

THE FREETHINKER
LONDON, ENGLAND
10 MARCH 1929
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"Good Sense" and B.D. Cousins.

I have been fortunate enough to trace the history of the first English edition of the *Bon Sens* of the Curé Meslier. This edition was the one issued by Richard Carlile, and its journey through the press may be followed in Volume xiii. Of *The Republican*.

On page I of this volume (January 6, 1826) Carlile writes: "The first book [*i.e.*, of the newly-formed Joint Stock Book Co-moany] which is the 'Bon Sens; or, Good Sense of the Curé Meslier,' was put into the hands of the printer on Friday last, and it will be proceeded with, with all the rapidity that a careful revision and printing will admit, in an office, as yet, rather too small for the work required to be done in it."

The first book issued by the Company was, however, Hammon's *Answer to Dr. Priestley's Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*, which appeared, according to *The Republican*, in February, 1926.

There are several further references to the forthcoming issue of *Good Sense* in succeeding numbers of *The Republican*, but the only one I need quote is the one in the number for March 27. It runs: "The book entitled *Good Sense* has gone on but slowly, in consequence of the labour which a gentleman has imposed upon himself, to read the American translation by the French copy, and to mend the Americanisms and the inelegant English words with which it abounds. This task is little short of a new translation.

The Republican for April 28 announces that, "after encountering many unavoidable delays," *Good Sense* was ready. The price was 'Five shillings in boards.'

Volume xiv. of *The Republican* mentions in the issue dated July 28, 1826 that "*Queen Mab* and *Good Sense* are the best selling books which the company has printed." The issue for December 29 gives the information that the edition consisted of one thousand copies, whereof one hundred and fifty had up till then been sold.

There is no doubt whatever that Carlile's edition preceded the one published by Cousins, about whom I can give a little information.

Between 1832 and 1841, at least (and most probably for longer), B.D. Cousins' address was Duke Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields; in June, 1832, he left No. 14 for No. 18. For this information I am indebted to *The Isis*, which, in its imprint for June 9, 1832 records the change. Later, he removed to Helmet Court, Strand. My copy of Cousins' edition of *Good Sense* is published from Helmet Court, 337 ½ Strand. The imprint says, "338 Strand."

Cousins seems to have inherited or acquired some, at least, of the Carlile "good-will," for many items originally issued by that imperturbable pioneer appear in Cousins' catalogue. He was a most "faithful" producer, giving Carlile's text with absolute fidelity, even obvious misprints being followed.

At least five "advanced" periodicals were printed by Cousins: *The Isis* (1832); *The Antichrist* (1833); *The Crisis* (1834); *The Shepherd* (circa 1836-8); *Legends and Miracles* (1837).

The following quotation is from J.M. Wheeler's *Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*:—

Mitchell (Logan), author of Lectures published as *The Christian Mythology Unveiled*. This work was also issued under the title *Superstition Besieged*. It is said that Mitchell committed suicide in November, 1841. He left, by his will, £500 to any bookseller who had the courage to publish his book. It was first published by B. Cousens (*sic*), and was republished in '81.

I have reason to believe, on excellent evidence, that Cousins was in business until the early 'fifties of last century; but these ramblings of a bibliomaniac must already have wearied you and your readers.

For further information I can refer you to my friend, Mr. A. G. Barker, of Walthamstow, who probably knows more about popular English Freethought publications than anyone in the world.

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