

MAYOR JOHNSON: ONE OF THE STRONGEST LEADERS IN MUNICIPAL PROGRESS IN AMERICA.

A CHARACTERIZATION.

BY EDWARD W. BEMIS, Ph.D.

NO GREAT American is so much misunderstood to-day as Mayor Tom L. Johnson, although, thanks to Mr. Lincoln Steffens* and to other fair-minded observers, a truer view is beginning to be taken. There are very interesting reasons why he has been treated worse by the press, through which most persons form their opinions, than have any of the other five famous municipal and state reformers, save Altgeld, who have held public office of late years. Neither Altgeld, Pingree, Jones, Folk nor LaFollette made a moderate fortune in early life out of the very monopolies he later fought. None espoused any economic creed like the Single-Tax that, whether rightly or not, is still looked at askance by the majority of farmers and small property-holders. Public operation of public utilities, advocated by Pingree, is not particularly offensive save to the few vastly powerful but not over popular holders of franchises. The same may be said to be true of LaFollette's platform of railroad taxation and rate control, Folk's attack on graft and Jones' advocacy of non-partisanship. Mr. Johnson, on the other hand, in the face of the unpopularity of some of his most widely advertised ideas on taxation, has served two terms in Congress, been twice elected mayor in a strongly Republican city, despite all Senator Hanna with untold millions at his back could accomplish, and all signs point to his reelection with a larger majority than ever before. The explanation lies in those characteristics I have been asked to point out. So strongly convinced is the writer of their force that it is my great effort in this brief statement to so restrain utterance as to avoid the appearance of exaggeration or eulogy. No attempt will be made to

determine the relative importance of most of the factors of success where all have been so important.

1. Despite an unusually smiling exterior, Mr. Johnson is terribly in earnest in his opposition to every form of special privilege from government and in his determination to strike effective blows at it. Any weapon, whether of just taxation, regulation of rates where practicable, or public-ownership and operation of what are known as public utilities, is eagerly grasped. Cato never insisted upon the destruction of Carthage more earnestly than does Mr. Johnson upon the destruction of all special privilege. He places this far above those attempts to investigate, regulate and control, which have their place, but only as introductory to a real solution of our trust and monopoly problems. This point-of-view is undoubtedly the sound one, but few of our public leaders and teachers understand it or are bold enough to acknowledge it.

2. While having in sight his goal, he is always willing to work for the immediately attainable. Though an outspoken believer in complete free trade, he was always ready in Congress to co-operate with any effort, however moderate, for a reduction in the tariff. Though a believer in immediate city operation of street-railways and lighting-plants, he has shown himself ready when such operation was legally impossible, to admit a natural gas company to fight the extortions of artificial gas and coal companies, and to charter a three-cent-fare road or to advocate a lease at a liberal price of an entire city railway system to the right kind of trustees, as a step toward municipal-ownership.

3. He is a democratic Democrat with a faith in the ultimate good sense of the

* See July *McClure's Magazine*.



TOM L. JOHNSON

THE ARENA



people and in the triumph of high ideals that sustains his arm even when smarting under defeat and which is beginning to be realized by the people.

4. He has broad views of public policy and a keen desire for a clean, pure government as well as for a government that can hold its own in the contest with special privileges. No man in Ohio has done so much as he against the spoils-system and in favor of administrative efficiency. Referring to the matter at a time when disgruntled spoilsmen were fiercely demanding a surrender, he said of the merit system: "I believe it is good politics; but anyway, it is decent." As evidence of his broad views, one may instance also that during the past four and a half years in office he has effected great improvements in street-paving and cleaning, the construction of sewers, the popularization of parks, the development of playgrounds, the efficiency of the water, police and fire departments, the separation of grade crossings, the management of the reformatory and of juvenile delinquents, and of many other matters.

5. His capacity in at least two respects is extraordinary. First, his executive capacity, an important evidence of which is his conceded ability to select strong subordinates and to impress them with somewhat of his own enthusiasm, and second, his ability to look to the heart of the problem, whether of engineering or of political and economic science—in other words, his power of perception. One of the most prominent civil engineers of the country, after contact with our mayor, pronounces his power of perception the greatest he has ever met in a very wide acquaintance. Mr. Johnson has taken out many patents, some being of large value. This engineering ability joined to financial keenness greater than that hitherto shown by any of our reform leaders makes his advice in the development of municipal-ownership along safe and rational lines invaluable. It has

been often sought and freely given in more than one large city. His universally admitted success in giving Cleveland the purest, most efficient government she has ever enjoyed and one that is better than that of most, and possibly of all, the other forty cities in this country of over 100,000 population, has drawn to him the support of thousands of Republican voters who have not yet been converted to his taxation, public-ownership, home-rule and direct-legislation policies.

