

## TOM L. JOHNSON.

We are indebted to the PUBLIC (Chicago) for the material of this sketch:—

Tom Loftin Johnson was born at Blue Spring, near Georgetown, Kentucky, on July 18th, 1854. He was married in 1874 to his fourth cousin, Margaret J. Johnson. Johnson's lineage extends back through the history of Kentucky to its organisation as a District of Virginia, and thence into the parent state itself. His father, Albert W. Johnson, was established in the late 'fifties as a cotton planter with over 100 slaves at Beaver Bayon, Arkansas, making this his winter home and Blue Spring his summer home, where Johnson's childhood was spent in luxurious surroundings. Then the Civil War broke out and throughout its course, his father served in the Confederate Army, first as the Colonel of a regiment then on the staff of General Breckinridge and afterwards on the staff of General Early. Through all his military service his wife kept near him with their three boys, Tom L., William L., and Albert L. The close of the War in 1865 found them all at Staunton, Virginia, absolutely penniless.

It was here and in these circumstances that Tom L. Johnson, then only eleven years old, discovered the powerful character of monopoly as a factor in business, and used it to his advantage. In the disordered state of affairs following the war, only one train a day ran into Staunton and its conductor had autocratic powers. Energetic and far-seeing Tom established friendly relations with the conductor, started a newspaper selling business and was the only one allowed to bring in papers on the train. News was in great demand and the monopoly he enjoyed enabled young Johnson to charge almost what prices he chose. The monopoly only lasted five weeks, but it brought him in nearly £18.

With this windfall the family managed to get to Louisville, Kentucky. Here his father borrowed enough capital to operate his Arkansas cotton plantation, but the venture failed. Then the family moved to Evansville, Indiana, and after a year's unsuccessful work in various businesses, the elder Johnson tried farming near Louisville on a farm belonging to his brother.

The intervening period since the war had been utilized in promoting the education of the children. At Evansville, Johnson attended school for the first time. He had a full year's

schooling there and went through three grades. In addition to attending school he had instruction from his mother. When they moved back to Louisville he had a few months more schooling, but his father, who was skilful in mathematics, and his mother, continued his education. He cared nothing for literary studies, but mathematics came easily to him, and, like his father, his mind seemed to work almost instinctively in mathematical processes.

On 1st February, 1869, he started work in a rolling mill in Louisville. Four months later, Biederman Du Pont and Alfred Du Pont, related to the Johnsons by marriage, bought up the smallest of three street railroads in Louisville and offered him office employment. So in June, 1869, at the age of 15, Tom L. Johnson started on the career that was to make him a street railroad magnate. His promotion was rapid, and in a few months he was secretary of the company. About a year afterwards his father was made superintendent of the road, which position he vacated after several years to take up a position as chief of police at Louisville. Young Johnson took his place and held it till 1876, when he and two associates bought the Indianapolis street car system. Before this, he had invented

a patent fare box which eventually brought him in nearly £6,000.

The Indianapolis system, a miserable affair when Johnson took it over, improved under his management and became very profitable. Later, rather than offend some old associates in the company who opposed his idea of modifying the system by means of electricity, he sold out. He had made money regularly since 1869 and several of his patents, besides the fare box, had been profitable, but the sale of the Indianapolis street car system yielded him by far the largest sum. His net profit was more than £100,000.

In 1880 he bought a small street car line in Cleveland which he built up by utilizing his experiences in Indianapolis. His railway grew and there commenced a war between seven or eight street car lines in Cleveland. Johnson's great fight was against Senator Mark A. Hanna. Hanna was a director in the company with which Johnson first came into conflict. The war was the sensation of the time in Cleveland and resulted in a great reduction of fares, a policy which Johnson always believed in and furthered. Sometimes one side won, sometimes the

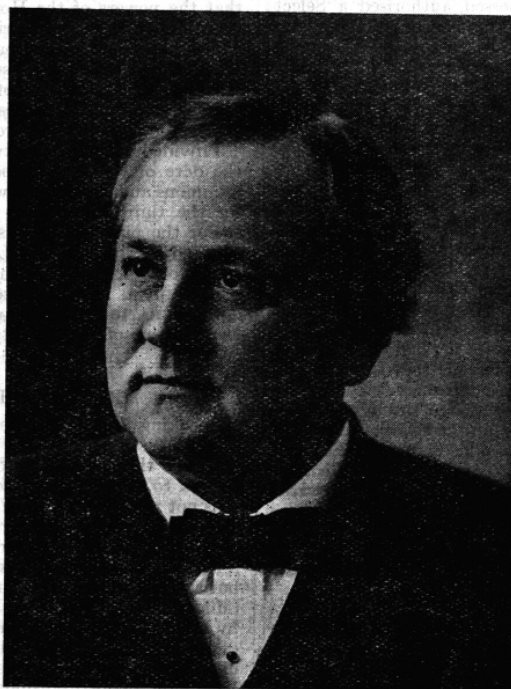
other, but Johnson's road grew the faster. After a while Johnson succeeded in uniting several other companies, forming the Cleveland Electric Railway Company, known as the "Big Consolidated." Hanna replied with a Union of cable-roads, known as the "Little Consolidated." The consolidations resulted in ending the war. Subsequently Johnson disposed of his interest in the "Big Consolidated" and that company united with Hanna's.

