

# On the Chautauqua Circuit

(The following, taken from the July Lyceum Magazine, is an interesting description of Mr. Bryan's work in the chautauqua circuits:)

Bryan is still the great chautauqua attraction of America. He went from indoor audiences to the "canvas colleges" at the opening of the season and spoke twice or thrice a day until the national conventions opened, when he hurried from the last steaming tent to become a reporter.

There are the same crowds and enthusiasm of the "palmy days." Indeed, if the clapping of palms is the proof, these are his palmiest days. No matter where he goes, the towns he visits are gay with flags and bunting. Special trains bring crowds from adjoining towns to fill up the streets. There is a throng at the depot as the train pulls in. The band strikes up, the necks crane.

"There he is!" "There's Bryan!" The familiar stout figure climbs down, the reception committee of prominent citizens grabs him. "Glad to see you!" says the Commoner with the big smile in place. Into the auto and up to the hotel or to the home of the citizen they go.

An hour later the speaking begins in the tent. Bryan has been busy hand-shaking before till time to speak, and afterwards till the train pulls out he keeps on grasping hands and telling them how glad he is to see them.

He means it, too. No matter what he is doing or who is talking to him, he has time to stop and shake the hand of anybody who pushes in. No matter if he is well dressed or shabby. The lank man in the shirt sleeves gets the same welcome. "These are the people who believe in men and stick by me," he explains. Which explains why you can't kill Bryan. You can't kill anybody the shirtsleeve boys believe in. You can only kill them in type. There is nothing so harmless and beneficial as type-killing.

"I could make a million dollars a year if I wanted to make money," he said just before he went on the platform at Helena, Arkansas, June 4, while touring the Alkahest circuit.

"I could go down to New York

and practice law. I could go out and speak for the special interests. I could make a million a year in corporation oratory alone. But I prefer to take my two grips and go out to the chautauquas. I prefer the hardships of travel and speaking where I can do good, upon causes dear to my heart. I do not get nearly so much money, but every penny is clean."

That ought to hold the folks a while who proclaim that Mr. Bryan is out for the money, that he resigned for chautauqua gate money. And those who so enjoy holding funeral services for Mr. Bryan might weep a few real weeps if they would go out to the chautauquas. The republicans have so often read the sad ceremony. Now the democrats are industriously heaping up the Bryan mound. Come, brethren of the doleful sound, come out to the chautauquas!

Do you realize what Bryan does? He spoke over at Bamberg this forenoon. He handhook his way to and from the train. He got to Manchester at 3:45 that afternoon for his next speech. Word had gotten out that he wasn't coming, but at four he was on the Manchester platform before a sea of waving fans. He speaks another two hours, then slips from the crowd to steal an hour's rest. He lies down and goes to sleep that hour. He can sleep whenever he tells himself to sleep. At seven he jumps into an auto and rides twenty-five miles to Thomaston, where a little after eight he is on the platform for his third lecture that day.

An ordinary man couldn't stand the pace. But Bryan would chafe at the tedium of an ordinary man's high speed. Many public men have been wrecked at trying to do the half that Bryan thrives beatifically under. When I saw him at Helena, he had ridden all night, had been just an hour in bed. At the hotel he got another hour, and declared he never felt better in his life and plunged into the handshakes.

This lecturing and whirlwind touring is the daily incident. He is thinking, planning, prophesying, writing, editing, measuring, listening all the time. He hears what is going on around him, and he counts the world's pulsebeats day by day.

He isn't after his pound of flesh. He draws his fee at the gate. You know he takes the first \$250 and then divides. \* \* \* \* \*

Get on the train and ride with Bryan to his next date. He's shaken the last hand, greeted the last politician, smiled at the last baby named after him. About a dozen on the train throng around him, and somehow he manages to visit with them all, but on his knee is a pad. He is writing for the printers.

Click! We have hit a switch. That means another town, and they have learned that Bryan is going through and there are people at the depot. He has just written, "Now is the time for —"

He drops the pad, goes to the platform, shakes hands, perhaps speaks. "I voted for you!" "Here's my baby named after you!"

"All aboard!" Click! The last switch is passed. He goes back to his seat and finishes the sentence:

"— this nation to tender its good offices to the belligerents with a view to aiding the restoration of peace."

