

Likewise of the San Diego Union's "epitaph" No. 2, on the "remains of the late municipal lighting plant of Toledo, Ohio." According to the tainted veracity of that "epitaph," "the municipal lighting experiment" of Toledo, costing \$1,500,000 in bonds, "of which \$1,050,000 still remain unpaid," was "unsuccessful from the start," and, "after seven years the plant was leased to a corporation, and the mains outside the city limits were sold for \$102,000." Now, what do you suppose the city of Toledo's municipal lighting plant wanted of "mains outside the city"? The "tainted news" bureau sayeth not. If it had explained that mystery, the taint would have exposed the putridity of the lie. For the Toledo plant was not an artificial lighting plant at all; it was a natural gas plant, drawing its supply from a field adjacent to Toledo. Hence "the mains outside the city." The reason the city gave up this plant was not because municipal ownership was a failure, but because the field from which it drew its natural gas began to give out. It is now entirely exhausted, unless for the supply of small quantities to private companies and farmers on their own lands. The natural gas now consumed in Toledo is pumped from West Virginia fields. This is done by private companies, not because Toledo wished it that way but because she was so tied up with legal red tape that the companies were at a great advantage. They could supply communities along the line, while Toledo could sell only to Toledo; and if this disadvantage had been out of the way, or other fields near Toledo had been available, the companies could get options secretly, whereas Toledo could do nothing without making her intentions public in advance. While the Toledo natural gas field held out—that is, during those "seven ruinous years" of the San Diego Union's epitaph—the city of Toledo had a lower rate for natural gas than any other large city in the country. But Toledo never had a municipal lighting plant in any such sense as the San Diego Union's "epitaph" implies.

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Of course the San Diego Union did not work up those "epitaphs" itself. They were supplied by one of the bureaus for the manufacture of "tainted news" which Big Business patronizes and bright young newspaper men with a mouldy sense of honor work for. The "epitaphs" supplied to the San Diego Union included the Philadelphia (Pa.), the Hamilton (Ohio), the Norwich (Conn.), the Lowell (Ind.), the Galena (Ill.), the Brunswick (Mo.), the Bowling (Ohio), and

the Casselton (N. D.) lighting plants—every epitaph doubtless wholly false or grossly misleading, as those we have investigated were—Elgin and Toledo.

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"BACK TO THE LAND"*—A RETROSPECT.

Through corporation stocks and bonds, land monopoly is confusingly capitalized with labor-produced capital. This makes abolition of land monopoly less simple than it might be in primitive times or places. Neither so practicable nor so desirable is it to make land common property in form, as to make its value a common fund.

Whether that be done through public leasing, as is proposed regarding Alaskan coal deposits and other natural opportunities still in government ownership, or through taxation of land values, exempting industrial values, is largely a question of local or temporary policy. But the taking in some form of land values by the public for public use, as being justly a source of public and not of private revenue, has clearly become a world-wide tendency.

In the politics of Great Britain,† this tendency appears with resounding emphasis. It is manifest in varying degrees in certain colonial and municipal policies of Germany,‡ in the Cottagers' movement of Denmark,§ in the politics of Japan,|| in the British administration of Northern Nigeria,** in the policies of local taxation in New Zealand, New South Wales and other States of Australasia, and in the general policy of the Australian Commonwealth.†† Manifestations nearer home may also be observed. The fiscal reforms of Vancouver

*An editorial study of this question in its ECONOMIC aspects appeared in The Public of October 28, 1910, at page 1014. Of its DEMOCRATIC relations, there is an independent editorial study in the issue of November 4, at page 1036. For a concise editorial explanation of the meaning of the phrase "BACK TO THE LAND," as it was understood by Bishop Nulty, with whom it originated, and by Henry George, who gave general currency to Bishop Nulty's address on the subject, and also as the phrase is here used, see The Public of October 21, 1910, at page 990.

†See The Public, vol. ii, no. 87, p. 5; vol. xii, p. 1253; vol. xiii, pp. 53, 63, 65, 77, 101, 126, 150, 164, 174, 242, 245, 410, 683, 996, 997. Also back references there noted.

‡See The Public, vol. ii, no. 63, p. 6; vol. xii, pp. 183, 1066; vol. xiii, pp. 348, 486, 497. Also back references there noted.

§See The Public, vol. xii, pp. 183, 787, 954; vol. xiii, pp. 372, 438, 586, 635. Also back references there noted.

||See The Public, vol. xii, p. 641.

**See The Public, vol. xiii, p. 580.

††See The Public, vol. iii, p. 629; vol. xii, pp. 420, 990, 1066; vol. xiii, pp. 148, 149, 1020. Also the back references there noted.

and other Canadian municipalities* are notable; and in their effect upon public opinion in neighboring municipalities on our own side of the national boundary,† there is impressive proof of the spread of this tendency. The Conservation movement, which is deeply stirring American politics,‡ seems in a broader though less definite form, to be another expression of the same tendency,—the more especially as it is coupled with reaction against Protection, whereby the principle of exemption from industrial and commercial taxation is united nationally with the principle of common ownership of land.

That progress along those lines has everywhere been influenced by the agitation which began with the appearance of Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" in 1879,§ and which for many years its author led in person, is probably as mild a statement of the fact as the most hostile critic would insist upon. Certain it is that this man's leadership is a worthy subject for retrospective consideration with reference especially to the lessons it may have in store.

