

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious-Parliament Idea

Editor: DR. PAUL CARUS.

Associates: { E. C. HEGELER.
MARY CARUS.

VOL. XVII. (NO. 10) OCTOBER, 1903.

NO. 569

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CHICAGO

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CHARLES CARROLL BONNEY.

FUNERAL ADDRESS.

BY L. P. MERCER.

OUR brother's work done, he has been waiting in patience, his heart peaceful in the love of God and childlike faith in His Providence, contemplating the ultimate good of men with love for all sorts and conditions, content with what he had been privileged to do in the evolution of divine designs for the race, and hopeful of participation in the other world development of what has here begun! His call has come. He fell asleep. He has awaked in the world of souls, and is already experiencing in life and fact what he has contemplated in faith with love and confidence. With the humility of conquered pride and matured faith in the Divine Saviour, he will learn of those great racial movements in the spiritual world, belief in which filled him for the unaustatious but stupendous work achieved by him in this world, and with which he will enter there with larger love for divine ends and clearer understanding of divine means to ends.

"The world's history is a divine poem, of which the history of every nation is a canto, and of every man a word." A divine poem, and therefore made and written of God. They only read history aright who see in its transitions the successive developments of providence; who behold in its persistence the activity of divine forces silent but mighty like those which evolve planets and gravitate among the stars; who realise in its results the ends of a divine good will, caring through all change for the sure working out of a blessed purpose. This is the permanent in the midst of the transient; the life and goodness, the truth and order, eternal in the heavens, perennial in the Church, progressive in the governments.

Ages come and go; but the divine purpose persists with its unfolding revelations and its developing ministries. Nations and dynasties rise and fall; but the divine truth and order, the divine ends and purposes which form nations in countries, and societies in communities, work on with the sweep of an eternal providence that can find agents everywhere, and turn even the wrath of man to praise.

And if the world's history is a poem designed and written of God, the history of every nation is a canto having its own place and destiny in the divine purpose of the song. The providence which rules in the history of the ages, appoints to every nation its mission, provides the conditions of its problems, and superintends the progress of its solutions. In the rivalries and competitions of the daily struggle few men catch the sweep of the meaning of the national life; but at intervals and in great moments, like the Columbian Exposition in commemoration of four hundred years of world-history, we see something of the meaning of our own history; the planting, peopling, and progress of the nation; its idea that man can be a man, can compel himself to recognise the law and order, the goodness and wisdom of the common good; its future, pressing upon us with the outline of its great ideal, turning us from our little rivalries and partisanships and ambitions to a vision of our place and mission in "The parliament of man, the federation of the world."

And so again, as the histories of nations are cantos in the divine poem of the race-history, the lives of men are words which give structure and meaning to the unfolding story. Words usually mean little or much according to the relation in which they stand. Thought makes its own speech, selecting its own words; and providence appoints its own agents, calling for them as they are needed, and placing them to express its divine meaning. A masterful thought will make common words carry a high meaning; and in the unfolding ministries of nations, men are made to work out thoughts and purposes which give an emphasis beyond their individual value to the developing revelation of the divine purpose in the race.

So it came to pass when this country paused in the great Columbian year, to review its history and take the whole world into its hospitable confidence with exhibit of the progress of four centuries, providence found in our genial brother, a mind to conceive and a word to express the major factor in the progress of the race, and the true place of America in the development of its meaning

with his dream of a World's Parliament and his motto, "Men not things; mind not matter."

Before the stupendous plans of the World's Columbian Exposition had taken form Mr. Bonney had announced in October, 1889, the ideal of something higher and nobler than the exhibit of material triumphs and industrial achievements, and called for a congress of statesmen, jurists, financiers, scientists, literati, teachers, and theologians, greater in numbers and more widely representative of all the activities of mind and spirit than any assemblage ever before convened.

