from The Public, December 23, 1905

JOHN W. BENGOUGH.*

•A half-tone portrait of Mr. Bengough accompanies this issue of The Public as a supplement.

Readers of The Public have long been familiar with the name of John W. Bengough, for nearly all its cartoons have come from his pencil. Not so familiar, however, is the fact that he is the best known cartoonist and one of the most popular entertainers on the lecture platform in Canada.

Mr. Bengough was born in Toronto, April 7, 1851. His father was a Fifeshire Scot of sturdy intellect and rigid conscience—a typical Scottish reformer whose mind grew fresher and keener and his views broader almost to the day he died, at the age of 81. His mother came from County Caven, Ireland. The national characteristics of the parents blend in the rollicking humor and unflagging purpose of the son.

When he was of the age of two, his parents moved to Whitby, Ontario, and at the public schools of this place the boy got his education.

He was not very studious, in the school-master sense of studiousness; but in developing his natural aptitudes he was as studious as the best. For skill in English composition, song, recitation, drawing and comic carving, he soon became famous among his schoolmates. With these accomplishments matured, and the aid of a prodigious memory, he has made his place in the world and filled it.

After a brief experience in high school and a briefer one in a law office, Mr. Bengough discovered an entrance to the path along which he has made his career. He threw up his position in the law office to take a place on the Whitby Gazette, where he remained until he came of age in 1872, when he secured a job as a local reporter on the daily Globe in Toronto. This was in the days of George Brown and his brother Gordon, the acknowledged leaders of Liberal journalism in Canada.

Before he had worked long on the Globe, an opportunity opened which introduced Bengough to the whole Canadian public. A pencil sketch he had made of a well-known Toronto character having been reproduced by the then unfamiliar art of lithography, the idea occurred to him of utilizing this art for the publication of a weekly paper with pictures.

The process was quick and cheap, and its cheapness especially was important, for Mr. Bengough had but little capital. Neither had his younger brother, Tom Bengough (now known as the most expert shorthand writer of Canada if not of America), who joined him in the enterprise. Between them they had barely enough capital to pay for the first number of the paper. But they made the venture together, and on the 24th of May. 1873, the paper appeared under the name of Grip. Though it was a crude little sheet, the Canadians took kindly to it; and as the Pacific railway scandal flamed up an exceptionally fine opportunity for cartooning was offered, of which Bengough made good use. So Grip sprang into immediate popularity. For more than two decades it was an influential organ of Canadian opinion.

Bengough's editorial policy was to express his honest thought on every subject he wrote on or cartooned. So far from injuring the paper, this policy increased its circulation and strengthened its influence. A prohibitionist himself, he not only supported prohibition, with pen and pencil in Grip, but as long as he controlled the paper he admitted no liquor "ads" to its advertising columns. Other subjects also claimed this kind of loyalty from him. While editor of Grip he read Henry George's Progress and Poverty, and at once capitulated to its reasoning. True to his editorial principles and policy, he then gave full expression to his thought along the lines of George's work, and Grip became an emphatic advocate of free trade and the single tax as well as of prohibition.

When Grip had been running; about a year, growing more popular all the time, the example of Thomas Nast, a cartoonist of whom Bengough was always a great admirer, made him ambitious to go upon the lecture platform. As he had from early boyhood beem accustomed to public reciting, being regarded in his schooldays as the star of his town, and as he had attracted attention as a writer of sketches in prose and verse, as well as a cartoonist, he felt encouraged to make his experiment at lyceum entertainment.

His first appearance was at the Music Hall in Toronto under the auspices of the Mechanics' Institute, in 1874. Since then he hasfilled engagements every season, going twice across the continent, yet never neglecting his editorial work.

For 21 years Bengough edited and illustrated Grip without missing a week, no matter how pressing upon his time and energy were other demands. His connection with Grip was severed in the early 90's through a business disagreement between himself and the managers of the corporation which had come into its control. Grip did not long

survive his withdrawal.

Since leaving Grip he has done regular cartooning and other journalistic wor.k for the Montreal daily Star, the Toronto Evening Star, and the Toronto Globe.

