

Strong Soul and High Endeavor

I REMEMBER, as though it were yesterday, the first time I met Joseph Dana Miller, seven years ago. The meeting came about in this way. Having just read "Progress and Poverty," I entertained the hope there might be some sort of group that gathered to discuss and spread the beautiful philosophy of Henry George. The vicissitudes of fortune led my search to the office of LAND AND FREEDOM.

I shall never forget the impression made upon me by the editor. His face beamed with kindness, yet reflected a worldly wisdom that challenged any idea he could be taken advantage of in his field of work. He displayed a serenity that can only be associated with the pure in heart. Almost as if by natural design, he had received the physical gift of a beautiful, dome-like head, in keeping with and apparently symbolizing his virtues.

Having allowed me to introduce myself and my errand, Mr. Miller began telling me of the newly formed Henry George School of Social Science, of which his office was then the headquarters, and whose curriculum at that time was nothing more than a semi-weekly lecture conducted by Oscar H. Geiger at the home of some friends. Further conversation brought out that Mr. Miller was the editor of LAND AND FREEDOM. He reached for a copy of the paper but even before he could hand it to me, I announced myself as a subscriber forthwith. Thereupon he picked up the telephone, got Mr. Geiger at the other end, and "registered" me as a student. I had not told him to. But we had seen the gleam of understanding in each other's eyes.

Hardly a day passed thereafter in which I didn't run up to Joseph Dana Miller. Ever courteous, he bore calmly and sympathetically with the numerous "problems" I brought. A few years later he took me into his confidence and gave me my "spurs" by stating he had come to rely very much on my judgment. When Oscar H. Geiger, the business manager of LAND AND FREEDOM died, I was drafted as Mr. Miller's consultant.

Being an editor, he had a string of visitors. Some were more welcome than others. I don't believe he had much chance to write at length in the office. Now and then he might jot down something, but probably did most of his writing at home. On vacations, too, he did considerable work. He wrote slowly, and with an unsteady hand, though he actually enjoyed addressing all the LAND AND FREEDOM wrappers at each issue.

The office itself was the subject for lots of fun. Hardly bigger than a packing box, never was more stuff crowded into an editorial sanctum. I still gaze, with mixed feelings of laughter and sorrow, upon his desk, a real antique. When the roller part goes up, the table part pulls out,

threatening to topple the ink and paste and various other items with which it is cluttered. The editor's chair, with its arm rests, was built for comfort, its new cretonne covered back and seat pads betraying the work of a feminine visitor whose sense of tidiness had revolted at the older pads, which were so worn as to expose nearly all the cotton filling. Everything in the office seemed to be of the most ancient vintage.

Joseph Dana Miller always took good naturedly our quips about the office attire. In return he treated us to a delicious humor of his own. His repartee was flawless, yet he never employed a deliberate pun. On occasions he would throw us into stitches by dryly referring to some crackpot as possessed of a "custard pie" mind. If one became too serious on a metaphysical aspect of the Single Tax, he would bring the culprit to earth by perhaps posing some such question as "Does Omnipotence abnegate Attribute." If sentimentality went to excess he could make short work of that also. Once, when I had voiced my regrets at having been born after Henry George's death and my envy of those who had shaken our great leader's hand, the editor, with a twinkle, replied, "Don't take it so hard; I never saw Christ in the flesh."

He tolerated those Single Taxers who criticised Henry George, but saw little use in debating with them. Without malice, he suggested they were merely enamoured of their own subtleties. However, he often expressed admiration for the sincerity and hard work of many who disagreed with him, although he was saddened, in his way of looking at it, by their error in not sticking to Henry George. When certain of them would become violent, he confessed that "Single Taxers are the only people who are against what they're for."

Joseph Dana Miller preferred to see the good intentions that might be present in any of the approaches to the attainment of our goal. While recognizing Henry George as the exponent of a *science* of political economy, he, like George, never frowned on any Georgeist movement because it might be less scientific than political, so long as he felt the advocates were sincere, as he always saw a certain educational value in them. He constantly reiterated his approval of Henry George's entrance into the political arena.

He enjoyed belonging to the School of 1897, to which a few of his critics consigned him in reproach for his "failure" to keep abreast of the modern improvements being engrafted on the ideas of Henry George. He admitted he could also bear the accusation of belonging to an even older school, that of the first century of the Christian era.

