ANCIENT WISDOM

A monthly journal devoted to teaching theosophical and occult truths

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VOLUME XVI JUNE, 1950—SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI NUMBER 4

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Number Please

BY CHARLES E. LUNTZ

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BY BILLY ROSE

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THE STORY OF LUTHER

BY OLIVE HARCOURT

(Continued from Last Month)

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"Who," he said, "would hesitate for the sake of a few florins to buy one of these documents which would admit his soul to the joys of Paradise? All the merits and sufferings of Christ are contained within them."

Luther rose up in wrath. Drawing up a list of 99 objections against this absurd nonsense he nailed them up in the porch of the Archbishop's own Cathedral in Wittenberg on the Eve of All Saints' Day, October 31st, 1517, one of the most important dates in history. Leo the Tenth, son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, tonsured in his seventh year, made Cardinal at thirteen, Pope at thirty-five, is forgotten in spite of his high birth, great knowledge and attainments, and is remembered merely for his indulgences, which were the cause of the change brought about by Luther over the whole field of religious thought.

Up rose the Pope and the whole Church with him. Luther, fully persuaded that he was the messenger of God, started the idea that the Pope was not infallible. Hauled before a great assembly at Leipzig, he made a remarkable speech, showing so much calm that he sniffed at intervals at a little bouquet of flowers placed on the desk by an admirer. He was wearing his famous ring, which had a tiny golden box hanging from it in which, according to gossip, he kept the Devil captive.

On that occasion, too, he gave forth his idea that the Eucharist contained

(Continued on Page 36)

REAL PROBLEMS OF REINCARNATION

(Continued from Last Month)

We need a lot of experience to make us perfect and, seemingly, with a lot of experience goes a lot of suffering. There are so many lessons to learn—so very many—that if we did not have the hundreds of lives nature provides in which to learn them the task would be hopeless. And it is likely, indeed the natal horoscope almost proves it, that only one or two major lessons are set to be partially mastered in a given incarnation. Countless little ones there are, of course, but these must be subordinate to the one big one—or maybe two or three—but it seems to an astrologer that just one dominates most horoscopes, with perhaps another coming second and a third as runner-up. And this simplification which, in view of the nature of the subject, is not oversimplification, can be made of great value to the individual in determining the probable No. 1 spiritual lesson—also No. 2 and No. 3—assigned by karma for the incarnation.

But whatever this lesson or these lessons are, they are to be mastered up to a certain point and not completely, for completeness or perfection in any field lies far in the future for present-day mankind. What may seem perfection to us now will appear as a mere halting step in the right direction when true perfection has been attained. Even Jesus disclaimed it for himself. "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but God."

And that is the key to the mystery of the sufferings of the "righteous." No matter how good they are or appear to themselves or others to be, no matter how much better they are than the rest of us, they are still only neophytes in righteousness, raw recruits to the ranks, tyros, novices, beginners in saintliness as compared with what they are destined to become.

And the suffering, the pain, the privations, so often in excess of those meted out to the "wicked," who are as a rule, only younger souls who inevitably will reach the level of the present saintly ones and far beyond—these shaping blows are heavier and more frequent only because those who have reached a certain stage of "goodness" are older souls, hardier spiritually, better able to stand them. Indeed the lighter thrusts would be ineffective because outgrown. That is the real meaning of the curious "Whom the Lord loves he chastens"; a somewhat misleading statement for surely the Lord loves each alike. Yet understandable in the light of common belief that those nearer to God in goodness are most beloved of Him.

We all know or have known people of beautiful character, grand persons who are liked and esteemed by almost all who contact them—who are kind, unselfish, charitable, seemingly the most perfect of the perfect in every way we can conceive. Yet they are still only "gods in the making," still have a long and weary road to travel before that real perfection, combined with all-embracing love and wisdom, has been achieved.

Each life's experience, each day's sufferings, each year's heartbreaks, disappointments and frustrations, add their minute quota to the moulding and shaping of what is to be an unsullied expression of the divinity which now smolders within. If there were one life only to accomplish this supreme task, the words of the Christ, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father within is perfect," would surely mock the hopes of the best among us.

But there are many lives, many "mansions" in the Father's house, and we tarry awhile to learn in each. And if in some the fare set before us is rough and unpalatable and the accommodations sparse, it is only to prepare us for the "joy, gladness and cheerful feasts," which the Bible allegorically holds out as the spiritual eventuation of the hard going of earlier days. Also there are centuries of superlative happiness in devachan as the immediate compensation for the temporary unhappinesses of physical life.

Heavenly reward is in no just sense reparation or restitution for injustices visited on us elsewhere—if they *are* injustices. The Theosophist knows that they are not, but are manifestations of the divine benevolence, the divine helpfulness and the divine intent that we too shall one day be divine.

(To Be Continued)

'TAINT FUNNY

By Charles E. Luntz

I try to pen a solemn verse,
Dramatic and impressive;
In language eloquent but terse
To strike a blow aggressive
At follies crass to which men cling,
As love of ease and money—
But, Woe is me! The doggoned thing
Insists on being funny.

I see my readers shake their heads,
Reproachful and disgusted.
My robe of dignity has threads
All hanging down and busted.
In vain my fountain-pen I gnaw,
My brain's about to buckle.
I seek a line replete with awe—
And all I get's a chuckle.

I feel just like the actor who
Would be a great tragedian.
Gave this ambition all he knew,
And ended—a comedian.
So as it seems some nature-sprite
Turns all my rhymes to laughter,
The epic verse I yearn to write
Must wait for the hereafter.

WRITING REVERIES

By Charles E. Luntz

It is not easy to write, if one wishes his material to amount to anything. Those who image a successful writer as taking pen in hand or sitting at typewriter, whereupon the inspired words pour out in a golden flood, know nothing of what might be termed "writer's agony." A well-known author, asked for the secret of his technique, replied "I sit down at my typewriter — then I open a vein."

Sometimes it may seem like that. The polished unlabored sentences that read so smoothly and so quickly may be the final result of a dozen re-writings or corrections—of search and research for just the right word to express a meaning—of desultory pacing up and down when ideas dry up, or long staring through the window until they start to flow again.

