
The Burton Book

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In the summer of 2001 a major controversy erupted following a *Jewish Chronicle* report (18 May 2001) that the Honorary Officers and Executive Committee of the Board of Deputies of British Jews had decided to offer for sale, at Messrs Christie's auction rooms in London, a hitherto unpublished work by the nineteenth-century explorer, writer and diplomat Sir Richard Francis Burton. In the event, and in the glare of worldwide media attention, the reserve price of £150,000 was not reached (6 June 2001).¹ The lot – one of the very few Burton manuscripts still in private hands – was therefore withdrawn and returned, amidst yet further controversy, to the safe-keeping of the Board. In this article we trace the history of this work from its creation in the early 1870s, and offer some thoughts on its contemporary significance.

We do not propose here to dwell at length on Burton's colourful, controversial, and in Victorian terms, scandalous life, a public image that may even, it has been suggested, have led Bram Stoker to model Dracula upon him.² Born in Torquay, Devon, in 1821, Burton taught himself Arabic whilst at Oxford and his extraordinary natural gift for languages made him an accomplished speaker of other eastern tongues, including Hindustani, Gujarati and Persian. In 1853 he famously journeyed to Mecca in the guise of a pilgrim, risking his life because at that time Christians who entered the Holy City customarily faced execution. Three years later he and John Hanning Speke explored central Africa under the auspices of the Royal Geographical Society; Speke discovered Lake Victoria but it was Burton who received the Society's Gold Medal. The two explorers subsequently became bitter enemies. Following Burton's marriage (1861) to Isabel Arundell, ten years his junior and the daughter of a distinguished Catholic family, he yearned for a diplomatic career – perhaps Her Majesty's Ambassador in Constantinople – but obtained only inferior posts with the Consular Service.

In December 1868 Burton was fortunate enough to be appointed British Consul in Damascus. But in August 1871 he was summarily recalled following complaints from the British Consul General in Beirut, the Ottoman Governor of Syria, and the Sultan himself about his attitude to Muslims, his many indiscretions and his general waywardness and unreliability. He was posted instead to Trieste, which became his base for the rest of his life,

¹The bidding started at £80,000 and quickly reached £140,000, but then stopped: information from Mr Leon Symons of the [*Jewish*] *Chronicle*. The *Daily Telegraph*, 19 May 2001, drew attention to the proposed sale. The *Observer*, 7 June 2001, carried a report of the auction.

²P. Murray, *From the Shadow of Dracula: A Life of Bram Stoker* (London, 2004), pp. 177–179.

though he actually spent a great deal of this time in further adventures – to Iceland, India, and the Arabian Peninsula – and in writing. In 1883, in pursuit of his literary interests he published a translation of the sexual manual known as the *Kama Sutra*. His translation of the *Arabian Nights*, two years later, brought him further fame and financial security. But his health, and that of his wife, had already begun to deteriorate. Knighted in 1886, he died in Trieste in 1890 and now lies at Mortlake (south London), in a marble and stone replica of an Arab tent. Isabel lived long enough to write a two-volume biography of her husband. She died in 1896 and lies beside him.

Such are the bare outlines of Burton's life. While in Damascus he had incurred the displeasure of its Jewish community, firstly by refusing to acknowledge and implement the protection given to it by the British government in 1849 and then by unhelpfully inquiring into an event in that city in 1840, which had in part caused that protection to be given.

The incident is known as the Damascus Affair. Again, there is no need for us to dwell at length upon it, for its broad outline is well known.³ The disappearance in February 1840 of a well-known and much-loved resident of Damascus, the Franciscan friar and doctor Father Thomas of Sardinia, and his Greek servant, led to the arrest of some thirteen Jews, including the rabbi Moses Abu-al-Afia. Under torture some Jews, including the rabbi (who subsequently converted to Islam), implicated others in giving credence to the rumour that Father Thomas had been murdered by Jews in order that his blood might be used in the baking of unleavened bread for the forthcoming Passover festival – a classic case of the Blood Libel.⁴ Four Jews died under torture and others were crippled for life. In Damascus and elsewhere in Syria the widespread killing of Jews and looting of Jewish property also occurred.

The Damascus Affair became an international incident. In the United States of America, in France and in the United Kingdom prominent Jews petitioned their governments to intervene. In such circumstances Sir Moses Montefiore, the lay leader of British Jewry, together with the prominent French Jewish lawyer, Adolphe Crémieux, journeyed to Egypt where the latter obtained from the titular ruler of Syria, the powerful but anti-Ottoman Viceroy Mehemet Ali, exoneration for those Jews still in prison in Damascus. In Constantinople Montefiore also obtained from the Sultan a *firman* (edict) denying the truth of the Blood Libel. Following a British naval bombardment of Beirut and the landing of British and Turkish troops in northern Syria, Mehemet Ali agreed to give up his claims to rule over Syria, which, to the satisfaction of the British government, returned to direct Ottoman control.

Such, in rough outline, was the Damascus Affair. But for our purposes we need to note that, by common agreement amongst all the reputable scholars who have addressed these matters, a sinister and crucial role was played in them by the French Consul in that city, Benoît Laurent François de Paul-Ulysse, Comte de Ratti-Menton. It was he who ensured

³The authoritative account is by J. Frankel, *The Damascus Affair: 'Ritual Murder', Politics and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge, 1997). See also T. Parfitt, "The Year of the Pride of Israel: Montefiore and the Blood Libel of 1840", in S. & V. D. Lipman (eds), *The Century of Moses Montefiore* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 131–148, and U. R. Q. Henriques, 'Who Killed Father Thomas?' in V. D. Lipman (ed), *Sir Moses Montefiore: A Symposium* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 50–75.

