

## 1861 — 1865

**D**uring the Civil War the choices that young men of military age had to make were of course less prefigured than in our day. The draft was less certain; and no area of federal activity, from taxes to artillery, was as tightly organized then as now. But we should err if we slipped into saying that for Henry George's generation the anxieties of 1861, the ultimates we phrase as the downfall or survival of civilization, seemed less tragic than the anxieties of 1917, 1941, and 1950 have seemed to people of our own day. Though there had been a generation of crying 'wolf' between North and South, perhaps no nation that has experienced war was ever so unready as the United States then was for compulsion, for the military, for the realities of battle and revolution. When the showdown did come, it was shocking in the extreme, and all that was most dear seemed to hang in the balance.

In George's case awareness of abolitionism in the East gave meaning to the national tragedy, as he viewed its slow unfolding from a distance. As the son of an office-holding Democrat he might in easier times have found the party battles of the new state of his residence to be interesting, and the dominant position of his father's party to be entirely to taste. Recent California politics had been not unlike Pennsylvania's: a successful intrusion of Know Nothing native Americanism in 1855, and a clear victory for the Democrats in 1856. But, very unlike what he would do in the future, Henry at this stage took no notice of state or local politics. Perhaps he was

too young and too new in the state to know or care. Certainly he pitched his political concerns at the national and moral level appropriate to his personal history in Philadelphia. In 1859 he wrote to his old opponent in slavery discussion, his mother, that California displayed a contemptible provincial lack of interest in the John Brown affair. And early in the election year he troubled to read a constitutional history of the United States. His letters show him to have been intensely aware of the growing crisis.

Of course he voted for Abraham Lincoln, and we can imagine his home thoughts when letters told him that the older and younger members of the family were at sixes and sevens, variously for Douglas, Bell, and Lincoln. Voting for the first time, he must have experienced a special excitement. It was not only that he was differing from his parents, but the margin in California was so slight as to magnify the responsibility of the individual voter.

Nor did Lincoln's victory end the anxieties of decision making in the state. While proposals were voiced first, that California lead a new secession movement and set up a Pacific republic, and second, that sympathy and aid be extended to the Confederacy, he endured the crisis within his heart. His family kept him informed about sentiment at home: 'You cannot feel it as we do,' his father said, 'All around us is warlike . . . Nothing now but the sound of the drum and the marching of troops South.' But Henry did feel it, as for him personally policy thinking yielded to pondering about the meaning of the war and about what his own duty might be.

He estimated that joining the army in California would lead to nothing more important than frontier duty keeping Indians quiet. In perhaps the longest, surely the most emotional letter of his life, the one written to Jane George on 15 September 1861, which we shall need to consider later as his 'Millennial Letter,' he said that if he were home, and situated as his friends were, he too would go to war. 'Not that I like the idea of fighting my countrymen — not that I think it is the best or pleasantest avocation, or that the fun of soldiering is anything to speak of; but in this life or death struggle I should like to have a hand ... I have felt a good deal like enlisting, even here, and probably would have done so had I not felt that my duty to you all required me to remain, though I did not, and do not, think our volunteers are really needed or will do any fighting that will amount to anything; but I should

like to place my willingness on record, and show that one of our family was willing to serve his country. We cannot tell. It may be my duty yet, though I sincerely hope not.'

All the rest of his life the Civil War was to be for Henry George not a bitterness personally experienced but a tragedy viewed in perspective and deeply felt. Another passage in the same letter should be quoted here, partly

because the time of writing was yet so near his religious training and his conversion, and partly because it shows how very early, and also how self-propelling, he was in searching for a Christian point of view on the fratricidal war. 'Truly it seems that we have fallen on evil days. A little while ago all was fair and bright, and now the storm howls around us with a strength and fury that almost unnerves one. Our country is being torn to pieces and ourselves, our homes, filled with distress. As to the ultimate end I have no doubt. If civil war should pass over the whole country, leaving nothing but devastation behind it, I think my faith in the ultimate good would remain unchanged; but it is hard to feel so of our individual cases. On great events and movements we can philosophize, but when it comes down to ourselves, to our homes, to those *we love*, then we can only feel; our philosophy goes to the dogs, and we but look prayerfully, tearfully, to Him who hath more care for us than for all the sparrows.'

Meanwhile during the spring and summer of 1861, the sale of the *California Home Journal* had put Henry George out of his job, and he had risked a business adventure. The opportunity he seized represented neatly the state of affairs in California journalism. Before November 1860 most of the newspapers, like the preponderance of the votes, had been Democratic, but now the change of politics encouraged new ventures and new ideas. Though in later days important papers begun or reorganized during the Civil War period were to concern Henry George, in the season when Lincoln took office he was of course not ready to take up anything very weighty. But he did go into a shoestring proposition, in partnership with four or five other young men. They took over the San Francisco *Daily Evening Journal*, which under the name *Constitution* had supported the Unionist candidates, Bell and Everett, during the election. On terms of investing \$100, money which he had saved from recent earnings, George became an equal partner, and an enthusiastic young entrepreneur into the bargain.

He pushed for a policy of literary-interest and human-interest journalism, like that to which he was accustomed on the *Home Journal*. To the bright young sister who was now teaching school he addressed a request, the day before Sumter, that she send a 'nice gossipy letter, once in a while, for the paper. You could do it exquisitely, I know. Try it, and if the paper is going on by that time (which there is little doubt of) I'll pay you

well. No political news, but town-talk, sensations among woman-kind, new books, scraps of sentiment, poetry, new fashions.' About his own future he added: 'I think we have a good prospect, and in a little while will have a good property, which will be an independence for a life-time.'

He had his way on *Evening Journal* policy, and Jane actually contributed a few letters, very feminine and bluestocking, during the summer and fall. In June the paper announced a circulation of 3000, a good number to grow on, and for an early-summer season, Henry George's hopes ran high.

