

ALBERT L. JOHNSON.

Unlike his distinguished brother, the mayor of Cleveland, Albert L. Johnson had entered upon no political career; but he was only less known and influential than his brother in business connections, and his sudden death may not unlikely have a prejudicial effect upon railroad enterprises of great magnitude and revolutionary character.

It was Mr. Johnson's dream, as matter of business and not philanthropy, to establish a great transportation service upon the basis of cost. He had brought that dream within sight of realization. Neither the confidence nor the cooperation of capitalists was lacking for the construction of his proposed swift trolley lines between New York and Philadelphia, and their operation within the cities for fares of three cents and between them for a small fraction of the present steam car fares. The only obstacles yet to be overcome were the opposition of conflicting interests and the more or less corrupt antagonism of public officials.

In his long experience as a railroad man Mr. Johnson's record was unique in other respects, but in none more so than in his relations to the labor interests of the roads he managed. A practical man, not infrequently doing the work of a motorman himself, he was hail fellow with the employes as with everyone else; and it is reported that no employes of his ever went upon strike. So far from opposing the organizations of unions among the men upon his roads, he never waited for the men to venture upon that undertaking, which is somewhat hazardous under most railroad managers, but advised and encouraged them to organize.

With such a record as a monopoly magnate, together with an affectionate and confiding association with his elder brother, it was almost inevitable that Mr. Johnson should be a democrat. And he was one. He was a democrat of the same sterling type as his brother, whose lead he had followed into the service of the principles for which Henry George's name stands preeminent. It was no party label that attracted him, nor yet the traditions of the south from which he

came and for whose lost cause his father had fought. It was the profound principle of democracy itself, the inextinguishable doctrine of equal human rights.

Albert L. Johnson died a millionaire. Much of his wealth was earned by exceptionally useful work. But much came to him unearned, through social maladjustments. Over these he had no more control than the poorest man he employed, but his greater influence was thrown in the scale against them. The high merit of his career is that he never lost what seemed to him to be an opportunity to promote their destruction. No one, be he pauper or millionaire, can do more.

MACVEAGH'S CLASS AGAINST CLASS ORATION.

Of all the college speeches of the year, the most impressive is that of Wayne MacVeagh, formerly attorney general of the United States. It was the Phi Beta Kappa oration, delivered on the 27th at Harvard. This address sounds a sharp note of warning, and it would be well for coming generations not remote if we of this time were to give it heed.

Mr. MacVeagh declared, according to the brief reports of the press dispatches, that American voters are already divided into two distinct classes—"those who are contented with their lot," and "those who are discontented with their lot;" and that—

under whatever disguises, called by whatever names, inheriting or seizing whatever partisan organizations, the alignment of the two great political divisions of American voters who will sooner or later struggle against each other for the possession of the government will inevitably be upon that basis. The party of the contented will be ranged under one banner and the party of the discontented will be ranged under the other, and that alignment will steadily develop increasing sharpness of division, until the party of the discontented, being the majority, has obtained the control of the government, to which under our system they are entitled, and then they will be sure to remodel the present system for the distribution of wealth, unless we have previously done so, upon bases wiser and more equitable than those now existing. The one party will be, under whatever name, the party of capital, and the other

party will be, under whatever name, the party of labor.

Had Mr. Bryan said this, he would be denounced as a demagogue, although he has never in his brief but brilliant public life shown the slightest tendency to demagogism. A more candid man or sturdy character does not figure in our political history. With the firmness of Cleveland, he has none of Cleveland's stubbornness; with the suavity of McKinley, he is without McKinley's studied smoothness. Robust in mind as in body, he stands squarely for what he believes, and speaks plainly and simply of what he sees. But because he has uttered the same warning that MacVeagh now gives out, the friends of both Cleveland and McKinley have denounced him as a demagogic disturber, seeking to array class against class. They cannot denounce Mr. MacVeagh. He is a Brahmin among them. They may minimize the importance of his utterance, or placidly argue away its significance, but they cannot call him "demagogue," as they do Bryan, for he sits with them at the upper end of the table. Bryan may be called demagogue, because his place is below the salt.

Notwithstanding the protestations of the comfortable classes that there are no classes in this country, the fact that there are is so familiar that it cannot be excluded from common speech. Every one falls insensibly into the mention of this class or that. We speak of the upper class, the lower class, the middle class; of the rich class and the poor class; of the educated class and the ignorant class—by which we do not distinguish real education from ignorance, but cults from the mass; and there is a growing disposition among the "better classes" to crystallize these distinctions into law, by disfranchising the "lower classes." To object to these class crystallizations is to incur the displeasure of the superior sets, and to evoke the accusation, as Bryan has, of setting class against class.