⁴There is a vast literature on the Blood Libel. An account of its manifestation in Britain is offered by C. Holmes, 'The Ritual Murder Accusation in Britain', in A. Dundes (ed), *The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore* (Wisconsin, 1991), pp. 99–134.

French soldiers assisted in the round-up of Jews destined for the torture chamber; it was he who initially interrogated these Jews before turning them over to the mercies of the Syrian authorities; it was his head of chancery, Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Beaudin, who translated into French the proceedings of the Syrian trials.⁵ Ratti-Menton's private and public motives have been exhaustively examined by Professors Tudor Parfitt and Ursula Henriques and their researches suggest the Frenchman seems to have believed that in taking an anti-Jewish and pro-Syrian (or, more correctly, a pro-Christian Syrian) stance he was defending French interests against the British. In examining the French government archives relating to the affair Professor Henriques notes that Beaudin's translation had been supplemented by notes made by Ratti-Menton.⁶

Six years after the Damascus Affair a two-volume account of it appeared in Paris. Entitled *Relation historique des affaires de Syrie depuis 1840 jusqu'en 1842*, the second volume was devoted largely to a most detailed description of the trials in Damascus of the unfortunate Jews accused of Father Thomas's murder, noting *en passant* that such incidents (that is, ritual murders) had been 'documented' as long ago as England in the twelfth century. The author of this remarkable work was given on the title page as 'Achille Laurent'. 'Laurent' was one of the forenames of Ratti-Menton, and one of Ratti-Menton's surnames was 'Ulysse' – suggestive of Ulysses, the King of Ithaca and one of the Greek military commanders in the Trojan Wars. The Greek hero of those wars, immortalised in Homer's *Iliad*, was of course Achilles – in French 'Achille'. It is tempting to speculate, therefore, that 'Achille Laurent' might well have been no more than a pseudonym for Ratti-Menton. Professor Frankel, in his classic study of the Damascus business, while acknowledging this possibility, suggests that others, including Beaudin, might have authored the work; but he appears to have overlooked the striking similarities between the name of Ratti-Menton and that of 'Achille Laurent'.⁷ Whoever the author, we shall return in a moment to this two-volume work, for we believe it to have played an important part in the tale we have to tell.

Burton's recall from Damascus, less than two years after his appointment, was a terrible blow to his self-esteem, and spelt the end of his diplomatic ambitions. He rightly regarded his subsequent appointment to Trieste as a demotion. In Trieste, with much time on his hands, he brooded and sulked, and seems to have become convinced he had had been the victim of a Jewish conspiracy. In particular, he recalled that some of the Jews to whom he had refused to extend the protection promised by the British government in 1849 (in relation to the enforcement of debts owed to them) even had the temerity to complain to London about his conduct.⁸

⁵On Beaudin see Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, pp. 58–59.

⁶On Ratti-Menton see *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 416.

⁸McLynn, *Burton*, pp. 267–268. Sir Moses Montefiore and Sir Francis Henry Goldsmid (one of the earliest professing Jews to sit in Parliament, as Liberal MP for Reading, elected 1860) both protested to the Foreign Office about Burton's conduct. McLynn follows Brodie (*Devil*, p. 256) incorrectly and inexplicably describing Goldsmid as 'Chief Rabbi of London'; the Chief Rabbi was Nathan Marcus Adler, who appears to have played no part whatever in these events, other than to have forwarded – presumably to Montefiore – a Hebrew letter he had received (dated 13 September 1870) from two rabbis in Damascus, complaining about Burton and seeking his premature recall. Montefiore clearly used this information as the basis for a letter published in *The Times* of 1 November 1870: Wiltshire & Swindon Record Office [WSRO] (Trowbridge): Papers of Sir Richard Burton: 2667/26/2/ (i) 46: Burton (Damascus) to Lord Granville (Foreign Secretary, London), 28 November 1870.

Burton's insistence that his recall from Damascus had been the result of Jewish pressure has been championed in an earlier article by Dr Andrew Vincent published by the Royal Asiatic Society. "The actual recall [Dr Vincent writes] seems to have been prompted in the final analysis by the supposedly poor performance of his duties which was brought to official attention as a result of the Jewish pressure".⁹ In fact, the decision of Lord Granville, the British Foreign Secretary to remove Burton from his Damascus post in Britain's national interest, took place against a background of only a relatively small number of Jewish complaints. A substantial body of evidence in Burton's papers is clear on this point.¹⁰ But we agree with the view – and find it especially significant – that Burton became fixated on the Jewish complaints to the apparent exclusion of all the others, including, as we have noted, that of the Sultan himself.

Between Damascus and Trieste Burton spent a vacation in England, where it is possible that, to supplement what he had already learned in Damascus about the events of 1840, he read in the British Museum various printed materials relating to the Blood Libel. That he consulted Achille Laurent's account of the Damascus Affair, a copy of which was in the British Museum, either whilst in England or at some other time, is incontrovertible.¹¹

