

upside down by some concealed machinery, and appeared labeled, "An Evening Scene." At the foot of the easel I now noticed a placard inscribed: "The Reversible Landscape; A New Idea in Art."

I stood for a moment astounded. The rascally picture-monger had not only made another of these pictures, but he was prepared to furnish them in any number. Rushing into the gallery, I demanded to see the proprietor.

"Look here!" said I, "what does this mean? You told me that there were to be

no more of those pictures painted; that I was to possess a unique lot."

"That's not the same picture, sir," he exclaimed. "I am surprised that you should think so. Step outside with me, sir, and I'll prove it to you. There, sir!" said he, as we stood before the painting, which was now Morning side up, "you see that star? In the pictures we sold you the morning star was Venus; in this one it is Jupiter. This is not the same picture. Do you imagine that we would deceive a customer? That, sir, is a thing we never do!"

*Frank R. Stockton.*

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### JOHN BRIGHT.

It is seldom that men who have taken a prominent part in the history of their time are able to anticipate with calmness and confidence the verdict of posterity upon their character and their achievements. For the most part they have commenced enterprises, and been associated with movements, the true merits of which must be judged by slow results. Years may conclusively prove the soundness of their judgment and the accuracy of their prevision, but are, perhaps, just as likely to show that the measures which they labored to advance were crudely formed and pressed forward in ignorance of the difficulties and complications which posterity is quick to see in their development. It would be confessedly premature to attempt to define the place which Lord Beaconsfield will permanently fill in the gallery of English statesmen. It would be yet more difficult to forecast the final award of political and national criticism in the case of Mr. Gladstone. But with Mr. Bright there is none of this uncertainty. The foundations of his fame are not laid more securely than its quality is decided, irreversible. He is already an illustrious figure of the past. His voice is still listened to wherever it is heard; the familiar presence is gazed at with admiration wherever it is seen. But alike as statesman and orator, reformer and partisan, John Bright belongs to a by-gone generation, and his fellow-countrymen have long since come to an agreement as to the measure and kind of the distinction that is his due. It is not that he has outlived his powers, or has worn away to the shadow of his former self. His parliamentary eloquence is still occasionally impressive. He can hold vast audiences in the country spell-bound by the rhetoric which is always more or less autobiographical; his intellect is yet clear and powerful; his

memory is undimmed, and his faculty of appreciation and enjoyment of existence is singularly keen. But the cause for which he battled was long ago definitely won; the strongholds of exclusiveness, privilege, and monopoly which he entered public life to attack have all surrendered; the fruits of his service to political progress and popular enlightenment have been gathered into the storehouse of history, and weighed in an unerring balance; the questions which were open in his early, and even in his mature, manhood are closed; the principles for which he first contended, and which were denounced by those who differed from him as involving consequences disastrous to English trade and industry, to the whole structure of English society, and to the British empire itself, have become the postulates and common phases of politicians of every school. Free trade, parliamentary reform, religious equality, the assimilation—gradual and qualified though it be—of the government of Ireland to that of England, the removal of Irish grievances, the avoidance by every legitimate expedient of friction between England and Ireland; these are the objects round which Mr. Bright's activities chiefly centered at successive stages of his career, which incurred for him an amount of personal obloquy and bitterness proportionate perhaps to the vehemence of his own attacks, and which are now regarded as nothing more than reasonable and right. Periodically feeble attempts are made to propose Fair Trade as an alternative for Free Trade, to check the political enfranchisement of whole classes of the population, and to revert in other matters to the policy of an extinct period. But every serious politician in England knows that it would be just as possible to rebel against Free Trade as to mutiny

against the law of gravitation, and that whenever the question of a further enlargement of the electoral suffrage is raised, it will not be dropped till it has been settled in the affirmative.

