

THROUGH COLORED GLASSES

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spectable press of the eastern states to a stage of the most barbaric hilarity. The editorial in question is passed on from one paper to the other and published as an example of what journalism in the far west can do toward the development of brain power.

One paper stops long enough to suggest that under this new dispensation the editor who charged the opposition candidate with infidelity to the marriage tie would lay himself liable to action for divorce on the part of his wife. Great is the poor old Journal.

In last week's Courier the esteemed senior editor and the esteemed junior editor, reinforced by the redoubtable Col. Tom Wing, subject me to so stinging a fusillade of jabbing goose quills that I am almost led to conclude that I have been so unfortunate as to entertain some views with which they cannot entirely agree. Now, my opinions, however awful and damnable they may be when seen through the rose tinted glasses of the orthodox optimism, have, at least, the nowadays doubtful merit of being sincere, and because of their sincerity I shall have the "temerity"—with the kind permission of Col. Wing, to attempt their justification through these columns.

And, first in order, I would deny that I have ever, in The Courier or elsewhere, "spoken slightly of the men who wear the badge of the G. A. R." For all the honest men who wore the blue, and for all the honest men who wore the gray,—for heroes everywhere, with badge or without it, I have the utmost respect. I say all honor to the heroism and the patriotism that for love of country and truth and justice went out freely from home and loved ones, to do and to die for the eternal right. To every old soldier of Farragut post, I take off my hat. But there I stop. I deny their right to a monopoly of opinion. I deny that their belief is the only belief. Unanimous agreement in any opinion means stagnation,—and stagnation means ruin. I submit, that it is not to "speak slightly" of the "Farragut Post," as soldiers, to say that the "Farragut Post," as citizens, were hasty, ill-advised and wrong when they censured Prof. Fossler for a lack of patriotism. I submit that they have no right and no divine privilege to pick at motives in their neighbors' eyes, and then complain that he "speaks slightly" who points out the beams in their own. I contend that when they made themselves the supine instruments in the hands of the A. P. A. to censure for unpatriotism as patriotic an American and as good a citizen as lives in the broad state of Nebraska—when they did this, they cannot in common manhood, hope to escape just criticism by hiding behind the badge of the G. A. R. And even though this opinion has drawn forth an apology, I will say in all candor, that it is an apology in which I do not concur. I believe that Prof. Fossler is right and Farragut post is wrong, and if I called their hot headed strictures on Prof. Fossler "a tempest in a teapot" I did so only because I believed that to be the fittest term in which to characterize their action. And in this belief I am satisfied that an overwhelming majority of the good people of Lincoln concur.

A little further on, in the to me extremely interesting Courier of last week "We and Our Neighbors" take good natured exception to the phrase "the good old days" as applied to American history. There never were any "good old days," says the writer;—"the good increases faster than the bad." To this I demur. All history proves the

contrary. Each nation and people have a "golden age,"—but it comes in their pioneer days, not in their full blown vigor. The people of Greece and Rome were honest and pure, once, and had high ideals and lofty standards. But they degenerated—fell, and their stumbling block was that curse of curses—public dishonesty! It was laxity on the part of the people of Rome in public affairs, that made official dishonesty possible,—this brought on the days of "panem et circentem,"—Caesar, and the dissolution and fall of a profligate dishonest and degenerate people.

And France, today the moral leper of civilization, once boasted a De Guescelin and a Chevalier Bayard, "sans puer et sans reproche." And, there, too, the mad race for wealth, the materialization of all the ends of life has made public life dishonest. This, in turn, has reacted on the people, and France is accordingly marked as a moral degenerate. This fate I most sincerely believe is now impending over the people of our own country. The "good old days" of Washington, Franklin, Jefferson and Adams, of Jackson, Webster, Clay, Calhoun and Benton, even of Lincoln and Seward and Sumner and Chase are days that are gone, seemingly forever. Public service is no longer a badge of honor. It is not the occupation of statesmen, but the trade of politicians. The halls of congress that used to ring with the honest eloquence of American statesmen and patriots are now disgraced and contaminated with political bosses who buy their seats as brazenly and openly as though it were a legitimate business.

