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Henry George: Childhood and Early Youth¹

By ANNA GEORGE DE MILLE

"When you bear that I am dead, if it can be said of me, 'he has fought the good fight, he has kept the faith,' write me a requiem of gladness and of hope."²

1

Birth

IN THE YEAR 1839, Philadelphia was the second busiest spot in the United States. With a population of two hundred and fifty-eight thousand, it was only fifty thousand behind the brash young metropolis, New York, and had but recently conceded its place as capitol to the newly-planned city of Washington. It was the seat of the United States Mint, Navy Yard and Marine Hospital, as well as the most extensively-used library on the continent,³ several art galleries and museums, three big theatres, an abundance of churches and the New Alms House that was "the most perfect of its kind in the country."⁴ A compact settlement, built on the banks of the Schuylkill and the Delaware Rivers, it had ready access to the ocean. Its port attracted shipping from various parts of the world.

The architecture of the town was marked with the Quaker severity of William Penn and most of the houses were of monotonous red brick, with low white marble front steps. They bordered brick sidewalks on narrow cobble-stone streets, lined with trees. In one of these regulation houses—smaller than the two flanking it⁵—on Tenth Street south of Pine, lived a publisher of Church and Sunday School books, R. S. H. George, with his wife, an infant daughter and his sister-in-law, Mary Vallance. Theirs was

¹ [EDITOR'S NOTE: A section of an unpublished ms., entitled "Citizen of the World, Study of a Personality," by Anna George de Mille, sole surviving child of Henry George. In this work, presented in narrative form to maintain interest, Mrs. de Mille makes available, to later students, family and other materials that were not available to Henry George, Jr., who, for more than four decades, has remained George's standard biographer. The work also incorporates some of the results of Mrs. de Mille's years of study of these materials and of those used by Henry George, Jr. Copyright, 1942, by Anna George de Mille.]

² Letter written by Henry George to Frances M. Milne on March 7, 1888, and quoted by her, after his death, in the dedication of "He Kept the Faith," in "For To-Day," San Francisco, Barry, 1905.

³ Founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1731.

⁴ "A Guide to the Lions of Philadelphia," Philadelphia, Ash, 1837, p. 71.

⁵ The house is now (1942) the property of the Henry George Foundation of America (809 Keystone Building, Pittsburgh, Pa.) which acquired it in December, 1926, with the intention ultimately of establishing a museum in it.

a comfortable little home. It was pleasantly furnished with mahogany, upholstered with the current fashionable material, black horse-hair.⁶ On the walls hung family portraits, a few engravings and needle-work pictures of scenes from Shakespeare.⁷ The large, heavily-bound family Bible, standing on a pedestal table, occupied a prominent place in the front room—the parlor. It was a typical middle-class home of the period.

In this home, on Sept. 2, 1839, arrived a boy—strong, lusty, blue-eyed—who in due course was taken to St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church,⁸ by his father Richard Samuel Henry George. The father had him baptized "Henry."

2

Childhood

THE AFTERNOON WAS HOT. Henry was supposed to be taking a nap along with his elder sister Caroline and his younger sister, Jennie, on the trundle pulled out from under their mother's mahogany four-poster. But he could not, somehow. Mother was asleep and so was Aunt Mary and even baby Kate—everyone seemed to be asleep. There was no one to play with. He tipped-toed down stairs. But he had been forbidden to go out. What fun it would be if he could only slide down the cellar door; if he could only sit on the cool front steps, or sail paper boats down the water in the back alley; if his father would only come and take him to the wharves again and show him the big boats, take him aboard one, maybe, and let him examine the ropes and the sails tied in tight neat rolls and the helm that made the rudder turn the boat, or let him stand at the base of the mainmast and peer up and see how it pierced the middle of the sky. . . .

He knew the way to the docks; he could go alone and perhaps become a sailor himself and visit countries where the bananas and cocoanuts came from and maybe countries where there were monkeys—and lions! It was a long way to the waterfront; he had better take some food. The child hunted around the kitchen. The shelves were high for a boy of five; he dragged a chair from place to place and climbed on it to make the search.

⁶ Some of the furniture is now in the homes of the writer, of Mrs. Caroline George Lockwood of New York (Henry George's niece) and of Mrs. Jane George Werner of Forest Hills, L. I. (Henry George's grand-daughter).

⁷ One of the portraits and one of the needle-work pictures are in the possession of the writer. Mrs. Lockwood has two of the portraits and Mrs. Ruth George Grove of Pittsburgh (grand-daughter of Henry George) has two miniatures of Henry George's parents.

⁸ The edifice was built in 1762, on Third Street between Walnut and Spruce. See "A Handbook for the Stranger in Philadelphia," Philadelphia, Appleton, 1849. Since 1904 St. Paul's has been the headquarters of the Protestant Episcopal City Mission in Philadelphia.

No pie or cake or even cookies were to be found. The only victuals were some cold, boiled potatoes. Balancing the plate precariously, he got down from the chair, opened the door to the back yard and went out.

It was hot. But there was a pool of shade made by the syringa bush. He crawled under it, placing the dish beside him. The potatoes were tasty. It might be hard to carry the plateful through the streets and up a gang-plank, so he ate them, then and there. It was nice to lie back on the cool earth and look up into the leaves and think how sad the family would be when they found he'd gone and they hadn't played with him, but, on a lovely day . . . like this . . . had just . . . slept . . . and slept. . . .

He opened his eyes. It was almost dark. Leaves quivered above him. Bewildered, he scrambled up to find himself in the familiar yard. Enticing smells came from the kitchen. Perhaps he'd better postpone his trip till after supper. His chestnut locks tousled, his eyes still heavy with sleep, he walked over to the door. No one noticed him; indeed they seemed not to know that he had run away from home! The meal was nearly ready; better wash his hands to be in time. Sheepishly he walked upstairs. So ended his first attack of "wanderlust."⁹

His father, son of a sea captain, had been born in New Brunswick, New Jersey, but had settled in Philadelphia. There he had occupied a clerical post in the Customs House. He had married Miss Louise Lewis and by her had had two sons. But wife and children had died, leaving him with a young adopted daughter, whom he placed in a small private school conducted by Catharine and Mary Vallance.¹⁰

The father of these two schoolmistresses, John Vallance,¹¹ had been born in Glasgow, Scotland, and had been brought as an infant to Philadelphia. There he later married Margaret Pratt, grand-daughter of the goldsmith Henry Pratt,¹² who was a friend of Benjamin Franklin and a

⁹ This was related to the writer by an older relative as a family anecdote.

¹⁰ "Life of Henry George" by Henry George, Jr., first published by Doubleday, McClure & Co., in 1900 and now by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 32 East 29th Street, New York. (I have followed the pattern of this book and made full use of it; it is, and will remain, the primary source book for all biographers of Henry George. It was written by the son who was also the student, companion and amanuensis of the philosopher, and was himself an admirable and sensitive chronicler. His book was written directly after the death of his father and when Henry George's wife and co-workers were at hand to give informative help. After the death of Henry George, Jr. (1916), the bulk of the Henry George papers, used as data for the "Life," came into my possession. Believing them too valuable to be held privately, I gave them to the New York Public Library, where all students wishing to write of Henry George may have access to them in the manuscript division and the economics division.)

