

ARTICLE XI.

SOCIOLOGICAL NOTES.

GOVERNOR ALTGELD OF ILLINOIS.

A CHARACTER sketch of John P. Altgeld, late Governor of Illinois, has been drawn by Mr. Francis F. Browne in the *National Review* for December. We call it a character sketch; but, as Macaulay said of Gleig's memories of Warren Hastings, it is full of undigested correspondence and undiscerning panegyric. A fair estimate of a character can seldom be made by political enemies or partisan friends. To charge a public man with all the faults that his friends concede, and credit him with all the virtues that his enemies admit, is about the safest way to arrive at a proper estimate of his character. But Mr. Browne sees no faults at all in Altgeld, and his estimate is one of simply indiscriminate praise. On the contrary, the enemies of Altgeld, and their name is legion, can see no redeeming features in the man who sympathized with Debs and pardoned the Anarchists.

We are not called upon to find a reason for Mr. Browne's admiration of his subject, but simply suggest that he is a poet, genial and imaginative, with a happy faculty of reading into a subject what is not there. As Josh Billings said, "the trouble with some folks aint in knowing so many things as it is in knowing so many things that aint so." Governor Altgeld's public career, both as Judge and Governor, has extended over many years, and he ought to be known and read of all men by this time, despite the asperities of politics and the passions of party zeal. The most prominent leaders of his own party hate him about as cordially as his political opponents do, and the reasons for it are not because he was opposed to Cleveland and favored Debs, so much as that he has the happy faculty, that belongs to a strong individual, of making warm friends and bitter enemies.

The entire press of Chicago opposed Altgeld's re-election. One exception, if it can be called a newspaper, was a vile sheet whose editor has been convicted of sending obscene literature through the mails and has been sentenced to the penitentiary for a term of years. This paper supported Altgeld, but in Chicago it has entrance to no homes of respectability, and is the paper that Editor W. T. Stead called the hedonism of journalism.

With no personal animosity and surely with no political prejudice, we will sum up briefly why, in our opinion, the voters of Illinois repudiated Altgeld by a majority of 113,317 in the State, and of 41,882 in the county of Cook, of which he is a resident. Those reasons are these:—

1. When he was a Judge on the bench, he secured a judgment against the city for assumed damages to some of his property caused by the construction of a bridge. He at once assigned the judgment, and then sold his property for more than he paid for it. It is a fair inference that it was not seriously injured.

2. His animosity toward President Cleveland for sending Federal troops into Chicago to suppress the Debs insurrection, when, as Governor, he himself refused to raise a finger until he was justly rebuked by the President for his great concern about the sacredness of state rights. This issue was forced upon the silver party by Altgeld, and, ex-President Harrison claimed, was the leading issue in the campaign.

3. The pardon of the anarchists, and the venomous attack on Judge Gary, who presided at their trial and whose life was endangered by his fearless decision against them. No law-abiding citizen could overlook the crime of these anarchists, and their most eloquent apologist was first found in the Governor who pardoned them.

4. His espousal of the silver cause when the leases of his own building were made payable in gold. This was in a measure a political argument, but did reveal a tinge of inconsistency.

5. His misrepresentations in his speech at Madison Square, New York, as to the real condition of affairs in Chicago at the time of the Debs strike on the day when the President sent the troops to protect government property. The postmaster of Chicago, Hon. Washington Hessing, quoted from the records of the post-office to show that mail-trains were tied up, which Altgeld denied. The writer of this article quoted Debs' own statements at the time of the strike to the railway managers to refute Altgeld's charges that the affair was "local," and not a suspension of interstate commerce.

6. The alleged use of state funds for personal ends, and other serious charges, which Altgeld ignored.

7. A passion for pardoning criminals, not so much in quantity as in quality.¹ Judges and jurists alike have expressed their indignation in many instances, because of the unwarranted use of the pardoning power.

8. The undignified and vindictive spirit shown toward the *Chicago Tribune*, because it opposed him, by pardoning the cashier that embezzled its funds, and using the occasion to denounce the paper for evading its taxes.

