

**A SHAKER'S ANSWER TO THE
OFT-REPEATED QUESTION,
"WHAT WOULD BECOME OF THE
WORLD IF ALL SHOULD BECOME
SHAKERS !"**

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A Shaker's Answer to the Oft-repeated Question, "What Would Become of the world ip all should become shakers !" by R. W. Pelham

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R. W. PELHAM

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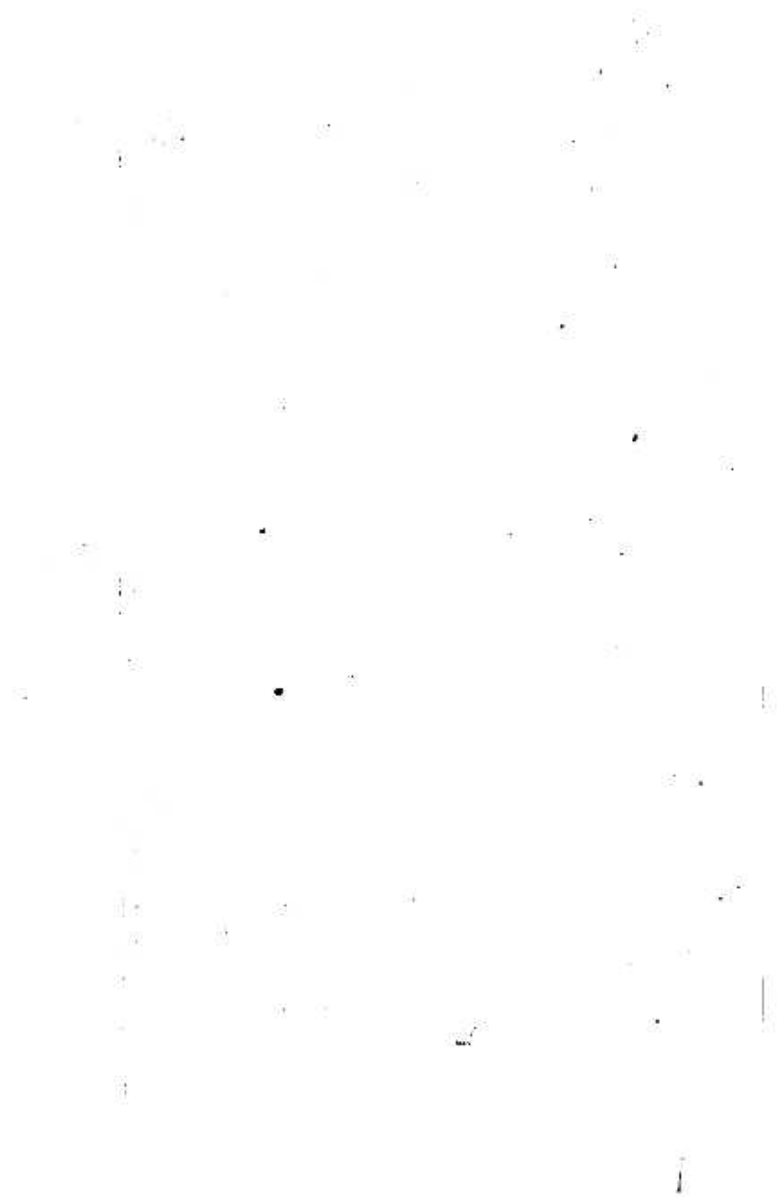
"WHAT WOULD BECOME OF THE WORLD IF ALL
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TO A LETTER FROM AN INQUIRER.

W—E —.

DEAR FRIEND, — Your letter of inquiry and suggestions, for the improvement of our religious community, came duly. It, being addressed to the Society at large, fell into the writer's hands, who respectfully returns you an answer.

Looking into the spirit of your epistle, notwithstanding the remoteness of its views from our own, we see the unmistakable marks of candor, which always command our respect; and we hope we shall succeed in giving you both a sincere and friendly reply.

You begin where most others do who controvert our principles, arguing the awful consequences of living continent lives if *universally* adopted. We hesitate not to acknowledge, that, in such a case, the consequences you depict would

certainly ensue; but we fail to see that the bringing to an end of this wicked world would be "a great wrong."

Most nominal Christians believe it will come to an end in a much less merciful way. You further observe: "No one can conscientiously advocate any thing which he or she would not wish every one else to advocate and practise." This sentiment doubtless appears from your standpoint as an incontrovertible truth; but from our point of view there is no truth in it. The great Architect has divers grades of workmen, all necessary in their places, in order to carry on the work, and complete the building.

Let not those whose business it is to work in the mud, and make brick, imagine that theirs is the all-important business, and strive to pull down the bricklayer, the plasterer, the painter, and those qualified to give the finishing touches of taste and ornament, into the mud and drudgery of brick-making. Nor let these brick-makers imagine that they can do the work of all the other classes of workmen, and make the bricks too. Let every one of each class work on in his

own calling, till the Master shall call him to another grade of duty, and not foolishly "wish every one else to advocate and practise his trade." My friend, we are Christians,—believers in and followers of Jesus the Christ. He clearly recognized this distinction in the condition of men. On a certain occasion his disciples said to him, "If the case of the man be so with a wife, it is not good to marry." But he said to them, "All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given," . . . "there be eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matt. xix, 10). Again he says, "Many shall be called, but *few* chosen. Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads to life, and *few* there be that find it. Jesus both advocated and lived the life that we practise; and as he evidently did not believe that many in his day were qualified or "able" to live the same life, but considered such ability as a peculiar gift of God, it is not probable that so wise and good a man "desired" that which he knew to be impossible; and so it is with us. We leave this matter

in the hands of the Great Master-builder, knowing that none can come to us except the Father draw him; and that all, in their several stations, are "safe in the hand of one disposing power." In what I have further to write, I shall be more general in my remarks, without noticing other passages in your communication. Most of those who object to our faith and practice bring forward, as you have done, the formidable charge, that we abstain from multiplying the human species. They argue that abstinence from marriage and procreation is a violation of the laws of Nature, and therefore "a great wrong." This argument and conclusion are based on the fact of the existence of the two sexes, and that Nature has furnished them with reproductive powers. If we appeal to the laws of Nature, we must ascertain, as far as we can, the operations of Nature in her varied productions, which we see around us. It is undoubtedly a law of Nature, that the use of the reproductive powers, under normal conditions, will produce offspring; but that Nature has no law requiring that those powers should absolutely be used, is most obvious. If it is a law of Nature

that reproductive powers, in every individual being and thing possessing them, must be used for reproduction, then Nature violates her own laws. Every vegetable seed has organs of reproduction; and every bird or other animal that devours such seed, though actuated by Nature's laws to do so, must, according to those objectors, violate Nature's laws by preventing those reproductive organs from being put to the only use they are, in their esteem, designed for. Every man, woman, or child that eats bread, and every animal that devours vegetables or seeds of any kind, would violate Nature's laws, as every kernel of grain thus consumed has the organs of reproduction. The fact is plain: Nature has no law requiring the reproductive organs to be used merely because they exist. The sacrifice of these organs to a higher use and nobler purpose is *Nature's general law*. Their use for reproduction is incidental and exceptional. Nature evidently designed vastly the greater portion of vegetable seeds for the support of animal life, and thus to pass into a higher grade of being, at the expense and destruction of their use for reproduction; only reserving a small proportion for reproductive purposes.