

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER



A CHINESE EMPEROR DRAWN BY IMPERIAL DRAGONS.
2000 B. C.

(See "The Dragon of China," p. 461.)

The Open Court Publishing Company

CHICAGO

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THE ISLAND OF THE DEAD.

By Arnold Böcklin.

Frontispiece to The Open Court.

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TAMMUZ, PAN AND CHRIST.

FURTHER NOTES ON A TYPICAL CASE OF MYTH-TRANS-
FERENCE.

BY WILFRED H. SCHOFF.

IN a recent number of *The Open Court* (September, 1912) I sketched the history of the transference and development of a myth, by which the ancient custom of the annual mourning of Tammuz has been misinterpreted by Plutarch as a lament at the death of the "Great Pan," and finally, through a chance quotation by Eusebius, carried into Christian legend as proof of the assertion that the incarnation and passion of Christ had brought about the downfall and death of the elder gods. The sequence of the legend was followed, from the "Pantagrue" of Rabelais, and the "Nativity Hymn" of Milton, through the "Gods of Greece" of Schiller to the "Dead Pan" of Mrs. Browning. A more thorough examination of the apparitions of the "Great Pan" in the literature of Christendom shows how strongly the tale has influenced the most diverse imaginations. This prehistoric Accadian and Babylonian rite has not only gone into Christian legend, but has been upheld as logical proof of Christian dogma, and attacked as the essence of Christian faith. It may therefore be of interest to trace its wanderings since Eusebius first suggested the Christian significance of Plutarch's ὁ μέγας Πάν τέθνηκεν, which the grammarian Epitherses, sailing in a vessel steered by one Thamus, had misreported from a ritual verse overheard from the shore of Paxos below Corfu:*

Θαμοῦς Θαμοῦς Θαμοῦς πανμέγας τέθνηκε.

*The accompanying photograph shows the vicinity of the scene of this incident. The island in the background is the original of Arnold Böcklin's



THE COAST OF EPIRUS OFF CORFU.

Eusebius had said:¹

“So far Plutarch. But it is important to observe the time at which he says the death of the dæmon took place. For it was at the time of Tiberius, in which our Saviour, making his sojourn among men, is recorded to have been ridding human life from dæmons of every kind. . . . You have therefore the date of the overthrow of the dæmons. . . . just as you had the abolition of human sacrifice among the Gentiles as not having occurred until after the preaching. . . . of the Gospel. . . . Let these refutations from recent history suffice.”

We cannot say how seriously Eusebius intended that this suggestion should be received. It is merely an episode in his great work, and seems to have been rather a *tour d'esprit* than a direct statement of fact. But the clever wit of the latter-day Greek was translated into the arid literalism of the medieval Latin, and finally emerged, through the rediscoveries of the Renaissance, as a revelation from early Christianity, newly accepted by the western world.

It would be interesting to know how fully the writings of Eusebius were available to the medieval church in western Europe. Greek, after the days of Charlemagne, was practically a forgotten tongue; especially so, after the great schism over the *filioque* in the Creed. Eusebius may have survived in some Latin abstract or compendium of priestly instruction, but a quotation from a mere heathen like Plutarch was of doubtful importance in the West, and it is quite possible that the Pan story slept throughout the dark millennium. The researches of the schoolmen, of Aquinas and his followers, may have uncovered it to the few, but to the many it probably remained unknown until the Renaissance.²

famous painting, “The Island of the Dead,” reproduced as the frontispiece of this issue.

¹ *Præparatio Evangelica*, V, 17.

² Portions of the writings of Eusebius, translated into Latin by Trapezuntius, were printed at Venice by Nicolaus Jenson in 1470; another incomplete translation appeared at Cologne in 1539. The first complete impression of the Greek text of the *Præparatio Evangelica* was that edited by R. Stephani and printed at Paris in 1544, under privilege of the King of France. In this edition (a copy of which is in the Library of Congress at Washington) the name of the pilot appears as Thamnus (*Θαμνός*). Another edition, put forth by a French Jesuit named Fr. Vigerus (or Viguier) appeared at Rouen in 1628, and was reprinted at Leipsic in 1688. Other editions were those of Heinichen, Leipsic, 1842; Gaisford, Oxford, 1843; Migne (in the *Patrologia Græca*) Paris, 1857; Dindorf, Leipsic, 1867; Heikel, Helsingfors, 1888; and Gifford, Oxford, 1903.

