

Gentlemen, scribes and Pharisees of to-day, members of the better element, that is to say: What is your attitude toward the prophets?

You wouldn't have killed the prophets. Of course not.—John Stone Pardee, in the *Argus*, of Red Wing, Minn.

#### TOM L. JOHNSON, MAYOR OF CLEVELAND; A REMARKABLE PERSONALITY.

An article specially contributed to the *Evening Journal*, of Ottawa, Can., and published in their issue for November 8.

To introduce "the whole philosophy of Henry George" into the legislation and administration of his own country is the labor of a great Hercules which Hon. Tom L. Johnson, presently mayor of Cleveland, O., has undertaken, and to that labor he brings such a combination of qualities that, if he lives, he will either succeed completely or at least make such a failure as John Brown made, a failure which was only the necessary preliminary to success.

James Creelman, the eminent American interviewer, says of Johnson: "He has the mind of an idealist in the body of an ox." "Words can hardly express the sense of energy conveyed by the personality of this extraordinary man, yet nature has given him the plump, laughing, unwrinkled aspect of an ease-lover." In these days of stress and strain, when a Schwab breaks down and a Rockefeller must husband his strength as though every unit of energy were worth millions, this outfit of perfect nervous balance and robust health is the first thing necessary for the worker in the field of political agitation.

"Give Johnson ten years more," said one of his friends some time ago, "and he'll own every street railroad franchise in the United States." Johnson is a fellow citizen of Rockefeller, the typical millionaire of the United States, and of Mark Hanna, the great high priest of the plutocracy. He has fought them both in business, asking no quarter and smiling all the time. If they have come out with more millions than he, it is because he has quit the game while still young, having found a more interesting use for his time. A writer in *Chambers' Journal*, a conservative publication, nevertheless credits Johnson with the ownership of twenty-five millions, all his own winnings, starting with no capital save a year's schooling and enough money to buy

a bundle of newspapers, with which he established a business.

You do not hear Johnson prating the tea-meeting drivel about men growing enormously rich by their own hard work and frugality. He saw from the first that money was made in quantity through the control of monopoly. When he peddled papers he used his first money to buy the exclusive privilege on a little railroad; when he manufactured iron, he protected himself with patent rights and took full advantage of the protective tariff; when he went into the street railway business, his first care was to get his franchise solid.

The plutocrats cannot talk down to him as they would to a man like William Jennings Bryan, giving him and the public to understand that this matter of being "captain of industry" is really something quite beyond the comprehension of agitators and common men. Johnson knows all the ins and outs of the game of captaining industry, and he knows that the plain bald fact is that money-making is a mere scramble, and that the only man who has a chance to win much is the man who gets a section of the ground railed off so that he can have that part of the scramble for himself. Therefore he tells the people in effect: "You are foolish to give these privileges to Rockefeller, Hanna, myself and others like us. The effect of such a public policy is that you make the wealth, but the fortunate and pushful few get it. Be reasonable, be just, and make laws which shall secure to every man exactly what he earns." And when captains of industry tell him that this is only an iridescent dream, his answer is: "I have quit business and gone into politics; I will never rest until our laws exemplify the great Jefferson's rule: 'Equal and exact justice to all; special privileges to none.'"

#### WORK FOR HIS IDEAL.

It is two years next January since Johnson announced at a banquet of Cleveland Democrats that he had freed himself from business entanglements of every sort and was ready to work for his ideal.

In thus abandoning the mere toiler's job of stacking up more millions and turning to work worthy of a man with a heart and a brain, Johnson has far greater qualities than mere energy and business ability. He is a born general, and he has had enough experience in politics to understand the ground. Moreover, he is a po-

litical economist more learned as to facts and more scientific in his reasoning than any man who occupies a professor's chair for the teaching of that branch of learning. And above all he is as much in earnest as any religious enthusiast. Henry George, than whom a purer soul never lived, said of him on one occasion, when it was suggested that he should distrust this millionaire: "Distrust Tom Johnson! Why, I would as soon think of distrusting myself as of distrusting Tom Johnson." It was Johnson who supplied much of the money and a large part of the energy for Henry George's first campaign for the mayoralty of New York; it was he who managed the second campaign which ended so tragically in George's sudden death just before election day; and it was in his arms, almost, that George died.

