

BETTER OR WORSE?

REV. DR. COLLYER, THE NEW YORK DIVINE, TALKS ABOUT HUMANITY.

He Says That at No Time Has the Desire for Knowledge of Christianity Been So Great as It Is Now—In His Opinion Creeds Do Not Count, but Godliness Does.

[Special Correspondence.] NEW YORK, Dec. 31.—A question of abiding interest, frequently discussed by thoughtful men and women, is whether the world in its religious aspects is standing still, growing better or retrograding.

In a scientific and educational view, in the field of discovery and exploration, in the domain of mechanism, the arts, commerce, and all industries, results are palpable. We can see and touch them. But what amid the boundless activity of the age that has supplied our outward wants has been the progress of spiritual life? How wages the war between Christianity and crime and selfishness? Which is the winning side?

Rev. Robert Collyer, in answer to questions I put to him, said:

"I think that at no time of my life have I observed such a deep and abiding interest in religion as I notice now. So far as it turns on the words of Christ, 'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free,' there never has been so eager and devouring an anxiety with reference to the Christian faith as at the present time. People everywhere are reading and thinking and trying to make up their minds about what Christianity means, no matter whether they are living what is called the Christian faith or not.

"Faith in the old axiom that held it own for a long time—'The Bible and the Bible only is the religion of the Protestants' (I think that was Chillingworth's saying), has been disturbed very rudely within these fifty years of my observation, and the Bible is now only one of the great foundation stones to faith in God and in all goodness. There is a growing disposition to welcome truth from whatever quarter it comes, whether it falls into harmony with something in the sacred Scriptures or not; and also to believe that the new truth of today is as divine as the old truth of 2,000 or 3,000 years ago. So that all great sacred truths as we find them and take them to our hearts are winning an authority and a love among us as deep as that we feel for the ancient Scriptures.

"When we see an error in the Bible or a statement that cannot be verified by the standards of truth we hold now, we say so without fear and without reproach. The foundations of religion, therefore, are much broader than they were when the axiom was accepted. Emerson said that 'One accent of the Holy Ghost, the heedless world has never lost,' but the people are listening still for the same accents, and are eager to hear them and to blend them with those of the old time.

"I have no doubt that the wider dissemination of a true Christian literature must have that outcome, but I naturally question whether a good deal that goes under the name has a perfect right to it. At the same time it is to be said for all the churches and denominations, that they are trying to get nearer to the heart of Christ; to understand his life and mission and to care less and less about doctrinal differences and distinctions.

"I never find a man, a good, true man, even though he is not ready to accept the Christian faith, who is not ready to confess that pure goodness is the root of the noblest life; not genius, but goodness; and that is the inmost heart of Jesus."

"What are your views with reference to missions?"

"I am used to say that I do not think so much of the missions to the heathen as the great majority of men and women do who make such splendid sacrifices for them, because I think they are founded on a false alarm. It seems to me as if a large number of persons had rushed through the streets shouting 'Fire!' 'Fire!' only to find there was no such fire when they reached the spot. But so far as Christianity can rescue the heathen from the hell upon earth in which so many of them live, and can lift them out of their degradation and misery into a nobler and truer life, I believe in Christian missions with all my heart. That is what they are doing more and more. They are more and more disposed, as I think, to let the old cruel alarm that if the heathens are not rescued from their heathenism in this life, there is nothing but eternal damnation for them in the life to come, go down the wind, and I am glad of it.

"Christianity, as it will be when it has outgrown its limitations and dogmas, will win the world, but it will take into full fellowship the old fakir I heard of in India in the time of the great Sepoy rebellion, who found an English child alive in the thick of the carnage of a town—the only living thing. He took it in his arms and made for the nearest English post, defending it by the way until he was sorely wounded. When he reached his destination and carried the child in and laid it down before its friends, and they subscribed what to him would be a great sum of money as a reward for his bravery, he said he wanted none. But he added that when peace should come again over the land they might take the money and make a well at a certain place, if that pleased them, in order that the weary, wayworn traveler might be refreshed, and then he went his way and they saw him no more. That man would not have to stand outside the Christian pale if he could not accept the Christian faith or dogma.

"I said to a missionary who had been many years in Egypt, a good Presbyterian, in Illinois, 'Tell me, on your honor, of what faith the best man you found in Egypt.' 'The best man I found in Egypt,' he said, 'was my instructor in the tongue. He was a Mohammedan, but he was the straightest, fairest and cleanest man I saw in the valley of the Nile.' 'What will become of him?' I inquired. 'He must be damned,' was the answer, 'because he has not accepted the

terms of salvation. Christianity will grow great enough to accept a man and never ask a question in the course of time. Jesus said, 'Other sheep I have that are not of this fold.' He meant, as I believe, men like that.