In other matters than these Mr. John Bright is to the English public to-day what he will be to the English public a century hence. He is not known, and he never will be known, as a great administrator, as a great legislator, or as a great master of parliamentary detail. He cannot even be considered a debater of the first order. He is a man, however, just as indispensable to the legislation which has been accomplished during his career as the minister who conducts a bill through Parliament. As an orator he has acquired an equal renown in the House of Commons and on popular platforms. Such are the power and fervor of his eloquence that it has always constituted a force with which responsible statesmen have been compelled to reckon. Disraeli once said of Cobden that "he was the greatest politician that the upper middle class of England had produced, and that he was not only an ornament to the House of Commons, but an honor to his country." It may be asserted of Mr. Bright that he has surpassed all his contemporaries in the art of giving simple and weighty expression to the views and aspirations of the English multitude. He has been called a demagogue. As a matter of fact no man was ever less of a demagogue. Had he been capable of pandering to the popular sentiment of the hour, he would not have resisted the Ten Hours Bill, nor would he have lost his seat for Manchester twenty-seven years ago by denouncing the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston in China and in Russia. It would be unjust to say of him that he was ever the mere mouthpiece of public feeling. He has acted as the champion of the popular cause just so far as he could identify that cause with, and vindicate it by reference to, what have seemed to him to be the eternal laws of justice and right. There were Radicals before Mr. John Bright. There are, and will continue to be, Radicals after him. But as he had little in common with many of those who were spoken of as his allies at the beginning of his public life, so he has slight sympathy with the most powerful and representative Radicals whom he sees round him as the shadows of his life begin to lengthen. The Radicalism of Roebuck and of the hard-headed political economists of the "Westminster Review" was as different from the Radicalism of Mr. Bright as is that of Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Chamberlain. The political convictions and aims of Cobden's friend were traversed by a vein partly of deep

sentiment, partly of moral indignation peculiar to himself and to his era. What impressed his mind was not merely the need of giving unfettered play to the law of supply and demand, or of removing purely political inequalities. He looked and he saw around him a great mass of men and women whose daily lot was one of want and misery, attributable to the operation of unjust laws. He would never have wielded so mighty an instrument in the work of political reform if he had not possessed so large a share of the fiery spirit of a moral reformer. A sense of righteous resentment against the state of things under which oppressive taxes were levied, and poverty stood in the place where plenty and happiness ought to be, animated him in his first political efforts. The gift of oratory was innate in him; but, over and above that, he possessed something of the old Israelite—something of the old Puritan spirit, which impelled him to assail secular abuses and political wrongs with an ardor greater than ordinary political passion could generate.

The secret of this must be largely found in the conditions of his birth and the associations of his childhood. The tale of civil and religious oppression was the first to which the second son of Martha and Jacob Bright, born on the 16th November, 1811, ever listened. His father, as a stanch Quaker, persistently refused to pay church-rates. These were at that time legal and compulsory, and Mr. Bright, senior, was therefore the victim of habitual distress warrants, which were satisfied not in cash, but in kind. Cotton twist was the principal article seized upon, but on several occasions cotton shirting to the value of four or five pounds was taken. Is it surprising if the hardship and humiliation of these exactions produced an abiding effect on the mind of so quick and sensitive a child as John Bright was? Nor were the circumstances of his boyhood less stirring in other respects. Rochdale, where his earlier years were spent, was the head-quarters of a chronic agitation in favor of Parliamentary reform. Collisions between the popular meetings held and the military were frequent. The young John Bright, if not an actual spectator of the Peterloo massacre, had drunk in with eager ears all the local narratives of it. It is not so long ago that in a speech delivered at Birmingham he stated that some articles published in a Lancashire journal had a very great effect on his mind. "I must," he continued, "say that I date some portion of my political activity to the influence of that paper over me in those days." Before he was twenty-one years of age he had seen the Reform Bill of 1832 become law, the Test and Corpora-

tion acts repealed, Catholic emancipation carried, and a French sovereign driven by revolution to the shores of England. Moreover, the value of goods taken from his father's premises under warrants for church-rates amounted during this period to only a little less than a hundred and ten pounds. Whatever of deep and inspiring sentiment the events of this epoch could excite, communicated itself to John Bright. A literary and philosophical society was formed in Rochdale, and the weekly discussions held by its members provided him with his first opportunities for the display of his oratorical power. He was an indefatigable reader, and soon knew many of the most famous passages in Milton's "Paradise Lost" by heart. A visit which he paid to Jerusalem in his twenty-sixth year marked an epoch in his intellectual development. It was about this time, too, that he formed the acquaintance of Mr. Cobden, and in 1839 he took part in an open-air Anti-Corn Law meeting. "The question," he said, "lay between the working millions and the aristocracy." But the church-rate controversy was not yet at an end. Mr. Bright, who had now become a celebrity in his neighborhood, delivered a series of powerful and characteristic speeches against the rate. With the Church itself he had, he protested, no quarrel. "I would," he exclaimed, in a passage curiously prophetic of some of his subsequent oratorical triumphs, "that that venerable fabric" — and here he pointed to the parish church of Rochdale — "were the representative of a church really reformed; of a church separated from the foul connection with the State; of a church depending upon her own resources, upon the zeal of her people, upon the truth of her principles, and upon the blessings of her spiritual head." Meanwhile, an event that was to have a more decisive influence upon Mr. Bright's career than any which had yet happened was at hand. Two years after his marriage — in September, 1841 — his wife died. Cobden called upon him the next day, and, finding him prostrated by the blow, said: "Do not allow this grief, great as it is, to weigh you down too much. There are at this moment in thousands of homes in England wives and children who are dying of hunger made by the law. If you will come with me, we will never rest till we have got rid of the Corn Law." These words have been often quoted, but, like the circumstances under which they were uttered, they are important, because they indicate the state of mind in which, together with Cobden, Bright entered upon the great labor of his life. As, years earlier, it was the consciousness of domestic suffering that inspired him with hatred of the