By this time Johnson, with his brother Albert, had acquired interests in the Detroit street car system and in the Nassau enterprise of Brooklyn. In 1898, however, he withdrew altogether from the street car business.

The political side of Tom L. Johnson's life is also full of interest. Until the middle 'eighties, he had little, if any, interest in political problems and principles. He was just a money-making man of business, and would probably have remained so but for a trivial incident. While on a street car travelling between Cleveland and Indianapolis he was asked by a newsboy to purchase a copy of Henry George's "Social Problems." He supposed it to be a work on social evil, and, saying as much and that he had

no interest in the subject, refused to buy the book. The train conductor, who was familiar with George's teachings, overheard him, and knowing him well told him he was mistaken in the character of the book. "It will interest you," he said, "more than any book you have read." Reluctantly, Johnson invested two shillings and read the book. It appealed strongly to him and he bought and read "Progress and Poverty." He discussed these books with his lawyer, L. A. Russell, and his partner, Arthur J. Moxham, with the result that all three were converted to George's views. Soon after his conversion, Johnson sought out George and between them a warm friendship and profound confidence took root in 1885, which lasted till George's death in 1897.

It was on George's advice that Johnson entered politics. Johnson had gone to New York in 1886 to further the Single Tax movement of which George was leader. A tremendous labour movement had broken suddenly upon the city and George was called upon to lead it against Tammany Hall and the so-called County Democracy. Johnson contributed liberally towards the expenses and was actively, though not prominently, engaged in the conduct of the campaign. In the following year



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(1887) he also contributed freely with money and personal effort when George was an unwilling candidate of the United Labour Party for Secretary of State for New York.

It was about this time that George advised Johnson to enter politics. He protested that the impossibility of his being a public speaker stood in his way. "But," said George, "you have never tried to speak; if you put your mind to it you can succeed at speaking as well as in business." So he tried. It was a large Mass Meeting in Cooper Union, New York, in 1888. He spoke for five minutes; crudely, timidly, but with evident sincerity. To-day he is one of the most effective and convincing speakers in American public life.

Convinced by Henry George that the cause to which they were both devoted demanded his personal service in political life, Johnson accepted the Democratic nomination for Ohio for Congress. His Congressional district was strongly Republican, and he was defeated after an unreserved Free Trade campaign. He stuck to his task, however, and two years later was returned for the same district by a majority of 3,000.

He entered Congress in December 1891 and was appointed to a local Committee on the District of Columbia. In five months he secured the passing by the House of a Resolution declaring for a thorough investigation of the methods of the taxing officials. The resolution, after reciting the fact which the Committee had unearthed, that the land values alone of the district were tremendously under assessed, authorised a Select Committee of three to inquire into the method of assessing land values in the district. Johnson was appointed Chairman of this Committee. The other two members were exceedingly conservative and objected to Johnson's recommendation for taxing land values on the ground that the change was too radical. The only result of the inquiry was a few trifling reforms, but the body of the Report was a splendid testimony to land values taxation and did a great deal to educate public opinion.

In 1892, Johnson came up for re-election and was returned by a majority of 3,224. This was the second year of Cleveland's second election to the Presidency when Free Trade carried the day against Protection. Johnson had no small hand in this victory. He had noticed that Congressmen were accustomed to lengthening their speeches with statistics and quotations from books under "leave to print." These matters, though never uttered on the floor of the House or Senate at all, duly appeared in the Congressional record as if they had been actually uttered, and, having appeared in the record, they had full and free rights to the mails under any Congressman's frank. In this way tons of election literature were sent through the post free. After overcoming the objections on the score of precedent of some sympathetic Free Traders, Johnson persuaded them to each contribute at different times parts of Henry George's "Protection or Free Trade." This was done and afterwards the different parts arranged in their order. In this way it was made possible to send over a million copies through the mails free. They were judiciously placed in the campaign of 1892, and the extent to which they helped the Free Trade cause cannot be over-estimated.