Johnson's idea of the future may be a dream, but he threatens to make his efforts to realize it a nightmare for all privilege holders. His idea of opposing privilege is not to make lectures about it, but to kill it, attacking first the part that is most exposed and that can most readily be reached.

In announcing the devotion of his life to the advocacy of the rule of justice, Johnson declared that he wanted no office, and would accept none. But he spoke somewhat hastily, for within a month he was nominated for the mayoralty of Cleveland by the Democrats and accepted. There were things to be done in his line, and the people of Cleveland seemed to think he was the only man for the job.

In the first place the Democratic party in Cleveland, and even in the state, had fallen to the position of a mere organization for the division of the spoils with the Republicans, who for years have been dominant, and the best men in the party felt that something should be done about it. In the second place, certain street railway franchises were about falling in, and there were people who were quite ready to accept a nice, juicy renewal for 50 years, such as had been granted for the benefit of certain bosses in Cincinnati. In the third place, and most immediately important, the Democratic machine, which was in control at the Cleveland city hall, had prepared to give away valuable city rights in the real estate of the water front, and there was no time to lose if the job was to be headed off.

THREE-CENT STREET CAR FARES.  
Johnson declared for three-cent

street railway fares, with universal transfers, and when the street railway people said that this was impossible, Johnson set his opinion as an expert against theirs, and pledged his reputation to have the street railway put on a three-cent fare basis if the people would give him the power.

The Republicans, knowing that the anti-Johnson Democrats had no chance, did all they could to win. They carried all their ticket except the mayor, but Johnson ran away ahead of the rest of the Democratic ticket and won by a plurality of over 6,000.

Meantime, as a citizen, he had sued out an injunction which had the effect of holding up the water-front deal until after the election. He qualified as mayor just half an hour before the injunction expired, and vetoed the ordinance, thus killing the deal.

His next step was to reach an understanding with the members of the city council. He formed a combine of honest Republicans and Democrats against the "gray wolves" in the council, the result of which has been that personal advantage has been eliminated as an element in the consideration of municipal ordinances. Acting under the power given him by the state law, Johnson appointed the heads of departments who, together, form his "cabinet." His experience in directing great enterprises enabled him to choose good men; and most of them were from outside the ranks of the party workers and leaders. Though big enough men to manage the affairs intrusted to them, they were not too big to work in consultation with a man of the mayor's caliber.

Leaks were stopped in the finances, the waterworks system was put on a paying basis, the parks were increased in area, and, by the removal of the "Keep-off-the-grass" signs and otherwise, were made the playgrounds of the common people instead of the gardens and driveways of the rich, the "tenderloin" district was regulated as never before, and many minor improvements were made in the management of the city's affairs.

The three-cent fare platform was not merely to get in on. As soon as preliminaries could be arranged a number of routes were chosen and tenders called for. The conditions were enough to make the old-time monopolists sick—three-cent fares and universal transfers, a forfeit to

guarantee early construction and operation, arbitration of labor disputes, right of purchase by the city at any time on a valuation, and so on. A bid was received from responsible parties, and the people got ready to ride about the city at three cents a ride. But the existing companies interposed and the three-cent fare proposition has been in the courts almost ever since.

As a single taxer, Johnson knows perfectly well that to reduce the fares will not be to really benefit the people if nothing else is done. The effect will be only to increase the value of the land, and so compel the people to pay the landlord what they had been paying to the traction concerns. His idea is that the three-cent fare and the agitation necessary to gain it will be the shortest road to municipal ownership. His own belief is that street cars should be to a city as an elevator is to an office building—run free and the cost of running collected in the taxes. He does not insist upon that, but he does insist that the street railway shall not be used as an engine for taxation, but that the price charged for a ride shall represent the cost of the average ride and no more. He thinks and says frankly that the course he is pursuing in relation to the street railway question leads toward the single tax, and that that is what he is after.