church-rate, and of the physical maltreatment of the Peterloo mob that gave him his first bias in the direction of Parliamentary reform, so it was the sense of personal bereavement — the loss of a young wife in childbed — that sent him forth against the upholders of monopoly. In each instance anguish of soul was transformed into political vigor, and the key-note of Mr. Bright's public character and career will be missed if this fact is not borne in mind.

The experiences encountered by him during the next few years, painful and agonizing as they often were, of the evils and suffering involved in the operation of the Corn Laws, account not only for much of the passion he infused into his crusade, but for what has often seemed to the public the exaggerated self-satisfaction with which he has since been in the habit of recounting the story of his triumph. He addressed himself to the enterprise as a social reformer and philanthropist rather than as a political agitator, and it is not too much to say that neither then nor afterward did he magnify his apostleship on political, still less on partisan, grounds. One of the first important incidents in his Anti-Corn Law campaign was his earliest meeting with Mr. Gladstone, who, with Dr. Ripon as his chief, was vice-president of the Board of Trade in 1842, when Mr. Bright was one of a deputation sent to London on the subject of Free Trade. Commenting upon Bright's statement that the Lancashire operatives who could raise enough money invariably emigrated to America, Lord Ripon remarked that the Americans themselves had a law against the admission of Canadian wheat. "Yes," was the immediate rejoinder, "and the carriers of that measure quoted your example as a precedent." Mr. Gladstone, without volunteering an opinion on the matter, asked if there was any symptom of improvement in trade, and was informed that, on the contrary, distress was greatly aggravated. The American tariff of 1828 exercised the most disastrous influence on the flannel trade of Rochdale, one-third of which had been previously done with the United States. In 1831 wages in Lancashire were forty per cent. below the average of 1828. In 1840 the decrease was fifty per cent. On the 13th of December, 1841, the local medical men testified that "owing to the high price of food, and the want of employment, the laboring classes in the borough of Rochdale and its neighborhood are suffering appalling privations." "Misery," was Mr. Bright's comment, "is to be seen in the house of every poor man. Haggard destitution and extreme poverty are the most prominent things in his family. The consequence is that discontent

has so pervaded the country that scarcely any workingman will lift a finger in defense of those institutions which Englishmen were wont to be proud of. Neither the monarch nor the aristocracy is safe under a state of things that would blast fairest prospects, and destroy the most powerful nation that ever existed."

Chartism was rampant, and Bright did his utmost to divert into a healthier channel the energies which Chartism enlisted by pursuing the Anti-Corn Law agitation. Throughout the whole of the north of England immense Free-Trade meetings were held. In March, 1843, Drury Lane Theater, London, was the scene of a huge demonstration at which Mr. Bright was the first speaker. "There is," he said, amid tremendous applause, "no institution of this country, the monarchy, aristocracy, Church, or any other whatever, of which I will hesitate to say, attach it to the Corn Laws, and I will predict its fate." Presently he quoted the couplet:

"There's yet on earth a far auguster thing,  
Small though it be, than Parliament or King."

John Bright, indeed, was fast becoming a power in the country. He was invaluable to Cobden, and the two worked together upon a regular system. First, at any great public gathering, Cobden would deliver a speech, defining the area of dispute, bristling with statistics, facts, and figures. Bright spoke last, summing up and embellishing with his eloquence all that had been said by those who had preceded him, and finally dismissing his audience in a state of rapturous enthusiasm. In the summer of 1843 he was elected Member for Durham; on the 7th of August he delivered his maiden speech in the House of Commons in support of Mr. Ewart's motion for the reduction of import duties. The effort, if not a striking success, was far from being a failure. He was a little nervous at first, and in his trepidation did injustice to his voice. But the parts of his discourse were so admirably arranged, he so soon recovered his self-possession, there was so transparent a depth of moral earnestness in his pleadings, above all his language was so happily chosen and simple, that he commanded the attention of his hearers, and great things were at once prophesied for him.

