

LANDOR

1857

Wheeler, Stephen: Letters and other
unpublished writings of W.S. Landor,
1897, p. 147-8

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a place in any collection of Landor's works that can be regarded as complete.

There remains to be noticed in this chapter a collection of shorter pieces, in prose and verse, of a later date. They are letters and poems sent by Landor, during his last residence in Bath, to the newspapers. With one or two unimportant exceptions, all the verses have been republished; but the letters will be new, except to the industrious bibliographer who has searched the files of the *Examiner* and the *Atlas*. The earliest is a letter on 'the comfortable state of Europe,' printed in the *Examiner* of September 8, 1849. Landor prophesied that there would be a great war in Europe before two years were out; and he was not far wrong. He was alarmed at the prospect of Russian aggression. 'Russia,' he wrote, 'is guided systematically by watchful and thoughtful, prompt and energetic ministers. Every step of hers is considerate and firm, is short and sure; she is exhausted by no hasty strides, she is enfeebled by no idle aspirations. France believes it to be her interest, and fancies it to be in her power to divide the world with her; and if two such nations with ambitions in

accord are resolved on it, what power upon earth can effectually interpose?' Landor was no believer in dreams of universal peace. 'There never can be universal peace nor even general peace long together, while three-score families stand forth on the high grounds of Europe, and command a hundred millions to pour out their blood and earnings whereon to float enormous bulks of empty dignities.'

In 1851, Landor was writing innumerable letters about Kossuth's visit to England. He had sold, or tried to sell, his pictures in order to raise money for the Hungarian revolt. When Kossuth sought a refuge in England, Landor organized a reception committee at Bath, and wrote a poem to be recited at a public meeting held in the patriot's honour at Birmingham. Kossuth at first seemed to resent Landor's ir. petuous enthusiasm, but ended by thanking him civilly enough for his efforts. Landor replied in a letter dated Bath, October 28,

1851:

SIR,

The chief glory of my life is that I was the first in subscribing for the assistance of the Hungarians at the commencement of their struggle.



The next is that I have received the approbation of their illustrious leader. I, who have held the hand of Kosciusko, now kiss with veneration the signature of Kossuth. No other man alive could confer an honour I would accept.

'Believe me, Sir,

'EVER YOURS MOST FAITHFULLY,

'WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.'

About the same time, Landor sent the *Examiner* ten letters addressed to Cardinal Wiseman; but these have been reprinted in 'Last Fruit.' More interesting, however, and less accessible, are the letters he wrote during the Crimean War. The following protest against a form of intolerance, which is not without its counterpart in our own days, was printed in the *Atlas* of September 29, 1855:

'TO THE EDITOR OF THE *Atlas*.

'SIR,

'It is much to be regretted that the Christian religion, from the decease of the Apostles down to the present day, has produced more animosity and discord in the East than all the religions which it encountered and struggled to supersede. The star of Bethlehem was a morning star, appearing but too short a time above the horizon, and extending its radiance but a little

way beyond the circle it illuminated. I am led to these serious and sad reflections by seeing the Greek and Latin churches at daggers drawn still, after an incessant conflict for many centuries above a thousand years. All the religions in the world, innumerable as they have been and are, never shed so much innocent blood as that which arrogantly and falsely calls itself the Christian. The first lesson of its Divine teacher was goodwill toward all; but no sooner were the scholars out of school than they tore out that page, and scribbled unintelligible words over the remainder of the volume. The ushers at last turned out the master, and declared he never knew what he had been talking about. It was their business, they said, to set him right; but he could not be set right until they had houses and lands to set him right in, with chains and padlocks for security. Story-tellers from the borders of the desert broke in among them as they were carousing, threw flask after flask upon the floor, called the people from round about, and told them a fresh series of equally marvellous and more pleasant stories. The candle, after flaring and glittering, went out; but left behind it, and still leaves, a close unwholesome stench.

Recently there have been loud complaints against the followers of Mahomet for persecuting the Christians. I shall now examine this matter. Twelve years ago there appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* a refutation of a cruel judgment against an Armenian

