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A Seed Was Sown By ROBERT CLANCY

I WAS getting ready to graduate from high school in January, 1932. There was one subject thrust upon me in my last half-year that I was definitely not interested in—economics. The "dismal science" was, to me, just plain dismal. I don't know how I managed to pass "Eco," for I remember little or nothing about it except that my teacher, in announcing that I had barely made a passing grade, added, "In felicitate requiescat!"

I didn't know that at the same time a man with different ideas on economics was starting a new school where a different kind of economics would be taught.

After graduation I began to learn a little about economics, the hard way. In February, 1932 labor was plentiful and jobs were scarce (why didn't they tell me, in high school "economics"?). After a few vain months I learned that one couldn't begin working unless one had experience working. This I couldn't understand. Why, I asked myself, can't a person who's willing to produce, do so?

I began receiving postcards in the mail announcing lecture forums on Fridays at the Pythian Temple, sponsored by a Henry George School of Social Science. I had been put on the mailing list by my high school French teacher who was interested in this new school. It sounded vaguely interesting but I put it off. But the cards kept coming weekly, and I finally went, on a Friday evening in May.

In an unadorned room at the Pythian Temple with about fifty folding chairs, about thirty people were present. The speaker of the evening was Oscar H. Geiger, a slim man, nearing sixty, moustached, plainly but meticulously dressed. This, then, was the Henry George School and its founder-director.

The subject of the evening was "Natural Law in the Economic World." Geiger began speaking quietly but vibrantly, in a way that commanded attention. As his argument unfolded, he grew passionate, earnest. I didn't quite understand all of it, but there was something compelling about it.

"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's. Render unto the individual the things that are the individual's and to society the things that are society's."

Reasonable! Just! (At least I got that much out of it.)

"Take the rent of land for communal purposes, and stop the robbery of the community by the landowner. Abolish all tariffs, tolls and taxes, and stop the robbery of the individual by the government."

Here was something worth looking into further. And look I did. And I learned that economics, as it should be, was an inspiring subject, that it dealt with great, deep truths, not dismal trivia; that it pointed the way to a brighter, happier life for mankind, not dreary routine and irksomeness. I found the answer to my question—and to further questions as they kept arising.



Oscar H. Geiger

As I became more acquainted with Oscar Geiger and the school I learned more about the background of this remarkable venture. There was a man who wrote a book that analyzed the problem of poverty and offered a solution. The man was Henry George and the book was *Progress and Poverty*. It found friends—but not enough to influence all mankind. For many years the Georgists tried to gain recognition and achievement through political action and propaganda, but without great success. And now Oscar Geiger, who had been through so many activities of that sort, said, education is needed. The Henry George School of Social Science was his offering.

There is no love without sacrifice—but sacrifice builds character, and what great characters we have had in the brief lifetime of this movement! Henry George himself was distinguished by integrity, courage, courtesy, modesty, generosity and perseverance. There were other great ones around him, and we honor them all.

Oscar Geiger was one who toiled for the truth as he saw it and died for it. We are not privileged to sacrifice our lives, but we can sacrifice desires in the form of money.

Twenty years ago Mr. Geiger dreamed of a Henry George School. We are the beneficiaries.

You who read this paper are as necessary to the future as the forerunners were to us. Because so many have expressed the desire to do something vital for the future of this educational movement, a membership plan has been offered by John C. Lincoln, president of the Henry George School. This was enthusiastically received, but many more responsible and loyal members are needed.

A few readers have become honorary members, paying \$1,000 annually into a necessarily ever-expanding budget which supports schools throughout the United States and Canada. Sustaining members pay \$100 annually. A far greater number become contributing members at \$35 a year, and this broad base is encouraging. For as little as \$5 readers may become active members. All who pay \$5 or more yearly receive their Henry George News free.

If you believe in education, give something, sacrifice if necessary, so someone else may receive the same benefit which somebody's generosity made possible for you.

To those of us who gathered around Geiger, the school was a wonderful thing, though it was no more than a handful of people who gathered weekly in a bare room. "You are the nucleus," said Geiger to us one night, "of a movement that will spread throughout the world." And we believed, implicitly. We *knew* he was right.

As we stayed week after week with this great teacher, we learned more and more. We fired questions at him; he answered them. Our questions—and his answers—were not only on economics, but on philosophy—and on the future of the movement and the school.

"Should not more be done about this than just sitting here discussing?"

"Before anything more can be done effectively, numbers of people are needed. And to get numbers we must educate more and more people."

"What is to become of the school after you are gone?"

"If I am doing the right thing now, I need not be concerned about the future. We can but sow the seed. The rest is in the Master's hands."

We could not choose but believe.

But Geiger did see that a more intensive cultivation would produce better results than scattering the seeds broadcast. After a year of his Pythian Temple lecturing, he decided to try a course of study based on the fountainhead of his inspiration — *Progress and Poverty*. The course he designed was essentially the same as the course now being taught throughout the world. He tried it out, in that same little lecture room. So successful was the experiment — pulling the whole body of economic truth together in the minds of the group — that it decided the future program of the school from that moment on.

Everything that happened, every step taken, seemed like something in the nature of an organic growth. "First the blade, then the ear . . ." It is curious how it impresses me even more strongly now, as I look back, that Oscar Geiger was sowing the seed.

But the sower, alas, was called away before long. On July 1, 1934 his worn body was taken from his beloved school's first home at 211 West 79th Street, for burial — just two and a half years after that almost imperceptible founding.

Is it necessary to add that the school went on growing—that others took over and carried forward the work—that it grew greater, stronger, more influential with the years?

And these are they which are sown on good ground.

[This is to announce the new book by Robert Clancy *A Seed Was Sown*, copies of which are available at The Henry George School, 50 East 69th Street, New York, at \$1 each. The book is an informal, illustrated treatise on the life, philosophy and writings of Oscar H. Geiger. On January 4 at 8 p. m., Mr. Clancy will speak at the above address, giving more of the history of this movement with which he has been so intimately associated. His lecture will in a sense, introduce the twentieth-anniversary year of the Henry George School.]