

Reminiscences of a Wayfarer

Some of the Important Events of the Pioneer Days of Richardson County and Southeast Nebraska, as remembered by the writer, who has spent fifty-one years here.

Church and State.

Carlyle, essayist, philosopher and abstract theorist and thinker of the last century, said that the most important fact about any man or nation of men is, his or their religion.

By which he wanted it understood that by religion, he did not mean the church, sect or creed he belonged to or professed, or whether he belonged to any church, or subscribed to any creed, or made any particular profession of faith,—but what in his heart he really believed concerning his own existence, his relation to the universe, to his fellows, and to the all-controlling authority and power that made him a part of the unknown and unknowable purposes of creation.

I do not give his language, for I have not the work before me, but am giving as well as I can the idea the great man had in mind and wished to convey, as I understand and construe his language. Critically considered, his definition of religion will apply to all—church members or non-church members, civilized or uncivilized, ignorant or enlightened; the living thinking animal man—whether in the wonderland of the infancy of the race or in the broad blaze of the twentieth century civilization, culture and refinement.

No human being ever lived who did not in the course of his life form some idea satisfactory to his judgment on the subject of his place in creation; his origin and his possible ultimate destiny, and that idea whatever it may be must accept as his religion according to the incomparable Scotch savant of deathless fame. The doctrine, if it may be called such is not new, but is as old as man himself; but the style in which it is written is certainly new, and forms the chief element of value in the composition. As a definition of religion, in my poor judgment, and as I have come to understand it after years of diligent study, it falls far short of the mark. Was it Mirabeau or Byron or both who said that words are things? In the hands of that inimitable master of forceful and elegant style, the Chelsea philosopher here named, words were indeed mighty things, and were marshalled by him to the everlasting ornamentation of a literature that up to his day, had never been equaled in the world of letters. The gliding hides many a defect, which without it would be patent to all.

It is not my intention in this paper to discuss the question of religion, except so far as it is a factor in world history and a something inherent in human nature. The use I shall make of the reference mentioned, I think, will be sufficiently pertinent to the purpose in hand to justify having made it without offending against the properties or evincing a spirit of irreverence for the works of one of the most original of independent thinkers in modern times.

In the settlement of a new country, and the establishment of government therein, religion has been the basic principle of the laws enacted to give operative effect to such government. This may seem a broad assertion, and it is certain that there are those who will deny it. But I will go further and say, what I believe is historically true, that without religion, civilization itself would be an impossibility. If I argue the point here, it will be by suggestion and inference only.

When I came to Nebraska fifty-one years ago there were no churches or school houses in the country. Men build houses first for shelter, and for other uses when their means will allow and the necessities of the community require them. But nearly every person I met was either a member of some religious denomination, or was predisposed in favor of some particular church. For myself I was friendly to all, but belonged to none. The settlers were born in other states and countries, and brought their religion and ideas of civil government with them, as man has always brought his religion into the world when he came into it himself. It is as much a part of his nature as the disposition to protect himself, which is present and controlling in every moment of his conscious life.

The Methodist persuasion was the pioneer, perhaps for the reason that most of the pioneers were themselves Methodists, and was the first church to gain a foothold in the country. I remember with much satisfaction the many incoherent and rambling sermons I heard preached in those long gone years, by men for whose piety I had the most profound respect, and whose superb ignorance became a very glory in excelsis. And now when the shadows are falling darkly about me I feel that I would be willing to pay the expenses of a whole camp-meeting if I could hear an old-time sermon

from one of those early workers in the vineyard of the Master, such as Fathers King and Taylor or J. F. Chamberlain. The inspiration of a lofty enthusiasm, born of a faith stronger than life or death, will make the most homely face beautiful and transform the illiterate "man of the hoe" into the High Priest supplied with a lore not to be gotten from books, or the great institutions of learning established by man.

It was eight years before we had a church building in Falls City, but the gospel was preached to the people in every neighborhood, and yearly camp-meetings were held over north of town, and now and then on the south fork of the Nemaha above Salem.

It was at one of those camp-meetings I first met Henry T. Davis, now at rest. In the early days especially, he was a tower of strength in the church, and one of the best men God ever made and put on this earth. His was a good life. He would have put something good into a false religion, if such a paradox is permissible,—but it is not, for no religion among men has been entirely without some truth to its credit. Any doctrine that any considerable number of people have believed, through long periods of time, must have had something about it that commended it to the truth loving side of their lives, and therefore could not have been wholly wrong.

The founder of Islamism, the so-called prophet of Allah, Mahomet, said, "I never expect to go to heaven on account of anything I ever professed, but on account of the good things I do in this life." Now it occurs to me that laying aside prejudice of all description, the sum multum of good in all the religions of men, in their best features, can be expressed in that single sentence.

