

## XI

### CONCLUSION

**T**HE life of Tom L. Johnson was a series of battles, lasting from childhood to the day of his death. He fought the grim harvester as he had fought poverty, political enemies and captains of industry. His great will power knew no surrender, his sunny nature never forsook him. At no time during his long sickness, which had been diagnosed as a cirrhosis of the liver, did he not hope for ultimate recovery. While too weak to move during a sinking spell, he thought of jokes to repeat to his friends as soon as he should be strong enough to speak and laugh again. City Solicitor Baker, who had alone survived the defeat in November, 1909, had become his closest friend and confidant. To him he intrusted his worldly affairs. With him he spoke about the news of the day. There are

few men who can feel the pulsation of life as Mr. Johnson did; few who would cling to life as he clung to it. He believed in its realities. He believed in the work of the world and was not prone to leave it.

To-day not even his enemies fail to do him justice, which speaks well for human nature. Above all men he must be judged by his deeds, for he was a man of action. He was also a product of our modern business life, which is not always honest. The struggle in his youth had been severe, but kind nature gave him the joy of living, that he might not feel too deeply the bitterness of a lost childhood. Too early had he become aware of the duplicity of men in business enterprises. His quick intellect furnished him with the weapons with which to beat them at their own game. His master-mind dominated over them, his great power of endurance outdid them, his iron will lamed their resistance. Yet none of his great enterprises was wholly successful. He made a few millions and stopped to enter into political life. Here his

success was still less marked. He was qualified to become a famous president for his country, but ended as a defeated mayor. He had conquered a great street railway monopoly, held the fruit of his victory in his hand, and dropped it. His personal magnetism won him the friendship of his fellow citizens, yet they turned against him at the end. There was no single obstacle that he did not and could not overcome, yet he died as a private citizen in an apartment house suite.

The case is astonishing. He was neither a child of fortune nor one of misfortune. Whatever his success it was attained by hard work and close application. It was the impatience to do things that in his younger years led him to different enterprises. He did not then concentrate his efforts, and was sometimes carried away by a spirit of adventure. His was too great an intellect to not see the emptiness of money making; and to his inquisitive mind it was but natural that the great economic questions should prove attractive. A world of mental specu-

lations opened before him. The young man had never had any time to study, but he was always susceptible to new things. Thus, from a business man he became a politician. He entered the arena with a high purpose, and as a man who wanted practical results, for he never was a dreamer. Solitude he abhorred and always liked having people around him. In politics he was ahead of his time, and having espoused the cause of the people, he antagonized the money interests. But, here too, his course was too swift, too radical for a slow but steady progress. Not being a diplomat, he offended where he should have conciliated antagonistic views. This was not his way of doing things. A man of great courage, he had neither the patience nor the inclination to parley with a foe. Instead he would send him forthwith a declaration of war. He was not to be measured by a pigmy standard.

There can be no question that his ultimate defeat was the result of his inherent qualities. That which his enemies could never

have achieved, he brought about himself, and it was a rather pitiful spectacle to see the struggle of this strong man, already partially wasted by disease, to regain his lost ground. Almost sick unto death, he strove to keep his party together, and announced that he would again come forth as a candidate for the office of Mayor of Cleveland. He had the sympathy of the citizens, for they admired his pluck. They began to perceive that there was greatness in this much maligned man and that his faults could be forgiven. After all he had meant well with the people and had been fighting their battles in his own way. It was but natural that he should fail in this and, even more natural, that he should fall short of his greater aims, for, no matter how little we demand of destiny it always gives us less.

Yet, no human life is without some results. Tom L. Johnson left a legacy to his fellowmen and to his country. As a boy he was a dutiful son, cheerfully carrying the burden of the misfortune which had befallen his

parents. He was ever ready to help and assist them and never failed to visit often his old mother in later years, though he was obliged to travel hundreds of miles to do so. He brought life and sunshine to his friends and even to his enemies, for he could forget business and politics in a social hour. His hatred like his love was strong, but he hated very few men. His naturally democratic ways won him many admirers, and made him an exception among his class. One could feel at home with him and enjoy his bright and lively conversation. He was never dull and seemed to have seven lives. Men and their doings were his chief topics. Having come in contact with most of the luminaries of his time, his word pictures of them were interesting and valuable.

