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A Question of Morals.

I note an article in Harper's Weekly of May 14th, from a Mr. Sims, severely censuring Governor Patterson of Tennessee for pardoning Col. Cooper, who was under conviction for the killing of Ex-Senator Carmack. As I have seen a number of similar articles, all ~~taking~~ ^{taking} strangely the same ground, and as they all seem to me to overlook an important fact in the problem, I desire to call attention to it.

At the time of the trial, I remember distinctly reading in a wired message from Nashville, published in a newspaper, a statement to the effect that the Governor saw the shooting and testified as a witness on the trial.

If that was the truth, it is not too much to say that the Governor knew whether Col. Cooper was or was not guilty. He could not well see the shooting and not know, as his senses tell him, whether there was or was not guilt. If, as he saw it, Col. Cooper was not guilty, it must go without controversy that it was the Governor's clear duty to pardon him, though many juries may have found him guilty. Suppose the jury found squarely against what the Governor saw; what he knew and testified to. What then? Was the Governor required by any law, moral or profane, to deny his own knowledge, to permit a man, friend or foe, to suffer for a crime the Governor knew that he did not commit? It strikes me that the conditions presented the clearest case for the exercise of the pardoning power. That power is given a Governor in order that he may correct errors in convictions. Whether Cooper was a friend of the Governor's or not, whether the Governor

was or was not under obligations to him, is beside the question. If these are the facts, rather than deserving censure, the Governor has done, in a brave manner, what he thought right under the most trying conditions. A weak man would have yielded to fear of censure, seemingly correct, and would have saved himself at the expense of his manhood.

As to another phase; there is just now a spasm of pewter purity, called "civic righteousness" rampant all over this land, and many are ~~holding~~ ^{lauding} their virtues, generally known only to themselves. For my part, I do not care to see the day when that type of big-hearted, red-blooded stalwart manhood that stands by friend and foe alike, for the truth as he sees it, shall be eliminated from public affairs by the howls of mushy sentimentalists. I like to see a friend that will stand when standing is needed, and have no use for a man who will not. The spirit of "Old Hickory" was good to live by, is good to remember and is good to cherish to the end.

James W. Oates.

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