Settled in Trieste he set to work and penned, in his own hand, a book provisionally entitled *The Jew*. Professor Dane Kennedy offers some interesting insights into "the highly visible presence" of Jews in Trieste, a presence which, he then alleges, "must have inflamed his [Burton's] sense of resentment and suspicion" following his recall from Damascus. But this claim amounts to no more than speculation.¹² It is clear, however, that Burton's fixation on Jews persisted and within *The Jew* were chapters addressing 'Human Sacrifice among the Sephardine or Eastern Jews'. These reflections formed the centrepiece of the lot put up for auction at Christie's in 2001. Professor Alderman has determined, from comparative inspection, that the bulk of these chapters had been brazenly copied, *verbatim*, from Achille Laurent's account of 1846. The major preoccupation of these sections of Laurent's work is the assertion that in 1840 Jews in Damascus murdered Father Thomas in order to use his blood for ritual purposes. In reproducing such detail it is clear Burton believed in the Blood Libel, and also that on this occasion he operated as a plagiarist. This latter aspect of his work has hitherto never been realised.¹³ This unashamed plagiarism even extended to the repetition of the date incorrectly given by Laurent for the Norwich Blood Libel, said by Laurent and repeated by Burton, to have occurred in 1137 but which actually took place in 1144.¹⁴

⁹A. Vincent, 'The Jew, the Gypsy and El Islam: an examination of Sir Richard Burton's Consulship in Damascus and his premature recall, 1868 – 1871', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1985, Part 2, p. 170.

¹⁰WSRO: 2667/26/2 (i) 1: *The Case of Captain Burton Late H[er] B[ritannic] M[ajesty's] Consul at Damascus* [printed: 'For Foreign Office Use only'] [1871?]

¹¹Brodie, *Devil*, p. 265, asserts that most of 'the diatribe against the Jews' was actually written in the British Museum. If so, it would have been a simple matter for Burton to have ordered the work of Achille Laurent in the Reading Room (as Professor Alderman did in 1988), and to have copied out large sections of it.

¹²Dane Kennedy, *The Highly Civilized Man: Richard Burton and the Victorian World* (Cambridge MA. and London, 2005), pp. 186–187.

¹³Brodie, *Devil*, p. 266, refers to the list of alleged ritual murders given by Burton in *The Jew* as "having been passed down from one anti-semitic tract to another over the generations", apparently unaware he had simply copied out the list given by Laurent, whose work she does not seem to have been aware of.

¹⁴Laurent, *Relation historique*, II, p. 325

How, if at all, did this manuscript relate to Burton's other references to the Jews? During his lifetime he was regarded as, if anything, a philosemite. On hearing of his death the *Jewish Chronicle* remarked that in his "many learned works" references to the Jews "were usually, if not invariably, marked by the tolerance and respect of a scholar".¹⁵ Prior to his Damascus posting he had spent some years in Brazil, as Consul at the port city of Santos and in his account of his travels in that country, published in 1869, had boldly declared: "Had I a choice of race, there is none to which I would belong more willingly than the Jewish".¹⁶

In about 1882 Burton also published a short study of the late Conservative Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, a baptised Jew, who had died the previous year; it was full of praise for Jewish 'foresight,' 'energy' and 'tenacity'. There is a need to be careful here, however. These apparently insouciant and certainly over-lavish references to Jewish intelligence and power may well have masked, or reflected, a much deeper fear.¹⁷ In other words, in some key respects they contained shades of that belief in the rise of a Jewish conspiracy, an allegation which accelerated in the course of the late nineteenth century and culminated at the very end of the century in the notorious forgery known as *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*.¹⁸

In *The Jew* we encounter Judeophobia at its worst. True, Burton has words of faint praise for Jewish intelligence and Jewish characteristics of cleanliness and longevity. But, he proclaimed, "their immorality is proverbial"; they treat non-Jews as "heathens barely worthy of the title of human"; "the Jew . . . alone eats bread not in the sweat of his own face, but in the sweat of his neighbour's face"; Jews are given to "lying and cowardice"; and their Oral Law [the Talmud] is "vindictive".¹⁹ "Obviously," he concluded, "such cruel and vindictive teaching . . . must bear fruit in crime and atrocities".²⁰ The worst of these is the murder of non-Jews for ritual purposes. The climax of *The Jew* was clearly intended to be a series of chapters recounting the alleged murder of Father Thomas in 1840. As we have emphasised, this account was simply plagiarised from that of Achille Laurent.

According to his editor, the manuscript of *The Jew* was "ready for publication towards the end of 1874". In 1875 Burton visited England, taking the manuscript with him, and tried desperately to find a publisher. In 1877, still pursuing this interest, he implored one such, Grattan Geary: "You must tell me that you want it, or rather that you are not afraid of it".²¹ But "an influential friend, who was highly placed in the official world", having read the text, advised against publication "owing to the anti-Semitic tendency of the book". Other friends supported this advice, pointing out (at a time when Disraeli, the Prime Minister, was arguably at the height of his popularity) that "so long as he [Burton] remained in the

¹⁵JC, 24 October 1890, quoted in C. Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society 1876–1939* (London, 1979), p. 49.

¹⁶R. F. Burton, *Explorations of the Highlands of Brazil* (London, 2 vols, 1869), I, p. 403; but Burton added "of course to the white family", indicating implicitly his prejudice against Oriental and therefore Sephardic Jews.

¹⁷R. F. Burton, *Lord Beaconsfield: A Sketch* (London) [1882?].

¹⁸On which see N. F. C. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide* (New York, 1967) and H. Ben-Itto, *The Lie That Wouldn't Die – The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London, 2005).

¹⁹R. F. Burton, *The Jew, The Gypsy and El Islam* (ed W. H. Wilkins, London, 1898), pp. 7, 11, 25, 29, 72.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 115.

