

CHURCH THOUGHTS BY A LAYMAN.

THE LATE EARL OF SHAFTSBURY.

THE death of the good Earl Shaftsbury has removed one of the highest and brightest figures of this era in connection with social reform. Levellers may say with Gifford:

"What boots it on the lineal tree to trace,
Through many a branch the founders of our race?"

or exclaim, "So yourself be good—a fig for your grandfather!" but science confirms the old belief in "blood," in heredity, and the late Earl illustrates the theory, for he comes as a direct descendant from the first Earl of the name, who, after a bitter struggle won for England the "Habeas Corpus Act," and secured for the Judges, independence of the Crown. Eminently noble beyond the rank of his order, he was to the white slaves of English industry what Wilberforce and Clarkson were to the less pitiable negroes of West Indian plantations. The perfect emancipation of the class for whom he laboured is not fully accomplished. But the tyrannous power of avarice is no longer absolute over the bodies and souls of working children, women and men. Between them made helpless by galling necessities and morally paralysed by ignorance, and their all powerful oppressors, the law of a Christian Legislature raises a shield of defense. The stifled moans of naked children toiling as beasts of burden in the hot foul air of a pit have been hushed. The night sobbing of heart-broken mothers as the breaking dawn calls their darling girls to slavery in the mine or shop, called them to face the sleet of winter in their dark tramp in hunger and nakedness, these bitter woes no longer appeal to Heaven for vengeance on a land cursed by oppression so cruel. It is hardly credible that in England within the days of the living, children from seven years of age upward were daily wielding hammers in smithies, painting crockery in rooms heated to 130°, carrying clay in the brick yards, and toiling down the coal mines, sometimes girls were working entirely naked! There is even yet a great, a holy work to be done in lifting the life of the human toilers to a higher plane of comfort, of decency, of opportunity. That work is still going on. Whatever success is achieved the glory of it will brighten the lustre of the pioneer philanthropist who burst through the bars of ancient class prejudice, broke down the more dangerous obstructions of modern social philosophy, and the all but omnipotent resistance of the wealthy manufacturers, in his efforts to civilize, to Christianize, the labour outcasts whose lives were degradation and death their only hope. Whosoever has a heart in him must reverence the memory of Ashley, whose zealous labours to ransom the oppressed workers in mines and factories will be his ever brightening renown in ages to come. Not to him alone but to the Elder Peel, to Oastler, the fiery champion of the factory slave, to Disraeli, Hobhouse, Althorpe, Cross, and others of less note, honor is due.

Lord Ashley championed those white slave^s of England and won over their heartless task masters, led by their Pharaoh hearted captain John Bright, a victory for God and Humanity. That victory was the successful assertion of a great principle, that in a Christian land Christian ideas in regard to the relationships between employers and employed are justly within the province of the Legislature to enforce. Lord Ashley asking the question, "Am I my brothers keeper?" answered with a generous, frank, loving, "Yes!" But Mr. Bright answered this question with a stern Puritan "No!" Lord Ashley, the aristocrat, the Churchman, recognised the supremacy of the claims of brotherhood over the hard, godless, soulless doctrines of political economy. The democrat, leveller, the anti-Church Mr. Bright, argued that the man who bought the labour of his fellow man had towards him no responsibilities beyond the duty to himself of paying the meanest wages for which work could be got. Mr. Bright's school held in fact that the master had a right to grind wage earners down to the basest poverty for his own enrichment. Even Mr. Fawcett contended that the State has no right to prevent married women taking their babes to the factory and there slowly murdering them by enforced neglect. But political economy lowered its flag before the Cross, when England gave the world a priceless lesson by guiding its legislation by Christian principles, as became a Christian nation. Well may Mr. Bright and his followers hate the State Church which so foiled their avarice by redeeming the victims of their greed.

As a churchman the memory of the late Earl is memorable. He lifted Evangelicalism out of a fatal quagmire. It was fast becoming a mere form of sentimentalism inspired by calvanistic self complacency. And Shaftsbury turned the forces of evangelicals towards practical works of social reform, "those good works" which this party regarded and slighted as in some way "contrary to the Gospel." We once needed help in an educational effort which was frowned upon by the clergy of this school. A few friends invited Lord Shaftsbury to address a meeting in our behalf. His reply came next post. Then there was rustling in the party dove cots, then was done for an Earl what for Christ's sorrow laden people had been coldly refused! Earl Shaftsbury came, saw, spoke, and conquered. A good work yet abides as the fruit of the splendid speech he delivered years ago. The late Earl had an impressive aspect which seemed to harmonize well with his powerful, though somewhat too solemn style as a platform speaker. He was not an orator in the sense of art, but was indeed one in the higher sense of—effect. He spoke with ease, with apparent spontaneity, but of preparation, even phrasal study, there were signs in the order of his more important sentences, in the elaboration of his perorations, as well as proofs in the orderly design and sequential flow of his speeches. His enunciation was distinct, his voice was clear, full in volume, resonant also in quality, hence a pleasant one to hear. He "filled" a large audience room without

visible effort. Indeed there was a tendency in his manner to aristocratic ease, which might have been mistaken for indifference, but for the vibrating tones which told of a deep undercurrent of conviction and feeling. His gestures were few, but vigorous. Whoever has heard the late Earl Shaftsbury has heard one of the best, most typical of English platform speakers.

The *Week*, see preceding page, has some comments on the deceased Earl as a Churchman. To say that the Evangelical party descends into Earl Shaftsbury's grave is to sacrifice fact under the temptation to write a striking sentence. The same remark was made when Dean Close died. It is time that this observation was lowered into its grave. The *Week* says truly, the *Record* "was not narrow only, but malignant." The old spirit of the *Record* has, however, departed from that paper, it has migrated and is now in full possession of the conductors of the party organ here, while the *Record* has become more Christian, more churchlike in tone. The fine gold of the evangelical party has become dim owing to its being outshone in what it once superciliously claimed as its exclusive sphere of power. The preaching influence, the religious zeal of life influence, the fervent evangelical influence now wielded by the extreme Church school, have left the evangelicals utterly in the rear as a spiritual force. The death and burial of the evangelical party, as a party, would now only leave the true evangelical spirit free from a corrupting body of death. The party in England is now casting aside its party narrowness, its bitterness, its shibboleths, its childish antagonisms to innocent joys in worship and society, we now hear no longer the claims of its intolerable presumption and pharasaic conceit. The evangelical stream has not dried up—it is simply merged into the deep, broad, main current of the Church's bounding life, giving to it elements of purity, and itself being blessed as well as ennobled by absorption into that grand river of Catholic Truth which flows for ever from the eternal fount.

Those who place the sainted Earl Shaftsbury high in honor because of his party zeal, who pay his memory homage for his opinions, insult his fame by such belittlement. The greatest of German poets says: "If the eye were not made to receive the light we should not see the sun; so if the soul had not something in it of God we should not be able to recognise the Godlike."

In the world at large, in our Israel, the greatness of Earl Shaftsbury comes from the nobility of his life-long devotion to such good works as tended to ameliorate the condition of the poor, to make life for them less an intolerable affliction, to give children children's days, to give mothers hours for maternal nursing, and upon the whole world of manual labour to confer the blessed comfort of protection from the greed of stony-hearted avarice.

The Shaftsbury motto is: "LOVE—SERVE," those words were the inspiration of the late Earl's life-long loving service to God and Humanity.