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The Public

**A National Journal of Fundamental Democracy &
A Weekly Narrative of History in the Making**

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EDITORIAL

Our Tom L. Johnson Memorial.

It has seemed to us that The Public could offer its readers no better tribute to the memory of Tom L. Johnson, than an issue of which his service and personality should be the theme; and that there could be no more appropriate occasion for such an issue than the anniversary week of his birth. "Thank God for those forty years!" exclaimed a loving mother, as she turned from the coffin of a son who had died at forty. She wished to remember with joy what he had been to her rather than with sorrow that he had gone. And so would we have our readers think of Tom L. Johnson. Not of the death of him, which marks the end of a career of public service, but of his birth, out of which that service grew—and though it be recalled only by the circumstances of his death.

†

We have tried to reproduce for this purpose all the thoughtful editorial tributes, whether of praise or blame, which the news of his death drew out. For reasons elsewhere explained, however, this has been impossible. Even when reduced to the narrowest compass, the selections and quotations from an avalanche of editorial recognition have necessitated a double number, enlarging the size of The Public for this occasion from its usual 24 pages to 96. And yet we have not the space for much material of many kinds that we should like to use.

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Of Johnson's public life and general character we have already written and others whom we quote in this double number have written better. We shall say no more of that beyond adding in a further paragraph a fact about him, one of those large facts of character, which is not generally understood. At this point we purpose recording a word about his relations to The Public. From its first issue to its last, Tom L. Johnson was one of the men to whom The Public's readers have been indebted—those of them who care for it especially—for its existence. There would have been no such relationship, of course, unless he had been in sympathy with its general policy and trustful of its editorial management. Honest men do not otherwise support periodicals as he supported The Public; and Tom L. Johnson was an honest man profoundly. But from beginning to end, not by word nor sign nor hint nor suggestion nor in any other way did he ever attempt to guide the policies of The Public, either in general or in particulars, nor even in respect of persons regarding whom he and The Public were at variance. This was characteristic of the man. The writer of these lines can testify to like effect with reference to the Cleveland Recorder, a daily paper which depended upon Johnson's support for nearly two years, as long as he could give it, from 1895 until the latter part of 1897, but which he never in the slightest degree attempted to influence, although it often trampled ruthlessly upon his personal friends and his business interests. As with the Cleveland Recorder, so with The Public; there was but one consideration for his support. It is indicated in this remark of his to a friend when he was in the heat of the Cleveland street-car fight: "You know that in all I am doing I have but one ultimate purpose, and that is to bring about the object that Mr. George worked for." So long as The Public also had this for its purpose—and the same was true as to the Cleveland Recorder—Tom L. Johnson neither troubled himself nor embarrassed the editorial management with efforts to influence the paper's decisions.

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The paragraph promised above about certain large facts relating to Tom L. Johnson's character is this one. We do not think it fair to his memory to preserve silence upon a personal experience of his that may account largely for biographical facts which, to shallow or unsophisticated observers whose moralities are only conventional, are puzzling. The fact of which we are about to speak needs an introduction, and here it is. Before Tom L. Johnson fell under the influence of Henry George, he was a mere money-maker, a plutocrat,

like scores of others who are successful and millions more who fail. The ethics of Big Business, as we call it now, were his ethics; he had no other. But under the influence of Henry George's teachings Johnson got saturated at first with those large moralities which your conventional moralist of pulpit or forum sees no more clearly than you see distant suns with the naked eye. "Progress and Poverty" was the telescope with which Johnson swept the moral heavens. He still realized, however, that he lived among men on the earth, among men like those of his ante-George days, among men who "play the game," and that if he would accomplish results for the bigger moralities, he must do it by "playing the game" for them as shrewdly as he had played it for himself. This was about his outlook when he became Mayor of Cleveland. Spoilsmanship and political intrigue were necessary in the game. So he yielded as of old to the Salens of politics where they were strong and apparently necessary to his larger purposes. But there came a time—and now we pass from our introduction into the fact of which we wish especially to speak—there came a time in the course of Tom L. Johnson's moral growth when he turned his back upon all that. He could not be static. No man can be. Unless we go forward, we slide backward. Tom L. Johnson went forward, continually forward, from the day when he first came under Henry George's influence. His last leap occurred about 1903 and 1904. That was about the time when he definitely abandoned every attempt to excuse to himself the "playing of the game," and became the fundamental, thorough-going and all around moral force in politics that made those who know him best love him so much. Of course, this regeneration threw into the scale against him conventional moralists, preachers of petty platitudes, workers for skin-deep righteousness, practical business men, practical politicians, labor skates, and candid crooks of every degree of candor. Perhaps for this reason it did more to defeat him in 1909 than anything else. But what of that? This very defeat was probably one of his greatest victories for what he wanted. Even now, after his defeat and after his death, the influence of his career as a courageous moralist in politics survives as no influence of political victories through uncanny bargains and tainted compromises could. At any rate none of Tom L. Johnson's friends would have had him do otherwise than as he did.

