

B. Pope

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POLITICAL.

From the American Mercury.—No. IX.
TO THE ISSUES OF CONSTITUTION.

Fellow-Citizens,

IN my last number I stated the substance of two conversations with Mr. Tracy, one with the Rev. Stanley Griswold, the other with General Skinner. Concluding in my own mind that the charges against Mr. Tracy were too pointed to be suffered by himself or his friends to pass without an attempt to palliate or parry them, I determined to wait in silence for his defence.

In the Connecticut Courant of the 7th instance was given to the public that a defence was preparing, and that in the ensuing week certificates of gentlemen who were present at both conversations would be published, from which it would appear, that the conversation said to have been held with Mr. Griswold was a wicked fabrication—and that with General Skinner misconceived and grossly misstated. In the Courant of the 14th, Mr. Tracy's defence was made by his counsel, Nathan, who exhibits his testimony accompanied with his arguments.

After stating the charges against Mr. Tracy, so far as they relate to the conversation with Mr. Griswold, Nathan proceeds with his defence as follows:

"It is probable that David when he invites an investigation of the truth of his statement 'knows not what he asks.' But I speak advisedly, when I affirm, that the Rev. Stanley Griswold, with whose approbation, I presume the statement is made, would be the last man living to provoke such an investigation, if he had not either lost his memory, or abandoned all regard to his own reputation. And I now beg leave to give notice, thro' the medium of your paper, to Babcock, and David, and Parson Griswold, and all other Jacobins whom it may concern, that if they are not perfectly satisfied, by the annexed certificates of the absolute falseness of David's 'development,' they shall soon hear somewhat more of this self-same conversation; than they, or their party will relish.

Let it be observed in the mean time that the following letter from Mr. Griswold, clearly identifies the conversation 'developed' in the Mercury, with that referred to by Dr. Sheldon and Miss Champion. It follows then that either David or Parson Griswold, on the one hand, or Dr. Sheldon and Miss Champion on the other, are guilty of a downright lie. The case is reduced to this simple point; and I assert (in full confidence, that the veracity of any anonymous writer will be as highly respected as that of David) that the conversation detailed in the Mercury, is a tissue of lies, from the beginning to the end. I would remark also for the present, that the conversation, according to David's 'story' took place 'five or six years ago.' Here is a small mistake in chronology: The Rev. Stanley Griswold reported the identical conversation published in the Mercury, more than eight years since.

"Again, if David is to be believed, Mr. Tracy 'solicited a private interview' with Mr. Griswold, and the conversation was had, 'with no witness present.' That this is a lie, we have the clearest evidence under Mr. Griswold's own hand!

"It is truly lamentable that men of respectable characters, or their friends, should find it necessary from a regard to private reputation or the public good formally to contradict anonymous calumnies, especially when published in such a thing, as the Mercury, by such a thing as David! This David, ('I know him well' even under his mask) is a man proverbially destitute of every thing that is called morality, in public or private life—a man, whose character, 'from his youth upward,' has been, and still is, justified to the very last! When such a profligate gravely describes 'an unprincipled wretch,' a 'miscreant meriting universal execration,' one would expect if the acts of miracles had not elapsed, that the very stones would cry out to him! 'Thou art the man!'

NATHAN.

(DR. SHELDON'S CERTIFICATE.)

"IN the Spring of 1855, the Rev. Stanley Griswold preached at Litchfield, in Mr. Champion's pulpit. After meeting he went to Mr. Champion's and, late in the night, before retiring I went over to his house. In the evening Mr. Tracy, Col. Tallmadge, Major Seymour, Mr. Deming, and Sheriff Lord came in. The gentlemen who came with Mr. Tracy went away some time before he did. I held and went away with him. I am confident I did not go out of the room, during the evening, until I went home with Mr. Tracy. From many days ago, Rufus Lowry and Thomas, from New-Milford, were at Litchfield, and informed me, that a report was circulating in New-Milford, that Mr. Griswold, when he lately was at Litchfield had a 'rough conversation' with Mr. Tracy, as parson Champion's in which Mr. Tracy manifested the utmost contempt for the American constitution, and said that the British government was the best in the world; that one would be like it; that we must have a King, and Grant for life; that men who were checked by their brethren were not to be regarded; that it was their business to see and glow; that well dressed men, and those who were well dressed, should be our rulers; and that we must have an established clergy. They informed me also, that this report was spreading and gaining belief among all classes of people in New-Milford; and if true, would do much injury to Mr. Tracy's reputation. And as they had heard I was present, they wished to know the facts. I told them I was perfect the whole time, and heard all that was said, and reported to them the principal leading sentiments of the conversation;

and also all read them; that the reports were TOTALLY FALSE and UNFOUNDED; that NOTHING LIKE them was said, nor any thing from which CONSEQUENCES of the kind could have been drawn. I wished them to tell Mr. Griswold what I had said, and that I had no doubt he would do what was in his power to correct such misrepresentations and falsehoods; that were circulating, as from him. Soon after this I received the following letter from Mr. Griswold:

New-Milford, 15th May, 1855.

