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Letter to Charles Petit McIlvaine

William Bartlett

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Professor William Bartlett of West Point to Bishop C. P. McIlvaine

West Point, Feb. 25, 1863

My dear Bishop,

Your welcome letter of the 10th instant was duly received, and I have to beg a thousand pardons for my delay in answering. Indeed, I have been a good deal unwell of late and, besides, very much engaged in getting a new Ed. of one of my books ready for the press; and this, I am sure, will excuse me to one as indulgent as yourself and who can, at the same time, so well appreciate in others, hinderances, which have fallen in his own path.

I remember the incidents well, connected with the reviews of Gen^l McComb, to which you refer, and am under the impression that you confound the first with the second occasion of your earnest address in opposition to the use of the sabbath for any purposes disconnected from rest and holy meditation and worship. The first was in June, I think, and during the Ann-examinations; the second was in Sept: and it may have been during the examination of some new Cadets who had failed to report in the June previous, for admission, as such examinations, once in awhile, took place. I never shall forget the effect of your second Sermon, preached from a few scanty notes, on a piece of paper not much larger than your thumb, & scratched off on the spur of the occasion. Your regular sermon was postponed. I can fancy I see everybody's eyes expanding to the dimensions of dinner plates, at the audacity of a preacher, holding his official life at the pleasure of a common superior, castigating that superior for a dereliction of his religious duties in the very presence of his _____ in Official station. The scene was grand & to many of us boys, terrific. It did, indeed, impress upon us, that the things of heaven are above the things of earth! But while my memory is vivid in regard to the effect of the two occasions, I cannot recall dates.

Of Dabuny Carr, I remember very little. He was in a class different from mine and of a character that impressed me but slightly. I believe he came to naught. I am sorry I cannot tell you more about him.

Have you seen the renditions, made by Mr. Stevens in the debate upon the new army bill, in regard to the difficulty between Gen^l Scott and McClellan? They are very striking indeed, and I cannot but hope there may be some misunderstanding about the facts. You will find them in the House proceedings of yesterday 24th instant. These are sad times!! I often wish myself near to some wiser head than mine and whose optics could reach to some glimmer of light that promised a day of peace & order again. I confess, my very dear friend, that all looks dark and dreary, and if I were divested of my reliance upon our heavenly father in our political trouble, I should despair. We have made mistake after mistake in the selection of men to lead us through the wilderness, and no one lies down to sleep with _____ feeling of security. No one feels the pressure of a heavy hand, directed by a sagacious & wise head. Mediocrity is the rule and the rule seems almost without exception. May God, in his good times, deliver us.

Affectionately & faithfully yours,

William Bartlett

Rt. Rev. C. P. McIlvaine