Governor Altgeld has shown a commendable opposition to monopolies

¹ Of 328 convicts who were pardoned fifty were burglars and forty were murderers; nineteen burglars and sixty-nine murderers had their sentences commuted.

and trusts, and has been fearless in his espousal of the cause of the low-est classes. But he imagined that they were in the majority and could re-elect him. Here he made his mistake, and he misled Bryan at this point. An aspirant for office may not need the wealthy nor those who live in the sphere of luxury for constituents, but he cannot afford to offend the great middle class of voters, who are the mainstay and the ballast in this Republic, and this is what Altgeld did, for which he has been retired to the ranks of private life. He is a man of some virtues but of many faults, and will probably never again be heard of in politics.

Z. S. H.

SOME CHICAGO ALDERMEN.

It may be interesting to our readers to have a classification of the characters and professions of that part of the Chicago Council whose terms of office expire this spring.

Chicago is districted into thirty-four wards, and each ward is represented by two aldermen; so that the Common Council has sixty-eight members, the wards electing one alderman each spring. The Municipal Voters' League has sent out the following letter:—

“ TO THE VOTERS OF CHICAGO:—The Municipal Voters' League is about to enter upon its second campaign to secure the election of honest city officials. Men are still seeking to obtain office, whose only aim is self-enrichment, and who have no regard for the sacredness of their official oath. Our city is staggering under a heavy weight of fraud and corruption, which must be met and conquered.

“ We have seen but two rifts in the clouds within the past two years:

“ 1st. The passage of the Civil Service Law, forced upon the unwilling machine by an outraged public, and certain if inflexibly maintained to put an end to the corrupt use of offices as party spoils.

“ 2d. The uprising last spring which placed in the City Council an able and aggressive minority of honest men, who have stood like a rock against the tide of corruption and impeded its progress.

“ These achievements prove that our city can be rescued by earnest work; and to unite honest citizens and rally the forces in favor of better government, the Municipal Voters' League has opened headquarters at 59 Dearborn Street, where each day until after the election, some of the officers will be on hand to consult, advise and coöperate for a municipal administration which shall be worthy of Chicago.

“ Good citizens must no longer dally with the situation, but face the plunderers and drive them from public life.

“ The League has three objects in view:

“ 1st. The choice of aggressively honest men for local offices.

“ 2d. The strict maintenance of the present Civil Service Laws.

“ 3d. The securing of proper compensation to the city for all franchises and special privileges.

"We invite the cordial and active coöperation of all honest citizens at the approaching election, to the end that our municipal administration shall be redeemed from political parasites and be made the pride rather than the reproach of this great city.

"The League wishes to enroll all voters who desire the election of honest and capable men. If you will sign the enclosed blank and mail it to Hoyt King, Secretary of the League, at 59 Dearborn Street, he will mail you from time to time the publications and recommendations of the League. No membership fee is charged or expected. However, as this is a popular movement, cash subscriptions of any amount, whether large or small, to meet necessary expenses are earnestly solicited. Remittances may be made to the Secretary or Treasurer at above address.

"By order of the Executive Committee."

Following is the report of the League on the record of the members whose terms of office expire in April:

WARD.	BUSINESS.	RECORD.	WARD.	BUSINESS.	RECORD.
1st.	Plumber	Bad.	18th.	Saloon-keeper	Horrible.
2d.	No business	Bad.	19th.	Hat dealer	Good.
3d.	Lawyer	Good.	20th.	Watchman	Bad.
4th.	Pres. of corporation	Bad.	21st.	Clerk	Bad.
5th.	No business	Bad.	22d.	Pres. of Coal Co.	Good.
6th.	Retail furniture	Bad.	23d.	No business	Bad.
7th.	Saloon-keeper	Rotten.	24th.	Warehouse owner	Good.
8th.	Saloon-keeper	Disgraceful.	25th.	Blacksmith	Bad.
9th.	Grain merchant	Bad.	26th.	No business	Bad.
10th.	Cigarmaker	Good.	27th.	Lawyer	Corrupt.
11th.	Life insurance	Bad.	28th.	Grocer	Bad
12th.	Real estate	Corrupt.	29th.	Com. merchant	Bad.
13th.	Contractor	Bad.	30th.	No business	Bad.
14th.	Picture framer	Bad.	31st.	Lawyer	Corrupt.
15th.	Hat dealer	Bad.	32d.	Real estate	Good.
16th.	Coal dealer	Unworthy.	33d.	Real estate	Bad.
17th.	No business	Bad.	34th.	No business	Mixed.