At just this point letters from Philadelphia indicated, at first fears, then the certainty, that Mr. George would lose his job at the Customs House. A Republican was now slated as collector and had let it be known that the axe would fall, on 'the ground that with the Victor is the spoil, and rotation in office is just and proper.' To this Henry responded with loyal bravado, assuring his people that he would sell his partnership if need be. In return came an outpouring of gratitude and refusal from home. 'It shows me,' his father said, 'that my Dear Son far away was willing to make any sacrifice to help and assist his parents in distress and so with all my dear children.'

One hazard was passed, yet month by month life was becoming infinitely complicated. In August the *Journal* paid the partners only \$6 a week apiece. As a small journal, which could not afford the new telegraphic news service, it confronted mounting wartime disadvantages. Unpaid bills forced Henry to set up a cot in the office and return to austerities reminiscent of British Columbia. Even so he professed to the people at home that the paper was growing and promised 'a certainty (comparatively, of course).' He predicted \$30 a week for each partner, within a year. The *San Francisco Call* had been built up that way, why not the *Evening Journal*?

But it was not hope of business success which was really directing

Henry's course in the hard fall of 1861. He had no adequate answer for his parents, who, when they learned how the *Evening Journal* was actually going, changed their minds about the wisdom of remaining in California. The printing business was booming in wartime Philadelphia. Now he should come home, they urged. Yet up to this time not even Henry himself, still less the Philadelphians to whom he had given no intimation, quite

suspected how fixed in California he was: that a girl was about to become the deciding influence on what he would do, where he would live, in the crucial next few months.

Annie Corsina Fox had entered his life on the evening of 12 October, a year earlier. Reluctantly Henry had let a friend persuade him to go to a party that night at the home of a Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Flintoff and Mrs. Flintoff's mother, Mrs. Henry McCloskey. He had almost balked at the door. A huge crowd, a singing tenor, and altogether more show and side than he had ever been accustomed to quite chilled him off. Then his eye lit on the dainty person to honor whom on her seventeenth birthday the party was being given. 'Let's go in,' proposed Henry George.

The girl who attracted him completely came from a British and Irish overseas background. As one of two children of the marriage in Australia of Elizabeth McCloskey to a major in the British army, Annie Fox had already behind her a story of domestic tragedy and much moving about. Her parents' marriage had broken early. The known facts are: the McCloskeys were pure Irish and Catholic, and Major Fox a redcoat Anglican; Mrs. Fox had married at sixteen, and her husband was twenty years older; after a short while they separated and he disappeared completely; and a few years later, when Annie was ten, the young mother died of what the family called a broken heart. For the little girl this meant a bringing-up by her grandparents, coming and going with grandfather Henry McCloskey, who was a contractor, railroad builder, and speculator. After Australia the family had a year in Hawaii, and then came on to San Francisco. Annie and her sister were sent to school at the convent of the Sisters of Charity in Los Angeles, and Teresa had taken the veil. Annie had reached the point of doing a little teaching there — English for Spanish-speaking girls — when she was called to San Francisco to attend her grandmother, who was now widowed and in declining health. When she met

Henry George, Annie was engaged to be married to some man about whom the family records tell us nothing — an unhappy commitment according to the little that is said. In her own much later retrospect her whole situation in the Flintoff household was miserable, and she a very lonely girl.

She and Henry reached an understanding almost at once. Though the grandmother died, apparently in December 1860, two or three months had been long enough for the old lady to approve the match in family councils, as Annie must have known. And at that time — these were still \$30-a-week *Home Journal* days for Henry — Annie's uncle, Matthew McCloskey, who also lived in San Francisco and acted as a kind of guardian, agreed.

During the winter and afterward the young people kept constant company. We are told that they took walks and memorized poetry; and the man instructed the girl in the meaning of the national calamity. Their engagement was no secret to people who knew them in San Francisco, but Henry said nothing in letters to his family. Even after a visiting friend aroused suspicions in Philadelphia, Henry camouflaged the situation by telling a jealous sister that, 'One thing is certain, if I do marry it will be no one but an orphan without relatives, so that I can pack her up, and come home at a moment's notice, and stay as long as I please.'

By all the signs, love would have marched straight to the altar, and with the blessings of the McCloskeys, perhaps as early as the summer of 1861, had it not been for Henry's hard times and his father's. But the shortage of funds was a fact; and to a bad time of frustration, and to a head whirling with affairs and anxieties, we owe the Millennial Letter, from which Henry's ideas on the Civil War and his sense of his own patriotic obligation have been quoted. To be sure he still refused to share with anyone at home the fact of the existence of Annie Corsina Fox; but everything else he poured out, and the concerns of young love penetrated every line he wrote.

Of course it is not at all unique to discover a young man suffering a season of sorrows. The war years, and the whole romantic century, abounded in them. It is scarcely less unusual that Henry took the comfort he needed, when the facts of life failed to square with hope, from mankind's ancient comforting beliefs: the promise of immortality and the promise of Utopia. Yet the letter is engaging,

because the boy wrote into it a connected estimate of his roles in life, as citizen, son, and Christian, and as a man of personal ambition. And the ideas and attitudes the writer displayed are important because they exhibit

the faith and hope from which moral and intellectual growth — and in time the writing of a great book — sprang.

The passages quoted below will not be injured, nor their meaning twisted, by some rearranging and omitting of phrases and sentences, as the punctuation indicates. Henry began by saying how impatient he felt, as his affairs stood still and he could not make them move, and he drew from a great sea poem:

*Storm or hurricane,  
Anything to put a close  
To this most dread monotonous repose.*

What he thought the good society ought to be he called the millennium: ‘How I long for the Golden Age — for the promised Millennium, when each one will be free to follow his best and noblest impulses, unfettered by the restrictions and necessities which our present state of society imposes upon him — when the poorest and 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 support wants but little above those of the animal.’

