

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. 9) SEPTEMBER, 1903.

NO. 568

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CHICAGO

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CHARLES CARROLL BONNEY.

(1831-1903.)

Frontispiece to The Open Court.

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CHARLES CARROLL BONNEY.*

[Born, September 4th, 1831. Died, August 23d, 1903.]

WORDS OF FAREWELL SPOKEN AT THE FUNERAL.

BY THE EDITOR.

OUR sainted friend, the Hon. Charles Carroll Bonney, was not only a lawyer and jurist of great prominence, not only a prophet and reformer, not only a good citizen, a just and faithful and kind neighbor to every one he met, but also a poet, and his poetry the greater part of which lies still unpublished in manuscript form, is characterised by grandeur and loftiness. Having had the privilege of his unbroken friendship since the days when he reached the climax of his fame as President of the World's Fair Congress Auxiliary and the Parliament of Religions, I enjoyed the opportunity to become better acquainted with him than it was permitted to many of his friends. He gave me access to some of the deeper recesses of his heart when handing me his literary treasures, his lectures, his manuscripts, and last, not least, his poems. It is from his poems that I propose to delineate the great personality of this historical man, and it is remarkable how well adapted many of his lines are to the present occasion.

*For an appreciation of Mr. Bonney's merits as the Inaugurator of the Parliament of Religions, see *The Open Court* for January, 1900, Vol. XIV., p. 4. An excellent pencil-sketch of his characteristic face, showing the features of a prophet, drawn by Eduard Biedermann, appeared in Vol. XV., p. 764, and will be reproduced in the present number. The recent volumes of *The Open Court* contain numerous contributions from Mr. Bonney's pen; the last-mentioned volume alone, not less than eight essays on several subjects of reform and good government. The deep interest which Mr. Bonney from his standpoint of orthodox Christianity took in the work of The Open Court Publishing Co., is strikingly set forth in his article "The Principles of *The Open Court*" (Vol. XIV., pp. 1-3 and republished in pamphlet form). See also the sketch of his life on p. ††† of the present number. Finally, we expect an extract from the funeral sermon by Dr. Mercer, Mr. Bonney's pastor and intimate friend, which shall appear in the next number of *The Open Court*.

The problem of death was no foreign thought to him, but though he recognised the majesty of death, he rose above it, and saw in it, only the immortalisation of man.

Speaking of Henry Clay, Mr. Charles Carroll Bonney wrote :

“He Is Immortal now !

The angel-monarch Death, the mightiest,
That most majestic and benign of all
The spirits strong and beautiful, to whom
The great Creative Father has consign'd
The keeping of our lives and destinies,
Hath come at last to this illustrious
And agéd man, in th' harvest of his years,
Of all his ripened honors and great deeds,
And broke the last dear fetter that still kept
His lofty soul within its wondrous home
Of living dust ; hath robed his glorified
And new born spirit for a radiant home
Of untold beauty, in the Eden Land,
And, like an elder brother, led him through
The pall-hung portal to the unseen way
Which goeth out from life, and leadeth down
In the vale of shadows, and from out
Its realms of grand enchanting beauty, up
A pearl-pav'd pathway, into Paradise.

.

He needs no marble monument to keep
His fame and give it to posterity,
His deeds are living temples, and in them
He will live on forever !

We say. he's dead—

We mean his mortal body is put off,
We mean the form in which he dwelt on earth
Has been chang'd for one more glorious—
One incorruptible. For truly, he
Still lives, more really than e'er he liv'd
Before : but he hath left the troubl'd sphere
Of the corporeal life, to fill a more
Exalted station, as a member of
The august senate of the mighty dead.
In the Supreme Lawgiver's grand domain
Hath he Departed !

Yet his long career
 Of great, immortal deeds, now sanctified
 By Death's sublime ordeal, giv'n up
 To History, the keeper of the past,
 Shall make his name a hallow'd "household word,"
 And in the bright'ning glory of those deeds
 He lives forever."

When Judge Alfred W. Arrington, a lawyer of great accomplishments and still greater promises, suddenly died in the vigor of his years, Mr. Bonney appreciated the sterling qualities of his colleague, for they found an echo in his own bosom, and thus the poem to his friend, became a description of the poet himself.

Mr. Bonney said of Mr. Arlington, and we repeat the lines of Mr. Bonney :

"Whatever fame he had
 When he departed, he had fairly won.

"Won by his eloquence and mental power ;
 Won by his learning, logic, and good sense ;
 Won by his toil and his fidelity.

"His eloquence was like the forests, grand ;
 And, like the streams and valleys, beautiful.

"His mental power was like a giant's strength,
 Equal to all demands of greatest tasks.

"His learning most profound ! And over all
 The subjects he discussed, he poured the light
 Of his great erudition and research.

"His logic was the algebra of law,
 Enriched with illustrations from the realm
 Where beauty blossoms into poesy.

"His labor and fidelity were such
 That less of both would have fulfilled all claims
 Of honor, conscience, and necessity.

"His fame is ours ; he won it in our midst
 And it becomes us that we honor him.

“And this man was a poet. In the midst
Of greatest legal labors, he made time
To demonstrate that highest legal lore,
And warm and glowing verse, of faultless style
And beauty, might in peace together dwell,
And bless the soul with their united wealth.