It may be observed,

1st. Out of thirty-four members only six are unquestionably good.

2d. The profession or business of an alderman is no indication of character, except in case of saloon-keepers.

3d. Only one has a mixed record.

The record of these men is made up from their votes in favor of corrupt ordinances, and this is quite a sure indication of boodle.

It is difficult to secure "good men" to serve as aldermen, for the office is not honorable nor remunerative. Church-membership does not yet include unselfish duty to the state. When civics is made a branch of religion, it may be otherwise. The desire to acquire and the love of a good name take on two manifestations: it urges the poor man into politics,

where he is tempted beyond his power of resistance; and it deters the "respectable" and wealthy from entering into it, because they are busy acquiring in other directions, and the newspapers are conscienceless in their abuse of public servants, even when clean, if they do not as they are told. The daily newspaper does much to purify politics, but it seeks to control votes of public officials when honor is not at stake. Good men are not seeking office to be called thieves and robbers because some editor favors some measure which they cannot support.

One of the first steps in the direction of civic reform, in order that honest men may be induced to enter politics where there is no money inducement or honorable distinction, is a more strict law on libel, making it dangerous for newspapers to attack honest men for the purpose of controlling their votes. Another step in the right direction will be for the clergyman to urge duty at the polls as one of prime importance, and for men of Christian standing and culture to be willing to serve in public positions of responsibility and trust without the incentive of gain either in money or public applause. Such men are rare, and it is unfortunately true that church-membership is yet too largely a subjective matter, having more to do with religion than with civics or politics, and in too many instances, even with ethics. Hence the cry of the socialist that wage-earners should also seek a corner lot on earth, not in heaven; a larger share of earth's products, and not a crown in some heavenly sphere for they see Ruskin's definition of religion¹ too true to life and practice.

Z. S. H.

THE CANONS OF CRITICISM.

ENVY no less than death loves a shining mark. If a clergyman is successful and distinguished, he must pay a high price for such a crime. A prominent clergyman, a man of most lovely spirit and of genuine worth, has been charged by a Chicago evening newspaper with using the thoughts of others without quotation-marks, in a series of sermons which he has preached and printed. The real instigator of the article proves to be a dissolute critic, the brother of a well-known poet; but the columns and the head-lines of a supposedly reputable newspaper are open to his virulent pen, because, forsooth, the paper must live, and sensation is its meat and drink. The proprietor personally apologizes, the editors hang their heads in shame when the facts confront them, but not a word of retraction appears in print to help undo the great wrong done to a Christian gentleman.

This is modern journalism, enterprise, the exercise of the desire to acquire, not by the greedy capitalists, but by literary men who have large

¹Our national religion is the performance of church ceremonies, and preaching of soporific truths (or untruths) to keep the mob quietly at work while we amuse ourselves.

theories of altruism and find this practical way of expressing it. This clergyman dictates to a stenographer, and in two instances single quotation-marks might have been used without injustice to the authors quoted; but because the stenographer omitted them, the author becomes a criminal, a purloiner, a plagiarist. What matters it that in fourteen discourses seventy-two thousand words are used, each one in its place and full of meaning, and that the discourses are full of genuine merit. That awful fly-speck, a period, must mar the feast and scatter the guests. An invited friend without wedding garments, not like him of old—speechless, would that he were! rudely pushes back his chair, slams the door and rushes forth to slander the host, to revile the feast as one fit for harpies. Like one who hath no music in himself, but is fit for treason, stratagems, and spoils; like the idle gossips of the lazy port who hinted at worse in either when Enoch Arden was on the dreary island, so the literary critic must look for fly-specks and for dirt.

