



LODOWICK MUGGLETON.



BOOKS CONSULTED.

A Remonstrance from the Eternal God; declaring several Spiritual Transactions unto the Parliament and Commonwealth of England, &c, &c. By John Reeve and Lodowick Muggleton. 1651.

The New Witnesses proved Old Heretics. By William Penn, 4to. London, 1672.

A True Representation of the Absurd and Mischievous Principles of the Sect commonly known by the name of Muggletonians. London, 1694.



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FONTENELLE in his "Dialogues of the Dead"—a reproduction of a familiar subject which Landor's "Imaginary Conversation" has rendered more familiar still—brings the shade of Montaigne, that instant dismissed from the earth, to meet with that of Socrates, lonely and unaccompanied, in Hades. The gossiping essayist is delighted to see one from whom he has so often quoted, and begs the philosopher to tell him of the grand age in which he lived, and of the great men by whom he was surrounded—of Plato and Phocion, Pericles and Alcibiades, "to whom," says Montaigne, "the men of his own days formed so pitiable a contrast." To which Socrates—in a method by no means Socratic—replies, that Montaigne is altogether mistaken, that the age in which he lived was by no means grand, that people then did not by any means make the fuss over him which they do now, that distance and time, both grand enchanters, had magnified its virtues and

buried its faults ; and that, finally, the ages do not degenerate, the world being always about the same compound of fools and wise men.

This, which is not particularly new, is not particularly true. Ages do differ considerably, especially in outward forms, whether the proportion of wise men and fools be about the same or not. We differ so much, for instance, from the age of John Bunyan, Milton, and the more earnest thinkers of their day, that it is quite difficult to realize the men of their stamp. In the comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher, of Jonson, Massinger, and Shakerly Marmion, we find an extinct species of bully, soothsayer, spendthrift, puritan, or swaggerer, as interesting to the student of character as a bone of an ichthyosaurus is to Mr. Waterhouse Hawkins. The fact is, that ages do change and characters die out. Perhaps Sam Weller and Becky Sharp may appear as strange to our descendants as do the "Copper Captain" and the "Roaring Girl" to us—in whom we can, indeed, trace scarcely one modern female trait, except that the young lady "dranke tobacco," and that the leaders of fashion imitated her, out of politeness no doubt, when entertained a few years ago on board the Pacha's yacht.

But strangest of all strange characters was the fanatic and Puritanic professor of religion, with whom Butler has made us somewhat familiar. It no doubt suited the cavaliers to represent these people as always hypocrites ; but they were, in fact, as thoroughly in earnest as any body of men in the world : and one proof of this is that

they carried the world with them. Everybody joined in the religious cry :—

The oyster-women lock'd their fish up,
And trudg'd away to cry no bishop ;
The mousetrap men laid savealls by,
And 'gainst evil counsellors did cry.
Some cry'd the Covenant instead
Of pudding-pies and gingerbread ;
Botchers left old clothes in the lurch,
And fell to turn and patch the Church.

Carried away and carrying others away as violently as any in this crowd of prophets—as earnest, and at the time more successful than their opponents, George Fox and William Penn—were two obscure men, John Reeve and Lodowick Muggleton, who achieved the honour of becoming the founders of a sect of Christians which has but recently expired, after a duration of two hundred years. As every false prophet must have his first aider and abettor—as Mahomet had his Abubeker, and Joseph Smith his brother Hiram, so John Reeve had his fervent disciple, Lodowick Muggleton, a mad tailor, whom he joined with him in his peculiar ministry, and pronounced to be his “mouth.” About the year 1651 these two came prominently before the English people, already disturbed enough by so-called prophets, and for some time favoured the people every year or so with Epistles and Gospels which bear certainly a very distant resemblance to the Apostolic and Evangelic writings. The first of these is entitled : “ A REMONSTRANCE from the ETERNAL GOD ; declaring

several spiritual transactions unto the PARLIAMENT and *Commonwealth of England*, unto His Excellency the Lord General CROMWELL, the Council of STATE, the Council of WAR, &c. &c. *By John Reeve and Lodowick Muggleton, the two Last Witnesses and true Prophets imprisoned for the Testimony of Jesus Christ in Old Bridewell.*"