²¹Burton to Geary, 12 May 1877, quoted in Brodie, *Devil*, p. 363. Geary was the managing editor of *The Times of India* and author of the celebrated work *Through Asiatic Turkey: Narrative of a Journey from Bombay to the Bosphorus* (1878).

service of the Government of a country where the Jews enjoyed unprecedented power and position, it would be unwise, to say the least, for him to make enemies of them".²²

Uncharacteristically, Burton for once took the advice he received and returned with the manuscript to Trieste. He seems to have entertained one final career ambition, to be posted to Tangier, in Morocco. The manuscript lay on his shelf, therefore. But when, in 1886, the Tangier Consulate went to another, he renewed his interest in its publication, only to be deterred, this time by his wife, then attempting to persuade the Foreign Office to permit her husband to retire on a full pension. "Burton [recorded Mr W. H. Wilkins, Isabel's literary assistant] reluctantly agreed to this, but declared his determination of publishing the book as soon as he had retired from the Consular Service".²³ However, Burton died five months before that impending retirement.

Whether Isabel Burton ever intended to permit her husband, insofar as it lay in her power, to publish *The Jew* must remain a matter of conjecture. But before we deal with the history of the manuscript after the death of its author we must turn our attention to the mysterious W. H. Wilkins.

William Henry Wilkins was born in 1860, the son of a Somerset farmer.²⁴ Graduating from Cambridge in 1887 he embarked on a minor literary career, writing novels under the pseudonym de Winton, authoring salacious accounts of the private lives of various queens of the Hanoverian period, and editing the works of others. For some years he acted as private secretary to the Earl of Dunraven, a leading light (1886) in the Society for the Suppression of the Immigration of Destitute Aliens, which played an important part in the mounting agitation against Jewish immigrants to England that resulted in the passage of the Aliens Act in 1905.²⁵ Dunraven was himself a disciple and devotee of one of the most notorious anti-alienists of late Victorian and early Edwardian Britain, Arnold White. White and Wilkins were also well acquainted with each other. Indeed, the latter wrote a chapter in the former's edited book on *The Destitute Alien* (London, 1892). Wilkins made other contributions to the anti-alien (mainly but not exclusively anti-Jewish) polemic of the period, writing a number of articles, as well as publishing a lurid monograph (*The Alien Invasion*) on the subject in 1892.²⁶ It is not without interest to note here that, like Burton, in his thirst for publication Wilkins also engaged in plagiarism (in the writing of *Alien Invasion*) and subsequently found

²² Wilkins in Burton, *The Jew*, p. viii.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. x.

²⁴ On Wilkins see H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison [eds], *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 58 (Oxford, 2004), pp. 991–992 and *The Times*, 23 December 1905, p. 10, where his birth year is given as 1861.

²⁵ G. Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (2nd edn, Oxford 1998), p. 124.

²⁶ There is a list of Wilkins's anti-alien publications at pages 249–250 of Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*. Wilkins moved in a circle of intellectual homosexuals that included George Cecil Ives (1867–1950), a criminologist and early campaigner for homosexual law reform and founder in 1897 of the Order of Chaeronea, a secret society of homosexuals that included Oscar Wilde's lover, the anti-Semitic Lord Alfred Douglas: Correspondence from Wilkins, 1892–5, survives in the papers of Ives, now at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin: <http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/research/fa/ives.html#bio> (accessed 29 November 2006). Wilde himself refused to join Ives's secret society. Wilkins and Ives also corresponded with the Cambridge historian and educational reformer Oscar Browning (1837–1923). Browning, whose surviving papers are now at King's College, Cambridge, was the lover of the (Jewish) pre-Raphaelite painter Simeon Solomon and, allegedly, of the future Viceroy of India, George Curzon. See I. Anstruther, *Oscar Browning* (London, 1983). Burton's own homosexual leanings are addressed in Kennedy, *Highly Civilized Man*, pp. 213–214 and 237–246.

himself having to submit a grovelling letter of apology in the *Evening News and Post* after the paper had exposed his illegitimate borrowing from its columns.²⁷

In due course Wilkins came to the attention of Isabel Burton. It is tempting to suppose he was drawn to Richard, and Richard to him, through a mutual dislike of Jews. But it seems more likely that, as Mary Lovell concludes, Wilkins had been called in by an ailing Isabel early in 1895 as a professional editor who could assist her in preparing various of her late husband's works for publication.²⁸ Following Burton's death in Trieste and funeral at Mortlake, his widow Isabel had set to work to write his biography and her autobiography. The former was published by Messrs Chapman & Hall in London in 1893. The latter, still in progress at the time of her death, was completed by Wilkins and published as *The Romance of Isabel, Lady Burton*, in two volumes, in 1897. Then in October of that year *The Athenaeum* carried an advertisement to the effect that a work by the late Sir Richard Burton, edited by Wilkins, was about to be published by Messrs Hutchinson.²⁹ It carried the title *Human Sacrifice Amongst The Eastern Jews; or, The Murder of Padre Tomaso*.

It is likely Wilkins had come across the manuscript when sorting through Burton's papers. Its subject-matter must have thrilled the anti-alienist. Nonetheless he seems to have felt the need to justify its publication. In the preface to *The Jew, The Gypsy and El Islam*, a compendium of three Burton manuscripts published posthumously under Wilkins's direction in 1898, he told an elaborate and barefaced lie:

Lady Burton [he insisted] had *The Jew* next on her list for publication at the time of her death. In publishing it now, therefore, one is only carrying out her wishes and those of her husband. But in the exercise of the discretion given to me, I have thought it better to hold over for the present the Appendix on the alleged rite of Human Sacrifice among the Sephardim and the murder of Padre Tomaso. The only alternative was to publish it in a mutilated form . . . the Appendix has no direct bearing on the other part of the book . . . The tone of even this portion is anti-Semitic; but I do not feel justified in going contrary to the wishes of the author and suppressing an interesting ethnological study merely to avoid the possibility of hurting the susceptibilities of the Hebrew community.

