Eugene V. Debs

WHAT HIS NEIGHBORS SAY OF HIM

BY

J. H. HOLLINGSWORTH
“Go search the earth from end to end
And where’s a better all-round friend
Than Eugene Debs?—a man that stands
And jest holds out in his two hands
As warm a heart as ever beat
Betwixt here and the Mercy Seat!”

—JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY.
You have doubtless heard that Eugene V. Debs is an "undesirable citizen;" that he is a "dangerous demagogue;" a "stirrer up of strife;" a "jail bird;" a "grafter," who is heap- ing up an enormous bank account by playing on the ignorance and credulity of the working class; a hot-headed, wild-eyed, iconoclast; a rude, brutish, coarse-mouthed, malcontent.

In order to place the reader of this in a position to know the truth about Mr. Debs, and also, if possible, to forestall other falsehoods that may be set afloat by his political enemies, I took it on myself to ask a few of his neighbors to put down in black and white their honest opinion of the character of this man. They did so, and did it gladly and wholeheartedly. I could have gotten a bushel of expressions as easily as I got these few. But what is lacking in quantity is fully made up in quality.

The gentlemen whose testimonials are given below are honored residents of Mr. Debs' home city, Terre Haute. They are men of high standing in this community. Any list of the most prominent citizens of Terre Haute, would include these gentlemen. The standing of those of them engaged in commercial and industrial pursuits can readily be obtained by consulting Dunn, Bradstreet, or other reporting agencies. Those of them engaged in the professions rank equally as high, in their spheres, as the others. All of them have for many years been in a position to know Mr. Debs intimately. Not one of them is a member of the Socialist party, hence, it would be natural to suppose that their politics would not prejudice them in his favor.

That you may the better judge the worth of these testimonials, permit me to tell you briefly something about each of these gentlemen:

**HULMAN & CO.**

This firm consists of Herman Hulman, Sr., and his sons, Anton and Herman, Jr. It is one of the representative wholesale grocery houses of the West. Besides the large establishment in Terre Haute, the Hulmans have branch houses in Evansville and Brazil, Ind., and in Paris and Mattoon, Ill.
They employ over fifty traveling salesmen besides hundreds of other employees. The volume of their business is enormous.

The senior member of this firm has known Debs from infancy.

Here is what these gentlemen have to say:

Terre Haute, Ind., July 6th, 1912.

Mr. J. H. Hollingsworth, City.

Dear Sir:

In response to your request for an expression from us of our opinion of Mr. Eugene V. Debs, we wish to say that we have intimately known Mr. Debs for more than forty years; and, for five years of this time he was in our employ.

We consider Mr. Debs unselfish and generous-hearted; a man whose life has been devoted to helpful service to his fellow-men. His chief delight seems to be to serve others.

In all business transactions between us, we have found him to be honorable and upright—a man of strict honesty and integrity; and devoid of the desire to over-reach or take advantage or deal unjustly with others.

As a public man he has had many opportunities to "feather his nest," but has uniformly refused to do so.

No man who knows him as we do, could ever suspect him of using any public trust for private gain.

Many years of close acquaintance have revealed his many fine qualities to us, his thorough reliability, his moral uprightness, his deep sincerity, his honesty of purpose, and his rich endowment of mind and heart.

Respectfully,

HULMAN & Co.

CARL STAHL

(Note: Hereafter the address will be omitted and only the body of the letter given.)

Mr. Carl Stahl is the head member of the Stahl, Urban & Co., manufacturers of pants, shirts, overalls and coats. The trade of this company extends to all parts of the country. In
addition to their large factory in this place they have plants in other cities.

Mr. Stahl is regarded as one of Terre Haute's leading citizens.

Mr. Stahl writes: "He who does not know Mr. Debs does not know the most unselfish and honest man that ever lived. Ties of personal friendship have kept me in almost daily contact with Debs for over a quarter of a century, and even if I do not agree with the political views of this self-chosen apostolate, I must admire the man who generously sacrifices everything for the principles he fearlessly advocates. There is absolutely no yellow streak in the make-up of Eugene V. Debs."

Yours truly,

CARL STAHL.

B. L. Viquesney

Mr. Viquesney is senior member of the Viquesney Company, printers, publishers, and binders. This is one of the leading printing concerns of the city.

Mr. Viquesney, as you will note, relates an exceedingly interesting bit of history that lets in a flood of light on the real character of Mr. Debs.

He writes: "I want to say of Eugene V. Debs that I consider him a man of unquestioned integrity in every respect. Have known Mr. Debs for the last twenty years, and have been in a position to know of affairs that took place behind closed doors that many people have not had the opportunity of knowing. Had Mr. Debs wanted to take advantage of his position for the money he might have made out of it, he certainly would be a rich man today.

However, I am satisfied that the financial end, so far as he was concerned personally, was his last consideration—it was a matter of principle with him.

