

Infinite Intelligence? Does it matter nothing that I cut myself off from the well-head of all wisdom, and drink only from the shallow wells of my own digging? Believe me, it matters everything. If we are right—and we are sure we are—that God is over all, the beginning and term of all life, and you deny it, you rob the mind of a great truth; nay, you compel your mind to turn from its natural object, to deny itself—its own very life, its perfection, and its joy. No belief, nor unbelief of ours can alter the *fact* of God. If He exists for one, He exists for all; if it is *truth*, it is truth, and to deny it is a fatal, horrible thing—so fatal, so horrible, that I tremble to contemplate it. And it seems to me that a prudent man, a man who has a care for his own true interests and manly life, will think often and pause long before he will dare to put his mental nature at so great risk as to doubt or deny the being of God. Let me ask you to look at this matter again—you who sneer at all mere religionists, or who lightly laugh the whole matter down, and think and say “it doesn’t matter, so long as we live decent industrious lives”—you are living upon a fallacy.

Take another point. To say and act that it doesn’t matter what a man believes so long as he lives an honest life is to commit a moral wrong—it is a sin against one’s own moral nature. For, say as you will about it, and deny it as often as you like, by the very original constitution of us we are religious. This institution of Religion, which in some form or another is spread over the earth, did not come like war and slavery, and much other business of society, from the abuse, misdirection and disease of human nature; it was not born of a passing passion which the advancing race will outgrow, but it comes from an eternal principle in us all, which legitimately and of necessity leads to this. Just as man’s body is connected with the world of matter; rooted in it; has wants, and senses to minister to them—so man’s soul is connected with the world of Spirit, and is rooted in God. You can no more deny the universality of spiritual or moral life than you can deny the fact and universality of intellectual life. Do you say it matters nothing whether the intellect of the race and of the individual be cultivated or not? Do you say never mind all this talk and these institutions for general culture; never mind about science, and philosophy, and literature—pay one hundred cents in the dollar, giving a trifle for charity’s sake—“he can’t be wrong whose life is in the right?” No, you do not. You say educate, educate—inform, expand the mind—teach the people to think—let us have scientific enquiry—philosophical research—careful analysis and synthesis, inductions and deductions and all that we can get by any process known or discoverable—and that is right. But why shall we shut down upon this other part of us—this moral nature which we have, and which is just as real, and attests itself just as forcibly as our intelligence. Why shall we smother our deepest instincts and highest aspirations? Why shall we deny the life that lives and moves in us?

And again—to say it matters nothing what you believe, meaning thereby that you may be an Atheist without running any great personal risk, let me say, if the Bible has any truth in it; if its great idea is a fact; if the “I am” of the universe *is*, then by doubting or denying it you lose an inspiration for life and work. It was an Atheist who propounded the question awhile ago, “Is life worth living?” No wonder he put the question. It is worth discussing. I think of my own life, and the life of others; I think of it in the arena of daily conflict; hard work; disappointment; human meanness; human malice; hardness and coldness, and ignorance, and selfishness. I think of it there anxiously in the great cemetery of my buried hopes and homes and friendships, and I know that life has more work than rest for me; more disappointment than triumph; more sadness than joy, and I am sure it won’t last long; the fever will burn itself out and leave the poor heart no strength to beat and suffer. And when I look up from all this weird melancholy, to find above and beyond, nothing—nothing but a great irrational silence—nothing but limitless wastes of nothingness—no Providence but science, no mother but the cold earth at my feet—then, I should say, that apart from my legitimate responsibilities, life is not worth the living, and I will calmly cease to live. But when I can look up to find the heaven full of light, revealing a great overruling Providence, who in Infinite Wisdom has devised the best thing for me, and in Infinite Power will bring it to pass, then I find impulse and inspiration to do and to suffer whatever my lot may entail. I can do my part bravely when I am sure of the co-operation of God. There is a sudden gleam of light flashing athwart the sky—a streak, shooting over a universe at night,—and I follow it, for I am sure it comes from One who will send more and more as the occasion shall demand. What great work can a man undertake upon his own responsibility? What reforms in society, in the nation, in the Church? I know not of any. You can only dare to do it, and feel that it is worth the doing when you are the interpreter of the Power who gave you the idea, and will guard the work when you are gone. Flung back upon your own individual conscience and judgment, what can you undertake? how much should you suffer? Not much. The risk and the pain are too great. That way, “life is not worth living.”

One word more, friends. You say it doesn’t matter what a man believes; you treat the whole subject of religious faith jauntily. But do you ever consider how much is at stake; what tremendous issues are involved? Suppose this old Book shall be found to tell positive truth after all? Suppose that parable

about the punishment, which was meted out to a man who failed to use his gift in the religious interpretation of a great law of the universe? Suppose it be true that belief in God be a condition of future life and happiness? Suppose that in fact there is only one name given under heaven whereby man can be saved, and you have no faith in that name? Suppose He is the world’s Redeemer, and there is no redemption but by Him? How will it be with you? You cannot live life over again. I believe that God is—and Father of mankind—and that Christ is man’s Saviour. You do not, and think it doesn’t matter. What if I am right? How will it be with you? How?

CARMEN: A SPANISH STORY.