"SIR, I duly received your message by Dr. Lowry and I thank you for the kindness. Had I had the most distant idea, that one conversation at Mr. Champion's was intended in consequence I would have done any thing sooner than reveal it.—But I had no such idea. Others were present, and I verily supposed that what Mr. Tracy said, he was ready to lay to every body, and to advocate before the world. On my return some people were curious to hear news, and I am always fond of telling them what I saw and say. I related the substance of our conversation, as nearly as I could recollect it. Indeed Mr. Tracy's remarks made so deep an impression upon the democratic part of my mind (which is the greater part) that I believe my relation was perfectly accurate. I think it is not a correct criminal to relate what we suppose to be open and free conversation.

"In this instance I knew not but the people to whom I related would approve of Mr. Tracy's sentiments, as in fact some amongst us do. I quickly saw however that the old '73 spirit was roused in some, and I have ever since wished that I had held my peace, although I did not consider the conversation as confidential.

"I have, respected, and admire Mr. Tracy. He has ever been the man of my fancy, and of my choice as a legislator. It is a trial to me to break with him on any subject. I am still disposed to preserve his political character as far as possible. I would throw the mantle of charity over a multitude of his political sins. Sooner would I let any man suffer wrongfully than him. I am truly sorry, if any misrepresentations have gone abroad, respecting him, especially as from me. I shall certainly do my best to contradict them, and keep Mr. Tracy's sentiments in their true attitude, as I heard them expressed. Approaching as I did, that the conversation was open, and that Mr. Tracy talked to every body, he did so, and I presume I had not been so for stating the conversation, although some minds may have been so affected as to be disposed to add exaggerations. I have however heard of no specific exaggerations myself. Should any be pointed out to me, I will readily retract it in any manner Mr. Tracy shall direct. But I hope there will be no occasion for any great retractions in the future. Although I perfectly agree the general complexion of Mr. Tracy's politics as expressed in that evening's conversation, and I love every thing else in the man, yet I am willing to say little or nothing about them, if he apprehends the possibility of them, would be injurious to his reputation with his constituents. If however there should be any disposition to crowd me on the subject, I shall not be backward to furnish a valued friendship, and every private consideration, to what I really believe to be the good of my country.

"My fellow-citizens have become so degenerate as not to be satisfied with such political intimations, I shall have done my duty in using a proper opportunity to point them to their duty. But I really believe that a great majority of the people of this State are very nearly with myself in sentiments of a political nature. This town contains as many parts of opposite feelings (as I do believe) as any of the last single towns in the State. But I presume I shall not be driven to any great exertions to give publicity to Mr. Tracy's sentiments. My private attachment is too strong to admit pleasure in such a business, even tho' my country's good might call for it. When I have done, I have done with an innocent intention and with the strictest candour. However, I freely confess with I do again, I should hold my peace, though I had no reason to apprehend any privacy, or particular confidence in the matter.

"Please permit my best regards to Mr. Tracy, and assure him of my most affectionate and best wishes for his personal and eternal welfare."

"Excuse me for declining to make use of the common Maximization of 'Your most obedient humble servant.' And for adapting the more open, simple, free and manly title of

STANLEY GRISWOLD."

I had never intended to Dr. Lowry or any other person that the conversation at parson Champion's was confidential, nor had I any idea that it was so—and was surprised that Mr. Griswold should dwell so much on it, and make it every word in his letter for dwelling on it. I therefore the first time I saw Dr. Lowry, inquired of him whether he had told Mr. Griswold that the conversation was confidential—or any thing like it. He assured me that he had not.

I do not say that Mr. Tracy did not express himself privately, or by implication, in the manner above mentioned, or in the manner stated by David, a writer in the American Mercury, of the 8th instant;—but that nearly the whole tenor of his conversation was the very reverse;—and that the principal scope and design of it was to convince Mr. Griswold of the absolute necessity of DEMOCRACY.

DANIEL SHELDON.

Litchfield, December 9, 1859.

(MISS CHAMPION'S CERTIFICATE.)