I. Henry George's Leadership.

In "Progress and Poverty" Henry George had cast his theme in the threefold form of economic necessity, democratic principle, and religious ideal. The *religious ideal* appeals to that sentiment universal which Dr. McGlynn expressed as "the fatherhood of God and the consequent brotherhood of man." The *democratic principle* bases civilization upon that law of human progress which Henry George himself phrased as "association in equality." The *economic necessity* is rooted in the doctrine of common rights to land.

Not that any of the three is first or last, except in philosophical sequence. Historic periods of religious readjustment, or of political upheaval, or of economic reform, have been periods of emphasis rather than distinction. Essentially, too, as well as historically, the three seem to be introactive rather than successive.

Religion cannot fully develop before *democracy*, nor *democracy* ahead of *economic* opportunity and justice.

And justice ignored, is prophetic of retribution to be endured. The Justice that is "grander than Benevolence," "more august than Charity," "that

*See The Public, vol. xii, p. 1159; vol. xiii, pp. 243, 252, 434, 472, 473, 540, 635, 675, 732, 777, 872, 949. Also back references there noted.

†See The Public, vol. xiii, p. 434.

‡See The Public, vol. xiii, p. 653.

§See The Public of October 28, 1910, page 1014, and November 4, 1910, page 1036.

will not be denied," "that cannot be put off,"—this noblest of all concepts of Justice, is it not true that she, also "with the scales carries the sword"?* Religions will assuredly sink into fetishisms and democracies revert to despotisms, if common rights to land be not established.† For common rights to land are the basic condition of unhindered opportunities for wealth production, and of even-handed justice in its distribution; and upon those economic processes depend that "association in equality" which is democracy, and that brotherly intercourse among the children of God which is religion.

It was those threefold forms of the message Henry George embodied in "Progress and Poverty," that Bishop Nulty grouped in his memorable slogan—"Back to the Land!" As old as history, the three of them? Aye; but also as new as the irrepressible conflict of the centuries!

This conflict, what has it been or is it now? Is it not the "growing pains" of civilization in its evolution from the savage selfishness of social infancy toward that democracy which is at "the heart of all religions,"‡—the democracy of common brotherhood from common Fatherhood? And the "growing pains," why these in our day but for the ligatures of slavery that survive in land monopoly?

His work of preparation over, Henry George began his career of active leadership.

In some respects this was pure agitation, teaching, preaching, propaganda. But there was soon constructive work also to do.

Opportunities came for getting a leverage here or promoting a tendency yonder, for sweeping away some legal obstacle or gaining more conspicuous or influential platforms for reaching larger audiences or audiences more earnest to know, or for gaining legal vantage grounds for easier or more effective political action. All such opportunities that drifted within the range of his eager and wide-seeing vision, he keenly sensed and promptly used.

Observing reflectively the differences of opportunity, educational or political, which time developed or localities afforded, he used his wits as industriously and conscientiously in adapting policies to varying circumstances, as he used both wit and conscience in testing principles by unvarying natural law. He was diligent,—with insight and thought, with pains, care and discrimination. Preaching, it was the gospel as he saw it that he

*"Progress and Poverty," book x, ch. v, p. 546.

†"Progress and Poverty," chapters iv and v of book x.

‡"Progress and Poverty," page 562.

proclaimed. Teaching, it was the whole truth he tried to lay bare. Planning political action, it was as the general plans a battle, or the politician a campaign; for he held the political art and the military art to be alike in this, that they consist "in massing the greatest force against the point of least resistance."*

Thence came arduous and perplexing experiences. But he was no fair-weather leader, no dainty preceptor, no social hermit or political recluse. He lived within, not apart from, the life of his time.

II. "The Day of Small Things."

Though not indifferent to "the day of small things," Henry George was seldom more than amiably tolerant of small methods in times of large ones. What concerned him at all times, and exclusively at seasonable times, were the tendencies of thought among men in the mass.

He consequently had to endure his full share of criticism. There were friends who, seeing no difference between purpose and method, urged him to be "true to principle" "in season and out of season"; and they were quick to read him moral lessons when his policies suffered what to them seemed defeat. Yet his defeats were victories. For the struggles he advised were either to clear away obstacles or to provoke discussion; and they were always big enough for their purpose. If they did not clear away the obstacle, they jarred it loose; and the discussions they provoked were far reaching and intense.

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Among the critics of his policies at first were old time land reformers and utopian socialists, who had risen with enthusiasm to his ideals but were chilled by his fiscal proposals. To others, "Progress and Poverty" was so perfect that they shuddered when they learned its author was writing "Protection or Free Trade." There were others later on who gasped at the thought of his having a bout with so formidable an adversary as Herbert Spencer. There were those also who, though they appreciated the simplicity and effectiveness of taxation for abolishing land monopoly by taking land values for public revenues, insisted upon "all or none" and "now or never." And when the telegraph strike of the early '80's paralyzed New York, converts were lost by George's speaking for the strikers; for had he not taught that strikes are frail weapons for labor, and that the land question is the only question?

*"Protection or Free Trade," chapter xxix, "Practical Politics," page 819.

Then there were the fastidious intellectuals. They had placed George's image in a glass case, as it were, and his doctrines in cotton wool, where dust could not soil nor the coatless intrude. The sensibilities of these friends were shocked by that London speech from the roof of a cab to a vast street audience of workingmen, in which George "incited class to rise against class" by saying that the Lord hadn't made the land of England for the lords of England but for her people. They called him "demagogue" for this; and when a little later he plunged into "the dirty pool of politics" as Labor candidate for Mayor of New York, they smashed the glass case, melted his image, threw their cotton wool and all its contents into the sewer, and "walked with him no more."

