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BRYAN'S BEE AND THE GOLD-BUG

Nobody ought to say a hard word of the millions of industrious but ill-informed persons who are the victims of the silver mania, and would be the victims of the 16 to 1 dollar if that noble buzzard coin should be allowed to prey upon us. Many of these persons, moreover, are still subject to reason and may yet be converted. There is a very numerous and formidable class, however, which is hopeless. In spite of the prevailing impression to the contrary, I have never been able to convince myself that Americans are a particularly industrious people. They think they are, and are always howling about work and "breaking down" under it, but there are plenty of them who never sully their hands with it. Our real genius is for talk, emotional and highly-colored talk, with no extensive basis of facts. Nobody can have seen much of small country settlements, in any part of the country, without having been struck with the large number of gentlemen who do no work, and seem to have no other visible means of support than a bench or a fence or the platform of a railroad station. If there is a railroad station, their chief employment is to watch the trains come in; if there is none, they ornament the postoffice, or the grain and feed store, or the barroom. Usually they are respectable. In the south they are always members of "leading families." The worst that their neighbors will say of them is that they are "shiftless critters" or "poor pay." I do not know how they live, but they seldom handle any instrument of labor except a fishing pole or a gun. They condescend to no meaner occupation than politics, which they will discuss with great heat and fury as long as they are awake. Ordinary politics serves them very well, but they do not feel that they have an opportunity to exercise the finest powers of their genius except when politics is busy with some financial question. Upon greenbacks, upon the wickedness of national banks and the bankers—and they have a particular hatred of these, on account of their reluctance to loan money to people who have no means or intention of paying it back—upon Wall street, and the Vanderbilts and Jay Gould, and corporations and watered stock, and the gold bugs they love to dilate by the day.

Finance is regarded by many as a dry study, but it has a perpetual fascination for these philosophers. They do not bother themselves about facts, but they have a very beautiful lot of fiction which they embroider with language full of sulphur and brimstone. "Jay Gould had \$500,000,000"—fortunes grow rapidly in these exchanges of financial thought—"and I ain't got a cent. Do you mean to tell me that's right? Ain't I as good a man as old Gould ever was? I tell yer we ain't got no free government. We ain't nothing but serfs and slaves. We do all the work (spite) and them bloodsuckers gets all the profft. There'll be a revolution in this country in ten years (spite) or my name ain't Bill Mudd. I tell yer we've got to rise up and git our rights. I'm sick and tired of tryin' to earn my bread by the sweat of my brow." (Cuts another

shaving off the plug). The country is very full of Bill Mudds, and every mother's son of them will vote for silver. They hope that it will hurt the rich, and in some unexplained way help them. Still, I do not see how they can be any better off than they are. They have absolved themselves from the primal curse of labor. They toil not, and they only spin yarns. It is their easy task to criticize the government and to disseminate the financial views of Bedlam.

I wish to make a respectful but emphatic protest to the directors of the Eden Musee and to the gentleman who is the curator of the collected greatness of that gallery of waxworks. On Sunday two new figures were there immortalized. One was Major William McKinley. The other was Mr. William J. Bryan. They have an alcove to themselves. They are the leading characters in the show. McKinley looks all right and in place. There is no air of constraint about him. He is capable of shutting up and does not feel any ill-effects therefrom. The case is very different with the Kid Populist. He has never shut up since he was born. He talks in his sleep. The imperious craving for expression yearns and surges in his whole being. As I looked at his waxen counterpart I could hardly believe that Senator Peffer or some other old populist witch was not sticking pins in it for the sake of tormenting the original. The eyeballs protruded and spun around like pinwheels. The sockets rattled with a hollow sound like the chains of a ghost in the deepest dungeon beneath the castle moat. The sweat of suffering and baffled endeavor ran from every pore. The attendant had to pack the figure in ice. Even then the sculptor was busy every moment in plastering up the solutions of continuity. Each particular hair stood on end, as if electrified by the strong currents of eloquence generated by the coils of convolutions in the thought battery. The hands twitched and pumped convulsively. The Adams apple was distended until it was as big as a Georgia watermelon. The chest heaved tumultuously. Contortions of epilepsy gambolled about the mouth and lips. Inarticulate gasps and choking sounds seemed to come from the windpipe. The left foot shifted and advanced uneasily. I never saw a more affecting picture of helpless agony.

