

the Henry George News

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The following excerpt is from a letter to Charles Nordhoff, dated December 21, 1879, recently discovered by Joseph L. Richards of Boston. The book referred to is *Progress and Poverty*. Henry George was then living at 417 First Street, San Francisco.

WITH all deference to your judgment I think you are wrong in your opinion that I should have but briefly stated the economic laws. That would have been sufficient if I had been writing for men like you. But I have aimed to reach a very much larger audience. I have tried to make a book which would be intelligible to those who have never read and never thought on such subjects before, and to do that in such a way as to get the primary truths firmly established in their minds. And it is astonishing and appalling how few there are capable of logical thought—or rather, who are willing to undertake it. In the latter parts the book is too much condensed I know, and I had to omit a good deal I would like to have said. The fact is it covers too wide a scope for one volume. The chapters, for instance, relating to the development of civilization are but a bare skeleton of what I would like to say, and do not begin to present the argument as strongly as I feel it. But at least an outline seemed to me essential, and I did not know even if I lived, if I would ever find opportunity to write again.

If this book makes success enough to insure it a reception I will write

the little book you speak of. And if opportunity is given me there are two books I would like to write—one a brief political economy, which without controversy should lay down the principles of the science, and make of it a harmonious whole, and the other a dissection of this materialistic philosophy which with its false assumption of science passes current with so many . . . Out of the train of thought which is set forth in that book, out of the earnest, burning desire to do what I might to relieve human misery and make life brighter, has come to me a faith which though it is not as definite and vivid and firm as must be the Christian's faith, when it is really felt, is yet *very* much to me. The opportunity to write that book came to me out of crushing disaster; and it represents more than labor. But I would not forgo this satisfaction for my success. And I feel that there is much, very much of which I get only vague glimpses or rather suggestions of glimpses.

With many thanks for your kindness, which has been very grateful to me, I am

Yours sincerely,

Henry George