His encouragement of movements among business men for tax reforms such as repeal of personal property taxes, and separation of land values from other values in tax duplicates, exposed him to criticism from "middle of the road" converts who would probably not appreciate even now the value to the larger movement of the agitation for those "pottering reforms" or the "trifling results" they have secured. Plutocracy, though, has not considered them trifles. When Governor Garvin of Rhode Island, while a State Senator, secured a law in 1890 which required the separate valuation of land for taxation, the privileged interests soon realized its import and it was repealed at the very next session of the legislature.

Another kind of criticism finds example in the prejudice excited by Henry George's speech at New York on the use in Illinois of Federal troops at the time of the Debs railroad strike and against the protest of Governor Altgeld. "I yield to nobody," he said, "in my respect for law and order and my hatred of disorder; but there is something more important even than law and order, and that is the principle of liberty. I yield to nobody in my respect for the rights of property; yet I would rather see every locomotive in this land ditched, every car and every depot burned and every rail torn up, than to have them preserved by means of a Federal standing army. That is the order that reigned in Warsaw. That is the order in the keeping of which every democratic republic before ours has fallen. I love the American Republic better than I love such order."* Converts who thought of democracy as outside the single tax movement felt that a long time must elapse before the ill effects of this attack upon "law and order" would pass away.

*"The Life of Henry George," by his son, Henry George, Jr., p. 577.

Extremely tolerant, as a rule, of all friendly protests that did not obstruct at critical moments, Henry George was sometimes obliged to listen to complaints with which he had no patience—those against himself or his followers for “degrading the cause by seeking office.” Perhaps no one ever cared less than he to hold office. But the narrowness of such complaints annoyed him. Possibly he detected streaks of jealousy in them. At any rate he made it sharply clear that the single taxer in office honorably performing his duties there, or seeking office honorably though actuated by personal ambition, is none the worse citizen or single taxer for that; and if a known believer in the single tax, so much the better, since his fame in office or as a candidate strengthens the single tax movement.



So in those “days of small things” Henry George often found enthusiastic converts only to lose them, or to have them turn upon him when they found that he went too far, or didn’t go far enough, or wasn’t a political recluse, or was an opportunist in action, or regarded judgment as well as enthusiasm, and sometimes without enthusiasm, as a necessary part of the single tax advocate’s equipment.

III. Single Tax Parties.

In any cause with political purposes, few tendencies are more characteristic, especially of “the day of small things,” than impulses for a separate political party* to carry the ark of its covenant into the battles of the ballot. This subject was one on which Henry George had very definite opinions. He expressed them often in conversation, occasionally in public speech, and with characteristic deliberation in his essay on “Practical Politics.”†

In that essay he explained that “important political battles begin with affairs of outposts, in themselves of little moment, and are generally decided upon issue joined not on the main question, but on some minor or collateral question;”‡ and he added: “To bring an issue into politics it is not necessary to form a party.”§ Continuing, he argued that “parties are not to be manufactured,” but that “they grow out of existing parties by the bringing forward of issues upon which men will divide.”

*For an editorial discussion of Permanent Side Parties in Politics, see *The Public*, vol. iv, p. 3; also vol. i, no. 31, page 6.

†Chapter xxix of “Protection or Free Trade.”

‡“Protection or Free Trade,” page 319.

§“Protection or Free Trade,” page 321.

That essay defines the true principle of practical politics, and describes the art, in so far as political promotion of a cause is concerned; it does both with exceptional keenness, clearness and force. Whether its conclusions be accepted or not, they cannot be wisely ignored. No promoter of political action for a cause is likely to be competent for leadership, unless he has familiarized himself with that essay,* and either rejected its conclusions with good reason, or made them his own.

The excellence of Henry George’s advice regarding practical politics has been proved on a large scale in Great Britain. Without a hopeless single tax party at any time, but with thoughtful, steady, long and patient work inside the Liberal party, his British followers now find their cause in the very center of British political discussion and on the highway to legislative acceptance. Temptations were frequent and enticing to break away from the Liberal party when loyalty was irksome but necessary, and there were not lacking impatient ones to urge it; but the present state of British politics demonstrates their error.



It is not to be understood, however, that in his political leadership Henry George opposed separate parties rigidly. Quite the contrary. He favored

*The context from which the excerpts are taken is as follows: “How men vote is something we need not much concern ourselves with. The important thing is how they think. Now the chief agency in promoting thought is discussion. And to secure the most general and most effective discussion of a principle it must be embodied in concrete form and presented in practical politics, so that men, being called to vote on it, shall be forced to think and talk about it. The advocates of a great principle should know no thought of compromise. They should proclaim it in its fullness, and point to its complete attainment as their goal. But the zeal of the propagandist needs to be supplemented by the skill of the politician. While the one need not fear to arouse opposition, the other should seek to minimize resistance. The political art, like the military art, consists in massing the greatest force against the point of least resistance; and, to bring a principle most quickly and effectively into practical politics, the measure which presents it should be so moderate as (while involving the principle) to secure the largest support and excite the least resistance. For whether the first step be long or short is of little consequence. When a start is once made in a right direction, progress is a mere matter of keeping on. It is in this way that great questions always enter the phase of political action. Important political battles begin with affairs of outposts, in themselves of little moment, and are generally decided upon issue joined not on the main question, but on some minor or collateral question. . . . Now to bring an issue into politics it is not necessary to form a party. Parties are not to be manufactured; they grow out of existing parties by the bringing forward of issues upon which men will divide. We have, ready to our hand, in the tariff question, a means of bringing the whole subject of taxation, and, through it, the whole social question, into the fullest discussion.”—“Protection or Free Trade,” pages 318 to 321.

a separate party whenever and wherever the circumstances made it useful. With him it was not a question of separate party or no; it was a question of in season or out of season.

