

Mr. Bryan in Porto Rico

Below will be found the speeches delivered by Governor Colton and Mr. Bryan at the banquet tendered Mr. Bryan at San Juan, April 9, by citizens of San Juan. Dr. Zeno Gandia acted as toastmaster and speeches were also made by Mr. Deigo, speaker of the Porto Rico legislature, and by Mr. Degetau, former representative of Porto Rico at Washington, but as they were not reported they can not be reproduced:

Governor Colton spoke as follows:

"Mr. Toastmaster and Gentlemen: I esteem it a privilege to join you tonight in honoring our illustrious and sympathetic fellow countryman, the Hon. William Jennings Bryan.

"I have had the honor of doing some things contemporaneously with Colonel Bryan. We settled in the great state of Nebraska in the same year; we went to war together in the same year. Having finished our term of military service, we laid aside our swords, and although we are of different political parties, neither of us have since, to my knowledge, acquired any sticks of large proportion.

"The colonel has traveled extensively throughout our island; he has been impressed with its beauty; with the luxuries of its products, he has experienced the hospitality of its lovable inhabitants. He appreciates the fact that it is the ideal spot for a Pan-American University, where the youths of the two races may meet and know each other, to the advantage of their respective countries. He knows, and he appreciates, that it is the most conveniently located and best-equipped place in the western Hemisphere for a great winter playground and resort.

"No one could inspire happier thoughts among us—no one will say kinder things about us, than he."

The speech of Mr. Bryan was as follows:

Mr. President, Toastmaster, Governor, Gentlemen: I appreciate the kind words spoken and this opportunity to meet so many of the prominent men of Porto Rico.

It seems to me that the main object of this banquet has been gained through the speeches of others. It is not nearly so necessary that I should talk to you as that you should inform me, and I rejoice that our people have taught freedom of speech because it is just such freedom of speech as we have had tonight that helps both those whom the speakers represent and the country to which they address their remarks. Some two years ago I heard a man explaining that freedom of speech was given, not that people might say things that were pleasant but that they might say things that were unpleasant. He said that it had always been possible for people to say things that were enjoyed by those who heard them but that it was only under the guarantees of freedom of speech that people were permitted to say things that those who heard were not glad to hear. I do not mean to apply this in full to this occasion, for nothing that has been said tonight has displeased me or would displease the representatives of our government. In fact, I believe that freedom of speech is as essential to those who are criticized as to those who criticize. I once had an opportunity to speak to one high in authority in a country where freedom of speech was denied and I made an argument in favor of freedom of speech. I told him that those in authority needed the aid of those who wanted to criticize, even more than of those who wanted to praise; that those who praised might conceal the truth but that those who criticized were more frank than those who praised, and that a good ruler ought to be glad to have his defects, and the faults of his administration, pointed out that he might correct them, and so I was glad tonight when one of the speakers emphasized the fact that in Porto Rico there has been freedom of speech.

I have enjoyed all of the speeches that have been made. I am glad that the governor, who represents in his executive capacity the whole people of the United States, is here to participate in this banquet. I am not sure but that our presence at the same banquet may emphasize an important lesson. He and I do not agree in party affiliations. He represents the government and at the same time the majority party, while I have represented, as a candidate, the minority party. But there is this significance in our meeting together. We illustrate an important fact in the life of the United States, and that is, that in our politics there is nothing personal and that people can fight each other in campaigns and yet stand side by side as the representatives of American ideas. Our fight ends when the votes are counted and the defeated party is as loyal to the administration as the

victorious party. I have three times been defeated and each time I sent a telegram of congratulation to my successful opponent as soon as I was satisfied of the result and I wished his administration success as sincerely as his most ardent supporters. All through South America this fact that I had sent telegrams of congratulation, was referred to and they told me that it was not always customary down there. They thought that it was a matter worthy of note that it had been done. I assured them that I had done nothing that my opponent would not have done had I been successful instead of he. It is important in a free government that there should be this recognition of the rights of opponents and this acquiescence in the will of the majority.