Mad as have been many of the indwellers of Old Bridewell, it never held a madder pair. It appears that in the year 1651 there were many Richmonds in the field in the shape of prophets. To the first of these, one John Tanee, who had affirmed that there was "no Personal God," John Reeve and his "mouth" went, by virtue of a commission which they had received from the Omnipotent, and with well-chosen and hard texts so puzzled and belaboured him that he was fain to be still. Still they gave him no quarter, declaring that he and the Ranters were "the cursed children of the Dragon-Devil Cain, sporting themselves in all fleshly filthiness, as the people of *Sodom and Gomorrah* did, that they may justly be damned in themselves in the great day of the Lord. And so much for all ungodly Ranters and John Tanee their king." This is hard measure surely for the despised people called Ranters, of whom it will be remembered John Bunyan, pious and godly, was once one. *Ranter*—from the Dutch *randen, randien, delilare*, says Richardson—is one who tears a passion to tatters, to very rags, and was at that time almost a new name. Richardson's earliest citations are from Cowley and Bishop Hall's Satires; but certainly we do not hear that the Ranters were by any means a vicious

people. It seems, however, to have been the peculiar province of Reeve and Muggleton to "deal damnation round the land," for the next prophet whom they damned was John Robbins, then in the New Prison; and him they approached for the express purpose of pronouncing a sentence of eternal death against. And here we learn that the word Prophet, used after this time by Milton as meaning a preacher, had assumed a far more important meaning. "For this person," says Reeve, "many people honoured as a God, for they fell on their faces before him at his feet, and called him their Lord and their God; likewise he was pray'd unto, as unto a God. Moreover he gave them a law, commanding them not to mention the name of any other God but him (his) only."

This madman might have been deemed by far too mad to yield to the two "commissionated prophets," as he had not yielded to the magistrates. Yet, after hearing the sentence, he bowed his head saying, "It is finished, the Lord's will be done;" and "so much for John Robbins." After this the two prophets were moved to deliver a general damning warning to all clergymen and ministers, forbidding them to preach unless commissioned by the two. As the Clergymen, Ranters, Shakers, Independents, and Quakers, did not pay the least attention to these warnings, Reeve and Muggleton proceeded to further acts, and were straight "seized, apprehended, and committed to Newgate for our faith, by the Lord Mayor;" upon which they at once damned the Lord Mayor and the "London Jewry" (the Mansion House was then in the Old Jewry), especially

one Alderman Andrews. This occurred on October 15, 1653; and being thus made martyrs, there was a great outpouring of that peculiar grace which made many believe in Reeve and "his Mouth," Muggleton.

Their next production is "A General Epistle from the Holy Spirit," dated from "Great Trinity Lane, at a Chandler's Shop, over against one Mr. Millis, a Brown Baker, near Bow Lane End, London;" and in it they plainly assume to be the two last witnesses spoken of in the Revelation. They were, undoubtedly, well read in the Bible; and, like John Bunyan, they took care to stick closely by it, never being without a text to quote in their support. An epistle of the Prophet Reeve which follows, opens up somewhat more of their peculiar doctrines, which are, however, very undefined and foggy. The soul of man, they assert, is inseparably united to the body, with which it dies and will rise again. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the rejection of the truth as preached by Muggleton and Reeve. God has the real body of a man, and it is blasphemous to assert that he is an impersonal God or Spirit. The Trinity is only a variety of names for God, who Himself came down to earth and suffered death, during which time Elias was His representative in heaven.

