

York, where his legal acquirements and his familiarity with three languages made him valuable in spite of his scruples. It was said of him that he was allowed a large salary, but agreed to remit most of it for the privilege of refusing to participate in cases which did not commend themselves to his sense of justice. It would not have been a bad arrangement for the firm, for such legal service as his sense of justice allowed him to render was of the first order. To this many an opinion in the Interior Department at Washington, signed by the Secretary but written by Mr. Adams while a law clerk there, will amply testify. So will his brief in one of the Philippine cases, the brief against the government in the only one in which the government lost. Mr. Coler's selection of Mr. Adams for second place in Brooklyn Borough is one that will prove its merit. And it will be neither less meritorious nor less acceptable to a rapidly growing sentiment throughout the country as well as locally, when the fact appears, that Mr. Adams of Brooklyn, like Dean Williams of Cleveland, has long been an unwavering advocate of the doctrines of Henry George.

The postal censorship.

It would be impossible to follow, instance by instance, the arbitrary acts of censorship by the Post Office Department (p. 420), but in occasional instances the circumstances are suggestive. One of these was the postal "hold up" of a Des Moines newspaper, for reporting a local social card party and naming the winner of a cut glass water pitcher. The Des Moines postmaster so construed his Department instructions that he stopped the mailing of the paper for half an hour while he telegraphed to Washington. He was advised in reply that while his construction of the rules was literally correct the Department had never enforced them against society card games! Another case was the "hold up" of Wilshire's Magazine

for two days, to enable the Department to decide whether or not one of the advertisements should be censored. According to this magazine for November the Department ruled that while in fact there was nothing objectionable in the advertisement, yet, as it related to a guessing contest, the neglect of the publishers to submit a proof before publication was against the rulings of the Department. If this statement is true, as it doubtless is, the editor's comment is entirely reasonable, that "if this ruling is valid as to advertisements it is valid as to editorials." As we have shown in previous articles, the rulings of the Department on these matters are absolute and final. The censorship is Russian in its absolutism. It is worse than Russian in its methods, for in Russia they only blacken censored articles, while sending the paper through the mails, but here the whole paper is "held up" for one censored article.

GERRIT SMITH A FORERUNNER OF HENRY GEORGE.*

A generation ago the name of Gerrit Smith, of Peterboro, N. Y., was widely known throughout the country, especially in anti-slavery, temperance, and other philanthropic circles. In the exciting days of John Brown and Harper's Ferry he unjustly suffered proslavery opprobrium for alleged complicity in the plan attempted.

Gerrit Smith inherited large landed possessions to which, later, he added extensively, becoming the owner of a princely domain. His father, Peter Smith, of Holland descent, was a partner of John Jacob Astor in his youthful days of enterprise and adventure, when the great fur trade that enriched both partners was in process of establishment.

Each had a keen instinct for land investments; Astor more shrewdly placing his in the heart of New York City, while Smith acquired vast areas in the center of the State. Beginning with sixty thousand acres at \$3.53½, from the

* This editorial, contributed by William Lloyd Garrison, was written at Boston on the seventieth anniversary (October 21, 1905) of the historical assault upon Mr. Garrison's distinguished father by a proslavery Boston mob.

Oneida Reservation, the latter subsequently bought lands sold for taxes, and, in the single county of Oneida, paid the State \$3 per acre for 80,000 acres. He was reputed to own nearer a million than a half million of acres, his property being measured by square miles.

Inheriting his father's business aptitude, Gerrit Smith also became an immense purchaser and dealer in unoccupied lands, buying 18,000 acres in the town of Florence when scarcely more than 21 years old, an investment of \$14,000, which, in a few years, reached a valuation of half a million.

The singular part of the story, as his biographer says, was the fact that his power of wealth "was his help, not his ruin; that it was his opportunity, and not his temptation; that it furnished a solid base for his intellectual and moral operations, not a grave in which his manhood was buried; that he could wear the purple and still be a king." There is hardly anything stranger in fiction than this plutocratic land-monopolist arriving at the same conclusions regarding the wrongfulness of land monopoly as those later enunciated by the needy San Francisco printer, Henry George, in "Progress and Poverty."

The conviction which forced itself on Gerrit Smith soon took action in lavish gifts of land to landless people. He evidently questioned the justice of keeping what he had not earned and could not improve. In 1846 he wrote: "I am an Agrarian.—I would no man were so regardless of the needs and desires of his brother men, as to covet the possession of more farms than one." To the colored men of New York State he made out 3,000 deeds, conveying land of 40 to 60 acres each, placing the selection of beneficiaries in the hands of a committee of well-known citizens. In 1849, he selected a thousand persons living in 58 different counties, to receive gifts of land, \$10 in money accompanying each deed. "Nor shall I be blamed for distributing the thousand parcels among white persons exclusively," he wrote, "by any who are informed that 3,000 colored persons have received deeds of land from me, entirely free of all charge either for the land, or for the expense of the perfected deeds thereof."

