

1869-1871

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The fewness of the Henry George letters extant for the years 1867 and 1868 accords with the impression of his life given by the job on the Daily Times. He was at the grindstone, writing, reading, thinking, and deciding. Doubtless he was too busy, and in off hours too wrapped up in his own family, to send to the people in Philadelphia the old amount of detail about Annie, the children, and himself. And there were complications also.

The San Francisco family had grown by now to be five, for the fall of 1867 had brought them Jennie Teresa, their first daughter, whom they named for Henry's sister who had died and Annie's veiled one. The delight of a new daughter brought a nice coincidence into Henry George's life, along with his increased responsibilities and income. This much is on the surface. But as unfortunate family events usually cast a shadow before, it seems that less cheerful changes which occurred when George left the *Times* must have been somewhat expected, and that the moves the family made must have been planned beforehand to take care of a case of distressing illness at home.

As for George's quitting the *Times*, on 12 August, we are told no more than that he was refused an increase in salary, and that the separation occurred with good will on both sides. The next two events, which seem almost to contradict each other, require factors of long-range planning to explain. Within a week George took a managing editorship with the San Francisco *Chronicle*, then a new

paper; and within two weeks he had broken up his household and sent Annie and the three children on to Philadelphia. Of course there were the old pulls toward home. It was high time for his wife and children to get to know his parents; and also, for himself, there was always the chance of a bigger career in the East. These matters entered his letters. Possibly

George's moving to the Chronicle was mainly a jockeying for position, an effort to broaden journalistic contacts beyond the purely Republican ones the Times represented, before he himself departed. He wanted contracts, sometime, to write letters in the East for California papers. Considerations of economy and a willingness to gamble whether he should go a few months sooner or later may tell the whole story of his staying in San Francisco when Annie left. It is more likely, however, that his joining the Chronicle indicates simply that he took the best job when it was offered, and that Annie's going east was in large degree a move separate from his career decisions.

Certainly the letter she sent him from Panama exhibited a serious condition. She had been desperately ill on the voyage south, a poor brave penciled scrawl informed him. What she said sounded like epilepsy: five seizures between San Francisco and the isthmus, and eight more on the gulf and Atlantic voyage. Her brother-in-law Tom met her in New York, and her father-in-law embraced her first in Philadelphia. Relief it was to be taken into the grandparents' home, where domestic routines fell mainly on others' shoulders. She and Mr. George established a wonderful relationship from the start; and with Mrs. George there was only a bit of mother-in-law trouble — she had to warn Henry to write more frequently to his mother.

'Harry darling, all is happiness around me, but I am not happy, for "my heart is over the sea."' Paying \$15 a week, Annie contributed something to the family's maintenance while she rested. Mr. George, just seventy, was in the coal business now with a little office opposite St. Paul's, and he was not doing very well. Yet there was another side of the picture: 'The folks home here have no idea of our situation. I spoke of getting a new cloak when I first came and Mother wanted to know which I would get, "cloth or velvet?" I said cloth by all means. It amused me more than a little. They were astonished when they saw my wardrobe. They all dress nicely, have all got silk dresses too, and none of them have any idea of the

troubles we have been through.' As of the present she grieved that Henry had sold their furniture, yet thought the decision prudent; and she was pleased with the first news about the Chronicle, feeling that financial worries were now behind them. She wanted him not to deny himself too much: chewing tobacco was a poor economy in place of the things he

preferred, she said; the amount of smoking he did would not hurt, and 'I think a little liquor is good for you.' About herself, the doctor had said that most of her trouble was in her head, she reported cheerfully, and added that she was really improving.

Before long, with an eye to the possible future, Annie began to size up the situation in Philadelphia. She could not like the climate or the city situation and noted that most people who had been in California wanted to return. She realized that Henry might probably be happier in the East, but warned him that they would have to live in better style than in San Francisco to have such congenial acquaintances as they were accustomed to. The oldest sister, Harriet, was living about as they had lived, yet her circle was a little 'low'; and as for the older Georges and the children at home, though their furniture was no better than what she and Henry had had, they made a better show, and they had the friends and connections of many years. 'They have never had poverty to contend with.' Altogether she succeeded well in becoming a beloved daughter: 'If I was an Episcopalian I think I would be all [Mother] would wish. That I cannot be. I would not exchange my liberal opinion for any creed much as I respect it. I go to church with Mother or Aunt Mary every Sunday, but being a Catholic in name is as bad as being practically a Catholic.' To the pleasure of her new sisters and brothers, Annie succeeded in introducing a melodeon into the home, and even in encouraging a certain amount of dancing and card playing.

