

THE LOTTIE WILMOT CORRESPONDENCE.

The following correspondence on this question will at the same time indicate the interest taken in it, and the amount of exaggeration indulged in by the Wesleyan Minister who circulated the story in a contribution to the 'New Zealand Wesleyan.' The position is maintained that no neglect of duty is chargeable to Freethinkers:—

THE FREETHINKERS AND LOTTIE WILMOT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'EVENING POST.'

SIR, A letter, signed by S. J. Garlick, headed "The Freethinkers and the late Lottie Wilmot," appeared in your last evening's issue. It was from this letter that I first learned the late Mrs. Wilmot was a Freethinker. Mrs. Wilmot was not, to my knowledge, a member of any Freethought Association in New Zealand, but if she professed to be and was a Freethinker, she certainly omitted to apply to the Freethinkers in Wellington for assistance. The Freethought Association would, I am certain, assist any deserving person in want, be the applicant Protestant, Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, or a member of any other creed. Freethinkers are not bigoted; members of other creeds usually are. It does not, however, follow that the Freethinkers in Wellington did not assist the late Mrs. Wilmot, nor does it prove that the goody-goody people alone rendered her every assistance. We have only the Rev. S. J. Garlick's statement on the matter, and I respectfully beg to refer him to the first and second verses of the sixth chapter of Matthew. According to the Rev. Garlick's version of the death of Mrs. Wilmot the last advice she gave to her daughter was, "Have nothing to do with Freethinkers; you see how they have treated me in the hour of need, and their friendship can do you no good when I am gone." But stay, my reverend friend. Supposing I was Wesleyan, dying, and wanting assistance in "the hour of need," did not let the Wesleyan body, or sect, know of my distress, and a kind Freethinker came along and cared for me, would not I have a perfect right to say to my son with my floating breath, "My son have nothing to do with Wesleyans; you see how they have treated me, &c.?" If such a circumstance were to take place, would the Freethinking friend publish in the Freethought Review that he had "converted" a Wesleyan? I trow not. There is an old and trite saying, "They that live in glass houses should not cast stones." Now, my reverend friend, may I, as a Freethinker, request you to read, mark, and inwardly digest the moral that is struck by the logical collision of the two paragraphs subjoined:—

(From the Sydney Morning Herald, May 30th, 1884.)

"The wife of a clergyman of the Church of England is suffering from a serious illness, and with her children is *in want of the necessities of life*. Owing to the number of pressing calls I am unable to afford this lady the help she requires. Any subscriptions forwarded to me will be duly acknowledged; or, if preferred, the name and address of the lady will be given.—JAMES N. MANNING, Incumbent of St. Silas', Waterloo."

(From the Sydney Daily Telegraph, May 30th, 1884.)

"After closing all the accounts in connection with the reception of the Bishop of Sydney, the committee had a surplus of £163 3s 2d. This has been handed over to the primate to be placed to the credit of the *new roads* fund, which now amounts to £450 5s 11d."

Further comment is unnecessary.

I am, &c.,

ALFRED T. JARDINE.

Wellington, 21st June, 1884.

The following letter appeared in the Otago 'Daily Times':—

SIR,—In your issue of the 17th instant appears a narrative conceived and related in the most approved style of the usual dissenting tract. It is entitled "A Sad Story." The heading is appropriate. I know a shorter title more appropriate still.

This story (I choose the politer phrase) presumably emanates from a Wesleyan minister named Garlick, for whose "unimpeachable veracity" Mr. J. S. Smalley kindly vouches. Pray, who vouches for Mr. Smalley? It is, however, an admitted fact that a story which is *all a story* may be met and fought with outright. A parti-colored falsehood is a more difficult matter to fight. In this Smalley-*cum*-Garlick effusion there is just that vague suspicion of veracity necessary to leaven the remaining lump of misstatement. Generously permit me to demonstrate this.

It is asserted that Madame Wilmot was a well-known infidel lecturer. This is simply untrue. She was a lecturer on somewhat risky social topics, (if, as stated) she prayed "to God through Jesus Christ," she must necessarily have been a Christian.

It is stated that Madame Wilmot was ejected from two hotels. I believe this to be true, however much I may question the decency and manliness of unearthing these pitiful details. The Wesleyan clergymen are frequently gentlemen, and heed the maxim, *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. Of course, the inference intended to be conveyed is that the hotel proprietors are infidels. Unfortunately they are Christians. Madame Wilmot was then (we are informed) taken in by a "drunken cobbler." Here again, the inference is, by an infidel "drunken cobbler." If this gentleman is infidel, then may we perceive that an infidel "drunken cobbler" showed compassion where orthodox sober bootmakers showed none. If, on the contrary, he is a Christian, then it appears to be possible to be both drunken and orthodox. Perhaps, however, the benevolent portion of the local Crispin was Christian; the drunken remainder sceptic. If he exists, he has certainly good grounds for an action against the 'New Zealand Wesleyan' for defamation.