Joseph Dana Miller devoutly believed that justice and ethics are the head and crown of any science of human relationships, including political economy, being a 100 per cent Georgeist. As such, he helped shape the policy of the

Henry George School of Social Science, that only the teachings of Henry George should be taught therein, without any ifs, ands, or buts.

Thoughtless remarks disparaging to the memory of old, deceased Single Taxers were offensive to his ears. He would counter by asking how many young men have we in the movement today who measure up to the stature of the old timers. Not that he didn't appreciate the movement is making greater progress than ever, in spite of a dearth of magnetic personalities.

It seems hard indeed to lose Joseph Dana Miller. But let us be thankful for having him as long as we did. It is for us to carry on the battle. "Strong soul and high endeavor, the world needs them now."

CHARLES JOS. SMITH.

From John C. Rose

I LOOK upon the death of Joseph Dana Miller as one of the great tragedies of recent years, for I always regarded him as one of our ablest Single Tax authors and leaders. I admired his writings and read every word he wrote, including his "Single Tax Year Book," "Verses From a Vagrant Muse," "Thirty Years of Verse Making," etc.

Miller carried on the work of Single Tax education in the noble spirit of Henry George and other predecessors. In his Single Tax campaigns and work of education, he held no personal grudges, and he never debated or argued by hurling invectives or by "calling personal names." Instead, he debated with logic, arguments and facts, and all who came in contact with him—including his political and economic "enemies"—admired his sincerity and good taste.

As a matter of fact, the very words he used to pay tribute to the late Francis W. Maguire (in his review of my book, "Philosopher and Reformer"), can well be applied to him. This tribute is, in part, as follows:

"And to this task Maguire [Miller] brought a thoroughness and devotion that set him apart with those who are . . . rearing the structure that is being built for the benefit of posterity. . . ."

"Maguire [Miller] like all large-minded men, was of a tolerant spirit. His philosophy had taught him that man was innately good and that the meaner traits so often exhibited were born of the exploitation and tyranny to which he had been so long subject."—(Joseph Dana Miller, LAND AND FREEDOM, Vol. xxxviii, No. 3, page 93, May-June, 1938.)

I shall never forget the encouragement he gave me, at our first meeting, "that if all Single Taxers labored as earnestly and diligently as you, we would be well on our way to victory."

It was such encouragement, from men like Joseph Dana Miller, that enabled me to do as much for Single Tax as I have fortunately been able to do.

As I Remember

Joseph Dana Miller

By ROBERT CLANCY

SERENE, with a certain detachment, yet allowing himself to be part of the event. That's the way you would find Joseph Dana Miller at meetings and gatherings. And you would usually find him in a group where people were speaking with hope, planning, and asking "What are we going to do next?" Such things would evoke his presence. But let the conversation turn into a dispute over a small matter, or an internecine feud, and he would turn and walk away. Almost like a force of nature. Certain combined compounds produce life; break up the compounds and life disappears.

Always ready for the task at hand, looking forward, but not questioning the future too far, and never lingering on the past. That was Miller in his work. That attitude kept him young—I could never think of him as aged. Somehow I got the impression that he was growing. Well, he was always on the lookout for new events in the movement, hopeful signs of progress, and he was always absorbing new ideas. "What's new? Any new lectures going on tonight? When are you coming down again? Did you see this letter I got today?" Pass some trite compliment on his latest essay and he would be tickled.

Samuel Johnson was Miller's favorite figure in the world of letters. He himself was a sort of Johnson in the movement. People would gather round him, come to him with their ideas, problems and disputes. He was father-confessor for a great variety of sins.

He was smiling, always, with a smile that gave forth benediction. Even now I see that smiling happy face. Yes, it was a happy face—he was happy in his work. He was one of those who kept at quiet, steady, constructive toil, not noise and shouting. And how imposing are the results of all those years of chronicling the movement! Great, impartial spirit, he realized that the movement was larger than himself and his ideas, hence he gave space in LAND AND FREEDOM to all representative ideas and activities in the movement, whether or not he agreed with them, and regardless of whether the writers criticized his own views. For instance, he allowed many stormy battles to be waged in the pages of LAND AND FREEDOM, over the question of interest. As for himself, he said "There is no problem of interest!"

Miller was a man of principle. He was not over-anxious to ascertain the exact figures on land values, how much rent land owners are collecting, whether there would be enough or too much for government expenses. "I don't care," he said, "whether the landowners are collecting 90 per cent or 10 per cent of the rent. They're not entitled to one cent of it. It belongs to society as a whole."