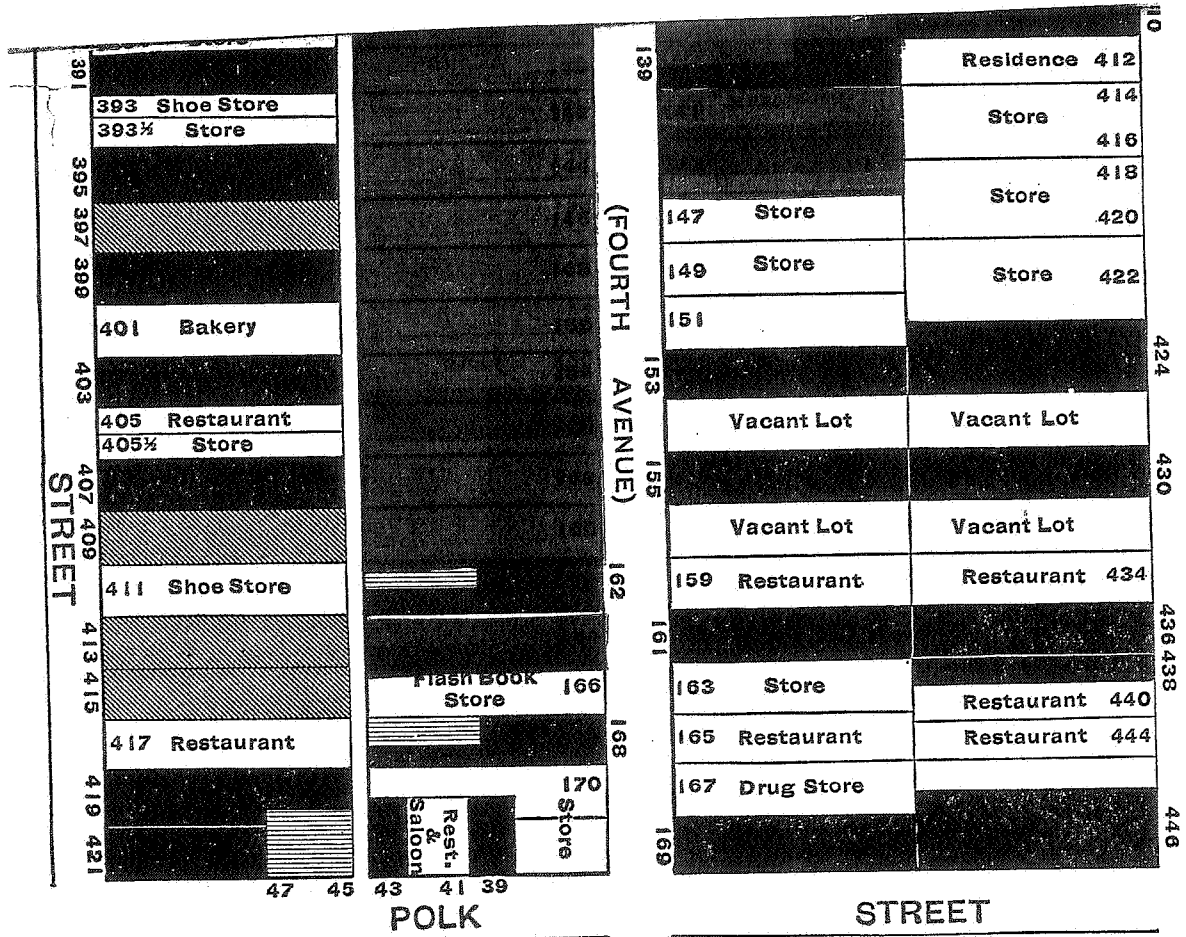