It is probable that but for the exceptionally bountiful harvest of 1844 the repeal of the Corn Laws would not have been delayed by two years. The protectionists began to be sanguine as to their power ultimately to repel the attack made upon them. Mr. Bright replied that "though Providence might send one or two good harvests more, the course of

the seasons could not be changed to suit the caprice, the folly, or the criminality of human legislation." Nor, as a matter of fact, did the movement ever flag. Tens of thousands of pounds poured in from every side. Tracts were circulated by millions. Free Trade had its bard in Ebenezer Elliott; skilled lecturers visited every town and village in the kingdom. Sir Robert Peel had already somewhat modified the duties on corn, and now proceeded to reduce or abolish duties on seven hundred and fifty other articles. A year later famine in Ireland forced his hand. He proposed the total repeal of the Corn Laws, and carried it by a majority of forty-seven. It is needless to dwell upon the Parliamentary incidents of this memorable period; on Mr. Disraeli's famous attacks on the Conservative Premier for his desertion of protectionist principles and betrayal of his political friends. But it may be mentioned that on the last night of the debate Mr. Bright eulogized Sir Robert Peel's conduct in words that brought tears to the eyes of a statesman usually immovable and cold. Of the speech which the Prime Minister had delivered on the preceding evening he said: "It has circulated by scores of thousands throughout the kingdom and throughout the world, and wherever a man is to be found who loves justice, and a laborer whom you have trampled under foot, it will bring joy to the heart of the one and hope to the breast of the other." This is not the place in which to enumerate all the social and industrial results of Free Trade. Speaking some twenty years after the Corn Laws had been repealed, Mr. Bright was able to say that nearly 500,000,000 pounds' worth of food which that law was intended to prohibit had, since 1846, been imported into England, and that, notwithstanding the diminution in the actual production of each worker, wages had increased from thirty to forty per cent. In 1846 the whole foreign commerce of the United Kingdom did not exceed £134,000,000. In 1876 it had risen to the total of £665,000,000. In that same year John Bright, quoting from Scripture the words, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," was able to say: "We have put Holy Writ into an Act of Parliament, and since then — since, that is, 1846 — of that fullness every man and woman and little child in this country may freely and abundantly partake." As has been already said, the same principles on which Mr. Bright collaborated with Cobden in the abolition of the Corn Laws seemed to him to justify, or rather demand, opposition to the bill introduced for compulsorily limiting the hours of labor in factories. He believed it would be

better for workmen to labor ten hours than twelve; but he objected to the rigid system of protection, and, as he was careful to say, he used the word in the same sense in which it had been used by all who were in favor of monopolies. He has often been taunted since with his action in this matter; but that it was approved by the public, and especially the industrial opinion of the period, may be judged from the fact that in the next year, on the 29th of July, 1847, Mr. Bright was elected Member for Manchester.

We may now consider that Bright had entered upon the second great stage of his public career. He had accomplished the first supreme object which he had proposed to himself. The Corn Laws were abolished. He now rested upon his oars for a little, or, as it would perhaps be more correct to say, he proceeded to strengthen and broaden the foundations of an oratorical fame and excellence already securely established and generally confessed. During the next two decades John Bright was nearly the most impressive figure in English history. He had entered Parliament ten years later than Mr. Gladstone or Disraeli, and he and Cobden were among the very few great speakers of the Victorian era who had not a seat in the first House of Commons constituted after the accession of her present Majesty to the throne. It is enough to glance at him in some of the best-known aspects of his career between 1847 and the year in which he became a responsible minister of the crown. In English politics this period was principally remarkable for the sustained ascendancy of Palmerston. Although Mr. Bright gave a general support to the various Russell and Palmerston governments, he had little or no sympathy with the spirit which animated Palmerston or Russell in their foreign policy. Both of these statesmen, and in a special degree the former, seemed to Bright the exponents of what he might have called the purely pagan idea in politics. No one can doubt that the illustrious subject of this sketch honestly endeavored to introduce into politics the canons of Christianity and the standards of Scriptural religion. It was no narrow sectarian bigotry which prompted him to condemn the Crimean war and to inveigh against the aggressive militarism with which he regarded that war as identical. From the first he protested that it was avoidable, and the impartial verdict of history has confirmed his judgment. He knew well enough that he was out of harmony with the general feeling of his countrymen. He felt and he spoke as one who was conscious of belonging to a small minority, but who was strong and bold in the conviction that in the eyes of heaven he was right. No man, what-