¹¹ Cf. Genealogical notes, Henry George Collection, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library (hereafter abbreviated as HGC), Box VIII.

¹² Mantle Fielding, "Dictionary of American Painters," Philadelphia, 1926.

member of his Junta. Margaret Pratt's uncle, Matthew Pratt,¹³ the painter, had made Franklin's first portrait. John Vallance, well-known as an engraver of portraits and encyclopedia plates, was one of the founders of the Association of Artists in America.¹⁴ When he died, in 1823, the Vallance sisters had to earn their own living and they turned to teaching. It was in her school that Richard S. H. George wooed and won Catharine Pratt Vallance.

Caroline Latimer George was the first child of this marriage; she was followed by Henry, Jane Vallance and Catharine Pratt George. As their family grew (they had ten children, eight of whom lived) with the addition of Thomas Latimer, John Vallance, Chloe Pratt and Morris Reid George, they had moved from the small house on Tenth Street, south of Pine, to a larger one at Third and Queen. Aunt Mary Vallance—"one of those sweet and patient souls who, in narrow circles, live radiant lives"¹⁵—continued to make her home with them and acted as the children's second mother.

Before he met Catharine Vallance, Mr. George had left the Customs House and had gone into the business of publishing books for the Protestant Episcopal Church, maintaining a bookstore, for a time, at Fifth and Chestnut Streets. He was a progressive man; he had had illuminating gas installed in his house when friends and neighbors feared it meant courting sudden death.

A Democrat in politics, he took a deep interest in the issues of the times. Conservative in religion, he started each day with a Bible reading. The Sabbath was dedicated to austere devotion; at St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church, where he was vestryman, the family attended divine service in the morning, vespers in the afternoon and, frequently, prayer service in the evening. Through the Philadelphia streets, the quiet broken by the intermittent beat of horses' hoofs on cobblestones, the red-headed, blue-eyed Georges walked along the narrow brick pavements, Henry leading, with Jane or Caroline, then the other brothers and sisters who were big enough to walk, followed by the adult members. The boys were clad in long trousers and pea-jackets with broad white collars; the girls in wide skirts and pantalettes that ran down to their ankles; Mrs. George and Miss Vallance in close-fitting bonnets and long, dark shawls. All carried prayer-

¹³ *Ib.*

¹⁴ *Ib.*, p. 380.

¹⁵ Henry George, "Progress and Poverty," New York, Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1940, p. 562.

books.¹⁶ Trim, neat, reserved, they walked two by two, save on occasion—as, for instance, on the morning when John Vallance, wearing the white trousers that had been cut down from a pair of Uncle Thomas Latimer's, had eluded his sisters, who acted as his monitors, and, just before starting time, had slid down a neighbor's cellar door, freshly painted green. Nothing but tragic illness or sudden death could keep the George family from church. An accident like Val's called for nothing more than rearrangement in the order of their going. With Val hidden in the center that Sunday, the children marched in close formation.¹⁷

Life for members of this family was simple. Everyone who was big enough helped with the house work, although Mrs. George had a "hired girl." They depended on themselves for their amusements; because they were strict Church members, cards, dancing and the theatre were forbidden to them. They lacked the luxury of a piano and knew little of music, but there was much reading and talking of books—history, travel and poetry.

In a family of eight children, there was always something of interest happening. In winter they went sledding and skating and sometimes sleighing, and in summer, occasionally, they visited "Lemon Hill" and the tropical garden belonging to Grandmother Vallance's cousin, Henry Pratt.¹⁸ One or the other of the rivers afforded boating and, in hot weather, swimming. (Mr. George once saved Henry from drowning; once Henry himself rescued his brother Thomas.) Best remembered were the fascinating trips to the docks where Mr. George passed on to his eldest son the lore of the sea, as it had been taught to him by his father, Captain Richard George. The lad's grandfather, a native of Yorkshire, England, who had married a Philadelphia girl, had acquired two ships and become one of the well-known shipmasters of Philadelphia.

Henry liked to get his father reminiscing; he always found much in the talk to interest him.

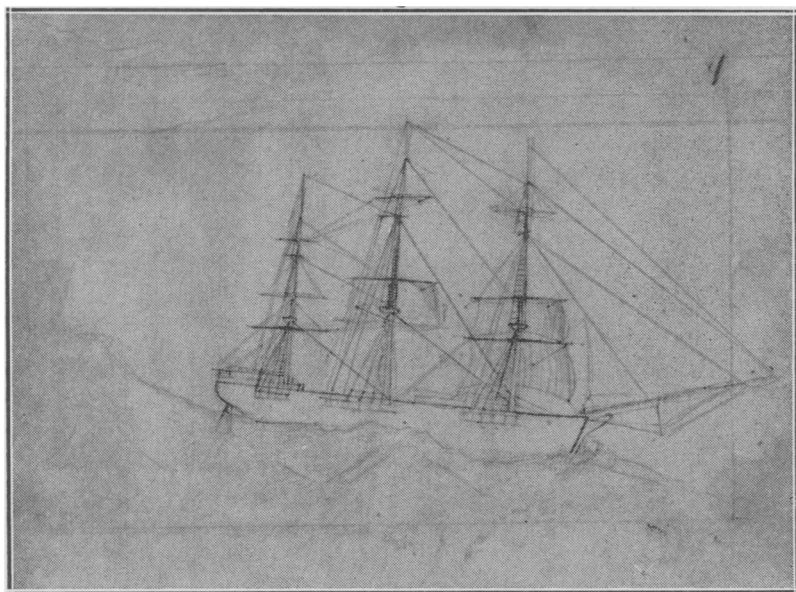
"I cannot remember dates but I do remember Aaron Burr; there was such a fuss about him during his arrest that I used to go to Market and 12th or 13th Streets almost every day to see the soldiers keeping guard, pacing the pavement. I, tho a mere Brat of a Boy, took a notion that if I could not see Burr I would sit in his carriage.

¹⁶ See letter from the Rt. Rev. Ignatius F. Horstmann, Bishop of Cleveland, Ohio, in *The National Single Taxer*, Aug. 31, 1898. The clipping, with a personal letter to Henry George, Jr., is in HGC, Box IX. The original Horstmann letter, which was addressed to the late Joseph Dana Miller, is in the private collection of the writer.

¹⁷ Related by John Vallance George to the writer.

¹⁸ "A Guide to the Lions of Philadelphia," *op. cit.*, p. 61; *cf.* also "The Chain of Colonial Houses," Philadelphia, Associate Committee of Women of the Museum of Art, 1932.