His personality entered strongly into every walk of his life. As a business man he constantly strove for improvements and for new things. The inventor was always in the foreground, even offering an incentive to his partners. There is no doubt that he

exercised a great influence over his surroundings. He revolutionized the street railway business in Cleveland and set an example which will be followed by other cities. The struggle against the street railway monopolies is already on in some of them. The great value of his lesson may easily be overlooked or forgotten, but it means immense savings for the poorer people, and is of no less importance than the values which are to be redeemed by a tariff revision, or by the breaking up of obnoxious trusts. The well-to-do are too apt to forget that not everybody is able to contribute a brick towards the erection of the palaces of the rich without feeling its weight. Palaces are not in harmony with their surroundings in a land of hovels; even the Church has begun to see the iniquity and is preaching humanity.

Mr. Johnson preached the same sermon in the halls of Congress and as Mayor of Cleveland. He did more. He tried to turn his sermons into deeds whenever the powers of

antagonism could be conquered. A man's good intentions and his efforts for their realization will be rewarded in Heaven, if not here below. Mr. Johnson's propagation of municipal ownership sprung not from the wish to strengthen his political machine but from a conviction that it would be helpful to the people. He has done much in this respect and saw further than the average politician who hangs to the apron strings of his party.

The lesson of his city administration had been both forceful and useful. The citizens of Cleveland have become accustomed to honesty in their officials and would have no patience with grafters. His great activity in the advancement of the city during the last nine years had the result that his successor emulated his example. To stand still became simply impossible. The education of the people in municipal, state, and even national affairs during Mr. Johnson's tenure of office was wonderful. His constant strife, his campaigns, and his new ideas found an



interested public even in socialistic circles. His tent meetings were schools in national economics and municipal self-government. People without the inclination to read even the newspapers went to these meetings to learn their lesson.

He had been elected Mayor of Cleveland at a time when the city began to emerge from her childhood, and it was lucky for her that she had his strong and sure guidance. He was not a man to waver for any length of time, and knew always what he wanted. The citizens of Cleveland soon became impressed with this fact and often wondered how Mayor Johnson would decide this or that vexed question, and decide he did without hesitation.

It is pertinent to ask how much more the city would have gained from his administration if there had been no street railway controversy. It is regrettable that the "Concon" octopus is still alive, while Mayor Johnson is no longer. Many think that it killed him, not only politically but physically. ✓

It killed him politically just as the temperance question killed Bryan of Nebraska and Folk of Missouri. The statesmen who are committed to one idea have always been doomed to extinction.

Tom L. Johnson's administration of the affairs of the City of Cleveland exercised its influence over many other cities in the country. Their emissaries came to Cleveland to study the Johnson methods, which were frequently quite original, and nearly always in advance of those in use in other places. The fame of the Cooley Farm reached across the Atlantic. Mr. Johnson preached home rule and proved its wisdom on several occasions. Thus, this much hated and much admired man was one of the first to preach the new gospel of The City.

As a politician Mr. Johnson was a Democrat who could not be kept within strict party lines. He always demanded the right to follow his own judgment in matters concerning questions of the day. At no time would he hesitate to flay a Democrat whom he thought

a traitor to the cause of the people. His political methods were described as sensational but they never failed to arouse attention, and were therefore apt to awaken the public conscience. Most of the "Johnsonisms" and Johnson fads of ten years ago are to-day advocated by Republicans and Democrats alike. They have become recognized planks in the party platforms. Who would deny that we are advancing?

Looking back upon his activities as a public man it becomes apparent that, when everything is said, they were in the interest of the people. Like all of us, he committed errors of judgment, but they were very rare. His methods died with him, his acts and his teachings will live on as a wholesome leaven in the fomentation of our public advancement. He thoroughly believed in this advancement and fought for it with his great intellect and his wonderful energy.

Not always did he draw the last consequences of his opinions. He would even relegate them to the rear when political

sagacity or business expediency demanded it. To control himself was not an easy thing for this self-willed man, when short-sighted pigmies differed from him. Yet, he was not ultra-radical, only a few years ahead of his time, which is also our time.

