

Henry George: Early California Period

Author(s): Anna George de Mille

Source: *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Jul., 1942), pp. 431-446

Published by: American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Inc.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3483386>

Accessed: 15-02-2022 01:07 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

*American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Inc.* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*

# Henry George: Early California Period\*

By ANNA GEORGE DE MILLE

1

## The Miner

SAN FRANCISCO, SITUATED on verdure carpeted hill that creep down to a gorgeous harbor, was hardly a beautiful city when Henry George arrived there in 1858. It was, however, picturesque and had already developed a distinct individuality. The greater part of the population of fifty thousand still lived either in tents or clumsily flung up little wooden houses, lined along poorly-paved or totally unpaved streets. Some of the newly-constructed buildings were substantial at least and the old adobe ones, including the garden-surrounded Mission, had true artistic worth. The hills and fields were abloom with color; flowers grew everywhere; the air was velvet soft; the blue sky cloudless.

Although the great gold rush had started nine years earlier, the excitement of pioneering was still in the air. The highways of the boom town teemed with cosmopolitan and heterogeneous crowds, assembled from the adventurous of many countries. The hope of finding, if not a precious metal, at least, a decent living, kept them there. Few women or children were to be seen. Prospectors, miners, lumber-jacks, seamen and cowboys far out-numbered the merchants and tradesmen. Burly, roughly-clothed and bearded, they were, nevertheless, surprisingly youthful looking.

Different it was from the world Henry George had left. The lad was caught by the fascination of it. "I have already seen a good deal of the city," he wrote in a letter, "and agree that 'it is a dashing place,' rather faster than Philadelphia."<sup>1</sup>

His plan had been to push on to Oregon. But the summons he expected to receive did not come, so, managing to get discharged from the *Shubrick*, and freed of the shipping articles he had been compelled to sign (they would have kept him in service on the boat until November), he remained in San Francisco. With his cousin, James George, and the latter's wife Ellen, he found quarters. James George was employed as bookkeeper by the clothing firm of J. M. Strobridge, one of the largest in those days.

\* Copyright, 1942, by Anna George de Mille. A portion of an unpublished ms., "Citizen of the World"; see "Henry George: Childhood and Early Youth," *AM. JOUR. ECON. SOCIO.*, I, 3, 283n.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Mrs. Curry in Oregon (quoting Emma Curry) May 29, 1858. Henry George Collection, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library (hereafter abbreviated as HGC). Henry George, Jr., "Life of Henry George," New York, Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1942, p. 70.

But while he was beginning to put down roots in the West, he was not forgotten in the East. Letters arrived from home bespeaking the love his family and friends felt for him. From his father came a discussion of political matters and the reassurance that, although Henry was greatly missed, Providence had certainly guided his step.

I could not if I had studied ever so long, have conceived of a more desirable position for you [his father wrote] than the one that bids fair to be the opening and starting point for your future success and happiness in life.<sup>2</sup>

His mother was more sentimental:

I have dreamed several times that you had come home. One morning relating my dream, Morrie [the youngest child] said "Ma, when will Henry come home?" I answered, "Not for a good while." He sat a moment in thought and then said, with a sigh: "Oh, I wish it was a good while now, don't you?" It opened the floodgates and there was no answer.

But my dear boy, I do not wish you home though it was so hard to part and we miss you very much. I feel thankful to our Heavenly Father for thus providing for you and raising up kind friends. I want you to do something or be somebody in the world. I do not think you will disappoint me. Have less confidence in self and more in a higher power. You will meet with many losses and disappointments, but if you can say with the heart and understanding; "My Father, Thou art the guide of my youth," all will be well.<sup>3</sup>

His boyhood friends went frequently to the home in Philadelphia for news of him. Sometimes there was jealousy among them when one or another was favored with a letter from California. Then little Jennie was put to it to re-establish peace. These boys who had been so fearful of showing anything akin to sentiment when with him poured out their feelings in letters to their chum.

Jo Jeffreys wrote:

You are right Hen, "There never was any affectation of sentiment in speech between us when face to face" and none shall exist now. How do *you* know that we shall never meet again? I shall be obliged to you if you would not send such letters to me. . . . You know I love you Hen, as much as anyone in this wide world. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Four weeks later Jo Jeffreys returned to the theme:

You are the only one Hen, before whom my pride ever bowed. My crest is lowered to none but you and never was. Don't talk of our forgetting each other for that is impossible.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Jan. 1, 1858, HGC.

<sup>3</sup> Jan. 1, 1858, HGC.