In 1901, while on a visit to England, he responded to a call from the London Chronicle for a cartoonist, and for several momths he aided the Chronicle in this way in supporting the programme of the Liberal party of Great Britain. Subsequently he was engaged as a cartoonist in London to assist in the Chamberlain movement for promoting the unity of the Empire; but after a fortnight's work he discovered that unity of the Empire was only a British euphemism for protection propaganda, whereupon he abandoned this engagement. He then contributed cartoons to the London Leader and the London News, on the antiChamberlain side.

The first Bengough cartoon to appear in The Public was on imperialism. It treated Uncle Sam as "Dr. Jekyll" with reference to Cuba, and "Mr. Hyde" with reference to the Philippines, and appeared in the issue of June 14, 1902 (vol. v, p. 160). The next, "The Un-working Classes," appeared (vol. v. 208) in the issue of July 5, 1902. Since then, with only two or three exceptions, every issue of The Public has contained a cartoon from the cosmopolitan pencil of Mr. Bengough.

With all his cartooning, editorial writing and lecturing Mr. Bengough has not neglected literary work of a permanent character. Like his cartoons, his writing is done not merely for the purpose of showing how well he can do it. but for the purpose of propagating ideas.

For political service he utilizes a character of his own invention. "Caleb Jinkins," who is made by Mr. Bengough's pen to do a good deal of useful "thinking out loud." His "Caleb Jinkins" papers have not yet been published in book form, but several books from his pen have come before the public. Among these are two volumes of verse, "Motley" and "In Many Keys." Another is "The Gin Mill Primer," and still another, probably the best known, is "The Up-to-Date Primer." 'The last is a witty yet philosophical book of one-syllabled words, with illustrations drawn by the author. It imitates the style of the old fashioned progressive school primer, and is intended, according to the title, as "'a first book of lessons for little political economists." Here is a sample:

What is this? It is a High Wall. It is built by the Wise State all round the Bounds of

the Land to Keep Out Cheap Goods that Foes might want to Send in. But if the Wall keeps out Cheap Goods, the like Goods our own Men make will be Dear, will they not? Yes, they May, but you see we will Keep our Cash in our own Land, so we can Buy even if they are Dear. And more, they will not be Dear long, for lots of Works will be set up, and the Price will soon Fall to a Fair Rate. And poor Toil will soon get Rich, will he not? So they Say. But see! there is a Hole in the Wall, and All who Please may come in to Beat down Toil in his Wage. Toll must buy Dear Goods, but Work for a Cheap Wage. That is what it Means, but Toil Votes for the Wall.

Political activity is not exactly in Mr. Bemgough's line, but a man who is a prohibitionist, a single taxer and a municipal reformer is pretty apt to be dragged into political activity whether he will or no, and this is what has happened to Mr. Bengough. Toronto is the city in which at a referendum recently (vol. vii, p. 661; vol. viii, p. 21) the people voted to exempt from taxation all real estate improvements up to $700). That was the principle involved, though in form the vote was an affirmative reply to the question, Do you wish the City Council to ask the legislature for power to exempt dwelling houses up to $700 of their value? The aldermen having refused to execute the people's will in this matter the exemptionists have decided upon nominating aldermen of a more democratic type. One of these is Mr. Bengough. He will be supported also by the temperance people and the Municipal Reform League, and there are good reasons for expecting his success at the election, which is to take place on the 1st day of January. 1906.

Mr. Bengough is intending to make a lecturing tour of the United States under the auspices of the Henry George Lecture Association as a colleague of John Z. White, Ernest H. Crosby and Herbert S. Bigelow, but as a cartoonist and entertainer rather than a formal lecturer.

His cartoons are so familiar to our readers that no special description is necessary. They are distinguished for pungent, serious-minded wit, which probes and lays bare, although his pencil has a light touch of humor when he aims to amuse. It is in his lecture cartoons more than in his newspaper cartoons that his Irish jollity gets the better of his Scotch gravity; for in lecturing Mr. Bengough makes comical as well as instructive uses of the easel and chalk. In "chalk talks" he excels. What Thomas Nast was in this respect to American audiences years ago, such is John W. Bengough to-day.

An entertainer of high grade and fine humor, both with speech and pencil, he makes

his humor serve higher purposes than those of a mere showman. The high ideals to which other lecturers appeal by verbal exposition, argument and oratory, are shrewdly and good naturedly served by Bengough with the cheerful art of the comic actor and the wit and skill of the ready cartoonist.