

Henry George, Employer*

By LOUISE CRANE

WE have become familiar with the figure of the great leader of men, the friend of humanity, the noble, patient well-wisher of mankind—Henry George. He has been pictured to us as the philosopher, the economist, the teacher and friend, the husband and father. But would we not like to know something of him as the employer of labor? Was he a kind master, humane and fair? Or was there, after all, a marked difference between what he preached and what he practiced, as is too often the case with some self-styled "friends of the working-man?" Engrossed with the subject in the abstract, they reject as trivial the suggestion that charity ought to begin at home.

I bethought me of a friend who was once a member of the staff of *The Standard*, militant journal founded by Henry George. William T. Croasdale, the editor, had a "right-hand man," who was a woman. This woman is the friend I speak of. I took paper and pencil, consulted her, and brought away the following:

"How we loved Mr. George! How we valued his approbation, and how little we ever thought of deceiving him, or of imposing on his generous, patient spirit! I count among the happiest hours of my life those I spent over the routine connected with the presentation to the public of the Single Tax doctrine.

"Our offices were quite the reverse of sumptuous. They were on the second story of a somewhat dilapidated building on Union Square, reached by climbing, at your own risk, a flight of rickety and none too clean stairs. The offices were cleaned every morning by a large, fat, office boy, and this was his system: After removing the top layers of newspapers, with which the floor was always littered, John would appear with an enormous, green, sprinkling can, which he would ply with a fearless, impartial hand. If you sat down at your desk before John had finished 'cleanin' up' you shared a like fate with the office furniture and the parlor stove (which kept us warm). John was a well-meaning, hard-working boy, but his duties were multitudinous and varied and he could not always arrange them in regular order.

"When everything was in a drip, he would fetch a muddy broom, and with it push the floor clear. The papers dragged dirt along with them, but the broom left muddy traces to relieve the monotony and altogether it was a most unusual-looking place after John got through. So much for the sanctum sanctorum, which consisted of two rooms, one of which was what is known as a hall bedroom. What they did about the cleaning in the

business office (the room in the rear) I never did know and I never voiced a suspicion I had that the subscription clerk got down on his knees and scrubbed the floor after we had all gone home. It was just that much cleaner in that room.

"But we were all so happy there! Mr. George would favor us with a visit every now and then. He took no part in the office work, being busy with his books. Once in a while he would ask one of us to come to his house and help him, and how gladly we would go! Always good-tempered, he never misjudged anyone; he never spoke sharply, or unkindly. The sweetness of his disposition, and his affectionate nature made him a delightful master, who held us to our duties out of respect for the man.

"A man of indefatigable energy himself, he never had an idle moment. He was said to have been intolerant of drones but I have more than once observed that it took him a long time to notice remissness in an employee. I remember a case in point. We had taken in an extra office-boy temporarily, who, as is quite common, worked while you were watching him, and dawdled the rest of the time. One day Mr. George came in and seeing the extra boy, began to question him. The boy became very much confused because he feared he had been detected, but Mr. George kept on, like a man gathering statistics, too much engrossed for a time to observe the boy's embarrassment. When he did finally notice it he left the room and the building abruptly without another word. Not long after Mr. George said to his son, Richard, then our bookkeeper, 'Would you say Dick, that that boy is a faithful worker?' 'No, father,' was the reply, 'but he is only here temporarily.' 'Humph,' was all Mr. George said. But we urged Richard to discharge the boy.

"Whenever Mr. George came to the office he asked the why and the wherefore of everything that was going on, but he always had a preoccupied air, which often deceived us into thinking he was not listening. And then some day long after he would surprise us by referring to some trivial thing which we would have thought safe to say he had passed over. It was his habit of asking questions that led newcomers to the office to believe him a very exacting, suspicious and distrustful employer, who wasn't going to allow himself to be bamboozled if he could help it. But they didn't think that way very long.

"It was immediately on his return from a lecture trip in Australia that I first met Mr. George. He wore a cheap suit of light brown clothes that hung loosely on him, and a square-top brown derby hat pushed far back on his head. By the way, I think I never saw Mr. George in anything but a Prince Albert coat. Turning to greet me he gave me a hearty handclasp and a genial, kindly encouraging smile, saying, 'Why, Croasdale, she's a mere child!' 'Is she?' answered Croasdale, 'ask the child

*This interesting document was originally published as a newspaper article twenty-five years ago.—ED.

what she knows about the Single Tax.' 'The Single Tax as we call it, for want of a better name,' I began, without waiting for Mr. George to speak, and mimicking the words and gestures of one of our best-known speakers of whom I knew Mr. George to be very fond, 'the Single Tax contemplates the abolition of all taxes save one on the value of land, irrespective of improvements.' Long and loud rang out that hearty laugh which was one of the most charming things about him. And whenever he felt like 'having a good laugh' he would make me repeat that little 'lesson in first principles.'

