

## INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT

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**S**URPRISINGLY ENOUGH, the Phoenix Park murders did not provoke any public disturbances. However, the Government was compelled by public opinion to abandon its proposed lenience toward the Irish Land League. "Gladstone," wrote George five years later, "was not wise enough or strong enough to resist the frantic English demand for repressive measures."<sup>1</sup>

The old, dreary round of coercion was resumed. The grief and abhorrence which had swept Ireland at the violent deeds in Phoenix Park were quickly forgotten. Yet the murders caused some apparent defections in the ranks. Although Parnell, speaking in the House of Commons, openly opposed the renewed policy of oppression, in the Land League he quietly did all he could to "slow down" and kill the old movement. In a few months he had swung away from "the land for the people" to the old and rather vague program of "home rule." George believed, and wrote privately to Ford, that Parnell by his change of heart had missed the greatest opportunity any Irishman ever had.

But Davitt stuck to his guns. Seven years in prison had not broken his spirit. Unwilling to be a party to Parnell's "Kilmainham treaty," he made his position clear when he presided over a large meeting in Manchester where George had been invited to lecture. Davitt spoke so long that he left the guest of honor barely fifteen minutes. Although George hardly did himself justice, any chagrin he might have felt was overshadowed by Davitt's ringing stand against the "treaty."

Now the cry was raised that George and Ford, together with Davitt, were trying to split the ranks. George wrote to Francis G. Shaw:

The truth is that Parnell is tired, that the conservative influences in the management of the League have come out in full force, and that they want to settle the land question before it goes too far. . . . Michael Davitt is full of the idea of popularizing *Progress and Poverty*. That was the first thing he said to me. He had read it twice before, and he read it twice again while in Portland and as you may see from his speeches and letters, he believes in it entirely. He says if a copy of that book can be put in every workman's club and Land League and library in the three kingdoms the revolution will be made. His first act was to demand of Parnell and Dillon £500 to use in the English propaganda, £300 of which he wanted to put in my hands for as many copies of *Progress and Poverty* as it would bring. Parnell and Dillon at first agreed, and he went to Paris to get Egan's consent. Egan refused; but afterwards wrote that what Davitt wanted would have to be granted, and then after the Manchester speech Parnell and Dillon refused.

The fact is that the line is really drawn and the split made, but not publicly. . . . I am glad I have been here if for nothing but my influence on Davitt. But the others taunt him so much with the idea that "Henry George has captured him" that he didn't want me to go down to Galway with him. The Land League leaders—that is, the "Parliamentarians"—have fought shy of me ever since I have been here.<sup>2</sup>

A few days later Davitt, speaking at Liverpool, caused a sensation when he brushed aside Parnell's objections and came out for "land nationalization" in opposition to peasant proprietorship. This differed from the method that George advocated for bringing about land reform. He desired the absorption of economic rent through taxation of land values and was flatly opposed to touching the titles to land.

But Davitt's speech had the old lilt—"the land for the people." George, knowing that it was not yet time to quarrel over details, and realizing at the same time that the right principle was being promulgated, was overjoyed.

On June 10, George delivered a second Dublin lecture at the Rotunda. It was so well received that the "Kilmainham Treatyites," as the Parnell faction came to be known, began to turn their fire on him. They also brought great pressure on Davitt, who had gone to the United States to try to raise money for propaganda.

Despite this opposition from Irish leaders, the American won

the friendship of George O. Trevelyan, the new Chief Secretary for Ireland, and the enthusiastic support of the Reverend Harold Rylett of Belfast, of Father Thomas Dawson, O.M.I., of Glencree, and of Dr. James E. Kelly of Dublin. Other lesser figures in Ireland rallied to his cause.

In England and Scotland he found enthusiasm for his ideas among men like Joseph Cowen, proprietor of *The Newcastle Chronicle*; Thomas F. Walker, a manufacturer in Birmingham; and William Saunders, president of the Central News Agency in London. He was invited to speak in Glasgow at two large meetings which kindled great enthusiasm and which are considered by many to mark the beginning of the radical land movement in Scotland.