Henry T. Davis made the Methodist church what it is in Nebraska. He came when the country was a wilderness in more senses than one; commenced his labors when the people were few and poor, and continued them till the great call came to go home. He reminded me of those old apostles of the first century I have read about and admired so much. In every fiber of his soul he was a missionary and a herald of the gospel. Personally I have always been a little partial to the Methodist church, but it did one thing I didn't like,—it elected John H. Mickey governor of Nebraska, and that was pretty nearly the unpardonable sin; and I am not at all certain that it did not contribute largely to putting the state in the column with the solid south last fall, but I reserve judgment on that point. While the Methodist was the pioneer church in this state, others have followed and done their full share in building the moral and religious fabric of the commonwealth. It is not enough to be religious in the sense indicated by the Chelsea philosopher. To be of any account to the world a man must not only be so in sentiment, but he must be so in action; but it is not of the first importance that his name be on the roll of membership in any church—not for everybody. For the mass of mankind the rule should be otherwise, for religion, properly understood, is the metaphysics of the people, and the discipline of the church is necessary to the good order and happiness of its individual members. The church is the idea of the family enlarged, and like families, is liable to sub-divisions; but of the many parts, the whole is composed. For fifteen hundred years the Christian church proceeded in violation of two fixed and invariable laws of nature, that of segregation and differentiation. Everything in nature is in a state of the becoming,—that is, becoming something else. A tree will grow to a certain height in the stem and then segregate into branches, and these will continue to sub-divide into minute branches; and this process of sub-division will go on during the whole life of the tree. Without it, foliage and the fruit—for all trees bear something of both—would be impossible. No matter into how many thousand tiny branches the immense crown of the sturdy oak may be divided, they still form a part of the tree in its entirety, from the highest twig at the top to its lowest root in the earth; and at every stage of its growth, fall and decay, it will constantly become different in appearance and size till it finally disappears as an organism and its material is absorbed by old mother earth for other uses of nature in its eternal work shop. The same invariable process goes on with man and with all that concerns him. The church paid the penalty of violating these natural laws by internal disturbances long

continued, and by ultimate sub-division, which was nothing more or less than the assertion of Nature's eternal authority.

But that same segregation instead of working destruction to the church, as predicted by the fathers, has, with the flight of the centuries, proved to be the one efficient means most needed for a wider spread of the Gospel. Luther, Henry VIII of England, Malancthon, Calvin and John Wesley, did nothing more than to infuse renewed life into the old church of the Apostles. They wrought better and stronger than they knew. While attacking abuses in the church, they were merely cleaning house, but it was still the old house of the Master.

But it is suggested that they only created a lot of sects that have done little else than quarrel among themselves and with the mother church for three hundred years, and are still engaged in that apparently congenial occupation. Well, what of it? Did they never quarrel before? Certainly they did, for otherwise they would not have been human beings, and there would have been no need of the Gospel. It was to meet just that peculiarity of the race that the Master, when he was about to go down to his death, gave his disciples the new commandment that they "love one another as he had loved them." The reformation of the world is not yet complete, nor will it be till that new commandment is more generally observed than it has been.

In the course of my own life I have seen much of this bickering going on, but I record with pleasure that there is less of it in these opening years of a new century, than there was in the first half of the last one. In that time I have seen a nation recreated,—a new republic erected on the ruins of the old, and have seen a religious and patriotic people build one of the states of that new republic in the wilds of what was once known as the Great American Desert.

Something came into the world nineteen hundred years ago, that has never gone out of it; something that has been slowly making people better than they were before, and is still doing it.

Nothing lingers in my memory with greater clearness, than the fact, that the society of this state, its average man and womanhood is of a higher cast, is on a higher plane of moral excellence, than when I came

to the country.

Why is that? One answer is, because it is so all over the nation; ah, and all over the world. That something referred to awakened in the people themselves a latent force that is raising them up as time goes by more rapidly than before, but nobody has a monopoly of that force.

Another answer is, that the church which had long mistaken itself for religion, instead of an association of the people religiously inclined, for the teaching and dissemination of religious principles and sentiments among the people who troop into and out of this world on an unknown journey, for their betterment on the way, has come to be more reasonable on that point, and a modicum of good common sense has found its way into the minds of the people on that subject, and they are none the worse for it.

It is pleasant as well as profitable to trace the historic march of that incomprehensible influence from its origin in the far east, westward over broad continents and stormy seas till now with its mighty Babilonian arms it girdles the earth. Owls hoot in the palaces of the Caesars, but close to the crumbling walls of the coliseum in which in another age Christians were torn by wild beasts for the edification of a besotted heathen ruler, stands a house of power—a power that controls without force, and yet is more potent in shaping human destiny than all the military and naval establishments of the world combined. Its great age may have rendered it dogmatic and exclusive, and all that; it may and probably does, deny to the segregated parts that have set up their own separate religious households, to preach the Gospel of the Master, nevertheless, it is still only a part of the universal christian polity that reaches back to the apostolic age, and so are all the others; for whoever gives to another a cup of cold water in His name, is His brother, and the brother of all His followers, whether he uses the same ceremonial in giving the cup or not.

When the stomach fails to perform its functions, the bowels become deranged, the liver and the kidneys congested causing numerous diseases. The stomach and liver must be restored to a healthy condition and Chamberlain's Stomach and Liver Tablets can be depended upon to do it. Easy to take and most effective. Sold by all druggists.

10 Years Ago

Thousands bought

Uneeda Biscuit

because they wondered what they were.



To-day

Millions use them because they know them to be

The World's Best Soda Cracker

NATIONAL BISCUIT COMPANY

Sold in
5¢
Moisture
Proof
Packages

Toronto Male Quartet

This really great quartet will be with us three full days

July 24th, 25th and 26th



Experience has demonstrated the fact that no more pleasing or popular arrangement of human voices can be secured than that of the male quartet. This quartet has few equals upon the concert platform. Their repertoire is varied and extensive, including both classical and popular music, rendered in a manner that pleases the most critical audiences. As specialties they present a horn quartet and Scotch songs in costume, and for a novelty

An Original Musical Sketch

Falls City Chautauqua July 24th to August 1st

Announcement

We are pleased to announce that our Spring campaign of the biggest values in Farm Machinery for 1909 is now on. You are invited to call and inspect our lines.

A complete line of John Deere Farm Machinery, Hay Loaders and Stackers.

McCormick Binders and Mowers.

Avery Cultivators and Planters.

Sharples Tubular and DeLaval Cream Separators.

Litchfield Spreaders.

Gasoline Engines. Old Hickory and Avery Wagons. Keys Bros'. and Vehlie Buggies.

No trouble to show our goods.

Loucks & Jones

FALLS CITY

NEBRASKA

Try The Tribune for Job Work!