MAJOR SIBLEY'S

CHURCH HISTORY CROSS-EXAMINED

AND PUT TO THE TEST OF RECORD,

BY H. CHAMBERLAIN.

The reason why I am again before the public is, that I am publicly assailed. And having obtained justice once, I very naturally look for it in this instance. I do so with unavailing confidence, because I have long believed the people of this State disposed to deal frankly and fairly when differences arise in any quarter: and have already proved them to be quick-sighted and prompt to award a righteous sentence in favor of an injured party, where misrepresentations are employed to subvert plain matters of fact. Perhaps no people were ever more so. The experience, which I, at least, have had of this disposition, induces me to trouble them with some brief remarks, and uncontradictable proofs, in reference to the Major's "Recent History." So far as the people of this country are concerned, however, I might well spare myself all this trouble. For the thing has really done nobody any harm with us, that I can ascertain. But it seems necessary to prevent any misapprehension, which may arise in the minds of strangers, from the industrious efforts of a few, disposed if possible to do me an injury, by means of printed books. I yield therefore, to a law of nature, which imposes on every man the duty of self defence. This duty being discharged, I am perfectly satisfied. I am at peace.

It may assist the reader, to premise, that in the summer of 1835, while the writer was busily employed in visiting the sick, during the prevalence of Cholera; certain individuals went up to the Presbytery of St. Charles, then in session near Palmyra, and made such representations to them, of our character and conduct, as led to the passage of a set of resolutions which were deemed highly injurious and oppressive in their bearing on the church. The more so, as the meeting was held without our knowledge. The case went up by appeal to the Synod, and thence to the Assembly of 1836.

On the eve of my departure to meet that Assembly, and with a manifest view of prejudicing the minds of the members, and the public generally, against me; a list of violent personal charges, made professedly on the ground of "Common Fame," without investigation, were published against me by order of the Presbytery of St. Charles, a body of which Mr. Lindsay was a member, and which had no jurisdiction over me. To sustain these charges the names of G. C. Sibley, Thomas Lindsay, S. R. Watson, and others, were appended. The reader will please note this last fact. I have further use for it.

These charges were met by a pamphlet on my return, which to this hour, remains unanswered. They were also, carefully and faithfully investigated in a judicial process before the Presbytery of Missouri, to which I belong. The result was an unanimous verdict, containing a perfect acquittal. A part of this verdict reads thus: "Presbytery feel constrained to say, that the exhibition of such charges, evinces in our judgment a very conscious fault finding and reprehensible spirit, on the part of those, whoever they may be, that have been engaged in hounding them up." This bitter pill, administered by the solemn sentence of an impartial bench of Judges, my opponents were obliged to swallow, tho' it produced many and strange contortions.
The witnesses, Messrs. Sibley, Lindsay, and Watson, were not however entirely of the church, which I was interested, had not been issued in 1836, but was pending the Assembly of 1837, to be convened in May. In great a diversity of something must be done. The Major has leisure. He must write a book.

Accordingly, when it was too late for me to reply to any thing before reaching Philadelphia, an anonymous pamphlet issued from the Clarion press, purporting to be a recent and impartial history of this church. Of this pamphlet, Major C. C. Sibley has publicly acknowledged himself to be the real responsible author. I met with it on the Ohio, where it had been conveyed with instructions to distribute copies among members on their way. I found two more in the Assembly, on the clerk's table, recommended to special notice by the certificate of Messrs. Lindsay and Watson. The leading object of this distinguished work seems to be, to place myself, my friends, and the Presbytery of Missouri, in an unfavorable light before the public, and to influence in an unlawful way, the judgment of the supreme Judicatory in regard to our appeal. Why not let justice take its course, and keep the vision of the court clear from the vapor of partisan prints? Why should this vapor be blown in the face of judgment?

On the first page of the pamphlet, we are told, "The object of view is—to present the whole subject impartially. Also—that there is no duty incumbent on the writer to prepare this narrative, after having examined a great mass of testimony, the greater part of which was obtained from the records of the St. Charles and Missouri Presbyteries, and the Synod of Missouri. The facts proven from these records, together with such as he knows he can prove by competent witnesses, and can verify himself from his own knowledge, will form the basis on which he found the following story."—But with the major may prove, which has never been proven: when witnesses themselves were anxious; and displayed their anxiety on more occasions, than cannot be proved; and months were given for them to testify and prove all they could; and with what he himself may know, that he did not see fit to testify, when sworn to tell all he knew in the case; and I have no argument. I take the records of the Judicatory, and ask the reader to examine them.

