

would prove guilt, and sentence would be involved in every indictment.

Assuming that Shakespeare's marriage was unfortunate and unhappy, Mr. Goldwin Smith says:

"All this considered, we have reason to be thankful for the essential soundness of Shakespeare's morality, especially with regard to marriage. There is not in him anything of the evil spirit of the Restoration drama. Matrimony with him is always holy, and though attacks upon its sanctity form the subject of more than one of his plots, he carries it through them inviolate. There is no Don Juan among his heroes."

Substantially we think this is undeniable. Shakespeare understood—nay, he realized, which is much more—that human society and civilization are founded, first upon affection, and secondly upon discipline. "Conscience is born of love," he says in one of his sonnets; and that is the whole primary philosophy of evolution in a nutshell. But the time comes when love and affection, which is one of its reflexes, need discipline in the interest both of the individual and of the social organism. Order, custom, and habit are as necessary as freedom and spontaneity; in other words, the conservative element is as necessary as the progressive. Now the family is the first degree of social order, and no one has yet shown how the family is possible without marriage. The two together secure—not perfectly, but as far as may be—the socialization of the sexual impulse. Let that instinct, and the other great instinct of self-preservation—under which all our emotions may be subsumed—once have absolute free play, unchecked by laws, forms, and social regulations, and we should soon fall back through barbarism into savagery. Shakespeare puts this in his incomparable way, at the close of that long and wonderful passage of social philosophy in "Troilus and Cressida":

"Then everything includes itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite;
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And, last, eat up himself."

We fully agree with Mr. Goldwin Smith on this point, but we differ from him on a collateral topic.

"It must be owned that in 'Measure for Measure,' in some of the Falstaff scenes, and elsewhere, Shakespeare plays with certain subjects in a way suggestive of looseness in sexual morality."

Jack Falstaff talks in character. Huxley, in a letter to Grant Allen, called "Honest Jack" a great philosopher. This is true enough, but his philosophy began and ended with the world he lived in. On the sexual side he was a pure (or impure) anarchist. He talks as such, and acts as such. We may call him a most delightful old rascal. But one Jack Falstaff is enough at a time, and Shakespeare drew but one; and that he drew him with as much loving care as he drew Hamlet only proves the astonishing catholicity of his genius. With regard to certain scenes and passages in "Measure for Measure," we admit that they display looseness in sexual morality, but not that they are suggestive of it. Coleridge disliked that play; probably not for the rather fantastic reasons he assigned, but because of its grim and relentless treatment of the darker sides of human nature. Yet through all the mire of that tremendous drama the noble Isabella moves with spotless and radiant purity. In presence of that divine woman, the weak and profligate Lucio exclaims: "I hold you for a thing enskied and sainted." He was unable to perceive the possibility of a taint in her adorable character.

III.—HIS VIEWS ON LIFE AND DEATH.

We should like to follow Mr. Goldwin Smith through several other applications of his criteria, particularly as to Shakespeare's social and political leanings, and more especially as to his view of the natural and inevitable relation of the sexes. But we feel that our review must now be concluded, and we desire to devote the whole of this instalment of it to Shakespeare's views of life and death. This is a subject, no doubt, on which it is possible for different persons to hold a great variety of opinions. Just as Shakespeare has been shown to have followed a considerable number of trades and professions—which is a tribute to the universality of his information—so he has been argued to have been a Roman Catholic, a member of the Church of England, and a Nonconformist. Our own opinion, for which reasons will be given presently, is that he was neither. Some of the principal commentators have noticed, with regret and even with dismay, what they are pleased to call the levity with which he too often treats religious topics. Gifford, the zealous editor of Ben Jonson, called Shakespeare the coryphæus of profanity. He certainly put into the mouths of clowns and fools, for whom he could claim a traditional license, some remarkable thrusts at the tenets of the Christian religion. We intend to elaborate this point in our projected work on Shakespeare. For the present it must suffice to call the reader's attention to it. Those who have read the plays carefully will recollect many instances. We must likewise remark that more than one commentator has dwelt upon the great poet's scepticism. Mr. Green, the historian, for instance, admits that he stood outside all Churches and outside all religion. It will be apparent, therefore, that we are far from being alone in our opinion of Shakespeare's religious (or irreligious) convictions.

Mr. Goldwin Smith is very certain that Shakespeare was not a Nonconformist. He threw ridicule upon the Puritans. "Least of all," Mr. Smith says, "can it be maintained that Shakespeare was a Roman Catholic." His noble presentation of the friar in "Romeo and Juliet" only shows that he was "a large-minded artist." He was true to nature, and he knew that there were good as well as bad and indifferent in the army of priests and monks. Elsewhere he makes a character speak of something being as fit "as the nun's lips to the friar's mouth," and a host of similar things might be quoted if we had room for them. We are also glad to hear Mr. Goldwin Smith declare his view that "The ghost and the purgatory in 'Hamlet' are evidently a mere part of the fiction." This is true all round. The supernatural in Shakespeare is mere stage machinery. It is never allowed to interfere really with the natural development of the plot and characters, or to precipitate a catastrophe. Even in "Hamlet," where the ghost appears so decisively, as a superficial reader might easily imagine, it will be found on a close examination that it does not actually hasten the natural progress of events. Further, we beg the reader to note that the supernatural which Shakespeare uses as stage machinery is never distinctively Christian. He introduces no angels or devils. Ghosts, fairies, and fates—for such are the so-called witches in "Macbeth"—belong to the immemorial primitive superstition of mankind; and, instead of being distinctively Christian, are distinctively anti-Christian.

Mr. Goldwin Smith says we may "safely" take it that Shakespeare was "a Conformist." But we may just as "safely" take the opposite. Whether he was a church-goer, Mr. Goldwin Smith says, we have "no means of telling." Nor does it very much matter. He