Ambitious from childhood for knowledge and grasp of the world's greatest thought, with the motive to do things to make the world better, the whole course of his life's training had fitted him for the work that he was called to perform. Interested in his boyhood in the science of comparative religions, he became a student of Swedenborg at the very dawn of his manhood, and learned from him to believe that the great religions of the world had their origin in that same Word of God which wrote itself through Hebrew lawgiver and prophet and became incarnate in Jesus Christ; that the movements of history had their causes in the spiritual world, and that the race in both worlds is like a greater man growing from infancy through boyhood and youth to manhood; and that the discovery of America by Columbus had above and beyond its commercial and political benefits a great intellectual and moral influence and purpose in not only civil liberty but in religious enlightenment and fraternity. Before Moses there was the Ancient Church with its written Word. The ethnic religions were founded on remains of that primitive revelation. The Bible begins with its correspondential history of the Ancient Churches. The societies of the spiritual world are full of their peoples, influencing their brothers on earth. The heathen who have lived well according to their religion, when they come into the spiritual world, are taught by those from their own nation and genius, the great spiritual verities which lie back of the letter of holy scripture and back of the myths and fables of their religion, and without losing their distinctiveness and individuality come all together into the unity of truth and life. The commerce which brings the nations into touch and relation with each other and is attended by interchange of ideas, ends, and means to ends, is the divinely ordained means of carrying the Bible to every people in their own tongue; and the commemoration of the achievements of commerce and progress in natural benefits and blessings ought to be made the occasion for friendly inter-

change of thought, intercourse of representative men, and brotherly comparison of religions, in the spirit of respect and confidence in the capacity for development of every nation and people under the fatherly guidance of the most high. These great ideas had taken form in our brother's mind, been talked over for years with his friends in every faith, and intimately with his pastor as the very mission and meaning of the New Jerusalem Church, which to him was the Church of reconciliation. "It comes," he said, "to reconcile the teachings of sacred scripture and the results of modern science; the apparent truths of superficial observation and the real truths of human experience; what we know of the world of causes and our knowledge of the natural world of effects. It comes to reconcile the duties of to day and the hopes of to-morrow; the best use of the life that now is, with the highest preparation for the life that is to come; the warfare with evil and the hunger for peace; government and liberty; self-help and the help of others. It comes to reconcile with each other the contending sects of Christendom and the multiform religious systems of the other parts of the world."

It was this catholicity of spirit together with the perception of what is essential and universal in differing and conflicting interpretations of truth, which made our brother strong and acceptable as a teacher and lecturer, in Bible class and Church, on the platform and in the organisation of moral and social reforms, working with all denominations of Christians and appealing to men of affairs. His long training in such work of reconciliation among men of different interests in behalf of what truth is common to them all, and the objects of common welfare superior to any of them, developed, chastened, and prepared him for that supreme achievement of organisation and reconciliation known in history as the "World's Congress Auxiliary" and "The Parliament of Religions."

The Parliament of Religions was his objective point; but "all religion has relation to life," and the way to brotherly conference in religion is fraternal relationship among men, commerce of ideas, aims, and purposes. All life and all results of life, material, civil and moral, are parts of the development of a divine design, and results of movements in the populations of the spiritual world; and if men can be brought together in fraternity and mutual respect, in conference on great subjects, influx from the world of causes will be able to move them beyond their imagination and purpose.

The greatness of the achievement is still past comprehension to those of us who were closely associated with those wonderful

congresses. The organisation of two hundred and ten working committees maturing a program of subjects and speakers which required six months for its execution, covering all the great departments of thought and life, in congresses which had over twelve hundred sessions, and presented nearly six thousand speakers to audiences which aggregated three quarters of a million! In the continuous and exhausting work of three years of preparation, the constant faith of our brother in the usefulness and possibility of the scheme, his capacity of method and endurance, his power to inspire men with his idea and hold many strongly individual minds in diligent co-operation by his gentleness, zeal, personal consideration, consummate tact and Christian politeness, grows more wonderful as contemplated in memory and at sufficient distance of time to give perspective to the massive parts of the undertaking. The intellectual feat of opening congresses on finance and socialism, on banking and literature, on education and African ethnology, with tactful utterance of the right word to inspire a spirit of zeal and good fellowship in execution of a program elaborately and laboriously worked out in months of collaboration, testifies not only to the man's power of organisation, but to the inspiration of a great mission.