The wisdom of the world was in him. Early in life he understood that the material things are of paramount importance, that a full stomach makes a contented mind, and gives peace to the nations of the earth. He had accumulated his share of the general wealth and was willing to give "the other fellow" a chance. It was at this point that his business friends began to doubt his sincerity. They could not comprehend him and henceforth considered him their enemy.

Those who watched him closely during the last ten years of his life, during which his greatest public work was done, learned to know that there was nothing wrong with his intentions. If he preached one thing and did another the cause must be sought in his inclination to mental and moral sophistry.

As stated, he had always favored the referendum and caused one of his legislative friends to present a bill making referendum elections a possibility. The bill was passed, yet Mr. Johnson was first to repudiate it and to fight the first referendum. The reason was not that he feared the outcome very much, not that he did no longer believe in the measure, but because the petitions for this election had been circulated by his opponents. He sought to nip their attack in the bud instead of allowing events to take their course. This was poor and unsound reasoning for a man of his calibre. The unworthiness of his action he tried to excuse on the ground of meanness of his enemies. This dangerous attitude of mind was ever present in him and prevented his rise to higher spheres and to real greatness. He could never be a hero, nor reach the high aims which filled his heart with the enthusiasm of becoming a benefactor to suffering mankind. Thus he carried the tragedy of his life in his bosom. In spite of lamentable

hindrances, he accomplished more than many a luckier man in public life. The grievous in him was hidden by an abundance of good qualities, but it was there nevertheless.

On the other hand he was strong enough to jeopardize his political success for his ideals. It was refreshing to see this man announcing his theories, so to say, with a fanfare, well knowing that this procedure would result in his having a whole pack of hounds at his heels. He was superhuman in courage, intellect and far-sightedness, a giant in endurance, working-power and strength of will. He was not a Messiah but a Prophet, who announced the coming of a new and better time in the life of mankind. He saw the light of the future long before the general public dreamed of it. He made a glorious fight for the welfare of his fellowmen, dying upon the field of battle while victory was hovering in the air.

No one who came into personal contact with Tom L. Johnson was able to withstand his personal magnetism. It is this fact which

makes a true judgment of him a task of great difficulty. Only in the course of time would the real man appear to an unbiassed mind. Even then the complexity of his nature offered many snares to the student of his character.

Taken all in all, he was one of the most remarkable men in the country, gifted and cursed, greatly admired, and greatly misunderstood. He accomplished much and failed in much. But he has not labored in vain. To-day his fellow citizens are beginning to comprehend him and within a short time they will feel his loss.

During the last year of his life he battled no longer with the world, but fought death. He longed to live, and summoned his great will-power and his good humor to hold in check the dire and wasting disease which was eating away his vitality. For a long time he had suffered in silence, neither his family nor his most intimate friends being aware of his affliction. It was only when his cheeks began to fade and his flesh to disappear that

he acknowledged the impairment of his health. He struggled long and hard, banishing the thought of defeat as he had done so often in his political warfare, and in his fights against the money interests. Until the last he requested that the newspapers be read to him, even the often cruel articles about his condition. He received his friends as often as his physicians would allow, and City Solicitor Baker was always admitted to the sick chamber. With his assistance Mr. Johnson closed up his worldly affairs when he finally saw the handwriting on the wall.

It was during that last year that he again took up the teachings of his friend Henry George, with great fervency. The wish to do a great thing for his fellowmen was still burning in his breast. He undertook the before-mentioned trip to England to take part in a meeting of single-taxers, and said after his return that he was glad to have been present, even if the exertion had shortened his life. His great power of concentration was brought into play. He occupied



himself with his pet theories, believing in their ultimate realization, and banished all thoughts of sickness.

In times of great pain Mr. Johnson was a reader. When incapacitated himself one or another of his friends read to him for hours. He liked to hear well-written, simple love stories with a happy ending, and took a lively interest in the destinies of the people in the book. On one occasion he asked a friend who was reading to him Robert Louis Stevenson's "Treasure Island," to suspend for a time, declaring the story to be too strong for his weakened condition.

The impetuosity of his active days had, of course, left him, and he had become very gentle, kind and considerate, and quite patient. Greatly, indeed, did he enjoy the presence of his little granddaughter, Margaret Evelyn Mariani. The society of his wife was not less welcome.

