

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.