

LIBERTARIAN MAGAZINE

Vol.5, No.5, November, 1925, devoted to Henry George and the Single Tax Movement

George and his Disciples
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IN conversation not long ago with Poultney Bigelow, son of John Bigelow, and distinguished in his own right as a noted author and keen observer of men and things, Mr. Bigelow said that what most impressed him in Henry George was his truthfulness. This seemed to Mr. Bigelow no negligible Quality, as indeed it is not. Truthful with all men, truthful with himself, George faced the world, faced, too, with calm courage, the consequence and conclusions of his teachings.

It was a rare quality. An idea was not something to be evaded but to be met and, if false, to be overcome; if true, to be made part of his philosophy. Perhaps the intellectual failures of men may be in large measure attributed to the fact that they are not true to themselves in the high way that George was. Truthfulness and courage—which merge insensibly into one another—were his distinguishing characteristics.

These were personal qualities which lesser men may possess. In Henry George they were united with intellectual qualities of an extraordinary kind, powers of observation and analysis, a superb gift of eloquence and a faculty of orderly arrangement that makes his chief work, *Progress and Poverty*, a very masterpiece of argumentation.

In addition to these qualities one other must be noted. Henry George was a master of English. In this it is doubtful if he has a superior among the great prose writers of the language. Clarity is here, together with warmth and fire. At times the sentences move in stately fashion to culminate in some splendid climax. The effect is always impressive and often thrilling.

But what made George a great man was something else, something infinitely higher, very difficult of analysis, very elusive and not obvious at all to the complacent minds immersed in the ordinary and commonplace. It was the seer-like quality of mind that sets off the Hebrew prophets and the prophets of other times from their cotemporaries, that makes them pillars of cloud by day and pillars of fire by night, that flame through the centuries and are an inspiration to remoter generations.

It will be seen that I consider Henry George a very great man. Indeed my sentiments regarding him stop only a little short of idolatry. I believe that future times will look upon him as the savior of civilization; that when men come to regard with increasing conviction the great truth he taught, the right of all men to the earth they inhabit, together with the mode of the application of this right to

human society, his memory will be among the dearest possessions of the race; that here and in all lands monuments will be erected to this great and unselfish servant of truth who did more for mankind than any save One only whom it may not be sacrilege to mention in this connection.

I say this who differ with Henry George in his explanation of the cause of interest as set forth in *Progress and Poverty*. I am not blind to what I consider his mistaken political policy, which I hold in the main responsible for the slow-moving wheels of the great chariot he set in motion. Here, it seems to me, his advocacy of fusion with the Democracy in Cleveland's and Bryan's time was a failure of that great mind to correctly visualize the future. It may be questioned, too, whether his great reform might not have been more powerfully enforced by presenting the method as one designed to take the economic rent of land, even if some taxes were retained. The tendency of some of his followers has been to lay too great an emphasis on the purely fiscal advantages of the plan, and the name Single Tax has been a real obstacle to a better understanding of our principles. But it may be that this was not so much the fault of Henry George as of those who came after him. The obvious fiscal advantages of the Single Tax are too great to be ignored, and I for one do not wish to ignore them, but the result to be obtained by taking the economic rent of land is the making of the earth free to mankind, and this immeasurably transcends the benefits that will flow from relieving industry of taxation. In more than one place throughout his works George has said what I am now saying. It is no harm to point out minor advantages of the plan if we do not lose sight of the major principle.

We may pass this, however, as perhaps less important than it seems. We must keep to our text, "George and His Disciples." The greatness which I have attributed to the man, part of which the world is even now ready to concede, needs no present proof. If it needed proof, it would exist in the character of his adherents. A man is known by the company he keeps, is an old saying. So, in the same way, the greatness of a man, the value of the message he brings, may be known by the sort of men whom he attracts to his standard and the sort of men who carry that message forward. Tried by this test, Henry George is truly triumphant. For no other man has ever rallied to his support so conspicuous a group of gifted minds; so many men and women unselfishly devoted to humanity; so many humble souls who in the lower walks of life carry in their hearts the thought of Henry George and his inspiring message. These must in all parts of the world today number literally many millions, for there is no country where his disciples are not to be found and few where organized groups are not actively at work popularizing his teachings.

At the very beginning of the announcement of his doctrines, he found eminent disciples. Those who hastened to declare their discipleship were intellectually strangely dissimilar which, I take it, is veritable testimony to the value of his message.

Among these early converts to the cause were the late James G. Maguire, twice Democratic candidate for governor of California, a man of great legal acquirements; Louis F. Post, later President Wilson's appointee as assistant secretary of labor, and second only to Henry George in his ability to present the doctrine in speech or writing. Mr. Post was associated with Henry George in the editorial conduct of the Standard. His forthcoming book, *The Prophet of San Francisco*, will tell the story of his early association with the great leader.

In the days of 1886 when Henry George ran for mayor of New York city, and where 68,000 votes were counted for him in what is now the borough of Manhattan, he was surrounded by a group of highly gifted orators; Dr. Edward McGlynn, Rev. Hugh Pentecost, and William Lloyd Garrison, were among them. The last named was an orator who read his speeches, but so admirable an elocutionist and finished a stylist that his hearers were never unpleasantly conscious that he was reading rather than speaking. William Lloyd Garrison had something of the rugged love of truth of his distinguished father, but he had graduated into the Brahmin caste of New England by virtue of a finer culture and a gentler nature than was the possession of his more noted father.

