

## A Backward Glance

THE celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the publication of "Progress and Poverty," which is to be held this summer at Edinburgh, prompts one to take a backward glance at the reform movement which that notable book started, in this country and in foreign lands. My recollection of the movement goes back some years before 1887, when the Syracuse Convention was held. I was in New York and called on Thaddeus T. Wakeman, a practicing attorney, who was also a lecturer on radical religious themes, and whom I had met several times when he was out on lecturing tours. Mr. Wakeman invited me to attend a mid-day luncheon at a restaurant, located I think on Duane Street, where he said I would hear some interesting talks. And surely I did, for among the speakers were Henry George and Louis F. Post.

When the call went out for the Syracuse Convention, which was held on August 17, 18 and 19, 1887, I was interested for I had been closely following the mayoralty campaign of 1886, had read most of the speeches as reported in the New York daily papers, and had seen the cat, at least the general outline of the famous animal. A meeting was called in Tompkins County to elect a delegate to the convention, and I was elected. I believe Byron W. Holt and James C. Parsons were at the meeting, and possibly others. F. S. Hammond, of St. Petersburg, then a resident of New York state, was one of the delegates. He recently lent me a copy of a scrap book containing an account of the convention as reported in Syracuse newspapers, the *Evening Herald* and the *Morning Standard*.

The list of delegates calls up interesting recollections. Among the number besides Henry George, Dr. McGlynn, and Louis F. Post, I find the names W. T. Croasdale, S. E. Shevitsch, Lawrence Grunlund, Frank J. Farrell (colored) William McCabe, Walter Vrooman, John McMackin, James Redpath, Fred C. Leubuscher, E. J. Shriver, Augustus A. Levy, Rev. James O. S. Huntington and R. J. Hinton.

Mr. Schevitsch, Mr. Grunland, Mr. Vrooman, Col. Hinton, and other Socialists were unseated by the report of the committee on contested seats. They were Socialists. But many Socialists retained seats in the convention. Under a rule which had been adopted by the United Labor Party of New York County, which in 1886 had nominated Mr. George for mayor, the Socialists mentioned were ineligible to serve as delegates it was said.

The platform adopted by the convention was the same, or nearly the same as that which was adopted in September 1886 by the convention of trade and labor associations of New York City which nominated Mr. George for mayor. The land plank did not use the word "Single Tax." "As measures of relief from some of the evils resulting from the failure to tax land values" the convention declared for reduced hours of labor, the prevention of the employ-

ment of children, the sanitary inspection of tenements, factories and mines, against the abuse of conspiracy laws, and demanded the adoption of the Australian system of voting.

At a mass meeting held one evening during the convention, there were speeches by Mr. George, Dr. McGlynn, Rev. Hugh O. Pentecost and others. But the speaking I remember best was the debate over the report of the committee on contested seats. The time was equally divided, Mr. George, Dr. McGlynn, and Mr. Post speaking for the majority report excluding the Socialists and Mr. Shevitsch, Col. Hinton and young Vrooman speaking for the minority report. I have attended many conventions, but never heard a discussion in which real oratory and sound reasoning arose to greater heights. It was a credit to both sides. Mr. Shevitsch was a handsome man of middle age, Col. Hinton, old and gray haired and gray bearded, and Mr. Vrooman appeared to be about eighteen years of age. Col. Hinton's talk was impassioned, and young Vrooman's speech was fiery too.

In December 1889 appeared a communication from the Single Tax League of Washington, asking Henry George men if there should not be held a national conference, "of those who believe that the appropriation of ground rent to public uses should be the paramount issue in politics." Chas. Frederick Adams and Jackson Ralston were among the signers.

Henry George's comment on the proposal for this national gathering is particularly interesting at this time, when the Edinburgh conference is being planned. Mr. George said:

"I believe that the appropriation of ground rent to public uses ought to be the paramount issue in politics, and that the day is fast coming when it will be. But I do not believe that that day is to be hastened by any premature attempt to force it into politics through a third party. Since the shameful ending of the United Labor Party, I have a wholesome dread of little parties that may be used as cat's paws by the politicians of the great parties."

Mr. George expressed the hope that if the conference were held that there may be present such men as Ring of Texas, Maguire of California, Williams of Missouri, Garrison of Massachusetts, Johnson of Ohio, Furbish or Bailey of Illinois, Powderly of Pennsylvania, Saunders of England, McGhee of Scotland, Davitt of Ireland, Toubreau of France, Flurscheim of Germany, and Sir George Grey of New Zealand.

If we are able to have with us at Edinburgh, Dr. Pikler of Hungary, Dr. Dane of Australia, Professor Dewey, Dr. Wise and a score of others like these men, the conference will be something like the one Mr. George was wishing for in 1889.

—CHESTER C. PLATT.