

John Adam

THE whirling mist of years stayed in their flight, and I gazed down the echoing corridors of time. At first, dazed by the immensity of the scene, I looked incomprehendingly: but presently, I saw John Adam. Spawned in one of the foetid slums of Ezion-Gebir, 2000 B.C., his father was one of Pharaoh's slaves, engaged in the building of Pharaoh's navy, which was later sent to sack Ophir. At fourteen he was gathered in by one of Pharaoh's slave gangs, and for six long weary years he labored in the ship yards. At twenty, being a man full-grown, and of more than average strength, he was picked out for transportation. Pharaoh being full of years and good living, was preparing to die; and had given orders for his mausoleum, a gigantic pyramid. Thousands of slaves were hurled into the work—pitiless toil—of fourteen hours a day under the blazing sun—with burning sand under foot. The great blocks of stone were literally mortised together with the blood of the slaves who died in the building.

John was a man apart from his fellows. Deep down in his heart flickered the feeble flame of freedom. Dumbly he saw the injustice of it, the many labouring and dying for the few, and meditating in the soft desert night, he burned to right the injustice. A few months later the great Pharaoh arrived in state to inspect the work, surrounded by his body guard of gigantic Nubians, and nobles, he wended his way slowly through the debris of the building operations. He passed John Adam sweating under a load of stone used for rubble fillings. In a flash John rose to the full stature of his manhood, and, throwing off his load, he picked up a huge stone, and, dodging through the astonished Nubian guards he flung the boulder at the fat face of Pharaoh. The stone missed Pharaoh, and crashed in the head of Zoaster, one of Pharaoh's lieutenants. The enraged guards fell upon John, and tore him to pieces like mad dogs.

So ended the first round in the fight for freedom, with the blood of John Adam bedewing the thirsty desert sands.

The hurrying years passed on. Here and there I caught a glimpse of John Adam reincarnated in remote climes, always with the flame of freedom burning more steadily, in living, achieving mightily, and dying for the cause. The blurred scene cleared a little, and I saw the entrance of the Catacombs of Rome, then in the full flood of her might. It was night, and the moon was reflected wanly by the faces of a subdued crowd that made its way through the entrance, and wended its way through the intricate system of subterranean passages which finally opened up into a vast cavern. These people were the Christians who, in defiance of the orders of Rome, congregated in the dead of night to carry out manifestations of their worship. At the end of the service there arose a man of commanding presence, noble of head and mighty of limb. In simple phrases he laid before the people his gospel, the gospel of freedom. I marvelled at the growth of John Adam, and contrasted him with the miserable slave of Pharaoh. I followed John Adam through

the years of his residence in Rome. He was a familiar figure in the narrow bustling streets of that city. He was the leader of a league who aimed to destroy the government of the nobles, which was slowly bringing Rome and Romans into disrepute and weakening their power overseas by their licence and debauchery. There was, however, a noble named Liberdicous, who learnt of the existence of the league of John Adam, and determined to break it up, and scatter its members, before it became dangerous. He sent four of his men to bring John Adam to him. After a terrific struggle John was captured, and cast into one of the dungeons of Liberdicous. That night a sinister party wended its way down the noisome hole that imprisoned John, and confronting him, demanded as the price of his life, the names of the executive of his league. With a look of ineffable disdain the big man refused the information. They hurried him into the torture chamber, and trussed him up in Ceasar's cradle. This torture consisted of suspending him by the thumbs and toes from the ceiling, until his body was an arch of flaming agony. But he laughed in their faces. Infuriated, they tried one evil thing after another, but he resisted all their efforts. At last Liberdicous commanded the rack as a last resort, and they cast John Adam upon the strange bed of pulleys and ropes. Slowly the wheels were turned, and the ropes attached to his limbs drew out, and each joint of his body became a livid mass of pain. Grimly Liberdicous jerked the wheel full round. There was an awful snap and crackle of living flesh, and the soul of John Adam fled out unsullied as the ether into which it rose.

The wheels of time spun on through the flashing centuries. I caught glimpses of John Adam achieving here and failing there, but with his gospel of freedom rippling in ever widening circles throughout the world. Once a decade was etched in sharp relief against the passing aeons. I saw John Adam condemned to the Spanish galleys, and again, with the traditional chain of slavehood, fettering him athwart one of the big sweeps of a Mediterranean raider. For four years he was chained to the oar, and the only relief to this was death. An arrow from a Corsican opponent released his immortal soul, and his body was flung into the sea.