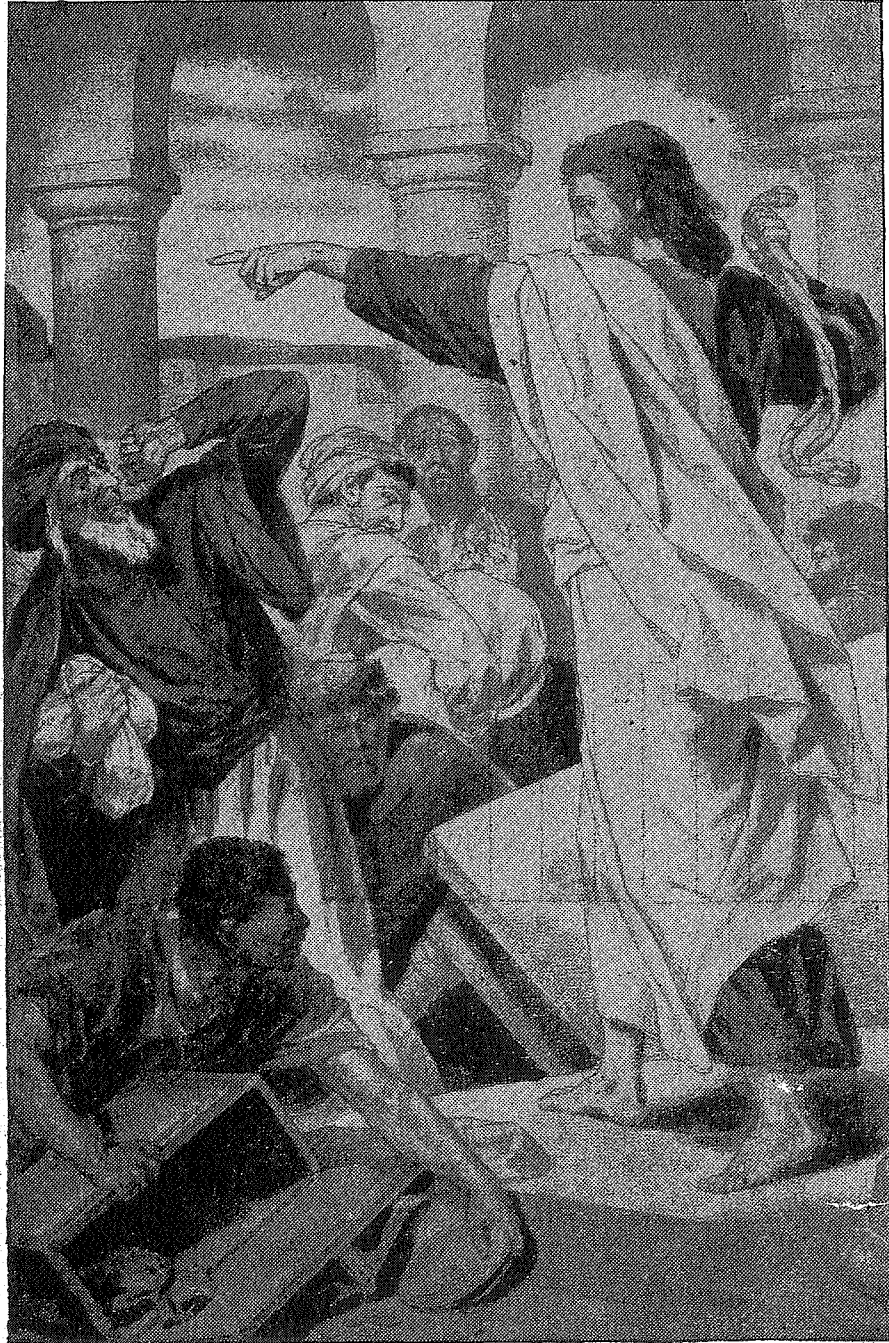


