

BISHOP VERSUS DEAN.

A WESTERN CONTROVERSY INTERESTING TO CHURCHMEN.

Shall Dean Babbitt Resign—Evident From the Letter's Letter the Bishop has Been Flaming to get him out of Office—Dean Babbitt writes an Open Letter.

[From the Chronicle, published at Spokane Washington, Oct. 2.]

'Shall Rev. Dean Richmond Babbitt resign his office of dean of All Saints' cathedral or not?'

This is the momentous question that the congregation of the cathedral has been called upon to decide, in the dispute between the dean and Bishop Lemuel H. Wells, by receipt of the following circular from the Bishop:

No. 2209 Pacific avenue, Spokane, Wash., Sept. 28, 1897.—My dear . . .

As you know, the cathedral chapter acting, as they think, in harmony with the wishes of the parish, have asked Dr. Babbitt to resign. Dr. Babbitt, thinking that the people desire him to remain, and that this would be best for the parish, has refused to do so. The vestry have, therefore, according to the canons of the church asked me to decide in the matter.

In order to ascertain how the congregation really feel about, I would request you to sign your name to the enclosed paper. This is a matter of very grave importance, and it is your duty not to shrink from the expression of your opinion. No one but I shall know how you vote.

Please tear off and send to me without delay whichever of the ballots you think right. Your friend and bishop.

LEMUEL H. WELLS.

In my opinion, it is the best good of the parish that Dr. Babbitt should resign.

Sign
In my opinion, it is the best good of the parish that Dr. Babbitt should not resign.

Sign

The receipt of the circular created considerable excitement and comment among the members and some there was who declared that the bishop was taking a secret ballot against the dean and without his knowledge. When questioned on this point the bishop denied that the circular was a secret ballot, as he said he had mailed the first circular to Dean Babbitt himself. The bishop said he simply took this method to ascertain the sentiment of the congregation as to whether they desired the Dean to longer remain at the head of the parish. Said the bishop.

'The canons of the church direct that when a dispute or difference of opinion arises between a rector and his vestry or the chapter, it may, by either party, be referred to the bishop, who is then required to investigate and decide. His decision is to be final. In this case the chapter appealed to me, and I am investigating. Dr. Babbitt is not on trial. He is accused of nothing.'

'The chapter judges, conscientiously I have no doubt, that it is for the best interests of the parish that he do not resign. I have been appealed to, and am seeking to ascertain the facts. That is all there is to it. This is the only way I have to investigate, and hence I have adopted this method.'

Dean Babbitt takes exception to the bishop's methods in thus trying to retire him in the following epicy communication which he mailed to Bishop Wells yesterday:

'Right Reverend and Dear Bishop: I have been astonished to find that you have sent throughout the parish a solicitation for a secret vote as to whether I should resign or not. A gentleman, a prominent member and a generous supporter of the parish, handed me your circular, with your tickets appended, and your words, "No one but I shall know how you vote." He condemned your action, as I know others will, and handed me a check for \$10 toward my October salary. I could hardly believe the request for a secret ballot was the act of a bishop until I had seen your signature. The church so hedges about the 'cure' of a clergyman, her laws and customs are so well known for protecting the great spiritual interests committed to them, that I could not expect there should be such unwonted and astonishing violation of them by one of her bishops. I say this without bitterness or unkindness, but still with a feeling of disappointment and grief. Permit me to respectfully remind you of the terms of my contract as dean of All Saints cathedral, spread upon the minute book of the parish, and from a copy of which I directly quote: The office of dean carries with it the same privileges and duties as the rectorship of a parish, except:

'First, the bishop establishes the ritual; second, presides at all meetings of the cathedral chapter—the dean on the bishops absence; third, the bishop preaches or uses the church for any function as he may see fit, but with due regard to the deans plans.