The truth was very different. To begin with, the material on 'Human Sacrifice' was never meant by Burton to be a mere 'Appendix'. He intended it to be the very climax of his manuscript *The Jew*. And far from wanting it published, as Wilkins asserted, Isabel had urged its destruction. It is well known that following his death Isabel burnt or ordered to be burnt many of her husband's papers and manuscripts. During her lifetime she did not burn *The Jew*. But she left instructions to her literary executors that her secretary and trustee, Minnie Grace Plowman, was to consign to the flames, after her death, all her own and her husband's surviving correspondence and manuscripts.³⁰ In her 'Private Instructions' to her sister, preserved in the Burton archive now in the Wiltshire Record Office, she specifically

²⁷See his letter, "The Contrition of a Plagiarist", *Evening News and Post*, 26 February 1892. *Ibid.*, 9 February 1892 had exposed his behaviour.

²⁸Lovell, *Rage*, p. 786.

²⁹*The Athenaeum*, 16 October 1897, p. 511.

³⁰Lovell, *Rage*, p. 789.

directed that “a manuscript about the Jews – Richard’s rough copy and fair copy must be burnt”.³¹

This destruction obviously never took place. Initially the burning was delayed to enable Wilkins to complete Isabel’s autobiography. Perhaps it was then, if not before, that Wilkins took physical possession of *The Jew*, including the chapters on human sacrifice. Scarcely a year after Isabel’s death he announced his intention to publish the work in full.³² This news reached the ears of the London Committee (Board) of Deputies of British Jews, which on 14 March 1897, in secret session, resolved that if the work were found to constitute a defamatory libel on the Jewish people, criminal proceedings would follow against anyone involved in its publication.³³ The following day the Board’s solicitor, Lewis Emanuel, wrote to Isabel’s executors begging them to use their influence to prevent the work’s publication: “Such a book would revive a cruel and absurd medieval legend . . . which is calculated to kindle racial hatred . . . and probably bloodshed”.³⁴

Negotiations amongst the various parties ensued, and on 8 April 1897 the Board’s Law & Parliamentary Committee was informed of the intended publication of the work but in a much-abridged version. Wilkins had in fact agreed, or had been ordered by Isabel’s trustees, to excise some 150 pages, including almost all the material on human sacrifice. The work, in this form, appeared at the beginning of 1898. The Board took no legal action.

Wilkins died on 22 December 1905. His legal title to the unpublished material was exceedingly weak. Nonetheless, heavily in debt, it appears that at some time in 1903 he had sold the material for twenty guineas to a well-known firm of London booksellers, Messrs Sotheran & Co, then of 140 The Strand.³⁵ From them it was purchased for thirty guineas by an aristocratic publisher, Henry Frederick Walpole Manners-Sutton (1879–1918), later the fifth Viscount Canterbury.³⁶ In 1908 Manners-Sutton approached Isabel’s nephew, Gerald

³¹WSRO, Papers of Lady Isabel Burton: 2667/26/2/ (xii): ‘Private Instructions For My Sister: A few of the things that are to be burnt after my death’ (typescript, undated). Lovell’s suggestion (*Rage*, p. 785) that Isabel had wanted *The Jew* published seems to us curious – to say the least – in view of the explicit terms of these Instructions.

³²Brodie suggests (*Devil*, p. 363) that Wilkins “could not bring himself to publish the most offensive portion of ‘The Jew’”. We are at a loss to explain this assertion. She brings no evidence for the contention and we have been unable to find any. On the contrary, all the evidence points in a quite opposite direction.

³³Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 52.

³⁴WSRO: 2667/26–2 (iii) 24: Emanuel to Elizabeth Fitzgerald [Isabel’s sister], 15 March 1897. That Emanuel had written in identical terms to Isabel’s other executors, and to Wilkins himself, is evident from the contents of Wilkins’s reply, in which he characterised the possibility of an action for criminal libel as ‘intimidation’ and threatened that he was minded to publish in full the Board’s letter and the resolutions, enclosed with it, which it had secretly passed: the threat was never carried out: WSRO: 2667/26–2 (iii) 22: Wilkins to Emanuel, 16 March 1897.

³⁵This firm still trades but we understand that it has no surviving material relating to *The Jew*. Its archives were blitzed in the Second World War and even its catalogues have disappeared: letter to Professor Holmes, 29 August 2001. *The Jew* was not the only Burton manuscript to which the financially-embarrassed Wilkins helped himself: Lovell, *Rage*, pp. 790–791. The sum paid by Messrs Sotheran was divulged in the High Court in 1911: *JC*, 31 March 1911, p. 29.