A price has to be paid for writing that counts—a high price, that takes its toll of mental, physical and sometimes emotional energy. The "writer" who slaps onto paper the first banal rubbish that occurs to him, under the delusion that he is offering pearls of great price, is not even an apprentice at his craft.

Good writing is hard, hard work and its true reward is not in dollars and cents, not even in the commendation of his readers, welcome though this may be, but in his own knowledge that he has given his faithful best to what he has produced — that something of his greater self has gone into his words and that because of this he is truly happy with the finished work of his mind. This may make no sense to some but it will to those who know how to write—or how to read.

"Old Diary Leaves," the day by day account of the early years of the T. S., is being studied and discussed by The Theosophical Society of St. Louis. It was written by Col. H. S. Olcott, founder and co-worker of H.P.B. Amazingly frank in its appraisal of the Blavatsky character, Col. Olcott does no glossing over, glamourizing or outright falsifying of the many defects of his great colleague. H.P.B. was a towering figure, not because of her uncertain temperament but in spite of it. And The Theosophical Society is a greater and more worthy institution because, unlike nearly all other institutions, religious or secular, it can appraise its leaders for the grand personages they were, without foolishly pretending that they were faultless and infallible.

THE ZODIAC IN MILTON

Gemini

With studied argument and much persuasion.

—*Samson Agonistes*

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TALEBEARERS

"Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people."
—*Leviticus XIX:16*

Facilis descensus averno, wrote Virgil poetically; which, being freely translated, means "It's easy to go to hell." And one of the quickest and easiest ways to gain admission to the place and likewise to send others there, so far as hell exists on earth, is to qualify as a talebearer—or, to use more modern English, as a malicious gossip.

Character assassination is not limited to the political field where one, alas, has grown to expect it. The figurative "knife in the back" is wielded expertly in some of our toniest drawing rooms and schnaziest bridge clubs. It is not even unknown at church socials. It should not be in evidence among Theosophists, of course—perish the thought! But as C. W. Leadbeater, whose words were addressed almost exclusively to Theosophists, had some stinging observations to make on this vicious practice, echoed in these columns some years ago by Geoffrey Hodson, it is just possible—just barely possible—that some of us occasionally slip, or at least need to watch our step lest we do. After all... only half-way through, you know.

Gossip is a deadly habit—an addiction which, once acquired, is as hard to overcome as the drug habit; harder, perhaps. Appetizing morsels of polite slander—sometimes not too polite—are peddled around with smirks and little gasps of affected horror, to be enjoyed and later repeddled, with suitable exaggeration and addition, to others who will not fail to repeat the procedure—and so *ad infinitum.* It's all done most beautifully; glorified to an art, in fact. Everyone is *so* solicitious—so very, very sorry for poor Mrs. P. or Mr. H. or their eight young children who have to suffer. Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. But what a glow the gossip retailer—wholesaler would be a better word—experiences that she, or he, for men are often just as bad, can offer such tasty fare to the company.

There is an old story, probably quite true in thousands of instances, of a particularly malignant gossip-klatsch which had torn to bits the reputation of just about everyone in the community who wasn't there. The party didn't break up until daybreak, no one present daring to be the first to leave.

For one who abhors gossip but does not wish to go around nose in air making himself offensive to those who indulge in it, there is no easy "out." In the priceless little classic, "At The Feet Of The Master," the admonishment is given, "Never speak ill of anyone; refuse to listen when anyone else speaks ill of another, but gently say; 'Perhaps this is not true, and even if it is, it is kinder not to speak of it.'"

This will not make you popular with the gossip crowd, which should not trouble you. As well wish to be popular with a herd of hyenas. To a Theosophist, knowing the power of mind and the repercussions of malicious thought on the one who sends it forth, the sacrifice of such "popularity" is a small price to pay for steering clear of "Avernus."

Words, like memories, may either bless or burn. And if we persist in using them to sear the reputations of others, we may be assured that, in the process, something of the finer part of ourselves is being incinerated.

THIS WE CAN DO WITHOUT

For some reason, perhaps because of our efforts to tear down literal biblical interpretation in the Occult Bible series, we have lately been deluged with atheistic literature ridiculing the Bible.

Evidently the senders are making the same mistake as the Back-To-Blavatskyites some years ago. The latter took it for granted that because we were constant and articulate critics of the Headquarters policies then in vogue we must therefore and by reason thereof also be critics and opponents of Besant and Leadbeater. We soon disillusioned them, with resultant repercussions which have only recently died away.

Similarly if the materialists think that because we reject the Bible as literal history we agree with their view that it is worthless and immoral, they are about as mistaken as anyone well could be. For all their vaunted intellectual superiority over the believers they so despise, there is little to choose between their own erroneous view of scripture and the erroneous views of their opponents, antagonistic though the two may be.

Both of these schools of thought insist on reading the Bible—an oriental collection of manuscripts written by ancient peoples twenty to thirty centuries ago—as though these writers intended them for history. Neither school can grasp the absolutely certain truth that they were written for a completely different purpose and that the idea they would be taken as a literal recounting of physical events never entered into the heads of those who wrote them.

Suppose that some three thousand or two thousand years hence, when undoubtedly reading material will have changed as much in style and content as ours has in the same period of time, someone came across miraculously preserved copies of our comic strips. They might—if they were as dull as the literalists—assume that Dick Tracy really lived and performed the exploits credited to him; that there was an Orphan Annie who somehow had not grown an inch in over 30 years (if they found copies of both 1916 and 1950 newspapers). That strange fact might puzzle them as much as our literalist brethren are puzzled by the Israelites in the wilderness wearing the same clothes and shoes when Moses took leave of them as they had worn when they left Egypt 40 years previously—and in good condition at that. "Your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot." (Deut. XXIX:5).

This raises some interesting questions. Mothers who know all too well that the garments and shoes they buy for their growing youngsters are too short or too small in a matter of months would surely like to know how Moses' little grandson, aged perhaps 7 when he left Egypt and now 47, contrived to avoid growing out of his clothes. Did the clothes grow *pari passu* with Moses III as he increased in height and weight, or did he maintain the *status quo* and remain a midget?