By this contract it is clearly seen that the bishop had no connection with All Saints' cathedral, but a simple privilege noted as exceptions above, and that the

entire 'cure of souls' and control of the parish rests as fully in the hands of the dean, except as to those few and unimportant particulars, as do those of a parish with a rector. In other words, besides the dignities and immunities of a dean, he has the rights and privileges of a rector. Now the best known of the 'rights and privileges of a rector of a parish' is that his people shall not be disturbed nor his cure invaded by another clergyman, be he priest or bishop. You have no right, as you perfectly know, even to baptize, read the burial service or perform the marriage ceremony without consent of the dean, and it has been your custom, under the law of the church, even in case of marriage to obtain my consent. How you could have brought yourself, my dear bishop, to send among my people a solicitation to a secret vote upon their pastor, is beyond my comprehension. I will not dwell upon the secretive and unfair method—I say it respectfully—of a vote solicited by a bishop, whose high office and prestige might carry weight against conscientious scruples or delicate feelings of justice, for I wish to cast no reflections. But I must call your attention to the necessarily inviting and inflaming of your solicitation, tending greatly to disturb the parish and make differences among the people where there are no differences; creating faction and exciting church partisanship. I do not charge this as your purpose, but suggest this consequence as the logic of words and circumstances. I trust these natural results of your solicitation to a secret vote will, under the blessing of God, fail to follow, but if they come, the responsibility must rest where it belongs, and not on me. And now, my dear bishop, may I be permitted to speak, and always with the respect your high office commands, more directly to the merits of the general situation.

A year ago, without right or authority, you asked me to resign an independent 'cure' to which I had been called and instituted only a year before in the most solemn manner. Some months previous to this you had sought to introduce into the cathedral a body of laws which would have destroyed my independence and given you complete control of the cathedral. One of such laws that the bishop should administer the cathedral as he 'saw fit in the sight of God.' I pleaded my contract in opposition and the adoption of the laws was stopped. But your wish for my removal seems to date from that time. Three times you have without authority, I respectfully suggest, asked that I might find a parish elsewhere—once last October, once this last summer, and once in a recent letter from Europe. Your wish then, is evidently eager for this result. Last October I represented to you the difficult character of the parish, and of my unalterable determination to remain for the dignity of the ministry and the good of the parish, that I could not allow myself to be driven from my post as other rectors had been driven. I still steadfastly and with unshaken resolution hold to that determination. I mention the circumstances now to show your wish and my resolve. How, then, can you decide a case judicially which you have already prejudged, and such prejudgment have expressed? And so as you have prejudged, I appeal, as St. Paul did in a similar case, 'unto Cæsar.' In other words, I have a legal contract, and shall exercise my functions in the Cathedral till process of the law of the state removes me.

A legal tribunal only can determine my rights under the circumstances. The canon of New Jersey, to which you refer, can have no application to the cathedral of Spokane, for in New Jersey there is no cathedral system and no dean of a cathedral. The general law of the church allows a missionary bishop to adopt the constitution and canons of an independent diocese only "so far as they are applicable to the circumstances." Again, I object to your adjudication, because there is no "serious difference" between the congregation and myself, which in New Jersey may give some right of the bishop to interfere. There is peace except at the recent action of the chapter and yourself in the solicitation to a secret vote may have made otherwise. And now, my dear bishop, permit me to suggest another reason why I can not leave my case in your hands, though I would gladly do so if I could. God knows how longingly the clergy look to the affection and protection of their bishops, for in the conception of the church they are the tender fathers of the clergy.

The additional reason I suggest is this: Six clergymen have left the jurisdiction your enemies, and one gentleman—not a

clergyman—who conducted a church school in years past has felt himself deeply aggrieved in contract rights. I will not go into the merits of these cases. Even taking your judgment of them, I must feel that the "cloth" might prudently withhold itself from your judgment, which may not be infallible. The presbyterate is as independent and as much of an order in our ministry as the episcopate, and I stand for the security and independence of my order. I regret my plainness, but see the necessity for it. Your inducements brought me to Washington from a wealthy and interesting parish of the east. I regret that circumstances have made it necessary to defend myself against one whom I esteemed so highly, and whom I still wish to call my friend as well as bishop.

