

A Young Lad's Tribute

Paul Northrup, a young Lincoln lad, graduated recently at the Nebraska Military Academy, a splendid school for boys, under the management of Colonel William J. Hayward, famous throughout the west as an educator and a boy trainer. Young Northrup delivered the valedictory oration. Choosing Mr. Bryan as his subject he selected "An Inspired Fanatic" as his text. Because this tribute came from the open heart of a frank boy, Commoner readers will be interested in it and at the request of a number of Mr. Bryan's Lincoln friends, it is printed in full. Here it is:

Education is a necessity. The broadest culture is demanded of the twentieth century American citizen. If one were merely to read some fiction-coated travelogues, or to glance idly through a Baedeker, one would be readily of the opinion that travel is the height of happiness to those who are possessed of the means wherewith to enjoy it.

Yet every true American citizen returns from touring across the sea with the feeling breathed forth in that magnificent song by Van Dyke:

"O Europe is a fine place, yet something seems to lack;

The past is too much with her, and her people looking back.

For life is in the present, and the future must be free.

We love our land for what she is, and what she is to be.

So its home again, and home again, America for me!

My heart is turning home again to God's country,

To the blessed land of room enough beyond the ocean bars,

Where the air is full of sunshine, and the flag is full of stars.

O London is a man's town with power in the air,

And Paris is a woman's town with flowers in her hair.

O it's sweet to loaf in Venice, and it's great to study Rome;

But when it comes to living, there's no place like home.

So it's home again, and home again, America for me!

My heart is turning home again to God's country,

To the blessed land of room enough beyond the ocean bars,

Where the air is full of sunshine, and the flag is full of stars."

So, my friends, we turn from the vast arena of Europe, and its setting of worshipped heroes, and come to some of those more kin to us, developed beneath the flag of stars. I might take you back to the gloomy days of seventy-six when the father of our country struggled against the greatest empire in all the world; I might march you all day and half the night with bleeding feet, chilled through and through and half starved, across the state of New Jersey to the battlefield of Trenton, in order to show you the military genius and the greatness of Washington; and then, my friends, when we carve in perpetual memory the names of the greatest among our heroes, we must never forget the magic name of Lincoln, the first American. There is no more unique figure in all ages than the rail splitter of the Sangamon bottoms, whose immortal works will be the theme of song and eulogy for years to come.

But my theme today is a simpler one. My hero is no military genius, except perhaps as he marshals the forces of righteousness against the hosts of sin; my hero is a fanatic, whom the country despised and distrusted. His boyhood days were simple, his college life was normal, crowned with little other perhaps, than his natural ability for public speaking.

Drift back with me some twenty years, when this character of ours began his political career. It was in the Fifty-second congress that he startled that body, and even the whole country, by his original ideas upon the tariff. From this time on his reputation grew, he fascinated the people, and drew multitudes to him in a strange and wonderful manner. His views upon the issues of the day were extraordinary, he was regarded as a fanatic of the most extreme sort. He demanded that United States senators should be elected by the direct vote of the people. "This is impossible," said the politicians. "This

could never be," thought the majority of the people. He was scoffed at and jeered at, and hissed at, his bursts of oratory were applauded, while what he said was torn apart, and declared the greatest fake of all the ages. Then he advocated the publication of campaign expenses before election, instead of afterward, as was then done. This in turn was declared as only another of his absurd and ridiculous dreams that could never be.

The press of the country denounced him; no paper supported him with whole heartedness, and the mass of the people protested against his sincerity. One editorial especially shows the opposition of the press, and its bitterness against him. It occurred in the New York Tribune just after his defeat for the presidency in 1896, in a paper once edited by the great Horace Greeley, and now owned by a man who came very near becoming vice president of the United States. The editorial said, in part: "Its nominal head," meaning Mr. Bryan, "was worthy of the cause—nominal because the wretched rattle-pated boy posing in vapid vanity, and mouthing resounding rottenness, was not the real leader of this league of hell. Not one of his masters was more apt than he at lies, forgeries and blasphemies, and all the nameless iniquities of that campaign against the ten commandments. He goes down with the cause, and must abide with it in the history of infamy. Let him go with the hissing of a peoples' scorn!" This, my friends, was the attitude of the country against Mr. Bryan in the early nineties. Every movement which was advocated by him was scorned and ridiculed as only another stepping stone upon which he might ascend to the presidency.

