SAINT JOHN, NEW-BRUNSWICK, FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 1851.

THE Weekly Chronicle.

Volume 15. "Nec Rege, Nec Populo, sed utroque." Number 26.

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March.		r.	Sun.	s	Moon's	s.	w.
8 Saturday,	-	6	28	5	55	11	39
9 Sunday	-	6	26	5	56	morn	3
10 Monday,	-	6	24	5	58	0	43
11 Tuesday,	-	6	22	5	59	1	47
12 Wednesday,	-	6	20	5	0	2	48
13 Thursday,	-	6	19	5	2	3	45
14 Friday,	-	6	17	5	3	4	34

2	25	2	29
3	11	4	12
4	5	5	35
7	10	8	29
8	29	9	30

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No. 37, BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON.

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CONTENTS OF THE TREATISE:

CHAPTER I.—On the Philosophy of Marriage, with its Hindrances and Obligations, and on Infelicitous and Unproductive Unions.

CHAPTER II.—On the Anatomy and Physiology the Generative Organs, their functions, structures, and secret uses, proving that great Mental and Physical Power are dependant on their healthy action.

CHAPTER III.—On solitary Habits; their various effects on the Animal Economy; the concealed cause of Debility of the functions of the Stomach, Lungs, and Brain, and general Weakness of the Mental Faculties.

CHAPTER IV.—On the Secret Disorders of Youth and Maturity, and the Treatment of Nervous and Local Weakness, Mental Debility, and Premature Decay.

CHAPTER V. and VI.—On the Disorders arising from indiscriminate Excess, Gonorrhœa, Gleet, Strictures, and other diseases of the Urethra.

REVIEW OF THE WORK.

Marriage requires the fulfilment of several conditions, in order that it may be really the cause of mutual happiness. Could the veil, which covers the origin of domestic wretchedness, be raised and its true source in every instance disclosed, in how many could it be traced to physical disqualifications and their attendant disappointments. Excesses are always injurious; the gift, which when used in moderation is fraught with advantage, becomes, when abused, the prolific source of misechief, and of greater or less injury to the constitution and vital powers. The particular excesses, on the nature and consequences of which this Treatise professes to dilate, are productive of greater misery to the human frame, than any other to which it is subject.

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THE RELIGION OF SHAKSPEARE.

I.—HAMLET.

WILLIAM SHAKSPEARE was baptized in the parish church of Stratford on-Avon, brought up in its grammar school, in that church he received the sacrement, and there his bones repose. Had the Papists who were his contemporaries been in circumstances to treat him according to their opinion of his deserts, it is probable that they would have burnt him as a heretic in his native town. Yet some modern Papists have had the offrontery to claim an inheritance in his genius, and vaunt of him as a Rege man of the Pope. Our belief is, that had he lived in Popish times, he would have been unknown to fame; cut off, perhaps, in infancy, by "fate," as likely to confer too much honour on an idolatrous age, or allowed to grow up with a genius stunted and depraved, by prevalent falsehood, and thus changed from the foremost man of all the world into one of these metre-ballad-mongers, beyond which Popery has scarcely advanced the most gifted of her sons. Truth, (where it is obtainable,) is a necessary element in the nature of a genuine poet. Neither Homer nor Virgil were chargeable with its neglect. Those who oppose it are judicially reduced by nature into dwarfs. When England made truth the object of her legislation, her glory, and her boast, Shakspeare was her reward. She has given it up, and begets pigmies.

"England did give herself to God, and then
God gave her Shakspeare—chief of mortal men.
England! thy path to glory is made plain:
Serve him who gave, and he will give again."

We are not aware of any published contemplation of Shakspeare in the religious aspect. We design, feeble as our powers for such an undertaking are, so to contemplate him; to go through his dramas, and endeavour to point out to our readers those thoughts of his which appear to have been more directly drawn from the sacred writings, so as to enable them to form some estimate of the amount and nature of that religious knowledge which was in his mind. Some individual, whose name, we are happy to say we have quite forgotten—we trust we may be fortunate enough never to hear it again—has written a book to prove Shakspeare an Infidel, or Atheist; he has proved himself an ass. That Shakspeare was not a converted man during his career as poet and actor, is plain; but the grace of God preventing, wrought in him all his life long. He had a mission as palpable as an apostle; and that mission was to show that man, at his best estate, was altogether vanity; and that the thoughts of his heart were only evil continually; and this mission was well accomplished.