It is a remarkable and suggestive fact that whenever one class perpetually wrongs another it is in perennial fear that some one will set class against class. There was nothing more dreaded by the oppressing class in slavery days than slave insurrec-

tions—the rising of the oppressed against their oppressors. For that reason the abolitionist was held in peculiar fear and hatred. And so general is the manifestation of the same spirit in a condition of society where chattel slavery has been supplanted by more subtle modes of enslavement, that he who would denounce institutional wrongs shrinks from this accusation of trying to array class against class. He is often silenced by fear of it. Even Thorold Rogers, in his great book, "Six Centuries of Work and Wages," found it necessary to say something in the preface to ward off such blows as have since been aimed at Bryan, and that his exposures of class injustice were sure to draw upon his head. Said he:

I cannot, therefore, be charged with attempting to set class against class in the narrative I have given. Were it necessary, indeed, to do so, in order to assist the moral and material progress of those who, living by labor, enable others to live without labor or by mischievous labor, I should not hesitate to use all my power in that direction, for the charge of setting up class against class has always been made by those who wish to disguise their own indefensible advantages by calumniating the efforts of those who discover abuses and strive to rectify them.

Mildly but firmly, even Mr. MacVeagh is being brought to task. What may be regarded as a typical criticism, though exceptionally intelligent in most respects, appeared in the Chicago Chronicle last Sunday. The Chronicle writer infers that Mr. MacVeagh's argument proceeds "upon the assumption that the distribution of wealth is not now governed by natural economic law, but by statute laws, and that the latter are unwise and inequitable." We are not so sure. Unless the parts of Mr. MacVeagh's address as yet unpublished show him to have argued from that assumption, it would be fairer to infer that he has no more conception of such a thing as natural economic law than if he were a Germanized professor of political economy. Yet he does regard the present distribution of wealth as unjust and inequitable. Mr. MacVeagh's assumptions, however, are not important, so far as the Chronicle is concerned. Its own assumption

is what we have at this point to deal with.

That assumption is extraordinary for boldness. Admitting that if the distribution of wealth is not now governed by natural economic law, but by unwise and inequitable statute laws, the laws ought to be reformed so as to make them not only more wise and equitable, but, if possible, wholly wise and equitable, it flatly declares that this is not the condition, but that "the civilized world, and especially the English-speaking portion of it, has established a pretty equitable system of laws so far as the acquisition and security of property are concerned."

No attempt is made by the Chronicle to justify its assertion. It seems to think it proves its case by pointing to laws giving special petty privileges to the poor, laws which it is itself obliged to denounce as not strictly just. But while plainly seeing this petty injustice for the benefit of the poor, and charitably throwing it into the scale of equity for "good count," as the huckster did the extra egg, after he had grossly swindled his customer in the tale, the Chronicle is almost totally blind to the great injustices, the great special privileges, which make some rich out of all proportion to their earnings, and others poor out of all proportion to their work. Despite the Chronicle's assertion to the contrary, the distribution of wealth is not governed by natural economic law. It is governed by statute laws that are both unwise and inequitable.

In one particular the Chronicle admits this interference with natural economic law. In fact, it might be suspected of admitting it in all particulars, with its sweeping words of inclusion. For it concludes its criticism with an assurance that Mr. MacVeagh's gloomy prediction is without probability, "provided the laws under which all should have a fair chance are well administered and enforced," and "provided those which still sustain privileged classes, such as the tariff laws, are repealed."

If these exceptions had been thoughtfully made, nothing further could be asked. They would nullify all that had preceded. But it must not be assumed that the Chronicle intends all that its concluding words

imply. Beyond the tariff law and lax enforcement of larceny statutes, it probably sees no obstruction to just and equitable wealth distribution under natural economic law.

But larceny statutes, in the most comprehensive sense of the term, can serve only slightly in promoting the operation of natural economic laws of distribution. And while the tariff system does enormously obstruct their operation, its effect is trifling in comparison with obstructions of like character interposed through internal taxation levied indirectly by the local and state as well as the federal government. All taxation upon the processes of industry operates, like tariff taxes, to sustain privileged classes. Local taxes upon buildings, for instance, interfere with the acquisition of buildings, as truly as federal taxes upon woolen goods interfere with the acquisition of woolen clothes.

Nor are taxes alone guilty of sustaining privileged classes. When the water, light, heat and transportation services of cities are made the basis of private monopolies, privileged classes are sustained. When public highway rights are vested in private ownership, privileged classes are sustained. When the land of the country is fixed in private ownership without regular compensation in proportion to its varying and increasing values, privileged classes are sustained. When the rich gifts of nature, such as coal, copper, iron, lead, tin and oil, are subject to private ownership as they lie untouched where nature left them, privileged classes are sustained. When the pecuniary results of every city's growth, as distinguished from the individual earnings of its inhabitants, are poured lavishly into the pockets of lot owners, privileged classes are sustained. When, through speculation in the future values of locations, the whole country is appropriated, though but little land is fully used, the privileged classes are still further sustained. For then the unprivileged, forced out of their natural economic inheritance, are placed at a disadvantage in respect of their contracting power. Landless men, when land is dear, cannot contract with employers or landlords on equal terms. As by economic action and reaction this disinheriting process becomes more and

more extensive (the increasing number of the disinherited who must beg for work augmenting the value of locations, and the augmenting value of locations increasing in turn the number of the disinherited), so at equal rate the privileges of the privileged grow in magnitude and power. This process of economic action and reaction is at work within the very sight and hearing of the Chronicle. It recognizes it readily in business discussions, where questions of more or less in a bargain, and not of privilege or oppression in social life, are raised. Yet it gravely declares that privilege has been abolished and that the natural economic laws of distribution are effective!