<sup>4</sup> Feb. 1, 1858, HGC; Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> Feb. 30, 1858, HGC.

Edmund Wallacz, who was seven or eight years older than Henry, showed a sense of loss:

I can say today, as I did when you left, that I had taken leave of the best and truest heart in the wide world. . . . I do not think there is another who could understand how deeply rooted our affection is. . . . I have never met anyone whose heart and mind assimilated to my own in any way resembling yours.<sup>6</sup>

Seek as he would in San Francisco, the boy could find no work, and when his little store of money was gone, he joined Jim George and an acquaintance, George Wilbur, in the gold rush along the Frazer River, just across the Canadian border.

On a topsail schooner, to Victoria, he worked his way as seaman. During the voyage, he had a conversation with some miners, also travelling to the gold fields, which made an indelible impression on him. One of the miners, a rather elderly man, had commented:

It will not be always that wages are as high as they are today, in California. As the country grows, as people come in, wages will go down.<sup>7</sup>

This remark spoken simply by a poor miner become associated in the boy's mind with the observation of the Philadelphia printer, that wages were low in old countries and high in new. But the relationship was puzzling, challenging. Why, if the country develops, as they were hoping it would develop, should the condition of those who had to work for a living become, not better, but worse? This question, planted in the mind of the not-yet nineteen-year-old Henry George, demanded an answer.

When he reached Victoria, the would-be prospector found that, owing to the flood-like volume of the Frazer River, all gold-seeking operations had to be suspended. He took a job in the miners' supply store Jim George had opened. His pay was irregular and poor. To save the rent of a room, he slept on the counter of the store, rolled up in a blanket, or on piled bags of flour, on the floor. Later he had a straw mattress on some boards. He took off his cap and boots upon retiring. Sleeping in the shop this way had its advantages; he was on hand for after-hour customers. Before lying down he would place a sign outside: "Please give this door a kick."<sup>8</sup> Several months later he wrote to Jennie:

<sup>6</sup> July 15, 1858, HGC.

<sup>7</sup> Henry George, address, "Justice the Object, Taxation the Means," San Francisco (Metropolitan Hall), Feb. 4, 1890, "Henry George's Works," Vol. ix, p. 299; cf. Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>8</sup> Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 78.

I have not changed much, except that I have grown uglier and rougher looking. You thought I looked hard when I came from Calcutta, but you should have seen me in Victoria.<sup>9</sup>

He left his cousin's employ and went to live in a tent with young Wilbur, who had newly arrived from San Francisco. For some months the two friends scratched an existence. Meager though their rations were, Henry, far from Wilbur's liking, was constantly sharing them with the half-starved Indians who visited the encampment. One day, while Wilbur was off in search of a job, his partner invited three into their tent. The only edible thing he found to offer them was a bag of sugar. The Indians ate it, relishing every grain.<sup>10</sup>

But prospecting or any other employment than tending store offered him no livelihood. Henry decided to return to San Francisco. Unable to get a berth as a seaman, he borrowed money from Wilbur and others to buy steerage passage. As he had no coat, Wilbur lent him his. Doubtful of the quantity and quality of food to be had on shipboard, his friends clubbed together and bought him six pies from the old man who used to peddle them to the dwellers in the tent city. To make sure that their gift was not stolen by other hungry travelers, the friends hid it under the blanket on Henry's berth. But when night fell, Henry had forgotten about the present. Wearily he flung himself into his bunk without undressing. Next morning he discovered the sad fate of the pies.<sup>11</sup>

The boy arrived in San Francisco penniless. At first his hunt for a job was fruitless. No answers had come to his appeals for work in Oregon. Just as he had made up his mind to return to the sea, he found work at the case at \$16 a week. This enabled him to pay \$9 a week for board and room in what was considered one of the best hotels in the city (although it enforced temperance and was for men only), the What Cheer House. To Henry the chief attraction of this place was its library. He spent most of his evenings there; all in fact, save those when he went to see his cousin, Ellen George.

He wrote his sister, Caroline, that he thought it would be a good scheme for St. Paul's Sunday School to send a few missionaries (provided they were gold-fever proof) to California.

The great want of the country in my opinion [he added] is women.

<sup>9</sup> Dec. 6, 1858, HGC. Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>10</sup> "Golden Jubilee Recalls Pioneer Days" (news story of the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. George B. Wilbur), *The Evening Post*, San Francisco, July 1, 1911. (Typed copy in writer's private collection.)

<sup>11</sup> Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 81.