About the middle of March, 1911, he attended as a guest a lawyers' banquet, enjoying himself hugely. He always had had a

liking for the fraternity and wished to study law after his last defeat, only being prevented therefrom by his sickness. Two days after this festivity he suffered from a sinking spell, from which he rallied partially. It was apparent, however, that the end was not far off. For several days he was unable to leave his bed. He revived, however, and insisted upon receiving his friends.

On the seventh of April his life was despaired of, and he himself had now given up all hope. At last this indomitable man had become tired and ready to sleep. His last days were not without pain.

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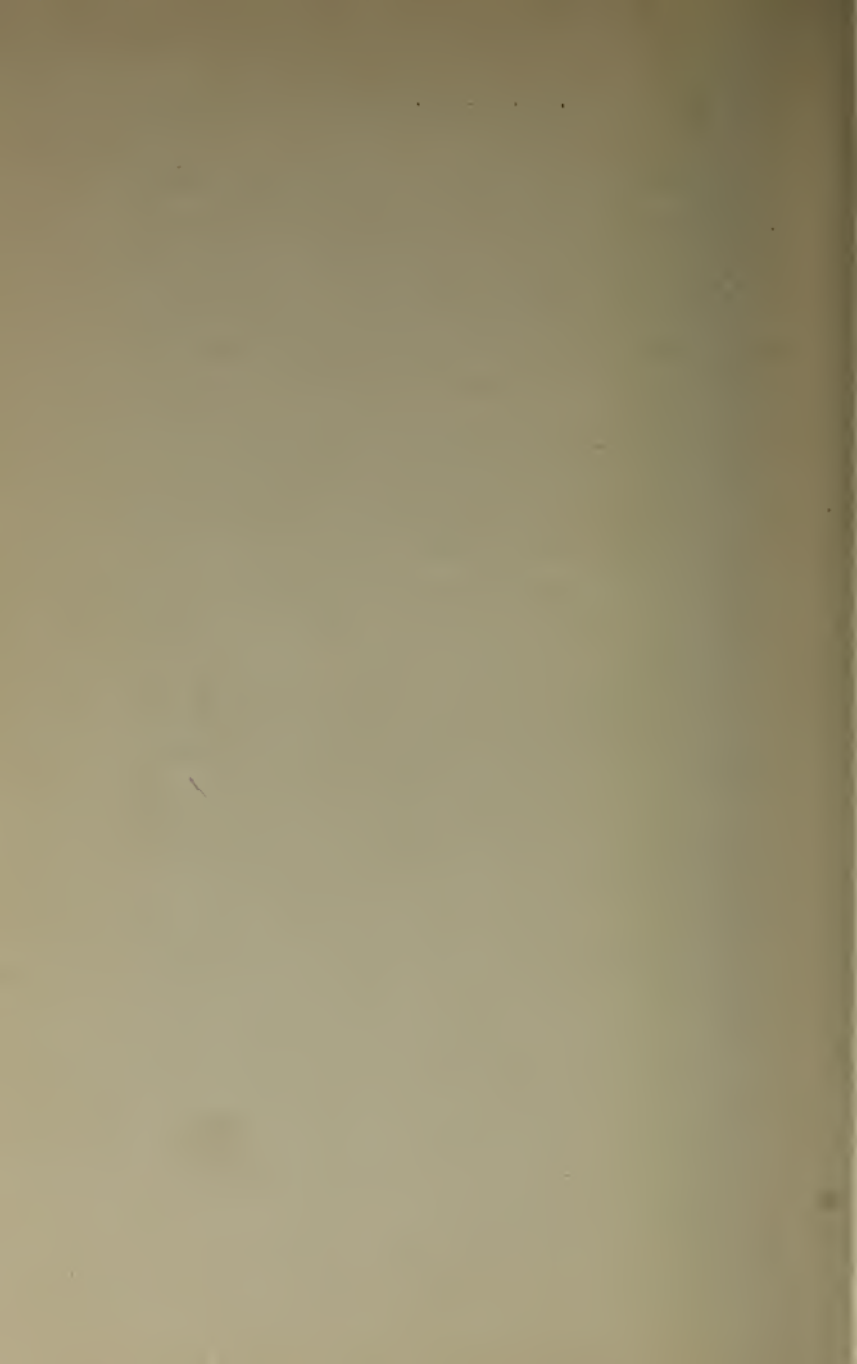
