

A SERIOUS STUDY OF JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

One of the most interesting contributions to American literature has just come from the press. It is entitled "A Study of John D. Rockefeller, the Wealthiest Man in the World."

The author is Marcus M. Brown, of Cleveland, Ohio, who generously gives to his readers a somewhat lengthy biographical sketch of himself, together with many high sounding tributes paid to him by gentlemen having the honor of his acquaintance.

In the "foreword" Mr. Brown says that his motives in the preparation of this book are entirely philanthropic, and are prompted by the "spontaneous and universal sentiments of justice natural to the human heart." A very laudable motive, indeed. Having learned that that was the motive of the author one reading this publication would naturally expect to find some serious defense of the business methods employed by Mr. Rockefeller. But such a search of this little volume will be made in vain. It is, in fact, largely devoted to a presentation of the unquestionably long list of contributions which Mr. Rockefeller has made to educational and religious institutions.

In the beginning the author says:

We shall in this book recite word for word and letter for letter full paragraphs from Miss Ida M. Tarbell's articles in McClure's Magazine by which she tries to reflect harmful insinuations upon Mr. Rockefeller.

It is noticeable, however, that the "full paragraphs" from Miss Tarbell's writings do not relate to the serious and the explicit charges Miss Tarbell has made against the methods of the Standard Oil company and the course Mr. Rockefeller pursues in the commercial world.

Mr. Brown sings the same old song. He quotes from a college professor and from other Rockefeller champions articles, the tendency of which is to justify the Standard Oil Trust and its methods. And then he surrounds these with some of the most extravagant tributes to the "generosity" of the subject of his sketch, pointing to the large sums he has contributed to schools and churches and to unknown beneficiaries as justification for the unholy methods through which he has acquired his wealth. His defense is far from successful, but it is entirely characteristic of Rockefeller literature.

While as a justification for Mr. Rockefeller's business methods Mr. Brown's production is a failure, it is nevertheless interesting, and should be read by every one who desires to obtain the estimate which the average Rockefeller champion places upon the popular intelligence. In the beginning, referring to Mr. Rockefeller Mr. Brown says:

"With his name left out, the history of education and religion could not be written."

So characteristic of Rockefeller literature are the statements of this particular article that comment will be unnecessary. These statements speak for themselves and they deserve wide publicity because there are some people who yet imagine that when Coal Baron Baer proclaimed himself and his fellow-monopolists to be "the trustees of God" they did not expect the people to give weight to the claim.

In one place in his book Mr. Brown says:

Mr. Rockefeller, however, is a unique character; he stands absolutely alone. Every age furnishes its masters—its geniuses. The history of succeeding generations tells of their scholars, their artists, their statesmen, and their heroes, but here is a man like as to whom the annals of time are silent, yet what modesty, what wholesome public and private example, what kindness, what forbearance, long-suffering and universal love has he! Not to speak of Christianity in particular, this country, nor even the world can afford to lose such an object lesson for good, and the general elevation of mankind, as this man affords.

Again Mr. Brown says:

To say that he (Rockefeller) is the intellectual illuminator of the world as well as the liberal dispeller of darkness by his products, is not to speak of the greatest qualities of the man. Inasmuch as moral greatness is more than intellectual; inasmuch as it is more blessed to give than to receive, so the greatness of Mr. Rockefeller is greater than any of these.

Again Mr. Brown says:

He (Rockefeller) had few books, but he was shut up with what he had. Chiefest

among these was the Bible, which he knows perfectly well; the spirit and principle of which he understands from beginning to end; and it controls much of his speech as well as his life.

But Mr. Brown appears to be fearful lest some man imagine that he does not have as clear an understanding of the people and of their intellectual capacity as he has of Mr. Rockefeller, and so he says:

The people at large misunderstand and misinterpret Mr. Rockefeller, not from any wrong intent, but because it is not the province of the public to go very deeply into the philosophy of things that do not concern them personally; they have too much business of their own, and so are easily misled by superficial appearances.

Again referring to Mr. Rockefeller Mr. Brown says that he is averse to any controversy in justification of himself, adding:

He speaks in his defense only by noble deeds, and where they imply his own virtue he speaks even then not as one crying from the housetops, but in his quiet and straightforward way.

In the light of this statement one is tempted to suggest that a great many people will be curious to know how Author Brown learned about all these Rockefeller contributions so as to be able to make such an exact statement concerning Mr. Rockefeller's "generosity?"

Mr. Brown quotes from B. T. Quilling, a deacon in Mr. Rockefeller's church. Mr. Quilling said:

He (Rockefeller) is condemned for his connection with the Standard Oil company. Let me say that I believe the Standard will be recognized by future generations as one of the greatest practical benefactions ever given to mankind. I can remember when coal oil cost 40 cents a gallon and it was so poor and dangerous that thousands of deaths and terrible injuries were caused by its explosion. The Standard has made it pure and safe and brought the price down to a fourth the old figure. The Standard has created billions of wealth through the utilization of waste in by-products. It has converted a business which was utterly demoralized into the most systematic commercial enterprise in the world.