Whatever the tug and pull on Henry of those for the most part cheerful letters from an unwell wife, there was always the chance of such bad news as reached him in the late fall, and not from Annie alone. Ned Wallazz, the old friend of King and Baird days, wrote that he was alarmed. The George family doctor had 'clapped the cups' on Annie George's temples. (The old practice of bleeding ill persons continued, in certain places, late in the nineteenth century.) Wallazz and his wife thought Annie to be right in doubting

the doctor's diagnosis of epilepsy, and in being dissatisfied with the treatment she was getting. It seemed to them that she was afflicted with some disorder of heart or brain, or possibly of the stomach, and that Henry should stop the cupping. This report fitted all too well with what Annie

herself was writing: she once overheard the doctor say ominous things, when he thought her to be unconscious. Her last letters to San Francisco, before Henry George himself came on, were emotional and upset. One told him that three-year-old Dick was very ill. The other was written on their wedding anniversary: 'Seven years of care, trouble, and sorrow,' said Annie, 'but also hope and love. We can look back and say we have indeed been one, sharing each other's troubles and joys. But few husbands and wives are as nearly one as we.'

Meanwhile, on the coast, Henry George's working for the *Chronicle* must not be pictured as though he were managing editor of that big paper today. Only three years of life were behind it, and those not as a regular newspaper but, under the title of the *Daily Dramatic Chronicle*, as a 'theater house bill' supported by advertising and circulated without charge. It had never lacked cleverness, however, and now under Charles de Young it had a large spark of ambition added. When, according to the editorial page of 20 August 'mysterious controlling influences' on the *Times* led to 'an editorial exodus,' it acted quickly, as up-and-comers do. 'Old brains, relatively speaking, have gone out; new ones come in. The two unfortunate men recently escaped from [the *Times*'] office show great emaciation.' So the *Dramatic Chronicle* hired Henry George.

Immediately the paper changed its name to the *Daily Morning Chronicle* and branched out into general journalism; and in its editorials we see Henry George loosening his tightest Republican attachments. Not that the *Chronicle* was Democratic. But an editorial of 3 September, for instance, announced that it would avoid partisanship as a curse. Look at the *Times* and the *Examiner*; it invited; though the two report identical events and affairs in the South under Reconstruction, they are equally destined to come up with absurdly opposed judgments. Working for this paper, George, the former abolitionist now seeking the middle truth, said the same moderate things about the Negro as President Lincoln had said. Editorials explained that while the Negro deserved economic freedom as much as any man because his labor belonged to himself by right, he should probably not be assimilated into the American social and political community — he was not ready for that.

There was preparation in this for one of the main events of George's next year, 1869: the change of mind that made him an early opponent of the policy of admitting Chinese labor on the West coast. The *Times* had been fairly friendly toward coolie immigration; and, generally, in the East and in the West, a correspondence existed between those who favored Chinese admission, often Republican businessmen who wanted cheap labor, and those who persisted in elevating the southern Negro, the Radical Republicans. In this frame of reference, George's inching out of extreme Republicanism, and out of the Radical line about Reconstruction, fitted him for the future. It would have been an almost impossible thing for a journalist on labor's side not to come to hate the coolie immigration; and in the future it would be hard for him to avoid the web of racism, and easy for him to prefer the Democratic to the Republican line. The *Chronicle* represents a softening-up stage in certain of its editor's first ideas.

Yet George did not shift opinions quickly, or change parties in time for the election of 1868. He worked for the *Chronicle* until late fall, and, with the recommendations of the paper, he voted Republican for one last time. Though the *Chronicle* asserted its character as a 'bold, bright, fearless, and truly independent paper,' it announced that it could only prefer 'Grant and peace' to 'Seymour and the prospect of civil disturbance.'

In one respect George's brief editorship molded the *Chronicle* into permanent form. In September and early October the paper hit harder at land speculation and made more of it as a public issue than the *Times* had ever done. In a three-day series of editorials beginning on 8 September, it attacked the San Francisco *Bulletin*, which a year earlier had stood about where the *Times* had stood in regard to the *pueblo*-land problem. Now the *Chronicle* charged the *Bulletin* with having followed the *Alta* into the camp of the speculators. The *Bulletin's* point that taxation would force land aggregations to fall apart sooner or later, and that 'the purchase of land by capitalists, if pursued in a liberal spirit, may [through sales] prove beneficial to the people,' Henry George scored as 'a Jesuitical defense of land grabbers.' He claimed the Sacramento *Union* as an ally in this protest. And when the Oakland *News* said that Henry George's line sounded very much like robbing the rich to divide the plunder among the poor, the editor was not cowed. Suppose it does, he replied under editorial title of the ominous

word, 'Agrarianism': to do that would be better than robbing the poor and dividing among the rich. And when someone said that 'old Californians' had a right to gain by the rise of land values, George responded that old Californians were not profiting. The profits were going to scrip purchasers and eastern capitalists and absentee owners generally. Half a century after these sharp editorials, the San Francisco *Chronicle's* historian credited Henry George with having originated the paper's opposition to monopoly in landholding, and with probably having contributed editorials on the subject during the '70s, when he was running his own paper.