“There was a good, kind old gentleman named Barkley who had been one of our most wealthy merchants but ‘ruined by the times.’ Burr used often to visit him—so I watched and one day he drove up to Mr. Barkley’s door and I saw him pass in. I approached the coachman and asked if I could take a seat for a few moments. To my surprise he consented; he opened the door and I entered and sat there about ten minutes. I thought it a great triumph. So much for my determined curiosity. I used to brag about it to the boys and got many a bloody nose. Although times were



AN IMPRESSION NOTED BY HENRY GEORGE AT 16, WHICH FOUND REFERENCE IN THE ECONOMIC WRITINGS OF HIS LAST DECADE. FROM SEA JOURNAL IV.

hard I didn’t feel them. I had a pleasant, happy home, let me tell you. We had four ’prentice boys and two girls in the kitchen, all in good tune and happy.

“One time father arrived at Almond Street wharf from France, where he’d gone with a flag of truce, carrying out passengers and bringing back a lot, including General Jean Victor Moreau, the Republican French general, exiled by Napoleon’s jealousy. I took on board lots of provisions for them. It was hard work—the crowd was so dense. Going so often to the Ship, I found I was as much noticed as the General himself. The boys crowded me hard and one fight I had built me right up, and afterwards

I was A No. 1 among the boys and cock of the walk. I went on the principle of *do nothing you are ashamed of and let no living man impose on you.*"¹⁹

Henry received his elementary schooling from his mother and his aunt. His years of formal education were spent at a small private institution conducted by a Mrs. Graham, at the Mount Vernon Grammar School, and at the Episcopal Academy. In the academy he had for fellow students several lads who were to leave their mark on their times.²⁰ Among them were Bishop Alonzo Potter's two sons, Henry Godman,²¹ and Eliphalet Nott,²² as well as the sons of the Rev. Dr. Richard Newton, Rector of St. Paul's—Heber²³ and Wilberforce Newton,²⁴ with whom Henry George played often. The Newtons frequently had missionaries visit them, missionaries who brought pets such as monkeys and birds from foreign lands. Then, too, the Newtons lived conveniently close to the Sunday School and the Sunday School banners were frequently borrowed by the boys for their games. The one with the picture of St. Paul preaching at Ephesus often had a part in the game of "firemans' parade"; Henry, of course, as leader, was the proud bearer of it.

Henry George was carried through the Episcopal Academy on reduced tuition fees, a privilege granted him as the son of a publisher of Church books. But when his father had to give up that business after seventeen years, as too unremunerative, and return to his old job in the Customs House, the boy believed himself no longer entitled to the reduction and begged to be taken away. So earnest was he that his father acceded, and put him under the tutelage of a celebrated coach, Henry T. Lauderbach. From Mr. Lauderbach the boy received such a foundation in methods of study that when he went to high school at the age of thirteen, he was able to make rapid progress.²⁵

Constant attendance at Church and daily reading of the Bible gave the lad a thorough grounding in the English language as well as in the sacred scriptures. And his mother's passion for quoting poetry, the conversations with the sailors on the docks, the tales of foreign countries chronicled in the missionaries' books that his father published, and the adventures told

¹⁹ Letter of reminiscences written for his children by R. S. H. George, Oct. 15, 1875, HGC. Cf. Henry George Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 2-4.

²⁰ Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

²¹ He became Protestant Episcopal Bishop of New York in 1883.

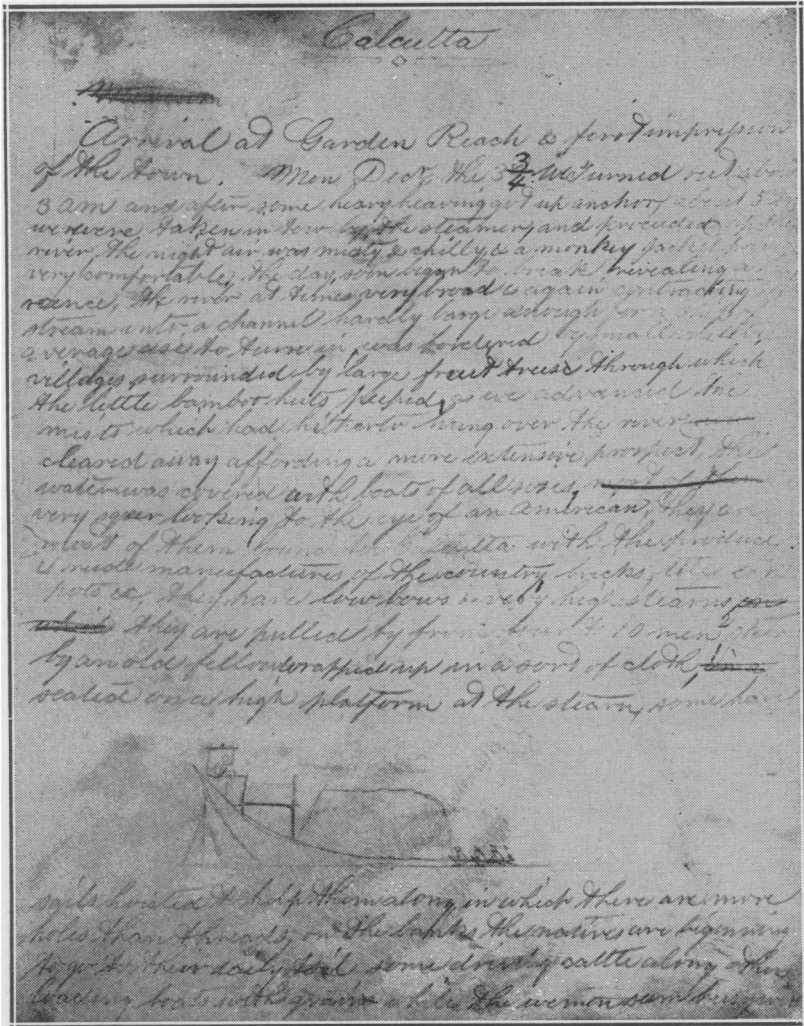
²² He became president of Union College in 1871 and of Hobart College in 1884.

²³ He accepted a call to All Souls Church (Anthon Memorial), New York, in 1870.

²⁴ Protestant Episcopal clergyman, author of many widely-circulated religious writings and several novels.

²⁵ Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 9 ff.

by the missionaries themselves and the sea captains on their visits to the house did much to stimulate the boy's fertile imagination. His education



HENRY GEORGE'S DIARY ENTRY FOR DEC. 5, 1855. IN SEA JOURNAL 5, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY.

was broadened by books he borrowed constantly from the library; some of them, novels chiefly, had to be smuggled up to his room and devoured

secretly. But perhaps the greatest educational influence he enjoyed was the Franklin Institute.²⁶ Uncle Thomas Latimer (husband of Aunt Rebecca Vallance) like the other respectable folk of the city had become a member and so Henry, as one of his family, had the privilege of hearing the "excellent courses of lectures."

At the Customs House Mr. George was getting only eight hundred dollars a year,²⁷ scant money, even in 1852, for a man with a family. Henry felt that, as the oldest son, he should help lighten the financial burden; he should earn his own keep at least. He liked high school but after five months of it he persuaded his parents to let him go to work. He was not yet fourteen.