Imagine, if you can, a place entirely destitute of them, and you can form some idea of the mining districts and even of some of the large towns.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately the printing-house job did not last long. Unable to follow his trade, he obtained a position as a weighman in a rice mill. Shortly thereafter Wilbur returned from Victoria and the two boys took a room together on Pine Street. Henry still ate at the What Cheer House. He wrote to Jennie:

It would please Ma if she knew how regular and quiet I am in my habits. However it is as much from necessity as from choice, for if I had money I suppose I would be the same as most others.<sup>13</sup>

His routine was spartan. He arose at 6 and had an early breakfast at the hotel before going to the mill. In the evening he returned from work at 6:30 for supper and quiet reading in the What Cheer House library until 9 o'clock, when he went back to his room, presumably to retire. But Wilbur often would wake in the middle of the night to find his roommate reading or writing.<sup>14</sup> "Good heavens Harry, what's the matter? Are you sick?" he would ask. To which the reply would either be an order to go back to sleep or an invitation to get up and dress and go for a walk. A quick turn in the night air seemed to quiet the young student and make him ready for bed.

George Wilbur's forbearance was tried by more than restlessness, however. On those mornings when he awakened to find that Henry had left unusually early for work, absent-mindedly wearing his roommate's much longer trousers and in their place leaving his own too short ones, Wilbur was, naturally, exasperated.<sup>15</sup> One time he went with Henry to get his laundry. The Chinese laundryman, with perfect justice, demanded the money due for past washing before he would release the latest batch. Henry hadn't the cash to give and he had to have his clean wash. The dialogue grew eloquent. Unfortunately Wilbur was not a mind reader: he could not foresee that Henry, suddenly spying his coveted shirt, was going to pounce on it and take to his heels. He, poor lad, was left to face the music—sing-song at that—for several unhappy minutes. Freeing himself, he followed his fleeter friend.<sup>16</sup> Yet the admiration he had for George never waned.

Family and friends in the East were perturbed by Henry's drift from job to job. "You are not competent to succeed at a dozen employments"

<sup>12</sup> Jan. 4, 1859, HGC.

<sup>13</sup> Dec. 18, 1859, HGC.

<sup>14</sup> *The Evening Post*, loc. cit.

<sup>15</sup> *The Evening Post*, loc. cit.

<sup>16</sup> *Ib.*

wrote Jo Jeffreys, in one of his long, closely packed letters, "nor can you hope to amass a fortune by laboring at them alternately."<sup>17</sup> But the boy was forced by circumstances to change again, for the rice mill shut down. Failing to find work in the city, he decided to try the mines in the interior of the state. He had no money for transportation so he started out to walk. Now he was a tramp. To husband his little cash he did chores, when he could get them to do, to pay for his food, and slept in barns. He worked as a farm hand when he could find a place. But his strength was not equal to the work. He had managed to go some distance towards the diggings when he was forced by sheer want to give up his search for gold. Suffering from privation he had to toil his way back.

During his two months' absence, the long-awaited-for offer of work in Oregon had come. But he arrived in San Francisco too late to avail himself of it. The opportunity had passed. And an even more bitter blow befell him. He found that while he was away, his friend and counsellor, his cousin, Ellen George, had died.

## 2

**Romance**

THE NATIONAL DEBATE on slavery and secession was raging when Henry George got back. Southern merchants were refusing to trade with Northerners. Hard times had set in. The Harper's Ferry rebellion and the martyrdom of John Brown inflamed passions. California had its share of the bitterness. The state had a violent political campaign with repercussions in personal antagonisms, the most noted of which was a duel between the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, a supporter of slavery, and a United States Senator, the foremost anti-slavery champion, as he put it, west of the Rockies. The duel resulted in the death of the latter.

During these agitated times an event of much importance to the development of the Pacific coast took place in San Francisco. A convention of one hundred delegates met in an effort to realize the dream of every Californian—a railroad that would link west and east.<sup>18</sup> It would bind together a widely scattered people; it would heal the division between adherents of North or South; it would open to development the intervening wilderness and bring the civilization and material comforts of the Atlantic states to the Pacific. For Henry George, it meant shortening the distance between him and his family in Philadelphia. A beautiful promise!

He could not foresee that from the group of one hundred men, starting

<sup>17</sup> Feb. 3, 1859, HGC. Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 87-8.

<sup>18</sup> Pacific Railroad Convention, Sept. 20, 1859.

this great public service with noble aspirations, there would finally emerge four<sup>19</sup> who—though they had begun as small, pioneer traders themselves—would become vast landowners, multi-millionaires, evaders of Federal and State laws, corrupters of public servants and princes of privilege—all out of railroading. But the portents of the future were not discernible to Californians. They exulted in the vision of the speed and luxury of a railroad. What blessings it would bring to the West!

