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John Bright

An Address Delivered by DR. GEORGE NORLIN, *President of the University of Colorado, at a Meeting of the Denver Bar Association, May 31, 1926.*

In 1815, the Battle of Waterloo brought to an end the long wars which England had waged first against revolutionary France and later against the Empire of Napoleon; and the people gasped in their exhaustion, "O Wonderous Peace, O Peace without a Parallel!"

This double deliverance was, however, bought at a great price. England before the French Revolution was the most liberal country in Europe, and viewed the moderate beginnings of that Revolution with benevolent neutrality. James Fox hailed the Fall of the Bastille as "How much the greatest event that has happened in the world, and how much the best!" and many felt as he did. That was in 1789. In 1793, the execution of Louis XVI and, following up on that, the Reign of Terror produced a violent reaction. Fox kept his head and maintained that, in spite of the excesses which are its birth pangs, "liberty is order, liberty is strength," but he stood almost alone. The great majority of Englishmen were not only shocked, but utterly panic-stricken in the face of the world crusade for "liberty, equality and fraternity"; they trembled for the safety of their own established order, of the Government, of the Church, of property itself; and Pitt was driven to war. While their soldiers were fighting republicanism on the Continent, an army of spies was hunting down political heresies at home. It was dangerous for liberalism to raise its head. To criticise the Government, to attack corruption, to say a word against any institution of church or state, to raise a voice for reform, was to be persecuted, probably to be arrested as a Jacobin and thrown into prison. The habeas corpus act was honored more in the breach than in the observance; aliens were deported with little ceremony; every form of repression was practiced in the name of patriotism; and worst of all, the mind of the governing class which up to 1793 was being gradually warmed into sympathetic concern for the people was now congealed and hardened by a paralyzing fear of making any concession to popular claims.

Then came the threat of Napoleonic domination; and when this spectre, too, was put away, England was left in a state of physical and spiritual bankruptcy at the very moment when the problems of peace demanded all the sane and intelligent resources of the Nation. For, while reactionary politicians were making desperate efforts to stand still or even go back, the world persisted in moving on. Economic forces were working under their very noses a revolution of which they were only vaguely yet resentfully aware.

"Let trade and commerce, laws and learning die", cried one,
But leave us still our old nobility".

The small farms and village commons had already been largely swallowed up in the great estates, and the division was clearly drawn between a landed aristocracy and a tenant class. Steam and iron were conspiring to press manufacturing forward to a first place in the nation's business. In the north, especially, great factory towns were springing up—great blotches in a smiling land. The quaint and pleasant villages of an earlier day were giving place to chimneys belching smoke and soot; and there was beginning to come about both in agriculture and in industry that geographical and sentimental divorce between the employing class and the wage-earning class which has raised the tremendous and, up to the present moment, the baffling problem of our modern world.

Meantime the Country was ruled by a mad king and a profligate prince; and Parliament was an oligarchy of the great lords of the land who were hand in glove with a firmly intrenched Established Church. It must be said for this ruling class that they were, generally speaking, a jovial, honorable, sportsman crew, ready to fight at the drop of the hat for the glory of old England. But the glory of England was to them the glory of their class; and they were equally disposed to maintain that against enemies abroad and the rabble at home.

Perhaps the most notorious instance of class legislation of the time was the Corn Laws of 1815, the first measure of reconstruction after the great wars. These laws placed prohibitive import duties upon the essential foodstuffs of the country, raising the price of bread, flagrantly robbing Peter to pay Paul, and causing incalculable distress to the poor. This called forth the bitter lines of Lord Byron:

"For what were all these landed patriots born?
To hunt and vote, and raise the price of corn."

The working class, indeed the people in general, had no voice in the government. They were thought to be too ignorant to be entrusted with the franchise. Probably three-fourths of them could neither read nor write, so removed were they from the means of education. But they were human beings, many in distress. They had lost confidence in their masters; and having felt the ferment of new ideas, were groping blindly toward popular sovereignty. Theoretically, at any rate, they possessed the rights of free assembly and petition, and through means like these they began to assert themselves. For example, in August, 1819, a great meeting was called in St. Peter's Field at Manchester to make a demonstration for the reform of Parliament and the suffrage. On the appointed day men came marching into Manchester by thousands from the surrounding country, waving banners with such revolutionary slogans as: "No Corn Laws"; "Annual Parliaments;" "Universal Suffrage"; "Vote by Ballot".