³⁶Sutton (whose Canterbury title became extinct on the death of his brother, the sixth Viscount, in 1941) was a partner, with the author and playwright Alfred Edey Manning-Foster (1876–1939), in Cope, Fenwick & Co (otherwise known as Cope & Fenwick), a publishing house then specialising in works on eastern and occult religions. A leading authority on the card game known as Bridge, Manning-Foster subsequently became president of the British Bridge League. In 1934 it emerged that he had written to the League’s selection committee advising that no Jew be included in the team to play in an international tournament in Vienna: *JC*, 25 May 1934, p. 37. We are grateful to the English Bridge Union for supplying invaluable biographical data relating to Manning-Foster, whose obituary appeared in *The Times*, 26 August 1939, p. 2. In 1909 Cope & Fenwick had published *The Jew and Human Sacrifice: Human Blood and Jewish Ritual*, a translation of the 8th edition of a work by the Protestant

Arundell (afterwards 15th Baron Arundell of Wardour), a trustee of her estate, for permission to reprint *The Jew* including the expurgated material. Arundell and his trustees (they included the executors of Isabel's sister Elizabeth, who had died in 1902) strongly objected. So did Wilkins's executors. Whether on their initiative, or that of the Jewish Deputies, to whose attention the matter had been brought by the National Vigilance Society, in early 1909 the Board purchased the manuscript of the chapters on human sacrifice, a consideration of £10 being paid to Isabel's estate and one shilling to that of the late Mr Wilkins. Ownership of the work was subsequently vested in the President for the time being of the Board of Deputies, which undertook that it was never to be published.³⁷

Although the Deputies had now secured legal title to the Burton material, it appears unlikely they actually had it in their possession at that time.³⁸ Manners-Sutton appeared to possess it and he believed his ownership of the manuscript was sound; however, he revealed his willingness to sell it to the Deputies, presumably to make good any financial loss. But the Board followed a different course of action. On 27 March 1911 the president of the Deputies, the distinguished lawyer David Lindo Alexander, brought an action against Manners-Sutton in the High Court in London.³⁹ He asked the Court to declare that, as president of the Deputies, ownership of the manuscript was vested in him, that Manners-Sutton be required to deliver up to him all copies of the work at no cost, and that an injunction be granted preventing Manners-Sutton from performing any act that would infringe his – Alexander's – copyright. Mr Justice Lawrence had no hesitation in ruling for the plaintiff, and we may assume it was at that point the Deputies came into possession of Burton's actual manuscript of the chapters on human sacrifice, and of a set of galley proofs. Reporting to the Deputies in April 1911 the president announced that the manuscript would now be "suppressed forever".⁴⁰

The material remained completely hidden from public view for the next sixty-seven years.⁴¹ Its existence was a matter of public record, of course, as a result of Wilkins's preface to *The Jew, the Gypsy and El Islam* and the newspaper accounts of the 1911 trial. But it

theologian Dr Hermann Strack refuting the blood-libel accusations against the Jews made by the notorious Canon August Röhling, a professor at the Catholic University in Prague, in his work *Der Talmudjude* [The Talmud Jew] in 1871. Although Strack's work was clearly sympathetic to the Jews, the Board of Deputies may have felt, in company with Isabel's executors, that the sensational nature of Burton's work would be too much of a temptation to Cope & Fenwick, which might have been prepared to publish any such material relating to Jews to boost its profits. We have attempted, without success, to glean more details on this publishing house. Its last offering that we have been able to trace dates to 1947.

³⁷Holmes, *Anti-Semitism*, p. 53. It was no coincidence that whilst one of Isabel's trustees was Miss Plowman, the other was W. A. Coote, a member of the National Vigilance Society (Brodie, *Devil*, p. 331), suggesting that it was Isabel's trustees who had alerted the Deputies to the unwelcome proposed publication of *The Jew* in full. Isabel had in fact instructed her executors to ensure that the Society had a list of all Burton's manuscripts unpublished at his death "to enable them to have any books purporting to be Burton's investigated and stopped": Lovell, *Rage*, p. 783. In her will Isabel had required her executors "at the expense of the estate, to initiate proceedings against any person printing or publishing anything objectionable in connexion with the works of her late husband": WSRO: 2667/26/2 (xii) (A) (7): *The Times*, 17 June 1896.

³⁸In the High Court in 1911 it was stated that the Board of Deputies did not then know where the manuscript was: *JC*, 31 March 1911, p. 29.

³⁹*The Times*, 28 March 1911, p. 3; *JC*, 31 March 1911, p. 29.

⁴⁰Dr Lionel Kopelowitz to Dr Geoffrey Alderman, 11 April 1986. The National Vigilance Society, through Mr Coote, subsequently thanked Alexander "for his action in connection with the suppression of the Burton book": *JC*, 5 May 1911, p. 15.

⁴¹The question has been asked why the Deputies, having obtained legal title to the work, and physical possession of it, did not at once destroy it. The answer surely is that the Deputies could never be certain other galleys did not

is our view that Burton scholars, even if they acknowledged its existence, found it an embarrassment. For instance, the late Fawn Brodie's much-acclaimed biography of Burton seems to us to downplay Burton's anti-Jewish prejudices; she completely misinterprets the events of 1911 and makes a fatal error in inexplicably describing David Lindo Alexander as "Isabel Burton's literary trustee".⁴² Frank McLynn's study of 1990 acknowledges Burton's Judeophobia, it is true, but deals with his belief in the Blood Libel in half a sentence.⁴³ Mary Lovell's biographical study of Richard and Isabel refers only briefly to *The Jew* and to Burton's anti-Jewish proclivities.⁴⁴ Of all the modern biographers of Burton only Professor Kennedy has fully acknowledged the reality of Burton's anti-Jewish prejudices.⁴⁵

We must also draw attention to the fact that Professor Jonathan Frankel's otherwise definitive account of the Damascus Affair, published as recently as 1997, omits altogether Wilkins's edition of the truncated *Jew* manuscript and the manuscript itself. This is all the more surprising because in the late 1970s the Jewish Deputies wisely agreed to have their extensive archives professionally catalogued under the auspices of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. The Commission's report, compiled by Roberta Routledge, was duly published in 1978.⁴⁶ Naturally, it listed the Burton material. Known collectively by the filing name 'The Burton Book', it appears under the pressmark B2/9/16A ('Manuscript of an unpublished book by Sir Richard Burton and surrounding action by the Board to obtain it').

