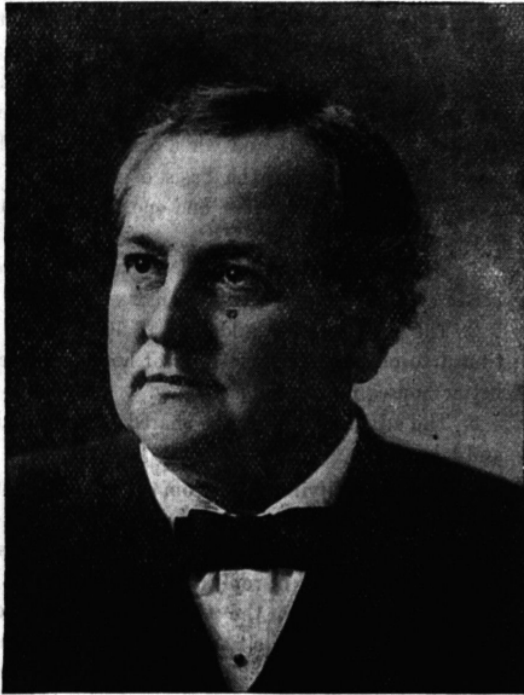


## TOM JOHNSON OF CLEVELAND.

By GEORGE C. SIKES.

(Abridged from "The Outlook," New York).



Tom L. Johnson is in many ways the most interesting and picturesque personality in American public life to-day. His greatest claim to distinction, it seems to me, lies in the fact that he combines in one individuality traits that are commonly found only in men of distinctly opposite types and antagonistic points of view. Johnson represents the new order of democratic leadership that is essential to the solution in a democratic way of the problems which modern economic conditions have thrust to the front in politics. The term democratic in this connection of course is used in the broader, and not in the partisan, sense. Johnson is a man of radical democratic views upon questions of economic and political policy, somewhat after the manner of Jefferson or Altgeld, only more extreme than either in his fundamental beliefs; while, at the same time, he is possessed of those exceptional administrative qualities that especially characterise the modern trust-building captains of industry, whose activities are so often the antithesis of democracy. Tom Johnson, to my mind, combines in one individuality, to a greater extent than in the case of any other man the nation has yet produced, the practical administrative efficiency of the business type, together with advocacy of the ideas and policies of radical democracy. Johnson, as a leader in the great democratic movement of the times, must be reckoned with as a force in the political life and conflicts of the country.

Mr. Johnson was born in Kentucky in 1854. He was christened Tom, not Thomas. He came from a wealthy slave-owning family. His father served as an officer in the Confederate army. The close of the war found the family in poverty, and young Tom was obliged to go to work at an early age. He learned his first lesson in the value of monopoly as a newsboy of eleven. Through

friendly relations with the conductor of the one daily train to his village, Tom was allowed to prosper in business in preference to others, precisely as great business enterprises have prospered through similar favoritism since. For several weeks, during a period when the interest in news was keen, the conductor gave young Johnson a monopoly by allowing no one else to bring papers to that village on his train.

In 1869, at the age of fifteen, the boy went to work in a humble capacity on a small street railway system in Louisville, which had been purchased by relatives. Before long he became superintendent, a position he held until 1876, when he and two associates purchased the street-car system in Indianapolis. In 1880 Johnson left the Indianapolis field and bought some small car lines in Cleveland, which he began to develop. His business brought him into bitter competition with Marcus A. Hanna, whose political antagonist he was later to become. As an operating street-car man, Johnson devised several inventions, one of which, an improved fare box, netted him about \$30,000 in days when he needed capital. Johnson also became heavily interested in steel rail making plants. His ventures were successful, and made him wealthy.

A chance reading of one of Henry George's books led Johnson, then past thirty years of age, to form the acquaintance of the Prophet of San Francisco, and made him a convert to the single tax idea. At the suggestion of Henry George, Johnson became a candidate for Congress from the Cleveland district in 1888, and was defeated. He tried again in 1890, and was elected, serving two terms, going down to defeat in 1894 at the hands of Mr. Burton, his recent Republican opponent for Mayor of Cleveland.

As a member of Congress, Johnson fought the passage of the Wilson tariff bill, which was put through by his fellow-Democrats, and allowed by President Cleveland to become a law without his signature. In debate over monopoly legislation, on one occasion, Johnson made a characteristic retort to an opponent who said that he ought to vote for measures he denounced as monopolies, because he was a monopolist. Johnson replied, "As a business man I am willing to take advantage of all the monopoly laws you pass; but as a member of Congress I will not help you to pass them, and I will try to force you to repeal them."

In 1901, Johnson was elected Mayor of Cleveland, on the issue of three-cent street-car fares. He has now been thrice re-elected. His programme has encountered very strong opposition. Failing to reach an amicable agreement with the existing company, Johnson sought to introduce a competing system. After much litigation, the new company has managed to construct and put into operation a small mileage on which passengers are carried for three cents each. In this connection Johnson has made use of a holding company idea, in the working out of which he is said to have sought the advice of lawyers of the type that serve the great corporations. The holding company virtually agrees to act as trustee for the public, and to use all profits in excess of six per cent. in making improvements or reducing the outstanding capital, with a view to turning the property over to the city debt free as soon as paid for. Johnson's idea is to utilise this plan as a step to municipal ownership, as soon as that policy shall be made possible by the laws of Ohio.

