

Ethel M. Maclaskey's

Verbatim Report

of

CLARENCE DARROW'S

Testimonial

on

GEORGE A. SCHILLING

NOTE BY ETHEL M. MACLASKEY:

Clarence Darrow met George A. Schilling in 1888, at a single tax club meeting. They became friends and continued so until Mr. Darrow's death, Schilling, the older, survived him.

George A. Schilling was Secretary of Labor under Governor Altgeld. "George" was always in attendance at meetings when Darrow was the speaker. He was usually present at the closing argument in court where Darrow defended. At public dinners, Clarence and George heckled each other much to the amusement of their friends.

Hon. William H. Holly was toastmaster on the occasion of this testimonial dinner held at the City Club on Plymouth Court on Saturday evening, March 25, 1933. At Mr. Darrow's suggestion, the Biology Group, of which Mr. Maclaskey was secretary, arranged the dinner. Mrs. Maclaskey took notes of the speech, and this is the first time it has been made public.

GEORGE A. SCHILLING TESTIMONIAL

By

CLARENCE DARFOW.

MR. DARFOW SAID: This is George's celebration; I want to say some things about him. I suppose I have known him almost as anybody here. If I am right, and of course I start with that assumption, then there have been more cob-webs in his brain than in any other men's I have known (laughter), but he never had in his heart. After all, that is very much more important. I am not speaking physiologically; I am speaking religiously when I am speaking about the heart. You know men and women get the idea that the individual is one thing and his views are another. You never can have any real, genuine regard for each other because no one can tell how anyone is going to think, if at all; you must unite with them upon some other basis.

I don't think there ever has been a time since I knew ~~George~~ Schilling that I did not love the man, and I ~~feel~~ think the same toward me. I hope so. There never has been a time when he has not been true to the highest principles that ought to influence human beings. There are many religious creeds and there are many political creeds; they come and go. None of them are all true or all false. There is no way to tell what is true or what is false. Generally, those who know least about them are the most sure they are right. It is very seldom that one lives a considerably long life and is satisfied he has been right all the time. I have always been sure I was right at the time (laughter) but often very suspicious afterward; sometimes sure, without saying so. You cannot care for people on the basis of their opinions because you will always find them wandering away from what they should, a straight line. You cannot care for them on the basis of their religion, because no two agree on that subject. There would never be the many sects if they did; there would never be. Besides, the unknown is the unknown, that is all. As to the ways for curing the ills of the world, I have gotten over that. I have heard my friend speak fairly optimistically that the world will be better off in two thousand years. I am only optimistic about

those things I think I can get while I am here. I am not interested in what happens two thousand years from now. If anybody else can get an illusion out of it, all right; I cannot. It is too long an option (laughter). I don't care what becomes of this world after I am through with it; and it will not make any difference what becomes of it, anyhow. It will, I know, go on just the same, and people will ignore all of the wisdom I have wasted upon it, and go on their own cruel, blind, everlasting way.

I am not an optimist for I know too much. Everybody ought to know too much. They would if they put an ^{hour} then two and two together. I have not the slightest belief that the future will be any better than the past. I believe man is fixed by his structure. He has a certain length, a certain breadth--or rather, narrowness--he has two legs, two arms, and one brain, if any (laughter); and all he can do is to develop those legs and arms and brain, and then watch them decay (laughter). And that is all he can do. I imagine that horses will not be any different ten thousand years from now than they are today. We may breed them a little stronger, if we don't get rid of them entirely, or a little spacier, but that is all; an infinite number of generations go on just the same. There is such a thing as temporary evolution, which means going forward, although nobody knows which way forward is. That ought to be settled first. That is the trouble with progress.

What is progress, anyway? Which way have you got to go? Many are going backward, but not many going forward. There are people who think I am going backward. I don't think we are doing anything but just milling around. For what? Just because we were born and have to live.

I don't believe there has been any such thing as a general improvement of man or of any other animal since the race began. There have been some that have grown larger and some that have grown smaller; but life is the same thing over and over and over again. So, why should I want to stay forever? I have seen the show, and it is not much of a show, I am telling you. I don't see why people should struggle to be born.

They wouldn't be born excepting that someone else got some pleasure out of it. Nature was too wise to have based reproduction on anything else. I don't owe anything to my father or to my mother, and if I knew how to settle the account, I think they would be in my debt. I didn't have anything to do about getting born. I have had my share of pleasure out of life. I have never tried to get more than my share; but sometimes I have. I have never tried to get it at the expense of

sombody else, though. I have had a great many pleasant hours in the seventy-five odd years that I have been here. Most of these pleasant hours have been when I was asleep (laughter). Oh, I hardly ever have had an unpleasant hour when I was asleep, unless I ate too much rabbit or something like that. But that didn't happen often because I can control it pretty well.

I really and honestly think that the most satisfactory hours of life are when we are asleep. I never knew anybody that was not anxious to go to sleep when he was tired, and I never knew anybody that did not try to hang onto his sleep when he was waking up, turn over and try it again. I never felt myself going to sleep and tried to keep awake, unless I had something I had to do, and then I was sorry to do it.

Taking it all in all, oblivion is the most pleasant thing, or, it is the least unpleasant, which is perhaps the most scientific way to put it. And, every day proves it, and yet they are always thinking that tomorrow will be better than today. We think tomorrow will be better than today but we know it will be worse still, we keep on thinking it. We will have more aches, more pains, and we cannot eat so much and we get less pleasure out of life. And, our three and two hundredths percent. of beer isn't going to do so much for us, and that will be at the expense, probably, of the rest of our organism. So you cannot find much to be optimistic about there.