Henry hunted Philadelphia for a job. At last he found one—tying packages and running errands for a china and glass house. It was trying. For years there had been a movement on foot for the ten-hour day, but it had not yet come. The hours were long and the pay was only two dollars a week. The job left him no time for trips to the wharves, unless he could manage to detour on one of his errands. For recreation he observed the weather and he kept a diary like the log of a ship, noting winds and temperatures in it. At night he made model brigs but he had small chance to sail them; during the daylight hours he was working, and one didn't sail toy boats on Sunday. He couldn't give Jennie much help with the gardening in the back yard and Bill Jones and the other boys of his crowd saw him only for a short time after supper.²⁸ Altogether the place in the china house was unattractive to him. As soon as he could, he got a clerkship in the office of a marine adjuster.

²⁶ Incorporated in 1824. Its prospectus read: "Without going into a detail of the history and internal arrangement of this Institute, it will be sufficient for us to say that it affords to any respectable person, who chooses to become a member, the privilege of hearing, with his family and apprentices, for a very moderate fee, excellent courses of lectures on natural philosophy, chemistry and other scientific and literary subjects." ("A Guide to the Lions of Philadelphia," *op. cit.*, p. 26.)

²⁷ Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 9 ff.

²⁸ See Henry George, *Diary I*, Jan., Feb. and March, 1855, HGC. (There are five diaries for 1855 but no one of them is complete. The writer has numbered them in an effort to eliminate confusion. *Diary I*, on folded paper and written in both pencil and ink, begins on January 6th and continues to March 31st. The second diary, comprising two small hand-stitched books, is marked "Sea Journal I" as it starts on the *Hindoo* as a ship's log. This is the most complete of all the diaries; it covers most of the period between May 27, 1855, and March 12th, 1856. *Sea Journals II, III and IV* are, for the most part, "fair copies," carefully written in Spencerian penmanship. These three cover many of the same months and are evidently different interpretations, made later on shore, of the roughly written and now almost faded *Sea Journal I*. *Sea Journal III* peters out as a diary after Aug. 29th, 1855; it contains lists of the Kings of England and the Presidents of the United States and quotations from Emerson, Carlyle, etc. *Sea Journal IV* records a few weeks of 1855, of 1856 and of 1857, sketches of ships and sailors and penciled impressions of Calcutta and of the beauty of a storm.)

The new job was less fatiguing and he found the atmosphere of the shipping office pleasant. But the work itself proved dull and uninteresting. He grew increasingly unhappy and anxious to get out of the constricted business life. He longed to see the world. His father, an observing man, noted his son's growing restlessness. Fearful that the lad might be tempted to run away, he quieted his own parental feelings and decided to send the boy on a cruise. He put him under the charge of a young friend—Captain Sam Miller, Master of the *Hindoo*.²⁹ Thus he hoped to cure Henry, once and for all, of his longing for a life on the sea.

3

The Sailor

GREAT WAS THE EXCITEMENT among his relatives and friends when Henry George left home to become a sailor. It was the first break in the family circle. Now at the age of fifteen Henry was putting childhood behind him. Small for his age, with disproportionately small hands and feet and a complexion delicate as a girl's, he looked ill-equipped for the rough life of the sea, as he stood at the corner, his red hair gleaming in the sunlight, waving his cap in a last good-bye. He almost faltered as he gazed at the group remaining at the door; but gripping tighter the gifts he carried, a new Bible presented by St. Paul's Sunday School,³⁰ and James' "Anxious Inquirer"³¹ from his cousin, George Latimer,³² he turned quickly and joined his chattering escort.

His father; his uncles, Thomas Latimer and Joseph Van Dusen;³³ George Latimer, and several friends went with him as far as Market Street Wharf,³⁴ where Captain Miller met him. The two boarded the steamboat and crossed the Delaware to New Jersey and took train for New York. It was a great adventure for the lad and at the end of the four-hour railroad trip he had his first view of New York. A few days later he reported to his family:

I signed the shipping articles at \$6. a month [sic] and two months' advance, which I got this morning. . . .³⁵

²⁹ Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 18.

³⁰ See Rev. George A. Latimer's diary notes, April, 1855, HGC, Box VIII.

³¹ "The Anxious Inquirer After Salvation" by Rev. John Angell of Birmingham, England. (It was published by the American Tract Society in the 1840's. Copy in NYPL.)

³² Son of Thomas Latimer and first cousin of Henry George. Afterwards he became a clergyman in the Protestant Episcopal Church.

³³ Married to Chloe Vallance, youngest of Henry George's mother's sisters.

³⁴ Rev. George A. Latimer's diary notes, *op. cit.*

³⁵ Letter to his parents written on board the *Hindoo*, April 6, 1855, HGC. Cited by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 20.

During eight days of waiting in New York Harbor, he had time to see something of the larger city. He was much impressed by its "business and bustle,"³⁶ particularly around the Customs House where he went for "a protection"³⁷ for which he paid one dollar. He wrote home:

The upper part of New York is a beautiful place—the streets wide and clear and regular, some of the streets splendid, wide places; and the houses all of brown stone and standing ten or twenty feet from the pavement, with gardens in front.³⁸

The *Hindoo* was delayed in getting to sea because of the scarcity of sailors. Some who signed on were so ill-suited that Henry had to be sent aloft to slush down the masts. Already he was beginning to adapt himself to the new life, for he, who had not only hated eating but touching fats, announced: "I don't mind handling grease at all now."³⁹

On April 7th the ship was towed down stream by a steamboat. Off the Battery she dropped anchor. Henry wrote:

The view from this spot is beautiful—the North River and New York Bay covered with sailing vessels and steamers of every class and size, while back the hills gently sloping, are covered with country seats. I saw at one time four of the largest class ocean steamers going down the Bay at once, while ships, barques, brigs and schooners are all the time going in and out. . . . I ate my first meal sailor style today and did not dislike it at all. Working around in the open air gives one such an appetite that he can eat almost anything.⁴⁰

Three days later he wrote the last message he was to be able to send home until he should reach Melbourne:

9:30 A.M.

We are now going down the Bay in tow of a steamboat and shall soon be at sea. I shall get the Captain to send this ashore by the pilot. God bless you all and may we meet again. It is cloudy and drizzling—blows a stiff breeze from the south. Good-bye.⁴¹

The *Hindoo*, a five hundred and eighty-six ton, full-rigged ship, laden with lumber and carrying a crew of twenty men, started on her journey across the seas to Australia. As had been stipulated between Mr. George and Captain Miller, Henry was not coddled or spared. He was "foremast

³⁶ *Ib.*

³⁷ *Ib.*

³⁸ *Ib.*

³⁹ *Ib.*, Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁴⁰ *Ib.* Addition dated April 7th, 1855. Quoted in part by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 20–1.

