

Jefferson Day Banquet Given by the New York Democratic Club

Address of Mr. Bryan, delivered at the Jefferson day banquet in the Waldorf-Astoria, on April 13, 1912.

Mr. President, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: This banquet has to me been a rare treat. I have enjoyed with you the speeches so appropriate to the occasion. How fitting that Thomas Jefferson should be presented as so splendid a character to an audience like this. I know of no other man produced in our country's history whose example is more needed today to inspire our people to duty. Just at this time we can, possibly more fittingly than at any previous time, celebrate his work and revere his memory, for there has been no period of the world's history since Jefferson lived when his ideals were growing more rapidly than they are today. Around this world the ideals of Thomas Jefferson are marching triumphant, and nowhere more than in our own beloved land. And, if I mistake not what is going on in this country, Thomas Jefferson is finding more followers today—more men following in his footsteps—than ever before.

Thomas Jefferson was born an aristocrat. He became our nation's first great democrat, and in his change he typified the change the world is witnessing; for aristocracy is passing away and democracy is coming into her own. There is not a land upon God's footstool in which the power of the people is not growing; not a country on this earth where the forces of privilege are not retreating. This is a time to think of Jefferson and the work he did.

Today the learned men are finding less and less satisfaction in contemplating their superiority over those less educated. The feeling of brotherhood is growing, and the increasing multitude coming from our schools and colleges are ceasing to look down upon those who used to be called ignorant; they are taking their place among them and bidding them look up to something better. In one of the guests tonight we see an illustration of these changing times, and I trust that he will be but the forerunner of the larger army of educated men who recognize that the heart controls; that out of it are the issues of life.

Thomas Jefferson was a rich man for his day—but he was the champion of the poor, and today we find the altruistic spirit growing and more and more men like Jefferson who are linking themselves with the struggling masses and helping them in their struggle for better things.

This is one of the characteristics of this period. It is well that we assemble here tonight and consider this great character. Are there here those who have leaned toward aristocracy and thought that some were made of a superior kind of clay? Are they bringing up their boys and girls to look down with disdain upon those who toil? Let them learn that this boy, reared in an aristocratic home won a place in the world's history that no child can ever aspire to who does not learn that he is one and only one among God's people. Are there any here who have thought that wealth measured their importance? What millionaire today but would change his wealth for the assurance that he would be loved by generations that would come after him? Jefferson, by the spread of his fame and name, and by the impress that he has made, teaches us all a lesson—how much more valuable, aye, how above all price are these fundamental virtues that distinguish man from mere possessions!

I am glad to celebrate this day in New York, I have been here before (laughter) but never under such favorable conditions. (laughter) One of the speakers has told us what Jefferson would say if he were here. I am glad he said what he did, for they used to drive me from your precincts because I said less in criticism of courts. It is gratifying to me that they have put at the head of this great city a man who is not so conservative as I am in the expression of opinion; but I am glad to indorse what he says. And to hear them talk of him for president? What a change, oh what a change in New York! And then we heard of what Jefferson would do, and again I was delighted and instructed. With these two radicals to precede me, how could you reject my speech tonight? And is this the east? (great laughter) Am I alive? (great laughter) Or is this a dream? (laughter) The new east! Mayor Gaynor suggests. (great

hand clapping) With these two speeches in New York and Roosevelt carrying Pennsylvania by two to one, what's coming, my friends? Surely the seed that Jefferson sowed is at last bringing forth fruit.

My subject is, "Democratic Opportunity," but after these speeches in regard to what Jefferson would say and what Jefferson would do, I feel like changing my subject and asking what would the people here do to Jefferson if he was among them? I know what they did to me when I tried to imitate him. I know that when I tried to imitate him, tried as best I could and only mourned that I could not more truly reflect his ideas on public questions, I know what they did. I know that they allowed your predatory interests to organize and stretch out their larcenous hands over a nation, and coerce people into consenting to their enslavement in the interests of privilege.

I wonder what they would do to Jefferson if he were here? And yet I glory in the fact that those who oppose the doctrines of Jefferson can only retard, not prevent, their growth, and the triumphs of today that make us glad for what has been accomplished, and hopeful as to future triumphs, show how clearly the character of Jefferson has been read and how well the wise men of the past have known the real forces in society. It was said by one who did not even have the inspiration of residence in our own land that thought is stronger than artillery parks and at last moulds the world like soft clay, and that back of thought is love. It is true. Love is the great force in this world and love for the people was the keynote of Jefferson's life and of his philosophy. It has been said of him, aye, it has been said of all whose names have lived beyond their generation, that the people loved him because he first loved them; it is love that is triumphing today over the forces that have been arrayed against the people and their rights.