The boy could not wait for that golden age to arrive. Poor, sad, lonely, and with no prospect for work on shore, he was about to sign up for a long sea voyage when fortune suddenly changed. He was given a position as compositor on a weekly, *The Home Journal*, at twelve dollars a week. He had turned his back on the sea for good.<sup>20</sup>

Now he was no longer worried about how he could support himself. But the period of content was brief. Stabbing news came of the unexpected death of his friend, Jo Jeffreys.<sup>21</sup> Henry realized he had had a premonition of it. When he had said good-bye to Jo in Philadelphia, he had felt that their parting was for always, and he had hinted at this premonition in a letter to Jo. Jo had brushed the thought aside, demanding, "How do you know that we shall never meet again?"<sup>22</sup> The death of this, the most congenial of all his friends, was a poignant grief to Henry. It did much to make his outlook on life more mature.

Much was going on in the world to make a thoughtful boy serious. The questions of States rights and of abolition were arousing agitation. On December 2nd, John Brown was hanged for inciting the Harpers Ferry rebellion. The trans-continental railroad was yet to come but eastern and western coasts were being drawn closer. On April 18th, in a long letter to Jennie, Henry told of the progress being made:

The Pony Express<sup>23</sup> arrived in this city on Friday last and a terrible fuss they made over the little animal who had the honor of bearing the express bag over the last section of the route. What an advance since I landed, when we had to wait until the arrival of the steamer to learn what was going on in the world. Next year we will, in all probability have a tele-

<sup>19</sup> They were Leland Stanford, Colis P. Huntington, Mark Hopkins and Charles Crocker. See Oscar Lewis, "The Big Four," New York, Knopf, 1938.

<sup>20</sup> His grandfather, Captain Richard George, and his great-great-great grandfather, Captain Henry Pratt (father of Henry Pratt, goldsmith) had been sailing masters in the trade between England and Philadelphia. (Mrs. James Dundas Pratt of Germantown, Philadelphia, has aided in assembling this genealogical information).

<sup>21</sup> Aug. 13, 1859. Cf. Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>22</sup> See note 4.

<sup>23</sup> The Pony Express reduced the time between New York and San Francisco to fourteen days. It operated for two years, until the opening of a telegraph circuit.



graph across the plains and our evening journals will contain New York news of the morning.<sup>24</sup>

Change impressed him, and he was led to philosophize about it:

What a time we live in, when great events follow one another so quickly that we have no space for wonder. We are driving at a killing pace somewhere—Emerson says to heaven, and Carlyle says to the other place; but however much they differ, go we surely do.<sup>25</sup>

He closed the letter with a tolerant judgment:

The more I see of men and things and the more I examine the workings of my heart, the less inclined am I to judge anybody else.<sup>26</sup>

The youth had drawn away from the strict orthodoxy of his Philadelphia religious training. Some friends introduced him to the preaching of the Reverend S. D. Simonds, a liberal and broadminded churchman. His religious interests awakened, he joined the Methodist church. While his family had been Episcopalians for generations, the fact that the boy had joined some church caused great rejoicing in the home circle. "Oh my Son," wrote his father, "What a thrill of joy your letter sent through us all, when we read that you had given your heart to Christ."<sup>27</sup> And Jennie wrote:

Now it seems as if we were much more reconciled to your being away from us—though away from the loving home circle amongst strangers in a strange land, yet the everlasting arms are around you, shielding you.<sup>28</sup>

Henry George came of age on September 2nd, 1860. Being no longer a minor, he was able to get the wages of a journeyman printer and join the Typographical Union. For a fortnight or so he held the position of foreman on *The Home Journal* at \$30 a week and was able to send money home to Philadelphia. Then came a long spell of intermittent work. He had no mind to change his frugal habits. Only a short time before he had written to Jennie:

All my society is of the rougher sex. In fact I don't care much about making the acquaintances of any ladies, at least such as are found around here. In a year or so—*quien sabe?*<sup>29</sup>

But he did not wait that long. Soon after his twenty-first birthday—on the night of October twelfth—George Wilbur dragged him to a party.

<sup>24</sup> April 18, 1860, HGC.

<sup>25</sup> *Ib.*; passage quoted by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>26</sup> Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>27</sup> July 2, 1860, HGC.

<sup>28</sup> July 2, 1860, HGC.