The magistrates became alarmed. They collected such police as were available and a band of volunteer soldiers, and ordered them to charge the mob and arrest the speakers. In an instant there was terrible confusion. People were trampled underfoot; some were thus killed; some were sabered to death; and three or four hundred were more or less severely injured. Hunt, the principal speaker, and his associates were arrested and sentenced to prison on a charge of "conspiracy to alter the legal frame of government and the constitution of these realms by force and threats, and with meeting tumultuously at Manchester". This was the celebrated "Peterloo massacre".

The government sustained the magistrates, congratulated the soldiers, and later replied to the demonstration at Peterloo by the famous six acts restricting, among other liberties, the right of public assembly, and devising quicker means to deal with traitors.

Public opinion was, however, outraged at this violation of constitutional rights, and Shelley sent from Italy these flaming lines, which John Bright later quoted with great effect:

"Men of England, heirs of glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurslings of one mighty Mother,
Hopes of her and one another;
Rise like lions after slumber,
In unvanquishable number.
Shake your chains to earth like dew,
Which in sleep has fallen on you.
Ye are many—they are few."

When the Peterloo massacre occurred, John Bright was a boy of eight years. He was born at Rochdale, of an old Quaker family which had suffered not a little from religious persecution, and throughout his life Bright never ceased to protest against what he regarded as the unholy alliance of the English government with the Established Church. His father was a cotton manufacturer, and the son with his brothers fell heir to this business. He left school at the age of fifteen, and seems never to have thought of a university education, perhaps because the leading English universities were then closed to dissenters. Later in life, when he was installed as Rector of the University of Glasgow, he made a public address in which he lamented this handicap; but neither in his clear grasp of public questions nor in the simple and forceful eloquence of his spoken and written words does Bright ever betray the lack of what we call education. His sympathetic heart, his passion for humanity, impelled him more than any academic requirements could have done to read, to ponder, to master our great human story. He found his greatest affinities in the Bible and in Milton, and from them he reinforced the native moral fervor which made him for almost fifty years the personification of the conscience of England. If he was not a great scholar, he was what is, perhaps, better, a great humanist, and this fact is the one key to his life and to his attitude on every public question.

His earliest public activities were connected largely with the Rochdale

Literary Society which he founded at the age of twenty-two—a sort of people's forum which he frequently addressed. He remained a local figure until 1841, helping his brothers in the management of their prosperous business, making occasional addresses, mainly against church rates and the Corn Laws, and enjoying in a degree granted to few men the peace of a charming home and the companionship of a devoted wife.

Then fell the blow which seemed the end of all things, but proved the beginning of a larger, if more tumultuous career. Bright has told the story in his own words:

"At that time I was at Leamington, and on the day when Mr. Cobden called upon me—for he happened to be there at the time on a visit to some relatives—I was in the depths of grief, I might almost say of despair; for the light and the sunshine of my home had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life, and a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me as his friend and addressed me, as you might suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said, 'There are thousands of houses in England at this moment where wives, mothers and children are dying of hunger. Now, when the first paroxysm of your grief is past, I would advise you to come with me and we will never rest until the Corn Law is repealed.' I accepted his invitation. I knew that the description he had given of the homes of thousands was not an exaggerated description. I felt in my conscience that there was a work which somebody must do, and therefore I accepted his invitation, and from that time we never ceased to labor hard on behalf of the resolution which we had made. Now do not suppose that I wish you to imagine that he and I, when I say 'we', were the only persons engaged in this great question. We were not even the first, though afterwards, perhaps, we became the foremost before the public—but there were others before us; and we were joined, not by scores but by hundreds and afterwards by thousands, and afterwards by countless multitudes; and afterwards famine itself, against which we had warred, joined us; and a great minister was converted, and minorities became majorities, and finally the barrier was entirely thrown down. And since then, though there has been suffering, and much suffering, in many homes in England, yet no wife and no mother and no child has been starved to death as the result of a famine made by law".

Bright here sums up in a paragraph a five-year campaign of incredible energy in which he and Richard Cobden went up and down the country, organizing, raising money, speaking from the stump, until an awakened public conscience together with a terrible famine in Ireland forced the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.