We commence our review with "Hamlet," for a reason that will appear by-and-by. The idea of seperate spirits, presented to us in this drama, is scripturally accurate. We do not mean that the relations of such spirits in revealed worlds, or to mankind, is correctly stated. In speaking of these relations, the poet spoke the language of tradition—the language of the Popish Church, which, as a painter, he introduced into the scene. The spirit that walks abroad is the ghost of a dead man, now enduring purgatorial fires.

"Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature,
Are burnt and purged away."

And now

"Doomed for a certain time to walk the night."

In speaking *of these relations* the dramatist expresses the language of the church of the times which he pourtrayed. But his idea of the spirit, *as such*, is scriptural. It is visible and audible to one or to more, as it chooses, and at the same time invisible and inaudible to others, equally present, and capable of perceiving it. Thus the chariot and horses seen by Elisha were invisible to his servant, until his eyes were dev iely opened to his perceiving them; and the same property of spirits is derived from the ease of Balaam, and many others in scripture. In a word, the abstract idea of a seperate spirit, as held and expressed by the poet (and this abstract idea alone was his), was scriptural and correct; and when he speaks of its relations to persons and circumstances, he only utters the thoughts which characterized the time of which he wrote; and, by the way, those times were those in which the Danes held England tributary. The king says of Hamlet—

"He shall with speed to England,
For the demand of our neglected tribute."

ACT III., Sc. 1.

And again—

"An earnest conjuration from the king,
As England was his faithful tributary,
That on the view, and knowing of these contents,
He should the bearers put to sudden death."

ACT V., Sc. 2.

Now the Danes ruled in England from A. D., 1017 to 1042. Hence it was the manners and ideas of this mediœval and thoroughly Popish age, that the poet had to depict; accordingly, his ghost, while a thorough ghost, contructed on principles of nature and truth, it still, as propriety required it should be, a Popish and mediœval ghost.

Shakspeare had read 2 Cor., xi. 14, 15—"Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light"—and reflected on it, too; and thus he makes his principle character expatiate—

"The spirit that I have seen
May be a devil, and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
Abuses me to damn me."

ACT II., Sc. 2.

Language which is almost a paraphrase of the text prefixed. As indicating the idea of the nature of a spirit which the poet had in his mind, we should not omit to quote part of the intercourse between Horatio, Bernardo, and Marcellus, or its appearance—

"*Hor.* Stop it, Marcellus.
Mar. Shall I strike at it with my partizan?
Hor. Do, if it will not stand.
Ber. 'Tis here!
Hor. 'Tis here!
Mar. 'Tis gone!
We do it wrong, being so majestical,
To offer it the show of violence;
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery."

ACT I., Sc. 1.

It is impossible that language can more truthfully express than this does those very ideas of the nature of spirit when we collect from the Word of God. Of course, we are far from intending to imply that we are warranted, by Scripture, to believe that the spirits of dead men can or do issue from their dwelling-places; talk of vengence, and incite to it; appear in armour, and discuss the things of time and sense. Far from it; these are the mere notions of superstitution and ignorance. Nevertheless, Shakspeare depicts spirit, as such, correctly. As he draws man correctly, and shows a true acquaintance with his nature, although he may represent him as malicious, and mistaken, just so does he show an exact acquaintance with the nature of spirits, although he represents them such as the spirits of the age of which he wrote were supposed to be.

Our poet makes the king descant upon the inconsolable and impatient grief of Hamlet for his father's death, as if he were a divine, enlarging on scriptural doctrine, and a conformable practice—

"'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
To give these mourning duties to your father;
But to persevere
In obstinate condolement, is a course
Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief;
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven;
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient;
An understanding simple and unschooled;
For what we know, must be, and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
Why should we, in our peevish opposition,
Take it to heart? Fye! 'tis a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd; whose common theme
Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,
From the first corse, till he who died to-day,
This must be so."

ACT I., Sc. 3.

None but a mind informed as to religious truth could pen such language as this. There is scarcely a principle, perhaps not one, properly bearing on grief for the dead, not here adduced. The propriety of moderate grief is recognised. The very highest example could be adduced as its warrant. We should be sorry, but we should not "Sorrow as men which have no hope"—1 Thes., iv. 13.—This is "a fault against the dead." "No chastening for the present; seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby."—Heb., xii, 11. Hence, to chafe impatiently under a trial, however severe, is also a "fault against heaven;" "most incorrect" thereto. In effects, the homily put into the mouth of the king shows in the writer a mind made up on all the topics suggested by truth and scripture, as suited to the occasion.