The founders of a sect very little less erroneous than their own were the most violent opponents of the new prophets. The State having, notwithstanding their flattery of Oliver Cromwell, whom they represented as "Mortal Hebrew Jew" to whom all were to bow down, and whose acts in putting to death the king and assuming the Pro-

tectorate they approved, quietly put them in prison, and left them there unnoticed, punishing them, indeed, by whippings for their cursings and blasphemies, but doing no more. William Penn and George Fox, who claimed for themselves a Divine revelation, set upon them with their pens, and would indeed, have taken more carnal weapons to them if they could. These works continued for nearly twenty years, William Penn leading the way in a tract called "The New Witnesses proved Old Heretics" (4to. 1672), and another hand closing it by "A True Representation of the Absurd and Mischievous Principles of a Sect commonly called the Muggletonians" (4to. London, 1694). Three years after this date, Muggleton, who had long survived his companion, died in great sanctity at the patriarchal age of eighty-eight.

Perhaps, as little causes determine great events, it is only to his peculiar surname that Lodowick owes the honour of naming the sect—perhaps it was because he was the more energetic and the longer liver of the two. His other opponents, for there were many, for the honour of being the two last witnesses of the 11th chapter of Revelation, made no mark on the world. Who now hears of Bull and Varnum, of John Tanee and John Robbins? The people appear to have accepted, on good faith, the assertions of John Reeve and his Mouth, and, in the midst of dumb instructors, to have listened to any rash madman who choose to cry out loud enough. As Oliver Cromwell had been pronounced a "Mortal and Spiritual Jew, a natural Lion of the tribe of Judah, according to the flesh,"

to whom Muggleton was "commissionated" to give advice—which, to be fair, was very good of its kind—so also the people were told, "You that are spiritual may know that the *Roman Gentiles* spoken of by *John*, are those people by men called *Cavileers*], whose princely Race sprang from the loins of King Herod, that bloody persecutor of the Lord of Glory, and so streamed into the line of the tyrannical *Roman Empire*, or *Popedom*." Whether this satisfied candid inquirers we are not able to say. Some, indeed, suggested that the Caviliers were Devil-born, and that Laud was Old Nick himself, just as others made Oliver and his Parliament derive all their spirit from the same diabolical source.

A writer in one of the encyclopædias, who tells us that a complete set of the works of Reeve and Muggleton was published by some of their modern followers in 1832 (it is far from complete), adds that these men held very singular and not very intelligible doctrines concerning angels and devils. According to them "the soul of man is united inseparably with the body, with which it dies, and will rise again." This doctrine may be a mere expansion of the belief in the Church of England, which declares in its creed the resurrection of the body—an apostolic article of belief. The question therefore of what became of the soul during the interval between death and judgment was not unreasonably solved by Muggleton, supposing that it lay torpid and rose again to reanimate the body and to receive its due punishment or its gracious reward. As the doctrine of purgatory, to which perhaps our High Church people pre-

sently may tend, was, and is by the Thirty-nine Articles declared to be a fond superstition and damnable error, having no warrant in Scripture, where indeed there is not the shadow of the shade of a sentence (the book of the Maccabees being out of court) to be quoted in its favour. Muggleton's supposition that the soul subsides or is withdrawn from the body for a time, is not without reason. Not one of us knows anything about it; the question asked Lazarus* is still left unanswered; there lives no record of reply. Doctor Johnson arguing upon Kit Smart's madness, said that one charge against him was that he asked people to pray with him in the street, and said the doctor, "I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as with anybody else." So we may as lief believe with Lodowick Muggleton as to the indivisibility of the body and soul. Not so with his anthropomorphism.

On the whole, Lodowick, if a blasphemous heretic, as William Penn called him, was infinitely purer and less mischievous than such prophets as Joseph Smith, Orson Pratt, and the rest of the Mormons. There is and there ever has been in the human mind a credulous disposition

* "Where wert thou, brother, those four days?"

There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die,
Had surely added praise to praise.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unreveal'd;
He told it not; or something seal'd
The lips of that evangelist.