When Bright entered with Cobden upon this struggle, he broke with the traditions of his sect, which in his day enjoined a life of quiet aloofness from the conflicts of the world. He thought, however, that this break would be only temporary. But once in public life, it was not easy to retire; and when in 1843, Cobden and his friends constrained him to stand for Parliament his strong reluctance to do so was overcome by his sympathy for the helplessness of the masses and their great need of a friend and spokesman in the councils of the nation. So he stood for election, frankly avowing it to be his one ambition to be the representative and champion of the working class. "I am", he said in his public address to the electors, "a working man as well as you. My father was as poor as any man in this crowd. He was of your own body entirely. He boasts not—nor do I—of birth or of great family distinctions. What he has made he has made by his own industry and successful commerce. What I have comes from him and from my own exertions. * * * I have no interest in seeking appointments under any government; I have no interest in pandering to the views of any government; I have nothing to gain by being the tool of any party. I come before you as the friend of my own class and order; as one of the people; as one who would on all occasions be the firm defender of your rights and the assertor of those privileges to which you are justly entitled. It is on these grounds that I offer myself to your notice; it is on these grounds that I solicit your suffrage."

Perhaps these words have a dema-

gogic sound. They are, however, the very essence of sincerity. During a stormy career of a quarter of a century in the House of Commons he was a free lance, without party ties and without party support—a voice of the people crying in the wilderness. When, in 1868, Gladstone became the leader of the new Liberal Party, Bright's confidence in Gladstone was so great that he was persuaded to enter his cabinet. He did so, however, with a misgiving which he has finely expressed in his own words. "I have not aspired at any time of my life * * * to the dignity of a Cabinet office. I should have preferred much to have remained in the common rank of simple citizenship in which hitherto I have lived. There is a passage in the Old Testament which has often struck me as being one of great beauty. Many of you will recollect that the prophet, in journeying to and fro, was very hospitably entertained by what is termed in the Bible a Shunamite woman. In return for her hospitality, he wished to make her some amends, and he called her to him and asked her what there was he should do for her. 'Shall I speak for thee to the king', he asked, 'or to the captain of the host?' Now it has always appeared to me that the Shunammite woman returned a great answer. She replied, in declining the prophet's offer, 'I dwell among mine own people'. When the question was put to me whether I would step into the position in which I now find myself, the answer from my heart was the same—I wish to dwell among mine own people. Happily the time may have come—and I trust it has come—when in this country an honest man may enter the service of the crown and at the same time not feel it in any degree necessary to dissociate himself from his own people."

He was never quite happy in the Cabinet. The give and take, the compromise, of administrative responsibility was irksome to his direct and ardent temperament. He felt himself at the last, as at the first, the tribune of the people. He suffered with them in their struggles; he voiced their inarticulate wrongs; he drew his power from their innumerable strength. This was, I think, the source of his indomitable courage. His aloneness in the most august and the most unmerciful assembly in the world must have unnerved him had he not felt himself standing on the shoulders of the millions outside who were his people.

From the very first he had the attention of a hostile House. His maiden speech there was an almost incredible performance. I can imagine him as he arose and faced for the first time the great Sir Robert Peel and his colleagues at the head of the Government. A friend of mine who knew Bright has pictured to me what he was like in action; a smallish man, but robust of frame, soberly but not too Quakerishly garbed; of strong, open countenance, a friendly soul flaming from keen, blue eyes; hardly a gesture, hardly a change of posture, accompanying a voice of marvelous reach and appeal—a voice now tender with tears, now thunderous with denunciation, but always, whether in pathos or humor or scorn, flowing from the wells of a kindly heart.

A first speech in Parliament—always a trying ordeal—is expected to be a sort of apology for one's existence. But John Bright did not apologize. He attacked Peel for the deliberate inaction of his government regarding the Corn Laws. He attacked Gladstone who had admitted that reform must come, but said that the time for it had not come. He struck and, as was his wont, he struck hard: "I am surprised", he said, "at the course pursued by the honorable baronet (Sir Robert Peel). I should be glad to see him, not the Minister of the Queen merely, but the minister of the people also. * * * He may have a laudable ambition—he may seek renown, but no man can be truly great who is content to serve an oligarchy who regard no interest but there own, and whose legislation proves that they have no sympathy with the wants of the great body of their Countrymen. I live in the manufacturing districts; I am well acquainted with the wishes and feelings of the population; and I do not hesitate to say, when I view the disregard with which they are treated in this House, that the dangers which impend are greater than these which now surround us. I can assure the Right Honorable, the President of the Board of Trade, (Gladstone), that his flimsy excuses will not avail him at the bar of public opinion. He knows what is right and he refuses to do it; and whether the session be at the beginning or near

its close, it is his duty to suggest measures of relief to the commerce of the country. That this is not the time is an excuse which is as untrue as it is insulting. When will the time come? Will monopoly resign its hold of the subsistence of the people? 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?' The Government knows what is right, the people demand it be done; and the Ministry who refuse to act incur an awful responsibility."

