

Mr. Bryan Evades the "I"

(From Kansas City Star, May 12.)

The door of room 839, Hotel Baltimore, swung open slowly. Inside, at a desk, a man sat, head bowed over the stationery before him, frock coat pressed against the chair's back, his mind intent on the work he was doing.

"Come in," he said, "you must have been in Topeka when you called. What took you so long?"

"I got in the wrong elevator," shame-facedly. "Then I had to go back downstairs and try it all over again."

The man laughed.

"That's a novel excuse, anyway," he said, a smile lighting up his serious face. "Do you mind if I shave while we talk?"

"Not in the least, Mr. Bryan. Do you like lecturing in the city better than in the small towns?"

"It's more restful in the city," the man said tiredly. "The small towns, perhaps, are more eager to hear one, but it's more restful in the city."

William Jennings Bryan, rounding out on the lecture platform the active career of his public life, is not far changed from the William Jennings Bryan who stood on the speaker's platform in the auditorium in Chicago that summer day in 1896 and told Democracy: "You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

He is a far older Mr. Bryan, that is true. The black hair that curled across his head has gone from the top and only a fringe of gray around the sides remains. The round, firm face has lines now. But the transition is only the natural one that comes between 36 and 61 years of age. The same steadfast, fighting look is in Mr. Bryan's eyes. His voice has its same rare impressiveness.

How does it feel to have molded public opinion for twenty-five years, to have addressed more people in public appearances than any other man in America today?

"That bring in the word 'I,'" he exclaimed. "It doesn't sound so bad, but it looks terrible. Put anything like that about me in the third person, please."

So—acceding to Mr. Bryan's request—his reluctance to talk about himself is novel among public men, and most refreshing. And it is very sincere. It's not that he is suffering from false modesty. It is just that he doesn't want a bored husband to announce to a sleepy wife across the living room table about 9 o'clock tonight "Ho—hum—! Here's Bryan talking about himself again."

It is the same way about politics. Mr. Bryan is absolutely nonpartisan these days at least so far as he is going to let anyone find out.

"Has the Harding administration taken any steps you oppose?" he was asked.

"Don't let's get on that subject, please" came the answer. "I'm talking on public speaking this trip and it's very interesting. Should you like to know any of the principles of oratory?"

"Not just now," hastily. "Here's a third question—who do you think is the greatest man you've ever met in public life?"

Mr. Bryan's reply was as easy to forecast as the weather the first half of this week.

"Comparisons are odious," he said, with a quiet smile.

Isn't that just what you or I—or anyone—would have said under the circumstances?

Whether Mr. Bryan admits that he has helped mold public opinion for more than twenty-five years, whether he confesses to having driven, driven, driven for certain reforms until his actual personal energy has helped put them across, it must be immensely satisfying to the man to see measures that were regarded as fetishes when he first advocated them now laws of our nation.

Lady Somerset, when she was here thirty years ago, dropped a saying that is more than a little applicable to Mr. Bryan and his work.

"When one man sees a thing," the Englishwoman pointed out, "he is called a fanatic. When many see the thing he is no longer a fanatic—he is an enthusiast. When everyone sees it, he is a hero."

Mr. Bryan advocated the popular election of United States senators and immediately became a "fanatic."

"The man's crazy," people shouted, none

more loudly than the United States senate. "He wants to revolutionize the government."

Mr. Bryan may have been "crazy" but he espoused the measure in his first congressional platform in 1890. Two years later it was endorsed by congress for the first time. Twenty-one years later, in 1913, it became a part of the constitution of the United States.

REALIZATION IN 23 YEARS

Wasn't it almost a reward from heaven that said that Mr. Bryan, as secretary of state under Woodrow Wilson, should sign the last document that made the popular election of senators a law—that popular election of senators that he had started working for twenty-three years before as a "fanatic?"

"The income tax amendment—that was easier," laughed Mr. Bryan "That took only seventeen years. That fight began in 1895 when the supreme court nullified the income tax law of 1894 by the usual majority, 5 to 4. That amendment became part of the constitution just before I became secretary of state, so Philander Knox signed it."

Prohibition was the third "apple of his eye" of Mr. Bryan's life. Women's suffrage was the fourth. They both went across to smashing victory with Mr. Bryan in the bandwagon on each occasion if not actually driving.

The statutory amendments he has suggested or has advocated have been as important. They include the publication of campaign contributions before the national elections, the currency law, the farm loan bank law, the child labor law, the anti-trust law, the Australian ballot.

"But you're not satisfied with having done all these things, Mr. Bryan?" was the question.

"Please leave me out of it," came the answer, true to form.

The shave was over. Mr. Bryan wiped off his razor carefully, put the blade back with its brothers, the holder back in its groove, snapped the box shut. He leaned over to examine his ruddy skin in the glass rubbed a finger tentatively over a place far back on his chin that he thought he had missed, found he hadn't missed it, smiled satisfiedly.

"Do you think of anything we've missed?" he asked through a fervid brushing of the teeth.

