

Henry George and His Friends

ADDRESS WRITTEN BY POULTNEY BIGELOW
FOR THE HENRY GEORGE CONGRESS.

(As Mr. Bigelow was prevented at the last minute from attending, this address was read at the Luncheon, September 14, by Joseph Dana Miller).

THE greatest of the many great men who embellished the annals of Greece in her golden age was probably Aristides. He looked like Henry George and he acted as Henry George would have acted under like circumstances. Both sacrificed their all for the benefit of their countrymen and each in turn was rewarded by ingratitude and ostracism. In the Athens of Aristides the whole people voted to expell him. A small farmer who could not write his name on the ballot asked for help in the matter from the very man whose fate hung in the balance. Aristides wrote as requested and thus added one more to the hostile ballots. Then he asked the small farmer why he desired to ostracise Aristides? "Oh! no particular reason," was the very human answer, "but I'm so tired of always hearing him called honest!"

And as we look about us on the list of conspicuous leaders in the political—to say nothing of the plutocratical world—it must be some satisfaction, to them, when they reflect on the probability that few, if any, of them are likely to suffer the fate of either Henry George or Aristides.

Honesty was the keynote of Henry George. Honesty in his own speech and acts, and an honesty so complete that he could not conceive how others could be otherwise.

Before he came to New York (1880) he was easily the most popular political figure in California, yet the bosses of that boss-ridden state so dreaded an honest man in office that his name was passed over when he should have been unanimously acclaimed for Congress.

California did not formally call a referendum of the whole state and ostracise him as Athens did Aristides, but they accomplished the same thing by methods invisible though irresistible. California was owned by a ring of shrewd investors who saw in Henry George what the hierarchs of Jerusalem saw in the reformer Jesus.

It would have made much scandal had Henry George been crucified at the Golden Gate, and plutocrats always avoid a scandal when their purpose can be achieved by less obtrusive methods. The California hierarchs owned much of the Press and all of the means by which news feeds a paper. They also could influence a seat of learning by withholding money support. Also they could influence a political party by withholding or doubling the usual contributions. In short Henry George found in California that he could not make a newspaper successful if telegraph rates were made heavier to him than to his competitors. He found also that no University would permit him to discuss political economy *ex cathedra* be-

cause his doctrines were displeasing to one or more generous patrons of learning.

And thus it came about that at the age of one and forty the author of "Progress and Poverty" found himself so poor in purse that he borrowed the price of a third class ticket from San Francisco to New York. He had to leave his dearly be'oved wife and children behind and the only future for him consisted in a vague hope of securing a job of some sort on the New York *Herald*, whose proprietor was James Gordon Bennett.

But he soon learned that it was just as easy to starve on the Atlantic seaboard as in the paradise of gold miners. His hopes of writing for Mr. Bennett's paper were soon dispelled and for a perceptible and very painful period he had to earn a precarious livelihood by contributions of a philosophical character to periodicals that paid little in money, however much they might offer in the way of academical glory.

It is to me an interesting coincidence that Henry George and myself should have been pacing the pavements of San Francisco only a few years before his exodus, each seeking to borrow the price of a railway ride to New York. Henry George was already famous in California, so much so that he had been selected by the Democratic party managers to stump that state for the great Samuel J. Tilden in 1876.

Mr. Tilden was elected, but cheated of the Presidency through technical methods. The Republican party had become desperate at the prospect of a Free Trader in the White House.

The name of Tilden grows like that of George; and the names of their detractors fade away like mosquitos before bracing mountain winds.

The name of Tilden may be read in marble at the front of the great Public Library of New York whilst that of Rutherford B. Hayes is known only as the synonym of one who sends his guests home thirsty after a dinner, chilled by goblets of ice water.

Between the Tilden campaign of 1876 and the next presidential campaign of 1880 for General Hancock, Henry George launched his *magnum opus*, "Progress and Poverty."

Every publisher in the American metropolis was approached and each in turn declined that immortal work. It is not necessarily the mark of a good book that it should have been rejected by one or all publishers, but it should make publishers modest and authors more hopeful when they consider the many great works they rejected when first offered. Nearly every New York publisher has latterly issued a laudatory book that boasts of what each has done towards helping authors to achieve greatness. But as I glance over such pages I rarely see any reference to such blindness on their part. The great work of Admiral Mahan on "The Influence of Sea Power" was ignored by the publishers of New York until William

II had it used as a text book for his naval officers. And even so it was with "Progress and Poverty," no New York house would publish it until at last Henry George had assumed himself the labor cost of setting up the type and making the plates and again it was in Germany that its lessons were first appreciated by the educated public and again credit is due to William II for being the first monarch under whom the lessons of Henry George were put into working practice.