One instance I would like to cite is this: Following the great strike of the American Railway Union, of which organization Mr. Debs was president, that organization owed the firm of Moore & Langen something over $3,000.00. At the
same time Mr. Debs was put in jail for carrying out what he considered was the best interest of the union. After the failure of the strike there was no union left to make good this unpaid debt. After Mr. Debs was released from jail, he came in and asked what the account was and Mr. Moore informed him that he had charged it off of the books, and that he did not consider Mr. Debs in any way responsible for it personally. However, Mr. Debs, stated that the account would some day be paid. He went out on the lecture platform, and from the proceeds of his lectures he personally paid every cent of that account—insisting that the firm of Moore & Langen accept the payment, though Mr. Moore tried to convince Debs that he should not personally assume it. This is only one of several instances where Mr. Debs has personally made good, through hard earned money of his own, the debts he was not personally responsible for.

Referring to insinuations made by some that Mr. Debs is living off of the working people, I want to say they certainly know nothing of him or of his character; otherwise, they would not make such an assertion. Regardless of politics or beliefs I am sure that if labor and political leaders today would manifest the integrity that Mr. Debs does, conditions would be vastly improved for every one concerned. I know whereof I speak.

Very truly yours,

B. L. VIQUESNEY.

LEE GOODMAN

Mr. Lee Goodman, the author of the following testimonial, is the proprietor of one among the oldest and largest clothing houses of Terre Haute. The fact that for forty-two consecutive years he has successfully conducted his establishment in this city, indicates that he is a man of more than ordinary business ability and uprightness.

Mr. Goodman writes: "Responding to your invitation, for some expression from me regarding the character of Mr. Eugene V. Debs, I will say that I have been acquainted with him from almost the time of my first arrival in this city over
forty years ago. During these many years we have had con-
siderable business dealings, and I want to say that I have al-
ways found him to be 'on the square,'—honest, upright, honor-
able and straightforward.

I cannot speak too highly of Mr. Debs as a man. He pos-
sesses those qualities that endear him to all who know him. He is a man whom to know is to love and admire for his high
and sterling qualities."

Respectfully,
LEE GOODMAN.

PROF. CHARLES M. CURRY

The Indiana State Normal has a reputation for high-class
work unsurpassed by any other institution of the kind in this
country. Only the best equipped and most competent teachers
can retain a position in this school.

The fact that Prof. Charles M. Curry, professor of Litera-
ture, has been connected with this school for twenty years, is
sufficient guarantee of his efficiency as an instructor and his
high standing as a man.

Prof. Curry is the author of “Literary Readings,” and other
text-books now in use in various schools throughout the
country.

Prof. Curry has this to say of Mr. Debs: “I can not
imagine a man possessed of a keener sense of justice and the
need of fairness than Eugene V. Debs. The strong words that
sometimes disturb quiet souls among his listeners and readers
have their source, I am sure, in the very real indignation that
sways his mind at the unnecessary oppressions of the weaker
or more unfortunate at the hands of the powerful or more
fortunate. The great gentleness of his character and his sense
of human brotherhood make it out of the question that he
should hurt any worthy cause or person. His opposition is
directed toward conditions that exist in society, and not to-
ward individuals except as illustrations or beneficiaries of these
conditions.

Such is the impression produced by many years of acquaint-
ance with Mr. Debs. The notion, sometimes heard, that he is
an irresponsible 'firebrand' is not a notion possessed by any who know him best where he has spent his life."

Cordially, Charles M. Curry.

CLARENCE A. ROYSE

Mr. Royse is an attorney of this city enjoying a large and lucrative practice. He is a graduate of DePauw University, and a man held in high esteem by his neighbors.

You will enjoy the fine tribute he pays to Mr. Debs.

He writes: "It has been my pleasure and privilege for a number of years to know well 'Gene Debs, to feel the glory of enthusiasm which radiates from his great soul, and to count his friendship among the blessings of a life-time. As a champion of revolutionary political and social ideas, he naturally is misunderstood and reviled. In the minds of many people, his tall, gaunt, wiry figure stands as the embodiment of the spirit of hatred and envy, as a scourge going up and down the country lighting the fires of destruction. The utter falsity of this notion is apparent the moment one comes in personal contact with the man. I will not here discuss the validity of his political philosophy, or the worth of his social message, concerning which honest men may differ according to their several points of view, but will only suggest the quality of the man.

I venture to say that no one can really know 'Gene Debs and watch the kindly smile perpetually playing over his features, without perceiving that the basic motive of his character is love; an all embracing passionate sympathy, which demands for every fellow-creature, a more abundant life. The earnestness and intensity of the man light up his features and crowd from his lips a rushing torrent of facts and ideas, illustrations and arguments. His eyes are aflame and to his finger tips he is alive.