In Gifford's notes (IV, 207) the following remark is made of the Pan story:

“The simplicity of Eusebius in accepting this tale, and finding in it ‘a lamentation of evil dæmons’ as presaging evil to themselves from our Saviour's death, is less wonderful than the credulity of modern writers who suppose that ‘the Great Pan’ is no other than Christ himself. See Cudworth, *Intellect-*

The awakening of the "Dead Pan" in Christian legend came through a Spaniard of Seville, named Pedro Mexía, who in 1542 published a work entitled *Silva di varia leccion*, a sort of compilation of marvelous tales, somewhat after the fashion of Gellius's *Noctes Atticæ*. It had a considerable vogue; there was a French version published at Tournon, by C. Michel, under the title *Les diverses leçons de Pierre Messie, gentil-homme de Seuille, mises de Castellan en François par Cl. Gruget parisien*, of which the fourth edition appeared in 1616.

Of Mexía's work the thirty-second chapter treats "of several things that happened at the birth of our Lord, told by several historians, aside from the account of the Evangelists." He quotes a saying of St. Jerome, that "when the Virgin fled to Egypt with her child, all the idols and images of gods in that land fell down from their altars to the earth, and that the oracles of these gods, or rather devils, ceased and no longer gave their answers." And he goes on to say that "this miracle, cited by St. Jerome, seems to be confirmed by Plutarch, an excellent man, although he was a pagan, who did not believe these things, nor why they occurred;" and he quotes Plutarch's full account of the passage of Epitherses from Greece to Italy, of the supposed call to the pilot from the island of Paxos, and of the repetition of the news, with answering lament, at Palodes, as given in his *De Defectu Oraculorum*. He prefaces the story by observing that in Plutarch's time, "which was after the death of Christ, men perceived that their Oracles had failed," and that Plutarch could not explain it otherwise than that "some dæmons had died," although he did so as "a man without faith." The story suffers somewhat in the spelling of the names; Paxos appears as *Para.rix*, and the pilot as *Attaman*, thus by some copyist's error entirely obscuring the origin and sequence of the legend. The inquiry of Tiberius is mentioned, and his finding that "it was the truth"; and Mexía concludes, apparently following Eusebius, "thus it is evident that everywhere the devils complained of the nativity of our Lord, as cause of their destruction; for a calculation of the time shows that these things occurred at the time when he suffered for us, or a little earlier, when he was driving and banishing them from the world." Mexía explains that "it is to be supposed that this Great Pan (like the Great Pan, god of the shepherds) whom they said to be dead, was some master devil, who then lost his

tual System, I, 585, with Mosheim's long note in refutation of the strange conceit. In Plutarch the story is told as evidence that the so-called gods were mortal."

empire and his strength, like the rest." And he caps the story thus: "Beyond these things, the Jew Josephus writes that in these same days there was heard in the temple at Jerusalem a voice (though no living creature was there) which said, 'let us quickly flee this land'; for they perceived the persecution they would have to undergo, and which now drew near to them, by the death of the Giver of Life"....

A German version of Mexia appeared at Nuremberg in 1668, with commentary by J. A. Matthen, who thought the "Great Pan" was certainly Satan, although he could not quite forego the possibility of the "Unknown God" of the Athenians, of which see St. Paul in Acts xvii. 23.

Mexia's wonder-book was followed in 1549 by the *Christiana Philosophiæ Præludium* of Guillaume Bigot, published at Toulouse. This was, as the title indicates, an effort to restate the Christian philosophy in the light of the new knowledge. It quotes the Plutarch-Pan story on pages 440-442, "with its application to the death of Christ." Bigot was a friend of that genius of the Renaissance, François Rabelais; whence the story promptly reappears, in 1552, with truly Rabelaisian improvements, as a philosophical treatise of the absurd Pantagruel.³

Through Rabelais the "Dead Pan" entered into French literature. England adopted him through another writer, Ludwig Lavater of Zürich, who published at Geneva in 1570 a strange compilation of wonder-stories under the title *De spectris, lemuriibus et magnis atque insolitis fragoribus, variisque præsigitionibus quæ plerunque obitum hominum, magnas clades, mutationesque imperiorum præcedunt*. This was promptly translated into English by "R. H." and published in London in 1572, as *Lewis Lavater, of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Night, and of strange Noyses, Crackes, and sundry Forewarnynges, whiche commonly happen before the Death of Menne, great Slaughters and Alterations of Kyngdomes*.

