Conkling's Personal and Political Career.

A REMARKABLE ANALASIS BY AN ORIGINAL REPUBLICAN, OF UTICA, NEW YORK.

The resignation of Mr. Conkling illustrates the secret of the measure of success which he has attained and the elements in his character which made certain his downfall. He aimed at a sensation which would not only command attention but would also compel applause. The act was flashy, pretentious and dramatic. It was, still more, insincere, and it aimed to capture by trick and surprise positions and results otherwise unattainable. He never meant to give up his seat in the Senate; he did not intend to give the people a chance to pronounce on his conduct. He supposed that the Legislature of New York was the creature of his will, and that his servitors would record for him a re-election with hardly a semblance of opposition and with a practically unanimous vote on the part of Republicans.

His whole career has run on the same lines. His abilities are showy and not substantial. Of culture he has none beyond acquaintance with a few English writers like Croly, Phillips and Macauly in his earliest and most pretentions days, and on the model of their glitter and display he has formed his style. His flatterers speak of him as an orator, and he has won reputation as a political speaker. His speeches are types of the man. In words they are affluent; in sentences they are elaborate, ornate and sensational; but they never present a thought which has not previously been beaten and battered by press and politician. They are mosaics of the current party prattle, but they contain no passage which will endure. He never deals with underlying principles. He sneers at the sentiment which ennobles life; he attains his heights in personal assault, in loose partisan denunciation and in 'practical politics.'

He adds to his facility of speech real industry and power for work. Scouting the belief that men act from principle, he bends every energy to attach followers by interest. Fearing men of real ability, he enlists lieutenants who are skilled in the arts of the caucus and are unscrupulous in obeying his edicts. He drives them like slaves and requires them to attend to every detail of manipulation. They may flatter him, and they must serve him by reaching voters. No influence are too base, no means too corrupt, so that they will serve his ends. He demands unquestioning obedience, and he is willing that obedience shall get its reward out of politics; and he believes that in politics 'the laborer is worthy of his hire.' That is the theory on which he continued to the end the champion of the moiety system after its abuses were fully exposed and after the great uprising of the merchants of New York against it. On the same theory he gave his toleration, at least, to all the speculations and extortions which brought scandal on the Administration of Gen. Grant during his second term. On the same theory, he has been a party to the combinations in New York city which render the municipal government so extravagant and so inefficient, and which follow so closely in the footsteps of the Tweed *regime*. This course has bound to him the horde of speculators in politics who seek wealth at any cost, who, at his wink, will strike down Republican candidates as readily as support them. They fly his colors; they would just as readily serve under the pirate's flag with cross-bones on a black ground. One of his shrewd neighbors, who knows him well, explains that the secret of ex-Senator Conkliugs's success has been that he has organized the hoodlums of the Republiran party, and has used them for his own ends and often to destroy Republican candidates offensive to him. His methods would be inadequately stated if prominence was not given to his maintenance of a detective bureau. He finds his weapons in human weaknesses. He assumes that all men offend and fall, and he seeks a record of their offenses and their lapses. When a rival crosses his path this record serves as his armory. The chapter would be interesting which would present the scandals with reference to men of note traceable to him. The Republican who advocates principle, who recognizes morality and does not accept his dictation and advance his ambitions is liable at any moment to libels, through correspondence influenced by his creatures, and to innuendoes set afloat from circles in which he is the chief.

Rev. P. H. Fowler, D. D., now of blessed memory, was for many years the next door neighbor of Mr. Conkling. That eminent divine often declared that Mr. Conkling had no conception of an ethical idea. It is certain that he has no faith in principle, in morality, in noble sentiment. This is the reason why, during a Congressional service of over twenty years, his contributions to the statute-books of the Republic are represented by a blank. He has suggested no legislation; he has written no statute. No abuse has been corrected by him; no burden of government has been mitigated; no additional securities to individual rights is due to him. He never lifted a finger to shield production against the aggressions of corporations. If any one will delve in the depths of his Congressional speeches he will find that whatever is notable in them turns on personal politics. His flatterers will cite the French arms discussion in the Senate as indicating his Senatorial achievements. That was a controversy over the details of administration, and Mr. Conkling's appearance in it not as the advocate of a principle but as the attorney of a policy, and he kept the discussion down, so far as he was concerned, to the low plane of individual rivalries. The time has not come for narrating the history of the Electoral complications of 1875-7. The suggestion of a commission has been claimed for Mr. Conkling. It really originated with Judge McCrary, of Iowa, then a member of the House of Representatives. Mr. Conkling was led to favor it because of his hostility to President Hayes and because it gave Mr. Tilden another chance for the Executive chair. It will not be long before Democrats can testify what grounds they had for believing that Mr. Conkling would vote in the Senate to count the Electors of Louisiana for Mr. Tilden. Hon. Clarkson N. Potter could enlighten the country if he would make known the assurances which were given that the Committee of which he was chairman should receive of Mr. Conkling proof that would invalidate the title of Mr. Hayes. Why these assurances were made, what the pretended evidence was, and why the alleged evidence was never produced, are questions the answers to which affect the honor and the integrity of the ex-Senator.