'Gene Debs is one of those rare souls who are capable of a conviction so deep, a devotion so complete, as to centralize and unify every activity and interest of their lives. With him, personal ambitions, the attractions of money and possessions, ease and success, play no part. Abuse and appreciation are
equally unimportant; he has no time for self-consciousness of any sort. That his message should get itself uttered, is the one thing worth while for him, and to that work he gives himself joyfully and completely.

Equally he has in his heart no trace of resentment against any man or class of men. His fierce philipics are never uttered against persons, but only against injustice, ignorance and oppression. He regards the degenerate beneficiaries of privilege as victims of the system, just as truly as are the exploited masses. He rejoices in all that man has achieved in material and mental possessions, and in the multiplied wealth that has come from scientific progress and industrial organization. He would hold fast all that is good, but his doctrine is that material things are good only as they minister to the souls of men. His voice rings out with an eloquence born of a deep conviction—a conviction of the injustice and stupid disorder of our industrial arrangements, whereby wealth accumulates and men decay. His concern is for men as human beings, each endowed with infinite possibilities of perfection. He would open to every creature the door of hope and opportunity, and remove the possibility of any man rising on the bruised bodies of his fellows. His motive power is the same religious zeal that inspired St. Francis—the gospel of the brotherhood of man.

Nevertheless, he is a wholly different type of man. He is absolutely modern and wholly human. He is of the twentieth century, or the twenty-first, and his eyes are set toward the future. The purpose he has in mind is the universal recognition of the fact that man is a social creature, that therefore altruism and egoism are one; that the welfare and destiny of each individual cell in the body politic, is inherently and necessarily bound up with the welfare and destiny of the organism. The means on which he relies are education, democracy and the ballot, the awakening intelligence of the working class, and the consequent perfection of human institutions so as to fit human needs.

Although the most serious of men, he shows no trace of hardness, pessimism or austerity. He is a perpetual fountain
of good cheer and good will. His heart leaps up when he beholds a rain-bow in the sky, and to him the sky is ever aglow with the bright colors of hope. His interest in the ideas and activities of others in intense, his curiosity is insatiable, his joy in human fellowship is genuine, his fund of energy is inexhaustible. I have never known a more genial, lovable and radiant man than "Gene Debs. He is one of the world's great men, and after the heat of contemporary political passions has cooled, he will inevitably take his true place on the roll of fame, as one who loved his fellow-men, and as a powerful teacher and preacher of a new ideal of social justice."

Sincerely,

CLARENCE A ROYSE.

MAX EHRMANN

Mr. Ehrmann is a young poet and writer of exceptional ability. He is a Harvard man, and the author of ten volumes—novels, plays, poems, etc., that have been widely read, and also of numerous essays and short stories. A prayer written by him has been translated into several languages, and the publishers announce that up to date over a million copies have been printed. His latest volume, "The Wife of Marobius," is attracting wide attention, and promises to be one of his most successful books.

Mr. Ehrmann writes: "Nearly all my life I have lived not far from Mr. Debs' home, and for several years I have lived less than two blocks away. Aside from knowing Mr. Debs as a man who has theories about government, I know him as a neighbor. I think he is almost the finest grained man in his private life I have ever known. In his home and in the neighborhood generally he is held in tender regard, and this in spite of the fact that few of his neighbors agree with his political doctrines. His wife is a beautiful, big-hearted woman; and the relations between them are such as would put to shame many of the critics of his private life. Mr. Debs, however, has one besetting sin in the eyes of "practical" persons; he is generous almost to the point of folly. He could be now a man of means, resting in independence, (which seems to be
the ideal of most persons), but for the fact that he works too much without pay and gives away too much of what he earns. To the end of his days, I fancy, he will be classed with the humble in matters of money. Personally the man is immaculate. I never knew a cleaner man. But he could not be taken for a model of fashion. That one dark suit of clothes, it seems to me, he has worn from the beginning of time. When this man closes his eyes in his last sleep, something will go out of the lives of his neighbors and friends here at home (regardless of party politics) that will leave a hurt which time cannot soothe or new friendships assuage. If it is possible for men to love each other, I should say that this man is loved—here, near his own fire-side, where we know him.”

Cordially,

MAX EHRLMANN.

DR. CHARLES GERSTMeyer

For forty-five years Dr. Gerstmeyer has practiced medicine in this city. Long ago his reputation for knowledge and skill in his profession was established. No man stands higher in the medical profession in this city. He is highly esteemed by his fellow-practitioners and is often called in consultation by them.

Dr. Gerstmeyer is a great lover of the best books, a student, a clear thinker, and withal has profound sympathy for the poor and distressed. He has a large practice and includes among his patrons many of the wealthy families of the city.

