

THE MISSION OF HENRY GEORGE.

ADDRESS BY FRANK STEPHENS.

Contributed to the Review by Mr. Stephens from His Notes.

“ And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

The mission of a man is his sending, the message which he carries to his time, for which, like Paul, he is an ambassador in bonds. And to understand the man's mission one must know more than the words in which he tells it, must know the nature and the need of the age to which he speaks.

He who, like us of Pennsylvania, is compelled to admire the non-restraint, peace loving, simple spirit once characteristic of the Society of Friends, and would understand the mission of the founder of that sect, must study the people among whom George Fox first bore witness to his faith. Look at English life and English law under the second Charles and the second James. See the unspeakable corruption of the court, its shameless profligacy, the abject subserviency of the church and the courts of justice, the cowardly conformity of the common people, the violence, the open robbery and murder under form of law which made a conservative English historian write that the excesses of the French Revolution were outdone by king, counsellors and high judges of the England of that day. All this we must study to know something of the mission of the man who would not stand bareheaded before power, who preached to a church altogether formal the worthlessness of forms, and to a people cowering before kingly and priestly authority the sufficiency of the inner light that is in every man.

He who would know something of Methodism when Methodism was not a dead creed, but a living power through the mission of John Wesley when he gathered the miners together at the pit's mouth, forsaking the desecrated temples of England of his day, must learn from chroniclers like Hervey or Walpole or Thackeray what life under George the Second and his sycophants meant to those who had to bear the burden of it.

And so he who would learn the mission of the Prophet of San Francisco must know the age to which he preaches, not its little matters, but its place in history, as compared with times that went before and times that will come after, a harder matter than to see in its true relationship the day of the last of the Stuarts, or of the first of the kings that Hanover gave to England. It is no easy matter for those in the thick of the fight to know which way the battle is going in which they have a part.

Henry George spoke to a people whose energies, whose intellects, whose very souls, were given over to the production of wealth as the one great end of civilization and of human life. In a country blessed with comparatively free institutions and unbounded natural opportunities, they had set themselves to the making of things, to such mechanical invention and increase of productiveness by co-operation and the specialization of industry as outstripped in mere wealth producing the record of the world, the dream of Alladin and the fables of Golconda. They had studied the problem from every apparent side and neglected nothing, nothing but the converse of the problem, that old time sum in moral arithmetic which asks what it shall profit a man to gain the whole world and lose the only thing worth gaining.

And to this people, so mad in the mere production of wealth as to pay no heed whatever to its distribution, able to explain everything that had to do

with riches except the persistence of poverty, this society that out of all its knowledge and labor brought forth nothing of wealth or magnificence so noteworthy or so characteristic as the destitution of its working class, the author of *Progress and Poverty* appealed first of all for economic justice. His mission was to preach social honesty.

At the outset he solved the economic problem from the point of view of the professional economists themselves and with a simplicity and directness unanswerable and sufficient. It is one of the wonder stories of history, beside which the egg on end of Columbus was a complex mechanism, the way in which this unschooled tyro in Political Economy set right the wise and learned of the schoolmen and made a science out of what had been conflicting guesses. "The definition of terms," says Socrates, "is the beginning of wisdom," so our teacher first defined his terms carefully so that even the college professors might be assured what he meant to include and what to exclude. Then with his terms, the working tools of his craft, thus exactly edged, he fits his propositions, or rather their propositions, together. If the distribution of wealth is, in the final analysis, into rent and wages, if the law of rent, as formulated by Ricardo and agreed to by all the leading economists as about the only one thing on which they were agreed, determines how much of wealth goes to the landowner, then the same law determines how much is left to go to labor as wages. That is all there is to the solution of the problem of distribution, to the understanding of the missing law of wages as to which hardly two economists were agreed, to the unavoidable conclusion that civilization or private property in land must end, one or the other. It is all simplicity itself, after it has been pointed out.