Again referring to Mr. Rockefeller Mr. Brown says:

He is rigid with himself, and so easy with others. He is inclined to apologize for being kinder than his associates. He does merciful things as much under cover as others commit crimes. He says the noblest words and does the noblest deeds with the most delightful unconsciousness, and perfect grace of modesty. He is a total abstainer from intoxicants and tobacco. * * * He is as patient as destiny.

Again speaking of Mr. Rockefeller Mr. Brown says:

He is acquainted with no fear, except the fear of God and of doing wrong. Hating oppression, pitying the oppressed, seeking to overcome, not men, but evil, he is the embodiment of the self denial, the courage, the hope, the nobility of the world.

He speaks not to anger, not to accuse, but to convince. He raises his hands not to wound, but in benediction. He longs to forgive. He loves to see the radiance of joy on the cheek of those he has been able to relieve. Mr. Rockefeller is the grandest figure of the fiercest industrial combat that the world has ever known. He will be one of the greatest and sweetest memories of mankind.

The concluding chapter of this fearfully and wonderfully made book is entitled: "The Author Pleads for Justice, Justice, Justice." He says: "To write of the virtues of the good and thoughtful is to me a labor of gratitude and love." He says that John D. Rockefeller is "one of the worthiest soldiers in the great battalion of men who have been hated in many cases by those they desired to liberate, and despised by many they are anxious to save," and who "for the good of their fellow men have accepted seclusion, slander and contempt."

Mr. Brown dares to tread upon the outskirts

of dangerous ground by saying: "I have studied all of Miss Ida M. Tarbell's articles and have not found a single point that can not be explained as necessary under the circumstances and that is not in keeping with generally accepted business customs and which operate in the end to the public good." But it will be observed that in this connection Mr. Brown says: "Space will not permit of a detailed discussion here."

Mr. Brown started out with a good motive—the motive of seeing that justice was done to a fellow being—and although he devotes 150 pages to his task, on the 145th page he says that Mr. Rockefeller's motives may be defended, but he pleads that he hasn't the space to devote to their defense!

Then in conclusion we are told by Author Brown that John D. Rockefeller is "one of our intellectual heroes;" that "as long as civilization exists he will be remembered, admired and honored;" that "if to love others more than one's self is goodness, John D. Rockefeller is good;" that "if to live in advance of one's time, to be the first upon the ground in the direction of progress, is greatness, John D. Rockefeller is great;" that "if to follow one's faith and do one's duty in the presence of threatening death is heroic, John D. Rockefeller is a hero."

In one chapter Author Brown tells us that Mr. Rockefeller "holds it to be his duty to be the most wholesome example possible;" and in order to prove this point Mr. Brown says "in the discharge of a duty of this kind I have known him to sit upon a platform on a public occasion of the Chicago University until he was overcome by fatigue and the heat, and had to be assisted to his lodgings." A very fine instance, indeed, of self sacrifice on Mr. Rockefeller's part! The American people could wish that he would "hold it to be his duty to be the most wholesome example possible" to such an extent that he would cease in his efforts to grind the faces of the poor; that he would call a halt in his course of pillage and conquest, and that he would set to his fellow men the "wholesome example" of one who is willing to live and let live, and who believes that the service of God is not confined to declamations in the classroom, but is possible—and necessary—in every sphere of life.

AVENUES OF USEFULNESS—TEACHING

Teaching is one of the occupations which the race can not outgrow. Each generation must pass through its school period and there is no more important or honorable calling than that of the teacher. With some it is merely a stepping stone to something else, with others it is a life business. But whether it is temporary or permanent it affords an opportunity for real service. From the grade school up through the high school to city, county or state superintendent is a line of promotion which satisfies a laudable ambition, and besides the public schools there are the colleges and universities which are ever on the watch for teachers who combine knowledge of books with knowledge of human nature and whose enthusiasm enables them to inspire a love of study in their pupils.

To one who has reached the point in moral development where he enjoys contributing to the welfare of others the school room offers great rewards. Few have such constant opportunity to sow good seed in fruitful soil as the teacher and he deals with those who are passing through the very springtime of life. Noble profession, great with possibilities of usefulness!

"WAY TOO HIGH"

The St. Louis Globe-Democrat, a republican newspaper, says: "Mr. Bryan has written an article on 'The Value of the Human Soul' without suggesting that, on account of some chronological crime, the quotation should be marked down to 49 cents on the dollar."

It must be plain, even to the Globe-Democrat, that 49 cents on the dollar is altogether too high a quotation on "the value of the human soul," as estimated by some of the eminent "defenders of national honor," who have given testimony before the insurance committee at New York. Yet during recent presidential campaigns the Globe-Democrat assured its readers that these men were patriots, and governed by their hostility to immorality in every form and their disinterested devotion to good government.