Whether the Chronicle advisedly uses the term "acquisition" in asserting that men are now protected "in the free exercise of their faculties in acquisition," we of course do not know. But that the assertion is true we make no question, provided full meaning be given to that term "acquisition." Our laws do indeed aim to protect "acquisition." But that is not in harmony with the natural economic law. It is not the sanctity of acquisition, but of earnings, that nature is jealous of. Nature gives only to him who earns. The non-earner can acquire from the earner only by fraud, free gift, or privilege. To protect acquisition, regardless of whether the thing acquired has been earned, is therefore hostile to natural economic law.

In our country of "equal rights," as in all others, there are two classes. They may be divided and subdivided without limit, and there may be a great deal of overlapping; but two great classes there are—the class which, through legalized privileges, gets more than it earns; and the class which, therefore, has to earn more than it gets.

That truth, which the Chronicle ignores, Mr. MacVeagh appears to have apprehended: His designation of one as the contented and the other as the discontented class, is hardly a happy distinction. Contentment is not a characteristic of the parasitical class, nor discontent of the other. Neither is his distinc-

tion of a capital class and a labor class at all apt, unless we suppose the tendency he warns us against to have gone so far as to have divested the earning class of all the capital it produces, leaving it nothing by way of economic distinction besides its labor, in which case master class and slave class would be the better terms. But despite his defective nomenclature, Mr. MacVeagh has correctly indicated the conflicting classes, and, what is more to the point, has put his finger upon the cause of the conflict. He does this when, predicting that the plundered class, being in the majority, will obtain control of the government and "remodel the present system for the distribution of wealth," "upon bases wiser and more equitable than those now existing," he interjects, "unless we have previously done so." The whole class issue resolves itself into that question of equitable distribution of the products of human labor—not of past products, but of present and future products.

The only hope for society is, indeed, what Mr. MacVeagh suggests. Without listening to the fools who prate about the danger of disturbing existing institutions; without wasting time with the "scientific" drivelers who preach patience while evolution through aeons of human pain performs its perfect work; without giving way to the intimidation of the thieves who, to perpetuate their plundering privileges, denounce as "demagogues seeking to array class against class" the men who would expose and abolish those privileges—disregarding all this, we must, if we would truly serve society, adopt Mr. MacVeagh's advice and place the distribution of wealth "upon bases wiser and more equitable than those now existing."

But that would require no remodeling, as Mr. MacVeagh thinks it would. So far as existing accumulations of wealth are concerned, nothing need be done with them. Though earners have been robbed of their products in the past, that would make no great difference if similar robbery in the future were prevented. It is not what men have earned in the past, but what they earn now and are to earn in the future that need concern them. Let the laws that exact tribute from the

earning class be abolished, and the rest will soon take care of itself. Abolish taxes upon production (which comprehends trade as well as cultivation and manufacture), and do away with monopoly privileges in the earth, and no further remodeling of wealth distribution would be necessary. It would remodel itself in accordance with natural justice.

FOURTH OF JULY IN THE PHILIPPINES.

Dispatches from Manila tell us that the Fourth of July is to be celebrated in the Philippines with greater display than last year; while Washington dispatches announce that this natal day of the American republic is to be made the occasion of the establishment of American civil government in the islands under officials appointed by Mr. McKinley, whose power is absolute.

What may be the burden of the orations on this auspicious occasion is a riddle that eludes apprehension. One might suppose that a Fourth of July speech in the Philippines would challenge the skill of the most consummate orator who did not happen to be a grim practical joker.

But if that may be said of the orator, what shall we say of the reader of the declaration of independence? Who could possibly attempt to read that great liberty document in public at Manila in celebration of the Fourth of July, without succumbing to overwhelming shame? To be sure, Gen. Funston might. He has qualified himself by making a boast and a stepping stone of his success in forging a letter of introduction to an enemy's chief, and outraging an enemy's hospitality. But who with a less shameful record could bear up under this ordeal?

Before these words reach the reader, the Manila burlesque will be over. The speeches will have been delivered, and the declaration of independence, sorely ironical as it must sound, will have been read. It is too late, therefore, to offer a suggestion for this year's celebration. For future celebrations, however, we recommend that a new form of the declaration of independence, adapted to the actual circumstances at Manila, be prepared and substituted for the inspiring and