

Herford Oliver

This Giddy Globe



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This Giddy Globe:

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PART I

WHY IS THE GLOBE?

CHAPTER I

THE CREATION

*Six busy days it took in all
To make a World and plan its fall,
The seventh, SOMEONE said 'twas good
And rested, should you think he could?
Knowing what the result would be
There would have been no rest for me!*

Claire Beecher Kummer.

It takes much longer to write a Geography than, according to Moses, it took to create the World which it is the Geographer's business to describe; and since the Critic has been added to the list of created beings, it is no longer the fashion for the Author to pass judgment on his own work.

Let us imagine, however, that concealed in the cargo of Hypothetic Nebula destined for the construction of the Terrestrial Globe was a Protoplasmic Stowaway that sprang to being in the shape of a Critic just as the work of Creation was finished.

Would it not be interesting to speculate upon that Critic's reception of the freshly made World?

We may be sure that he would have found many things not to his liking; technical defects such as the treatment of grass and foliage in green instead of the proper purple; the tinting of the sky which any landscape painter will tell you would be more decorative done in turquoise green than cobalt blue.

Like the foolish Butterfly in the Talmud, who (to impress Mrs. Butterfly) stamped his tiny foot upon the dome of King Solomon's Temple, our Critic might have declared the World "Too flimsy in construction." He would certainly have found fault with the Solar System and the Plumbing – the absence of heat in Winter when there is the greater need of it and the paucity of moisture in the desert places where it never rains.

The comicality of the Ape family might have provoked a reluctant smile, but much more likely a lecture on the impropriety of descending to caricature in a serious work.

THE FIRST CALENDAR

The Creation of Heaven & Earth *in Six dayesGen: I*

At best, our Critic would have pronounced the freshly made World the work of a beginner, conceding perhaps that he “showed promise” and “might go far,” and if he wished to be very impressive indeed, he would pretend that he had penetrated the veil of Anonymity and hint darkly that he detected evident traces of a Feminine Touch!

In that, however, our Critic would only have been anticipating, for is there not at this very moment on the press a Suffrage edition (for women only) of the Rubaiyat, in which one verse is amended to read thus —

The ball no question makes of Ayes or Nos,
But right or left, as strikes the Player goes,
And SHE who tossed it down into the field,
SHE knows about it all, SHE knows, SHE knows!

PREFACE

STRICTLY PRIVATE

For the Reader Only

Dear Reader:

This is for *you*, and you only. We have concealed it between chapters one and two so that it will not meet any eye but yours.

We have a confession to make – it would be useless to attempt concealment – we have the Digression habit.

We have tried every known remedy but we fear it is incurable.

All we ask, Gentle Reader, is that when we stray too far you will favour us with a gentle reminder.

CHAPTER II

A LONG JUMP

It is a long jump from Moses, the author of the first work on Geography, to Peter Simple.

When the acrobatic reader has fetched his breath and looks back at the fearsome list of Geographers he has skipped – Strabo, Anaximander, Hecatoëus, Democritus, Eudoxus, Ephorus, Dicæarchus, Erasthones, Polybius, Posidonius and Charles F. King, – he may well be thankful to find he has fallen upon his feet.

The Geographer's task is endless.

The Planet he endeavours to portray is perpetually changing its appearance. After thousands and thousands of years, it is no nearer completion than it was in the beginning.

The Sea with its white teeth bites the edges of the continents into new shapes, as a child bites the edges of a biscuit. The glaciers file away the mountains into valleys and plains. Beneath the ocean busy insects are building the foundations of new continents and, under the earth, Fiery Demons are ready at all times to burst forth and help to destroy the old ones.

It really begins to look as if this Planet would never be finished.

In the first chapter of his geography, Moses tells us there were only two people in the world.

Today we are preparing to put up the “standing room only” notice. In another thousand years, for aught we know, the earth may be going round dark and tenantless and bearing the sign “To Let.” What does it matter to us? What are we but microscopic weevils in the mouldy crust of earth? Sufficient unto the day is the weevil thereof.

CHAPTER III

THE GIDDY GLOBE

Men of Science, who delight in applying harsh terms to things that cannot talk back, have called this Giddy Globe an Oblate Spheroid.

