Dr. Clark's Estimate

(An appreciation of the man, the orator, the statesman, the Christian, by Rev. Francis E. Clark, president of the United Society of Christian Endeavor and of the World's Christian Endeavor Union.)

A full-orbed man is William Jennings Bryan. I am doubtful if our country ever possessed a great political leader, unless it were Lincoln, who had so few weaknesses and so many admirable qualities—I am speaking of character—as "the boy orator of the Platte," now "the sage of Miami." Even the great Washington, though of late years he has been made almost a demigod, was by no means the warm, eager friend of all men, ever pulsating with life and good cheer, that Mr. Bryan is.

But comparisons of this sort are odious. There can be but one Washington, but one Lincoln; I doubt if there can be another Bryan.

I know that some of my Republican friends, their minds still clouded by the slogans and the prejudices of past campaigns, will scoff and jeer at such a classification as I have suggested. But, brushing away the clouds of political prejudice, consider for a little the subect of my sketch from different angles.

I cannot be accused of partisanship, for I am, always have been, a Republican (with scratching reservations).

AS A MAN

Whatever you think of his politics, what flaw can you find in Mr. Bryan's character? He has been in the spotlight longer than any equally prominent man in recent American history. Has any meanness been proved against him? Thousands and thousands of people, in and out of his own party, whose political enmity he has incurred or whose shady plans he has exposed, would have been glad to besmirch him, and have not been able to do so. Like Samuel Wilberforce, who when asked by an enfant terrible, "Why do they call you Soapy Sam?" replied, "Because, my dear, I have been in hot water so often and come out clean." Mr. Bryan has been in hot water often enough; but no mud thrown at him has ever struck.

His modesty and good nature have always struck me as supremely admirable qualities. He has been abused unmercifully, but he has never been soured by calumny. He has been praised inordinately as the savior of his party and his country, but flattery has never made him anything but the simple, kindly, Democratic gentleman that he is. His sense of humor has never been corroded by failure. He jokes about his defeats for the Presidency, and waxes merry over his "sixteen-to-one" campaign. He is the best loser the country has ever known, and every one loves a good loser after the dense fumes of political prejudice have blown away.

Chief Justice Taft alone of our great men shares this quality with him in its perfection. No, Mr. Bryan's head has never been turned by adulation, or his soul warped by unmerited hatred. His every-day Democratic modesty is shown in many ways. I remember when he headed the procession of the St. Paul Christian Endeavor Convention in an automobile he insisted on getting out that an older man might ride while he walked. And in our last great gathering in New York he would have preferred to walk rather than ride, as I also would, had it not been that the leading automobile would then have looked strangely untenanted.

I recollect, after breakfasting with him and Mrs. Bryan at Washington when he was Secretary of State, I left behind me an old glove of little worth. He took pains to send it to me by the next mail with a kindly note in his own hand, which he is fond of using instead of dictating a letter when writing to his friends. "A little thing," do you say? but it is such little acts of thoughtful kindness that show a big heart.

In other matters, which many consider venial faults, Mr. Bryan shines conspicuously among our public men

Did you ever hear a vulgar or shady story attributed to him? Did you ever hear him insert a profane word or an irreverent remark into any of his speeches, or of his indorsing a political program of doubtful morality? He may have been mistaken in his political views, of course; but over and over he has risked his political future, and wrecked his immediate political prospects, by advocating or not advocating the measures for which his party or its leaders stood. Note his significant silence in the last Presidential campaign.

As a platform speaker Mr. Bryan's supremacy is unquestioned. Very few of the great orators

in our national history have reached his heights as a commander of the multitude. James Otis, Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, Daniel Webster, Rufus Choate, Henry Clay, Abraham Lincoln, James G. Blaine, Woodrow Wilson, have all been men of tremendous oratorical ability; but none of them has surpassed Mr. Bryan's power to move an audience.

Witness his great speech when as a reporter for a daily paper he gained his first nomination to the Presidency, a most surprising result which placed an unknown man, barely beyond the legal Presidential age, at the head of one of the great political parties, and which almost swept him into the Presidency.

His oratorical powers have never waned. His recent speeches at the World's Christian Endeavor Convention were as finely phrased, as eloquently delivered, as wittily pointed, as moving in their appeal, as any in his long career.

Moreover, his speeches read well, a great test of the true orator. Many a man has stirred the passions of a crowd by his personal magnetism or his vituperative violence (something in which Mr. Bryan never indulges; but, when you come to read his speech, it is nothing but troth, "a clanging gong," "a tinkling cymbal," "mere sound and fury, signifying nothing." I have read several of Mr. Bryan's speeches recently. It would be difficult to find a flaw in his argument, if you accept his premises, or a misplaced word in his fluent diction.

They all have the supreme virtue of simplicity and lucidity. You know exactly what he means and why he says it. He never utters a turgid sentence, and he never blinks an unpopular truth.

The popular estimate of Mr. Bryan's power with an audience is found in the frequently heard expression when other orators are alluded to, "Mr. So-and-So could hold his own on the platform with Bryan." What other public speaker is unconsciously honored by serving as the standard for popular oratory against all comers?

In Vachel Lindsay's poem one can hear the roar of the multitude as they call for "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan," and will be satisfied with no one else. His poem refers to one of Mr. Bryan's early speeches, which he heard in Springfield, Sangamon County, Ill., where Lincoln made some of his great speeches.