⁴¹ Letter written to Miss Mary Vallance, his aunt, April 10, 1855, HGC. Cited in full by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 22–3.

boy," assigned to the larboard watch, and was treated like any other sailor. It meant a real adjustment and "twelve months seem as if they never would pass,"⁴² he wrote. That he was quite unhappy the first few pages of his log indicate:

Wed, April 11th. At 1. A.M. wind shifted to N.W. Watch on deck from 12. to 4. Sick by spells. Not only Sea but very Home Sick. Would have given anything to have been back to breakfast. The sights and smells of the mess made me feel worse. Ship running before a N.W. wind, rather cold. Going from 7 to 9 nots [sic] in a S.E. direction. Sick by spells all day.

Fri. April 13th. Wind still the same steering E.S.E. Felt better. A fine bright & warm day. Cannot go the tea and coffee yet and dislike very much being roused out every four hours. Hoisting the lower stun' sail the halyard broke and had much difficulty in getting it in. In afternoon cleared out the paint locker. Still Home sick.⁴³

The trip brought the experience of hard work and personal responsibilities: it brought an understanding of how others live and an appreciation of the comfortable home he had left. To the end of his life he was to remember

. . . how sweet hard-tack, munched in the middle watch . . . had tasted; what a dish for a prince was sea-pie on the rare occasions when a pig had been killed or a porpoise harpooned; and how good was the plum-duff that came to the forecandle only on Sundays and great holidays.⁴⁴

One day he ruminated: "I wish I were home to get a piece of pie."

"Are you sure you would find a piece of pie there?" quietly asked a sailor, a Yorkshireman. His expression and the tone of his voice so shamed the boy that long years later he wrote of the incident:

"Home" was associated in my mind with pie of some sort—apple or peach or sweet potato or cranberry or mince—to be had for the taking, and I did not for the moment realize that in many homes pie was as rare a luxury as plums in our sea-duff.⁴⁵

The trip gave him experience of the tyrannical powers that the navigation laws conferred on a sea captain. For although Sam Miller was a good man, he, like every other master of a vessel, had almost absolute control of the destiny of the poorly-fed, ill-paid men sailing under him, being

⁴² April 11, 1855, Sea Journal IV, HGC.

⁴³ Sea Journal II, HGC.

⁴⁴ "Science of Political Economy," New York, Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1941, p. 352. (Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 27 n.)

⁴⁵ *Ib.*, p. 353.



OBSERVATIONS SKETCHED BY HENRY GEORGE AT 16; A PAGE FROM SEA JOURNAL III,
HENRY GEORGE COLLECTION, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY.

employer, law-giver and judge in one.⁴⁶ This experience made Henry George a life-long advocate of sailors' rights.

It was August 24th before they sighted Australia, one hundred and thirty-seven days from New York. For a month the ship lay in Hobson's Bay, near Melbourne, unloading and reloading cargo, taking in ballast and changing crew. Thence they sailed to India and up the Hoogley branch of the Ganges River to Calcutta in less than ten weeks, arriving there on December 4th. As the boy had had a chance to see a little of Australia, during a period when times were hard and thousands were out of work, so now he had a chance to see a little of India, and notice the extremes⁴⁷ there of riches and poverty, beauty and squalor. As he said later, the carrion birds seemed to be held more sacred than the country's human beings. In the new country, Australia, and in the old country, India, there seemed to be the same problem of poverty that was to be found at home in the United States.

Not until December 10th, eight months after he had sailed from New York, was the first word⁴⁸ received from Philadelphia; letters written in May, shortly after his departure, brought intimate recollections of his family and home. His younger sister, Jennie, explained: "Hearing that a ship was going to sail in a few days we thought we would write the first opportunity. There is another going to sail about the first of June so we can write both times. The flowers are coming up beautifully. Your rose bush has got any quantity of buds and they are quite large."⁴⁹ A girl cousin wrote: "I pray both morning and evening for God's blessing upon you—that he will bring you to a knowledge of your sins and grant that you may become converted and a real Christian."⁵⁰

One of his chums, known as "Dicky Doubter," addressing him as "Dear Mackerel" and giving him gossip of their mutual cronies (nick-named "Soda Ash" and "Sea Dog," respectively) closed his letter: "I hope God will protect you through all the dangers of the sea. Good-bye, it may not be in this world that we meet but I hope it will be above."⁵¹

His father was less sanguine:

The parting with you was much harder for your mother and myself than I at first supposed it would be. . . . You have our prayers, morning and

⁴⁶ See *Sea Journal* III, Aug. 25–29, 1855 (Hobson's Bay), HGC.

⁴⁷ See *Sea Journal* III, Sat., Aug. 25, 1855, HGC.

⁴⁸ Capt. Miller's account of the voyage: "Dec. 10, 1855. We were this day delighted by receiving all our letters." Box I, *Miscellanies*, HGC.

⁴⁹ May 9, 1855, HGC.

⁵⁰ Catharine P. Latimer, May 10, 1855, HGC.

⁵¹ Charles Walton, May 10, 1855, HGC.

evening, for your safety, health and prosperous voyage, which may God in his goodness vouchsafe to hear and answer, returning you in health and safety to your home. . . . Your little Brig⁵² is safely moored on the mantle-piece. First thing when we wake, our eyes rest on her, and she reminds us of our dear sailor boy. The children all look upon her, it reminds them of Henry, but none dare touch her. When you get home no doubt she will look as rusty as your own ship, and will want a thorough overhauling.⁵³

The voyager's letters home, usually meticulously written and abominably spelled, were little more than a log. To parents anxious for intimate news about their son, it must have been small comfort to receive pages of data about the winds, the course and the weather. Henry reported that the ship crossed the Equator on November 5th and that

Here we were fortunate as not to experience much of that wet calm and squally weather so peculiar to the line. From this place until we arrived at about 10° North we had the same fair airs as on the other side of the Line, with every prospect of a short passage. Here the wind became stronger and more variable, but dead ahead. It would seldom blow from one point of the compass for more than an hour. Indeed it seemed as if a second Jonah were aboard, for tack as often as we would, the wind was sure to head us off. She would often head on one tack E.S.E and on tacking ship, instead of heading N.N.W as she ought to do, she would not lay higher than W. Progress under the circumstances was impossible, and for over a week we did not gain a single inch to the northward.⁵⁴