"Speaking of hell, have not many men ceased to regard it as a bugbear?" "Unquestionably. Men who are very good and sweet fellows laugh in their sleeve and often openly when the thing is propounded to them in the old fashion. They do not believe it, and they do believe they can find no authority for it in the Bible, as it has been promulgated in some of the Christian systems, and if it could be proven today by the Word that it is all truth, they are ready to say, with Theodore Parker, 'So much the worse, then, for the Bible.'

"We are slowly but surely coming to accept the grand central truth that God is love and God is light, and in him is no darkness at all; that men will be weighed by their character and not by their opinion. Why, even the light that is beginning to gleam on us touching the transmitted troubles and deprivations of our human nature is going to make us more pitiful and tender toward those who are their victims, as Jesus was to the publicans and harlots.

"Education is exerting a most wholesome influence. I never have any trouble among men and women who are educated in a broad and practical sense, and I think the whole tendency of what one might call our religious education takes that trend now. Education, however, in the special dogma of a church and its system makes men narrower and more bigoted. The bright and cheerful aspect is this, that all the great popular channels of education which reach the people far and wide are of the broader and finer sort. I never saw a great magazine or sound public journal of any kind that does not possess this characteristic. The novel, which is so popular in our time, is also of that quality, broad in its sympathies, calculated to reach the heart's finest tissues and make us feel the touch of humanity.

"A few years ago, being in Luzerne in Switzerland, I saw a notice that there was going to be a Protestant service in a Catholic church on Sunday. I attended and found that the service was conducted by a Presbyterian minister from Greenock, in Scotland. The sermon was on the example of Christ and what it was to follow Christ. Touching miracles, he said the age of miracles has not passed and gone, but is still in full force. Miracles continue to heal the sick, give sight to the blind, feet to the lame and strength to the palsied in the hospitals. These miracles are just as great and divine in their way as any the world ever saw.

"When the discourse was finished I went up to the minister and, taking his hand, said, 'I have also a miracle to report—a Presbyterian service in a Roman Catholic church and a sermon fair and true to a confirmed heretic.' That is the way it is going. Our thinking is broader, our sympathy for each other is broader and we all look forward to the time when there shall be one Lord, one faith and one baptism, and all the churches and all the sects and all the men and women within them, and vast numbers outside them, will be branches of the living vine.

"One church now says, you must believe in me as the true branch, because I am the oldest; another, you must believe in me because I am the newest; a third, you must believe in me because I am nearest the water; a fourth, because I am farthest away. One says, you must believe in me because I am most in the shadow; another, believe in me because I am in the sun. One says, believe in me because every twig on the ecclesiastical trellicework, and another, because every twig is left to find its own twining in its own fashion. There is only one great truth to tell about them all—what sort of fruit do you bear, and how does that compare with the fruit borne by the other branches? The fruits of the spirit, the apostle says, are love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, patience, goodness."

"In a general way, doctor, don't you think the world is growing nobler and better?" "Surely, surely," was the reply, in that earnest tone which men use when they leave no doubt to be implied, "al though we are too close to the clash and clang of things to realize the full significance of the fact. It is well illustrated, however, by old John Evelyn, who said that when he was in Holland—it was some time in the Seventeenth century—he went up into the bell chamber of a great cathedral and was sorely hurt by the noise of the bells, but when he went away a mile or two and heard ringing their soft, sweet notes, the very air seemed rich in harmony. There was no discord then—no

Sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh. "And this is what we should all try to do now and then.

"Some time ago I received a letter from a friend in England, whose mother had just died at a very great age. All her life she had lived in a quiet nook among the Yorkshire moors, and my friend wrote that during her last years she was forever thanking God that the world had grown so much better since she could remember. She had watched it with wise eyes, living in a quiet place, and she had but one story to tell when the end drew near of the betterment of all things:

"God's in his heaven," "All's right with the world," "When we are right in it and believe in him and do his work."

FELIX G. DE FONTAINE.

Why He Can't Publish.

Prince Bismarck has placed himself in an awkward position. When in power he procured the passage of a law which forbids any Prussian minister or ambassador to publish documents of any kind relating to public or official affairs without the express permission of the emperor. He has just finished the first volume of his memoirs, but the young kaiser refuses to sanction its printing, and the one time autocrat of Germany is getting a taste of his own medicine.

CAPITAL GOSSIP.

THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN SECRETARIES RUSK AND FOSTER.

Speaker Crisp and His Fine Manners. Mr. McMillin, of Tennessee, and How He Saved Himself from Dry Rot—Other Matters.

