Socrates.

By William Ellery Leonard.

Introduction.

I.

Shelley referred to the great man we are about to study as

"Socrates, the Jesus Christ of Greece,"

nor was the English poet the first or the last to institute the comparison. The fathers of the church, when answering the sneers of paganism, cited the martyr of the hemlock beside the martyr of the cross; free-thinkers of yesterday and to-day have exalted his ethics and his mission in challenge to the Christian world and its prophet. He has been compared to Buddha and the religious reformers of the ancient kingdoms of Judah and Samaria. Yet, as we shall see, the historic Socrates was no religious zealot and founded no religion. The traditional figure is slowly but certainly undergoing modification wherever men have learned to distinguish Socrates from the men who walk either side or in front of him; the genuine voice is beginning to sound more clear as our ears separate it from Xenophon's confusing oratory and the insistent music of Plato. And now is there to be any longer reason for numbering Saul among the prophets? Has the instinct of the generations been wrong altogether? I think not. Socrates, in a sense that would justify honorable mention of his name and fame in any work on religious leaders, proclaimed long before Paul the unknown God unto the Athenians.

Socrates concerns us from the point of view of religious leadership on several grounds: as a soul interested in the salvation of man, as a life witnessing the laws of the spirit, as the central personality of a great people, and as an historic contrast to other more specifically religious types.

Socrates was interested in the salvation of man. Salvation
shall be taken out of the vocabulary of the theologians where it has troubled the human race long enough: the salvation of man shall not mean any longer security on a day of judgment; nor even alone the loosening of these bonds of sin. It shall mean emancipation from all that hobbles or shackles the mind—emancipation from ignorance, uncouthness, stupidity, gloom, fear, and the whole interminable train of devils, among whom sin, though chief, is but one. The emancipators, the saviours, have been many: teachers in the village school, singers in the street, painters at the courts of kings, as well as prophets and poets on the mountain. What Socrates stood for in this multitudinous business of salvation will, I hope, be manifest to us in the sequel.

Socrates, as a life witnessing the laws of the spirit, is a proof of things beyond time. There is the universal, the transcendental implication in every man—in the farmer harvesting his grain against the winter snows, in the grimy machinist who sits in the night school, in the thief and the prostitute whose miseries, deducible from violations of the universal, hint at the implication no less. But there are a few men and women who have given majestic and imposing proof: they are the incarnations in that mythology which is our poor best interpretation of the truth and beauty of the divine something which sustains the world. Among them perhaps is Socrates. And in a humbler sense, too, he is beyond time. We of to-day have far enough transcended the pitiful helplessness of that old Greek world in turning nature to account for our own convenience. We have steamboat and railroad—we ride faster; we have telephone and wireless—we speak farther. But, though in devising these wonders we also be assisting in the emancipation of man, let us not deceive ourselves: the most vital matter is still not how fast we ride, but for what ends: not how far we speak, but to what purpose. The deepest problems are the same as then, and Socrates was perhaps nearer their solution than some of us.

He was the central personality of the Greek race, born in the fulness of time out of the folk and absorbed after death into the folk, the culmination of the old, the starting point for the new—besides the Olympiads, a numeral in the Greek calendar. If he suggests in this the founders of religions, there is also something of their potent eccentricity in the means he employed to drive his purposes home to his fellows—in his word of mouth lessons to chance individuals or groups and in his attaching devoted followers to his side. He was as primitive and vital in his relations to the Athenians as was Mohammed, declaiming his earlier surahs, to the
Meccans, or as was Jesus to the Galilean fishermen who marveled at his proverbs and stories. Pythagoras had founded a cult; Empedocles had boasted in sonorous hexameters—a medium itself betraying the inevitable remoteness of the man of letters—how,

"Crowned both with fillets and with flowering wreaths," he was followed "with his throngs of men and women" as he came "to thriving cities," and was besought by thousands craving for oracles or healing words. But surely no other Greek so completely returned to that oldest and (where practicable) that most efficient pedagogy—the personal voice, gesture, and pause. The life of Socrates was one long conversation, as Mohammed's was one long harangue.

