

# THE BEATITUDES OF BOTTOMLEY

By T. A. JACKSON

"Mr. Stewart Chamberlain, the ex-English German, lamented the other day that Germany did not possess a MAN.... Although we are not short of leaders of men we do not sufficiently employ them. Take the case of Mr. Horatio Bottomley, whose tonic utterances in this journal give inspiration and comfort to the most lugubrious souls. Mr. Bottomley exercises an enormous influence with his pen and voice. Are recruits wanted? He gets them! Is there a strike to settle? He can pour oil on the troubled waters! Is there a cause to plead? He pleads it successfully.

"His crusade for a 'business Government' is well remembered. Its fruits are now to be observed in the new committees appointed to get things done. Yet his great talents are mostly exercised 'unofficially.' There is much more work that Mr. Bottomley could do. He is a force in the State. His services should be utilised more and more by the Government."

*Sunday Pictorial, July 25th, 1915.*

THE press informs us that Horatio Bottomley has ceased to be chairman of the Independent Party in Parliament. Also that he has ceased to be the Editor of the *Sunday Illustrated*—his connection with *John Bull* having been severed weeks before.

Barely a twelvemonth since the grave and revered *Observer* remarked that the only possible alternative to Lloyd George was Mr. Bottomley.

A little before *John Bull* had recorded the fact that:—

"A correspondent writes to point out that three men named Horatio saved England—Horatio, Lord Nelson, Horatio, Lord Kitchener, and, . . . (modesty forbids the Editor to name the third.)"

It is characteristic of Bottomley (and of that public which threatens to desert him at the first chill of an adverse wind) that he and they should rejoice in the symbol of "John Bull." Bluff, hearty, downright, "John Bull." Corpulent, heavy jowled, top-booted, big sticked, "John Bull." Not over-brainy, little given to qualms, hearty for all his truculence, and truculent for all his heartiness—"John Bull."

True, the conventional image "John Bull" was so very unlike the average of the Englishmen whom he was supposed to typify that when one of them was found to be literally "John Bullish" in face and figure, every newspaper printed his photograph as a curiosity. True, too, that nothing could be less like the hale and hearty agriculturist "John Bull" than the smart men-about-town, the weedy clerks, or the needy and greedy race-course hangers-on, who, providing the nucleus of Bottomley's public acclaimed the hale and hearty one as their tribal deity.

"John Bull," in fact, was successful as a symbol because he was so unlike the reality he served to conceal. His "bluff"-ness was a good excuse for his worshippers' brazen impudence; his insensitiveness for their brutality. His robustness and his bulldog was an excuse for greedy gambling upon prize-fights, football matches, horse races, and the chances of the Stock Exchange—upon anything, in short, which gave them a chance of doing meanly what the Big Bourgeoisie did grandly, viz., get something for nothing.

Around this nucleus of "fly-flats" there aggregated a much wider public, composed of the constitutionally timid, the petty-scandal mongers, and the half-radical, to whom the nucleus aforementioned, seemed the very quintessence of courageous independence. To all these, the journal, *John Bull* came as a gospel, an apocalypse, and a war manifesto. It gave them tit-bits of scandal; it gave them slabs of that righteous indignation which is dearer to the soul of the True Born Englishman than is molasses to the palate of a nigger. It gave them cheap and easy "gambles" in the form of "skill" competitions in which a thousand pounds in prizes tempted many hundreds of thousands of sixpences from their pockets. It gave a breezy tolerance to that practice of "free" living, which is denoted by the phrase "man of the world," and combined this with a scrupulous (if ritual) respect for conventions in the abstract.

Naturally, its patriotism was unquestioned. It gave a benevolent nod of recognition to Piety, it bowed its acknowledgments to virtue, it was on familiar terms with God, and at the name of the Throne or the Empire, took off its coat and banged the big-drum till the plaster fell down from the saloon-bar ceiling.

And now the creator of this mighty engine for making a noise in a vacuum and mistaking the result for an earthquake, is suspect in the temple of his own erection. He is debarred from the altar, and his acolytes swing their censers at his head instead of beneath his nostrils.

To recall them to their allegiance, I have (from a volume of *John Bull*), gathered, almost at haphazard, the beginnings of a BOTTOMLEY ANTHOLOGY Or A Golden Treasury of the Great Thoughts of a Great Man on Great Occasions.