The catalogue was publicly available, and soon came to our attention, through our work on the history of Anglo-Jewry (Alderman) and British anti-Semitism (Holmes). In the course of the research on the latter theme an unsuccessful attempt had been made to gain access to the Burton Book. The account subsequently offered by Holmes in *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876–1939*, which appeared in London in 1979, made full use of other available evidence and later formed the basis of a report in the *Jewish Chronicle* (20 April 1984). This article also quoted the then secretary of the Board, Hyam Pinner, as saying, with regard to the request to consult the Burton manuscript, "why revive the whole thing at a time when we are suffering enough. What does an academic want with this?" On 9 November 1984 Mr Pinner informed Professor Holmes: "it is our considered opinion that there is no likelihood of the Burton papers being made available to the public or to scholars within the foreseeable future". At that point Professor Alderman, then a member of the Board, decided to press for the Burton Book to be made available to *bona fide* scholars.

The campaign began when on 10 December 1984 he wrote a formal letter to Mr Pinner giving notice of a series of questions to Mr David Graham, QC., the chairman of the Board's Law, Parliamentary & General Purposes Committee at a plenary session of the Board on Sunday 16 December. These questions were duly put, and answered, but when Professor

exist. Should they ever surface, it was important that the Deputies could bring *their* galleys, delivered to them by court order in 1911, as proof of their ownership.

⁴²Brodie, *Devil*, pp. 266, 363.

⁴³McLynn, *Burton*, p. 284.

⁴⁴Lovell, *Rage*, p. 516, contents herself with the observation: "Before he went to Syria his [Burton's] opinions on Jews were conventional enough, afterwards his anti-Semitism was pronounced".

⁴⁵Kennedy, *Highly Civilized Man*, pp. 185–192

⁴⁶Roberta A. Routledge (compiler), *Report on the Records of the Board of Deputies of British Jews 1760–1966* (London, 1978).

Alderman attempted to exercise his right to ask supplementary questions he was cut short by the president of the Board, Mr Greville (later Lord) Janner, QC: “The document in question was a virulently anti-Semitic attack and he ruled that further questions on the subject would not be allowed as they would be against the communal interest”.⁴⁷ But this discussion merely provided more copy for the *Jewish Chronicle*, and for other media. A report in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* of 4 January 1985 signalled that, after three-quarters of a century, the Burton Book had become news once more.

Later that year Mr Janner completed his term of office as president. His favoured candidate, Mr Martin Savitt, whose view of the Burton Book coincided with that of Mr Janner and Mr Pinner, failed to secure election as his successor. The presidency passed instead to Dr Lionel Kopelowitz, and on 9 October 1986 he wrote to Professor Alderman a historic letter indicating he could examine the Burton Book under certain conditions, to which Professor Alderman at once agreed. Even so, it took another two years for this examination to take place.⁴⁸ On 31 October 1988 Professor Alderman finally received access to the Burton material. Some months later Professor Holmes was afforded a similar permission.

The conditions under which they were permitted to examine the Burton Book were understandably draconian. In particular, they were not to divulge to anyone any details of what they had read without the prior permission of the president of the Board. It therefore came as a considerable shock to both these scholars – and, it should be said, to many others in Anglo-Jewry – that in the spring of 2001 the then president of the Board, Mrs Jo Wagerman, announced that the Burton material, so carefully guarded from public view for ninety years, was to be auctioned in order to raise money to permit the Board to secure for itself new premises in central London. In 1911 the Board had been assured that the material would be “suppressed forever”. In 1984 the Board had been told the material constituted “a virulently anti-Semitic attack” and further public discussion of the subject would not be allowed because it “would be against the communal interest”. Now, in 2001, whoever purchased the material would be free to discuss and indeed publish it immediately.

This sudden change of heart produced a strong counter response, not only in Britain but also in the United States. As already noted, the Book failed to reach its reserve price at the London auction, and was therefore withdrawn. There were fears it might then be disposed of by private sale. One leading American scholar, an authority on the Blood Libel, wrote to Mrs Wagerman expressing his view that “it is unseemly for a Jewish institution to solve its financial problems by putting this document [the Burton Book] up for purchase by the highest bidder”.⁴⁹ Another, pointing out that the Blood Libel was still very much alive and “is peddled widely in the Muslim and Arab worlds”, reminded Mrs Wagerman that “the Board of Deputies secured this manuscript after a long struggle in order to protect

⁴⁷ Minutes of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, 16 December 1984, pp. 2–3.

⁴⁸ The reasons for this delay, which relate to other communal matters on which Professor Alderman and Dr Kopelowitz did not agree, are related in G. Alderman, *Academic Duty and Communal Obligation: Some Thoughts on the Writing of Anglo-Jewish History* (London, 1994), p. 10. Dr Kopelowitz had consulted the late Dr Vivian Lipman (at Oxford a pupil, like Professor Alderman, of the late Dr Cecil Roth), who reported regularly but in the strictest confidence to Professor Alderman on the substance of these exchanges. Support for offering *bona fide* scholars access to the manuscript was obtained by Professor Alderman from the then President of the Royal Historical Society, the late Dr Gerald Aylmer (Master of St Peter’s College Oxford), Professor Sir Randolph Quirk, President of the British Academy, and Rabbi Dr Abraham Levy, spiritual head of the Spanish & Portuguese Jews’ Congregation.

⁴⁹ Email from Professor AB, New York, to Mrs Wagerman, 17 June 2001, copied to Professor Alderman.

