

HENRY GEORGE'S UNANSWERABLE LETTER ON PROTECTION.

In his autobiography, MY STORY, Tom L. Johnson tells us that while the Wilson Tariff Bill was under consideration he received a letter from some Cleveland cloak manufacturers requesting him to vote for a specific duty in addition to an *ad valorem* duty on ladies' cloaks. He then goes on:—

I explained the matter to Henry George and he framed a letter in reply. That letter was one of the finest pieces of writing Mr. George ever did. It was as follows:—

Cleveland, Ohio.

December 29th, 1893.

To Joseph Lachneet, Emil Weisels, Joseph Frankel and others, tailors and tailoresses in the employ of Messrs. Landesman, Hirscheimer and Co., cloak manufacturers of Cleveland.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—

I have received your communication and that from Messrs. Landesman, Hirscheimer and Co. to which you refer, asking me to vote against the Wilson Tariff Bill, unless it is amended by adding to the duty of 45 per cent. *ad valorem*, which it proposes, an additional duty of 49½ cents per pound.

I shall do nothing of the kind. My objection to the Wilson Bill is not that its duties are too low, but that they are too high. I will do all I can to cut its duties down, but I will strenuously oppose putting them up. You ask me to vote to make cloaks artificially dear. How can I do that without making it harder for those who need cloaks to get cloaks? Even if this would benefit you, would it not injure others? There are many cloak-makers in Cleveland, it is true, but they are few as compared with the cloak users. Would you consider me an honest representative if I would thus consent to injure the many for the benefit of the few, even though the few in this case were yourselves?

And you ask me to demand, in addition to a monstrous *ad valorem* duty of 45 per cent., a still more monstrous weight duty of 49½ cents a pound—a weight duty that will make the poorest sewing-girl pay as much tax on her cheap shoddy cloak as Mrs. Astor or Mrs. Vanderbilt would be called upon to pay on a cloak of the finest velvet and embroideries! Do you really want me to vote to thus put the burden of taxation on the poor while letting the rich escape? Whether you want me to or not, I will not do it.

That, as your employers say, a serviceable cloak can be bought in Berlin at \$1.20 affords no reason in my mind for keeping up the tariff. On the contrary, it is the strongest reason for abolishing it altogether. There are lots of women in this country who would rejoice to get cloaks so cheaply; lots of women who must now pinch and strain to get a cloak; lots of women who cannot now afford to buy cloaks, and must wear old or cast-off garments or shiver with cold. Is it not common justice that we should abolish every tax that makes it harder for them to clothe themselves?

No; I will do nothing to keep up duties. I do not believe in taxing one citizen for the purpose of enriching another citizen. You elected me on my declaration that I was opposed to protection, believing it but a scheme for enabling the few to rob the many, and that I was opposed even to a tariff for revenue, believing that the only just way of raising revenues is by the Single Tax upon Land Values. So long as I continue to represent you in Congress I shall act on the principle of equal rights to all and special privileges to none, and whenever I can abolish any of the taxes that are now levied on labour or the products of labour I will do it, and where I cannot abolish I will do my best to reduce. When you get tired of that you can elect someone in my place who suits you better. If you want duties kept up, you may get an honest protectionist who will serve you; you cannot get an honest free trader.

But I believe that you have only to think of the matter to see that in adhering to principle I will be acting for the best interests of all working men and women, yourselves among the number. This demand for protective duties or the benefit of the American working man is the veriest sham. You cannot protect labour by putting import

duties on goods. Protection makes it harder for the masses of our people to live. It may increase the profits of favoured capitalists; it may build up trusts and create great fortunes, but it cannot raise wages. You know for yourselves that what your employers pay you in wages does not depend upon what any tariff may enable them to make, but on what they can get others to take your places for. You have to stand the competition of the labour market. Why, then, should you try to shut yourselves out from the advantages that the competition of the goods market should give you? It is not protection that makes wages higher here than in Germany. They were higher here before we had any protection, and in the saturnalia of protection that has reigned here for some years past you have seen wages go down, until the country is now crowded with tramps and hundreds of thousands of men are now supported by charity. What made wages higher than in Germany is the freer access to land, the natural means of all production, and as that is closed up and monopoly sets in wages must decline. What labour needs is not protection, but justice; not legalised restrictions which permit one set of men to tax their fellows, but the free opportunity for all for the exertion of their own powers. The real struggle for the rights of labour and for those fair wages that consist in the full earnings of labour is the struggle for freedom and against monopolies and restrictions; and in the effort to cut down protection it is timely beginning. I shall support the Wilson Bill with all my ability and all my strength.