Henry's leaving the *Chronicle* dismayed Annie — she was ready to blame somebody's spite on the newspaper staff — and her whole attitude enlarges the doubt that husband and wife had any deep-laid plan to move them permanently away from San Francisco. Though nothing much is clear about the break, it is altogether unlikely that George would under any conditions have gotten along well politically with de Young. And surely the husband must have felt impelled to take the chance when a new opportunity of journalism availed to send him across the continent. At any rate, almost before Annie knew what was happening, Henry was at her side in the old Third Street home. He came a couple of days too late to be a Christmas present, and before New Year's he was off to New York on business. But for half a year, nearly, he was in and out of the city; and at the end of that period she was a stronger and more stable woman, and he a better known and more experienced man.

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George crossed the continent in the employ of the San Francisco *Herald*, with a business rather than a writing assignment. He came the new way, by the not quite completed transcontinental railroad, and had an interesting time of it. The first leg of the journey, on the Central Pacific from Sacramento to the summit of the Sierras, he liked best; the engineering surpassed anything else he saw. But across the Nevada upland, the Central Pacific was guilty of hurry-up construction, and travel was incredibly slow. The wood for the loco-motive was so green it would hardly burn; and, waiting for the steam pressure to rise, the passengers amused and warmed themselves by burning sagebrush along the right of way. Unnecessary curves had been put in the track, George believed, just to qualify for the

higher government subsidy for difficult construction. On the Union Pacific leg of the journey east into Omaha, a berth was a relief though the traveler had to share it; and he said that the Union Pacific did better as to roadbed and speed than the Central Pacific in Nevada.

Sitting beside a talkative driver, during the cold ride on the 'mud wagon' stagecoach which connected the two railroads, George took the opportunity to ponder what American business and engineering were accomplishing, and the costs. As he summed up, the citizen and the ticket purchaser had plenty of reason to complain. With Central tariffs at ten cents a mile in coin, and Union at seven and a half, greenbacks accepted, the railroads had not lowered the expense of travel from coast to coast. Of all operations, he judged the Wells Fargo's handling of the United States mails to be the most scandalous. And over and above all manner of visible inefficiencies and high charges for transport, George did not forget the costs to the public of the subsidies and land grants to the railroads, and the demoralization of the legislatures that had enacted them. Monopoly, monopoly now struck Henry George as being a national phenomenon rather than one especially concentrated in California.

His assignment for the San Francisco *Herald* doubled his reasons for being alert to monopoly questions. He was working now for John Nugent, 'a very determined man and a very determined Democrat,' in the judgment of a writer for the *Alta California*. An Irishman born who had worked for the New York *Herald* under James Gordon Bennett, this newspaperman had entered San Francisco journalism in the middle '50s, bringing out his own paper under the famous name. Speaking of the staff he then assembled, one contemporary made him seem like the employer of a circle of latter-day Benjamin Franklins: a group of practical printers, but men wonderfully informed in languages and literatures, some of the sciences, and 'indeed nearly all the garnerings of human information.' But Nugent's quick success with the San Francisco *Herald* had been practically wiped out in 1856, during the rule of San Francisco's most famous vigilance committee. As is well known,

the murder of the editor of the San Francisco *Bulletin*, rival of the *Herald*, was the sensational incident that called this committee into life. So corrupt and so impotent to control crime had San Francisco government

been that historians have often judged that particular vigilantism favorably, as did most of the solid citizens at the time, the New Englanders of the Congregational Church, for example. But one aspect of the affair had been the suppression of free opinion in the city's journalism. When Nugent dared speak for the minority party which opposed vigilantism, advertising was withdrawn and the San Francisco *Herald* was humbled. Nugent was able to fight back, to be sure, and he kept the paper alive, on a reduced basis, until 1860, the summer before the election of Lincoln. Motives and intentions are not clear, but the facts are that the *Herald* was killed by the combined opposition of businessmen and rival papers, and that Nugent was forced from the field somewhat in the role of a martyr.

He decided to try to come back in 1868. He doubtless forecasted improving political weather for Democrats in California. He said that he was assured plenty of venture capital for a new *Herald*, and that he counted on the increasing supply of national and international news, which since the Civil War was being distributed by news agencies, as a factor in favor of making a fresh start. By the fall of the year he did, indeed, have all his arrangements made, except for one essential step. It was to negotiate a contract with the Associated Press, so that the *Herald* would have as good news service as any West coast paper, that Nugent employed Henry George to represent him in New York.