TENNYSON, *In Memoriam*, xxxi.

to believe in men of strong will who have the madness or boldness to declare that the heavens have been opened to them, and the decrees of God made plain. Muggleton and Reeve declared, indeed, that they were the last audible prophets from the Court of God ; but every age since their time has seen its dozens of like prophets, of whom the world happily takes no heed, save when breaking the Queen's peace they render themselves amenable to the laws of that society which they pretend to purify.

Muggleton, whilst he spread many errors, combated others. He was greatly opposed to those who believed only in King Jesus and his "Personal Reign" here on earth. "It is," he says, "rank folly to believe that men can read the designs of the Lord, and point out the day, the year, or the century in which the Lord's reign shall begin." But being himself "commissionated," he is permitted to know the names of the two last witnesses, and the time of their call. These were of course "Self and Co.;" and one part of their proof was that the witnesses were not to be clothed like citizens, Lord Mayors, and Aldermen, in silk and plush, but in sackcloth. Also, they were to be put to death ; and we greatly mistake the temper of the mad self-styled prophets if the very fact of their being permitted to die quietly in their beds was not the unkindest cut which they could receive from an ungrateful and an unbelieving world.

The most curious work which they have left for the benefit of the spiritual discerning reader is called, "A Divine Looking-glass, or the Third and Last Testament of Our Lord, &c, whose personal Residence is seated on

his Throne of Glory in another World." We omit many repetitions of the sacred names in giving these titles, for the two last Prophets were as fond of calling them out as is a Mussulman Fakir. In this last Testament the authors solve many scriptural riddles. They tell us of the form and nature of God from all eternity. They answer "the highest Querico concerning the eternal state of mankind." They assert that there is "no reason in God," and of what substances earth and water were from eternity. They tell us, but in so loose a manner that we are no wiser than before, of what form and nature angels were, and how they were created, and who Antichrist is; and they are especially learned about "the Serpent that tempted Eve," who, they assert, was a very beautiful and graceful young angel in the form of man, who certainly did not offer to our common mother "a mere apple from a wooden tree," but, in fact, seduced her from her allegiance to Adam, and thus became actually the Father of Cain, and through him of all the wicked people or sons of the devil upon earth. But unfortunately we have heard all this before. "I should never have done," says Bayle, "were I to relate all the fictions that are to be found in books concerning Eve and the Serpent;" and, indeed, from Josephus to Cajetan, Lanjado and Nicholas de Lyra, there have been some pretty theories broached, none more so than those by the over curious in the first and second centuries of the Church. "We are not to believe, therefore," sneers Bayle, "all the fine compliments which Alcimus Avitus reports to have passed on both sides; for according to the narrative of Moses, this great affair was ended in a few words."

The remainder of the last Testament of these two prophets is filled with a great deal of what Mr. Carlyle terms "clotted nonsense." The authors flounder from Trinitarianism to Unitarianism, and in and out of each; they condemn the unlawfulness of cutting off the head magistrate, and yet praise Cromwell; they propagate more errors than they preach against; they are ever ready with a "damnation to all eternity" for their opponents; and, in short, they act like the wild, mad, hot Gospellers they were. Their books have a saddening effect on us. They prove how easily a little incoherent but vivid assertion without proof will attract the faith of man, without even an appeal to his cupidity or to his baser passions, such as have been made by other false prophets from Mohammed to Joe Smith the Mormon. Muggleton and Reeve are singularly free from any such base appeals, nor do they make any exorbitant promises to their spiritually discerning brethren—never being, to use their own trope, at variance with what they thought to be true, "any more than William Lily and his learned brethren, in the astrologian figure, dare say the sun and moon were with themselves." Perhaps it is to this want of mixture of the worst traits of human folly in their scheme that they owe the decay of their sect. So late as 1832 some of their followers reprinted in three volumes the Epistles and Gospels according to Muggleton; but in the Census of 1851, their names had disappeared from the classification of sects and faith in the prophet Muggleton was not found upon the earth.