#### EQUALIZING TAXATION.

But, great as has been the turmoil resulting from this particular branch of his efforts to carry out his cherished idea of embodying "the whole philosophy of Henry George" in the laws of his country, it is as nothing compared with that which has followed his more direct attempt to put the taxing system upon a basis of justice.

One of the men of the mayor's cabinet is an iron molder whose reading of political economy led him to take a very active part in labor agitation, so active that he was blacklisted and found himself "not wanted" when he went to look for a job. This man was put in charge of taxation matters. To assist him, a St. Paul man who had invented a system of valuing land for taxing purposes was engaged. A revaluation of land was undertaken by this department. "Johnson's tax school," it came to be called, because it used blackboards, wall-maps, and enlarged photographs, and all who were interested in any block of land under consideration—and citizens generally—were invited to attend and

follow the demonstrations. The leading citizens, who had been accustomed to the old, cumbrous fashion of assessment, were not only incredulous, but contemptuous. But those who attended were surprised to learn that, given the value of certain lots in a block, the value of the other lots could be figured out, almost to a dollar, by a clerk, who neither knew nor cared where the land was located.

It became evident that a revaluation of city property was to be made which would reduce the assessment of many a poor man, but would double and treble the assessment of certain favored holders whose "pull" had been considered as well as the market value of their holding land. As usual, an injunction was secured to stop proceedings by restraining the city from paying the salaries of the officers engaged in this disturbing business. Mayor Johnson obeyed the injunction to the letter. He paid the salaries out of his own pocket and ordered the "tax school" to go ahead.

But this was only a part of the work. It was found that no less than \$20,000,000 of property owned by privilege-holding corporations escaped city taxation altogether. This was promptly listed and the owners were invited to call and settle. Moreover, it was shown that the whole state of Ohio received from the railway companies and other public service corporations only one-third of what it was fairly entitled to, and that the burden thus unfairly thrown upon the farmers, business men and workmen was not less than four millions of dollars a year.

#### LOTS OF LITIGATION.

It would be impossible, in any space less than that of a book, to explain to those not familiar with the laws of Ohio the complications of litigation and legislation to which all this has given rise. Johnson's opponents, the republicans, are in complete control of the state machinery, both legislative and executive. So long as the courts gave decisions in their favor, they trusted to injunctions and other legal proceedings, but when these would no longer avail, they "ripped" Johnson's taxing machinery out of existence. "Ripperism" is a thing with which Ontario is not acquainted. It is the act of a hostile state legislature imposing its will by statute upon an unwilling municipality. Carried to its logical conclusion, it abolishes municipal home rule and reduces civic representatives and officers to mere servants of the party boss of

the state. A more vicious use of party prejudice it would be hard to conceive. . . .

#### CONTROLS THE DEMOCRATS.

While all this was going on, Tom L. Johnson had troubles with his own friends, the Democrats. He had declared open war against the existing party machine and had stated in plain English that it would be better to drive the boss of the party in the State over to the Republican camp. The struggle for control of the party was not the less rancorous because only one side, Johnson's, fought in the open. A man of less resource and power would have been completely buried by the weight of prejudice and self-interest against which he was striving. But Johnson wrought perfect miracles of party management, with the result that he is now in absolute and undisputed control of the State machinery of the Democracy. As one of the Democratic Congressmen said, speaking avowedly on behalf of the defeated boss: "Johnson can have everything his own way. He has the piano and can sing and play any tune he wishes to." . . .

The fight against privilege, with its "rippersm" and its tax-dodging, was carried squarely into the campaign which has just closed for the election of some of the chief executive officers of the State. The head of the Johnson ticket was no other than the minister of the Vine Street Congregational church in Cincinnati, an institution which has a glorious record as the very soul of the movement for the abolition of slavery at a time when to be an "abolitionist" was to endure social ostracism and persecution of every kind. Rev. Herbert Bigelow, the minister referred to, takes the Single Tax as a part of his religion. He goes into politics, as Johnson has done, to establish the rule of justice in the community.