[Special Correspondence.] WASHINGTON, Dec. 31.—There are no closer friends in the cabinet than Secretaries Foster and Rusk. The former is recovering from an illness which came so near carrying him off that for two or three days those in the secret feared his death at any moment. Only the doctor, Secretary Rusk and Mr. Foster's private secretary knew the truth, which was



JERRY RUSK GIVES CHARLEY FOSTER A PIECE OF HIS MIND.

carefully concealed from the patient himself and the members of his family. A man could not be more devoted to his own brother than the big, patriarchal secretary of agriculture was to his friend of the treasury department during this long illness. Every day and every night he was at the sick bed; he was as thoughtful as a trained nurse, as tender as a woman. When I heard this pretty story of friendship my mind reverted to another story involving the same men—a story of politics which has never yet been printed.

When General Garfield became president, Jerry Rusk came down from Wisconsin and was a candidate for a place in the cabinet. He wanted to be secretary of war. At this time he was simply ex-Congressman Rusk, having served three terms in the house. Garfield was not favorable to the idea, but in his mild and pleasant way was careful to so word his expressions as to give no offense. As a result the Wisconsin man and his friends continued to hope and to keep up the pressure. Finally Garfield weeded of their importunities. He sent for Charles Foster, who had for years been in intimate friend and who had also seen on friendly terms with Rusk when he served together in congress in 1871 to 1877.

"Jerry Rusk and his friends are bothering the life out of me to make him secretary of war," said Garfield to Foster. "Can't you take him out one side, have a long talk with him and coax him into accepting the post of commissioner of agriculture?" "I'll see what I can do with him," said Foster, and that same afternoon the Ohio man called for Rusk at the Riggs House and proposed to him that inasmuch as the day was a fine one they take a walk in the suburbs. Rusk agreed, and they started out. For a time nothing was said about politics. Foster was thinking of the easiest manner in which he could lead up to the business in hand. Finally they stopped under a tree and Foster sat down on a log, determined to begin then and there.

Before he could open his mouth Uncle Jerry spoke. "Charley Foster," said he, "you needn't begin to hem and haw and beat about the bush. I know what you have brought me out here in the woods for. Garfield has sent you to tell me that I can't be secretary of war, but that I may have some minor place if I want it." "Yes," muttered Foster, "you have guessed it. But the place which you may have is one not to be sneezed at. It is the commissionership of agriculture."

Rusk was furious. "Commissioner of agriculture!" he exclaimed. "Distributor of seeds and peddler of pumpkins! You go back to Jim Garfield and tell him that Jerry Rusk is not that kind of a man. You tell him that if Jerry Rusk is not good enough to sit in Jim Garfield's cabinet he knows what he is good enough for. He is good enough to be governor of Wisconsin, and you and Jim Garfield had better look out for him. Jerry Rusk is going to be president himself some of these days and he'll remember you fellows and don't you forget it."

In vain did Mr. Foster endeavor to calm the anger of the offended statesman from Wisconsin. That same day he packed his grip and started for home. Two days later he sat in a parlor of the Plankinton House, Milwaukee, and gathered about him were a half dozen of the leading Republicans of Wisconsin. "I want to be governor," said Uncle Jerry, "and I want you men to help me. I want to teach these upstarts at Washington a lesson. Will you stand by me?" At the next election Rusk was chosen governor of Wisconsin. Garfield died so soon after his inauguration that the revengeful schemes of Uncle Jerry were never put in operation, and probably would not have been pressed in any event. "The manner in which Mr. Rusk divined what Charley Foster took him out into the woods for," remarked the gentleman who told me the story, "shows how keen the secretary of agriculture is. He does not know much about literature, but you cannot fool him on human nature. He is as sharp as a razor, and I tell you to keep an eye on him. He will be president yet, just as he said he would."

Speaker Crisp is known among his associates as a man of fine manners. Tried in the crucible of a speakership contest, pulled and hauled about by scores of men driven by selfishness or passion, caajoled by some of his friends and threatened by some of his enemies, the speaker has not for one instant lost that self-poise and equanimity, that absolute

self-possession which a man made in one of the most remarkable men of the times. I was talking about this the other day with Representative O'Ferrall, of Virginia, who succeeds Mr. Crisp as chairman of the committee on elections. "For six years," said Mr. O'Ferrall, "Judge Crisp and I have served together on that committee. It is in that committee room that we have thundered lightning. There we try many lawsuits, in every one of them the fire of party passion heating things up to a high temperature. In all the hand to hand fighting in that committee, in all the cross firing and personalities incident to a desperate combat, I never once saw Mr. Crisp lose, even for an instant, his self-possession, never for a second change his manner nor his words from that even and polite tenor which is his nature. What is more, I never knew him to make a mistake. He is indeed one of the notable men of our times."