Klal Yisroel [the Jewish people] from the effects of its publication . . . That trust must not be betrayed".⁵⁰

In these tangled circumstances Greville Janner (by then Lord Janner of Braunstone), who earlier, in 1984, had been reluctant to allow an extensive discussion on the manuscript at the Board of Deputies, appeared, together with Professor Alderman, on a BBC television 'Newsnight' report about the Burton Book the night before the auction. In that broadcast, in firm but muted tones, Lord Janner expressed the hope that the Book would be withdrawn from auction. A few days later (11 June 2001) he published a letter to all Deputies. Expressing the hope that no further attempts would be made to sell "this pernicious document", he revealed that he had been contacted by a Jewish benefactor who was willing, in effect, to pay the Board in order that the Book could be kept 'in custody and in private'.

It is our understanding that this is precisely what has happened. A benefactor has reportedly paid £75,000 to the Board of Deputies to keep the Burton Book under lock and key at its London headquarters.⁵¹

In view of the fact that much of the Burton Book was plagiarised from the 1846 work of Achille Laurent, copies of which are freely available for consultation in the British Library and elsewhere, and that in any case the story of the Damascus Affair is well-known, we have been asked whether in our view it would have made any material difference had the Book been disposed of at auction or by private sale. In our view the answer must be in the affirmative.

At one level the Burton Book is of exclusively historic interest; its primary significance lies in the confirmation it offers of Burton as an intellectual who became a pronounced and unrepentant Judeophobe, ready to give credence to any story that would show the Jewish people in an evil light. It also reveals him as a consummate plagiarist, a feature of his academic activities that has either been unrecognised or suppressed.

But does the Book remain significant in the history of anti-semitism? It might be assumed it is a total irrelevance, that the Blood Libel charge which first came into England in the medieval period is no more than a barbarous relic from the past. That line of argument does not convince. The Libel formed a feature of the anti-semitism that swept in a wave across Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, bearing testimony to the fact that once in circulation anti-Semitic ideas are tenacious. In an age when newer forms of conspiratorial Jew hatred took an increasing hold, images from the past, including the

⁵⁰Email from Professor CD, New York, to Mrs Wagerman, 12 June 2001, copied to Professor Alderman. In her reply (14 June) Mrs Wagerman justified the decision to sell the manuscript on the grounds that the money was needed to enable the Board to continue protecting the Jewish people.

⁵¹*The Independent*, 17 March 2002, p. 11. This sum was much less than the auction reserve. It was the view of the Board's director general, Mr Neville Nagler (as reported by *The Independent*) that "the main bidder [at the auction] withdrew after the allegations of anti-Semitism" levelled at the Book and the strong concerns that Greville Janner was expressing about it. We understand that legal ownership of the Book now rests with the Board of Deputies Charitable Trust.

charge of the Blood Libel murder, persisted and rabid anti-Semites experienced no tension in working along both old and new axes⁵²

And still today the Blood Libel helps to drive anti-semitism in many countries.⁵³ Entries in the standard listing of anti-semitic publications themselves attest to the truth of this statement.⁵⁴ In particular, the Blood Libel has become a component of anti-Jewish rhetoric in parts of the contemporary Arab and Muslim world, and has also been resurrected by extreme nationalist groups in post-Soviet Russia.⁵⁵ The imprimatur of Sir Richard Burton, evidenced in his own autograph, would certainly have been exploited to bolster the supposed veracity of this vile legend. At present groups such as the Sons of Liberty in the United States keep the abridged version of Burton's book in print and through their international links with racial nationalist groups in Europe and elsewhere guarantee its wide circulation. The full text would add to their ideological armoury. And at the time of the auction we were made aware that several extreme right-wing groups in the USA, who are certainly not short of funds, intended to try and purchase the Book. A successful attempt would have carried potentially serious political consequences for Jewish communities internationally.

At the same time, genuine scholars, with a legitimate research interest in the Book, must be permitted access to it, as we were, under stringent conditions. The Burton Book should indeed be kept under lock and key. But it must not remain immune thereby from expert scrutiny and study.⁵⁶

⁵²See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 4 (Jerusalem 1971), pp. 1119 ff for a convenient accessible survey of old anti-Semitism remaining a vital force during this period. Although the Nazis placed great emphasis on the threat of Jewish domination, the Blood Libel charge still surfaced in their ideology as in 1934 in *Der Stürmer*, for example. Arnold Leese, active at the same time in Britain, likewise had no problem incorporating both it and the allegation of a Jewish conspiracy within his ideology: see J. Morell, "The Life and Opinions of A. S. Leese: a study in extreme antisemitism", University of Sheffield MA thesis, 1974.

⁵³See Frankel, *Damascus Affair*, chapters 16 & 17.

⁵⁴R. Singerman, *Antisemitic Propaganda: An Annotated Bibliography and Research Guide* (New York, 1982).

⁵⁵L. Galili, "Blood Libel makes comeback in Russia", *Haaretz*, 25 January 2005, reproduced at <http://www.rense.com/general62/talm.htm> [accessed 14 January 2007]; A. Julius, "On Blood Libels" *Engage* (September 2006): http://www.engageonline.org.uk/journal/index.php?journal_id=12&article_id=42 [accessed 14 January 2007].

⁵⁶We are unaware of the identities of any scholars other than ourselves who have been permitted to examine the Book since 1989. However, Professor Kennedy has informed Professor Alderman (email, 2 March 2007) that a request from him to the Board to view the manuscript whilst preparing his monograph on Burton went unanswered.