BEECHER AT LIVERPOOL.

THE year 1863 was an unpleasant time for a loyal American to be traveling abroad. The disloyal were in Europe in considerable numbers, and, wherever they could, they molded public sentiment. Comparatively few had anything to say in defense of the Federal Government, and the hope that the Confederacy would prevail was freely expressed in conversation. Ignorant and insulting questions were propounded to all who declared themselves in favor of suppressing the rebellion. With one or two exceptions, the newspapers exaggerated the successes of the South, spoke contemptuously of the achievements of the North — of its generals, soldiers, and spirit. The average Englishman could not comprehend the right of the President to perform any act not specified in the Constitution. His powers as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States they did not perceive or were unwilling to admit. At a dinner attended by avowed friends of the North, most of them noted ministers, only five appeared to know the ground upon which the President claimed the right to issue the Proclamation of Emancipation.

Here and there Americans traveling on business, clergymen in poor health, and those who were compelled to go abroad for domestic and other reasons met, and their universal testimony was that, while occasionally an intelligent sympathizer with the North could be found, the majority of those whom they encountered in England were either cold or openly antagonistic.

I met Mr. Beecher at the Charing Cross Hotel in London just before he went upon the Continent, and he said, "What brings you over here?"

"Poor health," was the reply. "And what brings you? Surely you are not ill?"

"No; but so worn with work that I need to freshen up and get away from excitement."

"Will you speak any in England?"

"Not much. I am so mad at the way they talk and act over here that I don't care to see an Englishman."

On the 16th of October, four months after this conversation, I arrived in Liverpool to sail from that place for the United States the next day. Having come directly from Switzerland I knew nothing of Mr. Beecher's plans, but en route from London saw in the English papers that he had spoken once or twice. While riding from the station to the hotel in Liverpool I saw the following handbill:

> TO THE INDEPENDENT AND INDUSTRIOUS CLASSES OF LIVERPOOL.
>
> AN individual of the name of Henry Ward Beecher, who, when at home, Brooklyn, N. Y., is called a Baptist minister, has come over to this country as a political emissary from Abraham Lincoln to stir up strife and ill-will among you, and for that purpose will hold a meeting at the Philharmonic Hall, Hope street, this evening. This same Henry Ward Beecher it was who recommended London to be sacked and this town destroyed; and this godly man, bear in mind, is a preacher of the Gospel and good-will towards all men. As there will be an amendment proposed at the meeting, you must attend and show by your hearts and hands that the industrious classes in this town are opposed to the bloody war which Abraham Lincoln is now waging against his brother in the South, and the dastardly means he is resorting to in employing such tools as Henry Ward Beecher, a minister of the Gospel.
>
> Friday, 16th October, 1863.

There were a half-dozen more, some of them much larger and more conspicuously displayed.

The expression in the bill above quoted, "As there will be an amendment proposed at the meeting," explains a peculiarity of English customs with which we are not familiar in the United States. When a public gathering of this kind is held, it is considered proper for opponents to interrupt the proceedings, and, when any motion is offered, to move an amendment, and, if possible, to carry it; in which case the meeting will be made to teach the very opposite of that which it was called to advocate. I witnessed several such occurrences, and saw in one or two places the friends of the North take a meeting out of the hands of the South; and in Manchester a desperate attempt was made to capture one called in the interest of the North which resulted in the building being cleared by the police.

I determined, if possible, to hear Mr. Beecher. On inquiry it was speedily ascertained that the bulk of the people of Liverpool were not in sympathy with either Mr. Beecher or the cause he advocated, that there would certainly be an attempt to break up the meeting, and that tickets fully equal to the capacity of the house had already been given out. I made every effort to obtain tickets, but without success. No person who had one was willing to sell it, ticket speculators could not be found, and it seemed as if nothing could be done. But at half-past six a desperate expedient occurred to me, and was tried. Ascertaining that Mr. Beecher was the guest of Charles C. Duncan, I called at his residence and sent in my card. Mr. Beecher was at tea, and came out into the hall napkin in hand. I said, "Mr. Beecher, I am going to sail to-morrow to the United States. Your friends will wish to know all about this address; and yet I cannot get in, and have called to ask if I may accompany you when you enter. I will slip into some obscure position in the rear of the platform; and even if I have to stand the entire evening, it will be only what you will have to do."

"I would do it in a moment," said he, "but there have been three hundred applications of that sort, and every square inch of the platform is already bespoke."

"Then there is no chance?"

"None, my dear fellow, that I can see — unless I give you my place; and the Lord knows I would be glad enough to do that."

With that he laughed and went back to his supper.