An example of a separate party in season was the United Labor Party of New York city in 1886. It sprang up in organized labor circles spontaneously out of the oppressive judicial treatment of a labor union strike-committee. Members of that committee, honest men, were sentenced to prison as felons for three years for extortion—a high degree of robbery under New York law—although their offense consisted only in having received \$1,000 for the strike fund (which they turned over to their unions), in part payment of strike expenses and as a condition, approved by arbitration, of terminating the strike. This was treated as extortion (robbery) because the circumstances made it coercive. The consequent bitter feeling among labor unions led to a request from the Central Labor Union to Henry George to become the Labor candidate for mayor at the election then three months off. Unwilling to lead “a toy party in a toy campaign,” he conditioned his acceptance upon a petition of 30,000 voters. This was promptly got, and then he made the campaign. In the count he fell only 22,442 behind Abram S. Hewitt, and ran 7,675 ahead of Theodore Roosevelt.*

So large was the vote for Henry George at that local election that the demand for a permanent organization of the party throughout the State of New York was irresistible. Efforts at extension over the country were also hopefully made. But the response outside of New York city was feeble, and only upon Dr. McGlynn's urgent insistence that it was his duty, and much against his own judgment, Mr. George became in 1887 the candidate of the State organization for Secretary of State, the highest candidacy of that year. At the election the organization went to pieces. The vote for George was barely more in the entire State than it had been in New York city alone the year before; and in New York city itself his vote fell from the 68,000 of the preceding year to less than 40,000. Nor was this “slump” accounted for by loss of the Socialist vote; for the Socialist party polled only about one-fifth of the number that George lost.

His own sense of general political tendencies admonished him then that the useful career of the

*“An Account of the George-Hewitt Campaign in the New York Municipal Election of 1886. Prepared by Louis F. Post and Fred C. Leubuscher. New York: John W. Lovell Company, 14 and 16 Vesey street.” Out of print. At page 168, this pamphlet gives the aggregate vote as follows: Theodore Roosevelt, 60,435; Abram S. Hewitt, 90,552; Henry George, 68,110.

United Labor party was at an end. He therefore advised its abandonment; and when, a few weeks later, President Cleveland's tariff message looked toward free trade, he urged the course in practical politics which he had indicated in “Protection or Free Trade” before the Labor campaign of 1886 seemed to open a more direct pathway to the object of his leadership. “The gate to one path has hardly closed against us,” he said, “when another opens.” But protectionists among his associates opposed this policy, and they were honest. Support came to them, however, from allies who were not honest. The management of the party was subsidized by the Republican machine to go through the motions of a national campaign for the Presidency. Nominally this was to be done as a Labor party demanding the taxation of land values, but secretly in the interest of the Republican candidate and his Protection policy. Its more vigorous operations were to be confined to the doubtful States—New York, New Jersey, Indiana and Connecticut.* In the campaign that followed, the United Labor party collapsed ignominiously.

Henry George had withdrawn from it, however, as soon as he realized its object from admissions of its managers. With upwards of 10,000 others in the United States whose intentions and opinions were backed by their signatures, he supported President Cleveland. They did so expressly as voters to whom free trade is an essential part of the single tax, and who saw in Cleveland's opposition to protection the thin end of the free trade wedge.†

Nearly ten years afterwards Henry George again led a reasonable third party in local politics; but thousands scattered to other candidates when his death took his personality out of the campaign.

It was in connection with the United Labor party that the Anti-Poverty Society flourished. A word about that pioneer of the single tax movement is needed, because in retrospect it seems to many who were moved by its enthusiasms to have

*“The Life of Henry George,” by his son, Henry George, Jr., pages 505-506, 511-512.

†Of professed single taxers who were not free traders Henry George wrote in 1889 that they had “only half seen the cat.”—Henry George's “Standard,” June 15, 1889, page 2, column 2. “Seeing the cat” is single tax slang for perfect understanding of the single tax principle. It comes from an illustrative reference in “Progress and Poverty” (book v. ch. II, page 293) to concealed pictures, from which James G. Maguire built up a picturesque description of a landscape in which the picture of a cat was concealed.

reached a further stage of progress than the present. This is a mistake. Useful as the Anti-Poverty Society was in its day, its enthusiasms were pretty closely confined within the four walls of its meeting place. The general public were unaffected.

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Apart from a recent movement in New York City,* only two distinctive single tax parties have attempted to raise the single tax issue in the United States. One was at Chicago, the other in Delaware.

The Chicago movement lasted through three local elections (1901-1903). Its votes were trifling and it produced no general discussion.†

But the Delaware movement, beginning in 1895, "set the State by the ears," although its vote greatly disappointed its promoters. It originated in Philadelphia, on the plan in embryo which is now proposed for Oregon, that of concentrating upon a State; but it had none of the advantages of direct legislation or local interest which Oregon offers. It threw the little "Blue Hen" into convulsions, however, and many of its speakers were imprisoned, nominally for speaking to crowds on the streets, but really for the cause they espoused. At that time *The Public* had not yet been born and no citations from its columns can be made; but the movement itself had an organ, "Justice,"‡ in which the news of the movement was faithfully chronicled.