Surely that would have occurred to the scribe who penned the account or to some of the many millions who have read it.

But when we point out absurdities of this kind including the humor of such situations, it is not for the purpose of disparagement or mockery, as with the Freethinkers. It is to show the complete folly of accepting these stories as narrations of incidents and occurrences. The Bible writers were not fools. The magnificent passages they produced which do indeed afford hope, comfort and uplift in their literal sense, aside from the esoteric meaning, proves that. Some of the Psalms, passages in the Gospel and Epistles, chapters in the Major and Minor Prophets, are among the finest literature in any language. They are always ignored by the scoffers for the good reason that deriding them would instantly backfire on the derider, making him appear a hopeless buffoon. So he concentrates on the obvious absurdities of which the Bible in its dead letter meaning is full. Unlike the Theosophist, however, he goes no further than to show their irrationality—an easy task, for it is plain to anyone not blinded by religious authority, who will merely read them. It was plain to those who wrote them and to those for whom they were primarily written.

But these latter, being furnished with the occult keys, understood their real and transcendent meaning—their enshrinement of the deepest truths of life and death and divine purpose. As well try to make literal sense out of the code words of a cablegram as to make it out of the code words of ancient scripture.

If proofs are required, all the skeptics need do is to read the countless volumes of theosophical literature where evidence is piled upon evidence until it fairly overwhelms those who challenge. Let them read *The Secret Doctrine,* the scholarly works of G. R. S. Mead, or in recent years of Alvin Boyd Kuhn; read the many articles and series in ANCIENT WISDOM in which these proofs are cited. But do not, we beg them, betray the ignorance shown by both the religious and the irreligious when esoteric Bible symbology is read as though it were an Associated Press account of a happening of yesterday.

As for ourselves, we can do without further bombardment with witticisms at the Bible's expense. We even have the egotism to think that we are able to do a much better job along that line, when necessary for purposes of contrast, than most of those who attempt it. Certainly we do not make the egregious errors of fact that some of this literature displays. We have seen things attributed to the Bible that are not in it at all, the writers evidently not having troubled to check their faulty memories by looking them up.

We do not seek to destroy the literal meaning of Scripture for purposes merely destructive but to demonstrate the utter impossibility that the literal word is the true word. Only then may we proceed with our real task of showing how priceless a message the trivial code words hide. We shall not convince the materialists, we know. Their minds are closed and there is no conviction for them in this incarnation, unless rarely there may be found some enlightened intellect to recognize that this, and not the unqualified conclusions of the Bible haters, is the true explanation. Dr. Besant was a Freethinker and she recognized it—but she was one in many millions.

As for the religious, for them it should not come too hard, for does not the Bible itself declare (II Cor.III:6) *to gar gramma apokteinei, to de pneuma zoopoiei.* ? "For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

DON'T SELL THE BIBLE SHORT

Many Theosophists are completely indifferent to the Bible. They study *The Secret Doctrine, The Mahatma Letters* and the numerous works of the recognized theosophical writers but the Bible leaves them cold. The *Bhagavad Gita,* a magnificent excerpt from Hindu scripture, evokes their reverent attention, and rightly so for it is one of the greatest pieces of sacred literature ever to be produced, but the Bible is often shelved as something outgrown and no longer useful.

We think—we are sure—that this is a mistake. In spite of stories which literally read are absurd, bloodthirsty, unintelligible, contradictory of one another and even obscene, the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, contains passages of superb majesty and grandeur, words which have comforted millions in time of distress and in the hour of death, lofty thoughts worthy of writers claiming divine inspiration, uplifting spiritual ideals to draw man nearer to God.

The King James Version of the Scriptures still ranks with Shakespeare in literary eminence—a remarkable fact as it is a translation, not an original. Most tanslations are pale interpretations of the thought of the foreign writer. The Bible, however—at least in the Authorized Version (we can't say as much for the later revisions)—seems to possess so much inherent power of expression that the uninformed may almost be pardoned for regarding it as an authentic production of the Deity himself, and in English at that.

Few people, including the clergy, know how to read Biblical passages impressively to their congregations. In this country it is too often droned with all the expressiveness of a schoolboy reciting "The Wreck of The Hesperus." In England a twangy clerical enunciation, affected and formal, is adopted by many preachers to the disgust of those of their auditors who have some idea of how great lines should be read. There are exceptions in both countries, of course, but few indeed are the ministers who can compare in eloquence of diction with Theosophy's Annie Besant, George Arundale, L. W. Rogers or Fritz Kunz.

Those who attack the Bible fasten their virulent gaze on the grosser passages, which naturally they completely misunderstand. Even these have their value—often great value—in the occult truths they enshrine, questionable though the language may be in taste to Western eyes. But the beauty of the Psalms, the inspired dignity of many of the chapters in the Prophets, the divine solace and assurance in words uttered by Jesus or written in the Epistles, these are always ignored and the Bible made out to be a travesty of what it really is. The method employed is too one-sided to be convincing.

On the other hand the exaggerated reverence of the ultra-religious, often in inverse ratio to the actual knowledge they possess of what they are reverencing, is equally unimpressive. The people most anxious to give you an argument about the Bible are frequently those who have only a glimmering acquaintance with its contents and none at all with the historical facts of its production. They are long on noise and short on information.

Millions of copies of the Bible are still sold, yet in the course of daily conversation it is amazing how few people really know their Bibles and can quote from them as their forefathers did a couple of generations ago. It would almost seem as though many of the copies sold must be merely for keepsakes—to have a book of undoubted respectability in the house.

The Bible is worthwhile reading, if only for its literary value. They were finished writers, those old-timers, even if they were a bit racy in speech and not too particular in their choice of subjects. That was the custom in their day and they were people of their day.

Don't sell the Bible short. It will be here a thousand years after everything both its attackers and defenders have written shall have been forgotten by everyone on earth.