HAVING read, in the American Mercury of the 8th instant, the substance of a conversation, alleged to have taken place at my father's house, five years since, between Mr. Tracy and the Rev. Stanley Griswold; I do certify, that in the Spring of the year 1855, according to my best recollection, I was present, as was Dr. Sheldon, at a conversation between those gentlemen, in the place above mentioned; and that Mr. Tracy did not advance the sentiments imputed to him in the Mercury, nor any of them, nor any others, which in substance resembled them.

BETSY CHAMPION.

Litchfield, December 5, 1859.

P. S. It ought to be observed, and indeed it appears from Dr. Sheldon's certificate, that Col. Tallmadge, Major Moses Seymour, Julius Deming, Esq. and Sheriff Lord were all at the Rev. Mr. Champion's, in the course of the evening, in which the above conversation was had. Sheriff Lord is dead, and as Col. Tallmadge is at Washington, I can furnish at present, no statement on his authority. But I am authorised to declare, that neither Major Seymour (who was present indeed but a short time) nor Mr. Deming, heard Mr. Tracy advance a single sentiment, which bore the least resemblance to any one of those ascribed to him in the Mercury.

A word or two more, and I shall have done for the present; the foregoing certificates prove only what the conversation was not.—Let it not be supposed that the statement is to stop here. The public will know in due

season, what the conversation was; and it is to be hoped that the result will prove a salutary 'development' to Parson Griswold and all his Jacobin friends.

NATHAN.

THOUGH the foregoing defence furnishes unanswerable proof that my former statement of the conversation with Mr. Griswold was substantially correct, and though I might safely rest the cause here, yet I do not forget that I stand pledged to produce all the evidence in my power relative to the point in issue. This engagement I have neither an intention nor a wish to evade.—It is my desire to lay before the public as much as possible of that proof which has convinced my mind that the ultimate goal of Federalism, has been a change of our government to the hereditary, monarchic, aristocratic form of the British government, and I am confident that the declarations and opinions of Mr. Tracy, will be found by my fellow-citizens to be no unimportant part of that proof.

It must have been understood that I have stated Mr. Tracy's conversations, not from my own personal knowledge, nor as an ear witness of them, but as I have received them from others. I should have considered the information of no man excepting those who were parties to the conversations, as sufficient authority for me to have made my statements. The certificates of Mr. Griswold, of Gen. Skinner, and of others, corroborative of theirs, shall, as soon as they can be obtained, be laid before the public. Mr. Griswold now lives at Walpole, in New-Hampshire; a week or two, must therefore necessarily elapse, before his story can be told in his own words. In the mean time, it may not be amiss to call your attention, fellow-citizens to the present state of Mr. Tracy's defence.

Nathan asserts, that David is a man proverbially destitute of virtue. This being entirely foreign to the point in discussion, I shall only remark, that probably Nathan has oftensaid substantially the same thing of greater and better men than David pretends to be.—that in the present instance it is a rash assertion, because Nathan certainly does not know who is the writer of these numbers—that it proves neither more nor less than that Nathan is worthy, and that he uses with an indiscreet liberality the appropriate dialect of his sect. The question immediately before the public, is this, did Tracy express himself in conversations with Mr. Griswold and Gen. Skinner in the manner that I have stated. For the purpose of trying this question before the public, David appears, not as a witness but in the character of counsel for the prosecution, and Nathan, a counsel for Tracy, the defendant. Now, if Nathan wishes it, let it, for the purpose of trying this question, be supposed that David is a worthless scoundrel—and let it also be supposed (for we may suppose what we please) that Nathan is not a worthless scoundrel—now let us see how this will apply in argument; let us suppose again the question to be on trial before a jury, in a Court of Justice, and let us hear Nathan's argument.—Gentlemen, says he, you are to suppose Mr. Attorney, who prosecutes this cause to be a villain; and you are to suppose, no matter what you may know of me, you are to suppose me no villain, but an honest man; this being the case, Gentlemen, you must see clearly that my client never could have held the conversations with which he is charged. But I quit the remarks of Nathan, and request the public attention to his proof.

It seems that Miss Betsy Champion, and Dr. Daniel Sheldon, are the gentlemen who heard the conversation with Mr. Griswold. To enable us duly to estimate the weight of testimony, it is very necessary that we have a correct understanding of the real character of the witnesses. In ordinary cases this is a delicate enquiry; but unfortunately in the present case, in regard to one of the witnesses there is no doubt, there will, I am sure be no contradiction. It is a fact of perfect notoriety, that Miss Champion has from her youth, nay, almost from her infancy, been addicted to intoxication—in short that for more than twenty years past she has been a noted sot—and if Mr. Tracy were at home, I might with confidence appeal to him to say, whether he does not know this to be true, and whether he does not know that she is addicted to another vice degrading to the female character. It will not be denied that Miss Champion's character stands at a very low point of infamy. I appeal then to every man of common sense to say whether, when the mind of a woman has become so debilitated by a long course of intoxication, when she has lost all self-respect, when she has become desperate in regard to reputation, when she knows herself to be infamous—every ground of confidence in her veracity is not taken away. Supposing Betsy Champion to be a woman of fair reputation, still the credibility of her testimony would be extremely questionable, when it is recollected that she testifies of a conversation that took place, as appears by Sheldon's certificate, nearly nine years ago—a conversation too in which it is not pretended that she took any part, nor