It is insinuated that no assistance was rendered to Madame Wilmot by the infidels of Wellington. That is also untrue. Such assistance was given by individuals; not as from one infidel to another (no such claims existing), but as from human being to another. The few avowed infidels in Wellington are mostly working men, and poor; nor do I know one who is, in a pecuniary sense, the equal of these Wesleyan ministers, who pose in the organ of their sect as posed the Pharisee in more ancient page.

Mr Smalley asserts (by insinuation) that infidels commonly permit their afflicted brethren to die uncared for. He means this or nothing. I pin him to that assertion, and hereby challenge him to recount one case in which the facts can be locally tested.

In conclusion, I would point out that during most of the time in which Madame Wilmot lay sick at the Hutt I lectured on Sunday evenings at the Theatre Royal, Wellington. I invited and courted discussion. Why, then, did not the Wesleyan clergymen (personally or by deputy) rise in the theatre and crush my secularism by narrating the story, which they have seen fit to publish long after the period in which the events are supposed to have happened? Echo answers, Why?—I am, &c.,

Ivo.

Dunedin, June 19.

In the 'New Zealand Times' of June 30th appeared the following paragraph:—

At the Lyceum last evening, Mr. Jardine, the gentleman who had been commissioned to inquire into the circumstances of Madame Lottie Wilmot's death at the Hutt, submitted a report of his inquiries. He visited the Hutt, he said, on Wednesday, and again on Thursday last, and he proceeded to answer the statements made in the article originally appearing in the New Zealand Wesleyan, which had given rise to so much discussion. The statement that persons residing in the Hutt were not aware at first of her presence was false. That she had been ejected from two hotels, was also false. He saw one of the hotelkeepers (the second being away), who informed him that he (the publican) did not wish the lady to leave his house, but she persisted in keeping a dog in the house, and left in consequence. Visited the "drunken cobbler," and found that so far from living in a "hovel," his house was clean, and neatly furnished. He also found that Madame had had during her illness, everything she needed, such as jellies, &c., which she gave to the dog; that she was not visited by the Rev. Garlick, but that it was the Presbyterian minister, Mr. Rogers, who visited her, and supplied her with everything she needed; that Mr. Garlick refused her the loan of a table and two chairs, which were furnished by Mr. Rogers; that Mr. Garlick was not present when Madame expired, and that although a doctor was sent for, she never spoke a word in his hearing, being in fact, almost dead when he arrived, Mr. Rogers being also present. Mr. Jardine, in conclusion, said that the names of the persons from whom he collected his information were open to inspection by anyone desiring to verify his statements.

THE REV. MR. GARLICK IN REPLY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'NEW ZEALAND TIMES.'

SIR,—In a recent issue of your paper I find a report furnished by Mr. Jardine of his investigations at the Hutt of certain statements made by me in an article originally appearing in the New Zealand Wesleyan. Will you kindly allow me space to reply? I will do so in the order in which the false statements occur. My statement in the article re Madame having taken up her abode at the Hutt, is as follows:—"It was not until this public appeal (through the Wellington Press) that many of the inhabitants of the Hutt knew that Madame had located herself in their midst." The many here referred to, in common with myself, can vouch for the truth of this statement. That Madame was ejected from two hotels I have upon her authority; and re the last one she put up at, I have another authority (whose name can be given), who can vouch for the treatment received. Re my not visiting Madame Wilmot. This demonstrates very conclusively the value of Mr. Jardine's report for truthfulness. I can furnish as many names as may be required who can certify that I visited her regularly from the time I heard of her being in our midst up to April 10th, when I met with an accident which rendered me unequal to my regular duties for some time. Concerning the "hovel" adverted to by Mr. Jardine, this I may say is quite gratuitous on his part or some of his friends, who are consequently responsible for the use. Re the articles of furniture referred to, allow me to say that at this time (which was scarcely a month before her death) Dr. Wilford had strongly recommended for six weeks or two months her removal to the hospital. The lady who had kindly furnished a home for Madame obtained the necessary order for admission. The Relieving Board of the Hutt and many others were of the opinion that Dr. Wilford's orders should be carried out. It was then that I declined to assist to furnish private apartments. It is, moreover, stated that I was not present when Madame died. Perfectly true. I never said that I was. The statement in the MSS. which I sent the Press was this "Up to the time of her death she was visited by me, the Presbyterian Minister, and other friends." In the article, as printed, it reads "and other friends"—an important difference. In conclusion, Mr. Jardine must not conclude that because I was not there when Madame died, that there is no truth in the advice given to her daughter. These statements (unasked for) I have upon the authority of the one addressed.—I am, &c.,

S. J. GARLICK.

July 1, 1884.