The difficulty was that Nugent was being cold-shouldered in San Francisco once more. California had a new monopoly. A decade earlier the San Francisco *Bulletin*, supported by the organized and agitated business community, had edged him out, and now that newspaper was consolidated with other newspapers in a state press association. This group alone had present access to the Associated Press dispatches coming across the country by wire. It was made up of the Sacramento *Union*, and of four San Francisco papers which were not in complete competition with one another: the *Evening Bulletin*, and the *Morning Call*, which would soon become the *Bulletin's* partner; the *Alta California*, which was the senior newspaper in the city and the principal commercial one; and the *Times*, Henry George's old paper, which was soon to sell out and lose identity in the *Alta*. The California press association was a tight organization; the *Chronicle* could not get in, nor any minor papers.

For this biography few missing documents would be more welcome than some undiscovered memoir by Nugent, saying how and why he happened to assign to Henry George the job of negotiating the *Herald's* independent way into the Associated Press in New York. It would seem that Nugent might have preferred to handle that business himself. The negotiator would have to deal with some of the nation's top journalists and businessmen, and he would have to make decisions on which would depend the birth of the San Francisco newspaper. Clearly a great compliment of trust and confidence was paid the twenty-nine-year-old. It was to make an immediate arrangement for the new year, 1869, and to end waste and waiting in San Francisco that hurried George on from Philadelphia to New York, after no longer than a week-end visit with his people.

But he was doubtful from the start about doing business with the Associated Press. Thinking that time would be lost if he went direct to that headquarters, he approached first the people at Western Union. Though Vice-President McAlpine, the official with whom George dealt, refused a written contract, he did allow that for \$900 a month the *Herald* could have 500 words a day in San Francisco, to be telegraphed from New York, Philadelphia, or Chicago, at the paper's option. Put off by the Associated Press until a February meeting, George explored at once the other possibilities for getting the news. He reported to Nugent his future rather than immediate hopes: once a new French cable was laid, Reuters could be expected to bring in foreign news; and once an opposition telegraph began real competition with Western Union, domestic news too would loosen up. Such eventualities he thought near enough in the future to give the *Herald* something to count on, and he advised expedients for the present to launch the paper and tide it over. Even when the Associated Press advanced its meeting to mid- January, and shocked him by tabling unanimously the *Herald's* application for membership, George favored going ahead at once. 'The present news monopoly must be broken before long,' he wrote his employer, 'and you are certain ultimately to fight your way into the California association if you deem it desirable.'

His first expedients were rapid, loose-jointed, and ethically dubious, but effective. He returned to Philadelphia; he employed as assistant a boyhood friend, John Hasson; and he established himself in his father's coal

office. There he was able to buy the news, as he told Nugent he would. For a couple of days only he got the dispatches from a 'principal editor' in Philadelphia, and one dispatch 'coup de main,' not a reliable practice he admitted. Then Hasson arranged with the Harrisburg *Patriot and Union* to have its AP dispatches as soon as they were received and before printing. A clerk made copies; these were taken to the Atlantic and Pacific Telegraph office right in the *Patriot's* building; and a generously tipped messenger brought them quickly to Henry George in Philadelphia. Thence on to Western Union, and to San Francisco.

On this basis Nugent launched the new San Francisco *Herald*, 19 January, and made a play of having the transcontinental telegraphic news. The state association was defeated. The expenses of the system ran high, however: besides the \$900 a month to the Western Union, George was paying \$21 a week to the *Patriot*, \$5 a week for copying, a cent a word for telegraphing to Philadelphia, and \$35 a week to Hasson. Outside his own pay, which (whatever it was) he had trouble enough to collect, the *Herald* was committed to a monthly outlay of about \$1200, by George's quick arranging. George reported the Harrisburg machinery as he contrived it, a matter of days after the paper began. So Nugent knew from the start that his agent was proceeding independently of the AP, and that they were taking chances.

George expected to win, but he did not rate the enemy low or expect him to yield without a fight. In 1869 the Associated Press was a new organization, but neither youth nor small size made it tender; it was a hard-boiled youngster not yet civilized up to its natural responsibilities. Specifically, the AP was a trade association: it pooled equally the cable and telegraph news received by its members, seven leading papers of New York City. It sold those dispatches, transmitted by Western Union, to papers throughout the country. In the person of one correspondent, it had just launched its overseas news gathering services. Events of 1866 had pointed up its character as a business monopoly. In that year strong mid-western voices, those of Murat Halstead of the Cincinnati *Commercial* and Henry White of the Chicago *Tribune*, had demanded better service.

But protest had come to very little; and, according to the AP's friendly historian, that organization, at the time George confronted it, presented a

very stony face indeed.