Other disciples of Henry George at that time were Father Ducey, an eloquent priest of this city, and Dr. Burtzell, one of the greatest canonical authorities of the Catholic Church; and in the ranks of Protestantism, Rev. R. Heber Newton and Dr. Huntington. I purposely omit Dr. Lyman Abbott, who though exceedingly sympathetic, seems hardly to have grasped the full significance of the new movement. Perhaps the one great voice of the time was a former lawyer of Kansas City, Mo., John Sherwin Crosby. Here was a born orator if there ever was one. He was aided by a magnificent presence, a handsome face, and a voice that thrilled one strangely. He realized what we may imagine of Demosthenes, and in his arraignment of existing evils, of Cato, for his was the classical type of eloquence, and he bore himself like a Roman Senator. He shook his hearers with his passionate denunciations but never lost possession of his magnificent pose as he hurled his verbal thunderbolts.

Eleven years after the campaign of 1886 it was his painful duty to stand beside all that was mortal of the great leader and pronounce as fine a funeral oration as man ever heard. That this will not seem extravagant praise I may be permitted to quote from that great speech made at the Grand Central Palace in New York where Henry George's body lay in state:—

“Here on this sad Sabbath day, the day that was made for man, at the open-standing portals through which our beloved leader has passed from time to the eternity that awaits us all, let us ask, and answer if loe can, this question: Why is it that at the death of this plain, unassuming man, who, although known throughout the world, never held station or worldly honor; whose writings have seldom appeared in dress more pretentious than a cheap paper cover, having been slighted and discredited by concerted action of those whose office it is to make

known whatever truth may be discovered; why is it that thousands of men and women are today assembled, not only here at his funeral by the Atlantic, but on the other side of the continent by the Pacific, at this same hour, in that very hall in San Francisco where he first gave public utterance to his sublime theories? (Applause.) Why is it that not only in this country, but throughout all lands, there is this unprecedented manifestation of a universal, common sorrow at his loss'? Is it because he was a good won? He was a good man. No whiter soul ever winged its way to regions of celestial peace. But. other good men have died, are dying every day, and yet we see no such demonstration as this. ...An able man? Men of the greatest ability are constantly passing away, but they are paid no such tribute as that accorded to this man. . Why, then, this world-wide mourning? This man had a theory—was said to be a man of one idea. If that theory be false, that idea a mere vagary, why, as he passes away, does the world rise and stand uncovered in honor of the' man who proclaimed it? It is the natural, universally spontaneous recognition of Henry George's theory as an essential part of God's eternal truth." (Tremendous applause.)

And elsewhere in this remarkable address:—

"It has been said that he threatened established institutions. Threatened? He has not only threatened them-; he has shaken them to their foundations. (Prolonged applause.) Threatened your institutions, has he? To whom have you built statues in your cities but to men who threatened your institutions? Your Garrisons and Phillipses, your Lincolns, Sumners and Swards, all threatened institutions defended in their time by pulpit and press, as you know. Yes, Henry George has threatened established institutions, and they are now tottering to their fall, because not founded on the eternal rock of justice, but built upon the shifting sands of expedience."

Henry George drew to his standard at this time men eminent in the theatrical profession. Chief of these were James A. Herne, author and star of the famous "Shore Acres;" Louis Mann, Charlie Dickson, and others.

Among distinguished members of the medical profession who were disciples of Henry George were such men as General William C. Gorgas, Surgeon General of the United States Army; S. Solis Cohen, eminent specialist of Philadelphia; Dr. Walter Mendelson; the late Jacques Loeb, of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research; Victor C. Vaughan, President of the American Medical Association, and many others who might be included.

What of the College and University professors? What proportion of these have been converted to the views of this humble printer who began life as a sailor and was a compositor at the case and lacked all the "disadvantages" of a college education— we are grateful to Emerson for that word!

New ideas, especially where these are opposed to current thought, to accepted habits and customs, have never found hospitable homes in institutions of learning endowed by privilege and responsive mainly to conservative tendencies. Yet it is but fair to say that many individual professors have met these reactionary forces bravely and have often suffered for their hardihood in loss of position. In fairness to the colleges, too, or many of them, it may be said that a number of professors have not been molested for teachings in which Henry George has been accepted in whole or in part. Dr. F. W. Roman, formerly of the Syracuse University; Prof. Harry Gunnison Brown, of the University of Missouri; Prof. Downer, Professor of Romance languages at the College of the City of New York; Prof. Lewis Jerome Johnson and Prof. Comfort A. Adams, of Harvard, are a few of the Single Tax men among the professors, and if I omit mention of others it is because I do not think of them at the moment.

Among eminent literary men whose enthusiastic acceptance of the principles of Henry George has directed much of their activities, I must not omit to name the late Herbert Quick, who in *Vandemark's Folly* and *The Hawkeye* achieved extraordinary distinction. It is doubtful if these works would have been written but for the original impulse derived from Mr. Quick's knowledge of *Progress and Poverty*. The social philosophy that animates them is from the teachings of Henry George which Herbert Quick had early absorbed. Hamlin Garland, who in his early *Main Travelled Roads* achieved a series of masterpieces that deserve a place among the glories of our literature, was an early disciple of Henry George, and the influence of his writings is visible on every page.

I could add to these names many more from other departments of human activity: men eminent as legal lights, like Thomas G. Shearman; men distinguished in the financial world, like John Moody; poets, like Bliss Carman and Edmund Vance Cooke; editors, like Don Seitz. But I have named a sufficient number to enable me to make my point, which is this: I conceive that the presumptive proof of a proposition is supported, not so much by the number of those who announce their adhesion to it, nor even by their intellectual character, as by their varying mentalities. For these men manifestly approach it from many sides; weigh it intellectually, or emotionally, or ethically, or spiritually. And while it would be foolish to say that this fact, impressive as it is, is sufficient of itself to establish the truth of a proposition, it is the highest kind of presumptive proof in its favor. That is all I am pointing out. No sensible man or woman can be indifferent to a theory that numbers such adherents.