does it appear that any extraordinary circumstance existed to impress the contents of the conversation deeply on her memory—for she would have it understood that no extraordinary conversation took place—why then should she remark and recollect at this distant period, a conversation of no extraordinary interest? No this would not be credible, though Miss Champion were a woman of fair reputation—what credit is then due under these circumstances, to the declarations of a woman, whose very name is, in the imagination of those who know her, the sign and type of infamy. In truth, Miss Champion was not present at the conversation. It is more than an equal chance that she was at the time in a state of intoxication—it is possible, however, that she was sober—but not even Mr. Tracy would be known to spend an evening in her society.

In addition to these remarks I will hazard a conjecture, not on slight grounds, but on such evidence as satisfies my mind. The certificate bearing Betsy Champion's signature was not written by her, but by Nathan himself. This I state as conjecture—if it be a mistake, the Editors of the Courant can ascertain the mistake by examining the hand writing; let them say that it is a mistake, and I will acknowledge it to be such; until that time I shall remain satisfied that the certificates, both of Betsy Champion and Dr. Sheldon, were penned by Nathan, and by them subscribed upon his application.

Doctor Sheldon I consider as a man of honest intentions, his mistakes do not originate in his heart. His mind, however, is of that particular texture which is more liable than any other to strong prejudices; he considers members of Congress and Senators, as prodigious great men; and many a marvellous story which he has heard related by these great men, he has carefully stowed away in his hoard of important and useful knowledge. He has been told that all honest and great men are Federalists, he believes it implicitly—he is an honest man, he must therefore be a Federalist—he idolises great men—all the great men in his neighbourhood (and he has little acquaintance out of his neighbourhood) are Federalists; this makes him two fold a Federalist. I do not, however, believe, that even the interests of Federalism would induce him knowingly to falsify the truth, but I do believe that for the defence of so great and good a man as Mr. Tracy, he might be prevailed to imagine that he recollected facts which never had existence. His liability to mistake facts, and more especially the tenor of conversations, I think, is manifested by his certificate when taken altogether. The conversation to which he alludes in his certificate is doubtless the same to which my statement refers, and it appears, that in respect to the time when it took place my statement was incorrect. The truth is, several years ago I heard the conversation spoken of. On my request Mr. Griswold stated to me the amount of the conversation, on the part of Mr. Tracy, in substance as I have stated to the public. I have minutes of the amount of the conversation, the only thing which struck me as being important; but I had no memorandum of either the time when or the place where the conversation was held—I made use of the phrase "five or six years ago" to express an indefinite, an uncertain time, and so must have been understood. With respect to the place, it was impressed on my mind that Mr. Tracy had conversed with Mr. Griswold more than once but that the conversation principally alluded to was held at the house of Parson Champion. I did understand that Dr. Sheldon was present during part of the conversation; but that during the greater part of the conversation he was not present, nor any other person excepting Mr. Griswold and Mr. Tracy. Whether the interview was, or was not solicited by Mr. Tracy is doubtless a question of very small importance in itself—what did Mr. Tracy say?—being the principal question, and not what induced him to say it? I agree that it is of importance, that we at all times speak and write the truth. I did understand that the interview was solicited by Mr. Tracy; and I have no doubt that this will appear to have been the fact. If however, it should turn out otherwise, I shall be very ready to acknowledge my mistake.

Let us now for a moment enquire what is the evidence derived from Dr. Sheldon's certificate when taken in connection with Mr. Griswold's letter therein recited.—Says Dr. Sheldon, "I do aver that Mr. Tracy did not express himself directly, or by implication in the manner above mentioned, or in the manner stated by David, &c. but that nearly the whole tenor of his conversation was the very reverse; and that the principal scope and design of it was to convince Mr. Griswold of the justness of Democracy." If in this passage are contained the most gross, and palpable contradictions, Dr. Sheldon neither saw nor intended any such thing. He would not knowingly contradict himself; nor is it probable that Nathan perceived the absurdity, and inconsistency of the certificate, or he would have written it differently; and the Dr. would doubtless as readily have subscribed

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