

Governor Garvin

WHILE the last issue of the REVIEW was in press the news came of the unexpected death on Oct. 2nd of Lucius F. C. Garvin, who deserved the designation of the "Grand Old Man of the Single Tax Movement," better than almost any other of the adherents of that idea. Only two weeks before his death he was a conspicuous figure at a gathering of progressive-minded people assembled at Nantucket on the invitation of Hon. Frederic C. Howe to discuss the burning questions of the hour. His vitality, both physical and mental, excited the wonder of his associates, and many comments were made as to the hospitality which his mind showed to ideas regarded as ultra-modern. Eighty-one years of militant effort for the spread of democracy had neither weakened his hope of its ultimate success nor had it made him impervious to the changes of form in its realization which recent years have revealed to be necessary.

He was born in Tennessee in 1841, the son of James Garvin, Jr., native of Vermont, graduate of Amherst in the class of 1831, and professor in the East Tennessee University. How profoundly James Garvin was interested in education is shown by the fact that he named his son for Lucius Fayette Clark, one of the distinguished educators of his time.

The father did not long survive the birth of his son. The family moved to Greensborough, North Carolina, where Lucius F. C. Garvin attended a Friends' School. When ready for college, he came North, entered his father's college, Amherst, from which he graduated in 1862. He enlisted in the United States Army upon his graduation, and joined the Fifty-fifth Massachusetts' volunteers and served principally in North Carolina. After his discharge from the army in 1864, he settled in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, chiefly because many of his regimental associates lived there. He then began the study of medicine, and, having completed his studies, and passed his examinations at the Harvard Medical School, he was awarded a diploma in 1867.

He began his medical practice in Lonsdale where he maintained an office for fifty-five years. He had the distinction of being the only member of the medical profession ever elected Governor of Rhode Island. For forty years he was active in the political life of his State. Five times a candidate for Governor, he was elected twice. He sat in the Legislature for nineteen years, being elected to the Assembly sixteen times, and three times to the Senate.

That he achieved so much political success without ever concealing his belief in the Single Tax policy as the fundamental and necessary reform will surprise many. He never made the mistake of believing that public intelligence was yet sufficiently ripe on the subject to justify one in ignoring the truth, *that the function of a representative in a democracy is to represent*, and he interested himself in urging minor reforms which his constituents believed to be important. It is significant that, although Theodore Roosevelt carried Rhode Island in 1904 by a plurality of 1,400, Governor Garvin was defeated only by 856 votes. In 1912 when ex-President Roosevelt formed the Progressive Party, Governor Garvin joined the new organization and became a prominent figure in it. In 1916, being convinced that there was no hope of advancing the cause of the people through the Progressives, he returned to the Democratic Party. The *Providence Journal* sums up his political career in the following paragraph:

"It was on the issue of equal rights that Dr. Garvin first projected himself in Rhode Island political affairs in 1893. Five years later an amendment to the Constitution of the State made partial concessions to the principles which he advocated. In 1904 he urged the passage of the 10-hour law, which was effected the following year. In 1886 he introduced a measure providing for a Bureau of Labor Statistics, which was subsequently established. In 1891 he worked tirelessly for the passage of the weekly payment bill and in 1893 for the plurality election measures, and he saw his efforts fruitful. In 1894 he was instrumental in securing enactment of the factory inspection law. In 1899 he introduced the constitution initiative proposal, which he has offered every year since then. At each session of the Assembly for the past seven years he has brought before the House a bill for local option in taxation."

To those who knew him personally, Governor Garvin embodied a large number of those traits which we like to think of, as typically American, absolutely simple in manner and habit, profoundly interested in what he believed to be the popular welfare, quite careless about worldly success, utterly regardless of caste, race, or party distinctions; he continued to support himself and his family by the practice of his profession which he continued actively to the day

reform had not come true before his summons came, was not for him a source of discouragement. It was because he was able to hope, and firmly to believe that some day his ideals would be realized that his nature remained as sweet and as kindly as it did. He always retained the faith that mankind was more prone to good than to evil, and that unjust social conditions continued to exist, not because men did not want to do better, but because they did not know how—and that some day they would learn.

—J. J. M.