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Three themes predominate in the Editorial articles in *John Bull*: (1) Bottomley, His Virtues; (2) Bottomley, His Friends; (3) Bottomley, His Advice to the working man." We will arrange them under those heads.

## BOTTOMLEY: HIS VIRTUES

First of his virtues is patriotism. He can find time to keep one eye upon the tape machine, one on the Government, one on the "Hun," and still have one left for the creeping spectre of

Bolshevism. And even when he recognises perils on every hand he remembers that he is there, if not at the helm, at any rate at the megaphone.

Bottomley's faith is another of his strongest virtues; so is his hope. On the 4th December, 1920, he wrote:—

"I am not without hope that some arrangement may be arrived at before the next General Election between the Independents and the National Party, to prevent overlapping and waste of energy"

We understand that this hope is quite justified; there will be no overlapping. Hardly a lap, even.

Not only faith and hope, but charity. On the 13th November, 1920, he gave these words to the world:—

"I am in no cavilling mood, and am ready to make every allowance for the frailties of human nature."

This brings us to his stern honesty. On Dec. 18, 1920, he writes:—

"I can assure the Prime Minister that there will be short shrift for his ministry once the suspicion of trickery is established in the public mind."

A month earlier he had said in the course of some articles on "Recollections of the Law":—

"Why didn't I go to the Bar? . . . to put it quite bluntly, I was gradually forced to the view that the Bar—despite all its high traditions—is really an ignoble profession."

## BOTTOMLEY: HIS FRIENDS

Naturally, a man such as this is bound to attract the friendship of the flower of the land, and he lets you know it. Curiously enough, quite a lot of his friends belong to the "ignoble profession" of the Bar. For instance, on the 23rd Oct., 1920, in the course of some Recollections, he found occasion to refer to Rufus Isaacs (now Lord Reading):—

"He (Rufus) would sometimes spend an evening at my London flat—especially when there was to be a roulette party."

Again, he refers to his "friend," George Riddell (now Lord Riddell), and tells how they brought a collusive action solely to advertise "Bottomley's Book," and the *News of the World*, in which it was running as a serial. (*John Bull*, Sept. 18, 1920).

In December, 1920, he was in such high feather that he was seriously contemplating offering himself to a suffering Throne and country as a candidate for the Premiership. Generously, he thought of his friends:—

"If, for instance, I were to-day asked to form a Ministry . . . I should probably ask my friend, Sir Herbert Hambly, of Barclay's Bank to be Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sir Edward Marshall Hall would undoubtedly be Public Defender, General Townshend would take his proper place as Secretary of State for War, Sir Henry Dalziel would be Scottish Secretary, Dr. Macnamara would go to the Education Office, Sir Donald Maclean would be my Home Secretary—and, with a few days' time for consideration, I do not think I should have much difficulty in filling up the other posts."

It is by a flash of inspiration such as only comes to men of true Greatness that he recognises that with Such a Prime Minister there would be plenty of work for a "Public Defender."

## HIS ADVICE TO THE WORKING MAN

It is in his advice to the working man that Horatio adopts his Olympian manner. Note the nice modulation of this thunder:—

"Unless the employer is protected against sudden disturbance and loss he cannot be expected to share his precarious profits on generous terms with the men who make them."—(*John Bull*, Nov. 27, 1920).

This, in varying tones, is his sole advice to the working man—"Don't Strike." When the strike looks like being a big one, we get a big shout; as thus:—

"Should the strike come—which God forbid!—then, as I said to the railway strikers a year ago, 'Father, forgive them—they know not what they do!'"—Sept. 25, 1920.

A month later, he grows desperate, and we get this:—

"I tell the miners to-day, without any mincing of words, that in this strike they are guilty of a crime against the dead!"

What dead? The men who died in the Great War? How would a strike be a crime against them? Why, thus:—

"I would point to the crosses bearing the names of some of your pals—perchance a brother or son, and I would bid you listen! And shall I tell you what you would hear? Brother, Father, it was not for *this* I died; I died for England—go back to work!" (Oct. 23, 1920).

He goes on (in case you might think, despite his italics, that he doesn't mean it):—

"Believe me, my friends, I speak in deep earnestness. I sent many of those dear boys to their doom . . ."

And this seems to be so utterly the very last word, that I abandon the rest of the Anthology until some other time.