Lavater in English had evidently a great vogue in the Elizabethan period. There is a copy in the British Museum, but in the United States I have been able to find only the Latin original of 1570, and a reprint of 1683, both in the Library of Congress in Washington. Chapter XIX of part I is entitled "To whom, when, where, how, ghosts appear, and what they do," and on pages 113-119 of the edition of 1570, is the subhead, "Pans, fauns and satyrs, of whom many things are told by the ancients." Here Lavater quotes

³ As to the connection between Bigot and Rabelais, see Abel Lefranc in *Revue des études rabelaisiennes*, IV (1906), pp. 100 ff.

the Pan story from "Plutarch in his little book on the ceasing of oracles, translated by the learned Adrian Turnebo"; he seems to be in possession of a correct text, for he does not repeat Mexía's errors, but correctly locates the story at Paxos, and gives the pilot's name as Thanus; and he also correctly cites Eusebius. Scholarship had moved rapidly in that generation between 1540 and 1570! Lavater then cites Paulus Marsus in his notes on Ovid's *Fasti*, to the effect that "the voice heard that night on Paxos, which followed the day of our Lord's passion, in the nineteenth year of Tiberius, was miraculously given forth from a deserted coast, to announce the passion of our Lord and God. For Pan signifies *all*: and so likewise, the lord of all, and of universal nature, had suffered." And he goes on to tell of a ghostly apparition to a friend, Johann Vuilling of Hanau, which he believes to have been, like most of its sort, the work of Satan.

The 1683 edition of Lavater, in the Library of Congress, bears the autograph of John Locke; and has a symbolic page preceding the title, *Ludovico Lavateri, Theologi eximii, de spectris, lemuriibus variisq. præsigitionibus: Tractatus vere aureus*. By Ludwig Lavater, then, "most eminent theologian," through his "truly golden treatise," was the "Dead Pan" carried into English literature, through no less a medium than the prince of poets, Edmund Spenser, whose lovely *Shepheards Calender* appeared in 1582. In "Aegloga quinta," the month of May, verses 51-4, we read:

"I muse, what account both these will make:
The one for the hire which he doth take,
And the other for leaving his Lords taske,
When Great Pan account of shepherdes shall aske."

And Spenser's "Glosse" explains, "*Great Pan*, is Christ, the very God of all shepheards, which calleth himself the greate, and good shepherd. The name is most rightly (methinks) applyed to him; for Pan signifieth all, or omnipotent, which is onely the Lord Jesus. And by that name (as I remember) he is called of Eusebius, in his fite booke *De præparat. Evang.* who therefore telleth a proper storry to that purpose. Which story is first recorded of Plutarch, in his booke of the ceasing of Oracles: and of Lavetere translated, in his booke of walking sprightes." (Then follows Plutarch's story in summary) "By which Pan, though of some be understood the great Satanus, whose kingdome at that time was by Christ conquered, the gates of hell broken up, and death by death delivered to eternall death, (for at that tyme, as he sayth, all Oracles surceased, and enchanted spirits, that were wont to delude the people, thenceforth

held their peace:) and also at the demaund of the Emperoure Tiberius, who that Pan should be, answeere was made him by the wisest and best learned, that it was the sonne of Mercurie and Penelope: yet I thinke it more properly meant of the death of Christ, the onely and very Pan, then suffering for his flock."

Later in the same "Aegloga," verses 109-112, we read:

"Well ywis was it with shepheards thoe:
Nought having, nought feared they to foregoe;
For Pan himselve was their inheritaunce,
And little them served for their mayntenaunce."

And the "Glosse" explains:

"*Pan himselve*, God: according as is sayd in Deuteronomie, That, in division of the lande of Canaan, to the tribe of Levie no portion of heritage should bee allotted, for God himselve was their inheritaunce."