<sup>29</sup> Feb. 4, 1860, HGC.

Swept and garnished the lad went, but reluctantly. He hated parties. He was poor at dancing, worse at small-talk, and took no stock in flirtation. What then could be the good of going to parties? But he realized he needed to know girls as well as boys of his own age, so he let Wilbur take him.

The night was clear and fragrant from heliotrope and citrus blossoms. When the two youths arrived at the McCloskey garden and sauntered toward the vine-covered house, the entertainment was in full swing. A tenor was singing a sentimental ballad, so they waited on the porch. Henry had little ear for music and he hated mushy sentimentality. He wanted to bolt for home but Wilbur drew him to a window.

The drawing-room was well furnished and decked lavishly with flowers. The place was crowded with people. Henry's glance roamed from person to person but always came back to a small woman in her early fifties, sitting composedly in a high-back chair. Severely dressed in plain black silk, her only garniture was a rare lace shawl, her only jewels five small diamond stars, glistening against the velvet ribbon which banded her blue-black hair.<sup>30</sup>

"That's Mrs. McCloskey," volunteered Wilbur.

"It's getting late," said Henry, "and you know we have to get up early—"

Suddenly the solo ended and a young girl swept across the scene. Her widely hooped skirts of ecru piña cloth<sup>31</sup> floated about her. Her brown hair was parted and drawn satin-smooth to a knot at the back of her head. She was smiling and gracious.

"Who's *sbe*?" demanded the younger youth.

"Oh, that's Mrs. McCloskey's grand-daughter. The party's given for her. It's her birthday. That's Miss Fox."

"Let's go in," said Henry George.

\* \* \*

FROM HER THIRTEENTH YEAR, sedate and dignified Anna Maria Fox had been addressed as "Miss Fox." She was not a really pretty girl. Her face was too strongly reflective; her features too large and not regular enough. But her skin was so delicately fair that her nick-name was "Peaches-and-cream." She was petite, barely five feet tall, and small-boned. Beautifully formed, she had exquisite shoulders and arms and tiny patrician hands. She wore size one shoes. Her speaking voice was soft and well modulated; her singing voice natural and melodious.<sup>32</sup> She danced with fairylike grace.

<sup>30</sup> The writer's mother related this to her.

<sup>31</sup> Brought from the Sandwich Islands.

<sup>32</sup> The description has been confined to facts known to the present writer.

Her passion for dancing sometimes led her into foolishness. Once she had made a wager with her partner that she could tire him out. She did, and three more partners, and the orchestra. Not until her guardian-uncle arrived after two hours of waltzing, was she stopped; then, peremptorily.

She was born in Sydney, Australia,<sup>33</sup> where her father, Major John Fox of the British Army, was stationed. There, when he was thirty-six, he had met and married the newly arrived daughter of a prosperous Irish iron-monger and contractor, sixteen-year-old Elizabeth McCloskey. His young wife bore him two daughters, Teresa and Anna Maria Fox.

Life did not run smoothly for the high-spirited British, Church-of-England soldier and the rigidly-brought-up Irish Catholic wife. Nor between the soldier and his wife's mother. In the clashes between mother-in-law and son-in-law the girl sided with her parent and the marriage of Major and Mrs. Fox ended with separation.

In spite of the ease of her surroundings and the love lavished on her by her family, young Mrs. Fox never ceased to grieve for the husband she had left. She lived but a few years after their parting. The physician called her ailment consumption, but her family believed it was a broken heart. She left her two small girls in the care of her mother, who was devoted to them. Anna Maria was less than six years old when Grandfather McCloskey once more gathered up his family and migrated, this time (with a year's stop-over in Hawaii) to California.<sup>34</sup> Two years after establishing them in San Francisco, in a house he had had constructed in Sydney, he returned alone to Australia, to build a railroad he had contracted for. But he could not finish the job. He took ill with a fever and died.

In the comfort in which he had installed his family, his wife, like a matriarch, carried on. She was a dominating personality—a woman of intellect and tradition. Her three brothers had graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, two of them becoming priests of the Church of England, although she herself was a Catholic. She had three fads—fine China, fine shawls and begonias. One day she went to the San Francisco flower market and her collector's eye spotted an unusual begonia.

"How much is that?" she asked. She was dressed in dark colors and simply. The merchant looked at her appraisingly. Not being a connoisseur of shawls, he did not know that the one she wore was rare and valuable.

"You couldn't afford that plant," he said condescendingly.

Imperiously, she told him: "Send it to my home!"