Summing up I may say:

1. I can not appear in response to notice or hearing, and I can not resign.
2. I object to your adjudication of my relations, present or future, with All Saints' Cathedral: (a) Because of your self-interest and prejudice; (b) because there is no 'serious differences' to adjudicate; (c) because I would not feel safe in your hands.

With great respect, as well as pain and disappointment, I am faithfully yours,

DEAN RICHMOND BABBITT,

Dean of All Saints' Cathedral.

8. [In next issue will be given the Dean's reply in a sermon he preached on the following Sunday.]

Truth on a Gravestone.

A curious rhymed epitaph is that on the tomb of Isaac Reed, a conveyancer of London, who edited an edition of Shakespeare in fifteen volumes, published in 1793.

He left a large and curious library, which was sold, after his death, for over twenty thousand dollars. The epitaph runs as follows:

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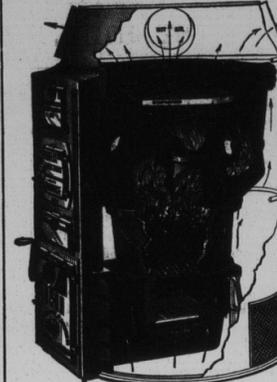
The Return Of the Pendulum.

In 1892 the prosperity of the commercial schools was at its flood. . . . Desiring to find some expedient that would render them still more prosperous, the proprietors of many of these schools abandoned methods that had produced excellent results and adopted others which were wholly experimental. It may safely be said that in most cases the change was not made with the expectation that the schools would be strengthened educationally, but that the new ideas would have greater advertising value. But a reaction has set in. The conclusion has been forced upon thoughtful teachers that the school that educates its pupils best advertises itself best; that a device which may attract inexperienced boys and unthinking parents, may not commend itself to a class of people whose friendship and patronage must be secured and retained as a basis of permanent prosperity. Those schools which adhered to the tried and approved methods, which gave their pupils solid and symmetrical knowledge, which steadily refused to be carried off their feet by patented systems of education, are now reaping the benefit of their wise conservatism. Such schools have not the task before them now of repairing the damage done by experimenting with one or another of the new schemes, are realizing that their reputation for real efficiency has been injured, and are seeing their more conservative co-workers forging ahead. Only a small proportion of the larger schools seem to be off in 1897, and some of them retreated as soon as the character of the road they were upon was discovered. When pretences will pass for performance, and when clap-trap will be accepted in lieu of genuine educational advantages, then, perhaps, the public will take kindly to patented systems of education. Progress, Rochester, N. Y.

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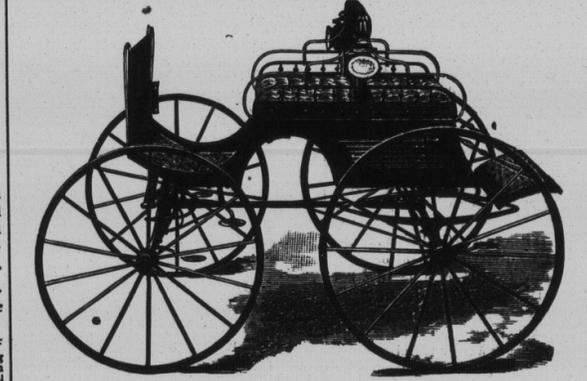


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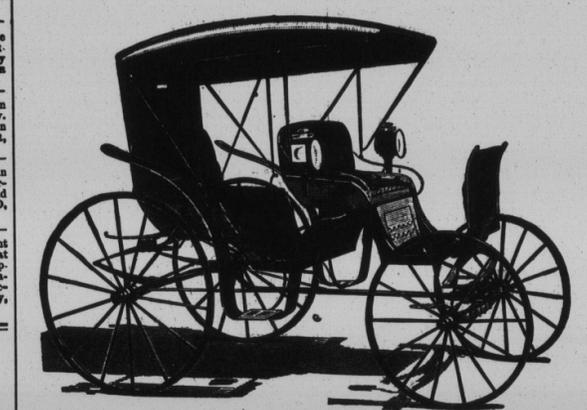
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