To make things completely difficult, moreover, the AP had recently elected as its general agent the hard-fisted James W. Simonton of San Francisco. No man could have been so utterly the opposite of George; no one else could quite so completely have identified the press associations of the two cities. Ten years earlier Simonton had purchased the share of the San Francisco *Bulletin* which had belonged to the murdered editor; since then he had been a member of the inner group of controlling owners of that paper; and as such he had been a part of the squeeze against the first *Herald*. His background and situation were such that one hardly needs to inquire whether he had read and been needled by George's editorials in the *Times* denouncing the *Bulletin* as inaccurate to the point of dishonesty. Almost assuredly he had, and he was going to hear worse later.

At the start of his mission George learned from a confidant that Simonton was opposing a contract with the *Herald*, and that factor became a part of the report to Nugent. Next the story was that Simonton had learned, by bribing Western Union George guessed, that the *Herald's* news was being sent from Philadelphia; and then that Simonton had come on from New York 'to lay traps.' But he did not learn about George's Harrisburg arrangement; and George felt that unless he hired detectives he would not discover it. So George continued the operation and planned if necessary to repeat the procedure elsewhere, say from Pittsburgh next time. He felt that he had to stay out of New York City. To a San Francisco friend he wrote, when the operation was two weeks old: 'It is a *big thing* to run full tilt against this Association, a bigger thing than you folks probably appreciate, and I regard success so far as a pretty big feather in my cap.'

George estimated a close understanding between the Associated Press and Western Union; but apparently he expected the telegraph company to stand by the oral contract and do business with him no matter what his relations with the AP. In this he assumed too much. Not detectives but telegraph officials put on the pressure for Simonton. After first merely refusing George the economy of using cypher in his San Francisco dispatches, Western Union gave

notice that those dispatches would have to be sent from New York. This was contrary to the original agreement with McAlpine; and George

identified the superintendent who served the notice as a friend of both Simonton and the proprietor of the *Alta California*. When the telegraph people went a step farther and pressed for information about his news gathering, George bluntly refused. But the pressure to move to New York he could not overcome. Accordingly, in the middle of February, after a month of jabbing holes through the news associations, George left his family for New York. He still assumed that his arrangements could be continued and stabilized sufficiently for the *Herald's* need.

And in the lion's den he did succeed in establishing new operating connections. A 'supplier' of dispatches was found, evidently a member of the staff of the New York *Sun*; and the New York *Herald* gave its namesake access to its 'specials' and to the Havana news. Western Union did not balk again for a while, and George planned a forward action and an eye-catching triumph.

The inauguration of General Grant made the occasion. George went down to Washington three days beforehand. Working through Senator Cole of California, he managed a promise from Grant's secretary, General Rawlings, that he would be given a copy of the inaugural address at the AP office, immediately on delivery and as soon as any newspaperman received it. His scheme was to wire the speech direct to San Francisco, and also very early news about cabinet appointments and the like. The *Herald* would scoop all the San Francisco papers. And on 4 March, so far as he could tell, things went very well. Staying away from the inaugural ceremonies and seeing very little of the parade, George received his early copy, and nothing more untoward happened than a ten or twenty minute delay by the telegraph operator. His dispatches hit the wires early, and he was sure that they would reach San Francisco ahead of the AP news which had to clear through New York.

Then came the humiliation of being tricked. The AP papers in San Francisco actually received their news far ahead of the *Herald*, and taunted the challenger. George learned what had happened when the president of Western Union told him that a copy of the inaugural had reached the hands of the Associated Press in Chicago in advance of delivery and was released as General Grant was speaking. George's fury shifted to the managing officials of the AP. For

falsely stating that he was getting the release as early as any, George demanded explanations. Lacking satisfaction, he declared he would go with appropriate charges to the President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, General Rawlings, and the news-reading public, all of whom were affected.

Actually there was very little he could do beyond threatening. This event was the time, and might reasonably be accounted the immediate cause, of George's dissolving whatever attachment he may have had left to the Republican party. In the *Herald* George's correspondence gave Grant no higher credit than for 'the best of intentions.' The new cabinet he called 'astonishing'; and, about the new appointments generally, he said, 'There are many, of whom confess I am one, who dislike to see enormous wealth and political power joined.' To a friend who twitted him about his old party connection, George declared that he was no longer a Republican.

Back on the job in New York, the Washington episode must have struck him as an evil omen for the future of Nugent's second *Herald*. John Hasson was having less and less success in gathering the news. When pressed by the AP, the New York *Herald* withdrew favors it had granted; and hopes, which George's new friend, John Russell Young, encouraged as managing editor of the *Tribune*, that that paper would lend a hand, were soon destroyed by authorities at high level. Then Simonton discovered the paper, though not the individual, from whom George's AP news had been tapped; and that well dried up. At last resort George turned to what he called 'stealing the news.' This procedure, which the name to the contrary hardly seems less moral than his earlier efforts, meant buying the New York papers as soon as they were out and telegraphing what he selected for the *Herald*, at once. He had to be on the streets between three and four in the morning, but with the advantage of the Pacific coast time differential, the scheme would work as long as the telegraph did.