I am grateful that God has spared my life unto this day. I have lived to see more of progress than I could have hoped to see even though I have been sanguine all my life. I have believed—my father taught it to me while I was yet a boy—that God stands back of every righteous cause and that His arm is strong enough to bring victory to his side; but the world has moved so slowly that one can hardly be patient when he sees how long deception can mislead and how long force can coerce. But behold our party's position today triumphant in its ideas even before it has been in possession of the offices. What better evidence could we have of the immortality of democracy than we have had in the fact that it has lived in spite of all it had to overcome, and what higher tribute could be paid to a party than to say of it—as it now must be said of our party—that in defeat it has dominated the opinion of a nation?

Tell me that the republican party has been in office? Yes, but the democratic party has been in power. Tell me that republicans have drawn the salaries? Yes, but our party has moulded opinion and led the way. And our hopes of victory in November rest upon two solid grounds. The first is the overwhelming sentiment in favor of the things we have fought for. The democratic party has been a militant party for more than a decade and a half, and what are the fruits of the struggle? We are now upon the eve of the securing of the election of senators by direct vote of the people. The democratic party began its fight for it some twenty years ago and it has, within the last few months passed the senate for the first time. It passed the house six times before the senate yielded to the popular will. It is now in conference between the two houses and soon it will be submitted as an amendment, for I can not doubt that the conference committee will find some way of harmonizing the verbal differences between the two resolutions; and when it comes the greatest change in a century in our methods of government will have been secured and the United States senate, which has been the bulwark of special privilege, will then become the servant of the people and responsive to the people's will. I am glad that this imperial state of New York has at last a man there to fight for the election of senators by the people. (great applause) His predecessor, Senator Depew, led the last fight that was made against the popu-

lar election of senators. I congratulate you that the favor-seeking corporations of the state have lost a senator and that the people have won one in the person of Senator O'Gorman. (Great applause.)

Not only is the United States senate to become a representative body, speaking for the people and not for those who take advantage of them, but while that fight has been going on the people have been getting better control of their party organizations. I remember that twenty-one years ago when I was a candidate for congress we did not even have the Australian ballot, and you could tell a polling place half a mile off by the crowd in front; you had to fight your way through a gang of men paid to peddle tickets. Now elections are so quiet that you have to get a policeman to show you where the polling place is. After that reform was secured we still relied entirely upon the conventions and under them the boss system grew up. Each party would have its boss. There was the state boss and a county boss in each county; when a convention was held the state boss and the county bosses would get together and fix up a slate and parcel the offices out several terms in advance and if the people rose up against the boss, the boss of the other party would come and quell the disturbance by assisting the boss of the opposite party.

But the primary system is spreading over the country and the people are taking control of party organizations, believing that if the Declaration of Independence states the truth when it says that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, then party organizations have no power which they do not derive from the vote of the party. Whether you like this or not does not matter. Whether you believe in the primary or not you can not prevent it. You could send a Depew down for a while to represent the interests and vote against the election of senators by the people, but after a while came an O'Gorman who trusted the people; and so, for a while you may stand in the way of the demand by the people for the control of their party organization but you can not stand against the flood long. Within two months two states have held special sessions of the legislature in order to pass laws, giving the people the benefit of a presidential preference primary, and—although I know my reputation as a prophet down here has been somewhat impaired—I venture to predict that before another presidential election comes, the age in which bosses will meet to pick a president will have passed and presidents will be nominated by the people and be responsible to the people. (Great applause.)

That's another reform, and the democratic party is on the side of it just as it is on the side of electing senators by the people. Not only that, but we have made progress in the purifying of politics. It was not many years ago when a prominent senator said that purity in politics was an iridescent dream. Well, that was back when Wall street nominated both tickets—took a mortgage on both administrations and then said "They are both good men. No matter which wins, the people lose." But that day, too, has passed. When the people found where the sinews of war came from a protest arose that could not be ignored and a law was passed making it a criminal offense for any corporation to contribute to a national campaign fund. Oh, my countrymen, if we had only that law in 1896! But that law was not sufficient. The people demanded more and they got more. They demanded publicity as to individual contributions, and in 1908 the question was not whether we should have publicity—we got to a point where publicity was then admitted to be necessary—but the question was whether we should have it before the election or afterward. The republicans said AFTERWARD, we said BEFORE, and they won, and a law was passed providing for publicity after the election, but before that law was three years old it was replaced by a law providing for publicity before election; and when the bill passed the house not even a republican—not even a New York republican—spoke against it, and when the president signed it he signed a bill repudiating everything that he and Mr. Roosevelt had said on the subject in 1908. That's how rapidly we are going forward and we now have more than we asked for in 1908. So rapidly is public sentiment moving that the senate improved the bill, the democratic house passed and put a limitation of \$10,000 on a senator's expenditures and \$5,000 on a congressman's expenditures, and if you think that does not mean anything, read the vote the other day