If we have a good friend, he dies; and, if we find ourselves feeling well, some morning we get up and get over it before night. We are always looking at the calendar to see how old we really are, and looking at the clock to see how soon we can go to bed. Then we are happy, or the next thing to it. And we wake in the night and look at the clock to see how much longer we can possibly sleep. When we are asleep we are oblivious of everything else. If anybody can reach oblivion, there is nothing more to complain of.

I know this is not an intellectual process. You cannot prove it some other way. Nobody insists upon believing it; and all insist that this is not true. But I never saw anybody who did not want to go to sleep, and I never saw anybody who wanted to wake up, and I do not expect to meet anybody. You have seen children at play. They do not like to be called in from their play and you never recall of a real child that ever wanted to get up in the morning. I never did. I may have sometimes wanted to get up on the morning of the 4th of July, or even Christmas, but it was over quickly. Those are the only days I recall when I ever wanted to get up in the morning. And then it was not so much fun as it was to be asleep!

I don't think being born is a favor conferred upon the human race. There has to be somebody to confer a favor or pleasure and I don't think there is, but that has nothing to do with it. If it was it was a bad conferrer; that is all I have to say about it. Most diseases we have are transferrable from one to the other; they are contagious. Good health does not seem to be catching, if ever. I would say that if one thinks about it, the person never born has the best life. He has nothing to regret (laughter). Taking my basis, there is not much else to say, is there?

George don't believe that. But he never believes anything that is true (laughter). He has had visions all of his lifetime.

MR GEORGE SCHILLING: And still have them!

MR DAFROW: Yes, he still has them (laughter); just see what happens to a fellow when he gets them! I get some fun out of my pessimism. I like to laugh at people, to think how trustful and childlike they are. I have seen people who believed the single tax was going to come, honestly. You wouldn't think so, but I have. I have seen them living a long life believing in the single tax, not only theoretically, which all of us can do, but practically believing it is coming. I have seen socialists who believed that was coming, too! I have seen people who think they are going to Heaven; but I never saw any of them so sure of it that they wanted to die. People don't believe in their pet doctrines, excepting me. I believe in pessimism. Did you ever see a Christian with a cancer? He must be very hard to dupe. Did you ever see a Christian with a cancer who wouldn't travel all over the world and get cut to pieces, inches by inches, so that he could live in this vale of tears thirty minutes longer, when he might die and go straight to Heaven?

We are all pipe-dreamers, more or less, and yet we cannot help it; we didn't get ourselves born. If a fellow could have the whole panorama laid out before him, before he was born, and asked whether he would be born, why, he would turn over and go to sleep; he would not want to be born. But, we are here, and one of the things that does make life a little more liveable is our friends. We, it seems to me, do not live logically, we wouldn't live nearly so long; we would get through with it just as soon as we got intelligence enough to know there is nothing in it, instead of trying to hang on as a matter of habit, which is all there is to it.

Most of us have lived through this depression so far. I don't know why except we cannot help it. What Schopenhauer calls the "will to live" is all you can say about it. There is in every living organism the instinctive will to live, and that persists until it is destroyed by some force or another. But if you have to live, then the best thing to help it along is good friends.

I have known George Schilling for many years. We have been together; we have been apart; we have never quarrelled. I could talk with George about something that he believed and that I knew were not true, but it never bothered me any. I said:

"Well, let him rave on; why should I care; he is a friend; he is kindly; he is human. He has got those qualities that ought to endear him to every man who knows him and which do endear him. And he is true to his ideals, to his beliefs, to his friends, to his loyalties, which are strong; he is dependable; he is like a ship or a great rock in a weary land."

I am not interested in what he believes or in what anybody else believes, except as an intellectual diversion. I have got a wonderful intellect that has to be diverted, and the sillier the recipe they give me the more diversion I get out of it. Put, I love my friends, and one of the first I had in this big city was George Schilling.

We disagree on many subjects; that goes without saying; for I am a very intelligent man (laughter) and George is emotional, trusting, kindly and human. I don't imagine it disturbs him any that we have so often disagreed on questions that are more or less fundamental, on minor questions like God, Heaven and Hell, and things like that.

I think George would be disturbed if he did not think there was a Hell, or may be even a Heaven, and perhaps a God. If I look at the world I see its misery; it seems to be designed by a clever brain; I would know just what kind of a fellow God was; if there were one. George believes in Heaven, that is all. I do, sometimes, but not after I am dead. I have had some glimpses of it while I am living, and I have enjoyed it tonight. I like to hear things and to talk and that is the reason I am talking to you tonight. (laughter) I like to hear the absurd theories of people and see how easy it is to destroy them. Anyway, I like to live. Some days I am glad I have not got past that. Most everybody is a pipe-dreamer, without knowing the past is bad; that the present is unsatisfactory, and they are sure tomorrow will be better. I know it will be worse, but I like to think it will be better. I know it will be worse because I will have more pains, aches and all those things.

I must say there are very few men that I have known in this cold world who have given me so much comfort and consolation and companionship as has George Schilling. I have always known I could rely upon his friendship no matter what the occasion might be, and I have known he would be true to his faith and to his ideals, and I think that this world will be a little colder and sadder and harder when he leaves it! (Applause)