"When Bryan came to Springfield, and Altgeld gave him greeting,

Rochester was deserted, Divernon was deserted, Mechanicsburg, Riverton, Chickenbristle, Cotton Hill,

Empty; for all Sangamon drove to the meeting-

In silver-decked racing-cart, Buggy, buckboard, carryall,

Carriage, phaeton, whatever would haul, And silver-decked farm-wagons gritted, banged, and rolled

With the new tale of Bryan by the iron tires told."

AS A STATESMAN

Here very likely some of my friends will differ from me in my appraisal. I do not claim
that Mr. Bryan is infallible in his judgments.
But what statesman is? Who, judged in the
light of after-events, has made fewer mistakes?

He stood for prohibition when it had few friends and a multitude of scoffers. The nation has adopted his views and incorporated them in the Constitution of the United States. He stood for an income-tax and was abused

for his views as though he were a highwayman robbing the poor rich people of their money.

The income-tax has been adopted by national and state governments. Without it we would

never have stood the strain of the world war.

During his brief term of office as Secretary of State he concluded treaties of peace with thirty nations; treaties which would have prevented the recent world war, had they been universally adopted; treaties that would have prevented the nations from ever declaring war until months of delay and investigation had given the hot-heads time to cool off and cool-heads a chance to remove by arbitration the

Even his famous "sixteen-to-one" controversy, for which he was abused "like a pickpocket," as Washington once wrote to Jefferson of himself when he undertook some unpopular measure, does not look so crazy as it did to many twenty-five years ago. Some economists are beginning to ask, since gold itself has fluctuated so much, if Bryan was very far wrong. Many of the policies which Mr. Bryan has sponsored when in their most unpopular stage have been when in their most unpopular stage have been adopted by the opposition party with loud acclaim. He himself says with wit and truth that the Republicans have stolen many of his old

clothes.
However his political opponents may deride

him as statesman, as they do every opponent, I do not believe any one will ever seriously dispute our claim that he is a Christion gentleman of the very first order. Consider the provocations which red-hot political campaigns furnish. Mr. Bryan has a sharp tongue, but he has never used it as a dagger to plunge into the heart of his opponents to the ruin of their reputations. He has never engaged in unseemly broils with words or fisticuffs, as have some of our politicians. When suffering under the misunderstanding and reproach of the nation as in his disagreement with President Wilson in 1915, he has borne it all in silence without striking back as he might have done.

His kindly interest in every one who has any claim on his attention is also a noticeable characteristic. He likes men and women and little children because they are human, and all are God's children, a sign that he is a "great human" himself.

Consideration, humanity, lack of self-assertion, and genuine brotherliness are qualities that have endeared him to all who know him.

Whatever else Mr. Bryan is or is not, he is a Christian, first and last and all the time, week-days and Sundays. In many respects he is the greatest preacher in the country. His sermons are as convincing as they are eloquent, and there are no subjects into which he throws himself more whole-heartedly than those which relate to the religious life, of Jesus Christ and His great salvation. It is a wonderful thing for America that a man as conspicuous in politics should be no less conspicuous as a Christian.

in confirmation of what he considers his greatest mission let me quote in closing what he himself says about his chief interest in life. The quotation is from an address on "The Bible and Its Enemies." "I make a great many speeches on many different subjects, but there is a sameness about them all. I try to use different illustrations, and possibly if one has not analyzed them he might think they were quite unlike. I have used this illustration: Every part of the rim of a wheel is supported by a spoke that leads down to the hub; the wheel would be nothing but for the hub. So with my speeches; though they have touched the circumference of the wheel at many points, there has always been a spoke leading down to the hub; and that hub is the creed of Christ. Whether I speak on politics, on social questions, or on religion, I find the foundation of my speech in the philosophy of Him who spake as never man spake; who gave us a philosophy that fits into every human need and furnishes the solution for every problem that can vex a human heart or perplex the world."

PUBLIC SPEAKING

Chapel Hill, North Carolina. My dear Sir: Answering your inquiry I beg to say that no one can select a subject for another unless the speaker has ample time to prepare himself on the subject selected. My plan is to find out what the student is interested in and advise him to use the most important of the subjects that are on his heart. It takes longer to get up steam in a man than it does in an engine and steam is as necessary to him as to the engine.

Eloquence is the speech of one who knows what he is talking about and means what he says.

Of course you can prepare an essay on most any subject-not so with an oration. You cannot feel deeply about trivial things. If you are a student in the university you have doubtless reached an age when there is something which stands out in your thought as the most important thing to be done. It may affect the life of individuals, like religion. It may affect the welfare of society, or it may pertain to government and national or internatonal policy. Take something that you can put your heart into, then prepare yourself. Get all the information that you can. Saturate yourself with a knowledge of the subject, then put it in shape, going iogically from the fundamental proposition to the various branches of the subject, closing with an appeal. The important thing is to have something to say. If you give information and give it in such a way as to make people know that you feel what you say, they will listen and they too will feel, if yor are right and the subject is important.

Be careful about your delivery. Commence in a conversational tone and then you will have room to rise when you want to increase the emphasis. Talk to the audience as you would talk to a group of individuals, increasing the force, not by loudness but by earnestness.

Very truly yours, W. J. BRYAN.