

## HENRY GEORGE'S LAST BOOK.

BY HAMILTON CARLSON.

IT is unfortunate that the necessary title of this last great book by a great teacher of justice and humanity in the world should sound so like the names of the books which it will supersede. "The Science of Political Economy" is not a talking title; but let no one mistake. As "Progress and Poverty" delighted men with its clearness, eloquence, and lofty spirit, so will this final work affect its readers.

It has great elements. It is, first of all, a profoundly religious book—religious in the broadest and purest sense, and the first part is taken up with a discussion of man in the universe, of civilization, its cause and what it should be. This section has the noblest quality. The second element of greatness in the work is its fearlessness. It shows no evasions. Nothing is miscolored out of respect to conventions. It is forthright, searching, and utterly candid. If all the world loves a fight, here is the basis of a keen controversy. Mr. George levels his lance at every confident economist, but is never ill-humored, and his opponents will do well if they emulate him in the manner of his fight.

A third element of strength lies in the perfect clarity of his statement. He pierces quite to the fundamental simplicity of things. Having no master to serve and only the true God to worship, he finds the world less complicate than certain professors of political economy who are component parts of some institution held it to be. He points out, handsly, how a man is too often warped in his judgment by surroundings; how, indeed, the whole "science" of social economics has been rendered false or evasive at the most vital points by the pressure of institutionalism. A science of political economy was not possible so long as writers apologized for human slavery; so now it is impossible so long as the injustice of private ownership of public values is ignored or openly condoned.

It is a great book by reason also of its research. It shows the most conscientious and catholic reading. Mr. George pored faithfully over the huge tomes of most evasive and apologetic "masters." He sets their confused and confusing terms over against each other, and if he smiles at the end, we can hardly help smiling

with him. If schoolmen cannot agree on the three words, *wealth, capital, and value*, how shall they agree on theories? No wonder the world wanders darkling while its leaders grope.

Henry George is the natural reasoner. He starts with the world of natural things and man. He moves from the simple to the complex, naturally. He appeals to the common sense of his readers. He is not engaged in showing his learning, his orthodoxy; he is seeking the simple solution which lies at the bottom of the problem. He wishes to enlighten, to convince, to do justice, and so a mighty power goes out from his writings. His aim is truth; his standard, justice. The ranked power of the world could not daunt him when he walked the earth, and all the powers visible and invisible cannot prevail against the spirit of his message of light.

The book is less of a fragment than has been supposed. Taken in connection with "Progress and Poverty," the emphasis will scarcely be observable to the reader. It is a noble book. As I read it I seem to hear his voice once more and see his face glow and lighten as in the days when his presence on the platform was a menace to every wrong, a terror to every tyranny, and the hope of every robbed and cheated man who faced him. He made the world better. He fought unrelentingly till his slight material self gave way. Now here are his books—including the last and greatest of them all. They and the man he inspired must carry forward his work.

"If political economy is a science—and if not, it is hardly worth the while of earnest men to bother themselves with it—let us follow the rules of science, and seek in natural law the causes of the phenomena which it investigates. It is concerned with the permanent, not the transient; with the laws of nature, not with the laws of man."

"Injustice cannot live where justice rules. If there can be no poor in the kingdom of heaven, clearly there can be no rich."

"And as it is utterly impossible in this or in any other conceivable world to abolish unjust poverty, without at the same time abolishing unjust possessions. This is a hard word to those who would like to get on the good side of God without angering the devil, but it is a true word nevertheless."

Injustice will find a most formidable force in Henry George's "Science of Political Economy."