



Single Tax Review

(Expressly for the Review.)

James A. Herne.

BY HENRY GEORGE, JR.

And now it is James A. Herne who has been called. At his home in Convent avenue, New York, he breathed his last on Sunday afternoon, June 2, after long weeks of struggle with pneumonia and a complication of diseases, any one of which would have killed other men long before. Utterly worn out at last, he sank into the long sleep that can know no mortal waking.

It seems but yesterday, so brightly painted is it in my mind, that James A. Herne came climbing up the three flights of creaking stairs to *The Standard* office in Union Square. That was in 1888, I believe; thirteen years ago. He came to see my father. He had become an ardent Single Taxer, largely through the intelligent propaganda work of a struggling young writer in Boston, who at that time sent frequent little gems of verse and prose to *The Standard* and who was pushing his way into the recognition of the magazines. This young man was Hamlin Garland. The poet and novelist found ready listeners in Mr. and Mrs. Herne and he was a constant visitor and a constant expounder of his single tax religion, until the great tender-hearted actor felt the conviction of the new faith, and its hope and enthusiasm.

Mr. Herne was in the happiest mood when he came to the *Standard* office that day to meet my father. That sweet kindness was in his smile and shining light in his eyes which beamed from the face of his *Uncle Dan'l* in "Shore Acres" soon afterwards. He said that this philosophy explained what before was to him inexplicable, and that he would hereafter do all in his power to preach it.

To that vow he was true to the last. He gave much time and effort and was liberal with his purse for the new anti-slavery cause, and there are probably few large cities in the United States where on some Sunday afternoon or evening, in church or theatre, he has not discoursed on the great theme with that exquisite blending of actor's art and propagandist's intensity which gave a singular fascination to his eloquence.

As a young man in California he had ranked high in his profession as a portrayer of character. Years brought the broader, deeper art and philosophy, and he dreamed of the time when the stage should present not mere glimpses of human life and affairs, but great periods divided among successive performances. Great artist and poet-actor that he was, he kept going to the foundation and predicating the development of the stage on the development, the general advancement, of the people; for he knew that true art is based on freedom—freedom not for some, but for all, and that stage art cannot come to its full flower where privilege exists.

I never knew a man who, displaying so much genius in his profession, at the same time gave so much thought to the great social problems. The secret was that in his mind they were inextricable. And once I had a curious illustration of the way one melted into the other.

It was in the Academy of Music, where on Sunday evenings the tumultuous Anti-Poverty Society meetings had for so long been held. Mr. Herne had been

engaged to stage a spectacular play called "The Country Circus," and to superintend the first weeks or more of the New York performances. The central idea of the play was a circus in a country town; the climax features, a street parade and an interior tent scene. There were a great many people in these two features, representing not only the circus performers, but the street audience and the tent audience. The people in these audiences particularly interested me, for, on invitation of Mr. Herne, I went on the stage at one performance and became one of them, as I believe my father did at another time. In the tent scene we sat around on what seemed to be the conventional circus plank seats. The glare of the footlights and the roar of laughter that frequently went up from the real audience in the darkened theater beyond disconcerted me at first. But this was soon forgotten in the matters that were occurring on the stage itself. The circus programme presented several features, one of which was a clown and a mule. There were several circus attendants who wore caps and a kind of uniform. Mr. Herne was dressed as one of these attendants, and he moved about watching and giving stage directions in an undertone. Another man who wore one of these uniforms cried out frequently, "Peanuts and red lemonade." This man soon interested me more than anybody else, for I found that he was punching tickets presented by the people in the stage audience.

In this audience were men, women and children—out of New York's slums I afterwards learned. They were anxious to have their tickets punched, because upon the number of these little holes depended the amount of their pay from the theatrical managers, fifty cents to each man and each woman for each performance, and twenty-five cents to children. One little tot had forgotten or lost her ticket, and was in sore grief about it. She tried to stifle her sobs, but they reached me through all the other hum and noise of the stage.

I motioned to Mr. Herne and drew his attention to the matter. "That's a tragedy to those people," he murmured; "they come from the tenement regions. We cannot get away from the social problem. Actors ought to think. They see these things everywhere."