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Three Cent Fares in Cleveland.

It is a curious fact that most of the tributes to Tom L. Johnson which are reproduced in Part

Two of this number of *The Public* mention his three-cent fare fight as if it had either wholly or partly failed. There must be some common source for so general a misapprehension, and that source is in all probability malicious. But an editorial from the *Cleveland Press*, reproduced on page 747 of Part Two, which evidently suspects deliberate misrepresentation from New York or Cleveland, gives the facts so as to leave no one any room hereafter to question it, unless he wishes to, and not then if he takes the pains to read what the *Press* says.

Better perhaps than any form of statement as to the success of Johnson's 3-cent fare fight, is the fact that although the charge of one cent for transfers has been abolished, and fares are three cents flat all over the city, the price of the stock of the company on the local exchange is higher than ever before. On the 12th, says the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* of the 14th, the shares advanced to 99 $\frac{1}{8}$. This may be due to temporary booming by insiders for some temporary purpose. The unaccountably low prices heretofore have doubtless been due in a measure to similar pressure reversed. But normal upward influences also are at work. That fares have been forced down to 3 cents flat, because the company management were unable to prevent the accumulation of the surplus of \$200,000 which Tom L. Johnson wrote into the ordinance as the point at which charges for transfers should cease, is a factor in values which would alone be sufficient to account for the rise of a 6 per cent stock to par.

Tom L. Johnson in Politics.

Mr. Johnson's first candidacy for office was in 1888 as Democratic candidate for Congress from the 21st Congressional District of Ohio, one of the two Cleveland districts. He was defeated by Theodore E. Burton, Republican, now United States Senator from Ohio.

In 1890 Mr. Johnson defeated Burton, and again in 1892. He accordingly sat two terms in Congress—1891-93 and 1893-95—becoming intimate with Jerry Simpson, John DeWitt Warner, James G. Maguire, and William Jennings Bryan, who were Congressmen when he was. Along with the first three and two others he voted for the Maguire Singletax substitute for the income tax, after making the speech we quote in full in this issue of *The Public*.

In the anti-Cleveland landslide of 1894, caused by the affiliation of President Cleveland with J. Pierpont Morgan, and which swept the Democratic majority in Congress out of sight, Mr. Johnson was defeated for re-election by Mr. Burton, although he ran far ahead of his ticket. For seven years thereafter he took no part in politics except as one of the managers of the Henry George campaign of 1897 for first mayor of Greater New York.

Meanwhile Johnson had lost one fortune and gained another; and having adjusted the latter so that he could not be financially intimidated he became, through radical elements in the Democratic party, the Democratic candidate for Mayor of Cleveland. William J. Akers, Republican, opposed him, but Johnson was elected. This was at the spring election of 1901.

In the spring of 1903 Mayor Johnson was re-elected over Harvey J. Goulder, Republican; and in the fall of 1905 (the Republican machine having abolished spring elections) he was re-elected over William H. Boyd, Republican, who afterward co-operated with him in the traction fight. Theodore E. Burton tried to defeat him for re-election in 1907 but failed. In 1909, however, he was defeated by Herman E. Baehr, Republican, the present Mayor.