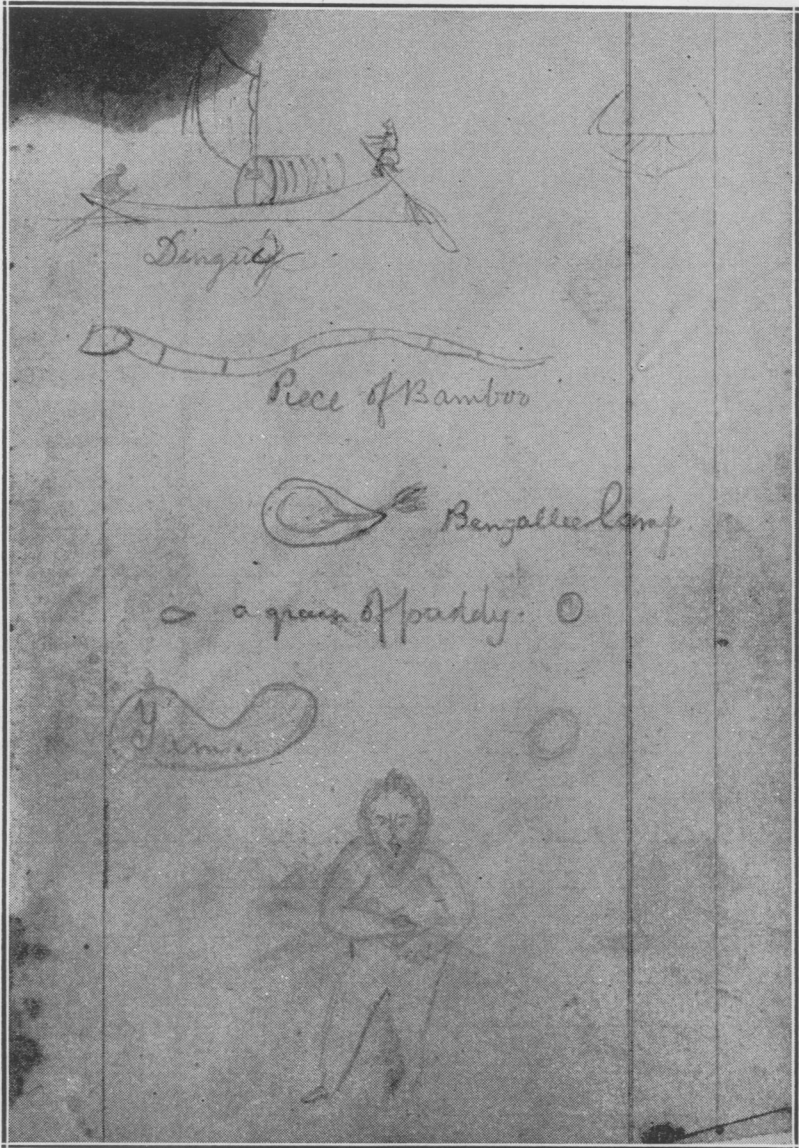
The boy, now 16, pencilled some notes, badly punctuated and incorrectly spelled, on the back pages of his sea journal, recording his impressions of Calcutta and the Ganges, that give some hint of the literary gifts he was later to develop, and of the powers of observation that were to distinguish his sociological writings. In one he wrote:

The river, at times very broad and again contracting its stream into a channel hardly large enough for a ship of average size to turn in, was bordered by small native villages, surrounded by large fruit trees, through which the little bamboo huts peeped. As we advanced the mists which had hitherto hung over the river cleared away, affording a more extensive prospect. The water was covered with boats of all sizes, very queer to the eye of an American. They were most of them bound to Calcutta with the produce and rude manufactures of the country—bricks, tiles, earths,

⁵² "March 31, 1855. Staid at home in the morning finishing my brig, painted her. After my last dinner at home, went with father and mother to get our daguerrotypes taken. . . ." George, *Diary I*, HGC. The daguerrotype of George is reproduced in Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, facing p. 24.

⁵³ May 10, 1855, HGC.

⁵⁴ Letter from Calcutta, Dec. 12, 1855, HGC.



OBSERVATIONS BY HENRY GEORGE AT 16; A PAGE FROM SEA JOURNAL III, HENRY GEORGE COLLECTION, NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY.

pots, etc. They had low bows and very high sterns. They were pulled by from four to ten men, and steered by an old fellow wrapped up in a sort of cloth, seated on a high platform at the stern. Some had sails to help them along, in which there were more holes than threads. On the banks the natives began to go to their daily toil, some driving cattle along, others loading boats with grain, while the women seemed busy with their domestic tasks. As we approached the city, the banks on both sides were lined with handsome country residences of the wealthy English. About 10 A.M. we came to Garden Reach. . . . The river which here takes a sudden bend, was crowded with ships of all nations, and above nothing could be seen but a forest of masts. . . .⁵⁵

The *Hindoo*, with a new cargo of some twelve hundred tons of rice, seeds, etc., and a change of crew, started down the Hoogley on January 15th. "It is very provoking," the boy wrote, "to be over two weeks getting down a river eighty miles long."⁵⁶ On the trip home, the cook became ill and died, and Henry had to do a turn in the galley for about a week. He hated the job. The days seemed long and monotonous and there was time for rumination. On April 1st (1856) he wrote in his diary:

One year has passed since the Sunday when I took farewell of my friends, to me an eventful year, one that will have a great influence in deciding my position in life, perhaps more so than I can at present see. O, that I had it to go over again. I am at Sea. Homeward bound. In a few months [sic] I hope to be in Phila. once more.⁵⁷

Even if he could not spell correctly he could exercise exceptional powers of observation. He jotted down impressions of a rainstorm on May 28th:

I witnessed this afternoon one of the most beautiful storms that I have ever seen. It was about 4. P.M., the sun shining brightly. The squall or rather shower came up astern: the space over which it extended seemed not above $\frac{1}{4}$ mile in width and its bounds were as clearly marked on the water as those of a sandy beach. Where it was raining the sea seemed as though it was molten silver which contrasted strongly with the deep blues adjoining. The wind curling the tops of the waves made a most beautiful appearance. Over the whole was suspended a small but most beautiful rainbow. The shower quickly came on us, but it was light, and as quickly departed.⁵⁸

A pet monkey, acquired in Calcutta, amused him with her antics, doing

⁵⁵ "Calcutta, Dec. 3, 1855," *Sea Journal* IV, HGC. Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 34-5.

⁵⁶ Letter to parents, Hoogley River, Jan. 28, 1856, HGC.

⁵⁷ *Diary* I, HGC.

⁵⁸ *Sea Journal* IV, HGC.

much to relieve the tedium. She was of service in keeping the roaches off his face as he slept and away from his food as he ate.⁵⁹

At last, on June 14th, 1856, after an absence of one year and sixty-five days, the *Hindoo* again anchored in New York Harbor. Henry George, with fourteen months' pay (about fifty dollars) in his pocket, took the train to Philadelphia.

The boy who returned was different from the boy who had sailed away. His white skin, burned by wind and sun, made his eyes seem bluer; his red hair had grown darker. He was broader of shoulder; more self-reliant. On his shoulder perched his monkey, resenting bitterly the affectionate welcome given her master by his kin. The small beast focused her jealousy principally on the youngest brother, Morris, and to Henry's deep regret had to be given to a friend who had no children.

