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BOOK REVIEW by Dean Gordon

PROSPERITY By Henry Ware Allen

A TIMELY BOOK

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A new and timely book by Henry Ware Allen, Wichita's celebrated contributor to country-wide newspapers, zealous advocate of the philosophies of Henry George, especially George's panacea, the "Single Tax," is just from the press of the Christopher Publishing Co., Boston. I have donated my copy of the book to the Wichita City Library, a practice I have long followed with the books I like best so that others may enjoy them, instead of hoarding them at home.

Mr. Allen gives a vivid, understandable picture of permanent prosperity as an accomplished fact in the year 2000 A.D.; draws the curtain and unfolds the story of its achievement, step by step, movie picture-like, under the Henry George Single Tax system. The story is told through the medium of a grandfather, Justin Waterson, aged eighty-five, a retired Chicago merchant, in conversations with his interested and inquiring grandson, Charles Waterson, aged seventeen.

The book is a sort of an Edward Bellamy "Looking Backward" way of treating the contrast between the depression and aftermaths of the present days with the orderly and happy situation under the established Single Tax system in full sway in the year 2000. The book of Bellamy (1850-1898) contrasted the boom days debacle of 1887-1889 with his idea of a socialistic state in the year 2000. It was published in 1889 in the days of the rise of Populism, and met with a big sale. This book was seized upon by the Socialists and Populists as the gospel of their new credo, and was widely influential in the big vote polled by the radicals of the time. I remember reading it and remember hearing Bellamy speak in Wichita then. "Coin" Harvey's "Coin's Financial School," illustrated by pictures of a young man teacher, a sort of defied youth, with blackboard figures, teaching the wise and learned and convincing them of the errors in the existing

monetary system, was another chimerical evangel in the craze of those Populistic, Bryanistic days.

In Allen's book, grandfather Waterson was a young student of public affairs in 1929-1935 and was able to tell his grandson from personal experience of the greatest of depressions, intensified and prolonged by the legerdemain which Mr. Hoover called the leaping white rabbits; by the bootstrap-lifting, wasteful and ineffectual efforts of the national administration to dam the eternal flowing stream of natural forces. The grandson expresses the greatest amazement, hardly able to believe that there could have been such times in contrast with the happy situation of affairs in Chicago sixty-five years later, all brought about by the political economy philosophies and Single Tax system of Henry George.

Allen's book is the antithesis of the Utopias of Plato's Republic, Plutarch's Utopian Sparta under the days of Lycurgus, Sir Thomas More's "Utopia," published in 1516, Bacon's "Atlantis," and other noted Utopias. More's "Utopia," was an imaginary island under an idealized, impossible social regime, and like all others, totally disregards the realities of human nature in the equation. More (1478-1535) was a member of the British House of Commons, afterwards Chancellor and while in that office he was beheaded as a traitor because he refused to take the oath required by Henry VIII to "renounce all foreign potentates," meaning of course the Pope.

More put the word Utopia in the dictionary, coined it from Gr. ou, not, plus topos, a place, meaning no place, no where. The name was not appropriate to the More Utopia. It negated the possible reality of his dream. It might as well have been "Never never land." As an antonym Allen's "Prosperity," might have been well named "Antiutopia," also from Gr. anti, oppose, topos, a place an actuality, a possible some place, somewhere, a State such as he pictures in his book based upon the eternal truths of reality and natural forces, the forces, which, when scientifically met, faced and utilized may be turned into blessings and happiness along the lines of least resistance. The More-Bellamy idea in the face of realities is to buck the young calf idea, the more the rope hurts the more the calf pulls back, and the more it pulls the tighter the noose and the more it hurts, ad infinitum.

In addition to the main purpose of Allen's book, the furthering of an interest in and understanding of Henry George's Single Tax, another fine and timely feature of his

book is the prominence he gives to the philosophies of the historically classic writers on political economy, especially of Adam Smith (1723-1790), who published his "Wealth of Nations" in 1776, and to Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862), historian, whose "History of Civilization" appeared in 1857. The Buckle history covered eleven centuries of the progress of civilization. Buckle said that the "Wealth of Nations" was the most important book to civilization ever written.

Buckle sought to make of history an exact science, maintaining that the progress of civilization was influenced by climate, soil, food and the character of a people formed by the mutabilities of nature. He maintained that skepticism was the true source of intellectual progress; that the retarding force was credulity; and that the excessive protection and regulatory projects of governments, the nobility, the Church, and other agencies over the people, had dwarfed and retarded the spirit of freedom and civilization. To him, evidences of these processes instead of a mere recital of the glamor of royalty, rulers, politicians, and of wars, were data for an exact science of history.

Adam Smith was a delusion debunker. One of his debunking instances was, his denial of the classic claim that the way to enrich a nation was at the expense of other nations by means of the "favorable balance of trade," the belief in which originated early in the 16th century. The "favorable balance" was the excess in cash received for exports above the cash paid for imports. The process was encouraged on exports by bounties, and discouraged on imports by protective tariffs. Smith said the process worked just the opposite way from that intended; that it was the excess in value of imports above the value of exports which was the true criterion of the gain. And that centuries-old belief seems still to persist to the present day.

Allen's style is in the class of clarity, simplicity and charm of a Henry David Thoreau, a Ralph Waldo Emerson, a Herbert Spencer, an Adam Smith, a Buckle and a Henry George, who each had a natural aptitude for comprehension of universal truths, and a natural genius for picturing them, irresistibly to the imaginations of others; and each in a class of realists whose passion for truth knew no delusionary limitations, either in conception of truths or in clarity of expression.

Allen's book is an index to the Smith, Buckle, George line of classical thought on political economy, uninfluenced by political expediency, and his book should prove a

stimulant to the revival of the reading of this class of important literature. It has inspired me to a re-reading of George's "Progress and Poverty," his "Protection or Free Trade," and his crowning achievement, the Single Tax. And since reading Allen's book I have read Buckle, and am now reading Adam Smith. Never read either before. I have always been a believer in the merits of Henry George's idea of free trade and in his Single Tax system.

And so I regard Henry Ware Allen's "Prosperity" as a timely book in these days of political atavism and reversion to the insanity of historical millstones in the orderly progress of American civilization.