The Spenser version of this story is, of course, sufficient explanation for its subsequent adoption by Milton and Mrs. Browning.

On the continent the "Dead Pan" reappears in the *Contes et discours d'Eutrapel* of Noel du Fail, published in 1585.⁴

This versatile and amusing writer quotes Plutarch's story entire, from Pedro Mexía; and observes, "by the word Pan, the ancients understood not only the God of the shepherds, but also the God of all things."

In Germany the tale reappears in 1591, in the *De Magorum Dæmonomania* of Fischart, a version of Bodin's *Dæmonomania*. On pages 4 and 47 Fischart refers to the various identifications of the "Great Pan" with Christ and Satan, but thinks he may rather have been the "old Adam."

Again in 1600, at Eisleben, appeared an anonymous compilation entitled *Magica*, wherein Plutarch's story was quoted in full, while the commentary questions whether Pan was Satan, Christ or the "souls of men"; and so likewise in the *Dæmonolatria* of Remigius, Hamburg, 1693.

In 1615 appeared at Oppenheim *De Divinatione et Magicis Præstigiis* by Jean Jacques Boissard, wherein Pan is found at page 36, with the note that "Christ is the Lord of all nature, like Pan the Universal God. The voices referred not to a good angel or a demon, but to Christ himself."

In 1629 the story reappears in the sublime "Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity" of John Milton, which I have already

⁴ See *Œuvres facétieuses de Noel du Fail* edited by S. Assézat, II, 339 ff, Paris, 1874; also G. Regis, *Rabelaiskommentar*, II, 653, Leipsic, 1839.

quoted. A few years later appeared the *Vates* of Pierre du Moulin, or Petrus Molinæus (1568-1658), of which chapter 11 of part III is devoted to the story of the death of Pan, with the conclusion that it was due to "voices of demons who knew that the death of Christ had ended the reign of Satan"; but that it "might also mean Christ himself, All in All (Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 28)."

Holland takes up the story in 1664, with the *Roomsche Mogentheid* of Joachim Oudaans, published at Amsterdam. At page 176 Plutarch is cited, and the explanation is offered that "Pan might be Christ, the 'all,' but perhaps more probably the Devil."

And again, in 1680 appeared in Amsterdam the *Demonstratio evangelica* of Bishop Huet, or Petrus Daniel Huetius. In volume II, page 931, after citing the story, he says, "And this happened at the time of the death of Christ Jesus, who is the true Pan, father of all things and lord of all Nature, whom the mythologists meant under the symbol of Pan."

So far in their several courses, the writers on magic, on ghosts, and on theology. Up to this point, if we except Rabelais, the story of Pan has not been questioned. It has been accepted as a truthful statement of fact, and the explanation of Eusebius has gone with it. But now comes the first word of serious protest. A conscientious Hollander finds it beyond his belief, and says so. In 1683 this man, a Moravian preacher named Antonius van Dale, published in Amsterdam *Dissertationes duæ de oraculis veterum ethnicorum*. Later in 1696 appeared his *De origine ac progressu idolatri et superstitionum*. Van Dale thinks it is time to call a halt on the easy-going acceptance of these ancient and alien superstitions. And as to the story of the death of the "Great Pan" he is especially skeptical. He quotes it, refers to Baronius in *Centuriatores Magdeburgenses*, I, 2, 15, "where he relates absurdities about the dead Pan in the time of Tiberius."

Again in France is heard the note of disbelief. Fontenelle, in his *Histoire des Oracles* (1686, and in various subsequent editions) quotes the story, reviews the protests of Van Dale, and says, "this Great Pan who died under Tiberius together with Jesus Christ, is the master of the demons, whose empire was ruined by that death of a god, so beneficial to the universe; or if this explanation pleases you not, for after all one may piously give contrary meanings to the same thing in matters of religion,—this Great Pan is Jesus Christ himself, whose death causes sorrow and general consternation among the demons, who can no longer exercise their tyranny over men. It

is thus that the means have been found to give this Great Pan two very different faces."