Yours very respectfully,

TOM L. JOHNSON.

One of the principal movers in the matter, an experienced newspaper man, told me some time afterwards that he had wasted reams of paper and burned much midnight oil in a fruitless attempt to answer. "But," said he, "I'm just as much a protectionist as ever, only it won't work on ladies' cloaks."

CHIPS FROM A SWISS WORKSHOP.

ON THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIALISM.*

BY GUSTAV BUSCHER.

Whatever may be held concerning its merits or demerits; whether we regard it as the only path to social salvation, or as a misleading will-o'-the-wisp, holding out alluring promises it cannot possibly fulfil; its fundamental theories and teachings as true or as false, as bracing or as enervating, as uplifting or as demoralising and degrading—the causes of the evolution of Socialism are comparatively easy to find.

The great political teachers, the apostles of Liberty and Justice, of the Eighteenth Century arose at a time when Despotism and Privilege ruled supreme and unchecked, when Might was tacitly assumed to confer Right, and when Government, under the influence of the Mercantile Theory, which regarded gold and silver as the only real wealth of the nation, were interfering with every branch of trade and industry, with the view of keeping in each country as much of these metals as possible. As against these tendencies they taught that the recognition of the equal rights of all—equal rights to life, to liberty and to the pursuit of happiness, as the American Constitution expresses it—was the only rational basis of peaceful and harmonious social life, the foundation-stone, key-stone and corner-stone of rational Constitutional Government. They held that the State was made for Man, not Man for the State. The primary function of the State, they contended, was *not* to grant monopolies, nor to maintain, extend and protect privileges, but to secure Justice, to maintain and enforce the equal rights of all its citizens. If it would only do this, it need do little or nothing more. For under such conditions the production of wealth, as well as its equitable distribution amongst those co-operating in the necessary work, would satisfactorily take care of itself. State interference and State regulation, they argued, was far more like to do harm than to do good, and,

* A somewhat free translation from Mr. Gustav Büscher's pamphlet, "A Word to Socialists." To be had in German. Price 6d., post free, from LAND VALUES Pub. Dept., 376-77, Strand, London, W.C.

so long as the State carried out its primary function, was entirely unnecessary. For the natural harmony of the rightful interests of mankind would soon put everything on the right track. These doctrines were briefly summarised in the somewhat vague and misleading phrase—" *Laisser faire, laisser aller.*"

After the downfall of unchecked Despotism and the gradual adoption and extension of Constitutional Government, the great Liberal Parties, both on the Continent and Great Britain, avowedly accepted this doctrine of equal rights. As a matter of fact, however, for the most part they only demanded and secured for the people such rights as cost the still all powerful privileged classes little or nothing. True that a few bold and far-seeing thinkers had openly proclaimed that the realisation of the equal rights doctrine was not secured by the extension of the franchise, or even equal voting power, and other such political formalities; but that it involved and demanded the recognition of the equal rights of all to the use of the earth. But any such idea was too new, too bold and too big, to be accepted by the mob of lesser men of which these parties were composed. Still less did it suit the powerful interests who had supported Liberalism mainly because, in its blindness and innovating zeal, it had helped to clear away any remains of the old established rights of the people to the use of the land, and had thus torn down every hindrance that stood in the way of their own ever-increasing greed and covetousness. Thus the best and most potent part of the great and immutable truth, upon the assumed adoption of which Liberalism had established itself and acquired political power, was hidden from the people.

More than this, when, despite this pretended granting of equal rights, the needs of the people became more and more pressing, Liberal theorists confronted them with haughty superiority, heartless indifference, and impudent denials. "We have given all of you equal rights, what more do you want, what more can you ask for?" they insolently demanded. As a matter of fact, of course, they had done no such thing. They had willingly given the people equal rights in immaterial, intangible, and invisible things; but that the equal rights doctrine involved equal rights to the use of the earth and to share in the bounties of Nature, they had never allowed themselves to entertain for a moment, or even allowed others to avow unhindered. Small wonder that such a distorted, perverted Liberalism soon lost its hold on the people, gained only the favour of the rich whom, in truth, it had served too well.

