

"OVER THERE."

THE MYTH AND THE REALITY.

"Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis, 'tis true," but it is so nevertheless, that the beautiful creations of the poet's brain are nearly always at variance with the teachings of reason and of fact. And yet in our daily intercourse we may observe the constant influence of the poetic craze on the lives and actions of those who we might suppose were beyond the pale of such influence. How little of poetry enters into the visible life of the English agricultural labourer, or of any of the toilers of his class in town or country. Nevertheless there are thousands who fondly believe that "There is a land that is better than this."

"Where the poor man's as great
Though he hath no estate
As he that's a thousand a year."

A delusion which the priests of all denominations have studiously endeavoured to keep up, in order that those on whom they preyed might be content to toil for the drones and parasites of society. As long as the poor can be persuaded to turn their eyes from the good things of this life, in the earnest hope of obtaining white robes and golden harps in the "sweet by and bye," Priestcraft and Kingcraft may be tolerably safe. It sounds so beautiful to sing:—

"Oh, think of the home over there
By the side of the river of light,
Where the saints all immortal and fair
Are robed in their garments of white.
Over there, over there, oh, think of the homes over there."

But when we turn our attention to the homes by the side of some other rivers, of whose geographical position we are rather more certain, a "bitter cry" goes up, the shrill tones of which would crack the strings of all the harps in every poet's heaven.

The civilised world has too long been turning its attention to "realms beyond the skies," and neglecting the only true source of human happiness, viz—a scientific knowledge of the laws of our being. The results of the theological teaching are patent to us all, and "while we have been dreaming that the millennium was coming," we have slumbered on the brittle crust of a seething volcano. It has been for many years my firm opinion, that the violent contrasts presented in all the great centres of—so-called—civilisation between enormous wealth and abject misery, would sooner or later produce such an eruption in the social and political world, parallels to which might only be found in the physical world in the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii, or the recent disasters in the Straits of Sunda. The persistent and self-sacrificing struggles of the Russian Nihilist, and the horrible and indiscriminate savagery of the Irish Dynamitists, revolting as they must be to the vast majority of Society, are proofs of the fire that smoulders beneath the smiling surface of modern life. Not only in the old cities of Europe, but in those also of the American Republic, is the gulph between rich and poor growing wider. "Land, labor, and capital" are doubtless the necessary elements of material progress, but when land and capital are arrayed against labour, instead of working with it and ministering to its necessities, the result can be nothing but evil; and the existence and development of that evil is daily becoming more apparent. Priestcraft and superstition are closely allied with the murderous cruelties of Fenians, Land leaguers, Nihilists *et hoc genus omne*. It is the duty of Freethinkers to do their utmost in disseminating a knowledge of truth, and to endeavor to guide the vast changes now going on, and yet to be, by a mild but firm intelligence. In the mean-time we can

THINK OF THE HOMES OVER THERE.

Oh, think of the homes in the street
At the back of that mansion so bright,
Where the children of misery meet
To skulk in the darkness of night.
In that slum over there.
Oh, think of the homes over there !
Oh, think of the men over there,
Of the women and children who sob
In hunger, disease, and despair,
Who go forth but to beg or to rob
From that street over there.
Oh, think of the homes over there !

Oh, think of the poor over there,
Those victims of squalor and gin
How much of God's love do they share ?
Has Christ ever saved them from sin
In that slum over there ?
Oh, think of the dens over there !
Avaunt ye false prophets, who rave
Of a powerful, merciful god !
His hand is unable to save,
His altars are deluged with blood
Everywhere, over there.
Oh, think of his dupe over there !
From ignorance, sorrow, and crime
The poor and down-trodden to save,
Shall be the great work of our time
Till Tyranny owns not a slave
Anywhere, over there.
Oh work for the poor over there.

CHARLES J. RAE.

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Notes & Queries.

ANSWERS.

EMERSON'S RELIGIOUS OPINIONS.

In reply to Query No. 5 of THE REVIEW, Emerson's religious opinions are rather mystical, and are contained in few set terms. We find him saying: "Miracle comes to the miraculous, not to the arithmetician." "Immortality will come to such as are fit for it, and he who would be a great soul in future must be a great soul now. It is a doctrine too great to rest on any *legend*, that is, on any man's experience but our own. It must be proved, if at all, from our activity and designs, which imply an interminable future for their play." "What is called religion effeminates and demoralizes. Such as you are the gods themselves could not help you." "And as far as it is a question of fact respecting the government of the universe, Marcus Antoninus summed up the whole in a word—*It is pleasant to die if there be gods, and sad to live if there be none.*" "The religion which is to guide and fulfil the present and coming ages, whatever else it must be, must be intellectual. The scientific mind must have a faith, which is Science. 'There are two things,' said Mahomet, 'which I abhor—the learned in his infidelities, and the fool in his devotions.' Our times are impatient of both, and specially of the last. Let us have nothing now which is not of its own evidence. There is surely enough for the heart and imagination in the religion itself. Let us not be pestered with assertions and half-truths, with emotions and snuff." The above extracts are from Emerson's essay on "Worship," and they are probably as correct a representation of his religious opinions as it is possible to obtain from his works. Mysticism does not yield readily to the crystalizing process which produces creeds, though creeds have been extracted from the most unfavourable material.—B.

QUERIES.

Can any of your correspondents give a succinct account of the history and attributes of Nemesis?—S.S.

Why is El Mahdi called "the false prophet"? Is he not a follower of Mahomet?—S.S.

What position does science occupy with regard to the idea of a plurality of inhabited worlds, and what are the most recent authorities available?

What is the present position of Darwin's Theory of Evolution—have more proofs been brought to light since his death with regard to missing links, and who of all the Darwinian school treats of the subject in the most conclusive manner?—FIAT LUX.

Another important discovery connected with agriculture has been reported from France. Two well-known physiologists, M. M. Chambrelent and Macsious, have announced to the Paris Academy of Sciences, that they have at length succeeded in recognising in the milk of cows affected with inflammation of the spleen, the bacillus of that disease. They have further succeeded in their experiments, in the reproduction of this micro-organism, and in innoculating animals with it.