By this time Tammuz-Pan, as interpreted by Plutarch and Eusebius, had been too closely woven into Christian teaching for such mockery as Fontenelle's to pass unproved; and so now we come to the formal defense of the story as a revelation of Christian truth. In 1707 Jean François Baltus, a Jesuit priest, published in Strasburg a *Réponse à l'histoire des Oracles de Mr. de Fontenelle, dans laquelle on refute le système de M. Van Dale sur les auteurs des oracles du paganisme, sur la cause et le temps de leur silence, et où on établit le sentiment des pères de l'église sur le même sujet*. The original treatise I have not found. An account of it is given in Collin de Plancy's *Dictionnaire des Sciences Occultes*, published at Paris in 1848-52. But I quote from an English translation. *Baltus: An Answer to the History of Oracles, translated by (H. Bedford) a priest of the Church of England, London, 1709*. (Thus we have the story of Pan adopted, as it were, into the Roman and Anglican churches; not by pontifical or archiepiscopal action, but still we may believe, without disapproval). On pages 22-4 we read:

"As to the story of Thamus related by Plutarch, it is true, Eusebius has inserted it in his Book de Præparatione Evangelica. But can you say 'tis on this story he relies to prove, that the oracles of the Gentiles were delivered by Devils? You cannot but know, that he produces a great many other Reasons for it in the 4th, 5th and 6th books of his Work. As for this Story, as appears from the very Title of the Chapter where he relates it, he only makes use of it to show, that the Heathens themselves had own'd, that the greatest part of their Oracles had ceased after the Birth of Christ, and that, not knowing the true Cause of this extraordinary Event, they had ascrib'd it to the Death of those Dæmons or Spirits, who, as they believ'd, presided over these Oracles. Eusebius did not concern himself, whether this story were true or no. Perhaps he believ'd it no more than you do. At least it is very certain he did not believe, that these Dæmons could die. But what he concluded from this story, true or false, was and always will be true, whatever you may say of it: 1st. That the Heathens acknowledg'd, that the greatest part of their Oracles had then actually ceas'd. 2nd. That those stories, they told of the Death of their Gods or of their Dæmons, having never begun to spread abroad among them, 'till under the reign of Tiberius, at which time our Saviour expell'd those evil Spirits, it was easily known, to whom they were to ascribe the Si-

lence of Oracles, and the overthrow of that Empire, which these Dæmons formerly exercised throughout the World by their means." (*Post hoc, ergo propter hoc!*)

"This is the only Reason for which Eusebius mention'd this Story: He makes use of it as an argument very proper to convince the Heathens, by the Testimony of their Authors themselves. It is therefore in vain, that you would make it pass for a Fable, since after all it will be ever undoubtedly true, that this Fable was current among the Heathens, and that Plutarch related it to explain the Silence of Oracles. This is sufficient to justify the Conduct of Eusebius, and to shew that he had reason to insert in his Work, as he has done, this (whether Fable or true Story) by copying this Place entirely out of Plutarch."

I quote also the heading of chapter IV in which the following appears:

"Eusebius only cited the Story of the Death of the Great Pan, to prove the Cessation of the Heathen Oracles by the Acknowledgment of the Heathen themselves.

"Whether it were true or false, Eusebius had reason to cite it."

Some of these discussions as to the nature of the "Great Pan" are summarized by Abbé Anselme, in *Memoires de littérature tirés des registres de l'Académie royale des Inscriptions*, printed at the Hague in 1724. (Vol. VI, p. 304.)

Among other eighteenth century criticisms of this legend may be cited Gottsched, *Heidnischen Orakeln*, Leipsic, 1730 (a translation of Fontenelle); J. Nymann, *De Magno Pan Plutarchi*, Upsala, 1734 (very possibly known to Swedenborg, whose remarks on the downfall of the demons I have already quoted): and Wagner, *Historia de morte magni Panis sub examen revocata*, in *Miscellanea Lipsiensia*, IV, 143-163.

Voltaire, in his *Dictionnaire philosophique*, article "Oracle" (1779: see *Œuvres*, XLV, 349) summarizes Fontenelle's refutations of this ancient story, and defends them against their priestly critics.

That it was still familiar in Germany is shown by the "Oberon" of Wieland (2, 18: published in 1780):

"... Es ist so stille hier, als sei der grosse Pan Gestorben."