The course of events early forced Mayor Johnson to recognise the dependence of the city upon the State. In order to secure a larger measure of municipal self-government, and to force upon public attention the subject of equitable taxation, Johnson became a candidate for Governor of Ohio, and was beaten. The campaign was not without its value, however, for some of the reforms he thus brought to public notice are being carried out. In the same campaign in which he was a candidate for

Governor, Johnson openly urged the defeat of legislative nominees of his own party, whom he thought unfit. On other occasions he has induced the Democratic party in Cleveland to nominate for office Republicans whom he considered deserving.

Johnson's enemies charge that he is insincere and a demagogue. In the campaign just closed they especially accused him of being the owner of a political machine. Johnson's reply to this charge is that he is willing his opponents should call his organisation a machine if they care to do so. But he asks the voters to compare the things his "machine" stands for with those for which the "organisation" of his opponent is sponsor.

On the administrative side, Johnson is given credit in many quarters for exceptional efficiency. The work of his Commissioner of Charities, the Rev. Harris R. Cooley, is especially noteworthy. The building ordinances have been revised under the supervision of Mr. John Eisenmann, appointed Special Building Code Commissioner by Mayor Johnson, and now Cleveland is said by experts to have the best building code of any city in the country. The management of the Water Bureau by Professor E. W. Bemis has attracted attention. The law and police departments have been highly commended. Public works have been carried forward in a progressive manner. The line of criticism is that too much money has been spent and the city debt too much augmented; but Mayor Johnson challenges his opponents to specify in what items there has been extravagance or waste, and to name the improvement for which the expenditure should not have been incurred.

It was largely general administrative excellence that led Mr. Lincoln Steffens, after a study of Cleveland, to pronounce Johnson "the best Mayor of the best-governed city in the United States." Before he went to Cleveland to investigate, Steffens had a poor opinion of Johnson. Apparently he thought the man was more given to exploiting cranky notions than to getting results. Johnson is, indeed, committed to radical policies to a degree that impairs his usefulness in the eyes of some; but he differs from the mere doctrinaire radicals in that he has the money-making faculty and the practical qualities which attend that faculty, and he is possessed of a saving sense of humour. Without abandoning his ultimate programme, or educational work in its behalf, Johnson is pre-eminently given to doing to-day the thing that can be done.

#### SCOTTISH NOTES.

##### Glasgow Corporation and Land Values Expenses.—The Settlement of the Action.

Lord Johnstone was informed that a settlement had been arrived at in the petition and complaint by George Eadie, builder, 405, Mathieson Street, Glasgow, and others, for the rectification of the Common Good Act of Glasgow.

The petitioner objected to the item of £2,457 2s. 1d. appearing in the Common Good Act for year ended 31st May, 1906, under the heading, "Taxation of Land Values," on the ground that the sum had been illegally spent in promoting a public Parliamentary bill for the whole country, called the "Taxation of Land Values Bill," notwithstanding the advice of the late Town Clerk, Sir James Marwick, that such expenditure would be illegal. They objected to the item except in so far as it might be duly vouched to represent expenditure in petitioning Parliament in favour of the bill, or in asking members of Parliament to support it. Subject to that exception, the petitioners desire that the item should be disallowed

as a charge against the Common Good, and that the Act should be rectified accordingly.

The respondents, the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Town Councillors, maintained that the charges formed a legitimate application of the Common Good funds, and that they were entitled to incur the expenditure.

However unreasonable it may seem to Mr. George Eadie and his friends to spend public money in promoting the taxation of land values, it is to be hoped that he may live to see that public money never was spent in a better direction. We shall continue to pray, trustfully and devoutly, that another £2,457 2s. 1d. may soon be forthcoming, from some source, to carry to fruition the noble work done by the Glasgow Corporation, and the Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values—otherwise known "as the power behind the Government."

#### The Hard Case of the Vatersay Raiders.

The case of these ten Barra Cottars, which came before the Second Division of the Court Session, throws a lurid light on the actual workings of landlordism in an obscure corner of the Western Hebrides. The trial revealed, as it was intended to do, the lamentable and distressing condition under which these men have been struggling to maintain themselves and their dependents in the barest kind of existence. Their condition is in many respects worse than can be found among uncivilized savages—yet these men are members of the greatest nation on earth. The protest they are making in defiance of the law is based on the certainty of human knowledge, viz., that if men are to maintain themselves in life they must have the use of land. It is rather strange that, while the people of Scotland, by their votes, raise the cry "of back to the land," these men are sent to prison for refusing to leave the land.

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"We are informed that, at a meeting of the Executive of the Scottish League, for the Taxation of Land Values, it was agreed to open a fund to assist the Vatersay Crofters in their efforts to bring before the public the conditions under which the people of Vatersay are compelled to live. A Committee was appointed to carry out the arrangements, and a sum of £10 was granted from the funds of the League as an opening contribution to the fund."—"Glasgow Evening Citizen," June 12th, 1908.

No doubt some of the friends of the Scottish League will smile at the League taking this kind of action. But is there no moral obligation on the part of the League to assist men who are demanding their rights as men—access to land? The Executors of the League think there is such an obligation, hence the appeal. It was a tactical mistake, on the Vatersay raiders' part, to surrender at discretion, as it conveys the impression that they are as good as beaten in their demand for the use of land. If they intended to win they should have played the bold game and have compelled the Government to bring them in.

It is said we cannot produce sufficient corn and cattle for our own consumption. Is there any reason to wonder at that, when men, fitted to produce both, are denied the use of any part of God's earth, unless some land owner graciously consents to allow it to be used?

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Mr. Francis Gaegler, of Kensington, Ind., U.S.A., writes, enclosing \$1 for two subscriptions, "Can't do without 'Land Values.' Wish you much success, and hope the cause will win out in Great Britain." This is both flattering and encouraging, and is the proper kind of support. If the cause is to win in Great Britain, it will need much of this kind of support.