#### THE RECENT CAMPAIGN.

The late campaign was made as brief as was consistent with a clear presentation to the people in every part of the state of the issues involved. "Home Rule and Just Taxation" was the slogan, and to make known the principles they stand for, the Johnson Democrats entered upon a campaign after Johnson's usual style. As in his congressional campaigns, instead of having meetings in public halls, he used a great circus tent, which was pitched now in this part of the city, now in that. His opponents were always invited to share the time with his own speakers, and, at the conclusion

of the speaking after the usual Single Tax style, which all who have ever heard Henry George or any of his followers speak will recollect, questions were called for, and everybody who asked a question was assured of a fair and respectful answer. Johnson himself, with his clear brain, his marvelous knowledge of facts, his true respect for a man as a man, and his constitutional and absolutely unflinching good-humor, is greatest answerer of questions that the movement ever produced.

#### HIS FUTURE PLATFORM.

The knowing ones have slated Johnson for the governorship, a Senatorship and the Presidency, in due succession. Johnson himself has declared that he is a candidate for no office, except to succeed himself as mayor of Cleveland. As for the governorship he has said that he would not accept the nomination, and would refuse to serve if elected. . . . Johnson, like all Single Taxers, is an absolute free trader. "Tariff reform," which is now, so much in favor with even Republican protectionists, only deepens the smile on Johnson's face and brightens the twinkle in his eye. When he runs for the presidency, if he ever does, it will be on a platform, not of "free trade as they have in England," but of free trade such as only Cobden himself ever had thought of. He will be for tariff abolition and the raising of national revenues by a tax on the value of land irrespective of improvements. The plutocrats have killed "Bryanism," but if Tom L. Johnson lives they will meet an opponent who will make them think regretfully of Bryan almost as one of their friends. And all the discontent growing out of the \$20-coal and 40-cent beef, out of low wages and trust-cornered goods, and, above all, out of the hard times which the plutocrats are preparing for the poor by the piling up of millions for themselves, will express itself through Johnson's demand for equal and exact justice for all and special privileges for none.

"Rather absent-minded, isn't he?"

"Extremely so. Why, the other night when he got home he knew there was something he wanted to do, but he couldn't remember what it was until he had sat up over an hour trying to think."

"And did he finally remember it?"

"Yes, he discovered that he had wanted to go to bed early."—Philadelphia Press.

#### THE WEAKNESS OF THE WISE.

For The Public.

Somewhere there lives a people just as clever as can be,  
With a knack for penetrating every kind of mystery,  
While certain facts quite obvious to ordinary men  
Seem somehow to be this side of that clever people's ken.  
They explore all fields of nature, and for long have been intent  
Every kind of curious engine and contrivance to invent  
In order all life's comforts to abundantly command  
With the very least expenditure in toll of head or hand.  
Their success in this direction is a marvel and no less;  
One acquainted with its story would not hesitate to guess  
That life among those people is in peace and plenty spent  
With all the women satisfied and all the men content.  
But no; some points are lacking in their wisdom's vast array,  
On account of being too simple for such clever folks as they.

A strong suspicion some time since was forced upon their thought  
That their unexampled progress has not helped them as it ought;  
That their wonderful inventions and their new industrial ways  
Have but little eased the burden of the toiler's weary days.  
But when they go with questions to their learned men of light,  
As to what may be the reason of their hopes' recurring blight,  
They are overwhelmed with figures and with logic marshaled well  
To prove that what they see and feel is quite impossible.  
That yet they are not satisfied will cause no great surprise,  
For the very cleverest people must at last believe their eyes,  
So their doctors now are testing sundry measures understood  
As likely soon to realize their hopes of general good,  
But to first inquire just how some reap where they have never wrought  
Is an idea quite too simple for their deep and abstruse thought.

As a fundamental mischief, earliest and by far the worst,  
Their lands were all divided among those who got there first,  
Which works a disadvantage pressing now with crushing weight  
On the ones who by no willful fault were born somewhat too late.  
And because they thus are largely of the chance to work bereft  
They combine to fight each other for such chances as are left,  
Overlooking the monopoly which makes them all its prey,  
For that object is too near for such far-seeing folks as they.

Their transportation system is most marvelous to see,  
Now that steam power is fast giving place to electricity;  
But the people's chance to profit thereby naturally falls  
Since their grandsires gave the highways to the men who laid the rails.