

LAND & LIBERTY

MONTHLY JOURNAL FOR LAND VALUE TAXATION AND FREE TRADE

Fortieth Year.—Nos. 468-469.

MAY-JUNE, 1933.

Double Number. 2d.

JOHN PAUL—1863-1933

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, in my heart
Deeply has sunk the lesson thou hast given
And shall not soon depart.

—William Cullen Bryant.

Yet remember all
He spoke among you, and the man who spoke;
Who never sold the truth to serve the hour,
Nor paltered with Eternal God for power.

—Alfred Lord Tennyson.

In all parts of the world where men speak in the name of Henry George there is deep grief at the loss of the guiding spirit who has conducted this Journal since its inception. John Paul has handed on his trust as every campaigner in a great cause would wish to do, active to the end and giving himself without stint to the work to which he was so passionately devoted. He passed away suddenly in the afternoon of the 28th April, at the Caledonian Hotel in Edinburgh, succumbing to a heart attack. He had gone with Mrs. Paul to Scotland on family business, and I made up the company. We passed through the Carlyle country. There was the stop at Symington and the sight of the hills he knew so well. It was to have been a brief visit, but he stayed: his native land had claimed him.

John Paul died in harness. He neither could nor would hear of the rest his friends insisted was his due. He had enjoyed a surprising, though partial, recovery from the serious illness that handicapped him five years ago and obliged him, to his own great disappointment, to be more an observer than a participant at the long-planned and eagerly awaited International Conference in Edinburgh in 1929. But the heart trouble continued to give warning, only to be ignored when it subsided for perhaps weeks or months at a time. He kept at the work day by day, commanding the same spirit, initiative and resolution that distinguished him throughout the years. When his seventieth birthday was celebrated on 15th March last, we rejoiced in his vigour, never anticipating the last breast pang would come so soon. An hour before the departure the talk was of the plans that were to be developed immediately on the return to London.

We have gone back on the files of this Journal to give the one biographical sketch he put on paper. It is

dated back to 1894 when this Journal was founded, and after already seven years' activity had made him one of the leading spirits in the Glasgow movement. How the entry into the ranks came about has been told

in occasional conversations. His elder brother, now long since passed, was a member of the first Land Restoration League, and was among those who organized Henry George's meeting in Glasgow in 1884, where *Scotland and Scotsmen* was the address delivered. John's interest had not yet been aroused; he had seen the bills announcing the meeting but had let the opportunity pass. Later, he said to the brother that it seemed absurd to expect any good could be done by dividing the land into equal pieces, and got the reply: that was not the proposal, it was the rent of the land they proposed to divide. No further argument was necessary. The truth broke on him like a flash, and that illumination held his mind ever afterwards. The conversion was sudden and complete, and when *Progress and Poverty* came to be studied the mind brought every social and economic problem to the touchstone: the law of rent in relation to the law of wages. It was

not long before John Paul began to find his feet among the advocates of the new doctrine, but there was an obstinate natural shyness to overcome—it never left him, it was of the sweetness of his character—and as he never strove for any front place, it was by recognition of his sincerity and ability and willingness to listen to his advice that his fellows ordered his leadership among them.

When Henry George came again to Glasgow in 1889, delivering his address, *Thy Kingdom Come*, John Paul was on the Committee of Organization, and there again the shyness was evident. He could only summon up



JOHN PAUL

[Photo—A. Swan Watson]

courage to join in the hand-shaking in the ante-room afterwards while others were pressing forward for conversation. The real contact came later by correspondence, when John Paul had become Secretary of the Henry George Institute and put that personality into his letters which so attached him to all his friends. He had the word, too, how Henry George read and appreciated the Journal, the *Single Tax*, but he would hesitate to say much about the compliments received for the services the Journal was rendering.

When the movement was being built up that the newcomer to-day can enter as it were from the top-storey window, the hands were those of a band of earnest and humble working men. John Paul was employed as a time-keeper in a shipyard, his work beginning at six in the morning, and he had to rise an hour earlier to get there. The ordinary man thinks he needs much leisure if he is to take any part at all in public affairs. But these men aroused a city and spread far their influence over the wider field of national politics. They did so in their spare time, what there was of it, and in this zealous concentration of effort by speech and pen—some preserved cuttings of the columns of his newspaper correspondence of that time bear eloquent testimony to the force behind it all—John Paul was among the foremost. It was glorious work and hard work, and however late the hour when he could shake himself free from some discussion or complete a "letter to the editor," he was always on time at the shipyard to which a ferry had to be crossed, often in the bitterest weather. He would relate these experiences when sometimes asked "What can a young man do?"—and he had not the physique nor the physical strength that most young men possess.

A friend once asked: "How much did your education cost? How did you gain so much knowledge, and acquire your mastery of language and literature?" The answer was, such education as he got cost nothing at all, which amazed his questioner. There was only the schooling that the boy gets whose father has a small wage and expects him to work as soon as the education law permits. He was born in Glasgow in sight of poverty and grew up in its sight and in the midst of its afflictions. The free schooling was interrupted not only by illness, but by the removal of the family from Glasgow to Liverpool, where they stayed six years. He entered the "labour market" at the age of 14 and the jobs either in Liverpool or in Glasgow were only occasional till he entered the shipyard. In Liverpool he learnt something about watch making. In Glasgow he had business training in a shipping office. But there was the night school and the extension classes with logic as the favourite subject. What is education, he would say, but to learn to think? That acquired, and given the bent towards reading, learning comes of itself.

