

## THE MAYORALTY CAMPAIGN OF 1897.

In 1897 Henry George, now in his fifty-eighth year and weakened by illness, was again induced to face the rigors of a campaign for Mayor, this time of Greater New York. He was at the time busily engaged on the Science of Political Economy, from which he hoped so much. This work had taxed his every energy, and a premonition of approaching dissolution seems to have haunted him and impelled him to a feverish energy in its composition, which embodied so much of the riper fruit of his profound philosophic thought. But he did not contemplate death with fear or misgiving, but with faith and calm serenity, and eyes fronting the future with placid confidence that death held nothing which need make him afraid.

So when the call of the people came to lead them again in a fight for the mayoralty of Greater New York—the first campaign for chief magistrate under the consolidation—though he shrank from the contest it was not with any thought of fatal consequences to himself. Warned by his physician that it meant death he cheerfully accepted the commission, with as high a courage as ever soldier essayed a hopeless assault. Dr. M. R. Levenson, a neighbor of Mr. George and a life-long friend and disciple, has recorded the following notes of a conversation that occurred just before the acceptance by Mr. George of the nomination.\*

One afternoon, after talking over the mayoralty subject, we went for a walk on Shore Road, just in front of his house. Mr. George was convalescent merely, indications showing to the physician the still existent condition. Continuing the conversation commenced in the house, Mr. George said to me: "Tell me if I accept, what is the worst thing that can happen to me?"

I answered: "Since you ask me, you have a right to be told. It will most probably prove fatal."

He said: "You mean it will kill me?"

"Most probably, yes."

Dr. Kelly says the same thing, only more positively. "But I have got to die. How can I die better than serving humanity? Besides, so dying will do more for the cause of humanity than anything I am likely to be able to do in the rest of my life."

Many of the friends of Mr. George were averse to his facing the dangers of the campaign, and even Mrs. George was appealed to to use her influence to dissuade him. This she refused to do. Her devotion to high ideals was as great as his own, and her reply to these friends, fearful of the consequences to the leader of the campaign that he must face, evinced the innate nobility of her nature which had sustained him through so many trials and dangers:

"When I was a much younger woman I made up my mind to do all in my power to help my husband in his work, and now after many years I may say that I have never once crossed him in what he has seen clearly to be his duty. Should he decide to enter this campaign I shall do nothing to prevent him; but shall, on the contrary, do all I can to strengthen and encourage him. He must live his life in his own way and at whatever sacrifice his sense of duty requires; and I shall give him all I can—devotion."

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\*Life of Henry George, by Henry George, Jr. Vol. 2 page 595.



A conference followed shortly after at the New York office of the Johnson Company, at which about thirty of the friends of Mr. George were present. As a result of this conference Mr. George decided to make the fight. He entered upon the campaign with much of the fire and spirit that had characterized him in 1886.

There were three candidates in this mayoralty contest. Robert Van Wyck was the Tammany nominee and Benjamin F. Tracy stood for the regular Republicans. Seth Low ran as an independent Republican, and around him flocked the opponents of boss rule as represented by the two regular organizations. Most of the active Single Taxers were for Low before the advent of Mr. George as a candidate. James R. Brown had charge of the Low speakers and Dr. Marion Mills Miller was engaged at the Low headquarters. With the nomination of Henry George, Messrs Brown and Miller and other Single Taxers who were at the time speakers nightly for Low showed their loyalty to their old chieftain by immediately resigning their posts and enlisting, most of them without pay, under the standard of their great leader.

The campaign waxed fast and furious; it even showed what seemed to many evidences of coming victory. There was a great ratification meeting at Cooper Union characterized by the old enthusiasm that swept men off their feet; there was waving of handkerchiefs and throwing of hats in the air. The writer of these lines stood at the back of the hall with Father Ducey, both of us perhaps a little curious to ascertain just how the people would welcome this herald of industrial emancipation after years of absence from the political arena. Maybe there lingered in our minds some doubt of the wisdom of the advent of the champion in view of the fact that Seth Low, who had been a clean mayor of Brooklyn, who had an enviable reputation as a student of politics, and who had already thrown the gage of battle to the two spoils-seeking organizations, was already the candidate of the Independents. But to the Single Taxer none of these campaigns represented simply contests for office, or even immediate results. They were regarded as merely instrumental in forcing to the front the great principle of industrial emancipation for which Mr. George stood. So as Father Ducey watched the extraordinary demonstration a flush of pleasure overspread his face, and turning to the writer he said, "It's just like old times, isn't it?" And indeed it was. Physically but a shadow of his former self the candidate nevertheless surprised his friends by the fire of his winged words. More than once bodily exhaustion compelled him to desist, but he went on, appearing before audiences with the pallor of approaching dissolution on his face, but instinct with the old inspiration that made him the most powerfully appealing figure that has ever appeared on any political platform in Greater New York.

Willis J. Abbott, a well know newspaper man, was the George campaign manager, and August Lewis was treasurer of the campaign committee. Another, since deceased, who did splendid work as a speaker, was Arthur McEwan, also a veteran newspaper writer, with a trenchant style. H. Martin Williams, now reading clerk of the House of Representatives at Washington,



Lawson Purdy, Edward McHugh, and many others raised powerful voices in this campaign. Numbers of meetings at which the candidate appeared told how little he had lost his hold upon the affections of the people of Greater New York. And then came the tragic culmination.

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## DEATH OF HENRY GEORGE.

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Henry George, in as dramatic a political battle as New York has ever witnessed, died Friday October 29, 1897, at 4:30 A. M., in the Union Square Hotel. He had addressed several large meetings before retiring. Mrs. George was with him and was awakened by his convulsive movements and faint moanings. He was found dead with a smile on his lips. Around his bedside were grouped Mrs. George, Henry George Jr., Dr. Kelly, Edward McHugh and August Lewis.

He had lived for the people and had chosen to die for them. The choice was deliberate. He had entered the campaign against tremendous odds, for opposed to him were the power of Tammany and the "reform" forces behind Seth Low, the independent candidate for the mayoralty. On his own side were growing physical weakness but the power of a great idea; and as the campaign advanced it began to be felt that he stood a nearly even chance with the two other candidates.

It is doubtful if the city had ever been so stirred to its depths by the death of any citizen. The event had all the elements of a tragedy, with the election but three days away and the result in doubt. It was felt for the first time that this man of great genius, of strong personality, to whose standard men flocked as if drawn by some hidden magnet, was a real leader of men. Some perception, too, that the truth for which he stood made him great, seemed to dawn upon the minds of the be-fuddled editors who were now called upon to comment upon his life and death.

The many eulogies that followed were often tempered with rejection of the Single Tax and the regret that a man so great should entertain an idea of this kind. It seems not to have occurred to them that if the idea for which Mr. George stood were a delusion the subject of these eulogies was not a great man, but a very much misled one, as well as a false and dangerous prophet. Even William J. Bryan who sent a telegram saying "he was one of the foremost thinkers of the world," has since maintained a discreet silence as to whether the chief thought of all his philosophy was true or false. If false he was not a "foremost thinker," but a very sorry example of self-delusion.

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### WHAT PROMINENT MEN SAID OF HENRY GEORGE.

From all over the country came letters of regret at the untimely death of the Prophet. John P. Altgeld wrote: