

## THE WRITING OF THE WORLD'S TRAGEDY

It has been necessary to sketch this part of my life in order to exhibit the atmosphere which I am bound to connect with Christianity, or at least English Christianity.

Certainly the vast majority of English people, of those who are religious at all, belong either to Evangelicalism or Dissent; and the tyranny of these is nearly if not quite as bad as that of the Plymouth Brethren.

I had, however, cut myself adrift from all these things.

I had lived among the great men of the earth, and the great mountains of the earth.

Pollitt had made a poet of me; Eckenstein had made a man of me; Cecil Jones and Allan Bennett had made a God of me. I had forgotten the Plymouth Brethren!

But early in this spring, I went down to Eastbourne to my mother's house, and some of the old bitterness came back.

In her house were two vile old women, hypocrites and slaves to the marrow. The mere meanness and old-maid-ishness of it would have sickened me. These manglebitten cats!

But there was worse. Only one food was on the table for breakfast, lunch, and dinner; and that food cold boiled Jesus. I stomached it well enough—God's blood! I had my belly full of yore and knew to despise it—but in vain I tried to talk of other things. The Boulter blasphemy case was on, and the cold boiled Jesus was so high that it literally stank. So did the women! I stood it for

breakfast, I stood it for lunch, I stood it for tea—  
but 'twasn't tea, 'twas Jesus!

Dinner came; cold boiled Jesus, and the scrag  
end of it at that!

I went out and stood by the sea. I was lost in  
reverie. Here were these hags of hell, the product  
of an unvarying diet of cold boiled Jesus!

By God! could I not save somebody? These  
had once been fresh healthy English girls, fit for  
life and laughter. C. B. J. had mummified them to  
what they were. I would be the Saviour of the  
future!

I must have wandered in my meditation; for  
presently I found myself lying on the grass under  
the full moon and the stars, the sea's low plash  
beneath my feet, the soft breeze blowing over me, a  
whisper—oh essence of the winds and of the seas  
of the world!—in my ears (I seem to remember  
even now that her name was Mabel—thank you,  
Mabel!) and then I gazed upon the moon and  
vowed myself knight of Artemis, to bring the truth  
into this England of hypocrisy, light in its  
superstition of rationalism, love in its prudery,  
chastity into its whoredom!

So I swore, and rose up and kissed Mabel and  
went home in the night of the holy vision—for the  
god Pan appeared to me, and abode in me and I in  
him—and wrote for four nights night by night, until  
the World's Tragedy lay finished and perfect before  
me.

All day I kept myself up to the mark by the stern  
penance of C. B. J.; all night I wrote—and wrote.

So fierce I wrote that—six months later—I have  
written no word since. I have poured forth all the  
vials, and loosed all the seals. From that supreme  
effort I am fallen exhausted—until, as it may  
chance, the Gods renew my vigour.

And all my other work I count as nothing; for I  
have written this in Pan, and in Pan I am content.  
To the boys and girls of England I give my book,  
the charter of their freedom.