ever his genius for eloquence, unless animated by such a belief as this, could have delivered the oratorical masterpieces with which Bright's name will ever be associated in the House of Commons: first, when we were on the eve of war with Russia; secondly, when the war was in progress. He had no formal connection with the Peace Society which sent out a deputation to the Czar to deprecate, and if possible to prevent, the violation of the peace of Europe. But he believed war to be an evil generally, and the Crimean war in particular to be a preventable evil. He denounced it, therefore, in a series of harangues that have already attained the dignity of Parliamentary classics, and that for sublimity and simplicity, pathos and power, are the most marvelous compositions contained in the book of Hansard. He held Parliament spell-bound, and when it was known he was upon his legs not a bench was empty. His doctrines, indeed, did not commend themselves to the judgment of the English people or to their representatives; but who could resist their charm, or who be blind to the beauty of those superb descriptions of the horrors of battle, of the misery and havoc which war meant to private households and to peoples; of the picture drawn by the orator of the angel of death, "the beating of whose wings," he said, "he could almost hear!" At this juncture of his career Bright spoke less to convince men than because he was convinced himself. More than once he confessed his distrust of the temper of the English democracy. The war, as the result showed, saturated the country with the leaven of militarism; and when a little later Lord Palmerston appealed to the constituencies, asking them to sustain him in his Chinese policy, and to sanction his chastisement of the "insolent barbarian who, wielding authority at Canton, had violated the British flag, broken the engagements of treaties, offered rewards for the heads of British subjects, and planned their destruction by murder, assassination, and poison," the English people rallied to the summons, and Bright and Cobden, together with Milner Gibson, W. J. Fox, Layard, and many others, lost their seats. Within six months Bright was returned for Birmingham, and, though for nearly two years his health prevented him from taking an active part in Parliamentary warfare, he was not forgotten by his countrymen; nor was it till he had earnestly ranged himself on the side of the reformers that a fresh installment of Parliamentary reform became an effective political cry.

The commercial treaty between England and France was negotiated and effected in 1860 by the joint efforts of Cobden and Bright. It was Cobden who first suggested

the idea of an interview with Napoleon III.; it was Bright who had taken the initiative with regard to the new international compact. With two other great public questions John Bright's name was soon prominently coupled—the repeal of the paper duties, which made the penny newspaper press in England possible, and the American civil war. Cobden, like Bright and all the survivors of the Manchester school, was the champion of the North. Before this he had incurred much unpopularity by the line of argument he adopted in the “Alabama” debate, and had elicited from Mr. Laird, who was responsible for the construction and putting to sea of that cruiser, the taunt that he “would rather be known as the builder of a dozen ‘Alabamas’ than be a man who, like Mr. Bright, had set class against class.” Ireland, and especially the Irish Church, were also subjects on which Mr. Bright delivered several famous speeches during this period of his career. He pleaded vehemently for a relaxation of the punishment meted out to those who had taken part in the Fenian rising of 1867, and he denounced the Irish religious establishment in language which heralded its doom. Difficulties of the gravest nature, he admitted, were yet in the way; but he reminded the House of Commons, in tones which will never be forgotten by any of those who heard them, that “to the upright there ariseth light in darkness.”

Mr. Bright had now obtained a position amongst his countrymen as commanding as the power instrumental in securing it for him was unique. There was no great popular movement of his time which, by his eloquence and by the intensity of the moral zeal underlying his eloquence, he had not helped forward. The Tories, under Mr. Disraeli, had carried reform; but it was Bright more than any of his contemporaries who had rendered that consummation possible, and who, by the unflinching zeal of his advocacy, had kept the fire of reform alive. In the same way Mr. Gladstone recognized the fact that his old friend's harangues on the condition of the sister island had more than anything else contributed to bring the disestablishment and disendowment of the Anglican Church on the other side of St. George's Channel within the limits of practical statesmanship. When, therefore, Mr. Gladstone was called upon in 1868 to form his first Cabinet, it was natural, and it was right for two reasons, that he should press Mr. Bright to occupy a place in it. First, Mr. Bright enjoyed a larger share of the confidence of the Liberal party in the English constituencies, and especially of the nonconformist section of it, than any other public man, Mr. Gladstone himself not ex-