George applied local color to his vision of the Golden Age. First, he pictured unselfish family life as showing what human energy rightly disposed might mean. James George’s new marriage furnished a lovely illustration: ‘His wife is one of those women who makes the happiness and well-being of their husbands and children an art and a study. Whenever I go there in the evening I always find them together — a pretty, happy family.’ Then, the California hills he made romantic and millennial, too. ‘I had a dream last night . . . I thought I was scooping treasure out of the earth by handfuls, almost delirious with the thoughts of what I would now be able to do, and how happy it would all be ... Is it any wonder that men lust for gold, and are willing to give up almost anything for it, when it covers everything — the purest and noblest desires of their hearts, the exercise 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

dim and blue in the distance, where I could gather those I love, and live content with what nature and our own resources would furnish..

The brother admitted to Jane homesickness in his emotions, a need for the old assurances and security. ‘At night when I lie down and think of the old times — when I wake sometimes at midnight, and I can almost feel the kisses that seemed to press my brow a minute or two before, and the voices that I heard in my dreams seem to linger in my ears yet, and I almost cry with mingled pleasure and pain . . . But it will be soon, not so very far off either I hope, though at present I cannot count the time.’

In a climactic passage, which he perhaps felt none too safe in writing, and yet pushed a little hard, Henry inserted a paragraph, his first recorded discussion of the idea of immortality. ‘What a glorious thought it is, that at last all will be over — all trial, all care, all suffering forever finished; all desire filled, all longing satisfied — what now is but hope become a reality — perfect love swallowing up all in one boundless sea of bliss. How the old hymn that we used to sing in Sunday School swells and peals through the mind, when one thinks of and realizes its meaning as a living truth, like a glorious burst of heavenly music, telling of the joys of the redeemed and freed.

*"Oh that will be joyful . . .  
To meet and part no more."*

What a thought. What a picture! With all we love or have loved here “to meet and part no more” — one unbroken family around His Throne. Can we be unhappy long, if we believe this?’ Although all George’s future passion and his sophistication about the idea of immortality had still to be born, his lifelong fascination with it had arrived this early.

With this passage the writer had explored almost every individual escape available to a young man who feels overwhelmed: to join the army, to strike it rich, to live by the soil, to go back home, to die. The fact that he did not even hint at the alternative which made his life famous — that a Christian or a democrat may strive to transform society, not wait but work to see the Golden

Age arrive — shows how far short he was, at twenty-two, from being generally reform-minded as in the future. His only conclusion was for



personal action: 'We must struggle, so here's for the strife.' It contained no economics except individualism, and no dedication except to self and the few he loved.

Within a month of the writing Henry tried some new moves. With two partners he dropped out of the *Evening Journal*, while the three who remained bought the shares of the sellers, on credit. He and Annie must have made their decisions together. At the moment of his selling out, she refused to leave San Francisco when Sister Corsina McKay of the Los Angeles convent — whom she loved so much as to have taken her name — invited her back for some duty, presumably teaching again in the school. And also simultaneously, Henry confessed his love to Jane, at first to her alone, to sound out the situation at home.

The sister's reply makes perfectly plain why he had kept up the deception toward Philadelphia. First, Annie's Roman Catholic faith. 'I know that our family will object to that, Ma especially,' Jane wrote, 'but still I do not think she will withhold her consent on that account.' The sister herself regretted the religious difference, and admitted pangs of jealousy; and she argued that the new home be set up in Philadelphia. But the answer Henry craved came unqualified: 'If you *really love Annie, you marry her as soon as you are able to support her* ... Love is too precious a thing to be thrown away ... 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.'

The intense courtship displeased Annie's guardian, who happened to be a real-estate developer. He troubled to make inquiries in Philadelphia. But reassurances concerning the family did nothing to improve the look of Henry as a provider, and on 2 December Mr. McCloskey forced a showdown. Discovering Henry calling, he ordered the young man to come less often. Tempers flared, and except for Annie's intervening there would have been a fight.

After a night of much praying, Annie Fox decided that she could not bear to remain where she was, and told Henry that she had better go to Los Angeles to teach. This brought the tender decision. Henry George drew a fifty-cent piece from his pocket, and said, 'Annie, this is all the money I have in the world. Will you marry

me?’ Then she made reply, ‘If you are ready to undertake the responsibilities of marriage, I will marry you.’

Before evening the groom made what preparations he could. He borrowed money and clothes and arranged with the James Georges for a couple of weeks board in the home he admired so much. Isaac Trump agreed to go to the Flintoff door and ask for ‘Mrs. Brown.’ That was the secret signal. Carrying not much more than the books of poetry they loved, Annie rode off with Henry; and they went with Ike and Ike’s fiancée for a wedding supper at a restaurant. At about nine they proceeded to the Bethel Methodist Church of Henry’s membership. A handful of friends, including Mrs. George, although James could not come, attended the ceremony. Out of consideration for both bride and groom, the minister read the Episcopal service; and on Annie’s finger her husband slipped a ring that had belonged to Mrs. McCloskey. The couple announced their marriage in the newspapers, and a month or so later in Sacramento they secured a Catholic sanction.

For three weeks Henry got by on substitute printing. Then from a friend came word of a job in Sacramento, and on Christmas day Henry left bride and cousins for the 100-mile trip up bay and river. Fortune smiled. Though at first he found only substitute printing again, the work was on the Sacramento Union, the biggest paper in the state capital. Before long his job became regular and adequate, and even before that Annie, who was desolate at being left behind, joined him in what was then California’s second city.

Altogether typical of the coming decades, the couple had an easier time in Sacramento than in San Francisco. They located first in pleasant rooms near the capitol square; they saw the spring high floods without injury to themselves; they enjoyed the summer’s aridity and heat. The worst event of the season came early when Annie was obliged to go back to San Francisco to get the personal property she had left at her Uncle Flintoff’s. She was already mentioning the possibility of a baby. So soon pregnant, she had to face a family lawsuit; and the bride’s worst anguish was to discover how vindictive her uncles could be. Matthew McCloskey would do anything to badger Henry, she reported. That Annie George was not in touch with her sister Teresa for a period of years measures the completeness of her break from the McCloskey family.