Nevertheless, it is also for what he is not that I set Socrates here beside Buddha, the Prophet of Islam, and the rest; and his differing emphasis on the principal factors of life, his differing vision and temperament will serve to set in clearer relief those men who, to speak literally, called the race to prayer or proclaimed the acceptable day of the Lord.

II.

If Socrates were with us to-day, the shorthand reporter would soon have his pithiest sayings verbatim, perhaps publishing them subject to the sage's own proof-reading. And the photographer would catch his characteristic poses, his broad face, his shabby mantle, his very stride; while the phonograph would respond with its infinitesimal and inerrant tracery to the modulations of his voice—for Socrates was a playful and curious spirit—and thus posterity might, merely by some care in preserving a few bits of dead wax and film, see his living image move across a screen or hear the old voice over and over, like one of the djinn in a magic box. Whimsical as this may seem, there may come a time, when once these marvelous inventions shall have been freed from their present associations as the fakirs of popular amusement, that serious and organized efforts will be made so to conserve such truly spiritual resources from the Heraclitic flux.

But the historic Socrates had not even the shorthand reporter. And how have we come by that which we have, and how far may we trust it? Plato makes Alcibiades say (in the Symposium, 32) that Socrates's conversation was reproduced by other people, almost like the songs of a rhapsodist. A certain Simon, a leather-cutter, we are told by Diogenes Laertius, published memoranda of conver-

sations held by Socrates in his shop. Xenophon, in the Memorabilia (I, 4), alludes to several collections of anecdotes about him; and in his Apology notes that others had written on the theme of Socrates's defense and death—among whom, besides Plato, we know the names of Lysias and Demetrius. Tradition speaks also of Socratic conversations by Æschines, and a few fragments of Antisthenes, Aristippus and other viri Socratici are still extant. Had we no other information than the items just cited, we should still be able to infer that men began early and continued long to put Socratic dialogue and anecdote on paper, like the followers of the rabbis and of Jesus. But did they put them down right? We are told that men in those days were in the habit of using the verbal memory to an extent unknown now—how the rhapsodists had Homer by heart, how redemption rose up in the Attic muse at Syracuse for whoever could repeat a drama of Euripides. But hundreds of actors and readers have as large a repertoire to-day; and in any case the verbal recollection of human talk is not the same as studying a part or a poem for recitation. Nevertheless, many ancient words ring very true; and scepticism must reckon with the alternative in denying historicity, say, to the beatitudes or the parable of the prodigal son.

Aside from the difficulty involved in our trusting implicitly the initial act of verbal recollection, we have to reckon with the spirit of the times. With the Gospel records are intermingled indubitably folk-legends, interpolations, and traces of theological bias. The Socratic record has problems of quite another sort: we must reckon with the literary fashion. Socratic dialogues became a literary genre; Socrates a dramatic figure in the service of the ideas of a number of men of letters. Again, carefully wrought speeches were a literary device in historical writing. Thucydides gives us the funeral oration pronounced by Pericles, and, though he says (I, 22) of the men he quotes that he tries to reproduce the sense of what was spoken, Thucydides, the most scientific historian of ancient times, is here the Greek rhetorician. The set speech was a favorite adornment with Livy, and not until very modern days did it disappear from the pages of historians. In the classical world the distinction between history and rhetoric, between fact and artistic effect, was imperfectly understood. The significance of this will become clearer in connection with the brief examination of Xenophon and Plato that follows.

