

The Georgeist Widows

By Anna George deMille



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“I AM a Georgeist widow!” One occasionally hears this statement sourly expressed by a disgruntled wife; how the bitterness of her tone stabs “old-timers” who for years have given of themselves to the Cause of Freedom.

They have heard that self-pitying wail in the past, and always with disappointment that the women uttering it lacked understanding and foresight. If she but realized it, the bowling alley, the race course, the card table, indeed any time-consuming enthusiasms can lure men away from home as certainly as teaching a class in “Progress and Poverty”—and not always with as commendable results!

Henry George was fully aware of the jealousy and possessiveness of some women. If one of his followers admitted regretfully that his wife never accompanied him to meetings because she “wasn’t interested,” he would ask:

“Have you really tried to interest her? I believe she would understand if she knew we are working to make the world a better place for our children—if she knew we are working for *peace*. Explain to her!”

The philosophy of Henry George has in numerous cases tightened the bonds of matrimony, and many women who had considered themselves as “Georgeist widows,” have shed their martyrdom to become “Georgeists,” with a fervor that has proven them worthy sharers in their husbands’ dedication to a vision. Some of these wives have laid even greater gifts on the altar of truth than have their men—since constant, albeit, small sacrifices can often out-balance the obvious offering made to the obligato of applause.

It is no more difficult to plough uphill than to teach an unwanted truth to a prejudiced world, but there have been Georgeist wives who worthily partnered their men in this high purpose. Such a one was the wife of Henry George.

Willingly she encouraged her husband to use his brilliant gifts for the good of humanity, rather than for acquiring the wealth that would have meant the ease and travel they both desired. A lover of beautiful things and of a gracious way of life, she never hinted resentment that hers was the constant struggle to make both ends meet.

Fond of the theater, concerts, and travel, it

must have been hard for her to forego these pleasures to the extent she had to. Her husband, engrossed in work to the limit of his power, was seldom able to escort her to evening entertainments, even if he could have afforded the expense.

She not only never showed resentment; she never let her children even feel it. While their life pivoted around the Cause that was their lodestar, and therefore in a way, around the leader of that Cause—their youthful rights and needs were never forgotten. The George home was a merry, happy place, where, in simple form, musical and card and dancing parties were frequent happenings.

The house-wife might have shown annoyance that, at all hours, she had to share her home, not only with friends, but with strangers (some of whom might today be termed “nuts”). But she never did indicate annoyance. Quick, resourceful, she was able somehow, to hide signs of the effort it entailed—when as many as five unexpected guests arrived for lunch. With grace and cunning she was known on occasion to apportion the hot chocolate and macaroons, prepared for fifteen Sunday night visitors, among the unsuspecting forty who turned up!

Her personal disappointments, financial contrivings, her tact and diplomacy, her unquestioning love—these were some of her contributions to the Cause. But greater than these were her brave sharing with her husband, of his cares and worries, and her dedication to his dedication.

She made her supreme gift when she gave her consent that he enter the last Mayoralty campaign. Four physicians and a number of close friends urged that he decline the nomination, believing his strength would not withstand another political fight. Henry George felt it his duty to accept the candidacy, in order that he might carry his message straight to the voters of Greater New York.

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"But I will not decide until I have consulted with my wife," he told his counselors.

Better even than the four doctors, she knew the tragic risk entailed; however—"You should do your duty at whatever cost," she answered.

And months after his death she wrote:

"He was my companion and teacher for thirty-six years and I wonder how to live without him. I try to find comfort and do, in the fact that I was useful to him."

To be useful to one who is serving a just Cause, is a great thing to be. Just *how* useful Annie Cor-sina George was, she never realized. But to one who knows their story well, comes the belief that had it not been for the unfailing faith and the deep understanding of his wife, Henry George, genius though he was, could not have achieved all he did.

Oh, bitter "Georgeist widow"—if down the years, as we have known you; if you had loaned your man, with better grace to what he believed to be his spiritual responsibility; if you had added your strength to his, in pointing the cause and cure of war—would history have written this bloody page?

But that page is now in the turning!

Take heart! Here is your chance to carry on: to find God's way—that it may be on earth as it is in Heaven.

For there's Peace to be written!