And our municipalities seethe in corruption. The most sacred rights of the people are bought and sold and bartered, just as in the days of slavery. True, there are honest men in politics, but when one is found he is made an object for a seven day's wonder. Think of Daniel Webster returning to his old seat in the senate, and engaging in a running debate with David Bennett Hill and Matthew Stanley Quay!

And the most discouraging feature of all is—the great common people. Their whole lives are lived only for the almighty dollar. Their whole attention is centered on getting rich. We are in the midst of the rankest materialism;—even the churches preach of golden streets and crowns and harps. The "material age" is upon us,—and this is the age that has marked the fall of every dynasty and kingdom that the stars ever shone down upon. Shall we, too, go the common road? There is but one way to escape it—and that lies through the hard and stony path of public honesty and moral regeneration. Yet who can deny that we have strayed from the path? It was therefore I spoke of "the good old days."

And it is because I believe that our salvation as a nation lies only in the spiritualization of the people that I say "God speed the churches," although believing not in their God or their heaven or their hell. For they are teaching, or should teach, men to look higher; they are lifting humanity out of the rut of materialism. They are doing it slowly and tardily. Too often they are singing gentle lullabies where they should be sounding, stirring trumpet blasts to action.

I honestly believe that our churches have a greater power for good than have even our schools. For it is not our minds but our consciences that need educating and uplifting.

And now as to T. E. Wing, who looks through A Spectrum." If Mr. Wing will brush the dust off his "Webster's Unabridged" and turns to the word "Spectrum" he will discover that he could hardly have made a more unfortunate selection of something to look through. A stone wall or the Burr block would be easy to see "through" in

comparison with Col. Wing's "Spectrum." And yet, admitting that this wonderful feat was really accomplished, it cannot be denied that any one who might be so privileged as to see things through so very unusual a medium undoubtedly would see strange sights. And Col. Wing undoubtedly did see strange sights. So numerous and so varied were they that I shall not attempt to consider them.

Seriously, I have no desire to discuss evolutionary religion or religion of any kind, with so distinguished an exponent of religion pure and undefiled, because I have noticed this remarkable peculiarity. Every one who finds himself called upon to defend the religion of Jesus Christ immediately finds it necessary to do what his Master never did; to-wit, lose his temper. And Mr. Wing is no exception to the rule. He descends from the plane of dignified, gentlemanly debate, and, leaving his religion with his coat and collar and tie proceeds to belabor, not my arguments, but myself personally, with all the choice collection of verbal clubs and bludgeons in his possession.

Now, I do not believe that the Lincoln public are interested in this sort of thing. People in general are much more interested in ideas than in the men who have them. When Mr. Wing has some ideas, and can present them in a manner befitting a gentleman, I shall be glad to help him ventilate them. But when he manifests an overweening disposition to discuss only my age, the color of my hair and my general "damfoolishness" I shall assume that these are not subjects of sufficient general interest to justify their discussion through the columns of the Courier.

In concluding, however, I would simply remark on the pathetic weakness of Mr. Wing's attempt to reconcile the doctrine of evolution with the doctrine of providence. This attempt was never made until it was found that evolution was established. Until that time Darwin and his theory were denounced by an unanimous orthodoxy as damnable and pernicious and atheistic. For the church saw clearly enough then that providence and evolution "won't mix." But now, finding evolution securely established, orthodoxy has determined to "make them mix," and confusion is the result.

Let any man with the trace of a heart in his breast spend a month or two in the poorest and vilest portions of a great city like Chicago; let him see teeming thousands of human beings, fellow men and women, living lines of poverty and degradation and crime through no faults of their own; let him see hovels into which the light and soul into which truth never penetrates; let him see humanity dying, dying, dying,—yet not living,—and seeing all, let him say that a merciful Providence, up behind the clouds, in loving kindness, decreed the survival of the fittest! Only let him say it, and his heart will rebel within him, and the God, whom he worshipped at his mother's knee, will be to him as a phantom of the mind.

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