Back in Sacramento events went very well. On 3 November

1862 was born a red headed boy, the future congressman, Henry George, Jr. Meanwhile Henry, Sr., had collected his credit, perhaps a couple of hundred dollars, from the sale of the San Francisco *Daily Evening Journal*. Now earning about \$40 a week the young father was ready to take things a little easy for a change, he said.

On the Philadelphia side the parents and sisters in the family which meant so much to Henry George did everything in their power to welcome Annie as beloved daughter. Unfortunately unusual delays in the wartime winter mails had kept them in the dark more than two months about what the oldest son was doing. But then an outpouring of response to Annie's appealing letters began the sealing of her lifelong affection for her husband's family, and Mr. George wrote that he could get Henry a job at home, on the *Inquirer*. To Jane Henry wrote in June that, 'Marriage has certainly benefited me by giving a more contented and earnest frame of mind and will help me to do my best in "whatever station it pleases God to call me.'" This is the only difference I can perceive. Annie and I are so well matched in years and temperament that there is no violent change in either.' In due course Mrs. George wrote the kind of letters appropriate for a grandmother.

Not unrelated to the values in life ultimately expressed in *Progress and Poverty*, all this devotion was raised to acute consciousness at midsummer, about the time of the Second Bull Run. Word of the sudden death of Jane George struck the newlyweds as though they lived next door. Typhoid fever had taken her. Henry kept his grief to himself one night while he worked at the press; then he told Annie, and wept. 'Henry,' wrote the mother, 'how her mind developed! It was too much for her frail body. She read too much nearly every day at the library besides bringing home books.'

second, the year of Vicksburg and Gettysburg to the east — show a very idyllic side also. The young couple moved from hotel and boarding-house to a comfortable place of their own: a house with four rooms and a garden, for which they paid \$8 a month. They came to relish the climate of Sacramento and the wonderful profusion of flowers. Among other gains for security, word came from Philadelphia that Mr. George had found a new position, apparently with a sufficient salary. In every way their two years

together were justifying the gamble they had taken, eloping on nothing but love.

As of 1863 the career and money sides of life demanded most of the attention of the man of the family. Little episodes demonstrate that the recent part-proprietor of the San Francisco *Evening Journal* had no mind to be contented for long with the income and status of a workman's wages, and they offer agreeable testimony also that the future critic of speculation began with no immunity to the California disease. With a couple of friends, one of them John Barry of San Francisco, George explored the possibilities of establishing a printing business in Nevada; and with Ike Trump he looked into the chances of opening a Sacramento *Union* agency in Marysville, and also those of trying a newspaper of their own in the Russian River country. Though none of these projects came to risk and trial, George did put some money, with Trump, into mining stocks. He had seen his old boss, Joseph Duncan, make a killing, and many friends invested whatever savings they could spare. Unfortunately or fortunately, a few months of speculating decided him that paying assessments was worse than abandoning hopes for a quick clean-up, so he valued down his stocks from \$462.50 to about half, and proposed to sell all but a few which still looked good. Chastened, he told Trump: 'It is now nearly eight months since we determined to make our fortunes, and I am afraid, in spite of our sanguine hopes we have failed ... I have come to think if I get my money back I will be in luck.'

On the political side of life, one senses from these Civil War years in Sacramento a general influence on Henry George's future, more readily than one discovers any practical and immediate steps in the education of a restless printer. His residence in the state capital coincided with the governorship of Leland Stanford, the successful storekeeper and coming railroad man in politics. As first Republican statesman in California, Stanford stood for the opposite

of Pacific secession and fondness for the Confederacy, and under his administration the state made considerable economic, though inconsiderable military, contributions to the Union cause. For all the immediate, patriotic objects of the governor, George the young printer of

course had perfect sympathy. At the same time, as is well known, the future president of the Central Pacific took West coast command in the planning and arranging—the famous contact- establishing, contract-making, and statute-passing business in state and nation — that prepared for the transcontinental railroad. Though we have no contemporary comment from George, it is impossible to think that he did not hear a great deal of gossip about Stanford at this time. It is reasonable to assume that the respect which his future philosophy allowed for the role of the imaginative and aggressive capitalist in an industrial system, and the grudging admiration George never denied the man, stemmed in part from personal knowledge of the governor whose humble fellow townsman he had been.

For a future journalist as well as social thinker, Sacramento was a good place to be and work in for a while. San Francisco had all the lead in commercial and literary journalism; but, partly because Sacramento was the state capital and partly because (before the railroads were built) it had much more immediate contact with the mining and agricultural regions, the interior city had a big advantage for political and general newspapers. There were two especially strong ones, the *Union*, on which Henry George set type, and the *Bee*, of which James McClatchy was the famous editor. In later years George was to be intensely interested in the *Bee*, to regard it as an ally of his own paper, to contribute to it, and to become a personal friend of Mr. McClatchy. So far as we know there were few if any beginnings of that connection as early as 1862 and 1863. Yet it is safe to judge that George at this stage became acquainted with the *Bee's* ardency for land reform, which was a parcel of the newspaper's radical Republicanism. McClatchy had worked under Horace Greeley, and in some degree he made the *Bee* a California model of the great nationalistic and reformist *Tribune* of New York City. With Governor Stanford on one hand and the *Bee* on the other, Henry George had close views of the contrasting elements that were going into the forging of the new Republican Party.

