

A KNIGHT OF THE 20th CENTURY

(By W. C. Brann.)

We applaud the Knights of stageland, cheap imitations of men, who in the days of Chivalry fought to live and lived only to fight. Ever ready to lead a crusade to the Holy Land, die for their lady love, or decide the fate of nations by a single combat, they filled the chronicles of their time with deeds of gold and glory sufficient to enrich the literature of all subsequent ages.

Everybody admires a fighter. All despise a quitter.

There never can come a time when stories of Knighthood will not be read and relished by the virtuous, the brave, and the generous.

But, while admiring deeds of chivalry, performed by men of might, "When Knighthood Was In Flower," we overlook, and sometimes despise the knights of our own day.

We honor the heroes of war, especially when they fight and die for liberty and the eternal right. We are prone to forget, and even despise the heroes of Peace, whose services to humanity may be as great as that of any Knight of the Sword who ever fought in any war, in any age. There is enough of the savage still in us to arouse our enthusiasm for gold lace, gleaming swords, flaunting flags, and flaming lips of cannon. The clash of armies, the thunder of guns, and the shrill notes of heroic bugles, appeal to us, with a thousand times more force than the angel song of "Peace and Good Will to Men." The Christian nations of the earth go armed to the teeth, and erect their highest monuments to their military heroes.

The destroyer is more popular than the saviour.

But the hero of Peace—the Twentieth Century Knight; who is he, and what did he do?

Come with me to the greatest forum in the world—the senate chamber at Washington. These seats were once occupied by statesmen, they are now filled in the main, by politicians. Once this was the Senate of the United States. It is now the Senate of the United Trusts. Formerly the election of a member depended upon his worth as a man, at present, with few exceptions, it depends upon the size of his purse. At one time it was controlled by a majority of its members. Today, Aldrich of Rhode Island is absolutely supreme, but rules in the name of his Master, the united forces of Monopoly. Do you see that sly old fox over in the corner? That's Tom Platt. He represents the Express Companies. His colleague, wearing that sanctimonious air, is Chauncey Depew, who represents the Railroads. The state of New York is not represented, though it is no worse off in that respect than nine-tenths of the other states. South Carolina, Wisconsin, Arkansas, and Oklahoma, are notable exceptions. They each have at least one man who has not bowed the knee to Baal. That magnificent looking man over there from Texas, is said to be "Water-Pierced" and thoroughly saturated with coal oil. We might go through the entire list, exhibiting the private trade mark of the interests who own the Senate, but time and space forbid.

The curtain is about to be rung down upon the last scenes of the sixtieth congress. The fate of a single bill hangs in the balance. It provides for an asset currency, not based on cotton, tobacco and grain, as was contemplated in the sub-treasury plan proposed by the Farmers' Alliance nearly twenty years ago, but railroad bonds, stocks, and other forms of questionable, if not fictitious value, owned by banks and speculators.

The bill contains more infamy than a quarter section of hell.

It was deliberately designed to give value to watered

stocks, and make it forever impossible to inquire into the physical value of railroads, with a view to relieving the people from paying an annual charge of \$200,000,000 on wind and water.

Once currency is based upon assets, you cannot question their actual value without depreciating your money. It is only the entering wedge, the first step in the direction of wild cat currency. Through this measure the iron heel of plutocracy will be ground into the prostrate necks of the people.

People who went into holy hysterics twelve years ago for fear Bryan would be elected and establish a currency system based on silver worth "fifty cents" on the dollar, accept the Aldrich Vreeland bill, as the acme of financial wisdom, notwithstanding the fact the money issued under its provisions will rest in many instances upon pure fiction. Once this system is established, railroads will no longer be tormented with rate questions, for the people will be afraid to ask for cheaper fares and lower freights, for fear of destroying the value of their money. Great scheme that! Under pretense of granting relief, we are to be bound so as to make future resistance impossible. The burdens under which we now stagger are to be fastened upon our backs forever.

Congress is about to adjourn. Surely this bill cannot pass. Its purpose is too palpable. If votes are lacking to insure its defeat, under the rules of the Senate it can be talked to death. Most Democratic members pretend to be antagonistic to the measure, and they can talk. Their sincerity will be put to the test. Republicans are practically a unit in favor of its passage. Who will lead the fight?

All have read the story of Horatius at the bridge. They are familiar with how Leonidas and his Spartan heroes won immortality at Thermopole. Here, at the pass of Monopoly, is the place to rally and make other heroes. The occasion calls for a man who is bigger than his party, a man with the courage of a Daniel, with a purpose high as the stars, ready to incur the eternal enmity of party bosses, and defy entrenched, united and triumphant Monopoly.

As the hour of fate is about to strike, a little man on the Republican side stands up and begins to talk. He is from Wisconsin. The people, and all the people's enemies know him. More than once the "interest" have tried to buy and bully him, but failed. Through party treason they undertook to retire him to private life, and instead their own trucklike tools were retired. This is Robert M. LaFollette. His eyes flash fire. His hair stands up almost straight, as if each separate hair were a rebel. His tongue is sharper than a two edged sword. His brain is stored like an arsenal with every weapon that wit, or wisdom can invent for the people's defence. Boss Aldrich and his corporation crew are stunned at the audacity of the man. Whether he wins or not, he would brand them as pirates and prove it. He would expose their perfidy. It would require much talk to do that, and he is sufficient. Night comes on apace, but he wavers not. Midnight finds him still fighting. The dawn breaks and finds him still hurling verbal thunderbolts at this infamous measure and the cringing interests behind it. But sleep he must have, and Senator Stone of Missouri takes his place, but shows little heart. His colleagues on the Democratic side had urged him to stay out of the fight and let La Follette talk himself to death. They keep coming to him begging him to quit. After a little while he sits down, T. P. Gore, the blind Senator, enters the breach. Eloquent, brave, brainy, and true as