With a truthful appreciation of the corruption of the world, and of the wearisomeness of the worldling's life, which yet a religiously-informed conscience prevents him from throwing away, have we in the beautiful passage which follows—

"*Ham.* Oh that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
O that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fye on 't! O fye! 'Tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank, and gross in nature
Possess it merely."

ACT I., Sc. 4.

Here he represents the whole world as a garden, covered with weeds, and possessed by naught save what was corrupt and vile. It is highly probable that he had in his recollection the sentiment so powerfully expressed in the prophet Isaiah, and enlarged upon with so much force in those homilies, which were popular reading in his time.—When the vineyard of the Lord brings forth sour grapes, it is declared that he will, in judgement, give it up to utter neglect, so that briars and thorns shall cover it. "He will let us alone, and suffer us to bring forth even such fruit as we will—to bring forth brambles, briars, and thorns—all naughtiness, and all vice—and that so abundantly that they shall clean overgrow us, choke, strangle, and utterly destroy us."—*Homily on falling away from God.* No doubt "The canon against self-murder," which is alluded to, is the sixth commandment, which the poet considered to forbid all murder, whether of ourselves or others.—His mind was not embarrassed by any belief in the canonicity of the 2 Maccabees, xiv. 42 where there is an actual approval of suicide, under certain circumstances, and in which "the Everlasting" is thus made, by those who admit the book as inspired, an applander of the crime against which he fixed his own canon. It very little affects the merit of this view of the subject, that Hamlet was, of the then prevailing Romish faith.

Natural feeling is admirably delineated in the mode in which the astonishment of Hamlet on hearing of the appearance of his father's spirit is represented. "Methinks," says the prince, "I see my father."

Hor. Where, my lord?
Ham. In my mind's eye, Horatio.
Hor. My lord, I think *I* saw him yesterday.
Ham. Saw! who?
Hor. My lord, the king, your father.
Ham. The king, my father!

ACT I., Sc. 2.

A less correct observer of life than Shakspeare would have probably this an occasion for a display of the eleqoence of astonishment. How much more beautiful, however, is the monosyllabic interjections which the great poet employs: "Saw! who?" "The king, my father!" are here interjectional in their character. Outbursts of feeling, which could not be prolonged without obvious injury to the effect, he drew from nature. But the Bible is nature itself; it is the very voice of nature; and no doubt he was an attentive reader of its forms of expression. We have something like a counterpart of the language before us in Genesis, xxvii. 33, when Esau came before his father, after the blessing had been bestowed on Jacob. The following is the dialogue:—

"*Esau.* Let my father arire, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.
Isaac. Who art thou?
Esau. I am thy son, thy first-born, Esau.
Isaac. Who? Where is he that hath taken venison," &c.

The admirable truthfulness of this language is particularly striking; and the Bible abounds in similar passages. There can scarcely be a doubt but that they were models for our great poet. The following observation is admirable, equally for its beauty and its truth—

"So oft it happens in particular men,
That, for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth, (wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose its origin),
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason;
Or by some habit, which too much o'er-leavens
The form of plausive manners; that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being natures livery, or fortune's star—
Their virtues else (be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man man may undergo,)
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault: the dram of base
Doth all the noble substance often dout,
To his own scandal."

ACT I., Sc. 4.

All this is nothing more than a poetical development of two thoughts, which Shakspeare often read and meditated on. The thoughts I allude to are in the book of Ecclesiastics, x. 1., vii. 13—"Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour; so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour." And again—"Consider the work of God, for who can make that straight which he hath made crooked?" This latter sentiment is found, with an elucidation, in chap. I. 15. The crook in each man's lot is "nature's livery."—Wear it he must. It is his "fortune's star." It will be dominant, let him do as he may; for it is "God's work," and it is not his pleasure that it should be straightened; nay, it is his pleasure that it should work out its full results on its crooked nature. Boston's admirable essay on this text, entitled "The Crook on the Lot," is one of the most interesting, eloquent, entertaining, and suggestive works in the language. We can scarce avoid giving our poet the the honour of having reflected on these remarkable passages, and of having used them for the edification and instruction of mankind.

It is impossible to avoid noticing, that this drama seems almost written for the express purpose of exposing the odious character of Wortley-an marriages. The whole story turns on one of those unfortunate occurrences, and the poet exhausts his treasury of epithets to paint it as abominable. Claudius having conceived a passion for his sister-in law—his brother's wife—is prompted by his guilty soul to murder him, in order to possess her, accordingly, he poisons his brother marries the widow, usurps his throne, and in the progress of his wickedness goes on from one stage of crime to another, until himself and all his race become extinct—blasted by the curse of heaven. Shakspeare saw the things in all its enormity—the confusion of connections, and the corruption of soul which it involved and engendered. The usurper, addressing his wife calls her—

"Our some time sister, now our queen."

