

John Worth Kern

Since our last issue death has laid claim to one of the nation's ablest statesmen, one of the democratic party's most trusted leaders—one of the country's most lovable men—John Worth Kern.

The Commoner shares—as do its readers—the sorrow that has overwhelmed his family and the sense of personal loss felt by his host of friends.

Senator Kern was a self-made man; by rare qualities of mind and heart he earned for himself a high place among the public men of his day. He met the exacting requirements of leader of the majority in the senate during as trying a time as our country has ever experienced, and nearly half the voters of the country, by supporting him for vice-president, put him in the presidential class. He was an ideal public servant; his place will be hard to fill.

He was a believer in the people and ever their champion.

He loathed corruption in politics and sought to purify the elections. His Indiana friends could pay him no higher compliment than to give his name to the effort which must sooner or later be made to free his party and his state from the dollar brand of campaigning.

His life was an asset to his people—his death can not take from them the value of his career.

The generation is richer for this typical American—devoted husband and father, loyal and sympathetic friend, conscious citizen, faithful public servant—manly man.

W. J. BRYAN.

TRIBUTES BY THE PRESS

CURBSTONE MEDIATIONS

[By Horace H. Herr, in Indiana Forum.]

Even if I had the ability it would be impossible for me to add the least thing to the estimation of the late John W. Kern, as it has been summed up in the Indiana press, both democratic and republican.

There is near Paris a little cemetery in which are many new graves and, from the ruddy dawn until the sombre dusk, there is not a moment when this hallowed spot is not frequented by those who bring flowers and strew them in this field where some of the seed of the glory of France has been planted. I watched these worshippers one day, as they placed upon these altars the flowers of their devotion, there came a French lad, poorly clad and timid of the press of people, and in his hand he carried a garland of withered grass. It was a very humble offering, in beauty not to be compared with the gorgeous bouquets beside which it rested, but I was sure at the time that it must have rejoiced the heroic spirits which hover over those silent graves.

The memory of this French lad's act makes me bold to place upon the grave of one who in life was my friend and a source of inspiration, a humble expression of my devotion to his memory, even though my offering seems but a garland of withered grass. It is infinitely less than greatness should claim, it is unspeakably less than would fairly testify to the respect in which I held him, but so also would be the fair language of the poets even though the words were vitalized by the eloquence of the ages; for here I find that if I could say all, all yet would remain to be said.

John Kern believed in common people, and he was such a friend of laboring folk as they will not soon have in so conspicuous a place in this nation. The measure of his service to American labor is not yet appreciated by the rank and file because they do not quickly realize what it means to be their friend in a season when political power is, for the most part, in the hands of those who have grown fat and indolent on bread they did not earn and from harvests they neither sowed nor reaped.

In all the impulses of his soul John Kern was "for men." He was a worshipper at the shrine of True Democracy and his eyes always were seeking the hilltops for the first dawn-light of the day when democracy would come into its own. While he, as are all of us, at times was buffeted by party tempests and political expediency, he held the prow of his ship toward the beacon lights of his ideals.

I have known many men who have gone far

in public life and none of these had less of cant and artificiality than did John Kern. Dignity he had, but without false pride and condescension; he seemed to be no more boastful of his political successes and his place of responsibility in the life of a great nation than he was having a nose and ears; he could not have attained to such prominence that he would have been the least removed from the humblest citizen. He was a brilliant lawyer and statesman, but before either of these he was human.

He was a good man to talk to when your faith was waning. He believed. He had faith in life, in this world, in this generation and in this day. He was a sure antidote for doubt and cynicism.

Some times I feel that those for whom he had done the most connived at his crucifixion in the last election and I am bitter in spirit when I see those who hated his integrity and fought his political ideals when living, singing his praises now that their songs fall upon unhearing ears. The hypocrites! The crocodiles!

Democracy, when it is sorely pressed, has lost a true champion. As for me, I have lost an inspiring friend—and friends are the rare diamonds in human experience, of which no man has such a number that he can lose the least without the deepest regret.

SENATOR KERN'S DEATH

The death of Mr. Kern, which occurred Aug. 17, will bring sorrow to thousands of people in Indiana, for he was widely known as a man of friendly and kindly nature. Though a strong partisan, he had many admirers among republicans. For many years Mr. Kern has been prominent in politics. Twice his party's candidate for governor under conditions that made election impossible, and once its candidate for vice-president when success was out of the question. Mr. Kern fought three losing battles in such a way as greatly to strengthen his hold on the people. As senator he had the confidence and respect of his colleagues who gladly accepted him as majority leader of the senate. President Wilson had no more steadfast supporter in that body.