Dr. Gerstmeyer writes: “I am not a socialist, yet I am a friend to Eugene Debs. I have known him for thirty-five years, to him years of storm and stress, and never knew him to falter in his work. Strictly honorable and more than honest in his dealings with his fellowmen, he would scorn to do a mean act and would make any sacrifice rather than betray a trust. I admire him for his dogged persistent advocacy of what he believes right. He is a political Wendall Phillips who has roused the old parties from their sodden sleep. Debs is a new force in politics and will give the old parties plenty to think about. I hope he may live long enough to see the realization of some of the things he stands for.”

Yours truly,

CHARLES GERSTMeyer.
You have now read the opinions entertained by eight leading citizens of Terre Haute regarding Mr. Debs,—men representing as many different vocations. They did not express their opinions merely because they were requested to do so, or through fear that by refusing they might give offense. If you knew them you would know they are men of too much self-respect and independence to be induced to give their testimonials to one whom they believed underserving. They gave them because they sincerely believe Debs is in very way worthy of them.

(Further Testimonials Follow on Next Page)
FURTHER TESTIMONIALS

ROBERT HUNTER’S TRIBUTE

Robert Hunter, who, as author and writer, has won national recognition and whose books are in almost every public library, now living in New York, was born in Terre Haute, knew Debs from his childhood and here is the beautiful tribute paid by him to his elder townsman:

I remember as a little lad of eight or nine years, walking with my father in one of the streets of Terre Haute. A tall, slender, handsome young man stopped to talk with my father. At first I was fascinated by the way they grasped hands and looked into each other’s eyes. I was then impressed by their animated conversation. But they talked on and on until it seemed to me hours in length; and finally I began to tug at my father’s coat tails, urging him to come on. After a while they parted, and my father said to me very seriously, “You should not interrupt me, Robert when I am talking. That young man is one of the greatest souls on this earth, and you should have listened to what he said.”

From time to time afterward I heard of ’Gene, and many were the stories told of him. Everyone spoke of his friendship for the poor. He could not keep money in his pocket. His wife says he always gives away his clothes to those who come to his door; and he gives his best suits, never his old ones.

Once I was told he had a gold watch of considerable value which had been given to him, and a fireman who had been out of work for some time stopped to say that he had a job offered him on the railroad, but he would have to have a watch before he could go to work. Immediately ’Gene took out his gold watch and gave it to the man, telling him to return it when he was able to buy one for himself.
These and countless other stories are told by his fellow citizens. Many of them do not understand 'Gene. His views and his work they cannot comprehend, but every man, woman and child in that town loves him with a devotion quite extraordinary.

They say that a prophet is without honor in his own country, but in Terre Haute you will find that however much they misunderstand the work that 'Gene is doing there is not one who does not honor and love him.

Ask anyone. Go to the poor, the vagrant, the hobo. Go to the churches, to the rich, to the banker, to the traction magnate. You will find that every single one will say that 'Gene has something which other men do not possess. Some will say he is rash, unwise and too radical. Others will say that he is too good for this world, and that his visions and dreams are the fanciful outpourings of a generous but impractical soul. But ask them about his character, his honesty, his sincerity, and unconsciously many of them will remove their hats.

Some of these statements will seem an exaggeration. But one cannot avoid that in speaking of 'Gene. When one who knows him makes any statement, no matter how moderate, it will seem to others who do not know him an exaggeration.

'Gene has followed Truth wherever she has led. He does not ask what is politics, what is wise, what is expedient; he only asks what is truth? He loves Truth beyond all things. She is his absolute mistress, and he has gone with her from riches to poverty, from popularity to unpopularity. He has gone with her out of great positions into small positions. He has stood up for her against all men. For her he has seemed at times to sacrifice all earthly gain and to accept without one pang of regret misunderstanding, misrepresentation and almost universal condemnation. For her he has been momentarily one of the most popular men in the country and for her he has been momentarily one of the most unpopular men in the country. He has been her companion when everyone believed in her, and he has been her companion when to believe in her meant to go into prison stripes, behind iron bars.
Sometimes I have differed with 'Gene. I have said to him that what he was doing was unwise, impolitic, dangerous. At such times, under such criticism, he is always kindly, but undeterred; and it is his conscience that answers you back and asks, "But is it right? Is it true?"