The world is at the feet of the student, and this student with his far-seeing vision surveyed the world from a goodly eminence. His reading of history and biography was wide and well-chosen. He was familiar with the best prose literature. He loved poetry and travel. Stories of the sea delighted him. Imagination took him with Conrad and remembrance brought back his voyages from Glasgow or Liverpool when the boy sailed—on one memorable occasion as far as Rotterdam—with his father who, with a wage of 18s. a week, worked the donkey-engine on that tramp steamer. In a life spent in the service of a great cause, in its concerns and responsibilities and anxieties, his reading for the sake of reading could not be constant or obedient to any curriculum; but it was so embracing that if a list were made of the best books and best writings he knew, it would be an everyman's guide to a very liberal education. He never read to forget anything. With a remarkable

memory he could bring authors and their characters or their word into any company to speak for themselves, and add to the charm of his own conversation. So he brought a well-cultivated mind to teach here in these pages his lessons in economic understanding, moral perception and political wisdom, and impress his personality upon all that this Journal stands for. So also in his correspondence. His letters brought him as it were in person to the recipient. "I feel so free in writing him," one Canadian correspondent writes, "that I feel better acquainted with him than with many whom I meet almost every day." This friend and John Paul had "conversations" only by post; and hosts of correspondents, distant friends whom John Paul never met, will pay the same homage to the manner of his address. His strength and beauty of character was enriched by an exquisite sense of humour that could laugh a catastrophe away.

The movement possesses no book or pamphlet with John Paul named as the author. One friend remarks this lack, and with regret, saying *Land & Liberty* was his book, and that if a volume were compiled from his leading articles and editorials and added to our circulated literature we should have a thing of inestimable value—that interpretation of Henry George's philosophy, its practical application to every one of the pressing problems of the day, as John Paul knew so well how to interpret and apply it. While no such volume of his own exists there are all the other publications with co-workers named as authors who would agree they are his publications as much as theirs, for he applied his genius of editorship to these productions by the request and with the glad acceptance of the authors themselves. He taught us all the virtue of putting our thoughts into the common pool and of adopting suggestions that might or might not interfere with the originality of any piece of writing.

If we were to make a biography of John Paul it would be the story of the growth and development of this movement from the time of Henry George's visits to Glasgow; how the Glasgow Corporation was captured for the rating of land values; the Municipal Conferences that followed and the Bills introduced in Parliament; the organizing of the great campaign with Alexander Ure as chief spokesman—the Alexander Ure whom John Paul brought out of comparative obscurity and gave such a platform and such an influence that for a time he might well have been named the "uncrowned king of Scotland," these conferences and demonstrations filling everywhere the largest hall, to the astonishment of the Party political organizers so sceptical of the response the people would give to the case for land value taxation well stated. In the work done these forty odd years to educate public opinion leading to the adoption of land value legislation on three occasions by the British House of Commons, the Scottish Bill in 1906, the Budget of 1909 and the Budget of 1931; the publicity campaign reaching out over the whole country; the recruiting of the necessary funds; the holding of our National and International Conferences—in all this, John Paul's action, his foresight, his determination, his capacity for right and often swift decisions, played a dominant part.

It was largely due to his able propaganda directed from Glasgow that Massingham of the *Nation* was able in his time to say that Scottish Liberalism and Land Value Taxation were synonymous terms. The years from 1894 to 1906 were the period of his most intense platform activity. With his services in constant demand and as a speaker of recognized distinction he became one of the best known public men throughout the West of Scotland. In his journeys farther afield, as far as Skye and the



JOHN PAUL

(Age 17)

Orkneys, he left an influence behind him that was long remembered. He took his message to the rural constituencies as well as to the towns. He would recall his many meetings up and down the country and had entertaining stories to tell about them. But this he would emphasize, that there were no better friends and enthusiasts for land value taxation than the audiences he addressed in the country districts.

On John Paul the mantle of Henry George had fallen, as far at any rate as this country is concerned. At the

impressive Memorial Meeting held in London on 9th May, tributes were paid to his many high qualities of heart and mind, to the affection and esteem in which he was held. At that meeting and in the letters that have reached us in such numbers bearing their tributes, the thought found expression, how sad it was that, for all his endeavours, John Paul was not given to see the realization. Would John Paul himself regret that? No. He would quote one of his favourite passages from *Progress and Poverty*: "For those who see Truth and would follow her, for those who recognize Justice and would stand for her, success is not the only thing. Success! Why, Falsehood often has that to give, and Injustice often has that to give. Must not Truth and Justice have something to give that is their own by proper right—theirs in essence and not by accident?"

That thought made John Paul the happiest of men as he strove for the overthrow of the unjust laws and institutions that keep progress, prosperity and ordinary decency so far from the homes of men to-day. Another thought prevailed with him, the challenging thought that the civilization could not endure where moral progress failed to keep pace with material progress. If he ever had written a book of his own, I think that would have been its theme.

At the Cremation in Edinburgh on 2nd May, the Rev. Johnston Millar, Moderator of United Free Church (Continuing) officiated, and at this service a number of friends from both Edinburgh and Glasgow attended. The remains were committed at the Putney Vale Cemetery, London, on 9th May, where the Rev. Mervyn Stewart, his dear friend for 40 years, paid the last rites and read the concluding passages from the final chapter of *Progress and Poverty*. It was John Paul's vision of the meaning of life.

To Mrs Paul, his partner in all his convictions and aspirations, to his sister, Mrs Calder, and to his nephews and nieces we extend our heartfelt condolences. We acknowledge with deep appreciation the many messages of sympathy and encouragement that have reached us, and acknowledging them we convey our sympathy to all our equally bereaved colleagues and co-workers the world over.

A. W. MADSEN.