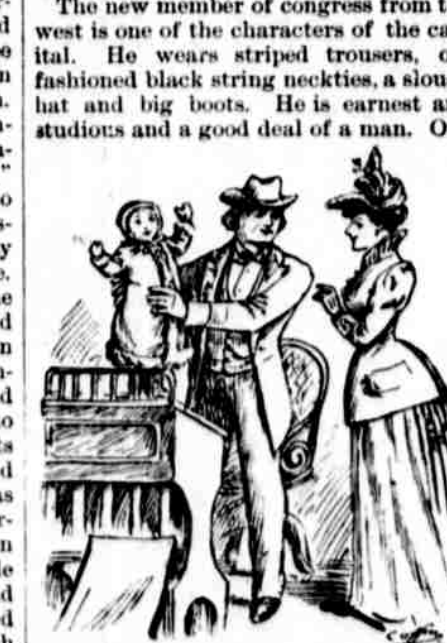
There is no more popular man in the house of representatives than Mr. McMillin, of Tennessee, who was thought by many at one moment to be almost sure of receiving the speakership nomination as a dark horse. The day on which Speaker Crisp announced his committees Mr. McMillin was taking luncheon with a new member who had not been given a very high place on the committees, and who was in consequence much discouraged. "Before you conclude that you have been cruelly treated," said Mr. McMillin, "let me tell you my experience. When I first came to congress my committee place was worse than yours. It gave me no opportunity whatever. I sat up nights trying to evolve some scheme by which I could distinguish myself in the role which the speaker had assigned me, but I couldn't do it. I was re-elected, and when I came back to the house I naturally expected to be promoted. But I wasn't. If anything, my second committee assignment was more discouraging than my first one. Finally Phil Thompson, of Kentucky—he and I were in the same boat as to committees—held a council of war. 'Phil,' said I, 'I am dying of dry rot. I must do something or perish. Not for fifty years has any man represented my district more than two terms, and unless I can stir something up I'll not get back here. What can we do?' 'Nothing but raise hades, Mac,' replied Thompson. 'Very well,' said I, 'let's go in and raise hades. That will I preferable to sitting around doing nothing.' So we made it up between us that whenever we saw a chance to jump on some fellow's little public building or other local bill or anything else that looked as if it might be extravagant or foolish, we would sail in regardless of curses and kicks and have some fun. We enjoyed ourselves in this way for a time, and finally we found a great opportunity. A log rolling scheme was devised by which 170 members who wanted public buildings in their districts agreed to stand together and help pass each other's bills. It was a strong combination, and seemed invincible. Carlisle told Thompson and me that we couldn't beat it. Holman told us it was too big for us to tackle. Everybody said the same thing. But Thompson and I didn't care how big a thing was—we were out for fight and this was too good a chance to be lost. I told Phil to prepare himself on ancient history—while a set of 1870 census reports—while I took up modern history as found in the census of 1880. The first day the combination got to work, Thompson quoted ancient history on them to show that the towns for which it was proposed to make appropriation were mere villages in 1870, when I followed with modern history to show that they were only small country towns in 1880. The first day they passed three bills on us. The next day they pushed two through. The third day they called a halt, for they found that as fast as bills were passed they lost the support of the men behind those measures. All the fellows with bills in their pockets became alarmed, and the combination was bursted. Just five bills out of the 170 passed, and Phil Thompson and I, out of a simple determination to stir something up to keep ourselves from going to dry rot, saved the government a great many millions of dollars. Since then I have not cared what committee I was placed on, or whether I was on any committee at all. There is some satisfaction in being a free lance."

The new member of congress from the west is one of the characters of the capital. He wears striped trousers, old fashioned black string neckties, a slouch hat and big boots. He is earnest and studious and a good deal of a man. One

thing I like about him is that he brings his wife to Washington with him—his wife and baby—and is proud of them and they are proud of him. I have in mind one young congressman who walks to the Capitol every session day with his wife by his side and his baby in his arms. The trio go in on the floor, and baby is perched upon the statesman's desk till the hour comes for clearing the floor. Then wife and baby go up into the gallery and sit all the afternoon, or till the session is over, watching hubby and papa legislate. It is only while the new congressman is very new that he does this. He soon gets over it, and then wife and babe are left in the background or perhaps at home in the far west.

WALTER WELLMAN.

THE NEW CONGRESSMAN AND THE BABY.



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N. B. See Adv. "Courier Premiums" page 2.

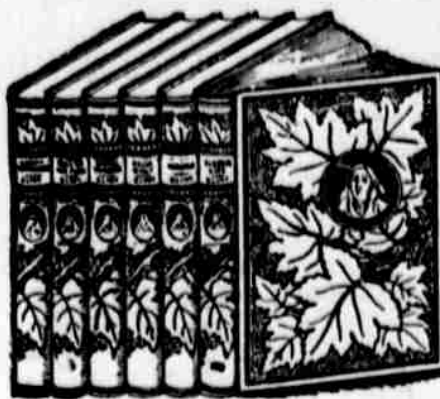
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