

Henry George pp 18-19

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LITERARY ANNALS
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108th Class

*Presented to
Henry George School*



*of Albert
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Phila April 2, 1960

Henry George (1839-1897), 29th class, has probably the greatest international reputation as a writer of any man who ever attended the Central High School. As is well known, his influence upon two world figures like Bernard Shaw and Tolstoy has been marked. Shaw heard him speak in London in the eighties, and like a good many others became temporarily interested in single-tax, but then drifted into socialism. Tolstoy read him in old age, became converted, and referred to him often in his writings. A book, now forgotten, "Mr. Henry George: The Orthodox," by Robert Scott Moffatt, was published against Henry George in England in 1885. Henry George became involved in a controversy with Herbert Spencer, the philosopher, and in "A Perplexed Philosopher" (1890) castigated Spencer for having changed his position on the land question from the one he had maintained in early life. In this country one of George's antagonists was Robert Ellis Thompson, also a former Central High School student, who was the foremost representative of protection, as George was of free trade. When George, in 1889, published his famous book, "Protec-

LITERARY ANNALS OF THE CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

tion or Free Trade," it was Thompson whom he quoted and sought to refute time and time again. George's "Progress and Poverty" (1879) is his greatest work and led to the founding of the movement known as the single-tax, by which he meant a tax on land alone for the support of the government, for George did not believe in private ownership of land, since its value was increased by the labor of others on or around it. No book in our economic literature aroused more controversy. George went to England in the eighties and excited wild enthusiasm. He founded a paper in New York called "The Standard" and enlisted many disciples. He ran twice for mayor of New York City, once in 1886, when he ran ahead of Theodore Roosevelt, and again in 1897, but after a vigorous campaign he died a few days before the election. He exerted a great influence upon liberals; Tom Johnson and Louis F. Post were followers of his. Only last year a book about him by Professor George R. Geiger was published as "The Philosophy of Henry George." George wrote an undefiled lucid English and had a poetic soul. Even though he spent only part of the year 1853 at the Central High School, the institution had something to do with his development.