George had written to Shaw, "*Progress and Poverty* is slowly and steadily making its way—eating in as I am inclined to think no book of this kind ever did before, and the little *Irish Land Question* has certainly produced a considerable effect. And soon now, I think the big discussion is to open and the oxygen blast will be turned on the smouldering fire."<sup>3</sup>

Crossing this letter was one from Shaw which enclosed a draft for \$500. In thanking him, George wrote that the money "seems to me like the fulcrum for a lever that will help move the world."<sup>4</sup>

Nine days later Shaw wrote again to say that \$3,000 had been pledged for the circulation of *Progress and Poverty* by someone who wished to remain anonymous.<sup>5</sup> With part of this money Shaw had ordered Appleton to send one thousand copies of *The Irish Land Question* and to follow them with an equal number of the larger book, specially bound, to members of the Society for Political Education in the United States.

"The great movement we have so often talked about is coming," George wrote to Dr. Taylor.<sup>6</sup> For now, thanks to the Shaw money and the cooperation of Dr. James C. Durant, who had a printing office in London, a six-penny edition of 12,000 copies of *Progress and Poverty* was issued and circulated throughout the United Kingdom. A three-penny edition of 5,000 copies of *The Irish Land Question* followed.

An amusing incident occurred during the preparation of this English paper-bound edition of George's master work.

One day a stranger sauntered into the composing room of the Durant plant. Explaining that he had been a printer, he said he would like to try his hand at the case. Permission was granted

and the stranger began chatting with another compositor named Boyle as the two set type. At last Boyle broke in, "You are an American and a compositor, and from what you've been telling me you've been a sailor and a miner. The man who wrote this book we're working on, was all those things. Can it be that you—*are—?*"

"Yes," admitted Henry George, "I am!"<sup>7</sup>

In August, 1882, the American set off on a jaunting-car trip to western Ireland to study and write of conditions there. With him went an Englishman, James Leigh Joynes, a master of Eton, who had been engaged to write articles for *The Times* of London.

They arrived at the small town of Loughree, which swarmed with soldiers and constabulary. As the correspondents drove down the street to the only hotel, the police seemed to leap from the houses on each side and follow them.

A month earlier George had written from London to America, "It has been very hard work ever since I have been here. Every word I write or telegraph has been watched on the other side (Ireland) and I have been in a much more difficult place than a mere newspaper correspondent."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, now in Loughree his position became acute. Later he wrote of it to his wife: "A lot of police were waiting for us and arrested us (under the Crimes Act) the moment the horse stopped in front of the hotel. Police jumped up (on the jaunting-car) and drove us to the barracks where, in a barred room, each valise was searched, each paper read. It was very funny to see them going through everything like a parcel of monkeys."<sup>9</sup>

George was particularly amused by a constable who, with intense interest, studied a manuscript which he held upside down. Indeed, the whole episode struck him as highly farcical. Joynes was not amused. His companion, wrote George, was "indecently disconcerted and frightened."<sup>10</sup> He went on in this vein:

The Eton men are brave. Whatever else he may get at the old school, a boy gets the lesson that he must not flinch drilled into him with his Greek and Latin. But this notion of being arrested and being paraded through the streets as a would-be assassin of landlords, was evidently more horrible at first blush to my friend than being fired at from behind a stone wall—the danger that his friends had warned him he was risking.<sup>11</sup>

An Englishman who comes to Ireland in the right way gets some new notions. I have no prejudices against publishers, but I would like to have had Kegan Paul on one side of the car and W. H. Appleton on the other.

The whole thing struck me as infinitely ridiculous. There was after all, a good deal of human nature in Artemus Ward's declaration that he was willing to sacrifice all his wife's relatives to save the Union. And in my satisfaction at seeing an Eton master lugged through the town as too suspicious a stranger to be left at large, I lost all sense of annoyance at my own arrest.

The Magistrate who examined them concluded there had been some mistake. After three hours the correspondents were released. They spent the night in the local hotel, paid a visit to the prior of the Carmelite Order and to the shops of several "suspects," and drove off to the nearby town of Athenry. In this hamlet, which was too small to support a doctor and which boasted only one pump for the entire town, twenty-six constables and fifty-six soldiers were quartered. The correspondents visited Father McPhilpin, did some sight-seeing, and made for the railroad station. The police, who had been loitering about, arrested George again but permitted Joynes to go free. The American related:

The charge against me was being a stranger and a dangerous character who had conspired with certain other persons to prevent the payment of rent. The police surrounded me and forced me into what in some parts of this country would be called the hoodlum wagon. I was carried to the police station under a formidable guard, and after being cross-examined was locked up. . . . I was taken to the mansion of the squire for examination. I shall never forget the contrast it presented with the misery of the village. Well-dressed people were playing lawn tennis on its beautiful grounds. It had stately trees around it and an air of the utmost respectability and comfort. The squire sent me back to the subordinate magistrate and I was recommitted to the lock-up.<sup>12</sup>

Several hours of detention followed, with a long examination of papers and endlessly stupid testimony regarding the prisoner's movements. George, as he wrote later, "was very hungry, for all I had to eat since morning was a bit of bread and cheese. . . . It was near midnight and I was very tired, and if I had to sleep in Galway Jail, as I expected, there was a long ride yet

before me, so I said nothing about the effort of kissing a 'swear book,' nor further bothered the inspector."<sup>13</sup>

The magistrate, who, oddly enough, was the same one who had examined him at Loughree, summed up with a justification of the police for having arrested the American. Then he proceeded to discharge him. Whether the decision was due to the telegram which Mr. Trevelyan, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, stated in the House of Commons that he had sent to Ireland, or whether it was due to the magistrate's native wisdom, George could not determine. "My papers," he continues in the account of the incident, "were restored to me, and as the magistrate expressed a desire to read the whole of *The Irish Land Question*, I asked him to accept a copy, and gave one each to the Sub-Inspector and the constable who had personally been very polite to me."<sup>14</sup>

Next morning the two correspondents wasted no time climbing into the jaunting car behind their Irish driver and the fleet little mare. As to further adventure, George only indicates: "...how the police followed us into the wilds of Connemara, and how we lost them by the aid of a horse that could understand Irish, if she could not speak it."<sup>15</sup>

Irish friends who learned of the American's predicament hurried to his wife to apologize and commiserate with her, and were quite amazed to find her unworried. Her sense of humor reassured her—and besides she had received a note from her husband saying, "Am enjoying the trip and seeing a lot."<sup>16</sup>

Yet George knew that such treatment as he had experienced could on occasion prove most annoying. When he reached Dublin he sent a letter to President Arthur protesting against "wanton annoyances, unreasonable inquisitions and imprisonment upon frivolous pretexts" suffered by American citizens abroad without adequate intervention by American diplomats. In reality, the letter was aimed at James Russell Lowell, the American Minister to the Court of St. James's. This assignment, as George afterward wrote in a critical yet humorous vein, was "a place for the spoiling of good poets."

After he returned to the United States, Henry George received a letter from Secretary of State Frelinghuysen who passed on to him "the regret of Her Majesty's Government that this incident should have occurred,"<sup>17</sup> and invited him to enter a claim for damages. George declined to do this.

The publicity given the arrests in Ireland, the reference to

it in the House of Commons, the spread of the cheap editions of his books, and the laudatory criticism in the *Times* of London brought George and his theories to the forefront of popular discussion. When the *Times*' review of *Progress and Poverty* appeared, George's English publisher sold out every copy of the book on hand.

Back in London, he made his first address in Memorial Hall with Alfred Russell Wallace in the chair.<sup>18</sup> It was a chance hearing of the American at this meeting that changed the life of a young Irishman, George Bernard Shaw, and (according to Archibald Henderson) "fired him to enlist, in Heine's phrase, 'as a soldier in the Liberative War of Humanity.'" <sup>19</sup> Following "the clarion call" of the author of *Progress and Poverty*, Shaw said subsequently in a message to America, "my ambition is to repay my debt to Henry George by coming over some day and trying to do for your young men what Henry George did nearly a quarter of a century ago, for me."<sup>20</sup>

A few days later George spoke to another gathering, one that gave him inspiration and satisfaction—three hours of serious discussion with Church of England clergymen.

That same evening he was guest of honor at a two-shilling workingmen's banquet. Then he said farewell to England—but not for the last time. His admirers were eager for him to stay but he told them that the movement was strong enough to go on without him; that perhaps he could be of help but no one man was necessary to the movement now. And with the glad tidings that another edition of 20,000 copies of *Progress and Poverty* was to be printed in a few days, he left for Ireland.

In Dublin a farewell dinner was given him. On October 4, 1882, he sailed with his family for New York.