The greatest event in his career came at the first convention from which he received the democratic nomination for the presidency. This event was the famous "Cross of Gold" speech; the greatest piece of oratory in fifty years. Not since the days of Calhoun and Webster have such words moved the minds and the hearts of their hearers. How magic were his words as they moved that vast assemblage. "You come here, and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard; we reply that our great cities rest upon our broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms, and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country." And then again in that immortal peroration, given as it only can be given by the "Boy Orator of the Platte,"—"If they dare to come out in the open, and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we will fight them to the uttermost. Having behind us the producing masses of this nation and of the world, supported by the commercial interests, the laboring interests and the tollers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them, 'You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.'" This was the speech that won for Mr. Bryan the nomination. The democratic party forsook their natural leader, at that time the President of the United States, and nominated a leader on the most conflicting platform that ever supported a presidential candidate.

It may be asked, "What has been the progress of this pioneer since the days of ninety-six?" My only reply need be to refer you to the press of this country, which now records everything which Mr. Bryan says as important upon the issue to which it refers. My friends what Mr. Bryan would have been executed for had he lived in the days of John Brown of Ossawatimie; those things have long since passed the milestone of party creed and have leaped to the goal of national necessity. Hand in hand with the march of events the reputation of Mr. Bryan has threaded its way through the death-holes of politicians and has escaped the millstone of utter oblivion. You of the republican party through the march of events in the last three decades, show me one who has equalled the statesmanship of William Jennings Bryan; show me one in either party who has equalled his gift of speech, and show me one in any nook or corner of the civilized world who has so clearly foreseen the course of current events and then has labored against the prejudice of millions in order that the nation, in the end, might be benefited.

My friends, we are living in an age of material things where religion plays but a minor part. The dictates of conscience are no longer heard, long silent now is the voice of Savanarola of old as he sways the multitudes with the strength of his convictions, "O, Florence, O, Florence, repent, or your city shall be de-

stroyed!" The passing of time has obliterated the path of civic righteousness, and has produced a terrible reign of mechanical government. Never since the days when Washington knelt in the snows of Valley Forge, and prayed for the success of liberty has any man of national consequence and reputation so fully depended upon divine guidance.

There has been a divorce between church and state. Yet, here steps a man who links religion and politics together, and with confidence in his ability as God gives him the power, marches toward civic righteousness and purity of government. His belief in inspiration is well shown by his fondness for the poem, "To a Waterfowl," by William Cullen Bryant:

"He who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,

In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will guide my steps aright."

The battle of Waterloo was nearly over; the slowly setting sun beckoned night to close the last sad battle of Napoleon. The career of the man of destiny was nearly done. The rear guard had been attacked, and before a rally could be made, the front rank had been swept away. Brave comrades gently carried a young lieutenant to the rear, and dropped his bleeding form on the rude hospital cot. It was then, while the surgeon probed his breast for the bullet, that the lad in a half delirious burst of strength turned partly over, and whispered to the rough army surgeon in a tone of utmost confidence, "Probe a little deeper, doctor, and you will find Napoleon there." So, my friends, you may plunge the common people in years of bloodless political battle, you may deceive their confidence by a grafter or a politician, you may wreck their hopes by the promise coated tongue of a demagogue; you may pass before their eyes the panorama of departed heroes, or conjure for them a truthful picture of those who now march their standards in the thick of the fight, and in the end, my friends, in the end, you may search this country high and low, and you will find emblazoned upon the heart of the common people the name of him who gave his political life that civic righteousness and purity of government might be further marched along the Utopian road toward the millenium that is sure to come.

The magnificence of marching armies and the brilliant diplomacy of statesmen are not the things that determine the destiny of nations. An unending procession of world's tragedies has taught mankind that just as physical dissipation and corruption spell human death so does civic unrighteousness and impurity of citizenship pronounce the doom of nations and empires. Thrice true is this true of democratic government wherein the public will is the source of power. In a nation of democracy public integrity and stability are not so much a question of palace and senate and council chamber as they are a question of an undefiled and upright common people. Viewing our nation through the warping lens of patriotic pride we boast that the future holds no evil fortunes; we cry that the United States is the mightiest exponent of democracy, and that its very name is synonymous with human happiness and liberty. Mark well then the man who preserves and champions the cause of labor, who guards safely the rights of the common people!

The march of events is a curious thing, and to him who can foresee, to him who can construct, and then carry out with a steadfastness of purpose, to him all honor should be given, and to him belongs the thanks and the blessings of posterity.

O, politicians, where are your heroes? Mark Hanna, arise from your eternal slumber, and conjure for us a picture of departed champions. Lay at our feet the worthiest of your lot, and we will answer for the cause of clean and pure politics, with the fanatic of a decade ago. For he answered your finest creations with the immortal words: "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!"

O, champion of labor; O, defender of the common people; O, gifted orator and prince of prophets, march onward the cause of precious liberty and democracy! Hold high your lofty ambition before the straining eyes of countless multitudes; and when in after years, when you yield the helm to another, may the remembrance of an inspired touch send a thrill from bow to stern, as the ship of state glides swiftly and proudly past the rocks of destruction through the straight and narrow channel of an eternal democracy.