Just as I was reconciling myself to defeat, Mr. Duncan came into the hall and said that a certain Baptist clergyman had received two tickets and he had just heard of a death in his family. "Would you call and ask him for those tickets? If you can get them, you shall have one, and may return the other to me."

The facts were as stated. The tickets were obtained, and the result was that I sat within six feet of Mr. Beecher on the platform during the evening. As he had said, every square inch was spoken for. The crowd was immense, consisting almost entirely of men. The few ladies to be seen here and there had an appearance of trepidation, and every person seemed to be apprehending a disturbance. The audience was comparatively quiet during the preliminary exercises, which were exceedingly brief.

When Mr. Beecher was introduced there was faint applause mingled with discordant sounds. The applause increased, and so did the noise of the opponents. Neither class, so far as demonstration was concerned, was very numerous. An English is very different from an American mob; it is much more noisy, but less vicious. It is accompanied by less bloodshed and violence, but more yelling and pushing; it also has less humor and is more persistent. Being able to see the entire building, I became aware that men had been stationed in different parts expressly to act in concert; and after a while I was able to identify two or three who were obviously leaders. It was their policy not to make much disturbance at first.

Mr. Beecher was in perfect health, but quite thin compared with his condition before leaving home; still he appeared a magnificent specimen of manhood, having just passed his fiftieth birthday. He advanced and placed a manuscript upon the table, and from it began to read a carefully prepared argument to prove that, from a commercial point of view, Liverpool should sympathize with the North rather than with the South. Slavery was a primitive institution, the South an agricultural region. Institutions built upon slavery would need comparatively little. What the slaves ate, they raised; they wore but scanty clothing, and the whole climate and mode of living favored limited outside expenditures. It was not so with the North. He made various references to Liverpool — its business interests, its dependence upon American trade, the immense development that would certainly follow if slavery were abolished.

This line of thought failed to reach the high moral tone of the abolitionists who were present, though it did for a time interest the average citizen. So long as Mr. Beecher read, the audience was obviously greatly disappointed. The disturbers found little room to object, and his friends little or nothing to applaud. Mr. Beecher was never remarkable as a reader. On this occasion, as expectation was high, and the reports of his former oratorical performances had been heard, the impression was much less than it would have been under other circumstances. After he had read for fifteen or twenty minutes a loud roar was heard, "Shut up that paper!" which was immediately responded to from the other side of the building, "He can't get along without a book!" "He don't know enough to speak!" "He is a *coward!*" From another place came the question in a shrill, piercing voice, "Where did you steal your sermon?"

In less than two minutes the whole audience appeared to be in motion. Men were pushing and elbowing, yelling and shrieking. One man in particular would jump up about two feet, howl, and then sink out of sight. The police began to move about with an expression of good humor upon their faces, pushing men with both hands extended. For the space of three or four minutes it was impossible for Mr. Beecher to be heard. He made several attempts to finish the manuscript, and practically did; and then began to handle questions with the incisiveness, wit, and occasional outbursts of eloquence for which he was famous. The disturbers had sense enough to see that they had aroused a lion, and that they must break him down or he would carry the great bulk of the audience with him. They resorted to every means imaginable, except actual violence, to accomplish this end.

Mr. Beecher's voice, when he was excited and spoke very loud, had a roaring sound. They would pitch their voices upon the same key, so that when he ended a paragraph in a clarion tone, taking the same pitch, they would bellow like a score of infuriated bulls, and continue sometimes five minutes at a stretch; for when some would be out of breath, others would take it up, and the first would come to their help again. Meanwhile Mr. Beecher would talk to the ministers on the platform, of whom there was a large number, and occasionally to the reporters. He would say to them, "Gentlemen, I am talking to you and, through you, to all England. If I should not be heard at all by this audience, and you should take down my words, thirty millions of people would read them." He was calm enough at one time when the roaring was going on to crack three or four jokes, as if he were conversing in a parlor; and the moment the rioters stopped, from sheer physical exhaustion, he screamed out, "I have talked to these reporters. They have got down all I have said. There is another idea out, catch it if you can!"

It has been reported that Mr. Beecher's life was in danger on that occasion. The scene indeed was at times appalling. Mr. Beecher received anonymous letters warning him not to attend; but I saw no evidence that any person intended personal violence to him. He considered the opposition which he encountered at Liverpool "worse than all the rest put together."