cepted. Secondly, it is a wholesome doctrine that responsibility should be the accompaniment of power, and that a statesman and orator who has wielded at will the British democracy should, when the time comes, submit to the test his capacity for molding the legislation that he has encouraged it to expect. Mr. Bright recognized the force of both these considerations, and, after having told the electors of Birmingham that for his part he had no ambition for office, but would be well content, like the Shunamite woman, to live amongst his own people, accepted the presidency of the Board of Trade. Office had, from the point of view taken by the English people, become inevitable to him, and the fact that he did not prove a great administrator cannot be cited as an argument which would have justified his refusal of it. In one sense, however, his political career, so far as achievement is concerned, was as much at an end in 1868 as in 1874. His health once more showed signs of failing, his absences from the House of Commons were frequent, and he entered but seldom into the war of Parliamentary debate. Yet his speeches on the Irish Church Bill, on the Ballot Bill, on the indirect “Alabama” claims, and on other matters, were as fine and as effective as any he had ever delivered. At the Board of Trade he continued till 1873, when, a redistribution of Cabinet offices taking place, he was appointed to the Duchy of Lancaster. This office he again occupied, when, after an interval of six years, during which the Conservatives, under Lord Beaconsfield, were in power, the constituencies once more declared for Liberalism. He resigned it only in 1882 because, like not a few other members of his party, he disapproved of the Egyptian policy of the Government, which for the time—it has gone through many critical developments since then—culminated in the bombardment of Alexandria. During the past two years Mr. Bright has addressed the House of Commons and popular audiences upon several occasions in his old manner; but it is no disparagement to his fame, and to the great work which he has accomplished in the past, to say that he has ceased to be an elemental force in politics, or that he receives the admiration and homage of his countrymen less on the ground of present performances than of past services.

“There are some men,” said Mr. Disraeli, in a speech (from which a brief extract has been already given) in the House of Commons on the day of Cobden's death, “who, although they are not present, are still members of this House, independent of dissolutions or the caprice of constituencies, and

even of the course of time. I think that Mr. Cobden is one of these men." Mr. Bright, one may venture to say, is another. If a perfect mastery of the art of Parliamentary debating is an essential element in the fame of a great orator, then Bright has several equals and one or two superiors, notably Mr. Gladstone himself. But if it is the cardinal condition of oratory of the first rank to produce with the simplest instruments magnificent effects; to strike right home to the hearts of hearers with words that come even more from the heart than from the head; to combine with the most perfect propriety of phrase the most studied absence of theatrical declamation; to know intuitively how wit and humor may be made to serve the same purpose as, and to work in unison with, tragedy and pathos; to display, as, according to Tennyson, it is the mission of the poet to display, the "hate of hate, the scorn of scorn"; to run in half a dozen sentences the whole gamut of human feeling; to say the aptest things in the aptest voice, now full and resonant, now low and clear, but always pitched in the key precisely consonant to the sentiment conveyed, and exactly calculated to impress those who listen with the emotion of him who speaks;—then, unquestionably, John Bright is the greatest orator that our age has beheld. Nature has denied him none of the attributes necessary to so exalted a reputation. "There came up a lion out of Judah," was Charlotte Brontë's exclamation when she was present at one of Thackeray's lectures. The same remark will have suggested itself to many persons who have witnessed John Bright on the occasion of one of his great oratorical efforts. The massive, well-set head, the lofty brow, the white hair, the clear blue eye, as Saxon in its expression as the language of the speaker, have immediately arrested the attention of all spectators. Yet, in the House of Commons, the visitor may have failed to recognize immediately the voice and the presence of its greatest orator. Slow, low, and distinct in his commencement, he has appeared to be suffering from a nervous hesitation which those who have never heard him previously might doubt whether he would succeed in overcoming. But in five minutes all apprehensions on this score have disappeared. The popular chamber is crowded, for, with the speed of electricity, the news that "Bright is up" has run the round of lobbies, library, and smoking-room. Never has there been associated in the same speaker and in the same speech merit so sustained with excellence so rare. Mr. Bright has spoken, no doubt, not infrequently below himself; but when he has spoken at his best, or at anything like his

best, he has been at his best throughout. His eloquence may be compared to the glow of a clear fire steadily burning almost at a white heat. There is nothing fitful or spasmodic about it. The solemn and the sportive are interwoven as naturally as the serious and comic scenes in one of Shakspeare's masterpieces. Mr. Bright has probably coined as many concise and adhesive phrases as Disraeli himself. It is he who invented the words "fancy franchise," who first employed "the cave of Adullam" as a metaphor for the refuge of the disaffected, and who compared the Adullamites themselves to the Scotch terrier of which it was difficult to say what portion formed the head and what the tail. His humor has always been of the quiet, cutting, and sarcastic style. He likened Mr. Disraeli to "the man who was not a Cabinet Minister, but only a mountebank, and who set up a stall and offered the country people pills that were very good against earthquakes." He likened Lord Derby's professions about reform to "the sort of feast that a Spanish host sets before his guest, consisting of a little meat and a great deal of tablecloth." The remark of a peer, when Mr. Bright was once absent from Parliament through illness, that "Providence, in punishment of the manner in which he had abused his talents, had inflicted upon him a disease of the brain," elicited from him on his return to the House of Commons the retort, "It may be so, but in any case it will be some consolation to the friends and the family of the noble lord to know that the disease is one which even Providence could not inflict upon him." Nor could anything be better than his criticism of Sir Charles Adderley, now Lord Norton, when that gentleman had made some statement from which Mr. Bright dissented: "I hope he thought he was speaking the truth; but he is rather a dull man and liable to make blunders." One instance more. During the American war, when the cotton supply failed, it was attempted to keep the mill hands employed with an Indian cotton known as Surat, which was exceedingly difficult to work. One Sunday morning a minister of some religious denomination was praying that Heaven would send a plentiful supply of cotton. According to Mr. Bright, a spinner in the congregation cried out, "Yea, Lord, but not Surat."