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One important single tax movement in politics calls for mention here. Although it was not a separate party movement distinctly, it is suggestive of the value of a separate single tax party, not to make nominations, but to promote the principle by direct voting upon measures, where direct legislation facilities make this possible. We allude to the movement in Oregon in 1907-1908,§ for the adoption of the single tax under the People's Power laws of that State. Although the proposed measure may have been imperfect, a point upon which we pass no opinion, the fact is, nevertheless, that the discussion throughout the State hinged upon the single tax question. Despite the election result, and this was far from discouraging, seed was then sown that makes Oregon one of the best States in the Union now for that localized political effort which Henry George looked forward

*See *The Public*, vol. xiii, pages 442, 515, 538, 988.

†See *The Public*, vol. iii, p. 825; vol. iv, pp. 3, 321; vol. v, p. 10.

‡The editor of "Justice" was Arthur C. Fleydell, now of New York city.

§See *The Public*, vol. x, pp. 468, 827, 1229; vol. xi, pp. 28, 110, 122, 170, 226, 250, 420. Also references there noted.

to when he said that the most direct method for the single tax movement is through local taxation, and that this "is doubtless the way in which the final and decisive advance will be made."* The Oregon movement was led by the Oregon Tax Reform Association, of which H. D. Wagnon was president and Alfred D. Cridge was secretary; and while the proposed measure was defeated at the election in June, 1908, the vote for it was large throughout the State and phenomenally large in Portland.

IV. Free Trade.

His support of Cleveland on the tariff reform issue in 1888, and again in 1892, Henry George regarded as being in accordance with his view† that a principle is brought most quickly and effectively into practical politics by measures which present it so moderately "as (while involving the principle) to secure the largest support and excite the least resistance;" for "when a start is once made in a right direction, progress is a mere matter of keeping on." It was in harmony also with the single tax principle. For this contemplates not only the relation of men to the land, through freeing it from monopoly, but also their relation to one another through freedom of trade.

Some sympathetic critics have regarded the policy of resorting to national instead of local agitations in politics as a mistaken one for this country, where questions of taxation and land tenure naturally proceed from localities up to the general government, instead of extending from the general government down to localities. But George never denied or overlooked the merits of that point. Three years before the first Cleveland campaign he wrote: "In the United States the most direct way of moving on property in land is through local taxation, since that is already to some extent levied upon land values. And that is doubtless the way in which the final and decisive advance will be made. But national politics dominate State politics, and a question can be brought into discussion much more quickly and thoroughly as a national than as a local question."‡

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Always recognizing the wisdom of promoting his cause by different methods in different countries and sections, according to the customs and habits of thought of the people, always and everywhere making the "line of least resistance" his test for immediate practical proposals and move-

*"Protection or Free Trade," page 321.

†"Protection or Free Trade," page 319.

‡"Protection or Free Trade," p. 321.

ments, Henry George favored the continuance of national agitation after Cleveland's defeat; and additional sympathizers with the single tax were consequently brought into touch by means of a petition secured by William T. Croasdale and formally presented to Congress in 1892 by Congressman Tom L. Johnson. It was out of this petition gathering that the New York Single Tax Conference of 1890 and the Chicago Single Tax Conference of 1893 were organized. But attempts to make permanent national organizations failed.

Although a single tax measure was voted on in the lower house of Congress in 1894, it had no direct connection with that petition. The single tax measure was presented by James G. Maguire, a Democratic Congressman from California, as an amendment to the income tax bill. The members who voted for it were James G. Maguire of California, Charles Tracey and John De Witt Warner of New York, Jerry Simpson of Kansas, and Michael D. Harter and Tom L. Johnson of Ohio, all elected as Democrats. Harter was a believer in the taxation of real estate and to that extent a single taxer; Tracey is said to have used this means of evading a vote on the income tax, which he opposed; but Maguire, Warner, Simpson and Johnson were single tax men as well as Democratic members of Congress.

V. Local Option in Taxation.

Concurrently with the national movement through the tariff controversy, movements for opening the way to local applications of the single tax were adopted under George's leadership. The immediate object was State legislation authorizing municipalities to levy local taxes on land values exclusively.

New criticisms came in this connection. "Middle of the road" single taxers denounced the movement as alien to the single tax. Of course it wasn't the single tax; but without this authority there could be no adoption of the single tax locally. Nor could there be much effective local discussion. The local option movement was therefore in line with Henry George's views regarding free trade agitation: "The chief agency in promoting thought is discussion; and to secure the most general and most effective discussion of a principle it must be embodied in concrete form and presented in practical politics, so that men, being called to vote on it, shall be forced to think and talk about it."* In campaigns for members of the legislature, whose elections turn upon personal, national, State, and other considerations,

there could be but poor opportunities for effective discussion of the single tax principle. But local option in taxation, a necessary prerequisite to effective single tax discussion locally, seemed comparatively easy to force upon reluctant legislatures and against interested opposition, because it appealed to many to whom the single tax idea would not appeal at all.

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No State having yet given municipalities the right of local option in taxation, its value in this country is not demonstrated. But its use for single tax purposes in Australasia, beginning in the 90's in New Zealand, and the growing popularity of this use of it in Canada, are highly encouraging, both as to the fact that it offers opportunity for single tax adoption, and the fact that its use in that way is beneficial and popular locally and an example for other municipalities.