“And, grandest thing of his eventful life,
His soul achieved a final victory
Over the hosts of infidelic doubt.

“He wandered long in dreary wilderness,
He suffered darkness, hunger, thirst, and pain;
But, at the last, he lifted up his eyes,
And saw the golden ladder Jacob saw,
And saw the angels passing up and down.”

The dream of the golden ladder Jacob saw was actualised in Mr. Bonney's life. It was the Parliament of Religions. Mr. Bonney wanted “Not matter but mind”; and “Not things but men”; and therefore he proposed to add to the World's Fair an exhibit of the civilisation itself that had produced the industries and mechanical wonders of our age.

A quotation from his response to the toast of the World's Congresses, embodies his attitude in this historic event. He said on that memorable occasion :

“I join with joy unspeakable the call
On every people to participate,
To send the choicest products of their skill,
And show how man has triumphed in the strife
With untamed nature, and thus make the gain
Each has achieved the heritage of all.
But something more sublime has drawn me here :
To bring the leaders in all realms of thought
Together, to consider how mankind
May be more nobly served, is grander still !

“From every continent I see them come,—
Masters of knowledge, science, culture, art,
Religion, morals, charity, reform,—
To plan campaigns by which they may advance

To greater victories o'er ignorance,
 And vice, and crime, and all calamities,
 And increase joy and peace throughout the world.

I hear them in the Palace of the Arts,
 Voice the amazing progress of the age,
 And state the living questions that demand
 Solution at the hands of living men,
 And point the way to the desired results.

I see mankind made one in mental aim !
 I see mankind made one in moral power !
 I see the age of peace begin to dawn !

Mr. Bonney was a Christian, and, in a certain sense, an orthodox Christian, for he accepted and believed in all the doctrines commonly deemed essential. His Christianity was so truly Christian that it showed no narrowness, but meant universality, brotherhood, and charity. He sympathised with all searchers after the truth, and thus the non-Christian was to him not a pagan but a brother and co-worker with whom he was glad to communicate and exchange thoughts. The cornerstone of his Christianity was the standard of truth set forth in the Fourth Gospel, "That is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (i. 9). His religion is characterised in a poem entitled "Golden Lessons":

"The Master bids us love our enemies,
 Bless them that curse ; do good to them that hate ;
 And pray for them that act spitefully.
 He bids us to do others as we would
 That they should do to us. He bids us lend ;
 He bids us give ; bids us be merciful ;

Bids us not judge, save as we would be judged ;
 And gives us His sure promise that, if we
 But keep His sayings, He will also give
 Blessings in ample measure, well pressed down
 And running over ; and that all shall mete
 To us the measure of our deeds to them.

Mr. Bonney concludes his "Golden Lessons" with a versified collection of Scripture passages, showing his interpretation of the Bible :

The Lord sustain thee,—be thou strong and brave (Joshua i.);
 He giveth, or withholdeth life and wealth (i. Samuel i.);
 He gives deliverance to the distressed (ii. Samuel xxii.);
 He will give wisdom, if we ask of him (i. Kings iii.);
 He can with plenty fill our hearts and hands (2 Kings vii.);
 He like a shepherd will seek out his flock (Ezekiel xxxiv.);
 He gives us peace, and says, Fear not,—be strong (Daniel x.);
 He is a stronghold in the day of grief (Nahum i.);
 He saith, Fear not, nor, let thy hands be slack (Zephan. iii.);
 He bids us be compassionate and just (Zachariah vii.);
 In His own image He created us (Genesis i.);
 And blesses us if we but keep His law (Leviticus xxvi.).”

Mr. Bonney suffered for the last years of his life from progressive paralysis, but he set us a noble example of patience and resignation. Here is the last poem in the collection of his manuscript:

“Waiting God’s will, my heart goes out in love,
 To those who came in the Columbian year
 From all the continents and joined us here
 In friendly conference on mighty themes
 Of life and immortality, and found
 Strong ties of brotherhood in every field,
 And in the matchless Universal Prayer
 The World’s religious peace and unity.

“Waiting God’s will, I hail the coming Peace
 That yet shall reign triumphant through the world;
 Not base ignoble Peace that shelters wrong,
 But Peace victorious in righteousness:
 Strong as God’s Justice, gentle as His Love.

Mr. Bonney is no longer “waiting”; the last call came and he joined the choir invisible of those immortal dead that are not dead in whose mighty company his soul is a potent presence still helping to actualise in human society the vision of the New Jerusalem. This is a very realistic immortality.

We conclude with another stanza of Mr. Bonney’s “Golden Lessons”:

“Death is no longer conqueror and king,
 The grave no more is darkness and despair.
 The Lord of Lords hath rolled away the stone
 Of gloom that barred its portal, and let in

The everlasting sunshine of His throne ;
And now the eye of Faith may clearly see,
Beyond the tomb, the Holy City's spires ;
And, through the open gates, may catch a glimpse
Of well-remembered faces, full of love
And peace and beauty and celestial joy.
And our exultant hearts cry out, Oh ! Death,
Where is thy sting? Grave, where thy victory?"

We offer thanks for the noble life that has been completed, for the high aspirations that have been attained, for the great work that has been accomplished. The labors of a life pass away, but its blessings remain forever.