Shortly after I left college I went to live in one of the most poverty-stricken districts of Chicago. One Sunday it was announced that Eugene would come there to speak. Thousands came to hear him, and overflowing the hall a multitude waited outside to hear him speak from a truck. After waiting for two hours perhaps, 'Gene came out and began to speak. Most of the audience were foreigners who could hardly understand a word of English, and as I heard his beautiful words and saw their wistful earnest faces I felt that something more powerful, penetrating and articulate than mere words was passing between the audience and the speaker. For a moment it seemed to me that a soul was speaking from the eyes and frame of 'Gene, and that, regardless of difference of language and all the traditional barriers that separated him from the multitude about him, they understood and believed all he said. I remember how my heart beat and how tears began to flow from my boyish eyes. I was ashamed for fear some one would see me. And it was not because of anything that 'Gene was saying. It was solely because of something back of the man, something greater than the man, something bigger, more powerful, and more moving than any words or expression. And after the thing was over I went to him, helped him on with his coat, and fondled him as would my own brother. And as we went away together there kept coming into my heart the words of Ruth:

"Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee. For whither thou goest I will go, and whither thou lodgest I will lodge. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

**GEORGE BICKNELL'S TRIBUTE**

George Bicknell, poet, artist and craftsman, also professor and chautauqua manager, writes of Debs in the following glowing and appreciative terms:
"I have known Debs for almost ten years. I lived in his home town for four years and I have had many personal conversations with him and have heard him speak in public many times. During this time I have been a close observer of him and his public utterances, and I can repeat here, as I have often stated, that he is one of the kindest, humblest, most chivalrous men I have ever known. His life is never too full to do little acts and little deeds of kindness. I watched him, unobserved, one evening just at dusk, as he was leaving his office in a cold drizzling rain, walk six blocks. In passing this distance it took him not less than a half hour, for he stopped six times to salute and converse with some one he knew, an odd but indeed democratic list. One a business man of the town, one a poet, one a drayman, one an old blind man, one a colored man and one a little child.

"Only yesterday I met him at a railway station coming in the gate as I was going out to take a train. Nothing would do him but that he must turn and carry my suitcase to the rear of the train where I was boarding the train, almost a block away. I relate these incidents to reveal the spirit of the man, such as I have never seen elsewhere and such as all know who know him.

"There are hundreds of incidents of Debs' life that are known by his friends that could be related to show his almost child-like humanitarian heart.

"Among other charges that are often brought against Debs is one that is brought against all labor leaders, that he is in it for the money. Some time ago I wrote an article 'The Personal Side of Eugene V. Debs,' which was published in the Twentieth Century Magazine. In this article was published a picture of the old shack of a house in which Debs was born and also the picture of a modern house in which he now lives. This article brought out several editorials in capitalist papers and they all sought to prove that Debs' preaching was not practiced by him because he was born in this old house and dared to live in a modern house. But Debs' fight is not that men may not have modern living conditions and a certain amount of ease
and pleasure, but that the capitalist system makes it so that all men cannot have these.

"It was through me a few years ago that a Chautauqua Bureau offered Debs twenty dates during the month of August at $150 each, but Debs declined it to work in the interest of labor for a little more than his expenses."

THE MAYOR'S OPINION

A gentleman in Michigan having heard some of the false and slanderous stories about Debs wrote to the Mayor of Terre Haute for information and received the following letter in return:

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT.
City of Terre Haute, Indiana.
James Lyons, Mayor.

February 27, 1907.

John Cuthbertson,
Crooked Lake, Michigan.

Dear Sir: Yours of the 24th inst., requesting information without any political bias as to the standing of Eugene V. Debs in this community. In reply will state that while the overwhelming majority of the people here are opposed to the social and economic theories of Mr. Debs, that there is not, perhaps, a single man in this city who enjoys to a greater degree than Mr. Debs, the affection, love and profound respect of the entire community. He is cultured, brilliant, eloquent, scholarly, companionable, and lovable in his relations with his fellowman. At home he is known as "Gene," and that perhaps indicates our feeling towards him as a man, independent of his political views. He numbers his friends and associates among all classes, rich and poor, and some of the richest men here, people who by very instinct are bitter against Socialism, are warm personal friends of Mr. Debs. His personal life is spotless and he enjoys a beautiful home life. Few public men
have been more persistently and cruelly misrepresented by the press of the country. When such a man as James Whitcomb Riley the Hoosier Poet, comes to Terre Haute, he is always the guest of Mr. Debs.

If you care to use this letter in any way for publication you are at liberty to do so. Every word I have written, and I am not in sympathy with Mr. Debs’ views on Socialism, I know would be heartily indorsed by the people of this city.

Very respectfully,

JAMES LYONS, Mayor

STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL LABOR UNION

Debs and Union Labor.

To whom it may concern:

For several years past a report has been persistently circulated, with malice aforethought, to the effect that the house that Eugene V. Debs lives in was built by non-union labor, that it was painted by non-union labor, and kept in repair by non-union labor.

This report was first sprung in the presidential campaign of 1908 and at that time telegraphed over all the country to injure Debs’ candidacy; it was revived in the campaign of 1912 and it has been given a fresh start since his recent indictment in the federal court.

Sometimes this report appears in one form and sometimes another but however it may vary, its object is always the same and that is to discredit Debs in the eyes of union men.