I refer of course to Kiao Chow, the Chinese territory colonized by Germany in 1897.

There's a noble promontory at the entrance of that port, and as I paddled my Rob Roy Canoe about that portion of Shantung it seemed as though I saw on top of that height a monument worthy of him who had here first realized the dream that had cheered him when he wrote the first page of "Progress and Poverty," just twenty years before.

This monument would recall to the passing voyager that although in his own country Henry George was treated with neglect, his doctrines had found congenial soil in the province of China that had given birth to Confucius. And both men held the truth as more important than worldly success.

"Progress and Poverty" had a good sale from the beginning. But those who appreciated George were for the most part of the very small minority who make it their business to read whatever is novel and speculative. George had many friends and admirers amongst New Yorkers of wealth and literary tastes. They brought his book and talked about it in literary clubs. But the author was not mercenary, on the contrary he cut down his copyright in order to help the circulation and even abandoned it altogether for the sake of a very cheap edition that would, he hoped, reach the table of every laboring man throughout the English speaking world, even to the ends of the earth. His rich friends did not add to his own small cash account, on the contrary they often caused him to spend more than he could afford, especially as he had brought his family on from San Francisco shortly after his own arrival here in 1880.

For some important occasion he wore an evening dress suit. I forget the exact date, but recall vividly his remarks to me on the morning following, when the *New York Tribune* had a report that poked fun at the clothes he wore. Now Henry George was incapable of noting such trifles. He may have borrowed or hired the suit for that one evening and was much surprised that a great newspaper could interrupt the discussion of political economy in order to raise a laugh at the overlong trousers of the speaker. "Did you see anything wrong about my clothes?" was his innocent question to me.

In those years I was a law student and at the same time honorary secretary of the New York Free Trade Club. My father had been all his life an advocate of

complete Free Trade and I grew up amongst people who looked upon a Protectionist as one who would rather live on governmental subsidy than earn his living in fair fight against all the world.

Of course I fell in love with "Progress and Poverty" and sought the first opportunity of meeting its author. He was a hero in my sight before ever I set eyes upon him.

All of one forenoon I sat by his side on a fallen log in the woods about Washington Heights, whilst he unfolded to me his plans and his reasons and his philosophy of life.

There was in him no boasting, and least of all was there in his talk any bitterness over his California failures, or those of New York. He knew that he was proclaiming a truth of importance and with his eyes open went forth like Apollonius of Tyana to discuss wisdom with all by the road side.

The love that "Progress and Poverty" inspired was heightened by personal contact and from that first meeting he remained my friend as I remain today his warm admirer and disciple.

Such was his fame in 1880 that the managers of the Democratic party asked him to make speeches on the Tariff, because the Republican party had raised that issue into prominence and the interested manufacturers were creating a panic amongst their ignorant wage earners by insisting that if a Democrat was elected every factory and mill would shut down and every avenue be blocked with starving families.

Henry George also had a starving family, nor did he wait for mills to close. Let me quote Henry George's own words:

"They asked me if I would go out and make some speeches." I said "Certainly I will." And they made a great list of engagements for me that ran close up to the day of election, so that I went out. Well it seems that what they were after was somebody to tell the working man that the Democratic party was as good as the Republican party.

"I went to a crowded meeting.

"The gentleman who spoke before me made that kind of a speech and then I was put on the platform.

"I told them that I had heard of a high tariff Democrat, though I could not conceive how there could be such a thing, and I knew there were men who called themselves Revenue Tariff Democrats. But there was also another kind of Democrat and that was a *No Tariff Democrat*, and that what was wanted was to sweep away the custom houses and custom house officers and have Free Trade.

"Well, the audience applauded, but you ought to have seen the men on the platform there! And I went off without a man to shake my hand.

"I got that night as I was going to my next engagement a telegraphic despatch asking me to go by midnight train to New York.

"The chairman of the committee met me and begged me not to make any more speeches!"