That sense of his great mission grew with the realisation of the success of the Congresses, and culminated in the Parliament of Religions, justly pre-eminent not only because of the importance and universal interest of the subject, but because it was central in the original conception, and its success the constant care of the President of the Auxiliary. He believed that in the spiritual world there had been great movements acting as causes in the reconstructions and developments of human life on earth in the past century, and his faith was unailing that if the representatives of the great religions could be brought together there would result such an influx from heaven and the spiritual world as would recall the feast of Pentacost and inaugurate a new spirit of religion and brotherhood. I can see him now, sitting in the midst of that august body, with cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests, and scholars of all the faiths of mankind on his right and left, the organiser and director of the whole! As one said after the closing, "Rightfully did President Bonney hold the central place in that assemblage not only as representing the New Church of this new age, without whose influence and inspiration from above into all the faiths of mankind this meeting could never have come about, but by his universally acceptable management and direction, his wise judg-

ment, happy manner, and broad and liberal comprehension of the scope and purpose of the meeting, proving himself the providential instrument for making the occasion productive of the highest results for good. It was not strange that President Bonney's name as 'the man we all love' was in the months of the gentle visitors from the far East, that his appearance was always the occasion for joyful applause from the audience, that his words always seemed most happily to meet the moment, to bring some bright, fresh, and happy thought or interpretation to what was going on; nor that later in the wonderful closing scenes of the Parliament, he was hailed and cheered by the vast audience rising to their feet and waving their handkerchiefs; so that it was long before he could utter his words of humble and sincere acknowledgment and gratitude: 'Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the Glory.'"

I have said nothing of the versatility of our brother's mind, of his contributions to jurisprudence in notable addresses before the Bar Associations of the State and Nation, of his work as a lawyer, and his notable contributions to the cause of civil law and order. All these works are overshadowed by the greatness of his achievements as the organiser of the World's Congresses which I have tried to recall. If we ask in what they have resulted of permanent good to mankind, we shall realise that they lie out of the realm of statistics and sensible exhibit. Men who influence as well as observe the currents of the world's progress have said, "The World's Congresses of 1893 have advanced the thought of the world fifty years;" "these Congresses will exercise a powerful influence on mankind for centuries to come;" "the Parliament of Religions is the most wonderful event since the time of Christ;" and such like things. We are in the realm of faith here, where every good and rational work for the benefit of mankind must be its own reward, and itself the promise of benefit and blessing. God writes the world-poem; the words and cantos go into their place as He wills; and only as the story unfolds do the meaning of great events reveal their effects and consequences in the epic of mankind.

But this I know, our brother broken by his great labor, rested in great peace. It was enough to have been moved, inspired and guided to plan and execute; of the results he had no more doubt than of the origin of the ideal or of the Providence in which it was realised. "Descended from the Sun of Righteousness this spirit of progress is filling the whole earth with its splendor and beauty,

its warmth and vivifying power, and making the old things of truth and justice new in meaning, strength, and energy, to execute God's will for the welfare of man." His belief in the spiritual world as the world of causes, in the movements there attendant upon the world's congresses, in the descent thence of new motives, new movements, new feelings, new purposes, and new sanities into the lives of men and spiritual and social developments among the nations, gave him confidence that not only will the work go on in which he had been allowed a part, but that his training here would be serviceable in his reception of the wisdom to be increasingly useful in the larger movements of the spiritual world. And as our faith is true there will be henceforth one New Churchman at the gates by which Christians and Gentiles enter eternal life, whom all alike will know for a friend and brother, who will have the wisdom to lay hold of that in their religion which was essential and true, and to lead by that to new truths and new life in the name and in the loving spirit of Him "who is the way, the truth, and the life."

And I have said nothing of the sweetness and peace, and faith and universal love of these last days, the true and suitable ripening of a worthy life. He was always gentle, wise to grasp the heart of the matter, generous in respect for others and inspiring in his intercourse. I remember well the early days of my ministry in Chicago, as a young minister enjoying largely through his influence an unusual publicity, the Sunday sermons appearing in full in the Monday papers, with what patience he sought to stimulate and guide, with what tact he moderated the young man's self-confidence, without wounding his pride or discouraging his ambitions, ever leading to better and higher ways of helping men. Often in these last years of feebleness and peace, when he would reach out his trembling hand for his "Bishops" blessing, as he said, I have been exalted in thankfulness at the memory of the blessing he has been to my growing life. Transferred to a higher life in a world of freer intercourse and larger opportunities there will be for him no end to the argumentation of intelligence and wisdom and power of service with its attendant blessedness!