With Major Sibley, I have no private, personal controversy. I never had any personal acquaintance, nor intercourse with him, except as a witness against me. When he testified of "this impression"—not his belief, I expect none. I have to do with him, now, only as the writer of a book. "A sense of duty [will not] constrain me, nor, to sketch his own History, that some parts of it might prove quite interesting. When I speak of him, I must be understood as dealing with the book, and with that alone. Of this he cannot justly complain, as every man, when he prints, and publishes—is subject to revision.

I propose then, here to show the public the moral certainty of the following proposition, viz.: That the book, considered as a history of our affairs, is utterly unworthy the confidence of any man, or body of men. It cannot be true.

PROOFS.

1st. To show his perfect impartiality in writing, and so save the unsuspecting confidence of the reader, Major Sibley says, page 24—"The writer who is also a member of this church, positively disclaims any party connection, or party feeling, or any whatever, in these affairs; and every motive capable of misleading his judgment in any degree."

The record of Major Sibley's testimony, when under oath as a witness against me, however, says, "This he professed, that from the beginning he has decidedly disapproved of his official course, since his arrival here, in January, 1836, and from that time, disapprobation on many occasions, both by words and acts. Quest. When did your opposition to Mr. Chamberlain commence? Major Sibley: Many years ago, when I heard of the difficulties with Mr. Giblings! He first stated "twelve years ago," and corrected himself on my suggesting that I had not been so long in the State. Reader, compare these words of the book, saying any party feeling whatever, with the words of the witnesses—expressing his "disapprobation on many occasions," and avowing an "opposition" which commenced "many years ago," and tell me, can both be true?

2d. Major Sibley says, page 20—"There does not appear to exist the slightest evidence to justify Mr. Chamberlain's charge against this church, that its colored members, who are slaves, have ever voted or been in any manner aggrieved against him. Those members are inoffensive, and not at all apt to claim the right to vote, and have never done so, or been urged to do it, during the two years of the last two years—and indeed no occasion has been within that period to require any expression of their sentiments in relation to the affairs of the church."

The pamphlet is dated, April, 1837. Now, I have never made any charge against "this church," and have no controversy whatever with the colored people. I object to nothing, so far as their agency is concerned, but to the use that the party have seen fit to make of their names. I say the party—because it has been proven that the colored members cannot write. Let the reader know, then, that the record shows two distinct papers used against me before the St. Charles Presbytery. The one signed by ten, the other by eleven names of colored persons, following the names of white communicants.

The first is here given in part only, that the reader may judge. It seems to be a strict order on government and ecclesiastical law, and reads thus: "We, the members of the Presbyterian church of St. Charles, who heretofore sanction our minister's desires that he may proceed in order and good government," &c. "We hold that without consent of Presbytery, no part of the church has any right to set up its own authorities, or withdraw and form a new church, by electing new elders; causing division and disturbances," &c. A very grave document, certainly it be so signed! The second paper referred to, runs thus: "The St. Charles church, which has the church of St. Charles, opposed to it, and Chamberlain, and have subscribed their names to stand by the Elders and Deacons in support of order and good government in our church."

(White names omitted.)

Sina Synnads, color woman;
Jno. Haney, Lindsay;
Richard, do.
Letty, do.
William, do.
Jane, do.
Milly, do.
Nelly Calere;
Albright Millington;
Isaac Redman;
Betsey Sibley.—Black members.

Who now will endorse for the truth of the book, with his eye on these strange papers, received and gravely acted upon? 3d. Referring to the appeal of the church, Major Sibley says, (page 16,) "This appeal contains some severe reflections upon the session of Saint Charles, and those who support their authority; charging against them, that they have, for several years, imposed on the people, and to their face, and to their face, that they had been guilty of misrepresentation, slander and forgery, and exercised unaccountable power." Such is Mr. Chamberlain's appeal to the synod."

St. Charles, May 20th, 1837.
Now as to "slander" I leave any man to judge, who reads the testimony. But as to "forgery," the word is not to be found any where in our appeal. The writer speaks the phrase with an authority, but the meaning of the phrase is not there. The appeal does say "employed papers without signatures," and that fact is proven. I trust, to the reader's satisfaction, in the paper signed by the names of colored persons, without adding, as might easily be done, from names of white persons, the names of colored persons, as unauthored. So the appeal did not charge them with "forgery." And all the Mayor's regret at "such a paper," is thrown on a nonentity.