Henry was happy to be home once more. He was glad to settle back into the old routine. His family and friends found new interest in him, with his descriptions of the life at sea and his tales of foreign places and of strange and different peoples. The children liked to give him a bit of string and see his small skillful hands, now calloused, tie sailor's knots. At times they would prevail upon him to box the compass, which he could do with a speed that made the words almost indistinguishable. But above all how they liked to get him to sing sea chanties, although he carried the tunes none too well:

It's up jumped the sprat, the smallest of them all;
She jumped on the fore-deck; well done my lads all—
So blow the wind wester, blow the wind blow!
Our ship she's in full sail, how steady she goes!⁶⁰

To the regret of the children, his chums demanded much of Henry's time—Jo Jeffreys particularly. Henry and his friends would go up to his room with the narrow bed in the corner, the small case of books on the bureau, and his sea chest on the floor against the wall.⁶¹ In the dim gas light, that could so seldom be induced to burn brighter, the boys would smoke and swap ideas and experiences—Henry, as one broadened by foreign travel, excelling over his more parochial friends. Since the room was small and the seating capacity inadequate, the host would usually perch on the bed and, at times, would fall asleep during the discussion; whereupon the other

⁵⁹ George, "The Science of Political Economy," *op. cit.*, p. 30. Cited by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁶⁰ "Blow the Wind Wester" from "Pulling Capstan Chanties," collected and arranged by Cecil J. Sharp, London, Novello, no date. *Cp.* Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 544.

⁶¹ Letter from Jo Jeffreys to Henry George dated Nov. 1, 1858. See page 7, dated Nov. 20, HGC. Quoted by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 40.

boys would tip-toe downstairs and go home—even before Henry's father suggested it.⁶²

Henry was working hard then, so he came honestly by fatigue. His father, anxious to keep him ashore, had found him an apprenticeship in a printing house. Working at the type cases helped to educate him. He learned to spell correctly and he imbibed much general information from the matter he set up and from association with the journeymen printers in the shop. He made it a practice to appeal to the older men to verify historical dates and political facts.⁶³

It was while setting type as an apprentice that the first puzzling question of political economy came to the boy—when an old printer pointed out that wages were low in the old countries and high in the new. It seemed strangely contradictory that where population and progress were centered and where material aids to production were concentrated, wages should be lower than in newer, sparsely settled places. The lad remembered the statement.⁶⁴

He had become an ardent abolitionist and, in discussion, stood against his parents. His father, a Democrat, supported Buchanan. His mother reminded him that the Scriptures sanctioned slavery. She was convinced that the tales of cruelty to slaves were exaggerated; and that the majority of owners were the same sort of sympathetically-inclined folk as herself. But Henry contended hotly against what the owners *could do* since, he reasoned, if some men are the property of other men the masters have the legal right to control, mistreat, or even kill their chattels.⁶⁵

Life for the boy had become somewhat more serious, although much of the time he was free from care. He wrote in his diary:

Went to several places today, trying hard to find work. Felt very low spirited. Called at Sallie Young's in the evening, found her and Miss A. Reinhart going to the strawberry festival. Went with them; escaped minus 37½ cents.⁶⁶

A few weeks later he records:

Bill Jones and I took Sallie Young and Amelia Reinhart to the Academy of Music. But Sallie Young deserted me there and went with Bill Jones. Curse these girls, they won't fool me so confoundedly again.⁶⁷

After leaving the girls at their respective homes, the two boys joined sev-

⁶² Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁶³ Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁶⁴ *Ib.*, p. 43.

⁶⁵ *Ib.*, pp. 43-4.

⁶⁶ Sea Journal IV, June 12, 1857, HGC.

⁶⁷ *Ib.*, July 3, 1857. Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 48-9.

eral cronies, one of them a Sunday School teacher, and visited several taverns with them. At the corner of Walnut and Sixth Streets, Jo Jeffreys and Henry started to box. Jo fell down and "cut his head awfully."⁶⁸ They went in search of a doctor. Henry relates:

We dragged him around for about two hours before finding any person who could dress the wound. At length we took him to a German Physician, who dressed the cut and charged a V for his trouble. We returned home about daybreak.⁶⁹

With his friends, of whom there were many, he formed "The Lawrence Literary Society." It met in a small building that had once been a church. The object of the group was self-improvement; the effort focused on the writing of essays. Henry perpetrated two; one entitled "Mormonism," toward which he took a belligerent attitude, and one on the less controversial topic of "The Poetry of Life."⁷⁰ But the literary ambitions of the club members gave way to more popular interests. They turned to swapping lurid ghost stories, to wielding boxing gloves and fencing foils, to singing raucous songs, to smoking "long black segars" and to drinking "Red Eye."⁷¹ On the part of at least one of the number—Henry George—this was a reaction, no doubt, to the restrictions at home, where the most innocent of card games, and even riding in a public conveyance on Sunday, were forbidden. One night, coming home late, the son was chided by his father. He answered hotly. Next morning each of them expressed regret for his words. They embraced and the quarrel was forgotten.

Although Henry had become proficient at the case and could set an average of five thousand ems a day, including distributing and correcting, he was getting only about two dollars a week. And even this meager stipend ceased when, remembering his grandfather's injunction, "Do nothing that you are ashamed of and let no living man impose on you," he refused to submit to the domineering influence of the foreman. Giving up his position in the printing office, he tried many other jobs, but it seemed impossible to find one that had any hope of permanency.

During one of these lulls, he embarked for Boston on a top-sail schooner that carried coal. He applied for a berth as a seaman, but the Captain, noting his youth (he was barely eighteen) and his small stature, was for turning him down. "I had told him," related George long later, "that I

⁶⁸ *Ib.*

⁶⁹ *Ib.*

⁷⁰ Originals in Box VI, "Articles and Miscellaneous Writings," HGC. Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁷¹ Letter from Charles Walton to Henry George, July 29, 1863, HGC; quoted by Henry George, Jr., p. 49.

could handle the sails and steer. He seemed to doubt it and said 'You can't steer this schooner.' But I did steer her. The sea was very rough and the schooner rolled and pitched, the waves often dashing over the wheel."⁷² By the end of the trip he had made himself so useful that he was paid off at the full rate of an able seaman. "It was the highest compliment ever paid me" he believed afterward.

When, however, he returned to Philadelphia, the outlook for work was dark. Factory after factory was closing down and discharging its hands. Henry longed to go West, where he believed he could earn a living. He had been in correspondence with friends who had recently gone to Oregon; they wrote that wages were high there and urged him to join them. The news from California also was luring him West. Uncle Dunkin George's son, Jim, had already gone there. Henry had been trying to secure a berth on some boat sailing to the Pacific. Arranging for the trip was not an easy matter, as he disclosed in a letter to a young friend:

There are thousands of hard-working mechanics now out of employment in this city; and it is to the fact that among them is your humble servant, that you owe this letter. If you will send without delay the V you owe me, you will be doing the State a service by lessening the pressure of the hard times upon one of the hard fisted mechanics who form her bone and muscle, and will at the same time be easing your conscience of a burden, which I have little doubt bears heavily upon it. If you hear of any business men or rich corporations in your part of the country who are in want of a nice young man of my well known talents and capabilities, recommend me without loss of time as I am pretty damn hard up at present and haven't as much money as you could shake a stick at. Indeed, I would not have any hesitation in taking a situation on board a good canal boat for a short time, provided that it would pay.

