

may have gone to church to please his wife, or his relatives and friends, or to divert attention from his own convictions in an age when heresy was so dangerous. He was not an apostle, and could hardly be expected to graduate as a martyr. "Atheistical or irreligious," our author declares, "he evidently was not. His general spirit is religious." But this is a matter of opinion, and other critics have taken a very different view. What does Mr. Goldwin Smith mean by "religious"? If he defined the word, or his use of it, we might discuss the matter. But in the absence of definition we might simply answer what he would assure us that he never meant. For, at this time of day, the word "religious" has contracted a dangerous ambiguity.

After referring to the turbulence of that age in the religious sphere, Mr. Goldwin Smith remarks that difference of opinion on the gravest questions was not confined to the Catholics and Protestants.

"Religious controversies and wars had not failed to produce their natural effect in breeding among men of more daring spirit, or perhaps more libertine lives, total scepticism or indifference to religion. Among the Bohemians of the theatre this tendency was likely to prevail. Marlowe is maligned as a blatant Atheist, an utterer of horrible and damnable opinions, who had written a book against the Trinity and defamed Christ. The imputation was extended to other Bohemians."

Reference is then made to Giordano Bruno, the great Freethought martyr, whose odyssey as a hunted heretic included a visit to England. He found much to disgust him at Oxford.

"But in London he found to his satisfaction comparative freedom of thought and speech. A circle, of which Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Fulke Greville were the chiefs, and of which Bruno was a member, discussed questions of science and philosophy with closed doors. So far as social position was concerned, Shakespeare might possibly have found his way into that circle."

One would like to know that Shakespeare and Bruno really met in London. Each would have felt the other's supreme greatness. And what a thought, that the world's supreme poet had clasped the hand of the world's supreme martyr!

We have another quotation to make from Mr. Goldwin Smith. When he comes to Shakespeare's views of life and death, he is compelled to write as follows:

"When Shakespeare touches the problem of human existence or that of the world to come, we cannot help feeling that we are in contact with a mind more like that of Giordano Bruno, or rather that of the Elizabethan liberals, than that of an orthodox Anglican Divine. The soliloquy in 'Hamlet' presents nothing sceptical; yet it and Hamlet's general utterances are pervaded by the spirit of one to whom the state of man, present and future, is an unsolved mystery. We do not know 'in that sleep of death what dreams may come.' The world beyond the grave is 'the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns.' To die is to 'go we know not where.' 'We are such stuff as dreams are made on; and our little life is rounded with a sleep.' This globe of ours, 'like an unsubstantial pageant, will vanish and leave not a wreck [rack?] behind.' That Shakespeare himself speaks in such passages cannot be affirmed, but may surely, without much improbability, be divined."

We think this is true as far as it goes. We also think it is far from being the whole truth. It seems to us that it can be *proved* that Shakespeare himself speaks in such passages. The very same sentiments about life and death are assigned to all his characters who are distinguished by intellectual power. Differ as they may in other respects; let them be mild or daring, noble or

wicked, scrupulously just or daringly ambitious; if they possess *intellect* they all speak essentially the same language in regard to death. Hamlet speaks like Macbeth, and Prospero like Cæsar. It may, of course, be replied that Shakespeare, as a great dramatic artist, only made these lofty ones speak in character. But that comes to the very same thing in the end. It implies that Shakespeare felt those sceptical sentiments about "the great perhaps" to be appropriate to men of powerful intelligence. And what is that, at bottom, but a confession that those sentiments were his own?

No person in the whole gallery of Shakespeare's creations ever derives the least consolation from the thought of an after-life. More than one shrink from it in apprehension and terror. Shakespeare had looked into the great abyss, when the sun was shining and in the silent watches of the night, and he saw within it the doom of all mortality. That he was, nevertheless, the great poet of the joy of life, only proves that his colossal genius was wedded to invincible sanity.

## Some Social Observances,

### THE CHURCH.

A REASON why the church is one of the most important society factors known is that it is a regular thing. Receptions are intermittent, calls may be delayed, dinners restricted, but the church is regular and gregarious enough to cover a multitude of sins.

A woman in church has an opportunity to observe her social superior which that individual would never otherwise bestow on her. The church also offers cover for quiet reflection and observation, which are invaluable to the society woman.

The ideal church consists of a mixed element. Spencer's law that we develop from homogeneity to heterogeneity is quite proper here. Simplicity characterized the church at first; but this was too primitive to last. A few millionaires and a greater number of semi-millionaires are indispensable to the working of the church that aims to preserve the highest social traditions.

There should also be a sprinkling of the poor. They give an air of respectability to the whole affair.

Church is held one day in the week and is a place where women assemble to think over their neighbors' sins and what they wear.

Men once went to church, but they have been driven away by the clergy. Now they stay away and play golf.

Church-going is one of the most delightful social functions when properly indulged in. It serves also as a soothing amelioration for certain inconsistencies, while in its revised and modern form it is not irritating enough to be disagreeable. It is a medium of intercourse between those who have got there and those who want to.

Social aspirants cannot always expect to get admitted at once to the best churches. But money helps; and, once in the clergyman may introduce you to some of the leaders if you are good and practise the best form.

Without church-going many people to-day would not be in society.—Puck.

Sceptic—"You still believe in Spiritualism, and yet at the *seance* last night the medium called up your grandmother, and she didn't know how many daughters she had." Believer—"Oh, well, grandmother's memory was getting very poor a few days before she died."