

CENTENARY OF METHODISM.

Address of Chief Justice Chase.

He Pleads for Civil and Political Rights for Emancipated Slaves.

A public meeting was held last evening in St. Paul's Methodist Church, corner of Fourth Avenue and Twenty-second street, under the auspices of the Ladies' Central Centenary Association, being the second of a series of meetings which are to be held during the present year, which is the hundredth year of the existence of the Methodist Church in America. The church, which is the largest in the city, was crowded long before the opening of the exercises. Aside from the importance and interest of the movement, so far as this influential denomination is concerned, the announcement that Chief Justice Chase would preside would have been sufficient to have crowded the house. It must not be understood that the Chief Justice, in consenting to preside, is a member of any Methodist denomination; but there is reason to believe that he, like every other good citizen, is interested in the furtherance of all religious and philanthropic movements—especially in connection with a denomination that is so intimately identified with the rise and growth of the American nation. As soon as Chief Justice Chase appeared he was applauded. The exercises were opened by the singing of the hymn commencing

"From all that dwell below the skies,  
Let the Creator's praise arise."

Rev. Dr. Cummings led in prayer, and appropriate selections of Scripture were read by the Rev. A. C. Ross.

Bishop Ames then said: "It affords me pleasure to introduce to the audience the Hon. S. P. Chase, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, who will preside during the meeting this evening."

SPEECH OF CHIEF JUSTICE CHASE.

The Chief Justice on arising to address the vast audience, was received with great enthusiasm. He spoke as follows:

"I have accepted, my friends, the invitation extended to me to preside on this occasion with great pleasure. I feel that it is good to be here, and to participate in the great work, however humbly, of this year. I am told, that on taking the chair I ought to address a few words to the people here assembled. My engagements have been such, and so arduous that it has been impossible for me to prepare for any thing like a regular address, and you will not expect that I shall accomplish all that I hope, if I expressed the earnest sympathy I feel in that work, which has called you together to-night. It leads us to look back, and it bids us to look forward—a hundred years ago and a hundred years hence; a hundred past, reaching back to a period of time when none of this vast audience, hardly any of the vast multitude which people the whole of the face of the earth, lived; reaching forward a hundred years to another point of time when all that are engaged in the activities of life over the whole face of the earth shall have gone to their final account. It is a very interesting moment—this moment between the two centuries. Go back to the beginning of it, and our nation was not; this great American people had no existence, except in the hopes and in the faith, perhaps, of a few patriotic men. Then the foundation of this great church, which now fills the land with its healing influences, were laid, oh, in what feebleness. Who would have thought that the seed dropped into the earth, almost, as it were, to the human eye by accident, was planted by the Providence of God to spring up and grow (all great growths are slow) slowly, slowly, yet surely, and extended its borders until it embraces a land, the like of which the sun never has shown upon in its power, and its grandeur and its strength. The church, whose centennial year we are celebrating now, was reared in the storms of the Revolution. It was itself a great asserter of human liberty. It asserted the right to proclaim the gospel among men, no matter what ecclesiastical might stand in the way. Its founder—himself a zealous adherent of the Church of England—was lead, through the Providence of God, to assert his independence of all earthly dominion, and looked only to God while he founded the Church in the New World. So, too, our country, loyal to the core, earnestly desiring to maintain its allegiance to the British crown, was forced to sever the bonds of that allegiance; and oh! how unwillingly the patriotic men of that age found themselves obliged to take their places among the nations of the earth. Contemporaneously the great Church and the great nation were founded. [Applause.] And so they have lived together, the Church multiplying her adherents, increasing every where her works, building her temples in every part of the land, and gathering every where the lost and forsaken into the fold of Christ, seeking to do good in the spirit of love, until to-day she spreads her borders throughout the vast extent of the republic. It is

