

LIVE QUESTIONS
BY
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COMPRISING HIS PAPERS, SPEECHES AND INTERVIEWS; ALSO HIS
MESSAGES
TO THE LEGISLATURE OF ILLINOIS, AND A STATEMENT OF THE
FACTS WHICH INFLUENCED HIS COURSE AS GOVERNOR
ON SEVERAL FAMOUS OCCASIONS.
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MEMORIAL ADDRESS ON HENRY GEORGE.
(Delivered at the Auditorium, Chicago, Dec. 5, 1897.)

Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

We have seen men of wealth and influence pass away; we have seen men of power called home, and the world scarcely looked at the bier of the one or glanced at the coffin of the other.

But today we behold the American people bringing their flowers and their tears to the grave of a poor, unpretentious private citizen.

Men of varied walks and professions, men of varied creeds and convictions, men who approved, and men who dissented have stopped to express a regret and to say a kind word for the spirit that has gone.

Seldom, indeed, is the heart of this nation moved by the taking off of one man. No one man is necessary to its existence, and new men press so quickly to fill the gap that the column seems forever unbroken.

Men who have been governors, senators or congressmen are numbered by thousands, and although each is impressed with his own importance, yet when the end comes a

brief notice in the local papers closes the chapter.

We have eighty-eight United States senators, and perhaps a million of men who want to be senators, and yet if the whole eighty-eight were wiped out there would be more talk about successors than grief for the departed. Their places would be filled, and they would scarcely be missed.

Why is this so? It is because few men touch the heart of mankind; they serve only the material, and matter has no soul that can rise up and bless their memory.

Why, then, do we linger around the grave of this private citizen who lived and worked a thousand miles away from here, who held no office, who possessed neither wealth nor power, whose life had one long, hard struggle; who had eaten the crust of poverty and drunk the bitter waters of distress? What charm had this man for us?

We are told that he was a scholar; that his literary style was so superior as to give him a world-wide fame; that after the appearance of his first great book the scholars of England delighted in doing him honor. But something more than this was needed, for, as a rule, scholars like to sup at rich men's tables; as a rule scholars are dependent, and have to curb their tongues and put a jacket on their consciences, or else look for another job. Then, too, human nature is so constituted that we look with kindly eye on the hand of a patron.

As a rule the scholars of the world work with old or neutral straw or else they mildly defend existing wrongs.

To be sure, there have been glorious exceptions, but in almost every instance the exceptions became martyrs who not only bore the taunts of their fellows but went forth with bleeding feet to push the car of civilization. The passing of a mere scholar or literary man does not necessarily moisten an eye or quicken a heartbeat. There must be something more.

We are next told that Mr. George was a great political economist; that he dug deeper into the principles of government, that he got nearer to the foundation stones of justice than any other man; that he not only gave to the world new ideas, but presented old ones in a stronger light; that this work alone must give him an enduring fame and must ultimately bless the human race.

Let us grant it. To my mind, he made almost as great an impression on the economic thought of the age as Darwin did on the world of science. The utterances of both men have been fiercely denounced by men who predicted that the new theories would bring all manner of disaster. But today you have to go far into the forest of prejudice to find a man who denies the doctrines of evolution and of natural selection. And instead of religion having been overthrown, it has simply stepped into a higher plane, where it breathes a purer atmosphere and is more vigorous than ever.

And already the thinking world is recognizing the great principle that no man or set of men can be given a perpetual monopoly of the lands of the earth or of the resources of nature. For if they can, then they can drive everybody else off of it, or they can prescribe the conditions upon which others may remain, and that moment the relation of master and servant is created.

So, also, do men already admit the proposition that if a thousand men by their industry build a city around a piece of land that is worth only \$1,000, and thus make it worth a million dollars more than it formerly was, this extra million should in equity and good conscience belong to the public that made it, and not to the man who did nothing toward creating it. And experience has already taught the world that all policies of government that enrich the few at the expense of the many are not simply unjust but are pernicious, and in the end spread suffering and misery among the weaker classes of society.

How far the theories of Mr. George can be put into operation is a question for the future -- economic theories that do not offer advantages to the few and therefore have no paid lobby to push them -- have to stand on their own merits and must possess not only the element of justice but must be capable of application. The institutions of society cannot be easily changed. Those interests that profit by existing wrongs will fight to keep their advantage. But let us assume that in time these theories will be adopted and will result in elevating the race and greatly reducing human misery. This would bring fame and the gratitude of the world; but there would yet be something wanting.

There have been many great economists who won fame, and whose doctrines were adopted and helped to shape the destiny of the world. Aye, some of them helped to bless the race and yet no tears moistened the graves of their authors.

What, then, draws the world to this man? It is the broad sympathy for suffering

mortals which he possessed. Henry George's soul went out toward all that were in distress. His ear caught the cry of sorrow that has saddened the ages from the time that the children of Israel sat down by the rivers of Babylon and wept.

In writing *Progress and Poverty* he dipped his pen into the tears of the human race, and with a celestial clearness wrote down what he conceived to be eternal truths. When he died there was nowhere a soul that cried out, "There is one iron hand less to grind us, one wolf less to tear our flesh," but everywhere a feeling that a friend of the race had gone.

