

papers and ran errands for a salary of \$3 per week. My friends were many and kind, for they sent me much law business of a certain kind—the kind that gives a young lawyer considerable practice but scant profit. I was almost uniformly successful in winning my case before judge and jury, but when it came to making the condemned party pay for damages and costs, the deputy-sheriff was pretty sure to return his writ marked *nulla bona*, which means that the dishonest party was bound to win out whichever way the Court might rule.

At the end of one year I had fifty cases pending, and had earned just enough to pay the rent of my office. I was naturally desirous of being independent financially, and the Bar did not look to me then as it might have looked had I been in an office with my father or others to whom I might have looked for juridical inspiration. The judges on the New York Bench were largely Irish Catholic or Jew, and few of them owed their positions to other than political influences. As a rule, in any important law trial, if any brains made their presence felt, the pressure did not emanate from the Bench. In England the judge instructs and reprimands the ignorant or presumptuous barrister. In New York it is the lawyer that lays down the law. My law office looked busy, but the business was largely non-legal: committee work in political organizations for the purification of Congress and Tammany Hall; the election of Theodore Roosevelt as member of the New York State Assembly; the combating of Protectionism; the securing of an honest copyright; the discussion of Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*.

Henry George was opposed to the political rule of the Roman Church; as he was to the material tyranny of a Protective Tariff and Landlord tyranny in California. He came to New York in 1880 as the author of *Progress and Poverty*, and became at once a political, economical and theological storm centre. For each one of his theses

was to the ruling classes of New York fraught with danger to society in general and their pockets in particular. The Catholic hierarchy excommunicated one of their priests who publicly avowed sympathy with *single tax* heresies (McGlynn was his name). Doubtless the Christ would have been a single-taxer, for Henry George wished to improve the lot of those who yearned for a bit of land and could not acquire any when it was monopolized by a few. *Progress and Poverty* tells how through land monopoly the rich grow richer and the poor grow poorer; it also tells how our western railways have secured much power through their land holdings in fertile districts. The remedy is very simple—to tax the “unearned increment”—which means the value of a land slice which has been increased merely through the natural increase of population. When I owned no land, the Henry George gospel sounded amazingly simple; but since my father gave me this farm on the Hudson which knows no increment save in the annual taxes, and has no value other than sentimental, the enthusiasm that buoyed me in 1880 has moderated.

Of course the Roman Church denounced one who proposed taxing their vast holdings in land. The financial world of bank and mill owners dreaded one who looked upon Free Trade as a self-evident proposition; and to the masses who either owned or hoped to own a bit of land, they scouted any plan that savoured of official meddling with private property of any kind. *Progress and Poverty* had probably a larger circulation than any book ever published in the English language, excepting, of course, the Bible. And like the Bible it owed none of its fame to a publisher. Indeed, Henry George told me that his book had been rejected by all of them, primarily because its purpose was unorthodox, and finally because it was not likely to find any sale.

George was a great man, a good man, an idealist, a re-incarnation of the Godlike that usually ends on the

Cross. We met in 1880, and our friendship ended only with his death in 1897, at the early age of 58. He died poor and he died under an overwhelming volley of defamatory howls, hisses and groans during the closing days of an electoral campaign which was to have made him the Mayor of New York. In the days of Luther he would have been burnt by the Inquisition, but in my time the Pope merely threatened hell-fire to such as voted for him. George was too credulous and kindly to detect the machinery by which he was defeated. His wife was a Catholic, and he himself carefully avoided any expressions that might sound prejudiced in the mind of Jew or Papist. His political strength lay necessarily amongst the wage-earners, and of course every Irishman delighted in doctrines that appeared to be an attack upon the English landlord. But the Catholic Irishman must vote as Rome directs, and Henry George found that his noisy Land League supporters howled themselves red in the face until the Sunday before election day, and then from every pulpit came a soft whisper more potent on the Tuesday after than Moses on Mount Sinai.

Henry George was used as a political mascot in order to inflame the zeal of Irish irreconcilables who worshipped any leader promising the triumph of Land League tactics, not to say Fenianism. The Land League agitation brought much American money into the papal coffers by way of Cork and Kilkenny. Incidentally it added seriously to the costs borne by England, and of course whatever vexed a Protestant Government and its excommunicated King was cause for joy in Rome. Henry George was transparently simple, and was naturally drawn to England through parentage, religion, and belief in the teachings of Richard Cobden. He believed sincerely that England would be the better for adopting his land theory, and yearned for any opportunity of preaching his doctrine. In California he had been defeated when proposed for office, and the same

fate met him in New York in 1886, and, last of all, in the electoral campaign that killed him. How could he suppose that the vast crowds that acclaimed him as their political saviour on one day would on the next fall away from him ?

Joan of Arc was worshipped as a miracle-working saint in Orleans, yet burned in Rouen. French crowds pressed about her in order to kiss the hem of her garment, and her bodyguard consisted largely of priests who saw in her the leader of a new crusade against the infidel Turk or the Protestant followers of Huss. Yet in one day all that adoring host fell from her. The Papal Inquisition burned Joan of Arc as the Hebrew hierarchy crucified Jesus, in each case for political reasons. I had a curious illustration of similar simplicity during the Boer War, when all Germany was ablaze with anti-English fury, and when the ambassadors of Oom Paul were acclaimed throughout the Fatherland as beloved allies and martyrs to British despotism. Such was the popular ardour that travellers who spoke or looked English were frequently made uncomfortable, and had the Kaiser then declared war, it would indeed have been a popular one.

