

Charles Pettit McIlvaine Letters

7-7-1863

Letter to Charles P. McIlvaine

Stephen Tying

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Dr. Stephen Higginson Tyng (1800-1885) to Bishop McIlvaine. Dr. Tyng was a leading low church Episcopalian evangelical opponent of ritualism & author on religious matters. In 1853 Bp. & Mrs. McIlvaine spent several days with him in Switzerland. His quite corney jokes sometimes offended the Swiss.

New York, July 2/63

My dear Friend,

Your letter about Ashfield is a great grief to me. The more because the character of his letters & conversation has been so positive, as to stamp his _____ with very peculiar _____. The whole scene is so painful that I cannot dwell upon it. And the mortification in accounting for it to others will be very great. He had offered his services as a missionary to Africa to the Foreign Committee. They will, of course, require information. So far as I am concerned, I shall be too anxious to have the thing die & be forgotten, to give it.

I am sorry that you should feel depression about our present affairs. I have never had any depression. I deem these invasions of our territory most advantageous excitements of the northern mind & power, which have thus far never been routed. Our moral elevation is far below our material, in this whole matter. The result is preponderance of brute power & the absence of high intelligent & righteous principles. But our contest is to be indeed only by principle. I think we have been _____ to go as far as has been safe for us in the two years. Our attainments have been immense in defiance of unprincipled & miserable generals. I have no doubt Halleck is unfaithful to the principles of this contest - as I have been long convinced that McClellan is completely. No man who so intimately & habitually associates himself with Copperheads as he has done can be anything short of a traitor in spirit. Still, I am in no way disquieted & in no hurry - we have time enough yet. And I would rather prolong the contest a generation, than yield to a division or a compromise. This latter is our chief danger. I shall be glad in every way to show my long continued respect & love for you. Our course is almost run. To me everything looks bright. I am working as hard as I ever did & by the Lords blessing not in vain. May his abundance of mercy rest on you & yours forever.

Faithfully yours

Stephen H. Tyng

Rt. Rev. Bp. McIlvaine

NOTES: Much had to be guessed due to his script and the way the letter was pasted in scrapbook. In 1853 when Dr. Tyng, D.D. spent a few days with the McIlvaines, some of his jokes were crude - "All Burlington women have no front teeth. They sell them & their babies too!" For description, see Mrs. McIlvaine's Journal of the European trip of 1853. They saw Dr. Tyng several times in London and he was with them a few days in Switzerland. There Mrs. McIlvaine was worried that his loud voice and continual jokes would offend others.