Though perhaps George would have become reform-minded

earlier if he had worked for the *Bee* and not the *Union*, it was probably better for him as a journalist that he had his first experience on the larger newspaper. And also the *Union* fitted better with his family's political

tradition. Recently developed from Stephen A. Douglas Democracy into strong patriotic unionism, we may be sure that the young typesetter liked the paper's slogan: '*The UNION for the Union.*' Though often critical of the paper in later years, George looked back on the wartime editor, Henry Watson, as having been as great and influential a national patriot in California as Thomas Starr King. George must have been pleased in 1862 when the *Union* defended the Emancipation Proclamation, even though the editorial tone was milder than his own antislavery feeling. It is worth adding that during the Civil War the *Union* supported Governor Stanford and the other railroad builders, and that afterward it suffered regrets. In the postwar wisdom of one of the owners of the paper: 'the railroad men had professed and pretended that everything should be conducted as fairly and squarely towards the people as could be; they were going to benefit the State of California . . . All of which we encouraged.' The trouble was that the paper, like the people, had taken a bear by the tail: 'We found by G-d after warming the [railroad] into life, that it was going to bite.' This was the resentment of hindsight, which George in time would share.

All things considered, the years 1862 and 1863 in Sacramento seem to have been the period of Henry George's California life when his ideas conformed the closest with the policy of the state and with the opinion of the newspapers of the city of his residence. He went with the Republican current during the mid-war period.

A personal conflict, however, suddenly caused him to leave the city and deprived his small family of their pleasant situation. Here once more, as at King and Baird's printshop and in James George's store, Henry George fell out with his boss. Whose fault it was is not known. Henry George, Jr., tells us that like the quarrel in Victoria this one also was later made up. But at the moment the loss of a job returned him to San Francisco and opened a perilous period of his life.

As if to play for a repetition of the good luck of 1858 when he had gotten a new job so easily, George again took a room at the What Cheer House. But no David Bond appeared. The contemporaries

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Not unrelated to the values in life ultimately expressed in *Progress and Poverty*, all this devotion was raised to acute consciousness at midsummer, about the time of the Second Bull Run. Word of the sudden death of Jane George struck the newlyweds as though they lived next door. Typhoid fever had taken her. Henry kept his grief to himself one night while he worked at the press; then he told Annie, and wept. 'Henry,' wrote the mother, 'how her mind developed! It was too much for her frail body. She read too much — nearly every day at the library besides bringing home books.' In the Millennial Letter, addressed to Jane less than a year earlier, Henry had discussed immortality as though it were a promise, a rosy vague extension of lives already filled. But now he had to believe, he told his wife as he paced the floor, that the soul of the individual conquers death, and outlasts it, and proves it of no avail.

Altogether the fourteen months from the Millennial Letter to the birth of the baby had contained about all the crises to which young people are subject, and some of the strains had been extreme. Yet all had been the



kinds that time does conquer, and in a backward glance the first and second years of marriage — especially the

earlier if he had worked for the *Bee* and not the *Union*, it was probably better for him as a journalist that he had his first experience on the larger newspaper. And also the *Union* fitted better with his family's political tradition. Recently developed from Stephen A. Douglas Democracy into strong patriotic unionism, we may be sure that the young typesetter liked the paper's slogan: '*The UNION for the Union.*' Though often critical of the paper in later years, George looked back on the wartime editor, Henry Watson, as having been as great and influential a national patriot in California as Thomas Starr King. George must have been pleased in 1862 when the *Union* defended the Emancipation Proclamation, even though the editorial tone was milder than his own antislavery feeling. It is worth adding that during the Civil War the *Union* supported Governor Stanford and the other railroad builders, and that afterward it suffered regrets. In the postwar wisdom of one of the owners of the paper: 'the railroad men had professed and pretended that everything should be conducted as fairly and squarely towards the people as could be; they were going to benefit the State of California . . . All of which we encouraged.' The trouble was that the paper, like the people, had taken a bear by the tail: 'We found by G-d after warming the [railroad] into life, that it was going to bite.' This was the resentment of hindsight, which George in time would share.

All things considered, the years 1862 and 1863 in Sacramento seem to have been the period of Henry George's California life when his ideas conformed the closest with the policy of the state and with the opinion of the newspapers of the city of his residence. He went with the Republican current during the mid-war period.

A personal conflict, however, suddenly caused him to leave the city and deprived his small family of their pleasant situation. Here once more, as at King and Baird's printshop and in James George's store, Henry George fell out with his boss. Whose fault it was is not known. Henry George, Jr., tells us that like the quarrel in Victoria this one also was later made up. But at the moment the loss of a job returned him to San Francisco and opened a perilous period of his life.

As if to play for a repetition of the good luck of 1858 when he had gotten a new job so easily, George again took a room at the What Cheer House. But no David Bond appeared. The contemporaries

of Pacific secession and fondness for the Confederacy, and under his administration the state made considerable economic, though inconsiderable military, contributions to the Union cause. For all the immediate, patriotic objects of the governor, George the young printer of course had perfect sympathy. At the same time, as is well known, the future president of the Central Pacific took West coast command in the planning and arranging—the famous contact- establishing, contract-making, and statute-passing business in state and nation — that prepared for the transcontinental railroad. Though we have no contemporary comment from George, it is impossible to think that he did not hear a great deal of gossip about Stanford at this time. It is reasonable to assume that the respect which his future philosophy allowed for the role of the imaginative and aggressive capitalist in an industrial system, and the grudging admiration George never denied the man, stemmed in part from personal knowledge of the governor whose humble fellow townsman he had been.

For a future journalist as well as social thinker, Sacramento was a good place to be and work in for a while. San Francisco had all the lead in commercial and literary journalism; but, partly because Sacramento was the state capital and partly because (before the railroads were built) it had much more immediate contact with the mining and agricultural regions, the interior city had a big advantage for political and general newspapers. There were two especially strong ones, the *Union*, on which Henry George set type, and the *Bee*, of which James McClatchy was the famous editor. In later years George was to be intensely interested in the *Bee*, to regard it as an ally of his own paper, to contribute to it, and to become a personal friend of Mr. McClatchy. So far as we know there were few if any beginnings of that connection as early as 1862 and 1863. Yet it is safe to judge that George at this stage became acquainted with the *Bee*'s ardency for land reform, which was a parcel of the newspaper's radical Republicanism. McClatchy had worked under Horace Greeley, and in some degree he made the *Bee* a California model of the great nationalistic and reformist *Tribune*

of New York City. With Governor Stanford on one hand and the *Bee* on the other, Henry George had close views of the contrasting elements that were going into the forging of the new Republican Party.