We are asked our policy in dealing with critical letters. It depends on the nature of the letter. We treat obvious "crank" correspondence the same as is done in all editorial offices by depositing it in the wastebasket. If the letter seems to be written in good faith and raises a point of general interest, even though it condemns us severely, we may answer it by mail or in our columns (without publishing the writer's name) or both. If our reply brings a second letter on the same subject, unless we have asked for it or it raises a new point of interest, it is ignored. Experience has shown that otherwise a long-drawn-out and purposeless correspondence is likely to result which takes up too much time and energy. We believe this policy is pretty much in line with that of most publications.

Russia has the atom bomb, which of course was inevitable sooner or later. Perhaps, because this makes Russia feel more secure, it may lessen the chance of war. Somehow we can't believe Russia wants war in spite of her huge army and colossal armament program. Our own armament program, including the arming of Western Europe, is colossal. The reason is that we are afraid Russia may start something—we know that we and our allies will not. Perhaps Russia's reason is that she is afraid *we* shall start something. If these are the true reasons—and well they may be — it would seem there should be some way of getting the two fearful parties together and resolving their mutual fears, so that this insane competition may cease. Insane it is, but so long as fear rules both sides, absolutely necessary for us. And doubtless Russia feels the same. Which is not excusing Russia. She started it when we wanted to be friends.

REAL PROBLEMS OF REINCARNATION

(Continued from Last Month)

We need a lot of experience to make us perfect and, seemingly, with a lot of experience goes a lot of suffering. There are so many lessons to learn—so very many—that if we did not have the hundreds of lives nature provides in which to learn them the task would be hopeless. And it is likely, indeed the natal horoscope almost proves it, that only one or two major lessons are set to be partially mastered in a given incarnation. Countless little ones there are, of course, but these must be subordinate to the one big one—or maybe two or three—but it seems to an astrologer that just one dominates most horoscopes, with perhaps another coming second and a third as runner-up. And this simplification which, in view of the nature of the subject, is not oversimplification, can be made of great value to the individual in determining the probable No. 1 spiritual lesson—also No. 2 and No. 3—assigned by karma for the incarnation.

But whatever this lesson or these lessons are, they are to be mastered up to a certain point and not completely, for completeness or perfection in any field lies far in the future for present-day mankind. What may seem perfection to us now will appear as a mere halting step in the right direction when true perfection has been attained. Even Jesus disclaimed it for himself. "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but God."

And that is the key to the mystery of the sufferings of the "righteous." No matter how good they are or appear to themselves or others to be, no matter how much better they are than the rest of us, they are still only neophytes in righteousness, raw recruits to the ranks, tyros, novices, beginners in saintliness as compared with what they are destined to become.

And the suffering, the pain, the privations, so often in excess of those meted out to the "wicked," who are as a rule, only younger souls who inevitably will reach the level of the present saintly ones and far beyond—these shaping blows are heavier and more frequent only because those who have reached a certain stage of "goodness" are older souls, hardier spiritually, better able to stand them. Indeed the lighter thrusts would be ineffective because outgrown. That is the real meaning of the curious "Whom the Lord loves he chastens"; a somewhat misleading statement for surely the Lord loves each alike. Yet understandable in the light of common belief that those nearer to God in goodness are most beloved of Him.

We all know or have known people of beautiful character, grand persons who are liked and esteemed by almost all who contact them—who are kind, unselfish, charitable, seemingly the most perfect of the perfect in every way we can conceive. Yet they are still only "gods in the making," still have a long and weary road to travel before that real perfection, combined with all-embracing love and wisdom, has been achieved.

Each life's experience, each day's sufferings, each year's heartbreaks, disappointments and frustrations, add their minute quota to the moulding and shaping of what is to be an unsullied expression of the divinity which now smolders within. If there were one life only to accomplish this supreme task, the words of the Christ, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father within is perfect," would surely mock the hopes of the best among us.

But there are many lives, many "mansions" in the Father's house, and we tarry awhile to learn in each. And if in some the fare set before us is rough and unpalatable and the accommodations sparse, it is only to prepare us for the "joy, gladness and cheerful feasts," which the Bible allegorically holds out as the spiritual eventuation of the hard going of earlier days. Also there are centuries of superlative happiness in devachan as the immediate compensation for the temporary unhappinesses of physical life.

Heavenly reward is in no just sense reparation or restitution for injustices visited on us elsewhere—if they *are* injustices. The Theosophist knows that they are not, but are manifestations of the divine benevolence, the divine helpfulness and the divine intent that we too shall one day be divine.

(To Be Continued)

'TAINT FUNNY

By Charles E. Luntz

I try to pen a solemn verse,
Dramatic and impressive;
In language eloquent but terse
To strike a blow aggressive
At follies crass to which men cling,
As love of ease and money—
But, Woe is me! The doggoned thing
Insists on being funny.

I see my readers shake their heads,
Reproachful and disgusted.
My robe of dignity has threads
All hanging down and busted.
In vain my fountain-pen I gnaw,
My brain's about to buckle.
I seek a line replete with awe—
And all I get's a chuckle.

I feel just like the actor who
Would be a great tragedian.
Gave this ambition all he knew,
And ended—a comedian.
So as it seems some nature-sprite
Turns all my rhymes to laughter.
The epic verse I yearn to write
Must wait for the hereafter.

WRITING REVERIES

By Charles E. Luntz

It is not easy to write, if one wishes his material to amount to anything. Those who image a successful writer as taking pen in hand or sitting at typewriter, whereupon the inspired words pour out in a golden flood, know nothing of what might be termed "writer's agony." A well-known author, asked for the secret of his technique, replied "I sit down at my typewriter — then I open a vein."

Sometimes it may seem like that. The polished unlabored sentences that read so smoothly and so quickly may be the final result of a dozen re-writings or corrections—of search and research for just the right word to express a meaning—of desultory pacing up and down when ideas dry up, or long staring through the window until they start to flow again.

A price has to be paid for writing that counts—a high price, that takes its toll of mental, physical and sometimes emotional energy. The "writer" who slaps onto paper the first banal rubbish that occurs to him, under the delusion that he is offering pearls of great price, is not even an apprentice at his craft.