Six months after his re-election in 1903, Mr. Johnson ran as Democratic candidate for Governor, and was defeated by Myron T. Herrick, his most intimate friend in his Big Business days, but one of his most virulent enemies when his path diverged from the money-grabbing direction. Mr. Herrick was defeated at the next gubernatorial election by his own party, the rest of his ticket being elected. It will be noticed from the editorial extracts appearing in Part Two, that Tom L. Johnson is supposed to have run for Governor in pursuit of personal ambition. It is a natural inference, for editorial writers to make who see so little disinterested public spirit in public life. But personal ambition wasn't a factor. Johnson ran for Governor of Ohio in order to protect the City of Cleveland. He had found that cities are so hampered by State laws, instigated by political and business rings, that control of the State was necessary to the freedom of the city. Of election he had no expectation, and was neither disheartened nor disappointed at the defeat. The campaign was a most useful campaign of education,

the beneficial influence of which is not likely soon to be dissipated. That was Johnson's object. And just as Herrick's victory that year was in its later effects a sore defeat for him personally and for the plutocratic interests he represented, so Johnson's defeat that year was in the end his and his city's victory.

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History in the Telling.

Collaborating before the Lorimer investigating committee, Senator Lorimer's lawyer and Governor Deneen have turned out a pretty interesting inside history of Illinois politics.

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Hazy Convictions, Though Honest.

The Oregonian professes to have given its "honest convictions" on land value taxation, to the effect that under "readjustment of market values" there would "ultimately be no change in the amount of taxes paid by improved and unimproved property." If that is one of the Oregonian's "best convictions" at present, a little common sense in the editorial attic might give it better ones for the future and could by no possibility give it worse.

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TOM L. JOHNSON—MAN OF PRINCIPLE.*

One of Rudyard Kipling's stories—maybe it is somewhere in his first Jungle book; and maybe it isn't his at all, but that is no great matter—tells of a very rich man of India who gave up his riches and became a beggar. He was an Idealist, and Truth was his ideal. But he could not find Truth in the midst of riches, though he hunted diligently. This may have been because he didn't take notice of the difference between unearned riches and earned riches, for that very difference is a footprint of Truth.

However, this rich man found none of Truth in the associations with which his riches surrounded him, and for that reason it was that he decided to give up his riches and become a beggar. So he passed from the most luxurious associations of unearned riches to the extreme hardships of undeserved poverty. And there I leave him, for it is not of this Eastern rich man and his Oriental ways that I wish to write. I recall him only to illustrate the story of a rich man of our own country who did the same thing, but in the Occidental

instead of the Oriental way; and the Occidental way is better for practical purposes, I think, even if not so good for purposes of Asiatic allegory.

When our Civil War broke out in 1861, the man I am writing about was a little boy, son of a rich slave owner in Mississippi; and when the war ended in 1865, he was still a little boy, but his father's slaves were free and the family poor. A new way opened to him, however, of turning riches into his own pocket, unearned. He got a railroad conductor to allow him to sell newspapers on that conductor's train, and to allow no one else—and this is the point, mind you—to sell papers on the same train.* That special privilege, or monopoly, enabled this boy to make large profits out of his newspaper sales, for he could charge his own prices—"all the traffic would bear."

It did a great deal more. It taught him the secret of the new kind of slavery and he got more unearned riches in only a few years out of monopolies than his family for generations had got out of slaves.

He was not conscious of any wrong in all this, neither in the unearned incomes of his slave-owning ancestry, nor in his own unearned income from monopolies. Like the Oriental rich man who became a beggar in order to find Truth, he saw no difference between earned riches and unearned riches. But unlike the Oriental, he was not hunting very hard for Truth, probably not at all. Truth was hunting for him though, and one day she faced him, right in his money-making pathway and in a blaze of light.

Of course, that is a figure of speech. Truth never stands in anybody's pathway literally, nor does she ever blaze forth light in a literal sense. But figuratively she does both to everybody, again and again, unless he refuses her company and she sees it isn't any use.

The particular way in which Truth faced the boy I am writing about wasn't very dramatic. She showed herself to him through a book which he happened to pick up in a railroad car. At that time he was a man of 30 or a little more, and very rich. The book startled him, just as Truth herself would if she had blazed out literally in the aisle of the car. It told him that his riches were largely unearned, that he was living in the sweat of other men's faces as truly as if he owned them as slaves. And he could think of no answer. So

*By Louis F. Post, editor of *The Public*. Written for "Life and Labor" (Chicago), national magazine of the Women's Trade Union League, at the request of the editor, Alice Henry, and published in the issue of that periodical for June, 1911.