4th. To fix on me the charge of disturbing the peace of the Saint Charles Church is a grand leading object of the Pamphlet. It was a leading object of the party of notoriety, not of witless, not of "reaud on the innocence of the accused," and great strength was revealed and vigorously applied here. Major Jilby testifies on his oath and says he "knows it to be true." (Does the reader remember what he says in his book about impartiality?)

The Presbytery of Missouri, however, (Mr. Gray being present and voting) after much delay and long and patient investigation, decided this point, unanimously, as follows:

"It is clearly in evidence that the peace of the Saint Charles Church is disturbed, and very much disturbed. They are of opinion, too, that the going and being there, of the accused, have been the occasion of much strife and disturbance; but it is not in proof that the accused is the guilty cause of all or any of these consequences. The Presbytery have sought industriously for that act of the accused from which guilt in this particular can be inferred, but with much delay and on pain. An examination of the immense mass of testimony, which we have, with labor and much expense of time and trouble, will convince any mind, capable of investigating such a subject impartially, that there is no such solitary act."

Ever was there a more triumphant and perfect acquittal, considering the pretended "strife" and "disturbance," which my accusers had made. But the Mayor, having sworn that he "knew the accused to be true," will have it his own way. He gives the verdict above quoted, and then says, page 22-3:

"This decision of the Presbytery, whilst it fully affirms the facts charged against the accused, is not onlyominent to offer any remedy for the admitted evil, already inflicted, or any security for the future; but on the contrary, virtuosity consents to the continuance of the disturbance through the whole cause, by exhorting all of us, the brother, who conscientiously occasioned it."

The writer believes that after the full admission, that Mr. Chamberlain was disturbed in the Church, the Presbytery ought to have used their authority in our behalf.

What flagrant injustice! The writer, who either does not understand language, or can pervert it, truly ought not to write history. Most clearly, the Presbytery neither affirm, confess, or admit any such thing as is here represented. They affirm the opposite. They do not say I have occasioned or caused strife. They say I have been "the occasion," not the "accused." The distinction is perfectly obvious, and altogether important, between being the occasion of an evil, and causing it to be. They "have sought to win," and found "no such solitary act," from which it can even be inferred that I have done it. Thus a modest retiring lady, of great worth and spotless reputation may be the occasion of two men shooting each other. So may a time of distress, a number of charges, a purse of inanimate dollars. Are either of these chargeable with the deed? Will you hang, imprison the estimable lady? Paul was "the occasion" of great commotion at Ephesus. Was he in the wrong? Christ and his apostles were the occasion of much sinning and wrangling among the people. Were they at fault? Every rational being, every object in nature, may be the occasion of sin among evil minded persons. So it was obviously the opinion of Presbytery, deliberate
that a paper is in circulation, the substance of which is a veto against my staying at Saint Charles, on any condition, whatever. This paper never originated from any better spirit than that, which was the cause of a papal persecution. Every subscriber well knew that I did not intend to return to this place, and therefore, there was nothing in the nature of things to call forth such a paper. The only construction I can put upon it is a wanton attempt to injure my character, and to destroy my usefulness as a preacher of the gospel. Strange as it may appear, Mr. Darby told me that eighteen persons had subscribed, and now, dear Sir, I care nothing about it. I know who the 18 are, and shall be very careful not to do any thing to injure their feelings; but I cannot, by courting their acquaintance, or having any thing to do with them, directly or indirectly.

"I am sorry for one thing, and that is, that these persons are doing all in their power to disturb the peace and harmony of the church, and if they persevere, they will ruin it entirely. This I greatly lament. I have one request to make, and that is, that you get this note for me, as it by its circulation has become an official paper and in all justice belongs to me. When the amount of subscribers is finished, I will subscribe it with all my heart, or that part of it which relates to my not returning, as I never had such an idea." Mr. Wood fulfilled the purpose expressed in this letter, and never returned to be the minister of this church. There were many complaints by the majority, that the few should govern the many, and some threatened to leave the church. The result was much dissatisfaction. Such is the testimony of Mr. Gayce, a ruling elder, acquainted with the facts, which our Historian is laboring to disprove. Another part of the testimony, referring to this former division reads thus: "Witness had neighbors who were members, as well as others, who were not members, who were sorry, at Mr. Wood's leaving; some were so much dissatisfied that they would never come to church since, or sign any paper for its support. Witness also believes the church has never prospered so much since." These extracts from the Records, placed by the side of Major Sibley's History need no comment of mine.