This great actor, with his big, melting heart, did think, and he made others think, both when he expounded his single tax faith and when he portrayed his stage art. That stage art was probably to a great many what it was to my father, who wrote to Mr. Herne a letter just after seeing "Shore Acres" for the first time—a letter that the actor greatly prized. The letter ran in part:

"I left Boston with the spell of your genius upon me, wishing very much to see you and sorry when I found I could not.

"I cannot too much congratulate you upon your success. You have done what you have sought to do—made a play pure and noble that people will come to hear. You have taken the strength of realism and added to it the strength that comes from the wider truth that realism fails to see; and in the simple portrayal of homely life, touched a universal chord. * * * In the solemnity of the wonderfully suggestive close, the veil that separates us from heaven seems to grow thin; and things not seen, to be felt.

"But who save you can bring out the character you have created—a character, which to others, as to me, must have recalled the tender memory of some sweet saint of God—for such loving and unselfish souls there have been and are. I never before saw acting that impressed me so much as yours last night. I did not feel like talking when I left the theater; but I wanted to grasp your hand. I did not want to see you in the wonderful piece of acting of which they told me, where you reduced man to the mere animal. I was glad to have seen you in this, where the angel gleams forth."

As I write the notes of a bugle ring out, as if giving the farewell salute of "taps" to the mortal remains of James A. Herne. It brings consciousness of the scene about me. I write on the shores of the Susquehanna, at Harrisburg. The afternoon sun sends a golden warmth down on the sliding, mirror-like river and the clumps of trees and irregular hills beyond. Behind me lies Harrisburg, the

capital seat of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Before me to the south, the Cumberland hills. Beyond those hills, forty miles away, lies historic Gettysburg. Again the bugle sounds, then comes the beat of a drum and along the shaded road of the river embankment marches a company of sedate, silver-haired Grand Army veterans. Two silk flags swish in the soft breeze and nothing is heard but the throb of the drum and the tramp of feet. Soon they are past and gone; and again I turn to the contemplation of the river and the Cumberland hills beyond—and Gettysburg behind those hills. To-morrow these old men in fatigue uniform will take train and go to the Grand Army encampment where perhaps some of them thirty-eight years ago took part in the supreme struggle there for three successive days. On the 3^d of July Lee's army retreated. The Northern invasion was prevented and the Southern cause was lost—the Southern cause in defence of chattel slavery.

The afternoon sun wanes and sinks in the western river waters. Twilight deepens to night and then the silvery moon and gemmy stars come forth. Only the occasional clatter from the city behind or the clang and roar of an occasional railroad train break the tranquil night-music of the crickets. But again in imagination I hear the notes of a bugle giving its solemn salute to the dead—to those who have died in the wars; in the wars against every kind of slavery; in the wars for mankind. Then again all is peace.

Harrisburg, Pa., June 4, 1901.

Posthumous Poem by Edward McGlynn.

“I fain would be a poet, and sing songs
 So full of hope and love and grace to men,
 That they should have the charm and potency
 To lure them from ignoble thoughts and cares
 To love of the Ideal, Infinite,
 Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Light, Life, Holiness,
 Which men call God, but Whom the Man of men
 Taught us, as man had never taught before,
 To call by more endearing, human name
 “Our Father,” and by this sweet parable
 Taught that the law of God is simply love,
 And that who best would show his love for God
 Must give best loving service unto men.
 This, Father, would I sing with trumpet tongue,
 In notes so sweet and clear and strong, that men
 Touched, softened, ravished by the strain should turn
 From selfish thoughts to love of all in Thee.
 Father, if Thou give not the gift of song,
 One boon I crave Thou wilt not, sure, deny:
 Let me my life a poem make, compact,
 In sweet accord, of harmony divine
 Of thought and will and deed with Thy sweet will.
 Then may my life some light and leading be
 To way-worn brothers while I tarry here,
 And, when I go, some word or deed of mine
 May still lure erring brothers back to Thee.”

These lines, by Rev. Dr. McGlynn, were read by Sylvester Malone at the Memorial Services in Calvary Cemetery, May 30th, 1901. They will be printed with a picture of the Doctor in an ornamental souvenir and sold for the monu-

ment fund. This poem is an epitome of the good father's creed, and will be read by our readers for the first time with renewed love for and appreciation of the Doctor's pure and lofty character and deep religious spirit.