He recognized the great fact that a governmental policy may determine not only the political but the moral and physical conditions of a people, and that most of the governments of the past and many of the present were simply powerful machines controlled by criminal selfishness, which not only crushed the aspirations of man but robbed him of his substance and enslaved his children; that while there are here and there individuals of such exceptional strength as to overcome their environment the mass of men have to bend to the conditions around them; that while intemperance and shiftlessness will destroy individuals in any station, it is possible to reduce a whole people to such poverty, hardship and exposure as to beget intemperance, degradation and misery.

Recognizing these great facts, he strove to educate the world to the necessity of a change of policies and governmental theories. In doing this he fixed his eye on the pole star of justice and tried to bring every sentence into line with that vision. Never once did he falter. Other so-called thinkers might be influenced by social, financial or political considerations, but to him the rays of justice were like rays of light -- they would not bend, and he wanted them to shine on all mankind.

Labor was at the base of his fabric. He wanted every man to earn what he got and was opposed to all systems that enabled one man to devour the fruits of another man's toil. He believed that tainted dollars eat the soul of the owner and that polluted wealth rots down families.

The world has decided that modesty is indispensable to greatness. In nature the shallows murmur, while the great depths are dumb. The late Professor Swing once said in a sermon, "We leave the lofty bearing and the high stepping to salaried servants. A man has something else to do."

And, my friends, when one turned from the multitude of lofty bearing, high stepping and self-important men, it was like entering a morning in June to meet the quiet, unpretentious and sincere Henry George.

I last saw him during the summer. He looked feeble and worn. He seemed like a man who felt that his career was over and who calmly watched the shadows grow longer and had nothing to regret. He had been visited by a great family affliction, but he did not refer to it.

He seemed much alarmed over the dangers that are threatening our country. He had been a Democrat of the kind that Lincoln and Jefferson were, and he felt that corruption was eating the heart out of this nation; that political bossism was one of the instruments through which corruption worked; that party names were often used to conjure with for the purpose of helping dishonest men to further their schemes.

As I took leave of him I felt that he could not do much more for his country. But I was mistaken; for soon thereafter the mayoralty campaign opened in New York City. He determined to register a protest against the two political machines that had no inscription upon their banners except corruption and spoils.

There was no prospect of being elected, but he hoped that the country might profit by his example. His friends tried to dissuade him; his physician told him that it would be fatal, that he could not survive the campaign. "Well," he replied, "I cannot die in a better cause." That moment Henry George stepped into the charmed circle of the world's heroes. A readiness to give up life for a principle is the highest form of heroism known to man.

You remember the fight he made. The American people looked on in amazement. This one earnest man with his assistants was stirring the great city to its depths; the people were arising and flocking to him. There seemed to be a political ground swell until within a few days of the election, when suddenly a hand reached out from behind the great curtain and took him away. The chapter closed, and Henry George was dead.

He had shown what one earnest, patriotic man can do toward restoring the people to their inheritance and then gone home. He is gone, we are here. Have we the patriotism, the courage, the character, the manhood to carry out his work? Approve of his doctrines, if you like, or reject them; but on the necessity of rescuing our institutions from the slimy hands of the corruptionist, there can be no difference of

opinion. Jackson sent word that if any man pulls down the flag shoot him on the spot. My friends, polluting the flag is a thousand times worse than pulling it down, for it destroys the people over whom it floats. Therefore, let the word go over this land, "If any man pollutes the flag, hang him on the spot."

Great as were the services of Mr. George as a scholar, as an economist and as a patriot, the example he has set the young men of this country is still greater. He has shown how to pass through those long, dark days; aye, years, during which neither friends nor sunshine nor dollars draw near, and during, which the road to perdition seemed so alluring. He has shown that labor, lofty purpose and untiring perseverance will surely win, and that without them there can be no honorable career. He has shown that the road to achievement rarely runs along the line of office holding. In fact very few of the great men of the country ever hold office.

How sad it is to watch the multitude of well meaning young men coming in endless procession; having kind parents, good homes, a fair education, but imbued with the mistaken idea that the way to win glory is to hold office. And instead of struggling up the hill, they commence work in the underbrush where many of them spend their lives. They breathe the poisons and learn the tricks that prevail there, and soon the bleared eye tells the story of a life that is being thrown away, and there follows financial, mental, moral and physical disintegration. Even if they succeed for a time, the hands of the fates soon push them over and the waters of oblivion swallow them up.

There is nothing more honorable than to conscientiously serve one's country, in public office or out of it. But those cases are getting to be entirely too numerous in which extraordinary powers of manipulation, coupled with a want of conviction, keeps some men in high office for many years, and then, instead of an old age that is glorious with good deeds, they are simply bent with the wrinkles of duplicity and they finally sink into graves which the kindly grasses hide from a deceived and betrayed people.

The life of Henry George tells the young men that if they would render great service to their country they must be conscientious and independent. They must be able to "go it alone." If they would breathe the purer atmosphere that inspires the souls of men they must struggle up the steeps, they must travel a road that is a lonesome road -- a road that is rocky and dusty and that has neither springs nor shade trees beside it. But that is the road along which are found the foot-prints of genius and the finger-boards that point to immortality.

"Let the breeze blow up or the clouds blow over
Nothing cares he for the clouds or the clover;
But he welcomed the grave which was just at hand,
And which gave him a share of his Father's land."