The political morality of Mr. Conkling is indicated by the fact that he justified his course in appearing as counsel for the New York Central Railroad in a suit against the Government while himself a Senator, and concerning the internal revenue laws, which he had nominally sided in framing. While Senator, and while the relations of the Government with telegraphy were constantly before Congress, he was ostentatious in figuring as counsel of the Western Union Telegraph Company. He has never spoken a word or done an act at variance with the interests of the Central Pacific Railroad while in either house of Congress. He has had the reputation of being a regular counsel of that corporation. He forced the nomination of the present Attorney-General of New York. The court records will show that he has been the favorite counsel of that official; and the State pays large fees for such services. One of the recent jobs in metropolitan politics was the combination by which John Kelly was driven out and the spoils turned over to the Tilden faction. Promptly after that action Mr. Conkling appeared as counsel for Corporation Counsel Whitney, one of the manipulators on Mr. Tilden's side. Thus the ex-Senator has been thrifty in getting employment from clients to whom his action in the Senate would be important, and he has picked up the rich plums in the gift of candidates who favored him, while he has clutched at the spoils in his line from the factions of the Democracy. Other men have been criticised for taking fees from persons remotely connected with legislation. Criticism has passed Mr. Conkling by for this course of action because nothing else was expected of him. No one discusses the political morality of General Butler. The ex-Senator from New York is classed in the same category and for a like reason.

No sketch of the character of the ex-Senator can be complete which omits his genius for quarreling. Persons who have the profound sympathy of all who know them would be pained by any specific reference to his quarrels with his father, his brothers and other members of his family; but no delicacy forbids the recital that, of all the living Republican Senators from New York, the Representatives from the Oneida district in Congress and the State Senate, the Chairmen of the Republican County Committee in his own county since his accession to power—not one is his political supporter to-day, unless the actual incumbent of an office received at his hands. In the House of Representatives his quarrels with Blaine and with Washburne indicate his relations with his associates. In the United States Senate, Sumner, Schurz and Trumbull preceded the whole existing body of Republican Senators in being decorated by his hostility and denunciation. The story of his warfare on President Hayes is illuminated by understanding this feature of his character. President Garfield has simply refused to let him force a quarrel on the new Administration That Administration sought no controversy with him. Its patient performance of its constitutional duties furnished him with the occasion for the sensational suicide with which he has adorned our politics.

Your columns forbid the citation of the particular acts which would present the causes of Mr. Conkling's downfall more completely than this summary can do. They prove that he has no genious for legislation and statesmanship on a high plane. He is a politician of the caucus and the convention. He has skimmed along the surface at a period when the ocean has been stirred to its depths. Coming into public life on the tide of the excitement of the war of the Union, he has been a noisy and dramatic drum-major in the Republican army, while getting the advantage of its strength. He has never been a leader of thought, much as he has wielded his ornamental staff. He has shown audacity but never courage. To the outside multitude his self-assertion and arrogance have been conspicuous; but his relations to General Grant exhibit the servility which he is wont to employ to win his ends, and to which he resorts to capture delegates in conventions and rich men who will pay liberally to advance his ambition.

He is now in Albany, supplicating for an election to a seat in the Senate which he threw away, although the consequence was to give the Democrats a majority in that body. Could any act more plainly declare how little he regards the Republican party or the welfare of the Nation in comparison to his own schemes? Could anything render more emphatic than his presence at Albany, the insincerity of his resignation and his purpose to array New York against the party of the Union? These recent acts expose the motives which actuate him. They will impress the plain people of the State and of the Republic with the conviction that he has fulfilled his last engagement on the stage of American politics. They will accord to him due credit as an actor; will recall the performances to which he has contributed a certain brilliancy and audacity. They will congratulate themselves on their sagacity in rejecting his aspirations for the nomination to the Presidency in 1876. They will rejoice that they overthrew in 1880 the movement in which he was active to bring back General Grant to the Presidency, with the influences now so well understood.

If he had ever been the champion of a great principle, his name might live. His labors for personal politics bear for fruit only apples of Sodom. By appealing to morality and sentiment he might have bound to him supporters consecrated to a noble cause and ready to die for its leader. He has taught that success and power are ends, and are to be sought by all available means. The hour has come when failure and weakness are his lot, and his satellites rush off in all excentric paths, cursing his folly which brings ruin to them. He deified the spoils, and he was their prophet. He won support by giving offices and encouraging speculation in politics. Many is the young politician to whom he has sent the temptation: "If you want anything you must come with us." To many an aspirant he has given the warning: "You must obey orders or be ostracised." The eclipse of the spoils darkens his whole career. His failure is ignominious at the instant it is made plain that patronage has been taken away from him. Under President Hayes he was able to keep up the delusion that he was able to recover his power over the spoils, and many of his creatures were fortified in position. When President Garfield, by his fair, just act, showed that Mr. Conkling could not be master of all the National offices in the State of New York, the false edifice, built on the sands, tumbled, and the most pretentions of politicians found his level.—*Correspondence of the New York Independent.*

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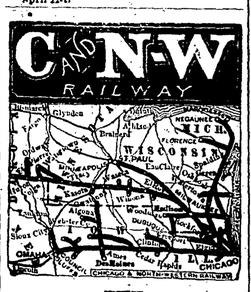

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