The majestic panorama rolled, and I saw Spain rise to the zenith of her power, and wax and wane under the hammer blows of England. The slow uprising of Britain, and the meteoric sweep of France across the known world, the rapid colonization of America—all the splendours of history were limned by a master hand on the canvas of illimitable time. Bewildered by the rapid sequence of events, I momentarily lost the thread of the lives of John Adam, until I observed, amidst the crudities of early pioneer life in U. S. A., two figures engaged in deep converse. They presented a striking contrast. One, an old man with seamed and wrinkled face, and hands that were a history of unremitting toil, and the other a lithe youth of perhaps seventeen summers, whose face was fresh and ingenuous, with a noble sweep of forehead, and grey eyes of uncompromising honesty. The older

man was a miner, who had followed his mistress—gold—to the four corners of the earth, and by his very faithfulness had had from her a contemptuous toss of a handful of dust, while her more fickle adherents she had rewarded with the treasures of Midas. The younger man was known as Henry George, but in him I recognised my friend John Adam, and knew that here was the quintessence of all the countless experiences that had been his through the centuries. The mind thus sharpened and strengthened by the years of tribulation alighted on the fundamental law that is to lead humanity from its chaotic groping into the broad pure light of reason and peace. In the wild rack and confusion in the formation of a great nation he found that as the country progressed, so the lot of the common people became worse and worse. Casting about to discover the cause of this he found that as the value of land increased, so the wages decreased. Years of travel and adventure followed, and in 1877, he started on his great work, "Progress and Poverty." Two years of intense struggle followed, and in 1879 it was finished and was received with acclamation by the thinkers of the day. The writer sprang into instant prominence, and in the years that came after he gave himself to the people. With pen and oratory he laboured to educate the masses, and lift them into economic freedom. Towards the end of his life he was asked to stand for the mayoralty of New York. At first unwilling, he at last consented to the pleadings of his friends.

During one of his election speeches he was asked by an interjector what political party he favoured. George answered gravely, "I stand for men." His opponents used all the vile arts at their command to defeat him, and in his strenuous efforts to overcome them Henry George collapsed, and was carried to his bed, from which he did not rise again. He died in the service of the people, but his name was illumined across the civilization of the world. Leagues were formed to fight the economic evils, and slowly but surely they are leading the peoples of the world to economic freedom.

Thus through the ages I saw the soul of John Adam rise from the cloudy obscurity of Pharaoh's slave into the flashing brilliance of Henry George. I was vouchsafed no glimpse of the future, but in my heart I knew that the man would again arise, and lead us into plentitude and peace.

W. H. BONWICK in *Progress*, Melbourne, Australia.

AT the annual conference of the Tasmanian Labor Party held on April 7, at Hobart the following motion was carried:

"That Labor principles and policy demand the earliest possible effective legislative recognition of the public's natural rights in natural resources, affirming that it is vital to progress and well-being that effective steps be taken to bring in legislation which will ensure healthy houses for the people."

How Long, O Lord, How Long?

NOT long ago I attended a dinner at which were a score or more of the pioneers in the movement to collect the economic rent of land for public purposes and use and abolish all taxation. I doubt if any there present were less than thirty years old in the movement, and most of them dated back to or before Henry George's campaign for the office of Mayor of New York in 1886, when I cast my first vote for George and could not for my life have given an intelligent reason for doing so.

The after-dinner talk developed into a free-for-all inquest into the whys and wherefores of the movement's slow progress—progress that seemed to some to be actually retrograde. The fact that no young recruits were present was commented on, though there was an obvious reason for this—the dinner was given on short notice to one of the pioneers who had been abroad for many years, whom the young recruits do not know.

The enthusiasm of the crusades of the 80's and 90's was recalled—where was it now? The dispersion of the movement after strange gods—Clevelandism, Bryanism, Watsonism, etc., was dilated on regretfully as having led us nowhither. Matters of policy were touched on—is it a great moral movement or merely a fiscal reform, Is it wise to try to run a political party, or must we still confine our efforts to the economic education of the people? Did our "howling dervish" enthusiasm, the spiritual exaltation of which has been felt by us all, get us anywhere, and would its revival, if this were possible, do any good?

Ways and methods of propaganda, form of argument to be addressed to men of varying degrees of perception, letters to the press, soap-box and other public speaking, private argument and appeal, all were canvassed and no new method was discovered, yet the fact of our small progress proved too stubborn to move.

Is it in ourselves, or in our stars, or in the public, that in nearly half a century we have failed to "put across" the gospel of Henry George which we know will set the world in the right direction for the millenium of which prophets and seers have been telling us for thousands of years?

Well, men are but children of a larger growth, after all. I can recall the days when I simply could not stand being "called names" or ridiculed. I'd "lick him" if I could and weep tears of bitter mortification if I couldn't, and all the wise counsels of my elders couldn't make me see the foolishness of it all. I had to outgrow it.

So with humanity. It hasn't grown up to mental maturity. Psychologists assure us the average mentality is that of a normal boy or girl of 14, and the extent to which mankind puts its happiness in superficial and unimportant things the course of which they cannot control seems proof that the psychologists are right. How many things men want that aren't good for them! How many things they need that they do not want! What ambitions they