In the second half of April, after three months of somehow doing the job for the *Herald*, Western Union refused service. Rather, it demanded impossible terms. The company notified George that the present arrangement would terminate in May, that to conform with a new contract with the Associated Press Western Union would in the future charge the San Francisco *Herald* \$2000 a month — instead of the old \$900. The 122 per

cent increase was practically a death sentence. In George's mind, this decision represented the last word in the power, caprice, and injustice of private monopoly.

Yet he was not too frustrated to be enraged, or so utterly helpless as to think the sentence as good as executed. During recent weeks his feeling had become greatly mixed about his employer. Nugent kept him constantly in arrears as to salary and working funds. He sent no instructions or letters; an occasional telegram and payment was all that George's long reports drew from San Francisco. Even so, George now urged carrying on the newspaper and persisting in the fight. He predicted more specifically than he had earlier that a new telegraph would in less than a year open up news selling in competition with the AP. For the immediate present, if Nugent was unable for the waiting period to bear Western Union's extravagant demands, George suggested reducing the size of the *Herald* — just as Nugent had done when the vigilance committee supporters took away his advertising — and sustaining always an editorial barrage against the monopolies. He proposed stealing the news in San Francisco if need be: this would 'terribly torment the combination.' But the main thing was to keep up the fight.

Though George's advice did not set the course for Nugent, or save the *Herald* or even sustain his connection with his employer, the counsels he gave were sound. His prediction that the news gathering he and Hasson had been doing could be maintained proved accurate. Fifteen months later, this associate was to join forces with John Russell Young to found the American Press Association. Exactly as George now said, they were going to be able to give the Associated Press a run for its money and to crack through the California news monopoly.

At the same time he was advising Nugent, George himself, still in New York, practised his own fighting precepts. He took to the president and vice-president of Western Union a written review of the whole affair: he charged the telegraph company with intention to suppress the *Herald* and any opposition to the Associated Press. In George's account of the exciting interview, Vice-President Mc-Alpine complimented him sincerely but cynically on the case he had built up 'as a writer.' Neither McAlpine nor President William Orton made the least effort to justify Western Union.

They freely admitted that for a long time the AP had been urging them to do what they had just done. General Orton said that if George did not

like it he could go back to California and build a telegraph of his own.

George made free to go to the public. He ordered printed 6000 copies of his history of the case, and he distributed many among New York newspaper people. He raised the moral question of the freedom of the press. But for the most part he presented financial facts: Western Union was demanding \$2000 a month for 500 words of news daily. This was its 'conforming' with new rates being given the California press association papers — \$3333 total, to be shared by 4 San Francisco dailies, for 2500 words a day. George did the arithmetic. While the *Herald* was being raised from 6.92 cents to 15.28 cents per word per day, the association papers were, pro-rating, being reduced from 2.4 to 1.28 cents per word. Under the old rates the telegraph company would have grossed \$40,000 a year from California newspaper business, and under the new, though for more words, \$40,000 from the combination alone.

The New York *Herald* printed George's full story in the Sunday edition of 25 April about fifty inches in small print; and it ran an approving editorial. The German-language *Demokrat* chimed in the following Tuesday. But so far as George could discover, no other papers mentioned the affair, and his circular was virtually boycotted. He enclosed a copy with a note to Senator William Sprague of Rhode Island, whose recent anti-monopoly speeches he had written up for the San Francisco *Herald*. He wrote also to the recently elected Senator Eugene Casserly, requesting him — in vain, as he anticipated — to speak as Californian and Democrat against the monopoly. More than this he could not do in New York, and by the first of May he was ready and anxious to leave. Years later he rehearsed the matter before a Senate committee; and still later, forgetting editorials of 1867 in the San Francisco Times, he said that the events of 1869 had swung him to believe in a publicly owned telegraph system; he had been convinced 'when General Orton forcibly presented ... the *argumentum ad hominem* in its favor.'

So ended Henry George's battle against the Goliath of contemporary journalism. The defeat confronted him with questions they appear in his letters of spring and summer — about what he should do next. Continue in

New York in some effort to beat the Associated Press? But, saying he did not wish to be a ‘purveyor’

or ‘sender’ of news any longer, he effectively gave up that choice by surrendering the New York work to John Hasson. Should he return to journalism or try other writing? Stay east or go west? In the end, though he had once said that of all possible jobs he would enjoy most being a correspondent in Washington, it was natural that he decided to go back to San Francisco for a while at least. Corresponding with Mayor McCoppin he let on that he might be a candidate for the legislature in the fall. And to his friend Sumner, on the staff of the *Herald*, he said that should Nugent withdraw the two of them could make the paper ‘spin.’ He also had other ideas: possibly a paper of his own in the mining town of White Pine, Nevada, and just perhaps an evening paper in San Francisco to match the *Herald* and oppose the *Bulletin*.