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Extended and patient efforts to secure a local option law in the State of New York, where the agitation for it began, at the suggestion of Thomas G. Shearman and with the whole hearted approval of Henry George, have thus far failed. Although the New York Constitution permits such legislation, her legislatures have firmly resisted the innovation. All that has yet come out of the movement definitely there, is a law requiring the city of New York to distinguish land values from other values for taxing purposes; but under the administration of Lawson Purdy, the head of the New York city tax department, this law has produced valuable results.*

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It was in Colorado about ten years ago that the most pronounced and systematic effort to secure local option in taxation was made. The leader there was James W. Bucklin, of Grand Junction, then a State Senator. Senator Bucklin secured legislative authority to investigate this fiscal method in New Zealand, and made the investigation at his own expense. The immediate result was one of the best reports upon the subject yet produced. This was followed by a measure, known as the "Bucklin bill," for so amending the Constitution of the State, which forbids local option in taxation, as to allow counties to tax only land values for local purposes should their voters decide to do so. The proposed amendment, after a long and bitterly fought contest, with but little outside financial aid, and in which Senator Bucklin sacrificed health, business, time and money, was defeated at the

*"Protection or Free Trade," page 318.

*See The Public, vol. xii, pp. 1162, 1203; vol. xiii, pp. 33, 157, 691. Also back references there noted.

election. It is believed, and there are good grounds for it, that this result was accomplished by false election returns under defective electoral laws. At all events, the Bucklin episode in Colorado may well be regarded as the most interesting, instructive and encouraging of all the struggles in this country for legislation tending toward the single tax.* Not only did it aim at "clearing the way," but it brought the whole subject under general discussion among the people of a State.

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The solitary instance of a local application of the single tax in the United States was brought about by Jackson H. Ralston in the village of Hyattsville, Maryland, some twenty years ago. Among the laws of Maryland was one allowing local authorities to exempt industrial improvements, the object being to enable communities to offer local inducements to industrial enterprises. It was an old law, which had been used in that way; and Mr. Ralston, an eminent lawyer of Washington, D. C., and at that time a member of the governing body of the suburban village of Hyattsville, where he lived, took advantage of it to secure from that body the exemption of all improvements and the concentration of local taxation upon land values. Economically, the experiment was successful. Householders found their taxes less; land monopolists found theirs more. But legally the experiment was a failure, for the Supreme Court of Maryland declared, in the Hyattsville case, that the old statute under which Mr. Ralston and his associates had acted was unconstitutional—not merely in their use of it, but in itself.

VI. Bryanism.

President Cleveland having thrust aside the tariff question, on which he was elected in 1892, for the money question, which had not entered into the campaign, and thereby split the Democratic party, the Cleveland part of it appeared in the next campaign in co-operation with the plutocratic elements of the country and their dependents, while the other part appeared as the regular Democratic party with free silver coinage as its slogan and William J. Bryan as its Presidential candidate.

All who knew the country as a whole,—caring neither for East nor West nor for gold standard nor silver coinage, in themselves,—foresaw this outcome two years before the Presidential campaign of 1896 began. Bryan, whose free trade speech in Congress was recognized even in New York as

one of the best ever made on that subject in the capitol, laid down the tariff question temporarily and set about advocating free coinage of silver as the dominant issue of the time. But quite as early, possibly earlier—as early at any rate as the summer of 1894,—the Reform Club of New York, organized out of and successor to the Free Trade Club, had put its splendid tariff reform work behind it, and its tariff reform committee completely out of commission, and was devoting the energies of its members and the money of its supporters exclusively to campaigning for the gold standard. Both East and West dropped the tariff question long before Bryan's first nomination for President; and not by preconcert of leaders, but as the inevitable result of the money policy which President Cleveland in office substituted for the tariff policy that had elected him.

Henry George had already revolted against Cleveland for his abandonment of the tariff question; and in this campaign he supported Bryan. So did the single taxers who sympathized with his decision or trusted his leadership. Few of them did this because they cared about the money question in itself. Both they and he looked upon Bryan as representing that tendency of political thought in the mass, on which the democracy of this Republic depends and through which its march "back to the land" must be accomplished.

Their explanation could not be better stated than in George's words. A group of his Eastern converts had issued a circular letter in opposition to Bryan's free silver doctrines, which, as Mr. George's biographer says, "they raised above all other considerations."* In his reply he wrote: "Of those friends of mine, the few single taxers who, deluded, as I think, by the confusion, purpose to separate from the majority of us on the vote, I should like to ask that they consider how they expected to know the great struggle to which we have all looked forward as inevitable, when it should come? Hardly by the true issue appearing at first as the prominent issue. For all the great struggles of history have begun on subsidiary, and sometimes on what seemed at the moment irrelevant issues. Would they not expect to see all the forces of ill-gotten wealth, with the control of the majority of the press, on one side, and on the other a reliance upon the common people—the working farmers and the artisan bread-winners? Is not that so today?"

Here was another instance of a failure of George converts to realize that democracy was his supreme

*See *The Public*, vol. iii, p. 629; vol. iv, pp. 100, 107, 136, 324, 722, 746, 761, 776, 792, 810; vol. v, pp. 11, 85, 116, 211, 322, 376, 391, 466, 486, 498, 548, 595, 664.

**"Life of Henry George," by Henry George, Jr., page 582.

purpose. While he taught that the corner stone of democracy is equal rights to land, he had no such fatuous notion as that single taxers must stand aside until the corner stone is being laid, though plutocracy meanwhile pull down the democratic structure as far as it has gone or put social dynamite into the place where the corner stone ought to be. He realized that society does not arrange itself nor submit to arrangement with geometric nicety or philosophic progression. He saw that it evolves through a constant interplay of economic, democratic, and religious forces, and that labels do not always identify.