Francis Bacon called it a Bubble; Shakespeare, an Oyster; Rossetti, a Midge; and W. S. Gilbert addresses it familiarly as a Ball —

Roll on, thou ball, roll on!
Through pathless realms of Space
Roll on!
What though I'm in a sorry case?
What though I cannot meet my bills?
What though I suffer toothache's ills?
What though I swallow countless pills?
Never you mind
Roll on!

(It rolls on.)

But these people belong to a privileged class that is encouraged (even paid) to distort the language, and they must not be taken too literally.

The Giddy Globe is really quite large, not to say obese.

Her waist measurement is no less than twenty-five thousand

miles. In the hope of reducing it, the earth takes unceasing and violent exercise, but though she spins round on one toe at the rate of a thousand miles an hour every day, and round the sun once a year, she does not succeed in taking off a single mile or keeping even comfortably warm all over.

No wonder the globe is giddy!

QUESTIONS

Explain the Nebular Hypothesis.

State briefly the electromagnetic constituents of the Aurora Borealis, and explain their relation to the Hertzian Waves.

Define the difference between the Hertzian Wave and the Marcel Wave.

CHAPTER IV

THE USE OF THE GLOBE

What is the Earth for? Nobody knows. Some say the Earth was made to supply the wants of Man, but as Man is part and parcel of the Earth herself, dust of her dust, mould of her mould, it does not answer the question.

From an instantaneous photograph of animal cracker.

Owing to the high price of living the cow was partially eaten by the author before the photograph could be taken.

To be sure the Earth produces the Tobacco Plant, and many other things that we classify among the needs of Man, including the “Friendly Cow” —

She walks among the flowers sweet
And chews and chews and chews,
And turns them into friendly meat,
And pleasant boots and shoes.

But the “Friendly Cow” may in her secret heart regard the classification as anything but friendly. For all we know, in the hidden scheme of Creation, the Cow may herself be the subject for ultimate evolution into the Perfect Being, and Man (to reverse Darwin), descending through the Ape to ever lower planes, only a discarded experiment.

And the Tobacco Plant? In the course of time there may be no Tobacco Plant.

Should the American People be again tempted to wage a World War for Freedom, they may find on their return that the Tobacco Plants have gone to join the Grape Vines of California!

Our only hope will then be that smoking is permitted in Heaven¹

QUESTIONS

What is "Friendship"?

Why is the Cow "friendly"?

Is the Oyster friendly?

When Prohibition is applied to tobacco will cigars containing less than one-half of one per cent tobacco be permitted?

¹ The Author is digressing. *The Reader.*

CHAPTER V

THE EQUATOR

The Earth is self-centred. Poised on an imaginary toe, she pirouettes round her self-centre, at the rate of over a thousand miles an hour.

We say imaginary toe because the Earth, owing to the enormous size of her waist, has never been able to see it.

To anyone with a waist measurement of twenty-five thousand miles the very existence of toes is purely problematical.

To wear an actual belt round a waist of such dimensions would be impossible even if it could be of any use. Instead, therefore, the Earth wears round her middle an imaginary line called the Equator.

To give this imaginary belt some excuse for existence we have depicted the Earth in an imaginary ballet skirt, which without in any way hampering her movements complies with the strict regulations pertaining to feminine attire.

Being self-centred, the Earth has naturally an exaggerated sense of self-esteem.

Other Spheres of equal or greater importance are referred to as "Luminaries" and supposed to exist chiefly for the purpose of furnishing light when the Sun and Moon are otherwise engaged.

Oh would some Power the giftie gie her

To see, as other Planets see her!

QUESTIONS

Can an imaginary line be said to exist?

If not, why does it need an excuse for existence?

CHAPTER VI

THE EARTH'S CRUST

Matter-of-fact Geologists speak of the Earth's Crust as if there were only one Crust.

Thoughtful people (like ourselves) who can read between imaginary lines, know that there are (as in a pie) two Crusts, the Upper Crust and the Under Crust.

The Upper Crust is pleasantly situated on the top and is rich and agreeable and much sought after.

The Under Crust is soggy and disagreeable. The only apparent reason for its existence is to hold up the Upper Crust.

To quote the eminent Nonsensologist Gelett Burgess —

The Upper Crust is light as snow
And gay with sugar-rime;
The Under Crust must stay below,
It has a horrid time.

When in the course of time the Upper Crust becomes too rich and heavy for the popular taste, the Social Pie flops over and the Under Crust becomes the Upper Crust.

These periodic flip-flops of the Social Pie are called Revolutions.

You would think that a Revolving Pie would be a disturbing

thing to have in one's system, but the Giddy Globe doesn't seem to mind it in the least.

Balanced on an imaginary toe, she continues to pirouette at the rate of a thousand miles an hour, just as if nothing were the matter.

The latest specimen of Acrobatic Pastry is after a Russian recipe.

The Bolshevik Pie has no Upper Crust at all and is declared by the leading Chefs of Europe to be unfit for human consumption, but the proof of the Pie is in the eating, how would you like to try just a —²

Oh, very well! We never did care much for pie anyway, not even for breakfast.

² Take it away, or we won't read another word! *The Reader*.

CHAPTER VII

THE TEMPERATURE OF THE GLOBE

In spite of incessant and violent exercise, the Giddy Globe (as we have remarked before) is unable to keep comfortably warm all over.

Her Temperature varies from intense cold at her upper and lower extremities to fever heat in the region of her equatorial diaphragm.

Ancient Geographers indicated these variations of temperature by means of *Zones*.

The Term *Zone* is derived from the Greek word ζώνη a Belt or Girdle, and a Girdle in the days of the First Geography Book was the principal (if not the only) garment of a well dressed person.

Today, however, the Girdle is no longer accepted as a complete costume.

No modern Costumer would countenance such a “model,” it would be too easy to copy and consequently unprofitable.

Even the “Knee-plus-ultra” of Newport or Palm Beach Society would hesitate to pose for the Sunday Supplement Photographer in a one-piece Bathing Girdle.

You might explore the World of Dress, from the Land of the Midnight Follies to the Uttermost parts of Greenwich Village

and find nothing exactly like it.

It is on its way, to be sure, but it will never be fashionable until —

The two extremes of décolleté
Of Ballroom and of Bathing Beach
Here meet in a bewildering way
And mingle all the charms of each.

Why, then, in this up-to-date Geography Book, should we depict the Giddy Globe in an obsolete hoop skirt of imaginary Zones?

In striving to answer the question, we have hit upon a pleasing compromise.

At least it is up-to-date.

A. and E. are the two extremities of the Giddy Globe, which are quite bare.

They correspond to the Frigid Zones.

C. is the Corset, which being hot and uncomfortable corresponds to the Torrid.

D. is — that is to say are —³

³ Pardon us for interrupting — but we thought this was to be a geography book. *The Reader*.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AGE OF THE GLOBE

Some people are sensitive about their ages. The Giddy Globe has never told us hers.

Rude men of science, after careful examination, declare she can't be a day under five billion years old.

Theologians, ever tactful in feminine matters, set her down as a shrinking young thing of barely four thousand summers.

Real delicacy of feeling goes with the bulging tum rather than with the bulging forehead; who ever saw a thin Bishop or a fat man of science!

Happy the man with the bulging Tum,
Who smiles and smiles and is never glum! —
But alas for the man with the bulging brow,
If he wanted to smile, he wouldn't know how!

If the Giddy Globe asked *us* to guess her age, we should say, without a moment's hesitation, "Whatever it is you certainly don't look it!"

Astronomers may say what they like, a Planet is as old as it looks, especially if it is a Lady-Planet, and we have seen ours when she didn't look a June day over sixteen! and, not having a bulging forehead, we told her so!

Astronomers think themselves so wise, but what do they know about the sex of the Planets?

With the exception of Mother Earth and old Sol Phœbus, — nothing!

If you asked an Astronomer whether the Pleiad girls were really the daughters of Atlas, or what Jupiter was doing with eight Moons (if they *were* Moons), he would think you were trifling with him.

But is it not possible that the old Greek tales were the garbled gossip of an age-forgotten science of which we have only the A.B.C.?

If it is Love that makes the world go round (and who can prove that it isn't?), what makes the other Planets go round?

How about the movements of the Heavenly Bodies?

How about —⁴

Quite right! Quite right! how we do run on!

⁴ This is all very interesting, but don't you think perhaps it is —*The Reader*.

CHAPTER IX

THE FACE OF THE GLOBE

There are no good photographs of the Giddy Globe; she refuses to sit.

Imagine attempting to photograph an obese and flighty Spheroid who spends her time pirouetting round in a circle with all her might and main.

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