The undersigned, who has lived in the same town with Debs and has known him intimately during the last twenty-seven years, having been active in union labor during all that time, now issues this statement to deny the reports above mentioned as being absolutely false and as having no shadow of foundation in fact.

These reports have but one purpose and that is not to help union labor but to hurt Debs who has worked all his life to
make union labor what it is today. As nothing that is true of him can be sprung to hurt Debs, resort must be had to falsehood and slander and that is the object of these malicious and lying reports which are frequently brought to my attention and which I now deny publicly in the interest of truth and justice.

The fact is that Debs organized most of the unions in this city and when he was grand secretary and treasurer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen his office was headquarters for organized labor unions of every kind and form. When unions needed money they went to Debs; when they were in trouble they went to Debs; when they had grievances they went to Debs. It was Debs who arbitrated all their early troubles or led their strikes over and over again, and never once did he turn his back on a labor union or a union man.

This is but a small part of his record as a union man here in Terre Haute where we have been in close touch with him for over a quarter of a century and know him for what he is.

I ask every union paper in the interest of common justice to publish this statement and help to stamp out this infamous lie. No one who utters it will dare to face the undersigned in doing so, or any other union man here in Terre Haute where the facts are known.

It is very easy to understand why Wall street capitalists should circulate this and other slanders about Debs, but certainly no true union workingman will give them currency.

PHIL K. REINBOLD,
President Central Labor Union.

Terre Haute, Ind., Feb. 22, 1913.

LET JUSTICE BE DONE!

Editor National Rip-Saw:

Sir:—In a recent issue of your widely circulated paper I noted that Eugene V. Debs was compelled to stoop to the humiliating position of defending himself from the cowardly, scurrilous attack made upon him by a fellow named Grant Hamilton of Salt Lake City, while there in the capacity of paid
organizer for the American Federation of Labor. It appears that this blatant fakir tried to convey the impression that Debs, “while editor of the Locomotive Firemen’s Magazine, had the printing done in a non-union office, and that when a committee from the Typographical Union called upon him to protest that he (Debs) ordered them from his office.”

In answer to this cowardly charge I want to say that when Hamilton made it he lied, damnably lied, and had I been present I would have forced that lie down his sordid throat when his foul tongue uttered it.

I was President of the Terre Haute Typographical Union No. 76, when “Our Gene,” as we lovingly called the great humanitarian, had charge of the publication of the Locomotive Firemen’s Magazine, and can vouch for the fact that the firm of Moore & Langen, where he had his printing done, was strictly a union shop and that Debs was the man who made it so. That firm had to furnish Debs with the printers’ union label, the insignia of our craft, or they never would have been allowed to do the work. No, not by Debs, and the idea of a committee of the printers’ union waiting on him with a protest is not only false and slanderous but utterly absurd.

Eugene V. Debs is on the roster—or should be—as honorary member of Terre Haute Typographical Union No. 76 for the manifold good offices he rendered the union, and when his name was presented for that honor there was not a dissenting voice, and when I, as President of the union, put the motion to the members it was carried unanimously.

Well do I remember the long and bitter fight we printers had with the non-union Gazette at Terre Haute, and with the aid of the other unions we almost had that sheet call “30” on its existence. Then it was that the labor crushers, the rich republicans composed of contractors, builders and manufacturers, came to the aid of the Ball brothers, its publishers, and pledged their money and influence (although the Gazette was the official democratic organ of Vigo County), providing they would continue fighting the trade unions until they were wiped out of existence. This infused new life in the Gazette, and the
unions soon began to feel the pressure and the persecution. The intention of the labor crushers, now all combined, would soon have been accomplished had not "Our Gene" come to the rescue by enlisting a few good Samaritans who, with himself, put up the money, purchased a printing plant and launched "The Evening News," which soon gained a large circulation among workingmen. But, alas! It was doomed to be driven out of existence and after two years of useful service suspended publication. This was brought about by its enemies, who, working secretly for its destruction, in some mysterious way foisted a fellow named Connor on the paper who was entrusted with its business management, and he soon completed his dastardly work. This fellow, smooth as a Judas, inquisitive as a spy, and crafty as a Pinkerton hireling, in a few short months put the paper on the rocks and then suddenly departed, leaving the printers with some $50 to $100 coming to them for back salary and a lot of other unsettled bills.

Debs and his associates who originally financed the project did all in their power to resuscitate the paper, but in vain. They were out their original investment for the plant and could not raise sufficient capital to resume publication, but Brother Debs raised many a dollar for those who suffered the loss of their salary, and helped others get situations in other industries.

If I were to recount one-half the good offices Eugene V. Debs did for the trade unions while I was in Terre Haute, I could fill up the entire pages of The Rip-Saw, and then a supplement would have to be added. Suffice it to say that he helped the writer to organize many of the trade unions of Terre Haute in those days, and many a night did we rouse him out of his bed to come and help settle some dispute or other between employer and employes, for the printers, the painters, the lathers and plasterers, the coopers, the cigar makers, the carpenters, the brick makers, the hodcarriers, and many others which I have borne witness to.