David had not succeeded, but his missiles had stung, and he was ready to deliver more from a western angle of firing.

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The fight with the monopolies does not tell the whole story of Henry George’s half-year in Philadelphia and New York; nor does that fight compounded with the newspaper writing we have noticed and with the obligations and anxieties which attended his visits with the family in the Third Street house tell all. Yet the total excitement of these things together does seem to go far in explaining the climactic personal event of the sojourn. This was the famous vision and dedication of his life which occurred on a sidewalk of New York — much like the call to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, Father McGlynn would say after George had become an international leader.

There is a disappointing lack of testimonial about how George held up psychologically under the pressures of 1869. Thirty years later John Russell Young retained an impression that his friend had been breezy, openhanded, and western, and also unusually thoughtful and serious, and anxious to make friends among fellow journalists, during the long battle. The only contemporary indication we have, aside from George’s own letters already drawn upon, is a phrenological chart, the second and last in the book, which was recorded in humor by ‘Professor John Hasson.’ But it tells about a

physical and nervous condition which was not amusing, and accords with the strains to which George had been subjected. He was very light, down to 113 pounds, and so tense he could sit at table no longer than fifteen or twenty minutes. It is hard to endorse Hason's finding that George lacked self-confidence, but perhaps the friend had perceived doubts or hesitations which do not appear in the letters to San Francisco.

We know, from George's own retrospect of the vision, that part of the background lay in an emotional reaction against the cities he visited. Of course he had not been in Philadelphia since 1858, nor in New York since 1856. One recalls Henry Adams' recoil, at precisely this time, when he returned to the United States and commented on New York especially, after spending the war years in Britain. The home city Henry George remembered from before his California days had been to him a decent place in which to live, and the New York he visited had seemed neat and lovely. But now New York confronted him, as it did the patrician from Quincy, with a terrible and an incredible social order. George never forgot the shock. Years afterward, when he was running for the city's highest office, he described the distress of seeing and realizing; and still later he told a Chicago audience that in 1869 New York's 'conjunction of wealth and want' had been 'absolutely appalling to a man from the Far West.'

When in 1883 he did put into writing his memory of the vision, he made it very private. 'Because you are not only my friend but a priest and a religious,' he wrote to Father Thomas Dawson, an Irish brother in reform, 'I shall say something I don't like to speak of — that I never before told anyone. Once in daylight, and in a city street, there came to me a thought, a vision, a call — give it what name you please. But every nerve quivered. And there and then I made a vow. Through evil and through good, whatever I have done, and whatever I have left undone, to that have I been true.' He spoke less as a mystic, more as a pledged reformer, when he told the story to the people of New York who wanted him to be their mayor. 'Years ago I came to this city from the West, unknown, knowing nobody, and I saw and recognized for the first time the shocking contrast between monstrous wealth and debasing want. And here I made a vow from which I have never faltered, to seek out, and remedy if I could, the cause that condemned little

children to lead such a life as you know them to lead in the squalid districts.’ These words were spoken on an especially stirring oc-

casional, but even late in life George did not many times choose to mention the spiritual event.

The occurrence is not to be doubted, yet from tardy testimony there is little opportunity to examine it. Remembering the Millennial Letter of 1861, and recalling the Lincoln editorials of 1865, it is best to observe simply how capable George was of intense social feeling, of intense identification of himself with public situations. In this sequence the vision of 1869 becomes the culminating event of a series — there was to be only one more, and that one soon and a kind of supplement to this.

In another man, the vision and dedication might have led to drafting blueprints for a new utopia. But escape to alabaster cities was not George’s way. Typical of his own realism, he set himself rather, while still in New York, to solve the California problem that seemed at the time most likely to reduce laboring men there to the world’s low level. As we have anticipated, California’s Chinese question posed problems especially knotty for a moralist. Those who favored the immigration had available the arguments of human equality and international opportunity, and they had also the interest of the employing classes, as Hittell and the *Alta* illustrated in California. To oppose Chinese admission involved drawing the color line into politics, and tangling with Negro problems. George had to select his premises carefully as he now went all the way with labor in saying that the Chinese could not be assimilated into American life.

Evidently he found time to do the thinking during his weeks in Philadelphia. At any rate it was in one of the libraries of his home city that he searched and borrowed from John Stuart Mill’s *Principles of Political Economy* — the first certified occasion of his using that epitome of classical economics, the book that introduced him to the field. And because one particular idea became crucial in his later development, we must notice that at this point George adopted as his own the widely accepted, and highly pro-capitalistic, wages-fund theory of employment. From the conception that wage rates are determined by a ratio between the size of the labor force and the amount of funds which business assigns to wages, George reasoned that Chinese coolies were bound to bring down the normally high rates of

the Pacific coast and to have effect across the land. The economic prospect which was meat to Hittell was poison

to George. Lower wages he believed to be sure to reduce trade, and to injure everyone by decreasing sales. So explained George in his vein of economy of abundance, much as he had spoken in the *San Francisco Times*.