<sup>33</sup> Oct. 12, 1843.

<sup>34</sup> In 1851.

When it arrived she found to her dismay that she had to pay eighteen dollars!

The transplanted Irish family took deep root in San Francisco. A son, Matthew McCloskey, and a son-in-law, Joseph Flintoff, affected the customs of the Spanish ranchers, who were still extant. In spite of blue eyes, they were both of the latin type with jet-black hair and sun-browned skin. From their dress one would never suspect them of Irish origin. They wore high-heeled shiny, faultlessly cut riding boots, for which they paid fifty dollars a pair. Solid silver spurs decorated the boots. Their large sombreros were of the finest felt. They rode magnificent mounts. Their "western" saddles were made of carved leather and studded with silver. The two Irishmen were at home in the Spanish-California of the '50s.

When her granddaughters were old enough to go to school, Mrs. McCloskey sent them to the southern part of the State, to the Sisters of the Order of St. Vincent de Paul, popularly known as the Sisters of Charity. Most of their school mates were native Californians and spoke Spanish out of school hours. The atmosphere of the peaceful convent<sup>35</sup> in the beautiful mountain-encircled Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles was redolent of the days before the coming of the "Gringos." There was the same strict chaperonage of the girls, and, after mass on Sundays, the traditional line of eager youths waiting for smiles and brief words from the favored señoritas. The liturgy was interpreted with traditional Spanish color and drama. On Easter, at the first word of the Gloria, the sombre curtains that had shrouded the altar during Holy Week were flung aside, displaying a dazzling blaze of candle-light and gorgeous blossoms and freeing a cloud of incense and flower perfume of an intensity that caused the fragile little Annie, on two occasions, to swoon.

At her confirmation, Annie dropped her second name Maria, and adopted in its place the name of her beloved teacher, Sister Corsina.<sup>36</sup> The bond between Tessie and Annie was peculiarly close, and the separation sharply cruel when the elder, at the age of seventeen, took the veil and became Sister Teresa. Later—during the Civil War—this tenderly nurtured young girl, wearing the wide white cornet of the Sisters of Charity, was sent to Vicksburg to nurse the wounded Confederate soldiers. After the war was over, she became a teacher, ranking high in her order.

<sup>35</sup> Ten acres bought for \$8000 by the Sisters from B. D. Wilson (for whom Mt. Wilson was named). It was at the corner of what was later Alameda and Tracy Streets. The site is now the property of the Southern Pacific Railway.

<sup>36</sup> Née Miss Corsina McKay.

Annie, after she had finished the regular course at the convent school, remained in Los Angeles as a student-teacher. She was a frail girl and the Sisters watched over her tenderly. They gave her the work of teaching English to some of the Spanish girls and, in order to keep her in the sunny garden, assigned her the happy task of picking flowers for the altars. When her grandmother's health began to fail she returned to San Francisco.

At the time she met Henry George, Miss Fox was engaged to be married to an exemplary and charming young man of ample means. But before she had known the Philadelphia boy many months, she broke her engagement. When her grandmother died, her Uncle Matthew McClosky became her guardian. He liked young George, but was unenthusiastic about the attentions paid to his niece by the delicate looking and shabbily dressed youth who called continually and showered the young lady with as many gifts, mostly books, as he could contrive to buy. It was plain to be seen by those with even less discernment than the loving uncle's that the lad's intentions were anything but platonic.

## 3

## Marriage

IN APRIL OF 1861 Southern guns fired on the Union flag and civil war was declared. Mrs. George in Philadelphia was deeply affected and she wrote to her son:

O this horrible, calamitous and most sorrowful of all wars; when and what will be the end? I firmly believe the Lord of Hosts is with us, and the God of Jacob will be our defense. Though we have sinned against Him, He will not give us anarchy and confusion, but will right our wrongs and make us again a happy, united people. O pray for this, my dear boy.<sup>37</sup>

Henry George had always given his sympathies to the Union cause and now he was anxious to join the colors. But there was little hope—California was cut off from the South. As he explained to his sister Caroline:

I have a pretty strong desire to join the cavalry regiment now being fitted out here for service on the plains but as there is no certainty of their having any fighting to do except with Indians and I cannot plead patriotism as a motive, I think I had better stick where I am for a while longer.<sup>38</sup>

His restiveness over the war, remote as it was, was to grip him for some time. The significance of the conflict had seized him. As he observed to Jennie, some weeks later,

<sup>37</sup> May 20, 1861, HGC; Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>38</sup> Caroline, Aug. 19, 1861, HGC.