Believe me, Mr. Editor, it would not be healthy for Hamilton to express himself about Eugene V. Debs in Terre Haute as he did in Salt Lake City. No! Instead of escaping what
he deserved for his cowardly utterance—a bath in Salt Lake—he assuredly would not escape a dip in the Wabash before leaving the Prairie City.

Debs, for his sincere honesty of purpose, his genial, warm-hearted disposition, his faithful, untiring efforts to uplift the downtrodden, is loved by the union men, revered by those who do not agree with him politically, and respected by all who know him. The true character of this great man is summed up by James Whitcomb Riley, the "Hoosier poet," in his dialect poem, "Regardin' Terre Haute":

"And there's 'Gene Debs—a man 'at stands
And just holds out in his two hands
As warm a heart as ever beat
Betwixt here and the Judgement Seat!"

J. P. MacDonagh,
845 Grant St., Akron, Ohio.

May 10th, 1914.

RELIGIOUS LIFE OF EUGENE V. DEBS

By Isabel MacLean.

One cannot write of the religious life of Eugene Victor Debs as if it were one phase of his life, separate and apart from the rest. What Debs is on Sunday, that he is every other day.

What he is in his inmost thought and feeling, that and no other is he in his speech and action. His spirit and its expression are in beautiful accord. The inward and the outward are as one. Therefore his life, religious and political, private and public, must be taken as a whole. His religion works itself out in his political activity, as well as in his public utterances and his personal relations.

Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, we are told, is to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world.

I do not know what Mr. Debs' denominational affiliations may be; but I do know that to the cause of the helpless, the unfortunate, the suffering, and the oppressed everywhere he is
devoting his whole life and all his splendid talents with a pure heart, fervently.

I know that on a cold winter's day he has taken off his own coat and given it to a shivering old man on the street, and giving himself with his gift, said, "Brother, you need this more than I do."

I know that not long ago he gave his own good gold watch to a trainman who had been discharged for unpunctuality, which was unavoidable because his old watch was utterly unreliable.

I know that on his Chautauqua lecture tours he has gone into mining towns among the mountains of the far west where a strike was in progress and the women and children were in a state of destitution—has gone in among them with two hundred dollars in his pocket; and, when he came out, he had to borrow money enough to take him to the next place where he was to lecture.

A BIG HEART.

It was James Whitcomb Riley, a fellow townsman, who wrote of him:

And there's 'Gene Debs, a man 'at stands
And holds right out in his two hands
As big a heart as ever beat
Betwixt here and the judgement seat.

He belongs to the tribe of Abou Ben Adhem, who, among those who acclaimed their love to God, was content to be written down "as one who loves his fellow men;" and in the final count it was found that "Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

And I do know, also, that he has kept himself unspotted from the world. Wordly wealth, power and honors are nothing to this man. Has he not in rich abundance the real wealth, pure pleasures and deep joys that no money can buy? Is he not honored and believed in and almost idolized by millions of his fellow men? And has he not that power over men, rare and surpassing, of arousing and quickening into life the
highest and the deepest and tenderest emotions of their souls, and swaying their minds to true and noble deeds by his matchless oratory?

Ten thousand pens have tried to describe 'Gene Debs adequately, and others are still trying it. For my part, I am going to let his own pen reveal something of the man to you in a couple of illuminating sentences. I have before me a personal letter from him, not intended for publication, written in 1900, in which he says, on the question of accepting the nomination for presidential candidate of the Socialist party:

"I wish no 'office' nor 'honors'—empty baubles all. When my days are ended, I shall have enjoyed the love of those capable of appreciating a man who is true to himself, and that is enough."

Again, eight years later, on a similar occasion, after stating that personally he did not wish the nomination, but would abide by the decision of the party, as a loyal member should do, he writes:

"When the convention is over and the battle begins, I shall not be found wanting. I have long since passed that point in life where we are searched for foolish vanity and stripped of desire for personal glory. But one ambition now rules my life, and that is to serve with all the powers of my body, mind and soul the cause of Socialism and that without any other honor than that which comes to the rest of the workers in the ranks."

His keen, logical mind sees clearly the folly of attempting to relieve the individual sufferers while the causes that produce them continue to flourish unmolested. In his arraignment of the wrongs and injustice of our present industrial system he is as uncompromising as truth itself. As the money-changers were driven out of the Father’s house, so would he have the usurpers driven out who monopolize to themselves this bountiful earth which the Father has given to all his children as their common heritage.

He sees a vision of a new earth wherein no man shall build and another inhabit, where none shall plant and another reap, where every man and every woman shall have the full
result of their labor, and have full opportunity to become the best and highest that it is possible for them to be.