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What governed Henry George and those single taxers who followed him in supporting Cleveland in 1892 on the tariff question, and Bryan in 1896 regardless of the money question, was their recognition of a conflict of tendencies among men in the mass, and not some childish expectation of winning party leaders over to the single tax propaganda. To infer, then, from its failure to make a single taxer of Cleveland, that George's policy failed, as some single taxers in the West have done, or of Bryan as have some Eastern single taxers, would be to confess misapprehension of the purpose of George's policy in practical politics, if not to exhibit a certain lack of acuteness in comparing little policies with larger ones.

As to the effect of his policy along its larger lines, no one can speak with exact knowledge, any more than one can positively assert that American liberty would now be greater or less if Washington had surrendered to Cornwallis at Yorktown, instead of Cornwallis to Washington. But whereas the people then were almost wholly blind to single tax principles, they are now beginning to see. Whosoever imagines that widespread and profound single tax sentiment, and forceful and ramifying or progressive tendencies toward it, were not engendered and fostered by Henry George's single tax leadership, both for Cleveland and for Bryan, must be singularly oblivious to general impulses and influences.

VII. Socialism.

It was in the attempt to project the United Labor party of New York into State politics that the George movement and organized socialism were estranged. The circumstances make a story by itself. The bare fact is all that need be stated here, and this by way of prelude to a brief explanation of the attitude toward socialism of George himself.

Many of his followers were early distinguishable

as "individualistics" and "socialistics"; that is, as persons who believed the single tax would keep government out of the industrial field, and those who believed it would extend government widely into the industrial field. Outside of single tax groups, the former have usually found intellectual companionship with philosophic anarchists, and the latter with opportunist socialists.

The two classes reflected George's composite view. It might be inferred from "Progress and Poverty;"* but he stated it explicitly in another book: "I myself am classed as a socialist by those who denounce socialism, while those who profess themselves socialists declare me not to be one. For my own part I neither claim nor repudiate the name, and realizing as I do the correlative truth of both principles can no more call myself an individualist or a socialist than one who considers the forces by which the planets are held to their orbits could call himself a centrifugalist or a centripetalist."†

While thus recognizing what are loosely called "socialism" and "individualism" as balancing forces in society, Henry George always refused to draw a fixed functional line between them. He held that socialistic and individualistic functions vary with circumstances. Water supplies, for instance, may be individualistic in primitive conditions or in country life, but socialistic in advanced conditions or in city life; the farmer's well, for example, in contrast with municipal reservoirs and distributing mains. This was his reason for opposing the substitute which the Single Tax Conference at Chicago in 1893 made for the final paragraph in the platform drawn by him and adopted by the Single Tax Conference at New York in 1890.

The original paragraph read: "With respect to monopolies other than the monopoly of land, we hold that where free competition becomes impossible, as in telegraphs, railroads, water and gas supplies, etc., such business becomes a proper social function, which should be controlled and managed by and for the whole people concerned, through their proper government, local, State or national as may be." By that paragraph free play was contemplated for variations of function, from individualistic to socialistic or the reverse. But at Chicago three years later the following substitute was adopted: "In securing to each individual his equal right to the use of the earth, it is also a proper function of society to maintain and control all public ways for

*See *The Public*, Oct. 28, page 1014; Nov. 4, 1910, page 1036.

†"Protection or Free Trade," ch. xxviii, page 302, note.

the transportation of persons and property, and the transmission of intelligence; and also to maintain and control all public ways in cities for furnishing water, gas, and all other things that necessarily require the use of such common ways." The point of divergence, it will be observed, was over the comparatively inelastic form of the substitute. It made the question of highway the determining factor, whereas in the original, which Henry George had drawn, the determining factor was free competition.

Although the substitute was a compromise more to his liking than the rigidly individualistic substitute that had been fought for and of which this was an amendment, George was nevertheless opposed to identifying his leadership with any fixed restrictions at all upon the details of either socialistic or individualistic tendencies.



His opinions regarding those apparently conflicting but really correlative tendencies were outlined at length in his essay on "Free Trade and Socialism,"* in one paragraph of which† he made this homely but pointed illustration regarding Labor: "Here is a traveler who, beset by robbers, has been left bound, blindfolded and gagged. Shall we stand in a knot about him and discuss whether to put a piece of court-plaster on his cheek or a new patch on his coat, or shall we dispute with each other as to what road he ought to take and whether a bicycle, a tricycle, a horse and wagon, or a railway, would best help him on? Should we not rather postpone such discussion until we have cut the man's bonds? Then he can see for himself, speak for himself, and help himself. Though with a scratched cheek and a torn coat, he may get on his feet, and if he cannot find a conveyance to suit him, he will at least be free to walk."

This is not altogether unlike that idea of socialism which contemplates putting the "labor class" in power as the first thing to do, and refuses to make a program for it in advance. The idea departs much from George's, if we consider the term "labor class" in its usual narrow meaning; but in socialism the term "labor class" alludes to all working interests. In that view the difference between the class conscious socialist and George, except in method, is inconsiderable.

In method, the socialist would give governmental power to the "labor class" (meaning all the people except industrial parasites), and expect it to decide and act in its own interest for itself

upon coming to power; whereas George would remove the land monopoly and trade obstruction ligatures that prevent "Labor" (meaning all the people except industrial parasites) from getting the power to decide and act in its own interest for itself. The difference in method may therefore be regarded as very great; though George's would seem clearly to be the wiser one for such countries as ours and Great Britain. Essentially, however, the point with each is much the same: Release the bound and blindfolded and gagged giant whom we personify as Labor, and leave it to him to see for himself, speak for himself, help himself, and with self-intelligence and self-power make and execute his own program.

