

A JEWISH TRIBUTE TO HENRY GEORGE

FIRST PLACE in the *Jewish Chronicle Supplement* for June is given to an article on the Henry George Centenary by Scholasticus. He writes:—

Preparations are now being made throughout the world for the celebration, later this year, of the centenary of the birthday—September 2nd, 1839—of Henry George. The work and influence of this great thinker have many associations which deserve to be specially commemorated by Jews at such a time.

Henry George was born in Philadelphia into a family which had long been intimately connected with the Episcopal Church, and his early education in religious and Scriptural traditions left a lasting impress. When still a young man he settled in San Francisco, where he had a hard struggle to earn a living as printer and writer. His own personal experience of poverty led him to ponder the connections between economics and ethics, between social science and moral philosophy. He became convinced of the need for bringing politics and religion into closer touch with each other, and felt it to be God's will that he should devote his life to the cause of social justice.

Between 1877 and 1879, Henry George was engaged upon writing his *magnum opus*, *Progress and Poverty*. It is significant that during this period—in June, 1878—he delivered before the Young Men's Hebrew Association of San Francisco a lecture on "Moses." The words of the then comparatively unknown lecturer made such an impression on his audience that Dr Elkan Cohn, Rabbi of the Temple Emanu-El, turned to the Chairman of the Lecture Committee and said with deep feeling: "Where did you find that man?" In after years the lecture was repeated in many other places—notably in Dundee and Glasgow in 1884, and in New York in 1887—and it has come to be generally recognised as the most eloquent of all Henry George's addresses. Such is now its fame that several quotations from it are to be found in the Chief Rabbi's "Commentary on the Pentateuch" and "Book of Jewish Thoughts." Never has finer tribute been paid to Israel than in its opening passages.

After quoting from the opening passages and the concluding tribute to Moses the Lawgiver, Scholasticus adds: "But no extracts can do justice to the sustained eloquence of this soul-stirring address." He continues:

What specially struck Henry George's imagination was the practical morality of the Mosaic code. "Its Sabbath day and Sabbath year secure even to the lowliest rest and leisure. With the blast of the jubilee trumpets the slave goes free, the debt that cannot be paid is cancelled, and a redivision of the land secures again to the poorest his fair share in the bounty of the common Creator. The reaper must leave something for the gleaner; even the ox cannot be muzzled as he treadeth out the corn. Everywhere in everything, the dominant idea is that of our homely phrase—Live and let live!"

To Henry George it seemed that the spirit—not necessarily the exact forms—of this Hebrew polity needed to be applied to the solution of present-day social problems. In 1879 appeared his *Progress and Poverty*, which directed attention to the fundamental importance of questions of land tenure and taxation. This work acknowledges the author's indebtedness to David Ricardo's "law of rent," and also makes interesting reference to the Jewish historical researches of Emanuel Deutsch. The technical details of Henry George's proposals—which form the subject of current debate—cannot be discussed here, but something may

be said about the general influence of their ideology.

Scholasticus then mentions the influence of Henry George on political action and on the thought of Tolstoy, Bernard Shaw and Einstein.

Two exquisite letters from Henry George to Emma Lazarus, the famous American-Jewish poetess, have just been published by the Columbia University Press. The first (dated 1881) expresses the writer's gratification that his *Progress and Poverty*, had inspired a beautiful sonnet by Emma Lazarus. In the second (dated 1883), Henry George consults Emma Lazarus, as an enthusiastic fellow-student of Jewish history, about his "Moses."

A prominent Jewish disciple of Henry George was Rabbi Felix Perles (1874-1933), of Königsberg. In a contribution to the *Jewish Review*, of London, entitled "Social Justice in Ancient Israel," the distinguished scholar discussed the influence of Judaism on the social education of humanity, frequently quoting and confirming the remarks of Henry George on this topic. He concludes that the Jewish mission is to promote social justice as an essential prerequisite to peace between men and nations.

The article concludes with references to the work of those Jews who have been closely associated with the Henry George movement: Joseph Fels, recalling the tribute of Israel Zangwill, "Two Josephs that Dreamed" in *The Voice of Jerusalem*; Louis P. Jacobs, the creator of the Henry George Foundation and author of *Social Justice and the Jew*; Max Hirsch, the teacher of Jacobs and author of *Democracy v. Socialism*; and August Lewis, one of the faithful friends to whom Henry George dedicated his last work. Nor does Scholasticus forget to refer to two friends now active in the work of the United Committee and the International Union for Land Value Taxation, Mrs L. P. Jacobs and Mr B. A. Levinson.

Publications and Prints Received. *Buildings or Vacant Lots?* by Gilbert M. Tucker; Six Cents; the Graded Tax Committee, 11 Park Place, New York City. *Essential Elements of Economics*, by Ray Robson; two copies 5 cents; Clinton County Republican-News, Michigan. *Lincoln and the Land Question*, with foreword by Wm. Allen White; two copies 5 cents; the Single Tax Publishing Company, 150 Nassau Street, New York City. *How to Balance Budgets*, by Geo. Dana Linn, Seattle, Washington, free. *Tenants and Taxation*, an essay by George White, 80 Atlantic Avenue, Long Branch, N.J. *Land, Labor and the Wagner Act*, reprint of speech by Charles R. Eckert in the House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. *Differential Taxation on Land and Buildings*, reprint of paper by Harold S. Bittenheim at the Conference of the National Association of Assessing Officers, New York. *Landlordism*, by Joseph S. Thompson; the Tax Relief Association of California, 83 McAllister Street, San Francisco (free). *The American Form of Government and the Power of the State*, by Ernest O. Keoser, Somerset, Penn. *How the Graded Tax Plan Works in Pittsburgh*, by Walter Fairchild, reprinted from the American City, November, 1938. *Let Justice be Done*, from the Senn Trust, Auckland, N.Z. *Free Trade or Unemployment?* (Danish), by J. L. Bjerne. Articles on Plywood and Protection by Bue Bjerne, reprinted from *Børsen*, daily journal of Danish Trade and Shipping.

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE JEW. By LOUIS P. JACOBS. 6d.
MY NEIGHBOUR'S LANDMARK. Short Studies in Bible Land Laws.
By FREDK. VERINDER. 1s.