IF CHRIST CAME TO CHICAGO!

FIRST WARD, CHICAGO.

STREET





It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer;
but ye have made it a den of thieves.—*Matthew 21: 13.*

IF CHRIST CAME TO CHICAGO!

A Plea for the Union of All Who Love in
the Service of All Who Suffer

"Said Christ our Lord, I will go and see
How the men, My brethren, believe in Me."
—Lowell.

BY

WILLIAM T. STEAD

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EIGHT-HOUR HERALD,
CHICAGO.

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PREFACE.

"If Christ came to Chicago!" It was under this title that, after a month's sojourn in the city, I summoned a Conference in the Central Music Hall, which was held in November, 1893. Nothing was further from my thoughts at that time than publishing a book on Chicago. The impression produced by the Conference was so remarkable that I promised to print a report of the proceedings, with an appendix, and for that purpose contracted with a firm of stenographers for a verbatim report of the speeches. The stenographers, however, failed to supply the promised report, and I returned to Chicago to see what could be done.

My second visit to Chicago occurred at a critical time. The pressure of the problem of the unemployed was beginning to be severely felt; the movement in favor of a Civic Federation, initiated at the conference at the Central Music Hall, was entering into the region of realized fact; the American Federation of Labor was about to meet in the city; the trial of Prendergast, the slayer of Carter Harrison, and of Dan Coughlin, for the murder of Dr. Cronin, were in progress; and, more important than all else, Mr. Hopkins, the rising young Democrat, was entering the field as candidate for the mayoralty, then temporarily held by Mr. Swift. For three months I was an intensely interested spectator of the rapidly unfolding drama of civic life in the great city which has already secured an all but unquestioned primacy among the capitals of the New World.)

This little volume, originally projected as a mere reprint of the proceedings of a Sunday's conference, has assumed its present shape as the result of much consultation with

many of the leading citizens of Chicago, who have been kind enough to encourage its publication. It is based upon the carefully collected opinions of the ablest and most respected residents, which have been collated and compared with the opinions of other residents as able perhaps, but who unfortunately are neither respected nor respectable. Throughout all my work of interrogation and condensation I have clung to the hypothesis which forms the keynote and the starting point of the whole: "If Christ came to Chicago!"

I have discussed the question with ministers of all religions and with the avowed unbelievers, with bankers and merchant princes, with the keepers of saloons, and even with the madames whose infamous calling has not entirely obliterated the Divine image which is the heritage of every child of man. It has been a strangely interesting and most suggestive discussion. To men of the world, to busy administrators, to labor agitators, to the crook and to the harlot, the question: "If He came to Chicago, what would He think of us and of our lives?" was often strangely unfamiliar, and sometimes provoked the most incongruous replies. "We take no stock in Christ in Chicago!" said one man. "He was all very well nineteen hundred years ago in Judea, but what have we to do with him in civic life in Chicago?" Not much, it is to be feared—" 'tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true." But, although there was sometimes a disposition to scoff at this insistence on the presence of the Son of Man, even in the precincts of the Board of Trade, the conception grew in power and in influence, and I often marveled to note the effect which the thought produced even on the most hardened and vicious. It might only be temporary, as most things are in this transitory world, but it was well if even for a moment some ray of Divine light should lighten the darkened soul with a passing vision of the love of God. For Christ, even

to those who use His name but to garnish their profane and filthy talk, still represents the most majestic and the most pathetic of all the conceptions which Man has formed of God. In the bleared eyes of the besotted drunkard, and in the dazed and despairing heart of the fallen woman, there was a recognition of the infinite love and tender sympathy which, long since, became man in order to interpret God. Christ, even to those who regarded him as a myth, is at least an accepted standard of ideal character, shining out luminous as the sun against the dark and gloomy background of human society as it is. The fascination of the popular conception of the Christ is His intense humanness. It is not as the Judge of all the earth, nor as the Second Person in the Divine Trinity, that He appeals to the common people. Christ is to them the Man of Sorrows, who was tempted in all points even as we; the Divine tramp, who said of himself, "the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head;" the heretic and outcast who supped and made merry with winebibbers, who came eating and drinking, and was called a gluttonous man, a friend of publicans and sinners. Christ was and is to the common man merely his own highest self, radiant with Divine love, suffused with infinite compassion. That idea of a perfect standard of right and wrong, applied by One who has a sympathy that never fails, because based upon an understanding of all the facts, can never be forgotten without loss, or ignored without peril.

"Oh, Christ is all right!" said one poor girl on Fourth Avenue, "it is the other ones that are the devil." And she spoke a bitter truth. For He dwells in us but partially, and that which is in us without Him is carnal, earthly and devilish in sad reality. But the thought of Him recalls the ideal, and by applying that ideal to the actual circumstances of the civic life of Chicago, men realized more clearly how

far short they had come of carrying out His will. To very many the conception of the Citizen Christ was so new as almost to be distasteful. To them it appeared at first almost as some strange heresy that the Son of Man could have either part or lot in such mundane institutions as municipalities and primaries. But by degrees it began to dawn upon those who pondered the matter in their hearts that the Churches, by insisting so exclusively upon the other life, have banished Him from His own world, and by the substitution of Divine Worship for Human Service have largely undone the work of the Incarnation. To re-enforce this growing sentiment, to strengthen this dawning consciousness of the reality of the Citizen Christ, this book is given to the world. Whatever value it possesses, whatever help there is in it for the citizens of Chicago, or of any other city, will depend solely upon the fidelity with which I have succeeded in expressing the mind of Christ on the subjects which it treats, and of bringing those who read its pages within the shadow of the presence of the Son of Man.