6. To the general subject of the Pamphlet—to sustain his own testimony—and show that I am a disturber of the peace, in opposition to the decision of Presbytery. The author introduces Mr. Gray, at page 3, speaks of the great unanimity in the choice of him, and charges me, on page 6, with interfering with his prospects here. This point is laboriously and it is curious to observe how men will argue. The testimony however shows, that there was not perfect harmony when the congregation convened for the election of Mr. Gray. One witness says: "I thought there should have been some other nominated, also as the congregation were too much hurried in their solicitations and had not an opportunity of having their choice. I did not like Mr. Gray from what I had read of his preaching. I determined not to support him if he came." This far famed election was considered by many as merely nominal at the time. It is spoken of in the testimony. To show that I was not a mere formal proceeding, a communication from Mr. Gray was made public at the meeting. It is in evidence and reads thus: "The more I have thought, the more I am convinced, I ought not to go there, and ought not to suffer my name to be used for that purpose in your congregation, unless there was a strong probability I would accept if invited. This I think would be inexpedient at present. I hope therefore you will counteract any at
And every member present on the 26th April knows that they were untrue, that that was not a "little meeting"! Our Historian makes more broad assertions about the meeting on the 10th of May, at which the election of Elders took place, and says, page 12: "There were too many members of the church concerned in the elections—those who participated—some not members of the church of Saint Charles." Unfortunately, for the Major, the testimony is against him again, "Quest. Was there a full meeting at the election of Elders? A. There was. Q. Was the vote unanimous? A. It was. Q. Do you know what proportion of the members were present at the election of Elders? A. Majority." A part of the testimony which refers to a previous election reads thus: "Q. Were there any persons, members of other churches, who voted. A. There were not.—That rule has always been strictly attended to, in all elections we have had."

8. Our Historian says, page 19, "The new Elders were chosen by Presbytery and synod," and on the strength of this statement, he charges me, and my associates with placing ourselves "in an attitude very much like defiance towards the law of the Presbyterian church." And on page 19, he says, "this action of Mr. Chamberlain took place after the Synod had removed his new Elders from office, and dissolved his connection with them, as a session, and was consequently an act of usurpation, in violation of the settled law of the Presbyterian church." Here is indeed a very high charge against one, at least, of the "sworn guardians" of our ecclesiastical body. A charge brought and persevered in—notwithstanding the shield thrown over me by the solemn judgment of my Presbytery, and the high court of Christ. As the reader might well suppose, this charge has no foundation in fact. Watson gave me their advice. They said of the choice of Elders, "This act Synod judge irregular and void." And of the acts of these new Elders they said, "these are irregular," they never used the important, technical word "deposed." We appealed from their decision, and our appeal secured to us, the right of continuance, until our appeal should be decided, as every legal, moral, and eternal lawyer or well knows. To be "deposed" is a very different thing in our law. Deposition would indeed set us all aside. Because that implies crime and is never applied without such implication. The act of Synod was designed to annul the election. But the appeal arrested its force. Accordingly, when I asked in the assembly of 377, "If we had a right to continue?—if the Elders might still exercise their office?" I was answered, "Yes" Yet the Major, in making the following charge, against us all, has "no party feeling whatever"—no motive to mischief.

9. On page 19, he says, "It is very true, that several respectable and worthy citizens of Saint Charles have, until recently contributed to the support of Mr. Chamberlain. Some of them are true, open and violent enemies of the Presbyterian church, and are not sorry to witness the shameful confusion that has for the last two years been kept up in this church." This is really a very strange character to give "several respectable and worthy citizens." It is no more than simple justice to them, that I say here, I know of nothing to sustain it. It corresponds very well, however, with a charge contained in another part of the record, as made by Messrs. Lindsay, Watson and others before their Presbytery, viz. "That a party have called in unbelievers, and scoffers to vote down the church." Whether such language applied to what respectable and worthy citizens" in a public manner, is most likely to increase their respect for its authors, I leave them and the public to judge. I, for one, shall be content, if I am so happy as to treat "respectable citizens" with respectful language. I know that the reader is satisfied with the foregoing specifications