Not such was that great critic, George Ripley of the *New York Tribune*, for he found merit where it existed; and if there were none, then charity closed the book and was silent. But the modern newspaper critic, the dukes and dudines of literary walks, know not Ripley, for they have forgotten how to spell some simple words like civility and truth. The Ingersolls find only weeds and poisons in nature, and then, forgetting the utility of even these, revile their Author, when all nature is but a tribute to his love and intelligence; so the narrow critic looks for the fatal spot in the heel of Achilles that he may wound to the death. To him all precious stones are barbaric pearls and gold. And this spirit finds its counterpart in every place where human nature seeks expression. It crops out in churches, colleges, theological seminaries, and ministerial associations. In higher circles it is not the crude oil, of course, but is refined and disguised under the forms of good-will. It is not the desire for the truth that inspires, however, so much as it is the love of error, because it affords an opportunity to drag down some growing author, some popular professor or pastor. Then envy, hatred, jealousy, finds some ingenious outlet, and it differs not a whit from the spirit of the vulgar homicide, but only in the refinement of its cruelty. There is not a place where men act in an organized capacity that this spirit does not threaten dissolution. General Grant became familiar with it no less than every clergyman that has ever become distinguished.

Such critics are usually parasites, and the slight admixture of pietism with this parasitism is all that confuses the zeal that ill-will inspires with the earnestness that is born of love. Defenders of "the faith once delivered," heresy hunters, and haters of mankind may all be from the same piece of cloth. A genuine desire to know and follow the truth and to prevent teachers of error, like grievous wolves, from entering the fold and destroying the sheep, bears all the marks of the Master,—good-will to the wolf, and a shotgun for his teachings. A model of perfection of

such a spirit is seen in the review of Dr. Lyman Abbott's views of Genesis by Professor William Henry Green, D.D., LL.D., and in an article by ex-President Samuel C. Bartlett in the *Advance*.¹

The true critic is a broad and generous nature who hopeth all things, who believeth all things, who thinketh no evil. A book or a sermon is a feast to which one is invited, and the guest must have enthusiasm for the truth, lack of suspicion, a glowing good-will, or the shadow will cross the threshold, and the joy of the feast will be turned into a hollow laugh. Like the one who, after wandering through our World's Fair, could remember nothing but that statue with the arms broken, little realizing that even then the Venus of Milo is a tribute to genius; so hypercriticism finds in every book and in every sermon a missing arm.

Judged by this standard, Tennyson must return from the great beyond to give an account of the deeds done in the body before the bar of human judgment,—the sanctum of the associate editor of an evening newspaper; for in his "Edwin Morris" Tennyson has quoted from Horace's Ode to his Friend and has given no credit. Virgil borrowed from Homer, and Milton from both, and Shakespeare from every source under the sun, but the quotation-marks are missing. Does Tennyson in his "May Queen" need to remind us that he quotes from Job, or may we find so much of merit in "Locksley Hall," "In Memoriam" and "Enoch Arden" we can pass over the punctuation-marks in the poet-laureate? Every poet, from the Elizabethan age to our own Longfellow, Whittier, and Browning, has thumbed the classics for material and form of speech. The patents on ideas, no less than on inventions, expire by limitation, and then ideas become public property. A hundred thousand graduates of Oxford and Cambridge need no footnotes, asterisks, quotation-marks, or parallel lines in their editions of Tennyson in order to detect the beauties of Horace, and the songs of Dante and Tasso. Only the Dick Bottom in literature needs them.

The artist who painted Daniel in the lions' den, and explained that Daniel could be told from the lions by the green cotton umbrella in his hand, would be the ideal in the mind of such a modern newspaper critic. The ignoramus, not the scholar; the frank fool, not the honest thinker, needs such explanations. The farmer brings his produce to market, not his farm machinery; his eggs, not his hens; his milk, not his cows. So the preacher, the artist, the poet, need not show us his raw material, if only he will convince us that his own powers of assimilation have worked upon it and given us a new combination, the fruitage of his own genius. Each one has his own word to give the world, his own poem, or picture that must be himself, given generously and lovingly as a part of his very being and when this is done he passes into the great beyond for his reward.

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him
And lies down to pleasant dreams.²

Z. S. H.

¹ For a reprint of this, see *infra*, pp. 383-386.

² It is not necessary to explain that this is a quotation from Bryant's *Thanatopsis*.