

*Rip*, and noting, not the occasional intonation, the curious little gasp, and other trifling points common to both impersonations, but the radical differences which exist between them. These are to be found, not in the variety of costume only,—the only pretense of versatility afforded by the ordinary hack-actor of the day,—but in the man himself, in his walk, in his gestures, in his carriage, in his address, in his voice, and in his laugh. The only constant point of resemblance between the two men is in the matter of age. In all other respects they are as opposite as the poles. There is nothing in common between the reckless and shameless, if fascinating, jollity of *Rip* and the sweet, unselfish, indomitable cheerfulness of *Caleb*, or between the methods which throw a glamour of poetry and romance about the forlorn and forgotten reveler and those which are so infinitely pathetic in the case of the old toy-maker. On the one hand, a detestable character is endowed with irresistible charm by the sheer force of poetic imagination; and on the other, a nature of a type at once the simplest and the highest is portrayed with a truth which is as masterly as it is affecting. There is nothing in "Rip Van Winkle" more touching than those scenes where *Caleb* listens while *Dot* reveals to *Bertha* the story of his noble deceit, and where he recognizes the son whom he deemed lost in "the golden South Americas." The play of emotion on Mr. Jefferson's face at the moment of recognition, as wonderment, doubt, and hope are succeeded by certainty and rapturous joy,—his deprecatory, spasmodic action as he turns away from what he evidently fears is a delusion of the senses,—and his final rush into the arms of his son,—are triumphs of the highest kind. Here the actor is lost in the fictitious character, and the simulation becomes an actual impersonation, which is the highest possible dramatic achievement.

It would be easy to dilate, if space permitted, on the beauty of the merely mechanical as opposed to the spiritual part of this performance. The fineness of the finish, noticeable in all Mr. Jefferson's creations, is equally remarkable in this. The minutest "business" is transacted with a neatness and precision which could not easily be surpassed. Nowhere is there a sign of premeditation or design; all is done simply, naturally, and without strain. The methods employed are those of comedy, and he never once permits himself to fall into extravagance except in his manner of kissing *Tilly* at the fall of the curtain. The indiscretion here is small perhaps, but it is a blot on a most delightful picture, which ought not to remain. It is only in works of the rarest excellence that the smallest blemishes are serious.

This impersonation would place Mr. Jefferson at the head of contemporary comedians if he had never been seen in other parts, and is an unanswerable proof, if any were needed, of the great range of his powers. It would be pleasant to say something of other recent achievements of the player who is now renewing the victories of a quarter of a century ago—of his *Bob Acres* and his *Golightly*; but the time does not serve, and nothing remains but to express the hope that it will not be long before he introduces some more portraits from his unrivaled gallery.

J. Ranken Torose.

#### Jefferson Davis and General Holt.

IN THE CENTURY for November is an article, "The Capture of Jefferson Davis," by Mr. Burton N. Harrison. The following phrases and sentences are to be found in this article: In a note by the author, on page 136 of the magazine: " \* \* \* The scheme of Stanton and Holt to fasten upon Mr. Davis charges of a guilty foreknowledge of, if not participation in, the murder of Mr. Lincoln." And in the text, on page 145: "Stanton and Holt, lawyers both, very well knew that Mr. Davis could never be convicted on an indictment for treason, but were determined to hang him anyhow, and were in search of a pretext for doing so. \* \* \* To have been a prisoner in the hands of the Government of the United States, and not to have been brought to trial upon any of the charges against him, is sufficient refutation of them all. It indicates that the people in Washington knew the accusations could not be sustained."

Now, I can safely leave the defense of Secretary Stanton to abler pens than mine. But I hold—contrary, I know, to the usual opinion—that the dead, whose time of action is past, stand less in need of vindication than the living. Therefore, I wish to speak as to the charges made by Mr. Harrison against General Holt; yet not with my own mouth; for it strikes me that the fitting answer to them is found in General Holt's own statement concerning another matter, published within the month, but before Mr. Harrison's paper was given to the public.

General Holt, in this statement (a reply, in the form of a letter published in the "Philadelphia Press," under the date of October 8th, to an attack upon him by the ex-conspirator, Mr. Jacob Thompson), speaks as follows concerning the actions of a certain Sanford Conover, first known to the General and the public as a witness in the trial of the assassins of President Lincoln (though Conover's testimony concerned not those conspirators executed for that crime, but others who were never brought to trial):

"In July, after the trial, Conover addressed a written communication to me from New York, of which the following is the opening paragraph:

"NEW-YORK, July 26, 1865.