Munich also was visited by the simple delegates of South Africa, and on that evening I was beside the painter Lenbach in the *Allotria* Club. It was a hilarious evening after a day of much oratory and parading, and on all sides were comments on the Boer visitors. Methinks that Fischer, the then conductor of the Royal Opera, was near me, and also Stuck and Carl Marr of the Royal Fine Arts Academy. Lenbach joked about the day's proceedings as a joyous carnival; he was then probably President of the Royal Academy, or if not, was, in any case, compelled to be present as the Dean of his craft, and a figure of national importance. But what was carnival to joy-loving Munich was deadly earnest for the bearded apostles of a lost cause. I twitted

Lenbach on his dishonesty in encouraging the Boers by his presence, and he agreed with me; also he shrugged his shoulders, and said that he had no choice but to hurrah with his people.

But soon Germany wearied of an embassy that cared little for music but much for money. Lenbach said philosophically that they would soon find out for themselves that German cheering was purely Platonic, and then they would embark for the Zambesi. Moreover, as no Germans understand Cape Dutch, and no Boers talk any foreign tongue save English, the social side of that mission was far from successful save when raising beer mugs and calling down curses on the British Army. The last straw, however, came from Potsdam, when William II refused to give them his hand, or even to send them home with a message of good omen. Could this be the same Kaiser who only four years before had congratulated Oom Paul for having routed the Jameson Raiders? Could this be the man who had encouraged in their unsophisticated bosoms the delusion of armed assistance from Germany?

And so the mobs all melted away at the frown of Imperial Majesty much as the Catholic voters abandoned Henry George, when an Italian pontifex passed the word.

Even James Gordon Bennett refused a request I made to accompany Henry George on his notable tour of England and Scotland, when he spoke in support of his theories and incidentally in aid of the Irish Land League. Mr. Bennett answered as follows:—

120 AVENUE DES CHAMPS ÉLYSÉES, PARIS,  
November 17th, 1884.

MY DEAR MR. BIGELOW,—

In my humble opinion Henry George is a “humbug” and a “busy body.” As for the “Skye Crofters” affair, it’s moonshine and nonsense. Besides, it’s an

island where these people live and cannot spread out of it ; and besides, it's none of our business.

If the *Herald* does anything it will be either to ignore Mr. George and all his nonsense, or if he should happen by chance to become dangerous, pitch into him most roundly. Faithfully yours,

J. G. BENNETT.

Bennett in general was liberal in spirit, and acted normally as though his only god were an incarnation of news columns. He had been reared a Catholic and had a devout Catholic sister ; but his daily life gave no outward token of his having ever submitted to any higher laws than those governing a metropolitan Daily.

Now Henry George was news in the commonest sense of that vulgarest of terms. He was invading the stronghold of landlordism, a whole generation ahead of Lloyd George, and thundering at British audiences much as Henry Ward Beecher did some twenty years earlier on a theme equally unpopular. Each of these men received a full share of denunciation, if not corporal abuse, but in the end Englishmen honoured their courage, their earnestness, and above all their honesty of spirit.

Yet Bennett listened to the interests of his Church rather than those of his country, and Henry George died an early death, as do all who use too freely that incomprehensible mixture labelled *the Truth!*

During the years that I knew Henry George—the short seventeen years of his active ministry—his great book was translated into every tongue, including Japanese, and cheap editions flooded the English world. The German Government was the first that applied his doctrines practically, at the very moment of their author's death, and in the world's oldest community—the province that gave birth to Confucius. Australian land legislation has felt the influence of *Progress and Poverty*, and to-day its principles are welcomed universally,

although vast prejudice is encountered when it comes to their practical application. In Henry George's own country, where the world might look for the first experiment in land reform, we find land speculation firmly rooted and hotly justified as the basis of national prosperity. This view is reinforced by an almost universal distrust of anything done by Government. We tolerate stupidity, waste, petty tyranny and mediæval barbarism in our customs officials, our post-office, our immigration matters, our censorship of morals, our suppression of wine, and in our navigation laws. We tolerate because we cannot do away with Congress and majority rule. We vainly protest against the corruption and inefficiency of our ubiquitous inspectors and blackmailing officials, but there they are like fleas on the dog, and any relief can be but momentary.

Henry George lived in the slums of New York, for he was putty in the hands of his publishers. He paid for making the plates of *Progress and Poverty*, and he never knew financial ease. It was to him the source of bitter comment when of a Sunday morning I would fetch him for a stroll and a talk. He had to pick his way along sidewalks crowded with ash-cans and refuse; neglected streets with abominable pavements; children with no place to play save the gutters. Yet we were in the richest city of the Continent under government "by" if not "for" the people. Of course, George argued that when his plan should have been accepted, every man would live on his own land-patch; speculation would cease; the public treasury would be full; Government would provide parks, libraries, baths, music, education, and all sorts of other good things, without any taxation save a moderate proportion of the "unearned increment."

It was a joy to be with George and to feel the glow of his invincible confidence in human goodness. Had I been younger he might have persuaded me that all

thieves and murderers would turn into philanthropists did we but meet their advances in a kindly spirit. He was a saintly man ; he walked with angels, and his heart expanded when the voice of God came to him and bade him struggle in the cause of humanity. He gave away his copyrights in order that the gospel of *Progress and Poverty* might reach the masses, and he gave his life as a sacrifice for the very men who gave him his death-blow.