And thus did New York in 1880 seek to smother the truth in Henry George exactly as did California in 1876. And each attempt was followed by failure to place a Democratic President in the White House. Indeed ever since the defeat of such notable men as Hancock and Tilden the Democratic party has been lowered in public esteem to such an extent that it is today looked upon as a species of mule—something with neither pride of ancestry nor hope of posterity.

Henry George regarded Free Trade as a fundamental principle of the Democratic party. He could not understand the mind of a man who could sincerely advocate so selfish a doctrine as begging one's neighbor in order to enrich one's self.

Of course he joined the New York Free Trade Club and entered whole heartedly into our efforts to educate the masses on Tariff matters.

Theodore Roosevelt also joined the Free Trade Club and was an active member on one of our committees. He was of a Free Trade family and believed in it quite as firmly as did George. I recall a big Free Trade banquet at which Roosevelt was to have spoken, but he warned me that he had a drill that night at his National Guard armory and might therefore be detained, or possibly prevented from coming. The dinner proceeded however according to programme and the speeches were in full swing when in burst our strenuous "Teddy" clad in full military dress and glaring joyfully from behind his glasses. He was acclaimed with applause and made a stirring speech in which he denounced Protectionists as un-American and praised the doctrines of Adam Smith and Richard Cobden as alone worthy of a statesman.

Shortly after this however, Theodore Roosevelt made the discovery that Free Trade was wrong in politics however sound it might be in theory. His discovery may have owed something to the Bosses of the Republican party who offered him a tempting vision of legislative power leading to ever higher and richer fields of official activity.

Roosevelt was of such ardent patriotism that he would sacrifice even his soul for the sake of his party. And thus he cast overboard the weighty arguments of his Free Trade period and sailed his bark more swiftly by bracing his yards according to the breezes of party and protectionism.

In those days I held regularly at my rooms back of the Players' Club a sort of Henry George evening when he would come and meet such as were sympathetic with him personally yet dreaded to do anything that society regarded as unorthodox.

Many of these became later notable figures in banking, transportation, and other profitable walks of life, but few of them wished to earn a martyr's crown. They knew that his diagnosis was correct but they dreaded

any operation or treatment that might provoke disorders or possible revolution.

Shortly after the Hancock election in 1880 I was invited onto the staff of the New York *Herald* as assistant city editor by Ballard Smith, and within two years had graduated from nearly every department including literary and dramatic, foreign and the editorial board. Then I was sent as correspondent in Europe and there Henry George and I foregathered once more and planned a grand speech making campaign throughout England and Scotland.

Of course I counted confidently upon Mr. Bennett as a Free Trader and therefore begged permission to accompany Henry George on this remarkable journey. But I had yet much to learn touching Mr. Bennett; for he wrote me a curt note from Paris describing Henry George as a negligible humbug whom he would crush if ever he became dangerous. I had known that the *Herald* was Catholic in so far as Bennett himself was reared in that faith; but I cannot yet be sure as to the exact inducement that made an otherwise great journalist abandon a piece of news that would have rejoiced the heart of every laboring man in America.

Shortly after this, in 1886, three Free Traders were simultaneously candidates for the post of Mayor in New York—all three friends of one another—loosely speaking; Abraham S. Hewitt, a wealthy and public spirited merchant, Theodore Roosevelt and Henry George. Hewitt was elected but Henry George received more votes than Roosevelt!

It was a Henry George triumph—the triumph of a poor man from far away California over the son of a rich New Yorker whose family influence was deservedly great.

The Truth is a mighty force when uttered at the right moment by a Martin Luther, a Galileo or a John Huss, but in the New York of our day the politician who is out for votes must find other sources of inspiration. Henry George was apparently in a fair way of being elected Mayor of New York when at the eleventh hour the Roman Catholic Leaders in the person of a Jesuit Monsignor (Preston) wrote a formal denunciation of Henry George's doctrines as "unsound, unsafe and contrary to the teachings of the church."

The *Republican* managers had this letter printed and handed free gratis at the doors of every Catholic church on the Sunday preceding election day; and between this very clever political trick and the equally vigorous anathemas from orthodox pulpits, every true son of St. Patrick voted as his church commanded.

The Irish vote was an important one because the Land Question was then agitating public opinion in Great Britain and Henry George had been looked upon by leading Irish patriots as a champion of their somewhat irreconcilable aspirations. Little did they dream at the the very last moment the goblet of hope would be snatched

from before their lips and the mayoralty of our metropolis decided by an Irish Archbishop at the behest of an Italian Pope.