I have been trying for some time to secure a berth on board the United States Light-house steamer "Shubrick," now fitting out at the Navy Yard for California; but she will not sail for two weeks at least and even then it is very doubtful whether I can succeed and go out in her.⁷³

The *Shubrick* was only one hundred and forty feet in length and three hundred and seventy-one tons burden. She was a sidewheeler and had two masts, the foremast square rigged. She looked as trig as a pleasure yacht but she was armed with six brass cannons and a peculiar device that squirted scalding water; her task was not only to supply light-houses and

⁷² The New York Journal, Oct. 10, 1897. "Sailor and Printer and Editor and World-Famous Economist," unsigned but part of the Ralph Meeker notes dictated by Henry George, early in October, 1897. Clipping in Scrap-book 29, Miscellany, TIQB, George, Economics Division, NYPL. Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁷³ Letter to B. F. Ely, September 30, 1857, HGC. Quoted in part by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 50-1.

maintain buoyage but to protect government property from the plundering of Indian tribes along the Pacific coast.⁷⁴ Greatly to Henry's joy he was hired aboard the *Shubrick* as steward or store keeper at forty dollars a month. His plan was to go to California and then to work his way further to Oregon, where his friends had promised him help in getting employment.

The order for the *Shubrick's* sailing came suddenly on December 22nd, 1857, a year and a half after Henry had returned on the *Hindoo*. The youth hurriedly said good-bye to such of his family and friends as he could find, and embarked on the sidewheeler at the Navy Yard. It steamed out of the Port of Philadelphia and set forth on the long journey around the Horn to the Golden Gate.

When his younger brother, Tom, came home from school and found Henry had left, the boy raced to the dock. Frantically waving his handkerchief, he stood there, looking at the departing vessel in the hope of a glimpse of Henry. But Henry, a member of the crew, was already hard at work. Still waving, Tom watched the boat getting smaller and smaller, until at last his father had to come and take him home. There "he cried as if his heart would break."⁷⁵

For the sailor, Christmas Day was one he never forgot. At home the family was exchanging simple, long-planned presents, and feasting on turkey, mince pie and plum cake. At sea, the day started sunny and calm, but suddenly, without warning, a squall blew up which later turned into a hurricane, churning the ocean white with spindrift. Seas broke over the little vessel on her maiden voyage, stoving in part of the superstructure, ripping off port shutters, and washing overboard everything movable on deck, including harness casks, deck engines and spare spars and lumber. By ten o'clock that night the boat was in danger of foundering. Henry related that "the squall drove the little cockleshell now here, now there, now with this side touching the surface of the waves and now with that, while I and a negro deckhand worked together, throwing over bags of coal to lighten her. The sailing master hung on the bridge, shouting to us through the speaking trumpet and barely able to make himself heard as he told us that the work we were doing was for life or death."⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Record of *Shubrick* from U. S. Light-House Board at Washington. Typed notes, signed by C. H. Thompson, Clerk, Twelfth Light-House District, San Francisco, Oct. 31, 1898, HGC, Box IX, October, 1898, folder.

⁷⁵ Letter from his mother to Henry George, Jan. 1, 1858, HGC.

⁷⁶ Ralph Meeker notes printed in Harrisburg paper, Nov. 18, 1897, entitled "Henry George's Own Story of His Career." Clipping in Scrap-book 29, "Miscellany," TIQB, George, Econ. Div., NYPL. Quoted in part by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 57.

The lightening of cargo saved the vessel and by morning, when the storm abated, she was able to proceed. Routine life on board was resumed. A few items from a penciled list in the writing of the storekeeper gives an idea of his responsibilities:

Shubrick voyage. Clothes served out. Dec. 27, 1857.

De Camp—Suit Oil Clothes, Souwesters

Simmons—Monkey jacket

Wilson—Souwester, Guernsey

George—Oil Jacket, 1 pair Socks

John Lee—Jacket & Souwester, 2 Shirts, 2 pr. Drawers, ½ doz. Socks,
1 pr. Boots

Sylvester—Monkey Jacket, Oil Suit & Souwester⁷⁷

Six days after the storm, the vessel reached the West Indies and recoaled. On her journey down the coast of South America, the *Shubrick* stopped for five days at Rio de Janeiro. Henry had a chance to wander along the rocks, catching crabs and toadfish, and to paddle about in a canoe made of one solid piece of wood, the counterpart of the one used by Robinson Crusoe. He visited the city once but saw little of it, "as it was too infernally hot to walk the narrow streets."⁷⁸

Trouble continued to mark the voyage as the ship sailed from Rio to Montevideo. From the Uruguayan city Henry wrote to his friend, Charles Walton, in Philadelphia:

The day after leaving Rio the yellow fever which we were congratulating ourselves on escaping, broke out among us and three or four were laid up.

On the evening before our arrival (at Monte Video) while in the River La Plata, Mr. Martin, the Second Assistant Engineer, died. He was immediately sewn up in a hammock and placed in a large wooden box, as it was the Captain's intention to bury him ashore if possible. But the next morning, the Captain, fearing that the Port authorities would not allow him to land the body, called all hands as we were going in, read the burial service and launched the coffin, which had previously been filled in with coal, overboard. But it soon rose and floated astern. The engine was immediately reversed and a boat lowered which after much difficulty succeeded in securing a kedge anchor to the box, when it apparently sank. You may judge of our surprise when in the afternoon, while lying at anchor in the harbor, we beheld the coffin float past but a few feet from the ship. The boat was lowered again and the box towed ashore where it was opened and the body of poor Martin buried at the foot of the mount from which this place takes its name.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ This page can be found with *Shubrick* typed notes, HGC, Box IX.

⁷⁸ Letter from Henry George to Charles Walton, Feb. 18, 1858, HGC. Compare Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 62-3.

⁷⁹ *ib.*

The other sailors, very superstitious about the incident, were deeply disturbed by it. Young George felt convinced that there had not been enough weights in the box and that the few put in it had been shifted about. Several years later he made a short story of the adventure.⁸⁰

Instead of going around the Horn, the course taken by sailing vessels, the sidewheeler went through the Straits of Magellan. The weather, however, was so severe that the coal supply became depleted and they had to moor the steamer to a bank and cut wood ashore, for fuel. It took several days of hard work before the bunkers were filled. The scenery was beautiful. "It was a most impressive sight" recounted George years later—"the deep water around us and the snow-covered mountains in the distance. We ran upon a schooner which belonged to English missionaries who were praying and working with the natives. We saw a number of Terre del Fuegians, and they were not at all attractive. I heard afterward that the Patagonians killed and ate those very missionaries who were trying to convert them."⁸¹

The *Shubrick* stopped at several ports along the west coast of South America. One hundred and fifty-five days after her departure from Philadelphia, on May 27th, 1858, she finally passed through the Golden Gate. Henry George was in California.

⁸⁰ The incident was expanded into the sketch, "Dust to Dust," published in two periodicals in 1866. See Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 63-7.

⁸¹ Ralph Meeker Notes, *op. cit.*