August 1st, to sunset on August 2nd, the Feast of St. Mary of the Angels, and can be gained in any Franciscan church during the hours specified. The little church is still in as good a state of preservation as when St. Francis was favored with the heavenly Vision, still a place of prayer and spiritual rest, where entreaties ascend to the throne of God

"From the spirits on earth that adore,  
From the souls that entreat and implore,  
In the fervor and passion of prayer,  
From the hearts, that broken with losses  
And weary with dragging the cross,  
Too heavy for mortals to bear."

The above are a few of the gifts of the Franciscans to poetry and religion.

In a former paper I endeavored to show what the same noble order accomplished in the domains of art and science. Perhaps some inquiring one will wonder how these men, secluded as they were from the world and its affairs, could do so much to benefit their fellowmen. Such a one I would refer to the words of the sacred text, "His just shall not labor in vain."

MISS S. SUTHERLAND.

## A HIGH VALUATION.

"If there was only one bottle of Haggard's Yellow Oil in Manitoba I would give one hundred dollars for it," writes Philip H. Brant, of Monticello, Manitoba, after having used it for a severe wound and for frozen fingers, with, as he says, "astonishing good results."

It is a mean wretch who will slyly drop a fancy hairpin in a tram loaded with women, and then smile as he sees every woman make a grab for the back of her head when she notices it.

## The Children's Enemy.

Scrofula often shows itself in early life and is characterized by swellings, abscesses, hip disease, etc. Consumption is scrofula of the lungs. In this class of disease Scott's Emulsion is unquestionably the most reliable medicine.

Sharp: I saw an example of what I could hard lines this morning. Flat: indeed, old man. Well, what was it? Sharp: Railway lines.

## CONSUMPTION CURED.

An old physician, retired from practice, had placed in his hands by an East India missionary the formula of a simple vegetable remedy for the speedy and permanent cure of Consumption, Bronchitis, Catarrh, Asthma, and all throat and Lung Affections; also a positive and radical cure of Nervous Debility and all Nervous Complaints. Having tested the wonderful curative powers in thousands of cases, and desiring to relieve human suffering, I will send free of charge to all who wish it, this recipe, in German, French or English, with full directions for preparing and using, sent by mail, by advertisement, with stamp, naming the paper, W. A. NOYES, 821 Bowery, Black, Rochester, N. Y.

Not Worth Anticipating.—Sareeder: Don't you think my literary style distinctly original. Snarler: Certainly. Nobody ever wrote in that style before.