6. Finally, he possesses a personal magnetism and buoyancy of spirits that attract the admiration and remove the element of personal antagonism from most of those that come into personal relation with him. Although handicapped by the normal Republican majority of a hundred thousand in the state at large and by the control of the courts and the state government by monopolistic affiliations and partisan considerations, such a man as Tom L. Johnson, vastly aided by the whole spirit of modern thought which is on his side, may be expected before he is many years beyond his present age of fifty-one, to reach even the now ignorant and prejudiced voter in the country districts and in the machine-ruled cities of the state. Home-rule will then be secured and every municipality will have the chance to draft its own charter, pursue its own desires as to municipal-ownership, and exempt from taxation such classes of personal and other forms of property as it may elect.

Even though he may hold no office, he has consecrated his best thought and effort for the rest of his life to advancing his ideals. The closer one comes to him and the more one is given the chance permitted the writer to see him in his own home and in travel, the more will one appreciate and love the at heart deeply religious and great soul working so unselfishly for social progress.

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United States," his "Address to the Officers in 1783," his "Circular Letter Addressed to the Governors of all the States on Disbanding the Army," his "Farewell Orders to the Armies of the United States," and his "Inaugural Address to Both Houses of Congress." Thus we have, brought within the compass of a little volume, matter that should be familiar in every American home—matter that cannot fail to rekindle the spirit of democracy in the heart of the people, and this at the present hour is especially needed, for we have far too little serious study of the fathers, else we would not see everywhere a movement toward reactionary government, bureaucratic aggression and a dangerous centralization inimical to the genius

of democracy. If the lofty patriotism of Jefferson, Washington, Adams, Franklin and other of the great Republic-builders can be again infused into the minds of our voters, the rule of privileged interests, of corporate wealth, of ever narrowing classes and the enforcement of arbitrary rulings, not recognised in the organic law passed by the lawmakers, will give place to a rapid rise in power and democratic sentiment that shall re-establish the Republic of the old days and safeguard it by the introduction into the organic law of the nation of such urgently demanded ideal democratic measures to meet present conditions as are offered by the Initiative and Referendum.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

UNCLE SAM'S ROMANCE WITH SCIENCE AND THE SOIL: We desire to call the attention of all our readers to the opening paper in our series of special contributions, dealing with some constructive work being carried forward by the national government for the benefit, happiness and prosperity of all the people, by Mr. FRANK VROOMAN, of Washington. In this series there will be three papers dealing with the work of the Agricultural Department. The first appears in this issue and deals explicitly with the field. The other two will deal with the forest and the stream. These papers will be followed by contributions on the work of the Civil Service Commission and the Congressional Library. Mr. VROOMAN has been peculiarly fortunate in having been materially assisted by the officials of the Agricultural Department in verifying and substantiating his data. These papers, therefore, are authentic as well as highly instructive and interesting. Few writers possess in so eminent a degree as does Mr. VROOMAN the rare power of dealing with statistical subjects in such a way as to make them as interesting as romance.

The Economics of Moses and of Jesus: This month we publish the initial paper of a series of five important contributions from the scholarly pen of President GEORGE MCA. MILLER, of Ruskin University. President MILLER is not only one of the ablest advance educators of the land, but his legal training, his profound interest in social and economic justice and his broadly religious nature fit him in an eminent degree for the important work of bringing before present-day civilization in a clear, concise and interesting manner the economics of the great Hebrew law-giver and those of the founder of Christianity. For years he has made a deep study of this great question, and this series of papers represents the ripened fruition of his exhaustive research.

Mayor Johnson: One of the Strongest Leaders in Municipal Progress in America: Professor E. W.

BEANS is known the land over as one of the most fearless and incorruptible scholars in the field of social and economic research. He has conscientiously held true to the high trust imposed by democracy upon her prophets and servants, and he justly enjoys the love and respect of all friends of progress and free institutions. For many years Professor BEANS has been intimately acquainted with Mayor TOM L. JOHNSON, of Cleveland, Ohio. Following our policy of securing papers from men especially well qualified to write on special subjects and writers whose reputations give weight to their utterances, we this month inaugurate our series dealing with leaders of the people and standard-bearers of progress with an admirable characterization of Mayor JOHNSON, by Professor BEANS.

The Evolution of Marriage Ideals: In this issue we publish an important historical summary of marriage ideals. It is a strong, brave and extremely important paper—important to every one who wishes to properly understand the questions of marriage and divorce and to consider these vital subjects in the light of reason unclouded by superstition or prejudice. Our age demands two things above all others—the cultivation of character, or the permeating of the thought-world from which deeds flow with that fine, true, high, moral idealism that makes men brave in the face of all danger and steadfast in the doing of what he believes to be right, not because it will bring him reward or the praise of men but simply because *it is right*; and secondly, we need mental as well as moral courage. We are becoming a race of sycophants, cowards and mental dwarfs, willing to take what others say rather than exercise our God-given reason, and too ready to take up and unthinkingly repeat any shibboleth or cry raised by conventionalism or by classes, which are in many instances beneficiaries of privilege or the children of ancient superstition and unreasoning bigotry, without boldly, bravely and conscientiously