"No, I don't think of anything."

The vest was brushed and put on. So was the frock coat. So was the low collar and the string tie was tied with a facile handling that bespoke much knowledge of string ties.

A young man sitting near the door rose nervously and coughed.

"We go first to the Athenaeum and then to the chamber of commerce, Mr. Bryan," he said.

"First to the Athenaeum and then to the chamber of commerce," Mr. Bryan echoed with a smile. "All right."

He turned to his visitor.

"I'm glad to have met you," he said.

"Thank you."

He turned back to the young man.

"Let's go."

"All right."

William Jennings Bryan, congressman, party leader, secretary of state, three times nominee for President, had started his day's work.

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

Honorable W. J. Bryan has been speaking in Kansas City every night for a week.

Neither years of service nor political defeats have weakened Bryan's leadership or detracted from the constant courage he shows in standing squarely for the things he believes to be right.

He can well afford to look back over the last twenty-five years with satisfaction and he is so big that he has not been embittered by the unreasonable attacks of those who have fought him without cause.

Practically all the national issues which Bryan advocated, and which, indeed, were first advocated by Bryan, have been enacted into law and practice.

We have prohibition, woman suffrage, direct election of the senators, direct primary, income tax, a Federal Reserve bank system, and a more elastic currency.

Multitudes have praised him and a public press has jeered him, and vicious interests have fought him without mercy.

Though he may have lost some battles he has won his cause.

Many people idolize him and down in their hearts even his enemies respect him.

To us Bryan did not require success in political battles to make him great. For fidelity to

purpose, for conscientious adherence to his ideals, for standing square to the front in conscience upon his principles in public life and private life, in victory and defeat, he is our country's greatest example of a Christian gentleman.—Olathe, Kansas, Register.

RUIN IN FARMERS' FLIGHT

"You are real estate men. I want to leave with you the thought that it is of utmost importance that you understand the foundation upon which this city is built."

For more than a half hour yesterday William Jennings Bryan had talked to the members of the Real Estate Board about his career. He had joked about his unsuccessful efforts to become President, then suddenly he delved into more serious things.

The great problem today is the plight of the farmer, the Commoner said. There was no mistaking Mr. Bryan's conception of how serious the agricultural situation has become. He was fervent, eloquent and ruthless in picturing the ruin of the country if profiteering and crop gambling are not curbed and the business men do not join with the farmer in obtaining relief.

CITY'S LIFE DEPENDS ON FARMERS

"You cannot hope to live," Mr. Bryan continued, speaking of the foundation on which this city was built, "unless the agricultural country is prosperous. If you allow these farmers to be driven back to their sod houses, you'll starve."

"Stop your stealing! Drive your profiteers out of business! They are the big, fat middlemen bearing down on the producer and crushing the life out of him. He's reaping the profits. Limit and restrain the profits of the middleman."

Bryan on the stump could not have preached the issue of the day more ardently. Grain gambling and the profiteer were attacked as the ruination of the farmer and the Commoner was there to defend and fight for the protection of the producer.

He sketched the ruin that will result if the farmer declines to produce at present prices. The heaviest blow eventually would fall on the manufacturer.

FUTURE CROPS WILL DEPEND ON PRICES

"If these farmers are not going to get more for their produce than they received ten years ago, and have to pay twice as much for what they buy, they are going to buy only half as much," continued Mr. Bryan. "And when that condition develops idle men will fill the streets and you'll have to feed them when they cry for bread."

"You cannot afford to allow this to happen. You must help the farmer now. Every man in the city is on the side of injustice and the people can have no relief. If you can't do the things because they are right, then get down to the lower level and be restrained by fear of consequences."

Warm applause, cheers and finally a standing tribute indicated the realtors' appreciation of what is wrong in the period of economic readjustment.—Kansas City Star.

IS THE YOUNG MAN SAFE?

Ft. Wayne, Ind., May 23.—Speaking on three of the great dangers confronting the American nation, Williams Jennings Bryan gave his famous lecture, "Is the Young Man Absolutom Safe?" before a cheering crowd that had driven into Fort Wayne for miles around and packed the gymnasium of the Y. M. C. A. at 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon at the last of the association's Sunday afternoon meetings for the present season. Mr. Bryan spoke in the evening at the Wayne Street Methodist church, before leaving for Winona Lake, where he was scheduled to address the 133rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian church at 10 o'clock last night.

Declaring that he had chosen as the theme of his lecture the story of the unhappy ending of the rebellious son of King David, because he wanted to call to the attention of men the anxiety of a father's heart as his children grow up. Mr. Bryan asked whether we are today pointing out the perils confronting the young man, and trying to make society safe for him?

The anxious thought of King David, even in the midst of the battle waged in rebellion against his own authority, was for the safety of his son, and the news of that son's untimely death. Mr. Bryan said, gave utterance to the greatest and most beautiful expression of love and sorrow in all literature. "I want to make men think of their sons."