This gave Socialism its opportunity; this accounts for its establishment and phenomenal development and progress, more especially, perhaps, in countries, such as Prussia and Russia, where the masses of the people have only recently been emancipated from serfdom and been granted some modicum of political power. The needs of the people were too great to be overlooked; Socialism espoused their cause and claimed to voice their aspirations. Socialistic theorists meditated on their needs and continuously invented and proposed fresh means to help them. Realising that such equal rights as had been secured were utterly useless to the poor, utterly inadequate to solve the social problem that confronted them, with swift logic they rejected the fundamental idea of equal rights as offering any guide to the social salvation of the industrial masses of the people. They seem to have been too immersed in their own theories to realise, or too near-sighted to suspect, that the conception of the equal rights of all had a far deeper meaning, of more far-reaching import, than that attributed to it by the orthodox apostles of Liberalism. Hence, instead of accepting and extending this basic conception, the truth of which it seems to many worse than folly even to suspect; instead of boldly avowing that it must involve and carry with it equal rights to the tangible things of this world, in so far, of course, as they have not been called into existence by unequal human toil: they proceeded to invent and proclaim a whole host of less clear and understandable, and certainly more questionable, disputable and confusing theories, from which they then proceeded to deduce such actions and proposals as they deemed called for by the temporary pressing necessities of the day. Once having quitted the straight path of clear conceptions and indisputable eternal verities, their path has grown ever more confused and confusing. Hence we have the paradox that while Socialism continues to make

constant appeals to right feeling, to accepted ideas of right and wrong, while Socialist poets have burst out into eloquent songs glorifying Freedom, Justice and Right, Socialist theorists, on the other hand, have come more and more to combat the inspiring idea and ideal of the inalienable rights of man as an absurd, ridiculous, obsolete fancy, quite unfit to serve as any safe guide to human conduct, individual or collective.

To-day in many countries Socialism still holds the field as apparently offering the only solution of the social problem. The greater the number of its supporters, of those willing to vote for its candidates, the more numerous become those who have implicit faith in it, who build upon it all their hopes of social salvation, even though they may have no real insight into or understanding of the basic principles upon which its teachings and doctrines are based. The progress of Socialism has startled the most apathetic. The progress of Liberalism has been checked; the forces of reaction have been strengthened. To-day the learning which serves the rich and powerful has turned a complete somersault. Whilst formerly it had perforce to avow and proclaim that, in the abstract at least, the doctrine of the equal rights of all was the one rational and natural foundation of constitutional law and order, to-day, encouraged by the example of the Socialist Theorists, this doctrine is attacked by all sorts of specious reasoning. In place of this clear, understandable, straightforward and logical conception, the publicists of to-day are busy substituting a confused and confusing mixture of all sorts of disconnected theories. Amongst well-placed but narrow-minded and half-educated men it is becoming increasingly fashionable to scoff at the idea of the inalienable rights of man, or of natural rights, as a sort of nursery-tale fit only to amuse such superior, clever and cultured folk as themselves.

The end, however, is not yet. If modern Socialism is not to pass away as so many other similar movements have done: if it is permanently to influence the future destinies of mankind, it will have to free itself from the fanciful imaginations and inventions of its early youth, and to seek the foundations of its ideal Social State of the future on the eternal and immutable verity of the inalienable equal rights of all, and boldly advocate all that this inspiring, up-lifting conception involves. In the process of its evolution it will have to come to discard the false and cling to what is true, to recognise, with the great apostles of Liberty and Justice of the early Eighteenth Century, that the State is made for Man, not Man for the State.

"Privilege is the advantage conferred on one by law of denying the competition of others."—TOM L. JOHNSON.

PEACE on EARTH GOODWILL to MEN

Do you desire to bring this about?
Then see that

4d. "Progress and Poverty" 4d.

(By post 5d.; Cloth 8d., by post 10d.)

is placed in every house in the United Kingdom.

Revised and corrected from the author's own Edition. "Progress and Poverty" is indispensable to Land Reformers.

John Bagot, Limited, MIDDLETON,
LANCASHIRE.
LAND VALUES PUBLICATION DEPT., 376-7, Strand, London, W.C.,
or from any Bookseller.