It was an unconscious but an awful cruelty to set up this figure and to condemn it to silence and leave it wrestling and quivering, striving hopelessly for speech. It will fall down and hurt itself; it will melt away in paroxysms of immitigable pain. It is the part of common humanity for the directors to take the thing away. The sight of this dolorous struggle gives pain to every beholder. There is no air of probability about the figure anyway. It cannot in the least resemble the original. It is as impossible to think of Mr. Bryan overtaken by silence as to think of Francis Murphy overtaken by drink or William Sulzer by intelligence. If the authorities of the Eden Musee wish the

figure to convey any impression of historic truth, they will connect the mouth with a phonograph or a speaking trumpet, or employ a ventriloquist to talk into it. I believe that at present it has to be rewaxed every three hours, so great is the wear and tear; and when the wax is off and the wires are exposed they distinctly hum in a thin treble those silver words which the Kid Populist has asked to have inscribed upon his tombstone next November. "I will not press down upon the brow of labor a crown of thorns. I will not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

Even when Mr. Bryan is provided with some means of exercising his voice he ought not to be left in the same alcove with Major McKinley. He should be put into a padded room—somewhere among the chamber of horrors—where his lungs and his larynx can gallop and curvet and prance and buck as much as they want to without interfering with the neighbors. Major McKinley has good, strong nerves, and is not easily affected, but nobody with a proper consideration for his health and due dread of neurasthenia and paresis will venture to stand for three months within two or three feet of the Nebraska Infant Phenomenon. The noise will be enough to drive a deaf man crazy. Besides, Mr. Bryan's neighbor is liable to be deluged with hot wax any moment. Take the Boy away. Where is Superintendent Jenkins? Where is Commodore Gerry?

The presidential collection of the Musee is by no means complete. There are great gaps in it which ought to be filled at once. Mr. Joshua Levering of Baltimore, the rich and impressive coffee merchant who is amusing himself by running or walking backward as the straight prohibition candidate for president, would be an ornament to any exhibition of statuary in wax or marble or bronze or butter. He ought to have a hall or an alcove by himself. He would make a good central figure for a room in which nothing was sold except soda, sarsaparilla, ginger ale and lemonade. Then there is the Rev. Charles E. Bentley, like Mr. Bryan, a citizen of Lincoln, that mother of men who will never be president. I will not say that Mr. Bentley is the candidate of the crooked prohibitionists, for prohibitionists, as the old conundrum says, can never be like Dr. Homily Hepworth's legs. Mr. Bentley is a compound prohibitionist, a silver-and-water man, so to speak. He ought to be set up in the collection. I do not know what his gifts of countenance are. Does he look as fine and fierce as one of his chief supporters, the illustrious John Prohibitionist St. John, who comes from Kansas, of course, and has been a candidate for president himself? At any rate, his combination and form ought to be exhibited to the New York public. Tammany Hall may repeat and want to vote for him.

And there is Mr. Matchett. I apologize for having forgotten Mr. Matchett's other name, but I have the satisfaction of knowing he is the socialist labor man for president. I suppose he is trying to allure the vote of the socialists who do not labor, but I am afraid that young Mr. Bryan has got the start of him. That does not prevent Mr. Matchett from being a fascinating character, and worthy of waxing. He comes from Brooklyn. So do several hundred thousand other persons, to whom I beg leave to offer most sincere condolence. I do not remember that Brooklyn has ever before had a candidate for president. I believe that Gen. Stewart L. Woodford might have been nominated for vice-president once upon a time, and doubtless Tiny Tim Woodruff will be when he gets old enough and has stayed long enough in Jericho, and I cannot forgive the intelligent patriots who assembled at Chicago for not having

selected either Judge William J. Gaynor or Mirabeau Lamar Towns, the poet publicist, as their candidate for vice-president. It is the greatest honor to Mr. Matchett and to Brooklyn that their merit has been discovered by the socialist non-laborers. I am told that Mr. Matchett has the misfortune to be an actual workingman, and consequently is much out of place as a candidate of the labor party. However that may be, I feel certain that he is an able personage and a congenial subject for the wax moulder's art. The Matchetts are naturally distinguished. Witness the nursery rhyme, saturated, however, with the spirit of profaned wisdom that used to be a favorite in Cattaraugus county and other seats of intellects in the lower tier:

Nobby Matchett, Nobby Matchett,
Lost his head and couldn't catch it.
Clearly this applies to Mr. Bryan, not to Mr. Matchett.

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