if I were home I would go. Not that I like the idea of fighting my countrymen, but in this life or death struggle I should like to have a hand. . . . I have felt a great deal like enlisting. I should like to place my willingness on record. . . . It may be my duty yet.<sup>39</sup>

The youth was now passing through another period of hard times. With one hundred dollars he had managed to save he had bought, in partnership with five other young printers, a small paper that they re-named *The Evening Journal*. It was dying a slow death. In spite of his tireless efforts to make money, everything he touched, as though it were the reverse of the touch of Midas, failed. He gave his sister, Jennie, in a letter, a glimpse of his deep desires. No longer the inhibited boy (matured, probably, by the great love that had come into his life), he was able at last to express his loneliness and yearnings in passages that anticipated the lines later to bring him fame:

How I long for the Golden Age . . . for the promised Millenium, when each one will be free to follow the best and noblest impulses, unfettered by the restrictions and necessities which our present state of society imposes upon him—when the poorest and the meanest will have a chance to use all his God-given faculties, and not be forced to drudge away the best part of his time in order to supply wants but *little* above those of the animal. . . .

Is it any wonder that men lust for gold, and are willing to give almost anything for it, when it covers everything—the purest and holiest desires of their hearts, the exercises of their noblest powers! What a pity we can't be contented! Is it? Who knows? Sometimes I feel sick of the fierce struggle of our high civilized life, and think I would like to get away from cities and business, with their jostlings and strainings and cares altogether, and find some place on one of the hillsides, which look so blue and dim in the distance where I could gather those I love, and live content with what Nature and our own resources would furnish; but, alas, money, money, money, is wanted even for that. It is our fate—we must struggle, and so here's for the strife!

What a glorious thought it is, that at last all will be over—all trials, all care, all suffering forever finished, all desires filled, all longing satisfied—what now is but hope become reality—perfect love swallowing up all in one boundless ocean of bliss. . . .

I long much to be at home—to see you all. . . . If I could only kiss Pop and Ma and Aunt Mary, good-night once, what a weight it would seem to take away.<sup>40</sup>

Some weeks the six partners in *The Evening Journal* made as much as \$6 each—but not always, and Henry got behind with his board bill. He ran into debt for it to the amount of \$30 and then slept in the office. His

<sup>39</sup> September 25, 1861, HGC.

<sup>40</sup> Sept. 15, 1861, HGC; quoted in part by Henry George, Jr., pp. 115–9.

clothes became increasingly shabbier and the toes of his shoes wore out. Try as he would he couldn't hide his poverty. Finally he sold his share of the paper. The purchaser could not afford to pay in money and gave mining stock. It proved to be worthless.

Miss Fox was making her home with her aunt, Mrs. Joseph Flintoff. One night, when her Uncle Matt McCloskey called and found the impecunious young George there again, he intimated to the youth that he might better appear less frequently. Mr. McCloskey was a hot-headed Irishman. Henry George was a hot-headed American—young and in love. Angry words ensued. Annie, terrified, kept the two from coming to blows. The greater part of that night she spent in prayer. When her lover came to see her the next morning—rainy and stormy it was—she told him that it was intolerable to live any longer with either of her uncles. She planned to return to Los Angeles, where she could take a position as a teacher in her old school with the Sisters of Charity.

The youth was out of work and prospects. He drew from his pocket a fifty cent piece. "Annie," he said solemnly, "This is all the money I have in the world; will you marry me?"

With great feeling, she replied: "If you are willing to undertake the responsibilities of marriage, I will marry you."

Most of that day she spent waiting in the parlor. At nightfall, Isaac Trump, one of young George's *Shubrick* friends, with his felt hat drawn over his face and his coat collar up, came to the door. He inquired for "Mrs. Brown." This was the pass-word. Miss Fox hastily donned the bonnet and shawl which she had had ready to hand. Giving Trump a small but heavy cloth-covered package, she followed him out through the garden to a carriage. From its weight and size Ike knew the bundle could not be clothing; he decided it must be jewels or silverware. It proved to be only the books<sup>41</sup> her lover had given her. Not another thing did the girl take by way of equipment for the new life; nothing provided her by her uncles, save the clothes on her back.

Trump's fiancée was waiting in the carriage. After they had driven a short way, Henry George, all brushed and combed and neatly attired (in borrowed clothes) met them. The quartette went to a restaurant and had dinner (a really good dinner could be had for twenty-five cents a plate) and then walked through the moonlit streets, where young George carried his bride-elect over places left wet by a December rain. To Bethel Church, where several other friends awaited them, they went and the Rev. Mr.