The Memorabilia appear to have been written in the quiet of an old age at Xenophon's estate at Scillus, a few miles from
Olympia—long after he had returned to Greece as the leader of
the retreat of the Ten Thousand, some nine months following the
execution of the master. He seems to have been a member of
Socrates’s little circle for ten years, though, if we may judge from
his own writings (not to mention the significant fact that Plato
does not introduce him among the speakers of the Dialogues), he
was hardly one of its more speculative and clever personalities.
Xenophon had something in him, bluff, adventurous, un-Attic, that
took him off to the Orient as a soldier of fortune, or down into
Sparta, away from the softer culture and the unstable democracy
of the northern city. He was a veritable store-house of old-fash-
ioned pieties and superstitions, as we see from the Hellenica, the
Cyropedia, and the Anabasis, where oracles, dreams, thunder, earth-
quakes, and sneezing perpetually accompany the march of armies
and the councils of chiefs. His ethics have a practical bias; and
other questions of purely practical interest often engage his pen—
horsemanship and “domestic science,” though he writes with Attic
clarity and ease. Such is Xenophon, without reference to the Memora-
bilia. We feel at once a temperamental limitation: Xenophon can-
not readily understand and report Socrates—unless the historic Soc-
rates be indeed the somewhat delimited individual that he too often
does report. For the Socrates of the Memorabilia is now and then
a good deal of a Polonius, and, if Athens possessed a Socrates not
unlike him, it is a wonder, says Schleiermacher, that she was not
emptied of her burghers in a week. Again, those portions of the
Memorabilia which some critics have pronounced interpolations
others have shown to be precisely the most like Xenophon in his
other writings.

But the temperamental is not the only limitation. Boswell and
Eckermann were vastly smaller men than Johnson and Goethe; and
if Xenophon had had their objectivity and abnegation, he also might
conceivably have builted better than he knew. A closer comparison
of the Memorabilia with his other dialogues has a little shaken my
naive faith, expressed incidentally in a former book. The Hiero
with its interlocutors, Simonides of Ceos and the Tyrant of Syra-
cuse, is obviously and openly a literary fiction; the Economist and
the Symposium, Socratic dialogues, are likewise literary fiction,—
if only because in the former Xenophon quotes Socrates anent the
expedition of the Ten Thousand, and because in the latter the scene
is laid in a time when Xenophon was scarcely nine years old. Yet
they have much the same atmosphere of verisimilitude that has

*The Poet of Galilee, B. W. Huebsch, New York.*
long been the stock-argument for the documentary value of the Memorabilia.

It has likewise been urged against the work that it is a Tendenzschrift—a party pamphlet designed to refute either the criminal charges of the dicasts, or the philosophic one-sidedness of other biographers; saying to the former that Socrates was a good man and great, to the latter that Socrates was not merely a dialectitian rather a practical servant of his kind. In so far as this may be true, I do not see why the Memorabilia should be thrown out of court any more than any witness for the defense. Nevertheless it puts us on our guard against exaggeration, and adds one more complication to the problem.

The Socratic writings of Plato have not always been entirely misunderstood. Aristotle (Rhetoric, II, 23) quotes Aristippus as remarking in answer to a saying of Plato, “Well, our friend Socrates never said anything of the sort.” Diogenes Laertius (III, 35) repeats the anecdote that when Plato read the Lysis to him Socrates exclaimed, “What lies that youth has been making up about me!” We know that if the Platonic Socrates is the real Socrates, Plato himself as an original thinker vanishes from the history of philosophy; for practically all the beautiful myths, all the flashes of intuition, all the sustained dialectic in the Dialogues come out of the mouth of Socrates. We recognize the dramatist, the unfolder of a system, the master of a studied utterance where the protagonist-Socrates is too clever and his adversaries rather too stupid and redless for real life. There is no parallel in literature to the glorious impertinence of Plato in thus publicly masking great thought under a great name not his own. Even the independent Landor, in his Imaginary Conversations, tried to reproduce the point of view of his character.