As Mr. Bright has lived to witness the completion of all the great political movements to which he ever put his hand, he has lived to witness also a curious revulsion in the sentiment even of the privileged classes about himself. A quarter of a century ago he was spoken of as the tribune of the people, a

latter-day edition of Jack Cade, a demagogue — though, as we have seen, he was never in reality a demagogue at all. Now, as for years past, he is regarded by his political opponents as a moderator and controller of popular passions, and is esteemed, in comparison with Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Chamberlain, a “safe man.” It was only the other day that he himself declared he could not lay claim to the title of Radical as that word is now understood. Mr. Bright’s Liberalism or Radicalism, by whichever name it may be called, has never failed to reflect the national temper and the political genius of the English people. In other words, it has always been largely tinged by conservatism. The reforms for which he has struggled, and whose triumph he has beheld, have been demanded by him not for reasons of abstract political perfection, but because so long as they were denied a gross moral and political scandal was in his opinion perpetuated. When, therefore, the offense against natural equity—the inalienable rights of man—has been removed, the fire of the political reformer has, in the case of Mr. Bright, subsided. He has absolutely nothing of the revolutionary temperament about him. He has nothing either of the sympathy possessed by some English politicians—but in its origin French rather than English—with vague doctrines of political evolution. He has called the Conservatives “the stupid party,” and, as in a letter addressed to a Birmingham meeting, when it was considered likely that the Lords would throw out the Irish Church Bill, has admonished the peers that “by throwing themselves athwart the national course, they might meet with accidents not pleasant for them to think of.” But Mr. W. E. Forster used, three or four years ago, much stronger language than this in speaking of the same assembly.

His own native good sense has ever kept Mr. Bright from extravagance. In 1872, when certain signs of republican feeling asserted themselves in England, and a correspondent wrote to Bright on the subject, he replied that “as to views on the question of Monarchy or Republicanism, I hope and believe it will be a long time before we are asked to give an opinion. Our ancestors decided the matter a good while since, and I would suggest that you and I should leave any further decision to our posterity.” Mr. Bright never wrote or said anything more characteristic than this. At no period of his career has he failed to show himself in words as well as action the loyal subject of the English crown. To the sovereign herself he has been and is personally attached, and it is the fact that the beginning of his personal estrange-

ment from Mr. Disraeli was not, as has sometimes been supposed, his exposure of the sentiments favorable to regicide which the Conservative statesman had expressed in his now forgotten “Revolutionary Epic,” but the manner in which Mr. Disraeli upon more than one occasion introduced the Queen’s name into Parliamentary debates. “The Right Honorable gentleman,” he said, when Mr. Gladstone’s Irish Church resolutions were being discussed, “talked, the other night, sometimes with pompousness and sometimes with servility, of the interviews he had with his sovereign. I venture to say that a minister who deceives his sovereign is as guilty as the conspirator who would dethrone her.”

Another evidence of Mr. Bright’s innate conservatism may be seen in the difference of opinion formed by Cobden and himself on the Reform Act of 1832. Cobden was never satisfied with that measure because, he said, it did nothing more, as was undoubtedly the case, than enfranchise the middle classes. But with that, for the time, Mr. Bright was content. He was, indeed, less advanced in his views of the political rights of the English people than was Mr. Disraeli himself, who objected to the Whig Reform Bill on precisely the same grounds as Cobden. It may therefore well seem surprising that when, in 1859, Lord Palmerston was engaged in the formation of a government, he offered Cobden a seat in the Cabinet, but declined to make the same offer to Bright on account of the political violence of the latter. The fact is that just as Lord Durham in 1832, and again some years later, was desirous of going a good deal further in the direction of Radicalism than Bright, so Cobden was always much more advanced and aggressive in his ideas than his colleague. That this did not appear to be the case was due to diversity of temperament. Bright always spoke, and seemed to feel, as strongly as, and more bitterly than, he actually felt. His nature was full of the indignation which Juvenal declared was the inspiration of his verse. Although he has been and is popular in society, Mr. Bright has never been famous for urbanity of manner. He has rather taken a pleasure in displaying his angularities and a certain irreconcilability of antagonism, superficial often rather than real, to the convictions and prejudices of others. Cobden, on the contrary, was full of natural *bonhomie*. If he was as earnest as Bright, his earnestness was never so militant, and the opposition he provoked was never so persistent.

