

SOME ACCOUNT OF AN INTERVIEW THAT TOOK PLACE RECENTLY BETWEEN DIOGENES, THE CYNIC PHILOSOPHER, AND JOHN ALLEN, "THE WICKEDEST MAN IN NEW YORK."

"We would not be considered as censorious or harsh in judging of any religious movement, but when all the elements of that movement are so notoriously sensational, and when the inducements to cupidity are so strong, it is not possible for an impartial observer to attach any real importance, or to see any genuine religious feeling in an enterprise which has clearly been set on foot with the object of thrusting into prominence the individual's concerned. The plain truth is, that the so-called revival is a gigantic advertisement, to which the press of the city have given a gratuitous publicity, and if any good results from it, it will be in spite of the adventitious aids which have been invoked to give it a sensational character. While all earnest advocates of moral progress must rejoice over any genuine reformatory movement, they cannot but regret that the holy cause of religion has been in this instance sought to be advanced by the most transparent of subterfuges. Whatever real good is wrought amid the moral corruption of metropolitan life, is done by the quiet workers who seek not notoriety, and who labour from higher motives than to gain the applause of men."—*Extract from an article in the New York Albion, headed "A Wicked and Disgraceful Farce."*

A short time ago, I, DIOGENES, read in the Montreal *Daily Witness* that John Allen, the Water-street dance-house keeper, had been suddenly arrested in New York, and subsequently imprisoned in the Tombs. As I was about to pay a visit to the commercial capital of the States, I determined to gratify my cynicism by calling upon the fallen hero. By the application of a little "palm-oil" to some unscrupulous officials, I was quickly enabled to satisfy my whim; and the following narrative, abbreviated from my short-hand notes, is a truthful account of my interview with him.

As I am not about to write a biography of "The Wickedest Man," I will simply state, by way of preface, that the notorious John Allen is an Englishman by birth: that he emigrated to the States in early life, and that he is not, and never has been, "the honest man" for whom I have long been searching. His dearest friends would not dare to assert that his personal appearance is at all prepossessing. He is of the "Bill Sykes" type—only "more so." A stout, broad-shouldered, large-limbed, and heavy-handed "muscular Christian," (?) he would probably be an ugly customer in a rough-and-tumble fight; and, to tell the truth, he bore striking traces of having been lately engaged in an encounter of that kind. One eye was closely bandaged with what he called "a bird's-eye wipe," or "fogle," and a huge gash on his heavy lower jaw told plainly that the "fibbing" in the above-mentioned *fracas* had been of the "ding-dong" order. The ruined remains of a severely-crushed nose made the original model of that organ a theme for conjecture; while the recent loss of a large number of front teeth prevented the outline of his mouth from being accurately determined. "His ears," as Mrs. Mary E. Tucker states in her description of Brick Pomeroy, "were large, and indicated the Democratic element of character." A bullet-shaped head, thickly covered with short, red hair, that stood boldly out, like the prickles on the cylinder of a musical box, must complete this hasty sketch of John Allen's outward presentment.

He received me with a low growl, like that of a bear robbed of her cubs, and, on the whole, I was formidably impressed with his manner. He was evidently much annoyed at being, as he said, "quodded," and the threats of vengeance that he uttered against his former missionary friends were expressed with such vigor, and were so evidently sincere, that they caused my legs to quake and my hair to stand on end.

The language of Mr. Allen was a singular *patois*, consisting mainly of American slang, grafted on a reminiscence of "flash" London "patter." In order to be ordinarily intelligible, I have felt myself at liberty to modify this dialect considerably. I have omitted, also, in my narrative, many forcible and characteristic expletives of which he made frequent use in his conversation, and have thrown what was really a dialogue into the form of a monologue. With these trifling exceptions, the following may be relied on as a correct version of what Mr. Allen said.

Upon my entering the cell in which he was confined, and explaining that I was desirous of making his acquaintance,

he growled deeply, as I have already remarked, and at once proceeded to honor me with his confidence.

'Wal, Kurnel,' said he, 'here I am in chokey—cornered at last—so I spose I may as well cave in. I'm a busted community, farzino, for there aint nary one of my pals to bail me out. If I'd only stuck to what they call liegitimit business, and let religion alone, this 'ere little accident would n't have took place. It all comes along of them Missioner coves, who wanted to set up shop in Water Street, and day and night came a sneakin round our cribs, like black cats on the tiles. Why, in the name of thunder, couldn't they let me earn a nonest livelihood? I never ast them into my snuggery, and, what's more, I never wanted 'em. They aint the sort what pays in a boozing-ken: for when they drinks, they drinks at home, like many other good total abstainers.

'What am I in for? Why, bless your big heart, I'm in for keeping a disorderly house, so they ses; and, as this aint quite the fust time by no manner of means, I'm skeered that the beaks will be down on me heavy. Wal, as I said afore, it all comes of them City Missioners. When they fust come loafin round my dance-house, and palaverin with my old woman, I giv them their walkin ticket in a brace of shakes. But it warn't of no use,—that snivellin old bloke, Van Meter, the boss of the Howard gang, would keep snookin round, till at last I got sorter tired of swearin at him, and let him crawl about my den like any other harmless loonatick. So says he to me one day, "Mr. Allen," says he, "aint you ashamed of your purfession? It's a disreputable callin, and aint the krect thing at all." "Wal," says I, "old hoss, you make it wuth my while to pull up stakes and make tracks, and I'll throw up the sponge at wonst." "Wal," says he, reflectin like, "What'll you take." "A flash of lightnin," says I, helpin myself to a pretty stiff horn, "and thankee kindly." "That aint what I meant," says he, "what'll you take to shut up shop, and try and live kinder sorter respectable?" Wal, an idee struck me that I could euchre him even on that question. So says I, "Wal, boss, I'll jest talk over with my old woman what you've been sayin, and we'll give you a nanser to-morrow when you look us up." Sure enough, on the next day he come—pretty early, too, shewin that he was hot on fixin me to a bargain,—and he made me a offer of \$350 a month, for to lease my bar reglar to a lot of revivallers, one hour a day, for religious meetins—all grog, and other little games, to be stowed away and shelved durin that time. The contrack was to run for three munce, sure. Wal, business wasn't very slick jest then, so I thought as how I couldn't do no better than close the bargain. Which I did. Besides, I heern tell that some of my pals was open to rent their cribs, and be converted right straight along; purvided that the Missioners came down with the dust, handsome. Meanwhile, a cove called Dyer—Oliver Dyer his name is—had managed to worm out of me where I was riz, how old I was, and ceterer. All this, and more, was printed in black and white in the Revivallers' Monthly orgin, as they calls it; and in a few days, all Water Street and the slums round it, was stuck about with orful big posters, stain as how John Allen, "The Wickedest Man in New York," had been converted, and was now lendin his bar-room gratuitous for prayer-meetins, and other fixins. In course I never counterdicted it—as Van Meter paid me my rent honorable, right off the reel. So one day, about noon, the queerest crowd you ever see came bouncin in to my snuggery, lickerty split, till the place was chock full.

There was Kit Burns, who keeps the rat-pit; Sodger Brown (who they *do* say is a wickedester man than me, but I think it's a toss up); Tommy Hadden, the Shanghaister; big Dick Marvin, the cracksman; old Ikey Slocum, and Boston Tom, all larfin in their sleeves like

(To be continued.)