What we may call the "text-book" stage of the Pan legend is reached in the *Griechische Götterlehre* of Welcker (II, 670) who says of it:

"In the time of Tiberius, a shrewd pagan, who understood the insufficiency of the official paganism and orphism in the presence of

the Christian movement, and who foresaw the downfall of the hylozoic pantheism personified in the God Pan, the universal god, used this story as a mounting, finely worked, to hold the jewel of his thought and so to give it greater brilliancy. But the savants of the court of Tiberius misunderstood or endeavored to misapply the omen by referring it to the Arcadian Pan, who had never been qualified as the 'Great Pan.'"

This, as Reinach observes, (*Cultes, Mythes et Religions*, vol. III) is indeed a curious piece of explanation, a strange mixture of eighteenth century criticism and early nineteenth century mysticism. It is duplicated, however, by Thomas Bulfinch in his *Age of Fable*, under title "Pan":

"As the name of the god signifies *all* (!) Pan came to be considered a symbol of the universe and personification of nature; and later still to be regarded as a representative of all the gods and of heathenism itself." And again, after quoting Schiller's "Gods of Greece" and Mrs. Browning's "Dead Pan": "these lines are founded on an early Christian tradition that when the heavenly host told the shepherds at Bethlehem (!) of the birth of Christ, a deep groan, heard through all the isles of Greece, told that the great Pan was dead, and that all the royalty of Olympus was dethroned, and the several deities were sent wandering in cold and darkness."

Here are, indeed, some startling extensions of the story. Among such may be noted, also, the account given in the *History of Magic* by that curious nineteenth century Cagliostro, Eliphas Lévi Zahed, or by his true name Alphonse Louis Constant, a renegade French priest and *soi-disant* Orientalist and exploiter of the "occult"—intimate, none the less, of Lord Lytton and of many another man of note in that period—who cites the Pan story, as a specimen of magic art, as follows:

"It is a matter of general knowledge (!) that at the Advent of Christ Jesus a voice went wailing over the sea, crying 'Great Pan is dead!'"⁵

For recent discussions of the development of this legend, the reader may consult also, E. Nestle of Maulbronn, in *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, XII, 156-8; Seymour de Ricci, *ibid.*, XII, 579; and Otto Weinreich of Heidelberg, "Zum Tod des grossen Pans," *ibid.*, XIII, 467-473; for which and other references I have to thank Mr. Alfred Ela of Boston.

In the course of the long history of this legend, we have seen

⁵ See translation by A. E. Waite, recently published by Rider & Son, London; also review in *Athenæum*, London, April 5, 1913.

how Dumu-zi-abzu became Tammuz, and how by a curious verbal misinterpretation, Tammuz in turn became Pan, who was explained both as Christ and Antichrist; how the explanation was carried into Christian legend, expounded in Christian doctrine, attacked by Protestant reformers and French skeptics, and defended in angry rejoinders by a French Jesuit and an Anglican priest. There remains only to cite the adoption of this story as the essence of Christian faith, as the central point of attack on Christianity as a religious and philosophical system. This appears in the *Kasidah of Hâjî Abdû el-Yezdî* of Sir Richard F. Burton (written in 1853, but first published in 1880), part IV, couplets 24-27:

“And when, at length, ‘Great Pan is dead’ uprose the loud and dolorous cry,
A glamour wither’d on the ground, a splendor faded in the sky.

“Yea, Pan was dead, the Nazarene came and seized his seat beneath the sun,
The votary of the Riddle-god, whose one is three and three is one;

“Whose saddening creed of herited Sin spilt o’er the world its cold grey spell,
In every vista showed a grave, and ’neath the grave the glare of Hell:

“Till all Life’s Poesy sinks to prose; romance to dull Reality fades:
Earth’s flush of gladness pales in gloom and God again to man degrades.”

Here, perhaps, the mourning of Tammuz, restated as the death of the Great Pan, may rest in the story of Christendom. No council of the church will be likely to formulate it as an article of the faith; let it more fitly live in the verse of Spenser and of Milton, there to gladden the souls of men:

“But see, the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest;
Time is, our tedious song should here have ending;
Heaven’s youngest-teemèd star
Hath fixed her polished car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending;
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable.”