The original conception of Christ coming to Chicago reached me, like most of my religio-philosophical notions, through the poetry of James Russell Lowell. The short poem which he styled a parable always seems to me to sum up in a page the vital essence of Christ's teaching. It is as it were a new chapter of the Gospel of St. John, done into English by the American poet-seer of the nineteenth century. I quote it here as the best explanation of the title of this book.

Said Christ our Lord, "I will go and see
How the men, My brothers, believe in Me."
He passed not again through the gate of birth,
But made Himself known to the children of earth.

Then said the chief priests, and rulers and kings,
"Behold, now, the Giver of all good things ;
Go to, let us welcome with pomp and state
Him who alone is mighty and great."

With carpets of gold the ground they spread
Wherever the Son of Man should tread,
And in palace-chambers lofty and rare
They lodged Him, and served him with kingly fare.

Great organs surged through arches dim
Their jubilant floods in praise of Him ;
And in church, and palace, and judgment-hall
He saw His image high over all.

But still, wherever His steps they led,
The Lord in sorrow bent down His head,
And from under heavy foundation stones
The Son of Mary heard bitter groans.

And in church, and palace, and judgment-hall
He marked great fissures that rent the wall,
And open wider and yet more wide
As the living foundation heaved and sighed.

“Have ye founded your thrones and altars, then,
On the bodies and souls of living men?
And think ye that building shall endure
Which shelters the noble and crushes the poor?”

“With gates of silver and bars of gold
Ye have fenced My sheep from the Father’s fold ;
I have heard the dropping of their tears
In heaven these eighteen hundred years.”

“O Lord and Master, not ours the guilt ;
We build but as our fathers built ;
Behold Thine images, how they stand,
Sovereign and sole, through all our land.

“Our task is hard, with sword and flame
To hold Thy earth forever the same,
And with sharp crooks of steel to keep,
Still, as Thou leftest them, Thy sheep.”

Then Christ sought out an artisan,
A low-browed, stunted, haggard man ;
And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin
Pushed from her faintly want and sin.

These set He in the midst of them,
And as they drew back their garments-hem,
For fear of defilement, “Lo, here,” said He,
“The images ye have made of Me.”

As this poem suggested the title, so it has inspired every page in this book. The dominant idea which Lowell insisted upon is the truth which, more than any other, is

needed to inspire and vivify our impotent, limp and ineffective conception of Christianity. How we believe in Christ is shown not by what we say about Him, nor by the temples which we build in His honor, nor by the hymns which we sing in His praise, but by the extent to which we succeed in restoring in man the lost image of God. The tramp is Christ's brother, the harlot is Christ's sister. These are the images which we have made of Christ. As the strength of a chain is tested by its weakest link, so the extent of our failure to save the least of these, His brethren, may be illustrated by the actual condition of those who are lost.

When once this idea is clearly and firmly grasped, when the condition of our fellow citizens is recognized as the test of the measure of our faith in Christ, the religious aspect of civic politics acquires a new and supreme importance. For the improvement of the lot of the least of these, Christ's brethren, the assistance of the municipal authority is indispensable. The law must be invoked, if only as the schoolmaster, to bring men to Christ. Before we can make men divine, we must cast out the devils who are brutalizing them out of even human semblance. But this cannot be accomplished excepting by the use of means, which can only be wielded by the City Council. Hence, as it used to be said of old time that all roads lead to Rome, so the more attentively we study the way out of our social quagmire, the more clearly will it be discerned that all roads lead to the City Hall. Thus it has come to pass that this little volume, begun with the simple object of recalling the conception of the Man Christ Jesus, has developed into an attempt to illustrate how a living faith in the Citizen Christ would lead directly to the civic and social regeneration of Chicago.

WILLIAM T. STEAD.

Commerce Club,

Auditorium Building, Feb. 24, 1894.