(Translated from the French of PROSPER MÉRIMÉE, of the French Academy.)

CHAPTER. III.

“We resumed the road to Seville. At the entrance of the *rue Serpent*, she bought a dozen oranges that she made me tie up in my handkerchief. A little further on she purchased a loaf of bread, some sausage, a bottle of Manzanilla wine; finally she entered a confectioner’s, where she threw on the counter the gold-piece I had returned to her, another that she had in her pocket, also some silver money; then she asked me for all that I had, which amounted only to a small coin and some *quartos*, and I was ashamed to have nothing more to offer. I thought she would carry off the whole shop. She selected all that was most tempting and most expensive—*yemas* (sweetened yolk of egg), *turon* (a sort of nougat), dried sweetmeats—so long as her money lasted, all of which, moreover, I was obliged to carry in paper bags. You, perhaps, know the *rue Candilejo*, where there is a bust of the King Don Pedro, the Justiciary.* It ought to have inspired me with certain reflections. We stopped in front of an old house in that street; she entered the alley, and knocked at a door on the ground floor, which was opened by a gypsy, a true servant of Satan. Carmen said a few words to her in *romani*, at which the old woman grumbled. To appease her, Carmen gave her two oranges, a handful of bonbons, and permitted her to have a sip of the wine. Then she placed her mantle on her shoulders and led her to the door, which she fastened with a heavy wooden bar. As soon as we were alone, she began to laugh and dance like a madwoman, singing the while: ‘You are my *rom* (husband), I am your *romi* (wife).’ I stood in the middle of the room laden with her purchases, not knowing where to deposit them. She threw them on the floor, and fell on my neck, saying: ‘I pay my debts, I pay my debts! It is the law of the Calés!’†

“Ah, Monsieur!” said Done José; “that day! that day! When I think of it I forget what to-morrow will bring. [The bandit was silent a moment; then, having relighted his cigar, he continued:] We passed the whole day together, eating, drinking, in delicious folly. When she had eaten sweetmeats like a child of six years, she crammed quantities of them into the old woman’s water jar. ‘It is to make sherbet for her,’ she said. She crushed the *yemas*, tossing them against the wall. ‘That will keep the flies from disturbing us,’ she said. There was no trick, no witching absurdity that she did not commit. I expressed a desire to see her dance; but where to find the castanets? She immediately seizes the old woman’s sole plate, breaks it into bits, and behold her dancing the *romalis*, clicking the morsels of crockery as skilfully as if they were castanets of ebony or ivory. One never grew weary at the side of that girl, Monsieur: that I answer for. Evening came and I heard the drums beat tattoo.

“‘I must go to quarters for the roll call,’ I said.

“‘To quarters?’ she repeated, with a contemptuous air. ‘You are then a negro, to allow yourself to be submissively held by the rein? You are a canary‡ in dress and spirit. Off with you! You are tame and chicken-hearted.’

“I remained, resigned in advance to the guard-house. In the morning she was the first to speak of our separation.

“Listen, Joséito. Have I repaid you? According to our law I owed you nothing since you are a *payllo*; but you are a pretty fellow and have pleased me. We are quits. Good-day.

“I asked when I should see her again.

“‘When you are less of a simpleton,’ she said, laughingly. Then added in a more serious tone: ‘Do you know, my son, that I really believe I love you a little? But that could not last. Dog and wolf never long dwell happily

* The King Don Pedro, whom we surname *The Cruel*, and whom Queen Isabella, the Catholic, always called the Justiciary, was in the habit of perambulating the streets at night, seeking adventures like the Caliph Haroun al Raschid. One night, in an obscure street, he fell into to a quarrel with a man who was giving a serenade. They fought, and the king killed the serenading lover. At the noise of the clashing swords, an old woman put her head out of a window and lighted up the scene by a little lamp, *candilejo*, that she held in her hand. It must be known that the king, otherwise nimble and vigorous, had the singular defect, that when he walked his knee joints cracked audibly, and by this curious noise the old woman recognized him. The next day, the chief of the municipal authorities came to make his report to the king. “Sire, last night, in such a street, a duel was fought: one of the combatants is dead.” “Have you discovered the murderer?” “Yes, sire.” “Why is he not already punished?” “Sire, I await your orders.” “Let the law be executed.” Now the king had just issued a decree, declaring that every duellist should be decapitated, and that his head should remain exposed at the place where he fought. The magistrate extricated himself from the dilemma like a man of wit. He ordered the head of a statue of the king to be sawed off and placed in a niche in the middle of the street—the scene of the murder. The king and all the Sevillians were highly satisfied. The street received its name from the lamp of the old woman, the only witness of the adventure; that is the popular tradition. Zuyiga relates the story a little differently. (See “Annals of Seville,” v. II., p. 136). However it may be, there still exists a *rue Du Candilejo*, and in it there is a stone bust that is said to be a portrait of Don Pedro. Unfortunately, this bust is modern. The old one was much battered in the seventeenth century, and the municipality of that period had it replaced by the one now seen.

† *Calo*: feminine, *cali*: plural, *cales*. Word for word: *black*—name of gypsies in their own tongue.

‡ The Spanish dragoons are dressed in yellow.