Yet, as we think we get glimpses of the real man even in the perplexing pages of the prosaic Xenophon, so still more perhaps in the frank inventions of the poet-philosopher. As historically reliable, I believe, we may consider Plato (as indeed to some extent Xenophon) in (1) his references to Socrates’s personal appearance and habits; in (2) some statements of a biographical significance, and (3) in the intellectual and moral character of the man. We would know from Aristophanes—whose relations to Socrates and to the sources for knowledge of Socrates I shall postpone to a later chapter—we would know also from the martyrdom to which he was publicly condemned that Socrates bulked large in the public eye. Plato could have had no purpose for dramatically misrepresenting
his person, life, and character. It was indeed because the historic Socrates was so great that Plato chose him for the spokesman of his thought and the hero of his drama. We know moreover, how strikingly Plato's dramatic sketches of other historical figures coincide with what we learn about them elsewhere, as the brilliant and irresponsible Alcibiades and the grotesque mirth-maker Aristophanes in the Symposium—the same politician described by Thucydides and the same comic poet whose very words we may still hear. Again, wherever Plato and Xenophon are in close agreement, as in some sayings and in the story of the master's conduct at the trial and in prison, we—believe. Finally I would make mention of that unconscious fusing of our impressions, that intuitive reconstruction in the imagination—a process which, though it be too subtle to trace, is not too subjective in a measure to trust.

Aristotle's references, scattered through the Rhetoric, the Metaphysics, and especially the three Ethics, touch only on the thought of Socrates. Their purport will concern us later. It remains here to note that though he often cites "Socrates" by a kind of literary shorthand where he means the Platonic Socrates (as in his Politics, often the Socrates of the Republic), he had other Socratics besides his teacher of the Academy on whom to draw—Antisthenes, Aristippus, Æschines—and that (at least according to Joël) he neither mentions Xenophon nor apparently uses him as source. His brief citations of Socrates, however much exaggerated in their sophic implications by Joël, are too circumstantial, accord in thought too closely with the line of development among some Socratic schools, and bear out certain hints in Xenophon and Plato much too strikingly to be dismissed in toto as by Roeck.

We pass from the book back to the city and the man.

THE ATHENS OF SOCRATES.

I.

The fierce wars had been won. The destinies of the west had been established on a hill. Freedom, opportunity, personality were not to succumb to the crude and undifferentiated bulk of barbaric splendor and blind power fostered by Oriental routine. And these matters had been settled within sight of the city, and her people had borne a main part. Her old temples were ashes; her dead lay under the tumulus on the plain of Marathon and under the waves of the bay of Salamis; but the Persians were gone forever—from the broad prospect back to the Asian fen.

And now, with the querulous voice of Sparta already threaten-
ing across the Gulf of Corinth, the Attic folk gathered to an ominous festival of toil—men, women, and children, day after day, night after night—till from the debris of the old walls, from tombstones and temple-fragments, rose the larger ramparts of Themistocles. The fortification of the Piraeus followed: impregnable harbor for an impregnable city, in a few years to be united to the same by the long walls of Pericles. Athens could with safety house the stranger and repair her high places.

But she would do more. Under the admiral Aristides she formed, against possible danger from the east, the league of the Ægean islands and the Hellenic towns of the Asiatic coast. Under Cimon, son of that Miltiades, she became in the boyhood of Socrates a maritime power. Meanwhile "ship-money" was pouring into the treasury at Delos. It belonged to the league. Pericles, statesman, patriot, imperialist, orator, controlled the Athenian assembly: "Let us build a more glorious Athens."

He bade rifle the treasury. He called to Ictinus and Phidias. Ranged columns of costly Pentilic marble began to rise against the blue sky of Hellas on the Acropolis, and sculptured figures of ideal beauty took shape there under a hundred chisels, one of which may well have been held by the hand of the father of Socrates. Hordes of slaves laid the stone steps of the great portico that, from the base of the declivity just beyond the Agora and opposite the Areopagus, ascended the citadel. Between the Parthenon and the upper portals of the Propylaea now towered Athena Promachos, Athena Protectrix, colossal in bronze, the gilded tip of whose uplifted spear homecoming mariners saw from the sea.