I have been glad also to hear the kind words spoken by our governor. As an American I am anxious that those who represent us, whether they belong to my party or any other party, shall represent the best in our country and thus give the best impression of our country. I have enjoyed also the speech made by the gentleman who is now doing me the honor of being my interpreter, Mr. Degetau. This is the first time that I have heard a man interpret himself and the fact that he seems equally familiar with the two languages reminds me of a campaign in which the double standard entered quite prominently into the conflict. I thought that I noticed a little more fluency in the Spanish language than in the English but the ratio was not "16 to 1." I was interested in what he said and especially impressed by the suggestion that he made in regard to this island being, as it were, the middle ground upon which North and South America will meet. His suggestion is entirely in harmony with the suggestion made by Governor Colton with regard to a Pan-American college here, and I am glad to inform you that both of these suggestions are in line with a suggestion that was made only a few weeks ago. In speaking of Panama I suggested that the canal strip ought to have been made the center of American influence down there, and that we ought to have a college there that would be representative of American ideas. I still believe that the canal zone is a good place for a college, because the people of the western coast of South America will come through that canal to reach the United States, and those who go from the United States to the western coast will pass through that canal—and it is also near the Central American countries—but when one goes from the United States to the east coast of South America he passes near Porto Rico. Porto Rico is a most admirable strategic point and I hope that the suggestions made by Mr. Degetau, and by Governor Colton, will impress the people here, and the people of the United States, and result in making Porto Rico the center of our effort to unite the Spanish and English speaking people. The same thought has been emphasized by the honorable speaker of your house of representatives, Mr. Diego, and I shall carry away from this island, as a result of my visit a thought, much enlarged if not first impressed here: I believe that Porto Rico is the key with which we can unlock South America; I believe that we can in Porto Rico best train the men who will go as the representatives of the United States among the people of South America. If in these schools that are multiplying with such rapidity, and in the colleges that will naturally follow, Porto Ricans learn the English language, learn something of the methods of business in the United States, and then go to the United States and acquaint themselves with the details of trade, they can represent the American business houses which are extending their trade in South America.

But while these gentlemen have placed me under a debt of gratitude by the information which they have given me, they have embarrassed me beyond measure in another respect; they have spoken with the earnestness that characterizes men who speak from the heart and who feel that in speaking they represent the wishes of a large number of people. I could not hope to interest you as they have interested you unless I discussed the same subjects, and yet the proprieties of the occasion prohibit the discussion of these questions. I think that you will all admit the impropriety of any discussion on my part of the questions at issue between those who speak for Porto Rico and those who in the American congress are vested with the responsibility of legislation. If I happen to differ from any position taken by those in authority at Washington it would certainly be improper for

me, a representative of the minority party, to come here and before you voice my criticism of the government. Not only would it be a breach of propriety, but if in the future I tried to be of any service to you any such action as that here would embarrass me in the effort to help you. If, on the other hand, I happen to differ from anything said by those who speak for Porto Rico, I would ill repay the cordial hospitality I have received if I entered into a joint debate here. My lips are therefore sealed on these questions, so interesting to you and not without interest to me. If I put those questions aside and speak upon themes entirely separate and apart from the things upon which your minds dwell, I am afraid that it will be with difficulty that you will follow me. In fact I am limited and restricted to a very narrow field. About the only question which I feel that I can discuss with absolute freedom is the weather, and I have not been here long enough to be well acquainted with that. And yet you expect me to say something, however lame and halting my speech may seem after the eloquence to which we have listened, and I have been casting about for something that will take me as near to the subject as possible without leading me into forbidden fields. I have been trying to think of some line of thought that might encourage you to believe that you will get everything that is right without defining the word right.

I am not sure that I can be as adroit as a politician in the United States of whom I heard. He was able to secure, at times, the unanimous and hearty applause of both sides. He was a candidate for a legislative office, and a certain contested question was to come before the legislature. In the midst of his speech one of the audience rose and asked him a question. He said you are a candidate for the legislature, and a certain measure, describing it, will come before that legislative body, and you, if elected, will have to vote upon it. "Will you vote for the measure if elected?" He answered, "I will,"—and those who favored the measure applauded vigorously; when they had ceased he said "not," and those opposed to the measure then applauded; and when they had ceased he added "express an opinion," and neither side applauded. That is my position tonight. If a Porto Rican were to rise and ask me "will you favor our demands," I might say "I will" and have the applause of all the Porto Ricans, and then add "not," and have the applause of all who do not agree with them, but after being applauded by both sides I would have to add "express an opinion."

But I can give you a word of encouragement without any disloyalty to those in authority in my own country, and without any offense to those in this country. I can point out the irresistible course of events, and it is not my fault if either Porto Ricans or Americans are not pleased with the course of events. The whole progress of the human race is towards better things. There is no reason why any one, either in Porto Rico, or in the United States, or anywhere else, should be pessimistic.

Reference has been made tonight to the progress of education, and it has been very justly attributed to both the Americans and Porto Ricans. I have been informed that whereas there were only between 20,000 and 25,000 children in school twelve years ago, there are now something over 100,000. While it is true that the taxes have been paid by the people of Porto Rico, and while it is true that the appropriations have been supported by the representatives of the Porto Rican people, still I think no one will deny that the United States has shown much more interest in education than the Spanish government did while you were under Spanish rule. It would not be fair or just for the United States to claim entire credit for this remarkable increase in the attendance at the schools, and yet it would be equally unfair to deny to the United States credit for its primacy and its commanding influence in the educational work. It is entirely probable that you would have made progress under Spanish rule, and still more likely that you would have made progress if you had been independent of Spanish rule and not connected with the United States. I say this because progress is being made everywhere, not under the American flag alone, but under all flags. Progress is being made in the Spanish speaking countries of South America, and yet as I traveled through South America nothing gratified me more than to learn that they have not only borrowed from us, but are borrowing from us, and speak of it with pride.

The first South American country that I visited was Peru, and there I found men and women, Americans, who had been sent for by the Pe-