Good writing is hard, hard work and its true reward is not in dollars and cents, not even in the commendation of his readers, welcome though this may be, but in his own knowledge that he has given his faithful best to what he has produced — that something of his greater self has gone into his words and that because of this he is truly happy with the finished work of his mind. This may make no sense to some but it will to those who know how to write—or how to read.

"Old Diary Leaves," the day by day account of the early years of the T. S., is being studied and discussed by The Theosophical Society of St. Louis. It was written by Col. H. S. Olcott, founder and co-worker of H.P.B. Amazingly frank in its appraisal of the Blavatsky character, Col. Olcott does no glossing over, glamourizing or outright falsifying of the many defects of his great colleague. H.P.B. was a towering figure, not because of her uncertain temperament but in spite of it. And The Theosophical Society is a greater and more worthy institution because, unlike nearly all other institutions, religious or secular, it can appraise its leaders for the grand personages they were, without foolishly pretending that they were faultless and infallible.

THE ZODIAC IN MILTON

Gemini

With studied argument and much persuasion.

—*Samson Agonistes*

THE INFLUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE ON AMERICAN LITERATURE

By Charles E. Luntz

(Continued from Last Month)

As to his plots, Shakespeare unblushingly lifted them from whatever source came to hand—and without acknowledgment—but what he did with them was his own idea, uninfluenced by their originators. He had no time, prolific as was his pen, to invent new plots. Any old record, chronicle, classic or hackneyed drama would do. From the dry chronicles of Holinshed he drew *Lear, Cymbeline, Macbeth* and all of his royal plays. But Holinshed never thought of Falstaff. Shakespeare created the old rascal and immortalized him. One sentence in Holinshed describes Lady Macbeth, but Shakespeare converted her into the personification of evil ambition and as such she will live so long as the English tongue endures. Where are those who "influenced" Shakespeare? Surely it is true that his adeptship in his chosen profession came from something within—the outer influences were slight. All the other boys who attended Stratford grammar school or any other English grammar school of the day were exposed to the same influences. Some may have, and doubtless did, become writers. But only one became a Shakespeare.

Which brings us by perhaps a rather devious route back to the subject of this lecture: The Influence of Shakespeare on American Literature. What is influence? Certainly it is not mere imitation. The first outright imitator of Shakespeare was an obscure Elizabethan poet named Richard Barnfield of whom probably few here have ever heard. He published a volume of sonnets so closely akin in style to Shakespeare's that two of them were actually believed to be Shakespeare's work and were incorporated into *The Passionate Pilgrim*. One of them is still to be found there although Barnfield's authorship has been definitely established. It is the sixth lyric, beginning, "If music and sweet poetry agree," and thousands of Shakespearean lovers and authorities read it for years without once suspecting that it was not Shakespeare's own work. Yet, outside of these two fragments, Barnfield produced nothing which has left any impress upon posterity. Such is "influence" as it manifested in the earliest of the Shakespearean plagiarists.

If we are to apprehend the way in which the indirect Shakespearean influence has filtered down to modern days, quite aside from the direct influence which every writer may obtain from the study of the plays and the viewing of them on the stage, we must put away any preconceived notions that Shakespeare was already conceded to be a genius by his own age. A few far-sighted ones—Ben Jonson, for instance—recognized him as such: "He was not for a day but for an age." The majority did not. Even Milton casually refers to him as "Sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child," which seems a most inadequate description of the author of the greatest tragedies in literature. And Milton's further observation that he (Shakespeare) warbles "his native wood-notes wild" appears almost grotesque. It might apply to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *As You Like It,* but surely not to *Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello,* or *King Lear*. Perhaps Milton was only familiar with Shakespeare's lighter productions.

In Elizabethan times gentlemen wrote poetry. It was considered a gentlemanly thing to do. But though gentlemen attended the theater they did not write for it. That was decidedly *outre*. It was quite all right for Shakespeare to dedicate his Sonnets to the Earl of Southampton, and that nobleman beyond doubt suitably rewarded him, but to dedicate a play to any but the dear public would have exceeded all the bounds of propriety. Shakespeare's plays were highly esteemed by his contemporaries. They enabled him to amass what, for those days, was a sizeable fortune and there are still critics who insist that this is the only reason he wrote and produced them. But for over a century after his death his star was in eclipse. It was really the publication of Dr. Samuel Johnson's edition of his plays that restored his fame with the public and from then on it has never receded.

A passable knowledge of Shakespeare is and has been for a hundred-and-fifty years one of the badges of all-around culture. Yet it is a matter of utmost difficulty for me to come to grips with the title of this lecture and to state with assurance the exact fashion in which Shakespeare has influenced American literature. It would be easy, too easy, to take this or that author and to show how his style, his characters, his plot construction or some other feature or features of his work betrays the influence of the Master. But it might also be purely imaginative and based on resemblances of which the author was unconscious and which trace to sources altogether different—perhaps to that interior something which is the author's own personal genius and not drawn from the outside at all. In the writings of those who eulogize Shakespeare I find the customary tributes with which you are all familiar: That he was the spokesman not alone of his own time but had the genius to speak to all ages; that fashions in literature may come and go but Shakespeare's work remains; that he is the one English author who is equally successful in depicting the highest type of both comedy and tragedy; and that, with the exception of the Bible, his dramas have surpassed all other works in molding modern English and American thought.

That last statement, I think, is the nub of the whole matter in relation to our present study. Because the great American authors have been fully as familiar as their English contemporaries with Shakespeare's methods, techniques and dramatic insight they cannot fail to have absorbed something of his "flavor," if I may use that term. But again I am frank to say that I cannot particularize. Perhaps the spine-chilling horror of Poe's works has something in common with certain scenes in Hamlet or Macbeth. The preoccupation of Nathaniel Hawthorne with moral problems is suggestive of some slight influence from "Measure For Measure" but is more likely the result of his own harassing experiences. Thoreau and Emerson seem to me to show little influence in their highly intuitive reasonings from the extrovert Shakespeare. And as I go down the list of one after another of this country's literary geniuses so do I fail to discover any but the most general influence of the Master Dramatist.