Though perhaps George would have become reform-minded

who speak of very good times in San Francisco in 1864 speak mainly of speculation and building, and certain war-stimulated enterprises. The other side of the coin was that forces of economic deflation and upset were also at work; and one exact contemporary of Henry George, though he was an engineer, had a very hard time getting and keeping jobs. Do not come to San Francisco, Frank Hinckley advised his brother: ‘a surplus of young men in the city [makes conditions] so that it is next to impossible for a man to get into business even with strong influential friends. There are many who would be glad enough to pay their board until better times come.’

Precisely so with Henry George. When Annie and the baby came on he moved from a good hotel to a shabby one; later they took rooms in a private house and finally wound up in a second-story housekeeping flat. George could locate no proper job. His old newspaper, the *Evening Journal*, had nothing better for him than soliciting subscriptions. And his good friend Trump, who had come down from the mining country out of work, had no better scheme than peddling clothes wringers. For a few days George put the two selling projects together, miserably tramping from house to house in Alameda County across the bay. Things must have seemed to be looking up when he found some substitute printing again; but the *Evening Journal* was slow to pay, and the work he got on the big *Evening Bulletin* — the paper he would later assault the most ferociously — did not amount to much.

Only in the spring of 1864 did he turn up anything which at all suited him, a six-month job on the *Daily American Flag*. This was another forgotten paper of the same class as the *Home Journal* and the *Evening Journal*. It was owned and edited by one D. O. McCarthy, an Irishman of vigorous anti-slave and unionist ideas like James McClatchy’s. But at best the job was stopgap, and George thought again of going into business in the mining country, perhaps Sonora or Silver Mountain. Finally he decided to try job- printing in San Francisco, in a partnership with Trump. Once more working on a shoestring, the two purchased part of the equipment of the

same *Evening Journal* on which Henry had worked, and which had just expired.

The venture could hardly have been more awkwardly timed, or less successful. In December, the month of starting operations,

Annie George was pregnant, seven months or so along. The following is Henry's diary entry for Christmas day, 1864. 'December 25. Determined to keep a regular journal, and to cultivate habits of determination, energy, and industry. Feel that I am in a bad situation, and must use my utmost effort to keep afloat and go ahead. Will try to follow the following general rules for one week:

'1st. In every case determine rationally what is best to be done. '2nd. To do everything determined upon immediately, or as soon as an opportunity presents.

'3rd. To write down what I shall determine upon doing for the succeeding day.

'Saw landlady and told her I was not able to pay rent.'

In January the question became literally that of having enough to eat. Some days there were twenty-five cents apiece for the partners to take from the printing-office till. Dinners for the Georges and for Ike Trump who ate with them dropped into a routine of cheap fish, corn meal, milk, potatoes, and bread. They continued to get milk by persuading the milkman to trade it for printed cards. Annie George took in sewing as long as she was able, and she carried all her trinkets, except the McCloskey wedding ring, to the pawnshop. Then on the morning of the twenty-seventh she was delivered of her second child, Richard. Possibly she really heard what she thought she heard, the doctor's orders: 'Don't stop to wash the child; he is starving, Feed him.'

On this day of anguish, in a dismal rain, occurred the event often told of Henry George. In his own words: 'I walked along the street and made up my mind to get money from the first man whose appearance might indicate that he had it to give. I stopped a man — a stranger — and told him I wanted \$5. He asked what I wanted it for. I told him that my wife was

confined and that I had nothing to give her to eat. He gave me the money. If he had not, I think that I was desperate enough to have killed him.’

The ordeal lasted for weeks. In February George surrendered to Trump his interest in the printing establishment with the understanding that, if a sale brought in any money, he would have a share. Next, about the first of March, Henry had several days of typesetting; and Annie paid \$9 rent by the earnings of her needle. At this point \$20 a week, if they could only have it regularly, looked about ideal to the wife and mother.

The need to redirect his life, which these hard times compelled him to acknowledge, is better expressed in Henry George’s words than in any possible rephrasing. ‘I am afloat again, with the world before me. I have commenced this little book as an experiment — to aid me in acquiring habits of regularity, punctuality, and purpose ... I am starting out afresh, very much crippled and embarrassed, owing over \$200. I have been unsuccessful in everything. I wish to profit by my experience and to cultivate those qualities necessary to success in which I have been lacking. I have not saved as much as I ought and I am resolved to practice a rigid economy until I have something ahead.

‘1st. To make every cent I can.

‘2nd. To spend nothing unnecessarily.

‘3rd. To put something by each week, if it is only a five-cent piece borrowed for the purpose.

‘4th. Not to run into debt if it can be avoided.’

In the matter of getting on with people, George planned:

‘1st. To endeavour to make an acquaintance and friend of everyone with whom I am brought in contact.

‘2nd. To stay at home less, and be more social.

‘3rd. To strive to think consecutively and decide quickly.’

In this time of greatest trouble Henry George made the trial upon which hinged the decision of his lifetime. His diary dates the event to the hour, on the afternoon of 25 March 1865: ‘After getting breakfast, took the wringing machine which I had been using as a sample back to Faulkner’s; then went to Eastmans and saw to bill; loafed around until about 2 p.m.

Concluded that the best thing I could do would be to go home and write a little. Came home and wrote for the sake of practice an essay on the "Use of Time," which occupied me until Annie prepared dinner.'