When he was fully loose, he paced the platform like a lion about to spring upon the assembly. The crowd would hurl remarks at him which, if it were possible to turn, he would make such use of as to raise a laugh at the expense of the questioner. If they were embarrassing he would say, "I will take that up when I come to it," and in most cases he would prepare an effective way of answering it. He seemed to proceed upon the assumption that the friends of freedom were with him, and that his wisest course was to ignore both friends and foes. In some reminiscences given in his Life, edited by Lyman Abbott, he says:

> I took the measure of the audience and said to myself: "About one-fourth of this audience are opposed to me, and about one-fourth will be rather in sympathy; and my business now is not to appeal to that portion which is opposed to me, nor to those that are already on my side, but to bring over the middle section."

He certainly acted upon this plan at Liverpool, and in doing so he lost for a considerable period the sympathy of those who in the beginning were prepared to applaud him.

But at last he struck the highest moral elevation, and no reporter, even though he took every word, could properly represent the majesty, the sublimity, the authoritative and electrical energy with which he spoke. A remarkable fact was, that after one of these outbursts he would catch up a question on a much lower plane, dispose of it with a witty turn, and converse with the assembly as though he were relating an anecdote to some gentlemen at a casual meeting. The policy of the factious element was to bawl the loudest after his finest passages. On one of these occasions he said, "Christ understood human nature; 'Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.' He did not say anything about bulls." These noises were like the cries of the people, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," for they "continued about the space of two hours."

There was one instant when Mr. Beecher seemed to be about to break down. His voice cracked, and the crowd imitated the cracked sound which it produced. He then turned to the platform and said, "Gentlemen, I take you to witness that I have controlled this audience until my voice is gone. I can do nothing without a voice." And it seemed as if his nervous force as well as his voice was failing. Had he stopped then, the assembly would have broken up in confusion, the mob would have prevailed, no resolutions would have been passed, and the meeting, though it would have left an ineffaceable impression upon the minds of those who heard him, would nevertheless have been considered unsuccessful.

But he gathered himself together once more, regained command of the audience, and subsequently did some of the most effective work of the evening. The hundreds of distinguished men who sat upon the platform, most of them public speakers, at first wore the aspect of men who were there to see what an American orator would do and how he would do it; but long before the conclusion their individuality was lost, and they were not only captivated, but captured. For physical power, self-control, diversified forms of public speaking, indomitable will without the loss of the power to respond to the changing moods of the audience, and affability essential to persuasion, I have never seen its equal and cannot imagine its superior. A gentleman sitting near me, who appeared to command universal respect from those upon the platform, said at the close, giving a list of the famous men whom he had heard on critical occasions: "I was prepared to criticise and ready to dislike, but I never heard anything equal to this." Every loyal American felt proud of his country, and proud of Henry Ward Beecher as its representative.

After a stormy passage of fourteen days, two weeks from the next Sabbath I had the pleasure of describing this scene to the congregation of Plymouth Church, on which occasion resolutions were passed commending the work of Mr. Beecher in England, and extending his vacation for as long a time as he felt that he could serve his country abroad.

At what exact point he could be said to have brought the audience into subjection to his imperial intellect and will it would be difficult to say. He remarks in the reminiscences already quoted, "Of all confusions and turmoils and whirls I never saw the like. I got control of the meeting in about an hour and a half, and then I had a clear road the rest of the way. We carried the meeting, but it required a three-hours' use of my voice at its utmost strength. I sometimes felt like a ship-master attempting to preach on board of a ship through a speaking-trumpet with a tornado on the sea and a mutiny among the men."

He made the entire assembly feel the greatness of his country, the justice of its cause, and the certainty of its triumph.

J. M. Buckley.

COURAGE!

TO A SAD POET.

TOO well we know the earth is full of sorrow,
Of loss and change,—no breeze but bears the tale.
Night veils her tears and prayers, until the morrow,
Wan from her bitter vigil, rises pale.

The roses breathe, low whisper all the grasses,
The wood-thrush rings and rings the sad refrain,
The fall, the frost, the spring-floods cry, "All passes!"
O poet! what avails to chant the strain?

Oh for a voice as clear as Burns' or Byron's,
And strong to shake us from our coward state!
We are not men, but moles, if death environs,
And blind with tears we tamely yield to fate.

Who sings that life is only pain and dying,
And all the grace and flower of it fade,
Sings not,—'t is but a false and feeble sighing,
The night wind moaning through the cypress shade.

The fashion of this world, it is, doth perish,
And all whose flower withers—dust to dust;
The vain desires that flesh and folly cherish,
Gold, greed, and glitter—dross to moth and rust.

Truth, love, and faith die not, nor brave endeavor:
No simple, self-effacing constancy
But links with deathless deeds that shine forever,—
The widow's mite lives with Thermopylæ.

To him that overcometh shrinking spirit
And poor, weak flesh 't was promised from afar
All things in earth and heaven he shall inherit:
Day, night, and then, tears dried—the morning star!

James T. McKay.