It is significant, I think, that in the extensive bibliography at the end of the Shakespeare article in Encyclopaedia Britannica not a single work is cited which has a bearing on the influence of Shakespeare on modern literature. I found none in my own library, except general expressions of praise such as I have already cited, nor did I find in the voluminous Shakespeareana in the Public Library any which dealt with such influence. There may be such a work or works and someone here may know of them. I started with the notion that there were scores. The fact that I found not one may be at least persuasive evidence that I am right in my conclusion that a concrete influence is difficult or impossible to trace.

But, you know, on taking thought regarding this unexpected conclusion I believe that, greatly as we revere the master singer of the world, it is a grand thing that we cannot directly trace his influence in our own literature. We are thinkers and writers and dramatists—yes and even poets—in our own right. Truly we are heirs of the ages, inheritors of the past, the beneficiaries of the great writers and thinkers of yesterday and of long ago, but we are something more. We ourselves are fathering the future. We, with our own inspirations, our own intuitions, our own genius, a peculiarly American genius which perhaps Shakespeare with his universal understanding would comprehend but about which he never wrote for it did not then exist—we, with our brave new world, have something to contribute to our own age and to posterity which is as unique and priceless as that which Shakespeare

(Continued on Page 35)

DO YOU KNOW?—

That there are two major reasons why The Theosophical Society, after 75 years, numbers its world membership at less than 40,000 while the Christian Science Church founded in the same year has millions of adherents?

* * * * *

That the first of these reasons is lack of promotional ability which, in spite of the highest type of talent and genius possessed by T. S. leaders, has failed to present the teaching in a way which would appeal to any considerable section of the public?

* * * * *

That the second reason is that the Theosophical appeal is in essence wholly spiritual, though the teaching when accepted and applied also contributes largely to personal efficiency, wellbeing and peace of mind?

* * * * *

That comparatively few at this stage can be reached by spiritual appeal alone, though many can be made responsive to the secondary contributions if they can be convinced of their validity?

* * * * *

That emphasis has been largely or wholly on the former with small attention to the latter?

* * * * *

That the public in general is bored and indifferent when the approach exceeds the level of its customary interests and aspirations?

* * * * *

That somehow it has gained the impression that Theosophy is impractical, fantastic and based on vain imaginings, when actually Theosophy is, for all its spiritual substructure, the most practical, logical and PROVABLE philosophy in existence?

* * * * *

That our answer to the public attitude should not be to blame the public because it is not more responsive nor, for that matter, to blame ourselves for not having done a better job of presentation, but constantly to try in different ways to find the right method of getting the message over?

* * * * *

That if we persist, though we may not in this century number our members by the million, we shall make steady headway in breaking down the stone wall of indifference and misunderstanding which makes our task so difficult?

* * * * *

That though our membership is small, our ideas have permeated the thought of the world in such degree as almost completely on many subjects to make it over?

* * * * *

That we must adapt our methods of approach to the standards of our modern era and do our utmost to interest people in the first instance at their own spiritual level, instead of essaying the almost impossible task of raising them immediately to the lofty standards of Theosophical idealism?

* * * * *

That ANCIENT WISDOM is earnestly trying to measure up to this exacting standard and to approach its readers, largely non-members, from differing points of rapport but always with the practical object of meeting them on their own plane of interest, whatever that may be?

THE SECRET DOCTRINE

(Continued from Page 29)

billion three hundred and twenty billion Cycle is almost exactly one-half. But Dear! Dear! What a weary way we still have to go! Still, when we reach the end we shall find it was worth every minute of it for we "shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Divinity is not purchased cheaply.

The latter part of the sloka, "The One from the Egg, the Six and the Five," at first glance reads like something from the less intelligible works of lamented Gertrude Stein. H. P. B. comes to our aid by kindly explaining, first that the One is "The One Lord of all beings... the one animating principle of gods and men," a phrase taken from the *Rig Veda*, a Hindu scripture. Secondly, she tells us that One means the figure 1, which is not so obvious as it sounds for wherever a number appears, in the Stanzas as in the Bible, there is a numerological significance aside from any other interpretation the passage carries.

H. P. B. points this by the following highly pertinent observation:

"This" (the figures) "relates to the Sacred Science of the Numerals; so sacred, indeed, and so important in the study of Occultism that the subject can hardly be skimmed, even in such a large work as the present. It is on the Hierarchies and the correct numbers of these Beings—invisible (to us) except upon very rare occasions—that the mystery of the whole Universe is built."

The Egg from which the One emerges bears the formidable Sanskrit name of Hiranyagarbha, an old friend, however, to Thesophists, who recognize it as the Womb of the Universe, the shining golden Egg which incubated all that which was to arise from it, in the Person of Brahma. It is the first remove from the Absolute and H. P. B. identifies it with Brahma Itself, quoting Manu. When we reach that far back to Ultimates, identification with one or another of the First Principles means very little. Whether Brahma *was* Hiranyagarbha or was "born" of Hiranyagarbha is a mere matter of Eastern semantics and need not concern us. To dub names on First Principles and then insist that only a single nomenclature can be the correct one is too much like the Fundamentalism of the Creeds to be palatable to the Theosophist.

The Egg is also stated to be a number—zero—which is quite appropriate from its shape. We didn't expect it, but we get a lot of what we don't expect in occult writings and it always turns out to be perfectly logical when understood. That leaves the Six and the Five—the number then reading 1065. This number, according to *The Secret Doctrine* is of the most profound significance, being the number of Brahma Himself.

It should here be explained that in esotericism each of the great Intelligences who superintend evolution has his own number. The name by which he is called in the sacred books numerologically expresses this number, though one must possess the key to the numerological interpretation in order to decode it correctly. It is not necessarily the same method that is employed in Western numerology which has been greatly simplified, though certain features are similar.