*The exact privilege accorded the boy consisted in giving him exclusively the opportunity to bring papers into a railroad town. He thereby had a monopoly of sales in that town while the privilege lasted. The story is told by Mr. Johnson himself in *Hampton's Magazine* for July, 1911.

he asked his lawyer to read the book and tell him where its reasoning was wrong.

His lawyer wanted a fee, but that was only a joke. Yet he probably got the fee when he collected his bills for other work. Anyhow, the rich young man used to tell him so; but that, too, was a joke.

The lawyer did read the book, however, and at the first reading he noted its "fallacies" with a pencil as he read along. And many were the fallacies he noted. Then he read the book a second time, rubbing out a large share of his previous notes, for he had discovered that these were due to his own misunderstanding and not to the author's bad logic. On a third reading he rubbed out all the remaining notes, and when he reported to his client, he said: "There is nothing wrong with the logic of that book, but its bottom facts are false." The rich young man replied: "I know as much about the facts as you do; the bottom facts of that book are not false, they are true, and if you advise me that the reasoning is sound—for I never went to college and you did—I accept the conclusions as true."

And he did so. Not in words alone, but in conduct throughout all the rest of his life; and he came thereby to see what the Oriental rich man turned beggar did not see, that you may find Truth in the midst of riches. He recognized the great difference, which the Oriental did not recognize—the difference between riches earned and riches unearned. So he followed the example of the Oriental in spirit, but in an Occidental way; not by uselessly giving up his riches and begging for a livelihood, but by devoting his business faculties as well as his hunger for truth to uprooting the unfair conditions that make possible unearned riches on the one hand and undeserved poverty on the other. The remaining 25 years of this rich young man's life were given over to the work of abolishing monopoly. He wanted everybody to get what they earn themselves, and not what others earn.

Through that book this rich man learned that the monopoly of monopolies is monopoly of the globe on which we live. Not that there are no other monopolies, but that the others are secondary, and that this monopoly would take the place of all others if they were abolished, and that the abolition of this one would make the abolition of all others easier. Once he said, in answer to a question from an audience he had talked to: "I would rather leave my children penniless in a world where land cannot be monopolized, than millionaires in a world where land monopoly ex-

ists; for I know that their millions might take wings and leave them economically helpless in the world as it is; but if there were no land monopoly, everybody could earn a good living and therefore nobody would be economically at the mercy of anybody else."

The book in which Truth faced that rich young man was "Progress and Poverty,"* its author was Henry George, and the rich young man was Tom L. Johnson, whose body was laid last April by the side of Henry George's in Greenwood Cemetery, New York. Tom L. Johnson's memory and influence, like Henry George's, cannot but grow as the things they stood for, and their devotion to them, come better to be understood by the disinherited classes they felt for and thought for and worked for—not as dictators, but as brothers.

Whether that Oriental found Truth in a life of beggary, need concern us of the Western world but little. It is not our way, and we cannot understand it. But Tom L. Johnson's way we can understand. He did not search for Truth, either in riches or in poverty. He did better than search. When Truth came to him and beckoned, he followed her. When she commanded, he obeyed. As a practical man, he realized the importance of expediency; but he was an Idealist to whom expediency was a means and not an end. In the best sense in which we use the word, Tom L. Johnson was a man of principle.

*The book Mr. Johnson first read was "Social Problems" by Henry George, but this led to his reading "Progress and Poverty," which caused all that is described in the text as having followed. An account of this experience also is given by Mr. Johnson himself in Hampton's for July, and by the Hon. Henry George, Jr., in the Twentieth Century for July.

NEWS NARRATIVE

The figures in brackets at the ends of paragraphs refer to volumes and pages of *The Public* for earlier information on the same subject.

Week ending Tuesday, July 18, 1911.

La Follette on Taft.

Senator La Follette reviewed, in the Senate on the 12th, act by act, the administration of President Taft, declaring that the contest between the Administration and the Progressives is a "fight between the plain people and confederated privilege." [See current volume, page 625.]



Mr. Taft's Canadian reciprocity agreement was denounced by Senator La Follette as violating