To him the brotherhood of man is not merely an abstract intellectual conception but a living, vital consciousness which fills him with a burning zeal for its actualization in our practical every-day life, right now and here, upon this beautiful earth.

And so in his denunciation of the wrong and injustice arising from our present competitive system of industry it is not he, but the truth, that condemns.

One man, Murray E. King, has succeeded in catching this attitude of Debs, and expressing it in these lines:

He fights as one who feels the hurt,
The hurt that he perforce must deal;
He strikes as one who feels that he
Must deal the blow that he must feel;
The tender Debs I see alway.
The looming figure of a man at bay.

A man at bay, who still must fight.
And serve the cause by thrust and blow—
The cause that bids him thrust and strike,
In spite of tenderness for foe,
And makes him love the foe he strikes,
And take the pain of every blow.

I see his tender, pitying hands,
Outstretching for the hearts of men;
I feel the pleading of his voice,
The tragedy of love and pain,
Of faith so strong, of heart so good—
Herald of dawn and brotherhood.

And this man, to whom twenty-five thousand people listened in Madison Square Garden, New York, a few weeks ago, while ten thousand more were turned away from the doors disappointed, is as simple-hearted as a child. How he loves the children. And how they love him! I wish you could see the picture I have of him, proudly seated in the midst of a group of sixteen of the neighbors' children, with the smallest of all on his knee. Once, when a magnificent reception was given to
him in a western city by the leading citizens, the mayor making the address of welcome and Debs replying, “at the close of the address a group of little children bearing baskets of flowers and wreaths, and their little faces suffused with smiles, marched to the platform, and literally smothered their friend with roses. Tears came to the big brother’s eyes as he gathered the little ones to him. An hour later,” wrote my friend, “I passed ’Gene sitting on the curb, with a dozen bright-eyed lassies and laddies clinging to his arms and shoulders. Mark my words: ‘You can pin your faith to the man loved by children.’”

“Except ye become as little children”—

Ah, well I know the “big brother” is very near the Kingdom.

Just one more story, to illustrate another phase.

Once, after a strike on a certain large railroad had been settled through the mediation of Debs, the men having gained some concessions which made life a little more bearable, they wanted to show their gratitude by having a banquet with Debs as the guest of honor. But Debs did not want this, and advised them not to spend their money that way.

Then they suggested a mass meeting at which they might express their feelings in an ovation when ’Gene appeared on the platform. To this he would not consent either; didn’t want any fuss made over it; he had only done his duty, same as the rest of them; many of them had sacrificed and suffered more than he, he said; and he wanted to slip away quietly to his home for a brief rest.

A SILENT TRIBUTE.

Early next morning, as his train pulled out from the station, the conductor came up to him, and asked him to step out on the rear platform for a moment. He did so, and saw that men, hundreds of them, from navvies up, were drawn up in line, on each side of the track; and more than one tear rolled down ’Gene’s cheek as the train drew slowly out from the station between the two lines of rugged, hard-working men, standing there in the morning light, with their heads bared and bowed. It was their tribute to the unselfishness and the pure, disinterested devotion of their beloved leader.
Such, then, is the religious life of Eugene Debs. He obeys literally and unstintedly the “new commandment” that was given unto us. His religion is love, love of humanity as a whole, and of individuals composing it, regardless of their deserts. He radiates it, as the sun does its light, because it is there and must come out. Debs believes greatly in men; therefore do they believe greatly in him.

There are many Socialists, but only one Debs. Many believe in Socialism, but Debs is a Socialist. Many believe in Christianity, but Debs is a Christian. There is no corner of room in his great heart for any selfishness or uncharitableness or unworthiness. His whole being is aflame with the white passion for humanity, for justice to the humblest as well as to the greatest of the children of men, for a world swayed by the living forces of love and truth and justice, where there shall be no hunger, no sickness or maiming or death or crime from causes which can be prevented; neither shall there be war any more; nor shall any of God’s children lack any good thing. To this end lives and works Eugene Debs.

And, “inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren—.” —*Christian Endeavor World.*

Those who, in the face of these splendid tributes, still permit their prejudices to blind them to the truth concerning Debs, would not be convinced though one arose from the dead. Such persons are joined to their idols, and, for one, I do not care to deprive them of the poor comfort they may derive from kowtowing to their little false gods. But those who do not want to intentionally wrong a fellowman, will, I believe, be glad to know the truth about this clean, brave, sincere, unselfish, big-hearted and noble-minded man, Eugene Victor Debs.
"Gene Debs is the most lovable man I ever knew. Debs is sincere. His heart is as gentle as a woman's and as fresh as a mountain brook. If Debs were a priest, the world would listen to his eloquence, and that gentle, musical voice and sad, sweet smile of his would soften the hardest heart."

EUGENE FIELD.