<sup>41</sup> Among the books was a copy of "The Household Book of Poetry," edited by Charles A. Dana, New York, Appleton, 1860, now in the private collection of the writer.

Simonds performed the wedding ceremony with the bride's grandmother's ring, using the Episcopal service. Soon afterward, at the insistence of the bride, they had a Catholic priest bless their marriage.

Lacking funds for a honeymoon journey, the young couple went quietly to the house of Henry's cousin, Jim George. The groom had not only borrowed the clothes he was married in, but money to defray the expenses of the wedding. On the morning after the ceremony he arose at five o'clock to hunt a job.<sup>42</sup> He got one as a "sub" typesetter, and worked at it all day and at another job most of the night. By continuing to "sub" this way for weeks he managed to pay their board bills, until a situation on *The Union* drew them to Sacramento.

Long before the other members of Henry's family knew of Annie Fox's existence, he had confided to Jennie his love for the girl. Jennie kept it a secret. She wrote back hurriedly, "No one knows anything about the letter, nor will they until you tell them."<sup>43</sup> The favored sister quickly adjusted to the situation:

I felt a sudden choking, a sudden loneliness and jealousy, when I first read your letter. I have got over that now. . . . Come home and bring her with you. I will love her; so will they all, I know. In the meantime do not forget me; do not cease to love me as much as ever, will you? There can be two places in your heart—one for Annie and one for me.<sup>44</sup>

As soon as news of the marriage reached Philadelphia, Annie was mentioned with Henry in the daily family prayers. Welcoming letters went back to the bride in California. Jennie was especially gracious:

Henry always had one particular place at the foot of the table (ask him if he remembers it) and I used to sit beside him but I will let you sit there when you come.<sup>45</sup>

The bride's family soon forgave the run-aways. Life looked brighter for the young couple although against their own happiness the Civil War raged like a discordant obbligato. Henry felt his isolation from the conflict, writing to Jennie:

Every day the telegraph is in working order it brings us the news of the success of the armies of the Republic. I cannot help feeling regret that the contest will be over and the victories won without my having taken the slightest part in it. If I am East after the war is ended I will feel abashed

<sup>42</sup> Henry George, Jr., gives a beautifully detailed account: *op. cit.*, pp. 123-6. The details check with the above account, presented as it was given the present writer by her mother.

<sup>43</sup> Undated, probably written in November, 1861, HGC.

<sup>44</sup> *Ib.*, quoted by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>45</sup> March 3, 1862, HGC.



among its heroes. If I had been home, I would have gone if I possibly could, but here there was no chance unless one could pay his passage to New York, for those [regiments] which were raised here were merely to garrison posts and fight Indians, though now a column is being pushed across the deserts of Arizona, though it is very doubtful if they will see any fighting.<sup>46</sup>

Work on *The Union*, sporadic though it was, still kept Henry and his bride in Sacramento. They lived close to the State Capitol, in a part of the city that abounded in beautiful trees and flowers. They had the use of a small boat which they frequently sailed and Henry kept himself fit by rowing and swimming. He spent much of his time, of which he seems to have had an abundance, in reading. He had been married for six months and fear of the loss of regular employment was troubling him. He reported home:

But while we are so pleasantly situated, "Old Adversity" walks as close behind as ever. The Legislature has adjourned, and though the weather and the roads have much improved, the Overland Mail stage has not yet commenced running. . . . This is disheartening, for to its regular arrivals we are looking for the revival of our business, which just now is unprecedentedly dull. The proprietors of *The Union* state their determination to run two double sheets a week as soon as the Overland Mail resumes, which will give me all the work I care to do. But we have been expecting and looking for it so long that it seems that it will never come. I am not one of those who love work for its own sake, but feeling what it brings, I love it and am happiest when hard at it. It is no wonder that wealth is sought by all means, good or bad, for it expresses almost everything. With it, it seems to me, I should be supremely happy (perhaps that is the reason I have it not). It is but the want of a few dollars that keeps us separate, that forces us to struggle on so painfully, that crushes down all the noblest yearnings of the heart and mind. I do not complain that no special miracle is worked in my behalf, that by none of those lucky windfalls which sometimes come to fools I am enriched; but it really seems that strive as hard in whatever direction I may, the current still turns against me. But I will not believe that it will be so always. At any rate I will do the best I can, make the most of my opportunities, and for the rest trust in God.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Sacramento, June 5, 1862, HGC; Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>47</sup> *Ib.*, pp. 130-1.