For these reasons English society may have before now misunderstood Mr. Bright, but it has long since discovered its error. In-



deed, it may be doubted whether, even when he was in the habit of applying his most passionate and vituperative language to objects and to individuals whom he disapproved, he ever concentrated upon himself the same sentiments of personal bitterness as other living statesmen have elicited. Whatever his faults, and however dangerous have seemed his machinations against the privileged classes, who were once taught to see in him their most uncompromising foe, there has never been anything subtle or sinister in his way of dealing with them, of which they could complain. He has dubbed spiritual peers "creatures of monstrous, nay, even of adulterous birth." He has spoken of "this regard for the liberties of Europe, this excessive love for the balance of power," as "neither more nor less than a gigantic system of outdoor relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain." But as, when Lord Shaftesbury declared "Ecce Homo" to be the vilest book ever vomited from the jaws of hell, he meant nothing more than that he disapproved of its teachings, so it has always been known that Mr. Bright only wished to express, however vehement his anathemas, his dissent from his opponents in an emphatic fashion. Thus it is that, not only in the House of Commons but in general society, he has always been personally acceptable. "If you will come down to the House," remarks one of the scions of the nobility to Lothair, in what is nearly Lord Beaconsfield's worst novel, "I will take you into the tea-room and introduce you to Bright." There is a degree of social truth in this casual comment which invests it with a real historical value. At the present moment Mr. Bright is much sought after in London drawing-rooms and dining-rooms, whatever the political views of their proprietors. Nor is there anything new to him in such an experience. All the memoirs recently published, which throw any light upon the social or political history of the last three decades, especially the biography of the late Bishop Wilberforce, contain numerous references to John Bright. Anecdotes are told in every chapter of the good things he said upon certain occasions, of the pleasant little snubs he administered to indiscreet intruders into select companies, of the freshness which his remarks ever carried with them, and of his far-reaching interest in a thousand matters that have nothing whatever to do with his political creed. If Mr. Bright were ever to write or to publish his autobiography, it would be found more valuable as a contribution to the social than to — since upon that point he has said in his speeches all there is to say —

the political history of the age. Unfortunately Mr. Bright is not particularly fond of literary composition. Though he has always prepared his speeches most carefully, he has never written them out at length; and though he was popularly reputed to contribute leading articles to the "Morning Star," which was once the recognized exponent of his views, there exists the best authority for saying that he never penned an editorial in his life.

The commanding position which Mr. Bright has achieved in England is, it may be said in conclusion, due, next to his genius, to the fact that he is an eminently faithful representative of the English character. If he has seemed to some of us in these latter days to have grown too autobiographical in his speeches, too prone to dwell at inordinate length upon the triumphs he has won, it must never be forgotten that he devoted to the labor which secured these not merely enormous energy, courage, and patience, but intellectual gifts and literary power of a sort that had never before been expended upon similar or analogous objects. It is no exaggeration to say that the marvelously delicate graces of his always robust rhetoric have proved instrumental in investing with a spiritual charm the hard and rugged features of nineteenth-century Radicalism. John Bright is a speaker whom in some respects it is difficult to compare with any of his contemporaries. He has not passed through the ordinary scholastic and academic curriculum of English politicians. His mind, unlike that of Mr. Gladstone, of Canning, Pitt, Fox, and a host of others, was free from all associations of classical literature. He has studied English, and English alone. The diction of the English Bible and Milton has become part of his intellectual texture — colors his diction like the varying yet dominant hue in shot silk. He is the first English orator who has shown his countrymen what may be accomplished with the unaided resources of the Anglo-Saxon tongue, and in after ages there can be little doubt that his achievements will be cited as illustrating the finest possibilities of our language. A man who has done all this; who in addition has witnessed the assured triumph of the great public causes which he has advocated; who, sated with victory, has in a measure detached himself from the strife of parties, is able to enjoy in his own life-time a foretaste of the fame which must to others, not less gifted perhaps than John Bright, be a vision or a hope.



*John Bright.*