"That the truth of my proposition is established—that the history is "utterly unworthy of his confidence." I shall take it for granted that he will, and stay my pen from noting further particulars. Yet I hope he will not, for a moment, suppose I have noted all the errors of the book. I assure him there are others in reserve. There are assertions of facts, which it was easy to prove—language is ascribed to us, which we never used—principles of action, which we never embraced. He who is not more than satisfied, however, with what I have already presented, would not be satisfied with anything which I could write. And there may be some such. I will do them all the good in my power, and as little harm, and leave them to be convinced in a world where none doubt.

Messes. Lindsay and Watson certified the truth of this pamphlet, bad as it is—and sent it to the Assembly with their certificate on a blank leaf. Though the records were kept back, to our injury, the certificate book was there in good time. They do, indeed, except a little to the 1st chapter, for Watson knew he was not an Elders, as there stated, tho' he had not the frankness to confess it. And also to the 3d, for Mr. Lindsay knew he had no such character as that roaming chapter author to give him. But they affirm the truth of all the balance, and thus involve themselves before the assembly and before the world in the errors which are herein set forth. They do it deliberately, and with settled purpose, because they do it to assist a judicial decision of one of the most important ecclesiastical courts in the land. Some of our older citizens may be a little curious, and wonder, as I do, what there is, in the character, the head the heart or the blood of S. L. Watson, that entitles him to certify to the prejudice of any man! I respect judicial decisions—but let them be based on evidence, and not on such histories as this. I honor gray hairs. But let them bloom on the truth, and be borne aloft, and shaken above such masses of error.

The reader cannot fail to observe, that there are some great principles, interesting to all, at issue between me and my friends. The author and party to which he belongs,—I say distinctly, the party to which he belongs. For his covering has been stripped off, and his position shown before all. The Major stands, with military precision, in the front rank, in full uniform, and with all the fresh laurels of his historic pen, clustering around him. We, on the one hand, contend for the right of appearing and being heard with evidence. They, on the other, would have us tried and condemned without it. We hold the right of appeal as sacred, and all the benefits it secures to an injured party. They would thrust us from these benefits, and bind us up to obey the decision of the inferior court, whatever it may be. We maintain, inviolate, the right of majorities to govern, and of the people to be ruled by representatives of their choice. They would have the minority govern, and their "sworn guardians" rule the people for years, without redress of grievance. We think justice
ought to take a straight course, and that all attempts to forestall judgment, are morally wrong, and productive of mischief only.—
They would argue their cause beforehand, with the court by means of partisan prints, covertly sent, and certified by themselves. We aver, that when a man has been published, slandered, tried, and finally acquitted by such men as composed the Missouri Presbyterian, he should be let alone. They agree, that the witnesses against him, having failed in their object, shall further prosecute him with a book.

Really they do show, in an impressive manner, the truth of one sentiment, that stands recorded on the last page of the aforesaid history, viz.: "There exists an inherent, mutually repulsive influence, so positively immovable and insurmountable, that were Mr. C. believed by all to be as pure as Caesar's wife, and to possess the learning and talents of St. Paul, it would prevent the union."—
Such feelings on the part of professing Christians, so different from the teachings of the divine Savior, printed and published to be read by perishing men, I sorely lament, and have mourned over them for months. I have not, indeed, at all, doubted their deep-rooted and bitter influence. They account fully to my mind for the movements of the party—for the acts of the Presbyterian of Saint Charles,—for my arraignment and trial,—for the disposition to persevere after an ignoble defeat—in efforts to hunt me down by means of a printed book. No man can account for such facts without admitting the influence of such feelings. And here we are relieved from all conjecture, by a naked avowal of their existence.

Certainly, it affords matter for melancholy reflection, that the bosom, where such fires are pent up, must be strangely agitated—must heave and swell at times, as the volcano, and cannot afford much joy, to its possessor. I pray, therefore, that the grace of God may extinguish these devouring elements wherever they may exist, and give to the reader, to me, and to all, the holy oil of Peace—pure, lasting, heavenly-minded Peace.

II. CHAMBERLAIN.

Saint Charles, July 1837.

N. B. The foregoing facts of record are commended to the serious consideration of certain, whose names are not before the public, but who are clearly seen in the distance.