Numerology, like astrology, was a sacred science and not communicated to the profane. It is found throughout the Bible and never more openly than in the Book of Revelation (XIII:18), where the number of the Beast, whoever he might be, is said to be 666. This mysterious statement makes absolutely no sense to the average Bible student. The Beast is usually presumed to be the Antichrist, an unpleasant role which has been assigned variously to Nero, Titus, Caligula and the Devil. Luther even held the conviction that it was the Pope (See Encyclopaedia Britannica Vol. 55 p. 61). Most uninformed Bible readers probably associate the "Beast" with the Devil, but why the latter sultry personage should have the number 666, they would be hard put to it to say. Whether a casual reader of scripture subconsciously regards it as a house number—say 666 Hotpoint Boulevard—or as a telephone number—LUcifer 666—it is certain that unless one holds the occult keys it makes no more sense than that.

In a footnote H. P. B. states that in the Kabalah the number of Jehovah who, with the Hebrews, would be the equivalent of Brahma, was also 1065, showing the striking unanimity of occult codes regardless of race or religion. She explains the way in which this is arrived at and it certainly differs from the simple numerology familiar to most Theosophists but in which the present writer has little faith.

Taking the Hebrew Y-H-V-H, which has been quite incorrectly rendered Jehovah (Bible scholars agree that it should be YAHVEH), she assigns to each letter its numerical value based on its position in the Hebrew alphabet.

IT MAKES NO SENSE THAT—

Rigid, unalterable laws govern in the realm of matter—no laws at all in the field of circumstance.

* * * * *

Everything that occurs to anyone outside of happenings within one's own control is a matter of chance.

* * * * *

There is no pattern of circumstance and no special end or aim to which evolution is working.

* * * * *

Evolution itself is a blind force, in nobody's care and not devised by anyone nor for any purpose.

* * * * *

Astrology is a false science and the many highly intelligent people who believe in it are all deluded.

* * * * *

The people who declare that astrology has no foundation in fact have studied it carefully, can set up natal and progressed horoscopes accurately and are familiar with the rules of interpretation which they find do not work.

IT MAKES SENSE THAT—

There are laws governing circumstance as rigid and unalterable as those governing matter.

* * * * *

Nothing can occur to anyone that he did not by his actions at some period, near or remote, control.

* * * * *

There *is* a pattern of circumstance, and evolution is working intelligently toward benefic ends.

* * * * *

Evolution is superintended at every step by divine beings who know exactly what they are doing and how best to bring these ends about.

* * * * *

Astrology is as true as any science known to man and is believed in by the highly intelligent because they *are* highly intelligent.

* * * * *

The people who declare that astrology has no foundation in fact are repeating parrot-like what others have said who likewise knew nothing about it. They cannot set up horoscopes, have no knowledge of how horoscopes are interpreted and no qualifications whatever for the criticisms they presume to make.

Ancient Hebrew possessed no vowels, these being added to make pronunciation easier about the Fifth Century. Y is the tenth letter, H the fifth, V the sixth, and the Kabalistic method of decoding, she tells us, is to omit the first letter which appears twice in a name and take only the second. Whether this would apply if the letter appeared three times or more (that is that it should only be taken once) she does not say, but here is food for thought for our own numerologists who takes all the letters as many times as they occur. Also the Hebrew numerology does not stop at 9 and start again at one as ours does (excepting only 11 and 22) but continues after 10 with 20, 30, etc. on up into the hundreds. And as the Jews employed no figures but only the letters of their alphabet, this system was also exoteric.

So taking out the first H, we do get Y-10 V-6 H-5 or 1065, the numbers not being added together as with us but the full number standing as the result. It is extremely probable that this system, like the alphabet, derives from or is linked with Chaldean, Babylonian, Egyptian and Hindu numerologies.

Why should 1065 represent the ineffable exaltation of God Himself? On this *The Secret Doctrine* is silent. While we are always suspicious of mysteriousness and obscurantism which too often hides pure ignorance and nothing besides, it does seem likely that there are secrets of number which are communicated only to advanced initiates because of their great potency if misused. However 10 is esoterically pronounced to be "The Perfect Number," perhaps because there are ten Schemes of Evolution proceeding simultaneously throughout the Solar System in which all of its planets, visible and invisible, are involved. As to 6 and 5—added together these total 11, which is considered by all numerologists, ancient or modern, to be one of the two most spiritual numbers in the table, the other being 22.

We believe there is a true science of numerology, known to the ancients and to some modern occultists, but we doubt if that which is practiced generally as numerology is the real article. No offense to those who believe otherwise.

(To Be Continued)

HISTORY'S STRANGEST WRITING TEAM

(Continued from Page 29)

consider the following:

At the beginning, Mrs. Curran got her messages via the ouija board a letter at a time, but halfway through the first book, she began to "see" whole words and sentences, and from then on she dictated to her husband at the rate of 110 words per minute. And hardly a dozen of the 3,000,000 words were of a vintage later than the seventeenth century.

A great deal of her writing was done in the presence of reliable witnesses and investigators, and etymologists who examined her prose and poetry testified that it was impossible without years of study and training, for a person to compose as much as a short story in seventeenth century English. Moreover, they unanimously agreed that the middle-class housewife who had never gone to high school and never been out of Missouri was the last person in St. Louis to write a 70,000-word narrative in iambic blank verse in 70 hours.

Many other oddish facts about this medium confused the psychologists and non-believers who came to investigate. Mrs. Curran often worked on three or four stories simultaneously, and would skip from one to the other in the course of a sitting without losing track of the narratives. And once, when her husband mislaid an early chapter of "A Sorry Tale," Patience Worth obligingly dictated it all over again.

In St. Louis in 1920, before an audience of writers. scientists and civic leaders at the Artists' Guild, Patience Worth was asked through Mrs. Curran to make up a 25-line poem, each line beginning with a different letter of the alphabet—which she did without faltering, going from "a" to "z" and leaving out the letter "x" as per instruction.

Who was Patience Worth? Well, various researchers went into this carefully and reported that a girl by that name was born in 1694 in Dorsetshire county, England; that some 30 years later she migrated to America, and was killed during an Indian attack in King Philip's War. And that many of the architectural landmarks referred to in her novels are still standing in Dorsetshire, and local records indicate that others had existed around 1694.