natural that in such growth there should be some divisions, some alienations, some off-shoots; but may we not hope that, as the causes of division pass one by one away, at length all the brethren who have been divided may stand together in one faith, owning the Lord and loving each other with one heart? [Renewed applause.] A hundred years ago! And now we are at the end of this hundred years. The church, which, at the beginning, was rocked by the storms of the Revolution, has just passed through another revolution. The last days of the century, even more than the first days of the century, have been agitated by storm and tempest; and in these last days what a mission it has been for this American Methodist Episcopal Church to perform. I have had, as you know, some part to bear in this trying crisis myself; and how often I have thanked God that the Methodist Church throughout all the loyal land knew only one sentiment—that of devotion to God, and, under God, to our country. [Applause.] But, my friends, I am glad to stand before you to-night and say how we have leaned upon you—how we have leaned upon your Bishops—how we have leaned upon your ministers—how we have leaned upon your great people—and we have recognized among the bravest of the brave the men who have gone from the Church to the battlefield, believing that it was their duty to sacrifice life for God, it was no less their duty, it need be, to sacrifice life for the country. [Applause.] And so we have passed through this storm, and we are emerging from it under the guidance of the same principle of love and justice which was the dew by which the early church was watered and nourished. Some think that there are great dangers around us. So there are. We exist every moment in the midst of great dangers; but for the Superintending Providence of God, which preserves all the elements in their places, and all the elements in their respective functions, we could not exist for a single hour. We are always in great danger, but we are in no greater danger now than we have been in many times before; and I feel perfectly confident that He who has led us thus far through the storm and the tempest when the waves ran highest, and the winds swept most fiercely over our society, when the storm was at the very loudest, that He will guide us through these waves which still heave their surges upon the shore. But they are not the waves of the tempest; they are the waves of the subsiding storm. [Cheers.] But what is the principle which led to the foundation of the Church? I take it that it was love to man and love to God—precisely the reverse of the old pagan principle, which was selfishness and hate; and as that separated peoples and nations, so this new principle gathers together peoples, nations and individuals. As they planted repugnance and distrust, these plant concord and mutual trust. And now that these principles of mutual trust, mutual dependence and mutual help have brought together this nation, this great nation, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Gulf to Canada, and bind them together by indissoluble ties, this same principle must guide us still; and we have now to-day the illustration of it in the steady progress which the nation is making, as well as the Church, in recognizing the rights of man and the duties of man to man. [Cheers.] We can not any longer look upon the face of any human being and not feel that he is our brother man. [Renewed applause.] A slave, represented upon a Roman stage in a play written by a Roman who was himself a slave, uttered eighteen hundred years ago, this sentiment, standing in front of a Roman audience: "I reckon nothing that is a human is alien to myself." Think of the force of those words in that day! Roman citizenship embraced all that there was that was considered valuable in the world, and here was a man outside of the pale of Roman citizenship standing up and saying, "I reckon nothing human alien to me," and thunders of applause greeted that sentence from Roman lips. Now, then, it was a mere sentiment; it was not a principle, as all history attests. It was nothing for which any man was willing to die. It came down from Heaven; it comes from Him who died to redeem mankind; and He who shed His precious blood for all men, now has breathed upon the heart of this great nation that sublime thought that it counts nothing human alien to it, and that it is willing and ready to do all its duty by the humblest and poorest of mankind. [Applause.] Now, then, I shall never forget with what sentiments I learned that one great act of justice was to be performed in the name of the American people by him, who, through an assassin's hand, has been sent to his home, we trust, in Heaven, and will be perpetually remembered among men for his kindness of heart, his conscientiousness and his goodness. He resolved, as he told me himself, one night lying in his bed, meditating upon the state of the country, that if it should please God to drive the army of Lee from Pennsylvania, that he would proclaim freedom to the slaves. Lee was driven from Pennsylvania, and Mr. Lincoln said to me, "I wish he had been driven further; but I have got to do it, and I will issue the proclamation." [Applause.]—and the proclamation was issued, how cautiously and gradu-

ally, you know, at first; but the ninety or one hundred days arrived, and the first of January came, and the proclamation was made the great fact in American history. [Renewed applause.] Every human being throughout the whole length and breadth of this land received the pledge that they should be maintained in their freedom; and so now this proclamation has been consecrated as a part of the American Constitution by the action of this same American people. But there is more work to be done. Slaves emancipated are but half men. They must be educated; they must have the gospel preached to them; and we have missionaries going abroad throughout the length and breadth of the land preaching to them, and everywhere noble women and noble men are consecrating their energies to the work of their instruction. But this is not all that is necessary. The faith which has been pledged to them by the nation, that they shall be maintained in their freedom, must be redeemed, and to-day we have the intelligence that the Congress of the United States, representing the heartfelt sentiments and the fixed resolves of the whole of the American loyal people, have declared that these emancipated slaves shall have equal civil rights. [Applause.] A step further remains among the steps; for it is a long work this raising a whole people; but one of these steps, as I count it, is that they to whom you have given freedom must be permitted to defend it by the ballot. [Loud applause.] And speaking here between the two centuries, I should be unfaithful to my own convictions if I refrained from uttering that word before you. But, then, let us look forward. This work is all to be done; civil rights are to be secured, political rights are to be secured, fraternity is to be established, and we are to feel, that every man who wears the image of God is entitled to all the rights which God has given to his children. [Applause.] Everything is to be left then, to the operations of the natural laws by which men raise the selves in society, each selecting the use whom he prefers for his associates, and no man deeming that any other man has a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and all the means by which life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are guaranteed and defended, can be his himself. And now, my friends, so much for what the nation and the Church have done together thus far. A hundred years to come! When we look back and see what God hath wrought; when we see what He has been preparing in these later days through all this great work of mercy and enfranchisement, what can we think of this nation is to become if it is only faithful to itself? Who can measure the work that this church has to perform in making this nation true to itself and to its God? I verily believe that but for this Church nothing of that which we have thus far realized could have been accomplished. I verily believe that, God in His Providence raised up this Church. I do not say that He did not give appropriate spheres of action to other churches; but I do verily believe that God raised up this (the Methodist Church) for the purpose of aiding in leading this nation to these grand results. Now this Church is celebrating her centennial year. She is calling upon the members of her own denomination, and I am glad to know that many other households of the Christian name are ready to come forward and stand with her, recognizing all that she has done, praying for her success, and anxiously sympathizing with her, anxious that she shall attain greater measures of efficiency and usefulness. I say this Church, thus aided this year, is preparing to take her place—not to take her place—she has taken it—but to keep her place and to move forward in her place in the van of Christian and moral regeneration. And then I shall not undertake to portray the future, as it rises dimly before me; and I see the great multitudes now filling the land doubling and quadrupling and quintupling; and I see such churches as this rising all over it, and vessels, winged with steam, bearing the messengers of salvation to earth's remotest corners, and telegraphic wires girdling the earth in every direction—more numerous round the world than they are to-day through New York—so that every pulsation of every heart is responded to throughout the world, and the Church multiplied in her numbers, purified in her faith, standing aloft between the world and God, bearing aloft the standard of regeneration and salvation—the powers of language and of conception fail. No human being can paint what the centenary of Methodism is to bring forth. It is in the hands of God. He who has wrought thus far, will work still. Only be it ours—our part, however humble, to do something while we yet live, that these glorious hopes may be realized for those who are to come after us.

The Chief Justice was repeatedly applauded during the delivery of his speech.

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