

Mr. Bryan in History

Editor The Commoner: Of all the centenaries that have been and are being observed throughout the civilized world, of those whose characters and services for the good of humanity have been writ large upon the scroll of fame, there is none whose life will be found to be more inspiring or more replete with instruction at the present hour, particularly for the millions of our countrymen who have steadfastly followed the matchless leadership of America's great commoner through the decade and a half now of triumphant and still triumphing struggle, "to reform the enormous abuses growing out of consolidated, law-defying wealth, avarice and legalized rapacity," than that of John Bright.

One hundred years ago, 1811, John Bright, the great English Quaker, orator and statesman was born.

Apart from the propriety at this time of paying tribute to the man to whom our country owes an obligation and debt of gratitude for what he did at the time when this country was in the throes of a great national calamity—that is measureless—the purposes of this article is two: First, to call attention to the striking similarity between the great struggle that was waged in England in which John Bright took so conspicuous a part and that which is now being waged here.

And, second, by carefully noting what follows regarding John Bright, spoken at a great testimonial meeting given him at Birmingham, England, in 1883, certainly one of the most remarkable tributes ever paid to any man. The millions of admiring and devoted followers of democracy's great leader here will be struck with the fidelity with which this portraiture of his great English prototype portrays his character and public services, and his incorruptible integrity, which is the chief secret of the confidence, admiration and enthusiastic loyalty with which they have come to regard him.

On the occasion above referred to, concerning the character and public services of Bright, the Birmingham Liberal association wrote:

"We need not recall the vital questions which have been raised and settled, the beneficent reforms which have been effected, and the measure of progress which has been achieved during the period of your services. These are written in the history of our country; and, there, also, is imperishably recorded the great share which you have had in bringing them about. There is no reform for which you have pleaded that has not received support from your countrymen, and recognition from the legislature, these have been the objections of your ceaseless endeavors; to these you have been faithful in all vicissitudes of political fortune, and under all circumstances of personal trial, undismayed by momentary failure, undeterred by persistent obloquy. And, thanks in a great measure to your advocacy, the principles for which you have contended, from your entrance into parliament until now, are largely embodied in acts of legislation."

The National Liberal club sent an address and it was signed by Mr. Gladstone.

The National Reform union (Manchester) wrote:

"Your life has been an ensample, your career an inspiration, your name a strong-hold of political faith. There have been times when the great party to which we all belong has been endangered of losing sight of the end and aim of its existence. Then your singleness of purpose shown forth like a beacon to keep us in the right course. When the principles which we all profess have been temporarily obscured by the passion of party or by consideration of so-called national expediency, your fidelity to principle has raised us above the influences of the moment. If we have ever felt uncertain and doubtful as to a particular course of political action, our confidence has been restored, or our doubt made certainty by the attitude you have assumed, so strong has been our faith in your political sagacity and the purity of your motives. It would be vain to attempt to enumerate all the great and beneficial movements which you have led or taken a leading part in promoting. With your name will ever be associated the acquisition by your fellow-country-

men of the blessings of free trade, a free press, and an extended franchise. The cause of liberty has ever found in you a ready and an uncompromising champion; and you have often striven, with a courage greater than that of the soldier, to stem the tide of war, even when it flowed with the full passion of a nation. Secure of popularity alike by the services you have rendered to the people and by the gift of marvellous eloquence with which God has endowed you, the breath of popular prejudice has never shaken your resolution. Basing your own conduct, in public as well as in private life, on the firm and immutable foundations of morality, you have consistently endeavored to shape your country's policy and secure her well being by a strict application of the same principles to her national life."