Patience Worth stopped communicating with Mrs. Curran in 1928, and Mrs. Curran died nine years later, but to this day nobody has been able to successfully ridicule this greatest-of-all literary riddles. Many psychologists agree with Dr. Walter Franklin Prince of the Boston Society for Psychic Research who, after spending considerable time on the case, said, "Either our concept of what we call the subconscious must be radically altered so as to include potencies of which we hitherto have had no knowledge, or else some cause operating through, but not originating in, the subconscious of Mrs. Curran must be acknowledged."

(The End)

THE INFLUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE

(Continued from Page 29)

contributed to his age and posterity. "I am a part of all that I have met," sang Tennyson. And so are we—and a part of the part is the glory that Shakespeare has bequeathed to us and that we in turn shall bequeath to those who inherit our day; and with it an enrichment that comes of the goodly land, the gracious living, the spirit of justice and consecration to freedom that it has pleased the Lord God to give us.

(The End)

WE ARE GIVING APPEALS A REST THIS MONTH

★ ★ ★ ★

As a matter of fact we are pretty well written out so far as these allocutions are concerned.

Our readers know the score, as well they have shown. If we depended on subscriptions alone to keep ANCIENT WISDOM going it would cease within a year or less.

After fifteen years of this we have some slight idea of what it must mean to run a college on tuition fees alone or where the endowments are not sufficient to take up the slack.

We love the work but Lordy, Lordy, if ANCIENT WISDOM could just feel financially secure for a few years ahead, what a load would be lifted!

Perhaps some day that will happen and we hope we won't be too old to see it and appreciate it.

Meantime the command from the Ego is "Carry on." We will do our utmost to obey.

THE STORY OF LUTHER

(Continued from Page 33)

the actual Presence of the Christ. To this day there are two forms of the Last Supper in Germany, the Lutheran and the Evangelical, both Protestant, one declaring, "This is My Body and this is My Blood," the other declaring, "This represents My Body and this represents My Blood."

Luther was formally excommunicated. Now an unfrocked monk, he could say what he pleased, and he let loose all that was within him. He became more and more daring, until the ruler of Saxony, fearing for his life, sent soldiers to kidnap him and take him to the Wartburg. He occupied a little room in a turret, one of the walls of which is still marked with the contents of the ink-bottle Luther threw at the Devil in one of his visions of that unpleasant person—or so they say. Most people believe it is annually renewed for the benefit of tourists, mostly English and American, who surreptitiously remove little bits of the plaster. The room is on a level with the tree-tops, and Luther wrote his friends about the little birds swaying on the branches "singing praises to their God with all their little hearts."

He prowled about the castle, recalling stories of St. Elizabeth, the beautiful chatelaine married to a brutal tyrant who forbade her to carry food to the poor. One day she met him coming unexpectedly round a corner. He demanding to see what she had in her apron, she opened it in great trepidation, and to her joy the bread had all turned to roses!

During his ten months in the Wartburg, Luther began the supreme work of his life, the translation of the Hebrew Bible into German, an enormous and most strenuous task. He tells us how he often spent several days trying to find the exact word to fit its Hebrew equivalent.

"I have sweated blood," he says, "trying to make the Hebrew Prophets speak German. One might as well ask the nightingale change her sweet notes into the raucous call of the cuckoo!"

His teachings spread like flames in a high wind, in all countries, in spite of excommunication, Papal Bulls, public curses and what not.

One day Luther walked out of the Wartburg and never came back. He went back to Wittenberg. Escaped nuns and monks poured into the town to ask his advice. One of these nuns he married. The story goes in Germany that Caterina von Bora was captured and again immured, that Luther placed a barrel below her cell window into which she lowered herself and was rolled away to freedom, probably by Luther himself.

Luther's job in this life, carried out with what Heine calls his "Divine brutality," was to plant the roots of a world religion, to give the Bible into the hands of the people of all lands, to reform the German language and give it a settled grammar and syntax which it lacked, and to bring music into the Church services and into the homes of the people.

It took him thirteen years to translate the Bible. Hebrew had almost disappeared from Europe in his time. Only in the dark places of the Continent, in the bolt-holes of a terribly persecuted race were preserved the greatest treasures the Jews possessed —their Hebrew Bible, their language and their post-Biblical literature, held as sacred as the Scriptures themselves, carefully hidden in those ghastly ghettos, in filthy alleys and infested attics, in and out if which flitted like shadows the despised and terribly persecuted inhabitants. Scholars, anxious to obtain knowledge from the many profoundly wise men concealed therein, penetrated into their miserable dwellings, and thus the Kabalah swam once more into the ken of modern times.

Luther reformed the Church services —we moderns have forgotten that we have him to thank for our benefits of congregational singing and services in the language of our country.

To quote Heine's "History of Philosophy and Religion"—a magnificent book—

"We must do honor to Luther and not complain of his faults, for they have been of more use to the world than the virtues of many thousands. In him were found contradictory qualities seldom found in one man. He was at the same time a scholarly mystic and an inspired prophet, intoxicated with the power of God. He could swear like a fish-wife and be as tender as a young girl. He was like the wild storm that uproots the stalwart oak and could be as gentle as the breeze that caresses the violet. He was austere as any monk, but he appreciated the good things of life as none other."

Heine here refers to Luther's famous saying:

"He who loves not wine, woman and song
Remains a fool his whole life long."

Luther died in Leipzig in 1546. He was born under the Sign Scorpio, and was a Scorpion of the purest type. "He had within him," says Heine, "something inscrutable and marvellous, an unconquerable demoniacal power and an exalted terrifying spirituality."

(The End)

MINSTRELSY

A Selection From The Poems Of Patience Worth

The Friend Of Yesterday

I can never lose you;
We have writ an indelible page
Upon the scroll of destiny.
We have traced a tender thing for all time.
What are days, hours, moments, ages?
Have we not met as friends?
And he who has been once my friend
Is a part of me for ever.
In the harmonies of Eternity
We twain have sung in accord,
And all the music of Eternity
Woud be incomplete without us.
Hear you, my friend,
What is tomorrow to me and thee?
There is nothing but today, for ever.