And not only did orthodox voters prove traitors to the cause of him whom they had up to then hailed as their "Savior"—the Irish editors and politicians quickly found excellent reasons for avoiding the company of him whom their church had branded as heretical.

One Roman priest remained loyal to Henry George, the noble rector of St. Stephens, the beloved Father McGlynn. But his loyalty cost him, if not his life, something vastly more precious. McGlynn was forbidden to enter his own church or to hear confessions, was ordered to do penance in Rome and when he claimed the right of an American citizen to think politically, he was formally excommunicated.

It was in reference to this noble priest that Henry George wrote in the summer of 1886. "There stands today hard by the Palace of the Holy Inquisition in Rome a statue which has been placed there since Rome became the Capitol of a United Italy. On it is this inscription: *"Galileo Galilei was imprisoned in the neighboring palace for having seen that the earth revolves around the sun."*

"In after years when the true hearted American priest shall have rested from his labors, and what is now being done is history, there will arise by the spot where he shall be excommunicated such a statue and such an inscription.

"And days will come when happy little children, such as now die like flies in tenement houses, shall be held up by their mothers to lay garlands upon it."

Henry George was made for friendship; his heart opened smilingly to anyone approaching him in search of truth. He was never irritable when sceptical interlocutors nagged him with shallow objections. He bore no grudge against those who calumniated him in the press or from political platforms. I never even heard him denounce Patrick Ford, who had professed the warmest faith in him until Archbishop Corrigan ordered him to recant. The *Irish World* had up to that moment been the mouth-piece of George's admirers, both lay and clerical.

It is a great privilege to have known in the flesh one whom the world at large regards as created by God Almighty for a lofty purpose. To me he was the embodiment of heroism, filled with divine ambition to serve his fellow man. Whatever his dress, he had such noble features that when I talked with him I saw only his firm gentle yet penetrating blue eyes and then the sympathetic lips that veiled or made one forget the strong jaw at the back.

Henry George was not a tall man, but eminently dignified and very broad and deep and muscular about the arms and chest. He had nothing of the histrionic self advertiser. Nothing of the Rooseveltian bluster and boasting. I never saw him embarrassed in his manner,

much less was he capable of playing the snob. He met rich and poor; the noblemen of England and the Crofters of Skye, and with all he was the same dignified, yet sympathetic searcher after the truth.

Of course he was a political and social failure; so was Jesus. Had he lived a few centuries earlier he would have died, like Molinos, in the dungeons of the Inquisition or have been roasted alive by pious Christian priests. As it was, his life was prematurely stopped by domestic burdens too heavy for even his broad shoulders. He died before even reaching the early age of sixty, and he died a poor man having known but poverty all his life. He was grossly misunderstood and shunned by those who were easily frightened by the bugaboo of anarchist and socialist. He could not have been elected to any of the older and more conservative clubs or societies of New York. Yet the time is not far off when the cities of the world will be clamoring for monuments to his glory.

Did I say that Henry George lived poor? If I did, it referred merely to the vulgar definition of poverty.

Posterity will call him rich, for what can the sage desire more than what Henry George possessed, a wife whom he loved and honored and who loyally sustained him at every step of his weary tramp. In his children he was equally blessed, for they were a living testimony to the qualities of both father and mother.

And how rich in friends was he, friends throughout the world! He had many secret admirers, people who dared not publish their friendship for fear of social ostracism. In short, I cannot think of Henry George as being the object of any man's hatred save as the cur hates when sicked on by a cruel master.

Blessed be Henry George, for he so loved his fellow man that he sacrificed himself on our account, he died that we might live, he spoke the truth.

Fairhope As an Object Lesson

ADDRESS OF A. E. SCHALKENBACH AT THE HENRY GEORGE CONGRESS, SEPT. 13, 1927.

I HAVE been asked to substitute for Mr. Gaston, without having any idea of what he intended to say, so I feel obliged to present to you my personal observations of Fairhope, since the text assigned me is "The Success of Enclaves." Fairhope's growth and effect as a Single Tax demonstration seems to me the only proper presentation to make.

My interest in the Single Tax philosophy dates back to 1884, when my brother Charlie arrived from an absence in the west of eight years. On his arrival he handed me a book, saying that in the railroad station in Chicago he bought it to occupy his mind while enroute home, that he was very much impressed with the book and asked me to read it and if possible find fault with it.