But they misapprehend this mission and literally miss the heart of it, who see in the economic foundation upon which George placed the *Art of Statecraft* only the basis for fiscal reforms and the more just distribution of wealth. Greater than this, so far as one necessary thing can be called greater than another, was his message to the heart of his time, not only that men should do justly, but that they should recognize in justice and in natural law the possibility of such living fellowship, such real love between man and man, as had been the dream of prophets and of seers in all ages, of all men since man first knew what it was to suffer alone. He preached the common brotherhood, the common inheritance from the one Father, that there is room for all, even the weakest and the worst, at the Father's table. This was the mission of Henry George which will make his name a household word in the long days to come, when the laws of economics as we now study them will be forgotten in the voluntary communism of the federation of the world, the day when the unwritten, undisputed law of distribution shall be "from each according to his ability to each according and to his needs."

It may be that it is a far cry to that time, that we who preach the gospel of deliverance have little hope of seeing its fulfillment, of knowing for ourselves that new civilization which out of the thievish, murderous conflict of society as it is shall build the City of Peace. But we also mistake the word of the prophet if we hear in it only the promise of social betterment that is afar off. With absolute certainty, here and now, it speaks to the individual so that he lacks nothing of the good that is to be. It tells of the certainty of personal responsibility, of results that follow every word spoken and deed done for the good cause whether we see those results or not, of the possibility for every man of attaining now that which is so much the greatest thing in life that even citizenship in the republic of the future is well lost to gain it, the apostleship of a new gospel, to be the voice of one crying in the wilderness, to have a part in the making of the world. If you would know the mission of Henry George to you personally read again the last chapter of *Progress and Poverty*, "The Prob-

lem of Individual Life." If ever man builded better than he thought to, this man did. Read in his own words how simply, how blindly, if they can be called blind who are led by love, he entered upon his work: "I have in this inquiry followed the course of my own thought. When in mind I set out on it I had no theory to support, no conclusions to prove. Only when I realized the squalid misery of a great city it appalled and tormented me and would not let me rest for thinking of what caused it and how it could be cured."

"Out of this inquiry," he says, "has come to me something I did not think to find." Aye, and this also that he did not think to find, that his mission and the mission of those who preach his gospel of the land for the people is in very truth the mission of him who, entering into the synagogue as his custom was on the Sabbath Day, read from the book of the prophet Essias the reason of his coming—"To preach the gospel to the poor; to heal the brokenhearted; to preach deliverance to the captive and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised."

THE GROWTH OF THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY.

(For the Review).

By ELIZA STOWE TWITCHELL.

It is not enough that men should die for liberty; they must be willing to surrender their superstitions to her truths. This is far more difficult, as history testifies. Think of the bondage in which man has long held himself, simply by his own delusions. His belief in "the divine right of kings," his awe and respect for "vested interests," his blind adherence to authorized superstitions, both religious and economic.

Of late, not having many gods to worship, and feeling the need of bestowing his "most distinguished considerations" upon something, he has begun to worship The Flag; to believe in "my Party—right or wrong," to assume that our national "destiny" is under the guidance of powerful, political leaders, with whom it behoves all good citizens to "stand pat." These, and other delusions, have kept him from using his own reason, and thinking himself a free man because he could cast a ballot, he has followed the advice of his instructors, and voted for the commercial interests that have enslaved him by taxation.

It is a dangerous thing for the ruling class when the masses begin to think for themselves. Their keen instinct for justice often leads them to the very truth that meets the crying need of the age. If that truth has already found utterance, if it has a following of earnest, unselfish, pure-minded disciples who love to proclaim it, then its dissemination is only a question of time. Thus evolution prevents revolution.

The history of the world is the history of the growth of the spirit of liberty. Viewed otherwise, history becomes a confused mass of unintelligible detail—an appalling account of atrocious deeds and unavailing sacrifices. One turns from its pages in despair, doubting the very existence of God, since such things were permitted. But a broader view shows that the history of the world is not intelligible apart from a moral Government. It was not that God did not exist, but that men's conception of Him was clouded by passion and selfishness. The general character of every civilization has been the natural outgrowth of its conception of God.