And, in the vast Dionysiac theater, open to the heavens on the slope of the Acropolis farthest from the busy market-place, Æschylus, veteran of Marathon and Salamis, presented his Oresteia when Socrates was a boy of eleven. There too at thirty Socrates might have heard the singer of sweet Colonus and her child.

Then came the Peloponnesian war (431-404), the plague, the death of Pericles, the treachery of Alcibiades, the disaster of Syracuse, the defection of allies, the blockade of the Piraeus, the Spartan camp before the walls, famine, surrender, subjection. Then in 404 was established by the victor the rule of Critias and the Thirty Tyrants, whose expulsion by the patriot Thrasybulus and his train the next year left the city under a coarse and reactionary democracy, ineptly calling for a return to the stern virtues of the men of Marathon. If there be anything to relieve the tragedy of the fall of this imperial city, it is that these same years gave to mankind the ripened
wisdom and character of him who, in becoming her chief citizen, became for after-times a chief citizen of the world.

II.

But the eye will turn from artistic background and political turmoil to certain phases of the life and thought unfolding through these days of glory and change beneath the temple of the Goddess of Wisdom on the hill. For Athena Protectrix was not carried off by Sparta, nor melted into chains and fetters by the Thirty; and the inquiring intellect of the Athenian succumbed neither to luxury nor to civic disaster.

It was awake in the Agora, where under the plane-trees or within neighboring porches and porticos, the citizen, whether in his busy hours he were an artisan in gold-work or ceramics, or importer of Pontic grain, or wine-merchant, or shipper at Piraeus, or banker, or physician, or farmsteader of Attica, or keeper of bees on Hymettus, or pilot, or soldier, or public official—still found leisure for friend and stranger and for exchange of news and views. We of a colder zone, of a more secretive and sullen temper, and of a more competitive civilization, can scarcely grasp the educative function of the Agora, but unless we do we cannot understand Socrates.

This intellect was awake too in the social and political clubs, awake in that eminently Athenian institution, the dinner-party, where with the circling of the mixed wine from guest to guest, the entertainment was furnished not only by dancing girls and flute-students and jugglers, but by that witty and imaginative conversation of the banqueters which suggested to several Greek men of letters an effective setting for literary dialogue and has since made the word "symposium" synonymous with enlightened discussion; awake, again, in the playgrounds outside the walls, where the young men wrestled and ran—the familiar gymnasium, lyceum and academia, which, girt by colonnades and halls, became meeting-places for rhetoricians and sages, and shortly the seats of the greatest Greek schools of philosophy, still known by those names.

But nowhere, at least outside the tradition of Socrates himself, have we a more useful hint of the level of the Athenian intellect than in the Dionysiac theater. I pass over as irrelevant here the creative originality that could invent the dramatic form, and the artistic imagination that wrought masterpiece after masterpiece. I pass also over the astonishing fact that any city could furnish year in and year out occupants for those thirty thousand seats as
spectators for such exalted art. It is as another phase of Attic talk that the Greek drama concerns us here. Compared to the hurly-burly of “Lear” or the romance of events in “Romeo and Juliet,” there is no action. “All,” says Grote, “is talk. . . . debate, consultation, retort”: talk, moreover, on human conduct, on right and wrong, and the purposes of gods, becoming, as we shall note more than once later, frank scepticism with Euripides.