"BRIG.-GEN. HOLT:

"Dear Sir: Believing that I can procure witnesses and documentary evidence sufficient to convict Jeff. Davis and C. C. Clay of complicity in the assassination of the President, and that I can also find and secure John H. Surratt, I beg leave to tender the Government, through you, my services for these purposes. \* \* \*

"On the second of August following," General Holt continues, "another letter to the same effect, but more urgent, was received from him [Conover], and, after a conference with the Secretary of War, with his full approval the proposal was accepted, and Conover entered on the fulfillment of his engagement. Some six or seven months were occupied in this, and after all the witnesses produced by him—none of whom were known to me—had been examined, and their depositions filed in the Bureau of Military Justice, Conover, under the supervision of the Secretary of War, was allowed a compensation, which, with what he had previously received, was deemed just, and no more, for his services,—such sums as were required for the attendance of the witnesses themselves having been before paid out from

time to time. Conover himself gave no deposition. In this there was no departure from the course habitually pursued by all the departments of the Government. \* \* \* At this time, nothing had occurred to excite the slightest suspicion of Conover's integrity in all that he had done, or in the credibility of his witnesses. Some time afterward, two of these witnesses, conscience-stricken, came and confessed that they had sworn falsely, having been suborned to do so by Conover. Investigation satisfied me that they were sincere in their avowals, and without delay appropriate action was taken. A prosecution was set on foot against Conover, and he was convicted and sent to the penitentiary for perjury and subornation of perjury, and on the margin of all the reports made by me on the depositions of the witnesses he had produced, an indorsement was made, stating that the depositions were withdrawn and had been discredited. \* \* \* Fortunately, this most guilty deception was discovered so soon that neither the reputation nor the sensibilities of anybody had suffered by the temporary credit given to it."

Had General Holt been maliciously determined to have the life of any one, would he have acted thus? Of course not. He showed himself in this affair, as always, a most honorable, high-minded, and just man.

The Secessionists will never forgive him, because, being a "Border man,"—a Kentuckian by birth,—he chose rather to remain true to the Union than to join them. But no loyal person will make this a ground of complaint against him.

*Loyalist.*

#### The Influence of Christ.\*

WHO, after the Evangelists, will venture to write the Life of Jesus? This deprecatory question of Lessing has not prevented, during the last three or four decades, the composition of numerous biographies of him whose career is depicted inimitably by the Four Evangelists. Germany has been most prolific of these works. France has produced one excellent book of this class, "The Life of Jesus," by Pressensé, and another famous writing, of a critical and distinctive cast, the "Vie de Jésus" of M. Renan. Even Scotland, where the abstract discussions of theology have still the strongest fascination, has made its contributions to this species of biographic writing. It is easy to see how the minds of men are drawn away from the problems of dogmatic theology, such as predestination and free will, and fastened on the wonderful personality of the Founder. The attention is drawn away from the circumference to the center. It is remarkable that this vivid interest in the question, "What think ye of Christ?"—this concentration of thought on the Person who gives to Christianity its being,—is simultaneous with a widespread tendency, rife in all the empirical schools, to make little of personality and personal force, and to make everything of general causes and impersonal forces as determining the current of history. The one-sided character of this

last tendency, in its undervaluing of the significance of persons, and of the mysterious personal agency which is not to be resolved into anything merely physical or distinct from itself, is specially manifest when the attempt is made to explain the origin of the Christian religion. Here the great originating cause is a Person. Nothing in his environment suffices to explain him. Nothing in his antecedents or circumstances accounts for the appearance, then and there, of an individual so transcendently gifted, and predestined to exert so transforming an influence on human society.

Akin to the tendency which leads men to dwell on the history of Jesus, and to gather up all that can be ascertained respecting him, is the disposition to trace the stream of consequences which have flowed from his life, teaching, and death. In the mist of critical conjecture which is thrown over certain portions of the Evangelical narratives, and the doubts which afflict many minds, it is a relief to contemplate the verifiable results of the work of Jesus among men. Not a few derive their profoundest impressions of his ineffable power and excellence from a close survey of the history of Christendom. The growth of the grain of mustard-seed, the spread of the leaven, have a reality and impressiveness which the most skeptical minds are capable of recognizing. It is one of the best services which a work like the "Gesta Christi" of Mr. Brace renders that it gives the reader a fresh idea of the energy, the beneficent energy, that resides in the religion of Christ, and emanates from him, account for it as one may. Mr. Brace's work confines itself to the various forms of philanthropy in which the influence of Christ is directly traceable. He dwells on the mitigation of the excessive paternal authority which prevailed in the ancient world; the elevation of woman under the benign and pure teaching of the Gospel; the sanctity thrown around marriage and the domestic hearthstone; the melting of the chains of the bondman; the abolition of cruel and brutal sports, like the contests of the arena; the increased tenderness for children, compared with the practice and spirit of antiquity; the abandonment of the private wars which prevailed in the feudal ages; the discarding of torture and the reform of criminal jurisprudence; the substitution of arbitration for war, and the astonishing mitigation of the horrors of war which the spirit of humanity in modern times has introduced, etc. The effect of such a discussion depends, of course, on the interest that belongs to the illustrative facts. One sees from such a broad survey that there has been steadily operating a subtle and powerful influence which, when followed back, leads to the Cross of Christ. The truth of the sacredness of humanity, of the dignity and worth of every human soul, be its outward condition never so humble, obtained then a permanent lodgment in the human heart. There it has been living and acting with an increasing efficiency. Thus human society becomes more and more Christian. Christ is seen, not in visible form, but in his spirit, incorporated into men's thoughts and lives.

\* Gesta Christi; or, A History of Human Progress under Christianity. By Charles Loring Brace. New York: A. C. Armstrong.

*George P. Fisher.*

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