



VOL. XII. No. 3.

MARCH, 1918.

PRICE 15 CENTS

[The February Number of the International having been withdrawn, subscriptions will be extended one month as compensation. — Managing Editor.]

## GOOD HUNTING!

*(An essay on the Nature of Comedy and Tragedy.)*

By **BAPHOMET, Grand Master of the Knights of the Holy Ghost.**

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

"Bye, Baby Bunting!

Daddy's gone a-hunting . . ."

Such is the sole stuff of art, as it was the sole occupation of primitive man. Hunting is the one real passion of man. Love, the desire of wealth or power, are only branches of the sport. For it is directly related to the first of all passions, hunger; and it is an exciting sport; it is gambling for the highest of all stakes. Now, art is primarily the celebration of excitement, the record of some stimulus of the soul. Dramatic art, which represents drama, action, consequently concerns itself with hunting — and with nothing else.

When daddy came back with a deer, there was great rejoicing in the tribe. Every one filled himself with meat; the cockles of his heart grew warm; he began to laugh. You can do the same to-day with a very hungry man, without the aid of alcohol. This expansive state being clearly associated causally with the killing of the deer, and the sportsman excitedly recounting his exploit, the story itself was food for laughter. And the key of the jest soon discovered itself as contempt for the foolish victim. "What a fine stag he was, how proud and swift! Nothing could catch him, and, if he wished, how sharp were those great, branching horns of his! And all the while there was I tracking him with my little flint axe — ha! ha! ha!"

All these points were seen and seized on by the old comedians. They would always accentuate the self-esteem of the victim. They would dress him up as a king or a God, and hunt him down. A still funnier elaboration of the joke was to persuade him that he was the hunter. "Come," say they to Pentheus in the Bacchae, "come, great king, adorn thyself according to thy dignity; come, arm thyself, slay these wild creatures!" and

aside: "And when we've got him there his own mother shall kill him in her madness, and run about with his head under the impression that it is a lion's!" This further development of humor was doubtless due to Dionysus; even the hungriest man could hardly think that out on mere venison.

I read my Agamemnon through the spectacles of Dr. A. W. Verrall, and it seems to me that the play is a comedy. The incident of the carpet is very like adornment of the victim. Agamemnon, however, is not taken in the snare; he does not show "Hubris," but modesty; and this makes the play more serious. Still, no doubt, it ends on the comic note — Aegisthus chuckling over the success of his clever stratagem. This Hubris hated of the Gods is the root of many a proverb. "At the hour of triumph sacrifice the dearest thing thou hast to the Infernal Gods" — the case of the play "Jephthah." "Beware of the moment of success." Think of Ajax flattered into the madness wherein he kills the sheep — what a superlative jest for the onlooker! Alternative themes lead surely to anticlimax. Consider Abraham's sacrifice — what a typically inartistic ending! The whole passion and beauty of the drama is destroyed by the sneaking subterfuge of the substitution of the ram for the heir of promise.

Let us glance now at the Crucifixion. Here we have comedy in its fullest flower. "Hail, King of the Jews!" Triumphant entry into the capital; robing in purple, crowning in mockery, barbarous murder at the close. The ritual is that of all ancient comedies of initiation, with mere local variations. Now why do not we laugh? They did at the time. "Let us see whether Elias will come to take him down!" "He saved others, himself he could not save." The answer follows easily, and we shall see incidentally why we are a little doubtful as to whether