It is astonishing that such boldness of attack, which in another would have been resented as sheer arrogance, should have commanded respectful, if unwilling, attention. Whenever Bright spoke, the House listened. His very audacity told upon his audience—a solitary voice, without party support, taking upon itself to be the scourge of ministries. More than that, a new tone had come into the oratory of Parliament—a religious tone, something of the moral earnestness and fire of the old prophets, insisting that righteousness and justice were the touchstones of public policy. But most important of all was the feeling that this curious and unique personality which had strangely come among them was the articulate voice of the masses of the people, who would not forever be denied by an inert and dilatory government.

A review of the public life of John Bright from 1843, when he entered Parliament, to the end of his career, would be a review of the history of England, and, in no small degree, of the history of the world, during this eventful period. Hardly a public question during this time is not touched and clarified by his power to go directly to the heart of the subject. His activity in behalf of the repeal of the Corn Laws is no more important than his efforts for the extension of the franchise—for popular sovereignty—which bore fruit in the Reform Bill of 1867; or his part in the reform of the Church laws, which in England taxed a dissenting minority and in Ireland a mutinous majority of ten to one for the support of the Established Church; or his work for the betterment of the administration of Ireland — pleading for patience, for conciliation, for justice to a people made turbulent by centuries of oppression, at a time when English statesmen generally looked upon Ireland as revolution incarnate and saw no other remedy than that of putting on the screws.

In all this agitation, his broad tolerance, his human sympathy and his never failing appeal to the moral conscience, won him increasing respect and admiration. Then came the Crimean War, which placed him in opposition not to the government merely, not to Parliament merely, but to the passions of the multitude. It took a brave man to be an uncompromising reformer in an age of reaction; it took a braver man to be a pacifist in a country which by habit and almost by principle had come to look upon war as the chief business of a glorious Empire.

It is now commonly agreed that the Crimean War was unnecessary. Indeed some historians regard it as nothing more than a criminal waste of men and treasure. It was at any rate a war which entailed horrible suffering in the armies who fought abroad as well as great distress among the poor at home. It committed England to the strange policy of alliance with the Turk—of energizing the "Sick Man of Europe" that he might stand in the way of Russia. It was a war foisted upon the world by diplomats and kings. Yet it enlisted the support of the English people for two reasons. In the first place, it was fought to maintain the balance of power—that superstition which focused the fear and hatred of England upon any nation which, like Russia then, waxed too strong and prosperous and which must, therefore, be put out of the way. In the second place, although the war against Napoleon had been a "war to end all wars"—yet the "wondrous peace" of 1815 had ushered in an orgy of materialism, of industrial conflict, of sordid greed, which so sickened the hearts of the sensitive that even idealists turned with relief to war as the only knife which could cut out the canker of selfishness, and cement the Nation.

"I wake", wrote the Poet-Laureate, "to the higher aims
Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold,
And love of a peace that was full of wrongs and shames,
Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be told;
And hail once more to the banner of battle unrolled.

And many a darkness into the light shall leap
And shine in the sudden making of splendid names,
And noble thought be freer under the sun,
And the heart of a people beat with one desire."

But John Bright was not one of those who idealized war. "You have read", he said, "the tidings from the Crimea; you have perhaps shuddered at the slaughter; you remember the terrific picture—I speak not of the battle, and the charge, and the tumultuous excitement of the conflict but of the field after the battle. Russians in their frenzy or their terror, shooting Englishmen who would have offered them water to quench their agony of thirst; Englishmen in crowds, rifling the pockets of the men they had slain or wounded, taking their few shillings or roubles, and discovering among the plunder of the stiffening corpses images of the 'Virgin and the Child'. You have read this and your imagination has followed the fearful details. This is war—every crime which human nature can commit or imagine, every horror it can perpetrate or suffer; and this it is which our Christian Government recklessly plunges into, and which so many of your countrymen at this moment think it patriotic to applaud! You must excuse me if I cannot go with you—I will have no part in this terrible crime. My hands shall be unstained with the blood which is being shed. The necessity of maintaining themselves in office may influence an administration; delusions may mislead a people; * * * but no respect for men who form a government, no regard I have for going with the stream; and no fear of being deemed wanting in patriotism shall influence me in favor of a policy which, in my conscience, I believe to be as criminal before God as it is destructive of the true interest of my Country".