ACT I., Sc. 2.

And speaking to Hamlet, his nephew and his stepson, says—

"And now my cousin, Hamlet, and my son,"

Which draws out the pitily, though concealed retort—

"*Ham.* A little more than kin, and less than kind."

So far was Shakspeare from believing that uncles would be rendered more affectionate to their brothers' offspring, by marrying the mothers of their nephews and nieces, he sees in the connection grounds for mutual antipathy. If it made the uncle a nearer relation, viz., a father, which he ought not to be, it made the mother a more distant relation—an aunt—which she ought not to be.—Hence Hamlet speaks of both with contempt—

"My uncle-father and aunt mother are deceived."

ACT II., Sc. 2.

But here the withering terms in which he denounces his mother's conduct—

"*Queen.* What have I done that thou dost wag thy tongue
In noise so rude at me?
Ham. Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;
Calls virtue hypocrite; takes of the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there; makes marriage vows
As false as dicer's oaths; oh, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul; and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words; heaven's face doth glow;
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act."

ACT III., Sc. 4.

We would strongly commend this passage to those who are moving towards Mr. Wortley's philosophy; nor do we think that that gentleman himself would suffer any detriment by reflecting on the denunciation which it contains.

But let us hear farther in what terms the poet speaks of the circumstances of such marriages—

"Oh, most wicked speed, to post with such dexterity to incestuous sheets."

ACT I., Sc. 3.

Again—

"Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts
(O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce), won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming virtuous queen,
O Hamlet, what a falling off was there!

ACT I., Sc. 5.

Again—

"Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
A couch for luxury and wicked incest."

ACT II., Sc. 5.

Upon the whole, the mind of the poet was evidently convinced that such a union was foul, unnatural, and incestuous. That it grew out of a grossly corrupt state of feeling. That it would thus be so viewed by the children, who would be brought to regard their parents with feelings of loathing and disgust. That it would originate hatred, strife and animosity in the family circle, and finally end in calamity and misfortune. The convictions of such a mind on such a subject are not to be despised.

The tone of thought in many of the passages of this drama so nearly resembles that in Scriptural passages, that we cannot but think that the bible-readings in Stratford Grammar School had some hand in them.

For example, when Hamlet turns off the question put to him as to the revelations of the ghost, which he seemed just on the eve of recounting, by saying, that what it told him was:—

"There's never a villain dwelling in all Denmark
But he's an arrant knave."

Horatio pleasantly replies:—

"There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us *that*."

ACT I. Sc. 5.

We are forcibly struck with a kindred sentiment, expressed in Luke xvi. 29, 31, where Abraham says, that there needs no one to rise from the dead to tell the brother of the rich man, that which they would find already expressed by Moses and the prophets. Let the passage be considered. Of course there is an unlikeness in the two cases, as well as likeness; but this does not prove that the Evangelist did not originate the utterance of the great secular prophet. Shakspeare did not imitate, he appropriated; and not words or expressions, but a certain form thought which he found beautiful in itself, and which became, in his mind, a mould of beauty altogether abstracted and distinct from the concecration in which it was originally imbebbed. And this suggests not the least important use of scriptural education; not such a flimsey and superficial study of Scripture as is connected with reading a chapter or two of the English Bible on Saturdays, but the constant study of the mind and thoughts of God, especially in the original, but also in all the language which it is desirable that children should learn. The fact is, that every language in which the Scripture is presented, has a peculiar mode of expression which is proper to itself, and which gives the same thought in a variety of aspects, the consideration of which is a vey profitable exercise for the mind, and would tend not only to render our own language more varied and beautiful, but, more important still, to elucidate the sense of the sacred volume. To take an instance in the 104th Psalm: We say, "with it the wild asses quench their thrist." The Greeks say, "the wild asses will take to it in their thrist;" the Latins, "the wild assess will expect it in their thrist;" the Hebrews, "with it the wild asses break their thrist." Now here we see that we regard thrist as a consuming flame, the Greeks regard it as a stimulating influence, the Latins as a paralyzing affection, and the Hebrews as a suffocating impediment. Each idea is correct—each beautiful—each instructive; the ideas are all different, yet they come to the same point. Now, to have our children so instructed in the thoughts of God—those grand and ennobling thoughts, so pure, so holy, and so edifying—as that they would be impressed on them indelibly, and in every possible manner, is surely an object which would set our hearts on, and earnestly struggle for such a reform in our educational system as would bring it to pass. Instead, however, of tending to this end, we are receding from it; and making the beggarly secular views which hold in our grammar schools the law which should govern even the education of the poor, who, above all others, require to be imbued with heavenly thoughts.—There can be no manner of doubt that Shakspeare read more of sacred literature than he did of any other; surely the fruit, in his case, was so rich, that we should hesitate as to the abandonment of the old English religious idea, in order to take up with the improvements of modern lattitudinarianism, falsy called philosophy. However, to resume our diognosis.