"To Mr. George labor was sacred. The humblest worker had a dignity in his eyes and a casual observer might have found it difficult to determine which was employer and which employed, judging by their manner of addressing each other. Mr. George respected his office boy, but the office boy adored him.

"I once reported a club banquet given in Mr. George's honor at which I was the only woman present. He insisted on having me placed at his right, while at his left sat the president of the club. Mr. George sat with his back to a window, and once, between speeches, I remarked that I felt very warm. He called to someone to open the window and it was done very quietly so that the man opposite me didn't notice it for a time. But, always alert for the well-being of the great philosopher, he soon spied the open window. In a jiffy he had jumped up, closed the window, and, looking from Mr. George to me in such a way as to make me feel very guilty, he seemed to be making a mental comparison between us and decided against me. Mr. George laughed, shrugged his shoulders, and said. 'No use, Miss——!' And I answered, 'No use.' And that was all. And yet that man under almost any other conceivable circumstance would have accused himself of great rudeness if he had acted similarly. This shows that it was not only respect and admiration for the man that held all he met to him—it was love. In many cases, like this, one might almost say it was a protecting love, for he was ever careless of himself, ever underestimating his usefulness.

"Let me tell you something to prove what I said about Mr. George's wonderful temper. One day Mr. Croasdale sent word to Mr. Louis F. Post that he must have a certain lengthy article by the next Wednesday (I think it was). Mr. Post promised to send it by messenger boy on Tuesday. The article hadn't arrived on Wednesday morning, as Mr. Post had promised. Mr. Croasdale was a man of irascible temper, so he immediately began, violently: 'Why the devil, Post, don't you do as you say? You know I ought to have had that thing——!' 'What's the matter?' asked Post, invariably amiable. 'I sent the article, if that is the cause of your wrath, by messenger yesterday afternoon.' 'What——' dropped blank from Mr. Croasdale's lips. The two stared at each other and the same thought entered each one's mind. The boy must

have lost the manuscript! In an instant Croasdale's face flushed purple and then he uncorked the vials of his wrath, and the familiar pop fell on my ear, as I stood in the next room. I knew he would call me in and tell it to me in his own picturesque, diverting way, which you couldn't publish if I described it, and in another moment the summons came. As I stood listening sympathetically to the irate editor the door opened and a little mite of a boy with tear-stained face appeared. Instinctively, Croasdale knew it must be the boy. And what a terrible ten seconds for the poor child, before the door opened once more, this time to admit the dignified figure of Henry George, the champion of the weak. Then, of course, it had to be told all over again, but Mr. George didn't sympathize with his editor a bit. He was divided between his desire to laugh at Croasdale and the sympathy that welled up in his tender heart at the sight of the wretched object of so much splutter. He looked over at Mr. Post, who had seated himself at Mr. Croasdale's desk, and the latter's eyes followed his, 'That's right, Post, write a complaint. Have the miserable whelp——' 'Complaint,' answered the imperturbable Post, with a chuckle, 'I'm rewriting the article.' I wish I could do justice to the state of Mr. Croasdale's feathers at this announcement. They seemed to expand, puffed out with an ungovernable rage, and yet he was abashed, although disgusted, with this forgiving, what's-the-use-of-getting-excited spirit. He did not know what to do or say, so he turned his attention once more to the boy. But Mr. George said, quietly: 'Now, that will do, Croasdale. The child has explained the accident'—(at this word the editor bridled)—'and we will let him go.' The boy looked up gratefully at Mr. George, who put one hand on his shoulder and with the other offered him a coin, and pushed the sobbing wretch out of the room. To me this was always the most remarkable thing I ever encountered, because the man who had really suffered the abuse and who would be put to the inconvenience of doing his work all over again sat quietly, taking no part whatever in the 'trouble'. And Mr. George was pained, as was to be expected, at the injustice. It was plain that he felt the poor child ought not to have had such harsh treatment.

