

## MY DEBT TO HENRY GEORGE.

Address delivered at the closing session of the St. Louis, Mo., Henry George Class of Economics, on May the 30th, 1906.

By M. P. STAHL.

About two years ago I noticed one day in one of our daily papers a small advertisement which read: "Those interested in economics will please send their address to——;" then followed a cipher. Little I dreamt at that time when I answered the "ad" what immense and unforeseen influence those two small printed lines would assert upon all my future life, little I fancied when in consequence of the ensuing correspondence I for the first time entered that small group of young men who came together once a week to read one or two chapters of Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" that the idea which emanated from this book were destined to completely change my economics, political, philosophical, yea, even my religious ideas, and that the day on which I joined that reading circle would become a milestone in my life, marking the most important and most decisive change in all my views of the world and of God and man.

I had in my younger years, as a student at various universities, studied economics at the feet of many a famous professor of political economy, a fact of which I was foolishly a little proud. And those eminent scholars and scientists had been so marvelously successful in clouding and veiling every question with a haze of profound scholarship that I stood before them in mute adoration, like the ass of Balaam before the angel of the Lord.

And then came that day when for the first time I got acquainted with the teachings of that "little man of 'Frisco," who, to use a recent phrase of the St. Louis "Mirror," "set the economists by the ears." Well, even though in my most self-conceited moments I never imagined myself an economist, still their fate was my fate. Henry George set me by the ears, too.

As the walls of Jericho went down at the sound of the clarion of Israel, so all those profound scholastic economic conceptions industriously acquired from the most learned and most academic professors went down, too, at the ringing, clarion like call of the clear voice of the prophet of San Francisco.

Great, indeed, is the debt which I owe to Henry George for having brought order into the chaos of my economic conceptions. *But that is only the smallest part of what that man has done for me.*

James Russell Lowell is the author of the word: "Democracy in its best sense is merely the letting in of light and air." Light and air, that is what Henry George has let in, into the somewhat musty cell-rooms of my mind, and this rejuvenating flood of light and air has made me what I now proudly confess myself: a Democrat in the best sense of the word, with a broader conception of and a deeper sympathy for the equal rights of all men.

So in economics and in politics Henry George has wrought a complete change in me. *But that is only the smallest part of what that man has done for me.*

Long before I got acquainted with the writing of Henry George I was—and am still to-day—a fervent admirer and faithful disciple of the elevating and inspiring doctrine of evolution as originated first by Herbert Spencer and ably expounded by John Fiske. But all the time I was laboring under a gross misconception of this doctrine, namely: the inequality of men which observed everywhere, and which is clearly shown in the process of evolution, led me to the, as I see now, ridiculously erroneous conclusion—a conclusion which is the fundament of the modern "superman philosophy" of Friedrich Nietzsche and

his followers—that because men are unequally gifted they have also no right to equal opportunities. It was the study of Henry George's works which shed light into this my philosophic "dark room," and this light democratized even my philosophic thinking.

So in economics, in politics and in philosophy, Henry George has wrought a complete change in me. *But that is only the smallest part of what that man has done for me.*

The very greatest thing which Henry George has done for me, the thing for which I have to thank him most, is that he has given me a clearer and sublimer conception of Almighty God.

As I said before, I was and am an evolutionist. But while in everything in the world around me I could, with the help of the evolutionistic philosophy, see prevail a divine order of things and a gradual, quiet and slow, but never ceasing development from lower to ever higher and higher forms, in the social conditions of the world, in the realm of economics, I saw an anarchy prevailing which upset all my ideas and conceptions of the existence of "a power that makes for righteousness." And then I read Henry George, and I have here in mind especially that booklet of his which first influenced me most deeply and which more than any other one of his works—even "Progress and Poverty" not excluded—converted me to his ideas. I mean his powerful "Open Letter to Pope Leo XIII. on the Condition of Labor."