We venture to say that the turn of thought in the following rhapsody of Hamlet—now affecting madness—is of scriptural suggestion—

"I have of late (but wherefore I know not) lost all my mirth, foregone all my custom of exercise; and, indeed, it goes so heavily with me, that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave overhanging firmament, this majestical roof, fretted with golden fire, why it appears to me no better than a foul and pestilental congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! and yet to me what is this quint essence of dust? Man delights not me."

ACT II., Sc. 2.

We again repeat that we by no means intend to imply that Shakspeare either imitated or quoted. He would have felt either course at variance with taste and propriety; and yet his thoughts assumed the form, perhaps unconsciously, of those magnificent thoughts which a scriptural education had impressed upon his mind; and here is, as we venture to think, an illustration of the remark. We have a lofty and dignified meditation on the earth and the heavens, wound up with a no less dignified apostrophe to Man. And this is exactly the shape into which that sublimest of poets, the inspired David, was constrained to throw his reflections in that noble Canticle, the eighth Psalm: "When I consider the heavens—the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, what is man, that thou hast ordained, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

How excellent is thy name in all the earth!" The 19th, 139th, and other Psalms, would seem to have suggested additional component's of the poet's rhapsody. If, however, we are right in taking the 8th Psalm as chiefly affording the analogy which presents itself in the passage quoted, Shakspeare would appear to have considered that "what is man that thou art mindful of him!" meant "how great is man that thou art mindful of him!" That is to say, "when I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what a wonderful being must man by that thou visitest him! little lower than the angels! crowned with glory and honour! the ruler of the beasts of the field, of the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea! the paragon of animals! the beauty of the world."*

It is rather remarkable that the words "Thou hast made him a little lower than the *angels*," may be rendered, "Thou hast made him a little less than a God." Now, Shakspeare introduces both ideas. "In action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a God." Why may we not conceive the learned schoolmaster of Stratford (no doubt, in those days, the parson of the parish) having up Willy Shakspeare's class, discussing before them the sense of the psalm and telling them what was the full force of the original words. Why may we not conceive him—interested exceedingly with the profound attentions of the wool-comber's son, and the intelligence manifested by him. We cannot abandon the witchery of this imagination without getting the parson, when the class broke up, to call up Willy, and pat him encouragingly on the head, saying, "Be thou a good boy, and quit thy wild tricks, and mind thy book, and thou mayest, some time, be a credit to my school, and, perhaps, become a parson thyself.—Would not that be grand? and, mayhap, a bishop—grander still." On which Willy, bursting into a wild laugh, ran off, "pitched into" Jack Hathaway for losing his marbles, and gave him a black eye, for which he got soudly thrashed in the afternoon.

Hamlet, speaking of Horatia, to whom he is

*An eloquent American clergyman, the Rev. Asa Mahon, M.A., who delivered, in Exeter Hall, one of the lectures before "The Young Men's Christian Association," took this view of the sense of this passage in the 8th Psalm. These are his words—"I would drop the suggestion, though it may seem to be somewhat out of its place, whether there is not a general misunderstanding of one important passage of holy writ—a passage often quoted—"When I consider," &c. [and he quotes the words above given]. "The common idea seems to be, that it is the object of the Psalmist to *diminish* our conception of man, by contrasting him with the immensity of the creation of God, and especially with that of its author. I would barely suggest the inquiry, whether the *opposite* is not the real intention of the sacred writer; whether it is not his object to elevate instead of diminish our estimate of man, and whether the following is not a true exposition of the passage—'When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, &c., what a being must man be,' &c. If the works of God are so vast and glorious, what must the greatness of the powers of the being, divinely qualified to have dominion over them." *Twelve Lectures*, London: James Nesbit and Co., 1850, p. 120.