When, after John Bright's death, Gladstone spoke his eulogy in the House of Commons, he praised him most of all for his high courage in opposing a whole people bent on war. But at the time, he was ridiculed, execrated, burnt in effigy, and ostracised as a traitor. Yet he stood his ground amidst the tempest of abuse, never complaining, never blustering, and never losing his poise. And never in his career did he appear to greater advantage and never did he attain a higher level of simple eloquence than when he arose in the House, faced Lord Palmerston, then the idol of a jingoistic people, and poured out his indignation upon a government which had so lightly entered upon a tragic and criminal war.

"It is very easy", he said at the close of his speech, "for the noble Lord (Palmerston) to rise and say that I am against war under all circumstances; and that if an enemy were to land on our shores, I would make a calculation as to whether it would be cheaper to take him in or keep him out and that my opinion on this question is not to be considered either by Parliament or by the Country. I am not afraid of discussing the war with the noble lord on his own principles. I understand the Blue Books as well as he; and, leaving out all fantastic and visionary notions about what will become of us if something is not done to destroy or cripple Russia, I say—and I say it with as much confidence as I ever said anything in my life—that the war cannot be justified out of these documents; and that impartial history will teach this to posterity if we do not comprehend it now. * * * Let it not be said that I am alone in my condemnation of this war, and of this incapable and guilty Administration. And even if I were alone, if mine were a solitary voice, raised amid the din of arms and the clamours of a venal press, I should have the consolation I have tonight—and which I trust will be mine to the last moment of my existence—the priceless consolation that no word of mine has tended to promote the squandering of my country's treasure or the spilling of one single drop of my country's blood".

A few years later, in 1861, the tables were curiously turned. The government which had perpetrated and prosecuted the Crimean War for the glory of England stood aghast at the enormity and barbarity of our Civil War, and was keen to mediate and stop the carnage; while John Bright, no longer a pacifist in the face of such an issue, gave himself heart and soul to the cause of the North. He saw at the outbreak of the conflict, what the English were slow to see, what we ourselves were slow to see, that the ques-

tion at stake was only on the surface a political question, a constitutional question; that it was at bottom a moral question; that the fundamental issue was not whether the South should be free to set up an independent government, as the leading statesmen of England thought, but whether the South was to be free to perpetuate and propagate the bondage of a race of human beings. "I blame men", he said in a speech at Birmingham, "who are eager to admit into the family of Nations a State which offers itself to us, based on a principle * * * more odious and more blasphemous than was ever heretofore dreamed of in Christian or Pagan, in civilized or in savage times. The leader of this revolt proposes this monstrous thing—that over a territory forty times as large as England, the blight and curse of slavery should be forever perpetuated. I cannot believe, for my part, that such a fate will befall that fair land, stricken though it now is with the ravages of war. * * * I have another and a far brighter vision before my gaze. It may be but a vision but I will cherish it. I see one vast confederation stretching from the frozen North in unbroken line to the glowing South and from the wild billows of the Atlantic westward to the calmer waters of the Pacific Main,—and I see one people, and one language, and one law, and one faith, and over all that wide continent, the home of freedom, and a refuge for the oppressed of every land and clime."

That interesting book, *The Education of Henry Adams*, is no where more interesting than in the picture which it draws of the state of opinion in England in this crucial period—the seemingly willful misunderstanding, the crass prejudice, at best the indifference, of a large part of the population with regard to the Union. Devotees of the balance-of-power principle welcomed the prospect of the dismemberment of the young giant in the West. Liberals, like Sir John Russell, took the view that the North was contending for empire, the South for independence. Even Gladstone favored the recognition of the Southern Confederacy. But the mass of the people, the working classes were with the North; and—what is most remarkable—those to whom the war brought personal calamity, the cotton workers, thrown out of employment and in dire distress, because no cotton came through the blockade by the North of the Southern ports—, these workers preferred to starve rather than prejudice the cause which John Bright showed them to be the cause of freedom. Never in his life did John Bright strike harder blows in any cause, and Henry Adams calls him the hardest hitter in England.