Johnson expected much from President Cleveland in the direction of Free Trade, but to his disappointment, Cleveland shelved the question. Johnson attacked the Senate for their surrender to the Protectionists and predicted early defeat for the Democratic Party. His prediction proved correct; for in the election of 1894, the Democrats were swamped, their majority of 95 being turned into a minority of 140. Johnson went under with his Party at this election. He was back again, however, in 1900.

In 1901 Johnson was nominated for Mayor of Cleveland at the Democratic Primaries. He was elected on April 1st, 1901, by a majority of 6,033. Thrice again he was elected Mayor of Cleveland, in 1903, 1905 and 1907, but in November, 1909, he failed to hold his seat, being in a slight minority at the poll.

The long and severe strain of business and politics has told on Mr. Johnson's health, and he has come to Britain for a much-needed rest and change. The followers of Henry George on this side have looked forward to such a visit for many years, and as many of them as have found it possible have joined in welcoming him.

The Imperial Pioneers, a new association which under cover of preaching Imperialism preaches Tariff "Reform," held its first meeting at the Walworth Baths on March 12th. A somewhat stormy meeting closed with the National Anthem, but some of the audience remained to give cheers for Lloyd-George and sing the Land Song, much to the surprise of the speakers.

## POLITICAL SPEECHES AND WRITINGS.

### THE VETO RESOLUTIONS.

The text of the Veto Resolutions brought forward by the Prime Minister, and passed by the House of Commons, is as follows:—

#### RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO HOUSES AND DURATION OF PARLIAMENT.

(1) **MONEY BILLS.**—That it is expedient that the House of Lords be disabled by law from rejecting or amending a Money Bill; but that any such limitation by law shall not be taken to diminish or qualify the existing rights and privileges of the House of Commons.

For the purposes of this resolution a Bill shall be considered a Money Bill if in the opinion of the Speaker it contains only provisions dealing with all or any of the following subjects, namely:—

The imposition, repeal, remission, alteration, or regulation of taxation, charges on the Consolidated Fund, or the provision of money by Parliament;

The supply, the appropriation, control, or regulation of public money;

The raising or guaranteeing of any loan or repayment thereof, or matters incidental to these subjects or any of them.

(2) **BILLS OTHER THAN MONEY BILLS.**—That it is expedient that the powers of the House of Lords as respects Bills, other than Money Bills, be restricted by law; so that any such Bill which has passed the House of Commons in three successive sessions, and having been sent up to the House of Lords at least one month before the end of the session has been rejected by that House in each of those sessions, shall become law without the consent of the House of Lords on the Royal Assent being declared.

Provided that at least two years shall have elapsed between the date of the first introduction of the Bill in the House of Commons and the date on which it passes the House of Commons for the third time.

For the purposes of this resolution a Bill shall be treated as rejected by the House of Lords if it has not been passed by the House of Lords either without amendment or with such amendments only as may be agreed upon by both Houses.

(3) **DURATION OF PARLIAMENTS.**—That it is expedient to limit the duration of Parliament to five years.

### MR. CHURCHILL ON THE LORDS.

Speaking in the House of Commons on March 31st, Mr. Churchill said:—

Unless the House of Commons carries the Budget it is idle to look to the King or to look to the country to carry the Veto. It is not merely a question of regularising the financial situation. The great series of Democratic taxes which constitute the policy of the Budget are not merely the pathway to future democratic reform, the barrier which we erect against a Protectionist system, but they are the actual gauge of battle with the House of Lords. (Ministerial cheers.) That they should be effectively affirmed by the new House of Commons is the only possible foundation of any successful attempt to punish the House of Lords for their unquestionable constitutional outrage—(Opposition cries of "Oh, oh")—in refusing to pass the Budget. (Ministerial cheers.) Having followed carefully the course of recent political affairs, I believe that at the proper time and in the proper manner and under the proper circumstances we shall succeed in carrying the Veto and the Budget to the steps of the Throne. (Ministerial cheers.) There is a substantial majority of British members in this House resulting from the election in favour of the Budget. (Ministerial cheers)

Parties are associations of men gathered together to pursue common objects and to defend common interests, and if one party or group of parties is unable even in the period of its greatest prosperity and success to give any effective satisfaction to the forces which compose it and is unable to achieve any of the objects for which its members have come into association, that party must perish and dissolve. (Ministerial cheers.) If the Liberal Party can hold office from year to year and month to month only by the sufferance of its political opponents, if at any moment on any ground, financial or otherwise, a Liberal Government is liable to have its whole structure pulled about its ears, then it is certain that Liberal Governments will have become finally impossible, and that in the long run the two historic parties, differing no doubt in method and conviction, but agreed on an enormous body of valuable precepts and principles, must come to a close, and you, the Opposition, will have made it