"I was about to say that I never heard from anyone in or around that office, any word about Mr. George that was not a tribute to some one of his many noble personal qualities, but on second thought I shall have to qualify that just a trifle. The compositors used to swear, not at him, I am sure, but certainly at his manuscript. It used to be common talk that Mr. George never sent back a proof without the margins filled with his closely written script. They made a test, so they said, at one time, and by an herculean effort turned out a proof that was typographically perfect, yet it came back with filled margins, like any other. 'On second thought,' he would

mutter, 'perhaps this would be better.' And then scratch, scratch, scratch. One day they threatened to cut the margins off, top, bottom and sides, but an inconsiderate foreman interfered.

But these little things were all on the surface. They might swear, but they loved him, as we all did. 'It is a way compositors have.'

"And so we lived our lives in the effort to please him, made happy by his presence, and going home at night sustained by the hope of seeing him on the morrow, disappointed if he didn't come, and doubly glad when he appeared after an absence of a few days. Nobody loved him more than we did. To us no better man ever lived, and I, for one, never expect to meet another as good, as sincerely and truly noble as Henry George."

Free Trade—Pro and Con

PRO

By J. RUPERT MASON

THE most immediate opportunity facing us, it seems to me, is to fairly scream to every one within hearing to urge his Senators and Congressmen to support the reciprocal trade treaty efforts of this Administration. The opponents are sure to be ferocious!

Now that the President has appealed for authority to provide greater freedom of trade between nations, let us not fail to give the suggestion support in every way at the disposal of any of us.

No one realized more completely than Henry George that taxation of land values, alone, would not eliminate unjust privileges, and that the abolition of trade barriers between nations constituted just as integral and essential a step before justice can prevail.

Many Georgeists appear to have all but forgotten this, for they have all but limited their thinking to the importance of government collecting all of the publicly created rental value of land, instead of only part of it, as at present.

Henry George, who launched the Georgeist movement, was of a much broader turn of mind than are his followers. No one can deny that he saw the necessity of collecting all the rent of land. But he also saw the question of Freedom in its larger aspects. In an editorial in *The Standard*, signed by him (reprinted by C. Le Baron Goeller), we find the following:

"As for those of our friends who think we ought to leave protection undisturbed until we have succeeded in taking land values for public benefit, and those who express the same underlying thought by asking why free land will not lead to free trade much more naturally than free trade will lead to free land, it seems to me that they can hardly fully realize the great object which is to be attained

by the Single Tax, nor yet the practical means by which the adoption of this Single Tax is to be secured. Like those who oppose us, or fail to go with us from sheer inability to see how the taxation of land values can abolish poverty, their mental gaze seems to be concentrated on what we propose to do, ignoring what we propose to do away with. The great benefit of the appropriation of land values (i.e., economic rent) to public use would not be in the revenue that it would give, so much as in the abolition of restrictions upon the free play of productive forces it would involve or permit. It is not by the mere levying of a tax that we propose to abolish poverty; it is by 'securing the blessings of liberty.'

"The abolition of all taxes that restrain production or hamper exchange, the doing away with all monopolies and special privileges that enable one citizen to levy toll upon the industries of other citizens, is an integral part of our program. To *merely* take land values in taxation for public purposes would *not of itself* suffice. If the proceeds were spent in maintaining useless parasites or standing armies, labor might still be oppressed and harried by taxes and special privileges. We might still have poverty, and people might still beg for alms or die of starvation. What we are really aiming at is . . . 'the freedom of the individual to use his labor and capital in any way that may seem proper to him and will not interfere with the equal rights of others' and 'to leave to the producer the full fruits of his exertion.' To do this it is necessary to abolish land monopoly. And it is *also necessary to abolish tariffs.*"

By enlisting aggressively with this Administration with regard to its present attempts to lessen trade barriers, the Administration leaders *might* discover that there is much about which we both think alike.

We know that any lowering of tariff barriers must increase the difficulty of private interests continuing to pocket for themselves as much of the publicly created rental value of land as at present. Very few land speculators have caught this, so they may not be as vicious in their opposition to Secretary Hull's aims, as they are to any taxation of land values.

This seems to me to be the most concrete opportunity facing us in many years. I hope it may be soberly considered by every lover of liberty.

CON

By PETER D. HALEY

All the free trade in the world is not going to make better the lot of the German masses. Prior to the World War the German people were faring better than the people of England despite the fact of England's democracy, because landlordism was a little less intense in Germany than in England. The mass of people in tariff-protected