He was, as all know, a man of integrity and character. He made no money out of politics. On the contrary, his participation in public life cost him much. His ambition was to serve the people to the best of his ability. But it is of Mr. Kern as friend and neighbor that the people of Indiana are thinking. To many his death brings the feeling of personal loss. For even those who met him but casually felt that they knew him, and that he was their friend. He had a keen, though kindly sense of humor. There was no bitterness in his makeup. Even those who differed with him could not help liking him. He never allowed political antagonisms to degenerate into personal enmity.

There was no selfishness in him, and no trace of commercialism. On the contrary, Mr. Kern throughout his public life fought those interests by whose help others have risen to power. The people of Indiana sympathize with his family in its great affliction, an affliction in which many of them feel that they share.—Indianapolis News.

JOHN WORTH KERN

In the death of John Worth Kern, Indiana loses one of her favorite sons, whose name probably was familiar to more homes than that of any of his contemporaries. He was one of the conspicuous men of his own state for many years, but it must be said for him that he never assumed any superiority; for in spite of the prominence he attained as the democratic nominee for the vice presidency and the distinction won as floor leader of the United States senate throughout the first administration of President Wilson, he was not given to boasting of his own achievements. In fact, his great and enduring popularity with the masses in his own state was due more largely to his simplicity of character, his gentle and kindly attitude toward people, than to any quality of leadership and statesmanship he developed.

He loved his state and was a distinct credit to it. No man could be as active as he was for thirty or forty years in public life without arousing antagonism and criticism, but in both parties he had warm personal friends. He was an intrepid partisan, and for a long period of years he was at the front fighting the battles of his party. The varying fortunes of the latter were reflected in the life of Mr. Kern. He took to politics naturally, becoming a candidate for the

legislature in Howard county when he was barely of voting age. He was ever ready to champion the principles for which his party stood, and because he was defeated twice for governor and for the vice presidency he became known as a "leader of forlorn hopes."

A man of less cheerful and optimistic frame of mind would have become discouraged by defeat and would have dropped out of politics, but Mr. Kern accepted his defeats philosophically. His reward came in 1910, when a break in the republican party enabled him to win a seat in the United States senate. His election as floor leader was a great honor that came to him unexpectedly. It is not unlikely that his elevation to that position was due in a great measure to the fact that he was so constituted mentally that it was easy for him to get along with his associates without friction. He was not a party boss in any sense, but he was loyal to his chief and faithful to the obligations imposed upon him.

He was always a man of the people and in the closing years of his life was known as a staunch champion of labor. Though he was a devoted follower of William J. Bryan, he was loyal to President Wilson and was a democrat of the most intense, unchangeable type. Whatever differences his opponents may have had with him, no one could take from him the high regard in which he was held by thousands of people who loved him simply as John Worth Kern, a man of sweet and gentle impulses. By them his loss will indeed be felt. It is decidedly to his credit that he made his own way in life so successfully; that he broadened his vision as he grew older, and that in the face of poor health he never attempted to shirk his responsibilities.—Indianapolis Star.

WHY NOT BUILD MONUMENT TO JOHN W. KERN

In the long list of her illustrious men, Indiana has produced none more devoted to the common, work-a-day people, than was John Worth Kern.

His place in the history of this state and in this union, his place in the memory of this generation is a thing which is secure. This place is his own handiwork, the living may do nothing to enlarge or diminish it. It is a place builded through service to the great masses of mankind through the championship, in fair weather and foul, of the principles of democracy. This place, perhaps, always will be the inspiring monument to his great talent and his untiring efforts in behalf of universal equity and justice.

Surely such characters as John Kern, when they pass on, need neither pencilled marble nor burnished bronze to secure them in the memory of grateful masses for whom they valiantly struggled, and yet there could be nothing more appropriate than that the thousands of friends of this statesman should build their own monument to him; a monument which should stand in the midst of his own people and in the heart of the state which he served long and well.

By every measure of a man, by every rule of patriotism, John Kern was such a one as richly deserves to be celebrated in a monument. That monument should stand in the capital city of his state. It should be builded by popular subscription so that his humblest admirer and friend could have a part in doing honor to his memory and could join in this acknowledgment of his service to his and future generations.

Is it out of place at this time to suggest to the democratic editors throughout the state of Indiana that they are in a position to make it possible for Indiana to build a monument to John Worth Kern that would be worthy one of a great state's greatest champions of democracy? There are thousands of men in Indiana who would welcome the opportunity to pay his final tribute to their former friend and leader.—Indiana Forum.

THE LATE SENATOR KERN

Indiana, in the death of former Senator John W. Kern, loses one of her truly distinguished sons—a man of ability and many lovable qualities. Senator Kern had been signally honored by his party, and, as United States senator from Indiana and democratic floor leader during his term expiring last March, he acquitted himself with credit. He was the running mate of Hon. William Jennings Bryan in the campaign of 1898, and has for many years been a close friend and supporter of the distinguished Nebraskan commoner.—Lebanon (Ind.) Pioneer.