In January, 1850, he proposed to make similar gifts to 500 males and 500 females. Subsequently concluding that money would be better for women than land, he bestowed \$50 on each woman, sufficient to purchase 40 acres of government land. In his letter to the committee accepting the labor of selection, he said: "I need not say how deeply I feel that every person needs to be admitted owner of a parcel of land. This every person should be, without having to pay for it." At this date, Henry George was approaching his eleventh year.

It detracts nothing from the generous intention of the giver of this bounty that it disappointed expectation and proved a practical failure. Charity was never yet a solvent for injustice. Owing partly to the unfertile conditions of many of the allotments, but more to lack of skill and industry on the part of the recipients, the lands eventually passed into abler hands, were absorbed by debt, or acquired by speculators.

It seems strange that Gerrit Smith, whose clear sight led him to protest against gifts of land from the public domain "to soldiers, railroad and canal companies," because the soil would soon become the property of land speculators, should not have seen that the same destiny attached to his private benefactions. In his later support of the Homestead bill, when in Congress, he expressed his illogical faith that individual allotments to actual settlers by the general government would ensure permanency.

In 1852, to his great surprise, Gerrit Smith was elected to Congress as an independent. In a letter to the voters who supported him he stated his political creed, enumerating its peculiarities in seven articles. Two of these are as follows: Article 2 affirms "That the right of the soil is as natural and equal as the right to the light and air." Article 4 declares "That the doctrine of free trade is the necessary outgrowth of the doctrine of human brotherhood; and that to impose restrictions on commerce is to build up unnatural and sinful barriers across that brotherhood.

It is evident that the writer did not suspect the close relation of

the articles, as he interposed one on political rights between them. But he followed the proper sequence, the natural right of access to the source of production properly preceding the assertion of the natural right—freely to exchange the resulting products of labor.

The discussion of the Homestead bill in the House of Representatives, February 21 1854, gave Gerrit Smith his opportunity for expression on the land question. The resolutions offered by him and the substance of his speech, which it is the purpose of this preliminary explanation to introduce, are to follow.* Like all men wiser than their time, he met with the impatient hostility of his hearers.

Herbert Spencer's "Social Statics," containing the famous and subsequently expurgated ninth chapter on "The Right to the Use of the Earth," was published in England in 1850. It received no attention in that country until a notice of it appeared in the "British Quarterly Review," in 1876, although it was reprinted in America by Appleton & Company in 1864. In 1850, also, Patrick Edward Dove published anonymously a book on "The Theory of Human Progression and Natural Probability of the Reign of Justice," asserting therein the fundamental postulates of the single tax philosophy.

There is no evidence or probability that Gerrit Smith had even heard of these publications at the date of his speech on the Homestead bill. The coincidence indicates that consciousness of the injustice of land monopoly, traceable throughout history in the expressions of ethical thought, was fast ripening for practical and political application. It was soon to find its consummate flower in "Progress and Poverty."

Independent investigators are often unconsciously abreast in search of a pressing truth or a scientific development. Contemporaneous announcements of discoveries like those of Darwin and Wallace on evolution, and of Edison and Swan regarding the incandescent electric lamp, mark

*See "Gerrit Smith on the Homestead Bill" in this week's Miscellany department of The Public.

the fruition of long years of obscure labor and thought by unknown pioneers of human progress.

As a matter of historical interest it seems worth while to preserve such records as they come to light. If the enduring fame which is the prize of him who, arriving at a psychological moment, incarnates and typifies an epoch, the memory of unrecognized workers in the field, who saw the vision and toiled in faith for its realization, should be honored and preserved.

It is noteworthy, indicating the natural kinship of the anti-slavery and single tax movements, that the editor of the "Liberator," in the issue of March 8, 1854, thus characterized Gerrit Smith's address: "Mr. Smith has just delivered a radical and able speech in the House, on the distribution of public lands." Of course, the immediate and concrete question of Negro emancipation obscured the question of land monopoly, and Henry George himself declared that without the abolition of slavery the progress of land emancipation was barred.

WM. LLOYD GARRISON.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

BUFFALO (see vol. vii., p. 616).

Buffalo, N. Y., Nov. 18.—Mr. J. N. Adam was nominated by the Democratic party for mayor and elected by 10,000 majority, carrying his whole party ticket with him and displacing the present Republican regime. While the new mayor, who has been successively councilman, alderman and councilman again, has always been in favor of the referendum and municipal ownership, he has done no aggressive work along progressive lines, but has fought extravagance and corruption and is known to be an honest man.

More important, however, than the election of mayor, was the question of public policy submitted to the voters, namely, whether the city should own and operate an electric lighting and power plant for the benefit of itself and its inhabitants. On this question 9,641 votes were cast, 7,691 being in the affirmative and 1,950 in the negative. The total vote for candidates was 65,000. The reasons the vote on the question was not larger were the absorbing interest in the election of the mayor, the consequent splitting of tickets, its obscure position on the voting machines below the seven constitutional amendments, and the limited time of one minute in which to