The 'Use of Time,' which marks George's decision for a writing career, was the first essay he had tried since the trifling days of the Lawrence Society almost a decade earlier, and the first sustained writing since the very private Millennial Letter. He was writing clearly again but there is little in the essay to indicate either that the young man's natural skill as a writer had held up or that it had declined, in recent years. We do learn something about his values in life. As in 1861, money for himself occupied front position in his mind. Not just \$20 or \$30 a week but wealth was what he

wanted, in an amount to open the doors to good things: 'more congenial employment and associates,' opportunities 'to cultivate my mind and exert to a fuller extent my powers,' and real capacity 'to minister to the comfort and enjoyment of those whom I love most.' Sizing up his present predicament, he felt remorse for the hours he had idled. 'If, for instance, I had applied myself to the practice of bookkeeping and arithmetic I might now have been an expert in those things; or I might have had the dictionary at my fingers ends; been a practised, and perhaps an able writer; a much better printer; or been able to read and write French, Spanish, or any other modern or ancient language to which I might have directed my attention, and the mastery of any of these things would give me an additional, appreciable power, and means by which to work my end, not to speak of that which would have been gained by exercise and good mental habits.'

The young man, now twenty-five, recognized of himself that, entirely apart from the hazards of unemployment, he would never be satisfied to earn his living by his trade. He did not deceive himself into thinking that writing would build a sure bridge from poverty to riches, and he was not especially idealistic about that calling. Yet feeling his own way forward he did begin to generalize a notion of human capacity — a pretty democratic notion — which he would enlarge in his greatest writing. As he put it now: 'To secure any given result it is only necessary to rightly supply sufficient force. Some men possess a greater amount of natural power than others and

produce quicker and more striking results; yet it is apparent that the majority, if properly and continuously applied, are sufficient to accomplish much more than they generally do.' So for himself George determined that, 'I will endeavour to acquire facility and elegance in the expression of my thoughts by writing essays or other matters which I will preserve for future comparison. And in this practice it will be well to aim at mechanical neatness and grace, as well as at proper and polished language.'

A little surprisingly, because nothing previous, unless it be membership in the printers union, indicates conviction or idea on behalf of labor, George made his next piece of writing a plea for working men. He did this in a communication to the editor of the new *Journal of the Trades and Workmen*, the short-lived first labor paper to be published on the Pacific coast. 'We, the workers of

mankind,' he began, live in the brightest day that has ever dawned for the 'like of us.' Without bothering to justify his optimism, but complimenting the editor, George estimated the service a labor journal could render: 'At a time when most of our public prints pander to wealth and power and would crush the poor man beneath the wheel of the capitalist's carriage; when one begins to talk of the "work people" and "farm servants" of this coast, and another to deplore the high rate of wages [this was true of the *Alta California*] ... I, for one, feel that your enterprise is one which we should all feel the necessity of, and to which we should lend our cordial support.' Hortatory but innocent of program, the piece contains little foretaste of future ideas, and no suggestion of an economist's analytical powers in the making. Only the simple identification of himself with a cause appears: in his very first published writing Henry George spoke for laboring men's improving their economic situation.

While some time was to pass before the opportunity came to develop this vein, another effort of 1865 assures us that the paper in the *Journal of Trades and Workmen* was no sport, no misrepresentation of present interests. This text is lacking, but George's own word tells us that he did an 'article about laws relating to sailors.' It appears that in hard times his memory had brought back the struggle of the crew and captain of the

*Hindoo* in Hobson's Bay, and that he now made his first plea for maritime labor.

George's second publication, which came out only a week after the first, shifted the scene of thought and elevated the level of publication. This time he did a 'Plea for the Supernatural,' quite in the California mode of being fond of the esoteric, and it was printed in the distinguished literary journal, the *Californian*, where Mark Twain and Bret Harte and 'a lot of other bright young writers' were appearing. Using the first person singular, George wrote of a psychological event during a voyage on the Indian Ocean. The sight of the Southern Cross, he said, had flooded his mind with memories of what his mother had taught him: the names of the stars, and ideas of the Creator's love. A meteor had flashed. 'To me it was an emblem of myself: having no part in the sweet glory around, it was quenched in darkness ... A voice called me ... Before me stood my mother as she was years ago ... That I could not hear and see this, on the trackless Indian Ocean, miles and miles from

land, proves nothing. *I did*. Whether with the sense of the body I care not; but my soul saw and heard, and it knows.'

There is no way to tell whether, in the writer's mind, the story was completely fictional or was developed from an experience of his own aboard the *Hindoo*, but we can be fairly sure that the 'Plea for the Supernatural' is not to be read as a very literal confession of belief. In a short interval George cashed in two or three times on San Francisco's vogue for spiritualism. In the second chapter we anticipated from 1856 the best of the series, the 'Dust to Dust' story which, as he wrote it about this time, he embellished with a supernaturalism not his own at the time of the event. That story, too, appeared in the *Californian*. The important thing is that in this beginning of serious writing George picked up emotional themes, just as he had done as a youngster for the fun of the Lawrence Society. His native skill as reporter of external events, displayed in 1855, he had not yet begun to develop.

Within a fortnight of George's debut in the San Francisco magazines came by wire from Washington the shock of the assassination of President Lincoln. The word arrived at ten o'clock in the morning, Saturday, 15 April, and the city's chords of feeling vibrated almost out of control. Business



stopped, the courts closed, speeches were improvised, and mourning was quickly displayed. Vengeance too broke out. Law and order yielded as inflamed persons broke into pro-Southern newspaper offices and scattered type and destroyed property. Ike Trump took some degree of leadership in the turmoil, and Henry George seems to have participated. Then in his little flat, with great emotion, George wrote a letter to the editor of the *Alta California*, the city's oldest and most conservative paper, on which he was at the moment 'subbing.'