Perhaps the greatest speech made by Bright in the cause of the Union was the speech at Rochdale, Christmas, 1861, at the most critical moment of the war. Mason and Slidell had been sent by Jefferson Davis on the British ship, "Trent," to arouse England and France to war against the North. On the eighth of November the ship was stopped on its voyage by Captain Wilkes, and Mason and Slidell were seized and made prisoners. This violation of international law stirred up tremendous feeling. It was not now a question only of the recognition of the Southern Confederacy, it was a question of war with the North. No one can measure how disastrous it would have been for us and for the world, had either course been taken; and therefore no one can measure what a friend in this dark hour we had in John Bright. Much of the speech at Rochdale is, perhaps, mainly of historical interest: his attack upon the belligerency of the British Government; his plea for patience, for peaceable adjustment, his exhortation not to hamper, not to dishearten, not to cripple a great cause. Heard and read in the light of the time, in their setting of prejudice, of passion, of impending doom, his words inspired in the friends of America the most profound gratitude—our historian Motley read them and thanked God for John Bright—words which now in the light of other days and other concerns we can read with indifferent calm. But there is one passage of that speech which is not touched with age; which still has potency to stir at least those who feel that whatever the mistakes of this Republic or of Great Britain in the past and now, the well-being of the world—the cause of freedom everywhere—is not promoted by the makers of discord between the two greatest powers of the English speaking race.

"At this very moment," he said at Rochdale, "there are millions in the

United States who personally, or whose immediate parents, have at one time been citizens of this Country. They found a home in the far West; they subdued the wilderness; they met with plenty there, which was not offered them in their native country; and they have become a great people. There may be persons in England who are jealous of the States; there may be men who dislike democracy, and who hate a republic; there may be those whose sympathies warm toward the slave oligarchy of the South; but of this I am certain, that only misrepresentation the most gross or calumny the most wicked can sever the tie which unites the great mass of the people of this country with their friends and brethren beyond the Atlantic.

"Now whether the Union will be restored or not, or the South achieve an unhonored independence or not, I know not and I predict not. But this I think I know—that in a few years, a very few years, the twenty millions of freemen in the North will be thirty millions or even fifty millions—a population equal or exceeding that of this kingdom. When that time comes, I pray that it may not be said amongst them that, in the darkest hour of their Country's trials, England, the land of their fathers, looked on with icy coldness and saw unmoved the perils and calamities of their children. As for me, I have but this to say: I am but one in this audience, and but one in the citizenship of this Country; if all other tongues are silent, mine shall speak for that policy which gives hope to the bondsmen of the South, and which tends to generous thoughts and generous deeds between the two great nations who speak the English language, and from their origin are alike entitled to the English name."

At the close of the war, in 1865, he turned this plea into a great prophecy: "I believe that in the centuries which are to come it will be the greatest pride and the highest renown of England that from her loins have sprung a hundred million—it may be two hundred million—of men who dwell and prosper on that continent which the old Genoese gave to Europe. Sir, if the sentiments which I have uttered shall become the sentiments of the Parliament and the people of the United Kingdom—if the moderation which I have described shall mark the course of the Government and of the people of the United States—then, notwithstanding some present irritations and some present distrust—and I have faith both in us and in them—I believe that these two great Commonwealths will march abreast, the parents and guardians of freedom and justice, wheresoever their language shall be spoken and their power extend."

The Bar Mysterious

By JOSEPH C. SAMPSON of the Denver Bar

(Reprinted through the courtesy of "Printers' Ink")

The law and the lawyer's part in modern business life are, for the layman, still to a great extent shrouded in mystery.

By many, the lawyer is regarded as a super-dignified and somewhat forbidding man of learning to be consulted only in times of dire distress and to be sedulously avoided in the ordinary run of business affairs. Instead of being known as a scientist, which he is, he is thought of as a dealer in black magic and a juggler of outworn technical words and phrases by which people are led into trouble. And by many, also, he is suspected rather than respected. All because he and his profession are not understood by the rank and file.

The ethical canon against any form of advertising, direct or indirect, necessary and desirable though it is, has much to do with this wary attitude of the average layman who, in this fast-moving age of publicity, gets much of his information concerning various kinds of business and professional activity from advertisements in the magazines and in the daily press, and the layman is so imbued with the idea of publicity in these days that whatever is not advertised