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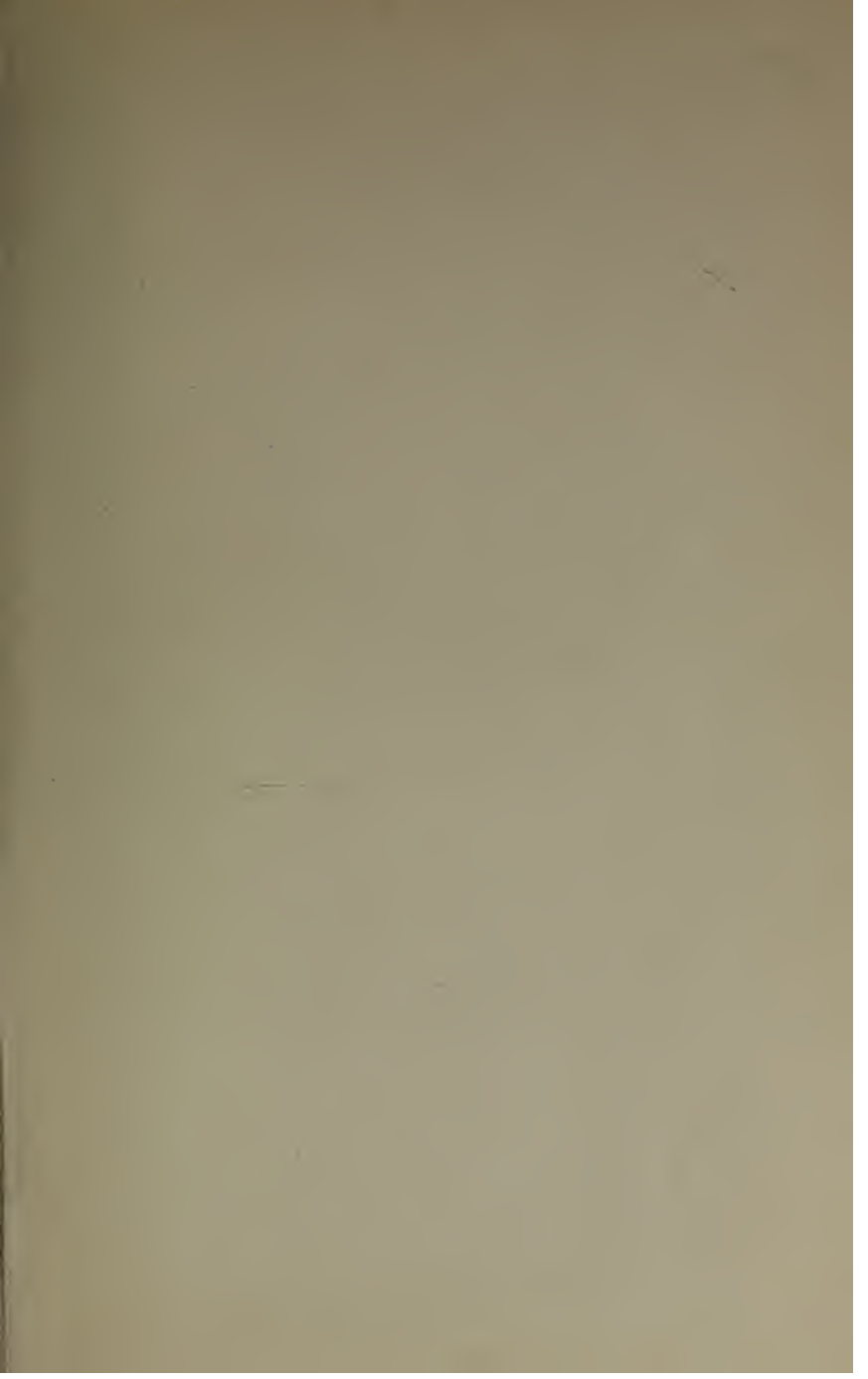
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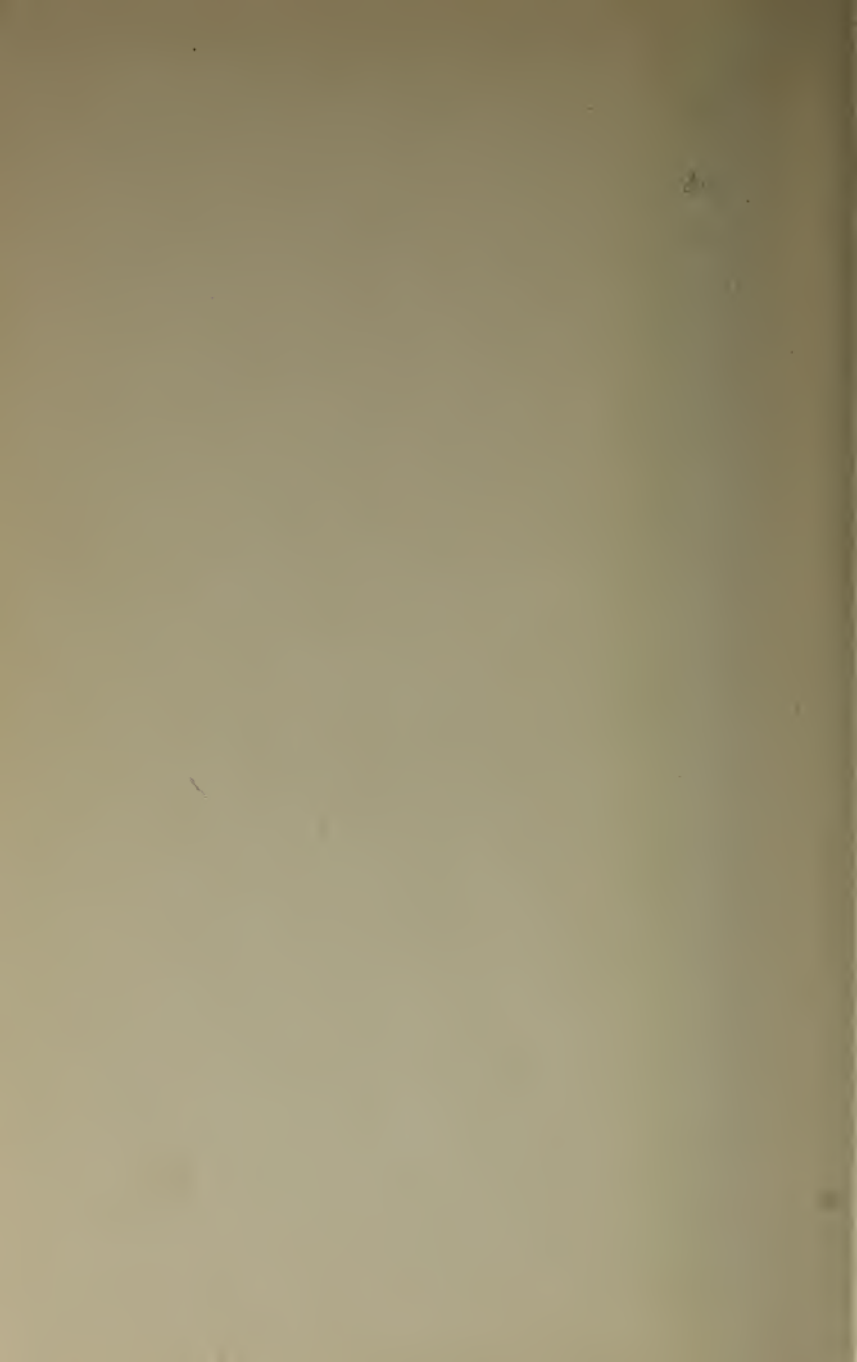
a character of national reputation and had personally known every public man of renown. His demise was noticed by Congress, where a resolution of regret was passed. The Legislature of Ohio also adopted a similar resolution.