The Athenian listened to others because he was interested in some new thing or thought; and when he spoke he desired to speak well, whether at symposium, or in law court, or assembly. He had both the speculative interest in ideas, and the rhetorical interest in form and effect. These two interests had been immensely stimulated by the arrival in the city during the earlier and middle years of Socrates of several teachers from the outlying Hellenic world, attracted professionally to the now maritime and thus cosmopolitan city, whose temper they understood and the opportunities among whose ambitious and curious youth they may well have surmised. They were in the main honest men, traveling professors of philosophy and rhetoric, independent of one another in conduct and opinion, and never, despite the sanction of modern usage, forming a school or cult. The Sicilian Gorgias of Leontini, who has given his name to a dialogue of Plato, came to Athens in 427, envoy of his native city (so close was then the relation between political activity and oratory), and the Athenians are said to have been captivated by his metaphors, parallelisms, antitheses, and other clever devices of style. He became the euphuist of the gilded youth. Protagoras, after whom another of Plato’s dialogues is named, had come from Abdera. His interest was more in the (at that time new) problems of grammar and in argumentation. Like Gorgias, he served in the political world, being appointed by Pericles to draw up a code of laws for the new colony of Thurii, (as the philosopher Locke was to do later for Carolina). Such sophists instructed both in philosophy and in the arts of discourse. In the latter they aroused the hostility of the conservative by their attention to means and, as charged, by their indifference to ends, making for cleverness’ sake the worse appear the better reason; in the former by their scepticism, Protagoras indeed being compelled to flee on account of a pamphlet questioning the existence of the gods, which was burned in the market-place (411). They were always in bad repute because they took pay, so naive and spontaneous was the Athenian’s notion of the dignity of the professional educator and of systematized instruction. Yet they were the humanists and
encyclopedists of the fifth century, and Socrates himself is a greater
sophist, as will appear in the brief exposition later of the philosophic
antecedents of his method and ideas.

However, that the old religious beliefs are still living traditions
at Athens during these years may scarcely be disputed. Anaxagoras
is banished—because the sun is Phoebus Apollo, not a ball of fire.
Alcibiades sets the town by the ears for mutilating the busts of
Hermes and engaging in a mock celebration of the mysteries. Her
envoys go to Delphi, the navel of the earth, to consult the Pythian
priestess on affairs of state; her generals govern their military op-
erations by the phases of the moon; Pericles himself is advised in
a dream by Athene (if Plutarch is reporting correctly) of the
plant wherewith he heals Mnesicles, one of the contractors of the
Propylaea. Nor stand Parthenon and Erechtheum here above the
throng simply as museums of sculpture and halls for promenade.
The Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries, popular throughout Greece,
are venerated as indicated above, in Athens; and in secret grove or
hall the cult unfolds to the Attic neophytes, apparently by startling
dramatic presentations, the fantastic doctrine of metempsychosis
as its best hope of immortality, and inculcates primitive tabus
against meat and beans, along with its finer ethics of purity and
self-control. And, moreover, the Greek writers of the time, when
they speak of God (Θεός), by their use of the singular imply not
unity of the Godhead but indefiniteness, not monotheism springing
from a higher knowledge, but the ignorance of embarrassment and
uncertainty.

There is nothing for surprise that these things be so. Cicero, several hundred years later, it to fill a book, the De divi-
natione, with the grossest superstitions, not only chronicled, but
very plausibly and energetically defended. Two thousand years are
to follow in which millions in Christendom are to be good poly-
thestis, with prayers and formulas for a Pantheon quite as compli-
cated as that of Greece; years in which millions, not only in the
uplands and on the heath, but in the great cities and centers of
western culture, are to ring the temple bells in the thunderstorm
against the witches, to read their fates by the aspects of the stars,
to establish justice by red-hot iron, or to ward off diseases by un-
canny specifics hung round the neck or carried in the pocket. And,
if we can compass in imagination the whole human race—not only in
its history but in its geography—watch the Buddhist cranking his
prayer-mill, peep into the Indian's medicine-bag, hover on the out-
skirts of an African village during a ceremonial meal of human
flesh, confront the Australian fleeing in breech-clout from the pointed stick of death, count the Carolina negroes of an August night on their knees in the fields beneath the shooting stars, or steam into an American metropolis at an hour when fifty churches are simultaneously petitioning heaven for the conversion of a recalcitrant mayor, we must have borne home to us that, unto this present, superstition in one form or another—varying of course too in ethical content, but still from the point of view of the emancipated intellect, superstition—is all but a universal factor in human thought and practice. The folk-mind of ancient Athens reappears, as the folk-mind of the race, with gods and incantations and amulets differing chiefly as to name, in London and Paris and New York, though all the discoveries of science lie between. Down through time the ancestral clan of the enlightened has been the smallest organization on the planet.

