

A CHAMPION OF THE PEOPLE

"I pray thee, then"

"Write me as one who loves his fellow men."

Bryan is the one notable figure in political life to-day who is not afraid to quote the scriptures in defence of his positions on social and economic questions. A friend of Tolstoi and a follower of Ruskin he takes himself and his political work seriously, hoping to become an instrument in the hand of God for the bringing to pass of that condition of national righteousness which "exalteth a nation."

Though the name of God is frequently on his lips there is no cant about him. He has taken to heart that significant question "If you love not your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have never seen?" He believes in protecting the man first and the dollar afterwards. He believes that the rights of men are paramount and that property has no rights that conflict with human rights; that property rights begin only when human rights have been fully satisfied. His political ideal is that the laws should be of such a nature that there should be no legal right which was not first a moral one. He sympathizes with the needy rather than the greedy. Hence he demands that no barrier shall be placed in the way of the industrious poor combining for their protection against the exploitation of those who by means of their control of the natural resources and means of protection are in a position to command their services without giving proper compensation therefor. At the same time he would prevent the idle rich from combining for the more complete absorption of the fruits of the labor of others.

Here are a number of characteristic utterances taken from his speech to the workmen of Chicago on Labor Day:—

"If it were proper to speak from a text, I would select a passage from Proverbs, for I know of no better one than that furnished by the words of Solomon when he declared that as a man 'thinketh in his heart, so is he.' This is Bible doctrine; it is common sense, and it is human experience. We think in our hearts as well as in our heads—out of the heart 'are the issues of life.' It is a poor head that cannot find a plausible reason for doing what the heart wants to do. I begin my speech with this proposition because I want to impress it upon the minds of those who listen to me, and upon those who read what I say to you. The labor question is more a moral than an intellectual one.

Tolstoi, the great Russian philosopher, in defining the doctrine of 'bread labor,' gives as one of the reasons in support of it, that personal contact with manual labor—not a recollection of former toil, but continued acquaintance with it—is necessary to keep one in sympathy with those who work with their hands. He contends—and is it not true?—that lack of sympathy, one with another, is at the root of most of the problems of society and government.

The world is growing toward brotherhood, and our nation is leading the way. There is more altruism in this country than anywhere else in the world, and more today than there ever has been before. There is more recognition of the kinship that exists between us, more thought about the questions which concern a common humanity than at any preceding time. The labor organization is a part of this great movement of the masses toward closer fellowship. It has worked wonders in the past and its work is only commenced.

The labor organization helps those outside of it as well as its members because the increased wages and improved conditions are shared by non-union men as well as by union men.

Do not understand me to say that a labor organ-

ization is perfect; 'the king can do no wrong' can no more be spoken of a group than of individuals. The labor organization is composed of men; its affairs are controlled by human beings, and human beings are not perfect. All that man touches is stained with man's imperfections, and his frailty can be traced through all his works. But, fortunately for the laboring man, the judgment pronounced against his mistakes must be tempered by the fact that those with whom the laboring man comes into contact are also likely to err. When the employe deals with the employer, he is dealing with one of like passions with himself. Each is likely to be insistent upon what he believes to be right, and the opinion of each, as to what is right, is likely to be colored by selfish interests and affected by incomplete information as to the facts. If the employe has sometimes resorted to violence to enforce his wishes, the employer has sometimes employed his position to secure an unfair share of the joint product. It is the province of the law to place limitations upon both, and the security of our government is found in the fact that both employer and employe in their calmer moments, will join in the enactment of laws which will restrain them in moments of temptation. Some assume that labor is lawless and that to settle the labor question permanently we need only enforce the law rigorously. I yield to none in insistence upon obedience to the law. Law is necessary in human society, and its enforcement is essential to peace and order, but we must remedy abuses by law if we would insure respect for, and obedience to, law.

The important lesson to be learned by the citizen in a government like ours is that the ballot is both shield and sword—it protects him from injury and enforces his rights.

The first thing that is needed for a better understanding of labor questions is the recognition of the equal rights of all, and second, more intimate acquaintance. We have rights that may be called natural rights; they are inherent; we have them because we are human beings. The government did not bestow them upon us—the government cannot rightfully withdraw them from us. We all come into the world without our volition; the environment of youth largely determines the course of our lives, and this environment is not of our choosing. We live under the same moral obligations, and are responsible to the same Supreme Being. We have, our needs that must be supplied; we require food, clothing, shelter, companionship. We have our domestic ties, and the tenderness of wealth or position in society. Man has used petty distinctions to separate society into different classes, but these distinctions are insignificant when compared with the great similarities that unite us in a common destiny and impel us toward a common end.

On this day it is well to emphasize the fact that we are linked together by bonds which we could not break if we would and should not weaken if we could. It ought to be easy to learn this lesson in the United States, for here, more than anywhere else, people feel their interdependence. We have no law of primogeniture to separate the oldest son from his brothers and sisters; we have no law of entail to prevent the alienation of an estate. There is no aristocracy resting upon birth or kingly favor; and if the people perform their kingly duties, there will be no plutocracy ruling in the name of the dollar. Here the road to advancement is a public highway, and it is within our power to keep it open to all alike. Here, too, the government is within the control of the people, and no department of the service is out of the reach of the voter or beyond the influence of public opinion. Under our constitution, some branches of the