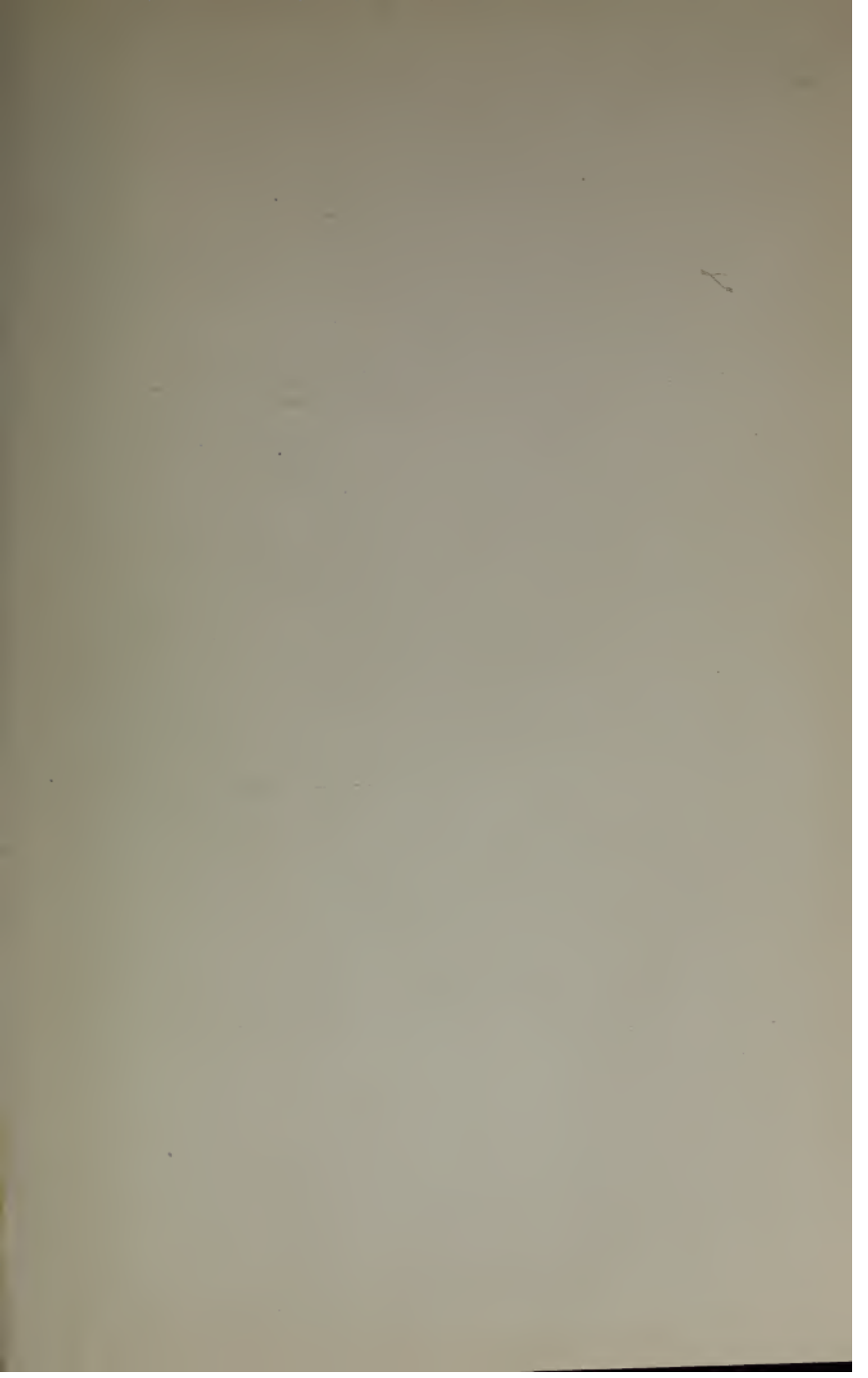
On Wednesday afternoon following his death, the remains of Tom L. Johnson were taken to the Union depot to be transferred to Brooklyn, N. Y. The cortege consisted of the hearse and six carriages. There was no public demonstration, according to the wishes of the deceased citizen. Heavy rain clouds overhung the sky, but the streets through which the funeral passed were lined with thousands of people who in silence watched the passing of their dead champion.

The interment took place Thursday morning in the Johnson burial grounds in the beautiful Greenwood cemetery. There, Tom L. Johnson rests next to his parents, and near the tomb of his friend Henry George.











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