Out in the southern Pacific, under the tropic of Capricorn, two thousand miles from Chili and a thousand miles from hithermost Polynesia, far off the beaten route of steam and sail, lies a small volcanic island, but a brown dot on the blue and green map of the world. It is the dwelling place of the dead idols of men. Colossal heads of bleak black stone, quarried by a populous and awful race that came no one knows whence, people its treeless slopes: some are still half carved in the pits never to be fully born of the primordial rock; some lie cracked and prone in the upper brush; others have rolled down to the narrow beach where the incoming tides are wearing them away; but many are standing erect, fantastic, austere, their gigantic necks firmly imbedded in the tufa and talus, with wide grim lips compressed, and with sightless eyes staring vacantly through times of solstice and trade-wind out upon the eternal seas. It is the dwelling place of the dead idols of men. For the men are gone. And then only do the idols die.

Down through the years the ancestral clan of the enlightened has been the smallest organization on the planet. Yet its forefathers, as we have seen, were not unrepresented at Athens. But they were not exclusively among the sophists, metaphysicians, and physicists. Thucydides, born in the same ward of the city with Socrates, though no sceptic in morals and one who lamented the break-down of the old religion, was an out and out rationalist as historian. Human nature through its thousand manifestations in individuals and communities, not the gods, had produced the events he recorded and examined; and he took little interest in prophecies of oracles and signs. And, though not an Athenian, even Herod-
otus (for all his proverbial credulity) had occasional rationalistic suspicions: those troubles in Thessaly were not due to Poseidon but to an earthquake, and the prophetic doves at Dodona were really only Egyptian priestesses. Euripides, influenced as he was by the rhetoric and philosophy of the sophists, represented his characters questioning the justice, even the existence, of the gods; and, as to life after death, that was matter of individual opinion, le grand peut-être, as Rabelais was to say many generations later. and, as to prophecy, "He who can reckon best is the best prophet"—just as God is on the side of the heaviest battalions. Euripides had not the Titanic energy of Aeschylus, the thunderous, nor did he like Sophocles see life steadily and see it whole; yet he was a much more restless and inquiring mind, and threw out more questions than either—a fact which has, quite as much as his romantic sentiment, I believe, been a source of his greater popularity from the beginning. Critias in the extensive fragment of his drama Sisyphus (quoted by Roeck, pages 167-8) was a declared atheist—

"'Twas first some man
Who fooled his fellows into god-beliefs."

Aristophanes, however, who brought on the stage with such reckless irreverence the gods along with men, was as far from the sceptical spirit as the medieval inventors of the Mysteries who depicted God-Father clad in white gloves, and patriarchs of the Bible engaging in horse-play. The things were so sure that they could be handled with jolly familiarity. A different matter altogether was Lucian's ridiculing burlesque several hundred years later.

Aristophanes, indeed, the laudator temporis acti, satirist of Euripides and the encyclopedists, is, perhaps, our best testimony to the persistence and importance of the conservative element which, unsuscptible of being reasoned away by modern scholarship as something entirely formal, furnishes environment and setting for those few radical minds that give the age its peculiar intellectual interest, as the age of enlightenment—the Athenian Aufklärung.

But the enlightenment brought its dangers; and the folk clung to the old gods and customs not simply because it was in all things very superstitious but perhaps quite as much because it had the instinct of moral self-preservation. We must remember that the absurdest superstitions may house the sturdiest ethics and the most genuine religious feeling and that the destruction of the former is too likely for a time to turn both the latter out of doors.

Into this world comes Socrates.

[to be continued.]