It is a comment on the excitement of the day that the letter was printed, not in the regular edition but apparently in an extra, though perhaps it went no farther than proof. An editor's line explained that the 'stirring article' had been contributed by a printer. Under the heading, 'Sic Semper Tyrannis!' George pictured the wounded president against the 'glitter and glare' of the theater. 'They have struck down the just because of his justice, and the fate they have fixed upon him shall be theirs.' Retributive justice and Christian atonement, George mixed his moral ideas. 'What a fitting time Good Friday! At this very moment . . . sounds the

solemn wail of the Tenebrae. Now . . . again has Evil triumphed, and the blood of its victim sealed its fate ... As a martyr of Freedom— as a representative of the justice of a great Nation, the name of the Victim will live forever ... *Abraham Lincoln* will remain a landmark of the progress of the race.'

It was an impulsive way to break into newsprint. Yet despite all crudities, 'Sic Semper Tyrannis!' won for the writer his first job as a newspaper reporter. The *Alta* commissioned him to describe the Lincoln mourning in the city, and the reports in that paper tell us that he thrilled to the occasion. On Wednesday, 14,000 citizens followed a catafalque through the city; the great Second Inaugural was read; Horatio Stebbins, Starr King's successor, gave the principal address; the crowd sang thrillingly the *Battle Cry of Freedom*. The reporter put visual detail and feeling both into the *Alta's*- stories that week.

Then unsolicited, Henry George wrote another letter, a very thoughtful one, and it was printed as a front-page editorial of the *Alta* in the regular Sunday edition, 23 April. The title was simply 'Abraham Lincoln.' 'No common man, yet the qualities which made him great were eminently common ... He was one of the leaders who march alone before the

advancing ranks of the people, who direct their steps and speak with their voice ... Hot blood called him slow, and cold blood called him hot; but the universal current, tempered by the moods and springing from the hearts of the times, pulsed through his veins ... No other system could have produced him; through no crowd of courtiers could such a man have forced his way ... And, as in our time of need, the man that was needed came forth, let us know that it will always be so, and that under our institutions, when the rights of the people are endangered, from their ranks will spring the men for the times ... Let us thank God for him; let us trust God for him; let us place him in that Pantheon which no statue of a tyrant ever sullied the hearts of a free people.'

Passion had evoked, and a week had brought from incoherency into coherency, the political affirmations of the young printer who had just one month earlier determined to write. In the common anguish he had turned from faddish supernaturalism, in which he could never have reached maturity, to the folk mysticism which democracy does produce. Unknowing of course, but in common

with many of the great men of contemporary letters and as early as any, he had made a small but eloquent contribution to the legend of the fallen Lincoln.

The end of the war and his being so little employed very soon provided the occasion of George's nearest approach to service in a military force. California, as the one unionist state adjoining Mexico, was particularly sensitive to the insult to the United States of the presence of the Emperor Maximilian on a throne created by Napoleon III, contrary to the Monroe Doctrine. Henry George felt the humiliation bitterly; and when a San Francisco group formed, in the old filibuster style, he joined it. He became a lieutenant under an Indian fighter named Burn; and a friend, probably John Barry, became a major. The project contemplated an invasion from the west coast of Mexico to help Juarez topple the foreigner from the throne.

Not that this was pure impulse with George, for in this undertaking money was offered at last, after two lean years. The *Alta* agreed to take any newsletters he would write from Mexico, and to pay Mrs. George. On D day Henry and Annie took the new baby to St. Patrick's Church and had him baptized Richard Fox, after his grandfathers. Finally after more prayers

at home, Lieutenant George joined his fellow officers in Platt's Hall, where they swore in 'a good many men' at the last moment.

But that evening the *Brontes* expedition, so called from the name of the vessel to carry the force, collapsed by reason of the *Brontes*. Provisions were inadequate; and word got around that the scheme involved seizing a French transport, and possibly even an American mail vessel off Panama, to make up deficiencies. So the story rumored against Henry George in New York in 1886, that he had been mixed up in a piratical adventure, had a certain grounding in truth; and late in life George himself felt apologetic about it. In San Francisco that spring evening, talk of piracy proved to be more than official leniency could bear, and a revenue cutter dropped anchor in front of the *Brontes*.

For Henry George the episode meant that a zealous, foolish impulse had been frustrated, and that now he must find some new direction for taking his second step into journalism. His mind was not at all changed about Mexico. Very soon he and Annie joined the Monroe League, a fresh and short-lived organization to support a

new filibuster; and this time they went through rituals and oath taking on a bare sword and a republican flag of Mexico. Mrs. George, twenty-two years old and the mother of two children, was the only woman member. Later, in the responsible position of editor, he vindicated the execution of Maximilian much as we justify the execution of war criminals. 'It is a protest against the right of Kings to cause suffering and shed blood for their own selfish ends ... It will teach princes and princelings to be more cautious how they endeavour to subvert the liberties of a free people.'

A literary historian, Professor Franklin Walker, has noted accurately the incorrigible romanticism of Henry George in this period of utopianism and adventure seeking before he became an editor. His mind shared much of the American common lot. With just as much correctness an economic historian might observe that George's periods of unemployment in 1859 and 1861 and 1864 and during his crisis of 1865 were more the normal than abnormal thing for young men in California. Many beaten men went home; others by the hundreds went out of work; probably few of the great fortunes of the state were accumulated without periods of reverse and anxiety in the experience of the accumulators. Yet over the twenty years, and despite his

own sense of failure in 1864 and 1865, Henry George's California story is a success story. The periods of defeat were quite temporary. It could be contended that his hard times in the state did not especially make him a man of suffering, no more than his father's low income had made him a child of poverty in Philadelphia.

He had not suffered uniquely, but he had been hurt, and the crisis at the time of Richard's birth was unforgettable. The unique thing in George's case of course is that during Civil War years he reached a high intensity of self-awareness, and an awareness of ideas. His writing shows that he was beginning to see his own reverses as part of a social process, as part of the situation of all laboring men. He was beginning to see poverty in the light and shadow cast by Civil War aims, by Christian ideals, and by the ideals of the national heritage.