VIII. People's Power.

Because Henry George regarded the abolition of land monopoly as the primary reform, narrow sighted indeed would it be to infer that he was therefore indifferent to other economic reforms. The facts are against the inference. Did he not, for instance, stand for public ownership of public utilities when the demand for it was emphatic, without waiting for land reform or tax reform? He knew, of course, that the financial benefits would go from franchise interests to landed interests; but he rightly regarded this in itself as a long step toward showing the people "the robber that takes all that is left."*

Narrow too would be the inference that he would have been indifferent to assaults upon democracy, or to democratic movements along less fundamental lines than those relating to land reform or tax reform. It is unthinkable, for example, that he would have turned from the Abolition struggle because freedmen with no right to land would as a class be as helpless as in slavery. He did, indeed, write that the putting of "political power in the hands of men embittered and degraded by poverty is to tie firebrands to foxes and turn them loose amid the standing corn;" that giving "the suffrage to tramps, to paupers, to men to whom the chance to labor is a boon, to men who must beg, or steal, or starve, is to invoke destruction."† But could any one with the slightest knowledge of the man, of his writings, of his leadership, or of the context of those quotations, understand him so vaguely as to suppose he would have been indifferent to attempts to limit the suffrage, or would have held aloof from movements to extend it?

Two motives urged him into the heat of such fights. For one thing, he was a democrat, and

*"Protection or Free Trade," chapter xxviii, pages 298 to 312.

†"Protection or Free Trade," ch. xxviii, page 300.

*"Protection or Free Trade," ch. xxv.

†"Progress and Poverty," book x, ch. iv, page 529.

the clarion of democracy always aroused him. For another, though he realized that every defense of democracy would in time be seized by the enemy, and that every weapon of democracy, even popular suffrage itself, would be turned against democracy, if the great vantage point of common rights to land were not secured, he also realized the importance, if not the absolute necessity, of democratic methods in securing that point. Not to kings or oligarchies, but to the people themselves, did he make his appeal for recognition of common rights to land.

He knew well that the freer the people are to speak, that the simpler and more direct the political mechanism through which alone they can speak, the greater is the certainty of gaining that impregnable and indispensable fortress of democracy, common rights to land. But again inferences are unnecessary. His words and his acts speak for him.

Was not Henry George intensely interested in the creation of the London County Council? And not merely as an observer, be it noted, but as the leader of his cause. Good in itself, as a democratic advance, he saw also that it cleared the way for the fundamental reform.

And did he not lead the movement in this country for the Australian ballot? Consult the record. In an article on "Money in Elections,"* the first presentation of the Australian ballot question in this country,—and it was speedily followed by a successful movement, promoted largely by land value taxationists and participated in actively by Henry George himself,—he expressed his views on that subject. "The election," he wrote, "is the initial point in our political system." "Popular government must be a sham and a fraud unless the popular will alone tells in elections." Exposing, then, the cost to candidates, at that time so great that "only a rich man or a man who expects to make money illegitimately out of the position can afford to run for office," he referred to the impossibility of finding a cure "by mere improvement in administrative machinery," for "the disease is deeper seated." His allusion here was to growing inequality in the distribution of wealth, which naturally begets a tendency, as he wrote, that can be cured by nothing that does not go to "the causes of inequality." Every intelligent reader knows what he meant by that. But he went on to say, and herein is the practical lesson, for our day as well as it was for his, regarding people's power: "Nevertheless any reform that can be made in the administration of political machinery

is not only good in itself, but clears the way for more radical reforms."

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Such further improvements in political machinery as direct primaries and direct legislation, being as remote from public sentiment in the United States in Henry George's life time as the single tax itself, his views regarding them were not publicly called out. But whoever understands direct legislation well enough to realize that it is "good in itself" as an improvement in democratic mechanism, or to appreciate its effectiveness as an electoral device that "clears the way for more radical reforms," will hardly doubt that Henry George, were he living now, would be with those of his followers who are urging the adoption of the Initiative and Referendum as a step toward the single tax.

That is a consideration, however, which belongs more properly in an outlook toward the future than in a retrospect. Enough be it here to anticipate the objection to George's argument for the Australian ballot, that it has not rid us of the money power in elections.

He did not prophesy that it would. The disease was deep seated and he saw no complete cure short of the fundamental reform he hoped to reach with the aid of electoral reforms. But the effect of the Australian ballot in lessening expenses to candidates and purifying elections, has been so great that only those of us who know somewhat of both in the days before that reform, can appreciate the difference. Were single tax sentiment ripe for legislative action, the possibilities of its winning at elections would be vastly better with the Australian ballot, despite all the remaining imperfections of our political mechanism, than it would have been under circumstances precisely the same except for the Australian ballot.

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Justitia slapped Vox Populi,
And old Vox hit him in the eye;
Then Veritas picked up a chair
And threw it at One Who Was There.
Pro Bono Publico arose
In wrath and smashed Inquirer's nose,
While Fair Play doubled up his fist
And whaled away at Suffragist.
In bold defiance of the law
Vindex slugged Nemo on the jaw.
Then Pax Vobiscum, with a roar,
Slammed Old Subscriber to the floor.
And Quidnunc, quicker than a wink,
Put Constant Reader on the blink.
Then Many Voters took a hand,
And soon had all the others canned.

—Chicago Tribune.

*North American Review, March, 1883.