### Great Moral Force

He's a wonderful machine. Day by day through the noise and the chaos he goes serenely like the iceberg going against the wind pushed by the great ocean currents below.

He reads newspaper praise and smiles. He reads newspaper denunciation—there's much more of that just now, for he is being buried again—and smiles. He is impersonal, not a man, but an institution. He says it doesn't hurt him to read about himself. He is Kipling's "If."

"I wouldn't go across the street to hear him." "He's a dead one." You hear all sorts of comments. But the big tent is packed, no matter where it is set up. There is no other man living who can do it with a gate-fee.

Why? There is no other man on the platform with the simplicity, the sincerity, the voice and the presence. There is no other living man who can present from the platform the old life fundamentals—the Bible, religion, mother, home and heaven and impress them so simply and strongly. It is the power of a great character behind the words, that moral power that will continue to keep him politically alive. Bryan on the platform is the speaking personification of the American ideals, and every audience feels that. He deals in what some call platitudes. But God, good government, mother, home and heaven take on a holler meaning after two hours of Bryan in a tent.

I think that is why he holds any crowd anywhere, however hot the tent. He is a child in his faith and sincerity, and that is why the children who are wiggly and squirmy at first, get quiet and listen to every word. They understand him.

There isn't much comment afterwards. But the speech has sunk deep. One time the Hearst papers sent a staff muckraker to follow up Bryan at the chautauquas, and make a joke of him. The Hearst man said he wished he could get his boy on the job to get the good of the speeches.

### His Record and Prophecy

"I am fifty-six years old," said Mr. Bryan as he got back on the train at Helena. "I am worth \$200,000—land and my two homes. I don't want a thing, I have everything and I am happy. All I ask is that I can live at home more. I am not a candidate for anything. I do not say I shall never be a candidate again. I do not know what conditions may arise."

"I often marvel how my causes have survived. Isn't it wonderful. I have had only the plain people to back me, and the rich interests have always been against me. I never have had money behind me."

Which explains why he is continually ridiculed as a pacifist. There are other pacifists in plenty. Bryan is flayed for his peace ideas, merely because it is the chance for special interests to get at their greatest foe.

"I do not believe any other man has advocated so many causes as I have, and has lived to see so many of them prevail. Look back twenty years. I was declared visionary in urging things that now are achieved. Think of the tariff, the income tax, the money measures, the direct election of senators, the trust regulation and very many other things I fathered. Add to that my work for woman suffrage, prohibition, peace and christianity."

"All aboard!"

"And if I live another twenty years, I'll see national prohibition, woman suffrage and world peace accomplished," he said from the rear platform, with the same gleam in his eye that years ago captured the Chicago convention.

He was on his way to another.

### THE COUNTRY NEWSPAPER

Our papers, our little country papers, seem drab and miserably provincial to strangers; yet we who read them read in their lines the sweet,

intimate story of life. And all these touches of nature make us wondrous kind. It is the country newspaper, bringing together daily the threads of the town's life, weaving them into something rich and strange, and setting the pattern as it weaves, directing the loom, and giving the cloth its color by mixing the lives of all the people in its color-pot—it is this country newspaper that reveals us to ourselves, that keeps our country hearts quick and our country minds open and our country faith strong.

When the girl at the glove counter marries the boy in the wholesale house the news of their wedding is good for a 40-line wedding notice, and the 40 lines in the country paper give them self-respect. When in due course we know that their baby is a 12-pounder, named Grover or Theodore or Woodrow, we have that neighborly feeling that breeds the real democracy. When we read of death in that home we can mourn with them that mourn. When we see them moving upward in the world, into a firm and out toward the country club neighborhood, we rejoice with them that rejoice. Therefore, men and brethren, when you are riding through this vale of tears upon the California Limited, and by chance pick up a little country newspaper with its meagre telegraph service of 3,000 or 4,000 words or, at least, 15,000 or 25,000; when you see its array of countryside items; its interminable local stories; its tiresome editorials on the waterworks, the schools, the street railroad, the crops and the city printing, don't throw down the contemptible little rag with the verdict that there is nothing in it. But know this, and know it well; if you could take the clay from your eyes and read the little paper as it is written you would find all of God's beautiful sorrowing, struggling, aspiring world in it, and what you saw would make you touch the little paper with reverent hands. —William Allen White, in Harper's Magazine.

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