"We who have heard him so often," said a speaker on the occasion, "can never forget the music of his voice, the simplicity and noble strength of his English style, the admiration of scholars, and intelligible to the least cultivated of the people. We have been charmed by the felicity of his illustrations, drawn from the best English sources, but by preference from those ancient and venerable scriptures which are dearer than all other books besides, to the hearts of the English people. Again and again we have felt the force of his massive common sense, we have been moved to tears by his pathos, and we have been kindled to passion by his glorious declamation. But, sir, the hearts of a great population are not to be won by eloquence alone, no matter how splendid. We are here to acknowledge that Mr. Bright has rendered immense and incontestable services to ourselves and to the whole country. These services alone would have been sufficient to secure for Mr. Bright lasting gratitude and renown. But in addition to this he, beyond all other men who took part in the great struggle for reform, achieved the political emancipation of thousands of Englishmen in all our great towns. (Applause.) But, sir, I venture to say that the affection and veneration which Mr. Bright has inspired are not fully explained either by his eloquence or by the magnificent services that he has rendered to the country. The man is greater than his eloquence; the man is nobler than his services. (Loud cheers.) We forget the genius of the orator, and the political achievements of the statesman in our admiration of himself. (Applause) And the reason of this is plain: in the heart of every one of us there is an invincible conviction that the true nobility and glory of human life come from courageous fidelity to duty, and in circumstances of great peril Mr. Bright has always been loyal to his conscience. Slander never turned him aside (hear, hear) from what he believed to be the path of righteousness, nor mockery, nor insult, nor hatred. He never quailed before the power of the great and when for a time fidelity to conscience brought upon him storms of unpopularity, and he lost the confidence of the people he loved and served, Mr. Bright remained faithful still. (Cheers, renewed again and again.) I believe that he has elevated the national ideal of political morality (hear, hear,) and the value of that service can not be measured. His incorruptible integrity is the chief secret of the confidence and enthusiastic loyalty with which we have come to regard him. (Cheers.) To a man like Mr. Bright, with powers so great, with an influence in this nation so immense, the review of his public life to which he is called tonight must have a certain solemnity in it. We hope indeed, that for a long while to come (hear, hear) his integrity, his sagacity, his knowledge of public affairs will long be continued to guide and to strengthen the great liberal party. (Cheers.)

"For ourselves, we are here to say that, in our judgment, he has discharged his great trust with a noble courage, and with a stainless honesty (loud cheers) and has served us and the nation well. (Loud cheering.) And now, Mr. Bright, the grateful blessings of the poor are yours, for you have lessened their miseries. (Cheers.) The confidence of the great mass of your fellowcountrymen is yours, for you have redressed their political wrongs. (Cheers.) You have won the respect of the most worthy of your opponents and you have won the enthusiastic devotion of your friends. In every land where the English tongue is spoken you are honored as the foremost champion in these times of truth, of freedom, of justice, and of

peace. (Hear, hear and cheers.) These, sir, are glories which surpass the most splendid rewards of mere personal ambition. They "Make the pageantries of kings like shadows seem

An unsubstantial dream."

(Loud cheers.) This is what was said of John Bright. This is what will be said of William J. Bryan and realized more and more as event upon event demonstrates how unerring is the great, strong and righteous hand that has been ordained to lead; and when his work is done it will as truly and justly be said of him as it was of Bright—and it will be one of the greatest tributes that can be paid to his life's great work—that "he was one of the greatest moral forces in American politics of his day."

At a testimonial meeting given in England to William Lloyd Garrison, John Bright in speaking of Garrison's work said: "It is a triumph which has pronounced the irreversible doom of slavery."

Must it not now be said, thanks to William J. Bryan more than to any other single living man in these United States, that the irreversible doom of legalized plunder and moral obliquity in high places is finally and rapidly being sealed by a great people. C. H. BULLIS.

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THE REAL DEFENDERS OF PROPERTY

Whenever any vested wrong is to be righted or any long-standing abuse corrected, those who profit by the wrong or the abuse are prompt to pose as the defenders of property and to charge the reformers with attacking property rights. This is the historic attitude of those who oppose remedial legislation. The insincerity of the position taken is usually shown by the arguments employed by these self-styled champions of property, and one of the best illustrations of these arguments is to be found in the story of Demetrius, the silversmith. It reads as follows:

"And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, 'Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands. So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at naught; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised and her magnificence should be destroyed whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.' And when they heard these sayings they were full of wrath, saying, 'Great is Diana of the Ephesians.'"

The silversmith was profiting by the worship of idols; the making of images was the source of his income. He called together those who were engaged in the same occupation and when all were convinced that Paul's preaching would bring them financial injury they joined in a protest—but they did not give their real reason for opposing Christianity—namely, that it would cause them a money loss, but they pretended a fervent devotion to the goddess Diana. So, today, the beneficiaries of bad laws and bad governmental systems are defending their pecuniary interests with arguments that imply great devotion to the public welfare. Having satisfied themselves that the reforms demanded by the people will lessen their power to extort from and to tyrannize over the people, these monopolists and their defenders shout, "Great is property! Great are the rights of property!" While the issue between the man and the dollar seems to be an acute one, yet in the last analysis there can be no issue between human rights and property rights, for nothing more surely undermines property rights than a disregard for human rights, and nothing brings greater security to property than a scrupulous regard for the natural rights of each human being. But we must always remember that human rights are paramount. In fact, everything depends upon the establishment of the true relation between the individual and dull, inanimate property.

The house and its foundation are indissolubly connected, and we can not think of one without the other. So, human rights and property rights are indissolubly connected. We can not think of the one without the other and as in the building of a house we must think of the foundation first and of the house as a superstructure, so in thinking of society we must