

JAMES BRYCE—A TRIBUTE

Historical students everywhere were saddened at the opening of the present year (January 22) by the announcement of the death of James Bryce—Viscount Bryce, to speak more accurately—but he will always be remembered affectionately in America as James Bryce. Bryce like so many of the familiar British type was a many-sided public man but he will be most widely known in America perhaps because of his studies in history and government. Son of a school teacher, born in Ireland, educated in Scotland and England, he began life as a lawyer and was then called back to Oxford as Regius professor of civil law. At the age of 26 he made a name for himself by his prize composition, *The Holy Roman Empire*, which is still the standard work in its field. His great work *The American Commonwealth* (1888, revised 1910) was the first serious study of the American government from the standpoint of the historian and constitutional lawyer. It became a classic at once and was very widely used as a text book in colleges and universities. Serious scientific study of our government may be said to begin with Bryce. His *Studies in History and Jurisprudence* appeared in 1901, followed two years later by *Studies in Contemporary Biography*. In 1897 following a visit to South Africa he published a volume of *Impressions* that had a large influence in Liberal circles when the Boer War was being discussed. A similarly illuminating volume on *South America* recorded his observations there. Perhaps his crowning work was *Modern Democracies* which was produced at the age of eighty-three. As late as August 1921 Bryce delivered eight lectures before the Institute of Politics at Williams College on *International Relations*, and in the same year as first occupant of the Chair of American History, Literature and Institutions founded by the Anglo-American Society rendered a brilliant interpretation on *The Study of American History*.

The versatility of the man is evidenced by activities in other lines. In early life he became an expert alpinist, and published a scientific volume on *The Flora of the Island of Arran*. In 1880, Bryce was elected to Parliament as a Liberal, later he became in rapid succession, under secretary for foreign affairs, chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, president of the Board of Trade, chairman

of the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, chief secretary for Ireland, and finally British Ambassador at Washington.

As Ambassador Bryce took leave of party politics and his work in this capacity entitled him to be regarded as one of the real builders of a better civilization. "If every nation could send to every other nation an ambassador who understood and loved both his home country and the country to which he was accredited as James Bryce knew and loved Great Britain and the United States, nothing could be more difficult than to start a war * * * With Bryce there could be neither patronizing nor obsequiousness; any class melted away in the sun of his geniality, his humor, his common sense, and his abiding friendliness."

As Americans we owe him an additional measure of gratitude for his pioneer work in the study of our institutions. Every thoughtful student should read his *American Commonwealth* and hold in grateful remembrance its author's name—James Bryce, scholar, historian, statesman.

EDWARD MCMAHON.