Therein he shows convincingly "how by one wise provision divine Providence has seen to it that through the never stationary but constantly progressive and increasing value of the land the means to defray the costs of the government keep step in direct ratio to the growth of the population, and the very causes that increase and multiply the demands made on the land increase proportionately its ability to meet them." Hereby Henry George shows that those anarchic social conditions, the fearful struggles for life and the misery of the masses which lead so many men to think "that God is a bungler and is constantly bringing more people into this world than he has made provision for or that there is no God," are not the will of God, but are brought about by man disobeying the natural law ordained of God.

And further Henry George goes on to say: "Of all the evidence that natural religion gives, the provision made for the common needs of society in what economists call the law of rent is the great social fact that most clearly shows the existence of a beneficent God, and most conclusively silences the doubts that in our days lead so many to materialism. This beautiful provision made by natural law for the fast increasing social needs of civilization proves that God has intended civilization. We see that if we were only to observe the natural law there would be work for all, leisure for all, abundance for all. We see that Christ was not a mere dreamer when he told men that if they would seek the Kingdom of God and its right-doing they might no more worry about material things than do the lilies of the field about their raiment; but that he with these words was only declaring what political economy in the light of modern discovery shows to be a sober truth. For it is to see that there is a God who lives and reigns, and that he is a God of justice and love—Our Father who art in heaven."

So it is, as I stated above, that upon my economical, political, philosophical and religious views Henry George has exerted a marvelously elevating and inspiring influence.

Now, as I know that this same influence is exerted itself upon everyone who comes in contact with the teachings of that great man; there arises the question for us: what can we do to show our gratitude for this priceless gift which our leader has bequeathed to us?

Upon us, his followers and disciples, devolves the sacred duty to make

good use of the precious heritage left us by our master. Let us then arm ourselves with the keen edged weapons which the well stocked arsenal of his intellect furnishes us in his works, and go ahead to fight the good fight.

Soon the time will come—I see it approaching faster and faster—when from all over the globe men and women will arise to help us in our fight. Then it will be our blessed privilege to “beat our swords into ploughshares and our spears into pruning-hooks” and with the use of them loosen and break up the hard soil, sow the seed and raise a crop which will laugh into a harvest that all mankind will enjoy. Then we will have a common brotherhood of man and a common fatherhood of God.

We are like the Children of Israel in the desert, ~~tramping~~ trudging along for many a weary year, but in front of their columns they saw beaming through the darkness of the night the ball of fire that led them on, and in their hearts they harbored the undying hope that they would reach the promised land, for they believed in the words of their great leader, Moses. The fate of Moses was also that of our leader. He, too, could see the promised land, although only with his spiritual vision, and like Moses he was not permitted to enter it. But we shall come to it if we only keep up courage and waver not from the path where the light is leading us on.

“Let us then be up and doing  
With a heart for any fate,  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labor and to wait.”

“Learn to labor:” teach the nations, preach our gospel, speak to your neighbours, talk of your friends!

“Learn to wait:” the signs of the times are propitious, the people are waking, the dawn is breaking, the day is coming. Sooner than even the optimists among us anticipate, shall we reach the promised land, but whenever that may be, reach it we shall, because ours is the gospel of truth: “truth that may lose an occasional battle, but never loses the campaign!”

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## TOM WATSON AND THE SINGLE TAX.

Reprinted from the *St. Louis Mirror* of May 3, 1906.

By WILLIAM PRESTON HILL.

*Watson's Magazine* for April contains a long defense of private property in land and a criticism of Henry George's doctrine, written by Hon. Thomas E. Watson of Georgia. As Mr. Watson was the Presidential nominee of the Populist party and has a national reputation as a reformer, it is necessary to point out the influences that produced this article. In the first place *Watson's Magazine* is sailing under false colors when it uses that title. It never was and is not now owned or published by Mr. Watson. On the contrary, it is owned and published by the company controlled by Col. W. D'Alton Mann of alleged black-mailing notoriety, who publishes *The Smart Set* and *Town Topics* and *Tales and Fads and Fancies*.

So much for the *Magazine*. Now as to the writer. Mr. Watson is one of the largest land owners in Georgia. He may not allow this fact to influence his judgment, but the presumption is to the contrary. It is not difficult for a large