Arguing this way George succeeded in avoiding a racial opposition to Chinese immigration. He particularly said that individually the Chinese were known to be intelligent and teachable. But from San Francisco he knew also that the coolies really could not be considered as though they were free individual settlers like other immigrants; they were unfree transient laborers transported from and committed to return to a culture which he believed to be 'in petrification.' Mainly he conceived the Chinese immigrants, in the Malthusianism of the common mind, to be the advance party of an unlimited labor force, a threat to free workers more terrible than the Negro slave trade had ever been.

The writer submitted his essay in the form of a letter to the editor of the *Tribune*, and on 1 May 1869, within days of George's leaving New York, that paper published it. The historian of anti-Chinese sentiment, Dr. E. C. Sandmeyer, judges that the argument was too involved to become popular or politically influential. But George had done the job in hope that the essay would be circulated for political effect among the 'horny-handed' in San Francisco, and accordingly he sent copies ahead of his return for republication there. Nugent published it with favorable comment, and with gauntlet down to the *Alta and the Bulletin*.

The Chinese letter was George's biggest intellectual effort during the hectic half-year in the East, a very limited expression of his spiritual commitment, and yet an important first step in his study of economic processes. It was to influence his coming California career rather more as a student and editor and social critic than as a young man interested in practical politics.

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When arrangements were made and Henry George put his foot on the train for Chicago, he traveled alone once more. Annie was better, but they decided that she and the children should stay on in Philadelphia until things worked themselves out. She was probably not ready to set up a new

household in San Francisco, and he cannot have been in shape to pay for one. The *Herald* owed him

\$700. He was grim, but not too much so for humor, when he departed: 'I am doing well for a young man ... I have already got the Central Pacific, Wells Fargo, and Western Union down on me, and it will be just my luck to offend the Bank of California next.'

Yet George left New York fortified with a pass on the Union Pacific and with a contract to correspond for the New York Tribune. This was arranged and signed by John Russell Young. During the trip it called for visits to Salt Lake City and White Pine, expenses paid: George was to send elaborate accounts of the mining country. After reaching San Francisco he was to write two letters a month, to be paid for at \$5 a column, and Mr. George was to rank as the New York Tribune's 'chief resident and representative correspondent in California.'

His personal papers contain notes he made on the western trip; probably he intended them for rendering into *Tribune* articles. This time — 1869 was the year of completing the transcontinental link — he liked the Union Pacific better than in 1868. Pullman Palace cars went part way; the bridges were being improved; the railroad restaurant meals were good, especially at Laramie, at \$1 or \$1.25 each. It was a much easier trip than in 1868, and he must have traveled in a mood of relief and rising hopes.

But when he reached San Francisco he learned that he would do no corresponding for the Tribune and had no future of any kind with Nugent's *Herald*. Samuel Sinclair, the publisher of the New York paper, had annulled his contract. Behind that event, George learned, his friend was being eased out as managing editor, to be succeeded by Whitelaw Reid.¹ And as for George's money and prospects with the paper which employed him, things were pretty desperate when he reached San Francisco. Nugent accused him of dishonest dealing and refused payment. George had to wire Hasson to hold up the eastern dispatches, and had to start a lawsuit, before he could collect. The San Francisco Herald died in the fall.

Even political hopes were disappointed. By August some campaigning within the Democratic party proved that George would not be nominated for the legislature. To be sure this was less than a defeat. As Annie wisely wrote: it had been too much to expect that he would be

chosen; he had been a Republican; he must keep courage. Nostalgia and waiting, and catch-as-catch-can, were Henry's fate for the summer and fall of 1869. 'There is nothing out here like the old-fashioned farmhouses of the Eastern States,' he wrote a sister: 'There is some magnificent scenery and beautiful country; but the people have not been here long enough to make it a country like the East.' He had an opportunity to eke out an existence when, for reasons unknown, the *Bulletin* hired him to write a few editorials. But before long he was doing a short turn at the printer's case again. One compensation, it must have seemed a pathetic one, was leisure and some chance to read, more than he had had for four or five years.

Exactly the reverse of the year before, family events now supplied about the only bright spots in Henry George's history. The politics of the city presently associated him with his Irish uncle-in-law, Matthew McCloskey, from whom he had been estranged since the event that forced him and Annie to elope. Their reconciliation gave joy to all concerned. And in Philadelphia, Annie did not have to report illness this year. Her hardest words for her husband were lovers' quarrels: he must, she insisted, omit the 'josh' from his letters or his family would think that all the McCloskeys were drunkards. Wifely pride soared as she reported that Hasson had called, and, saying how much he himself admired Henry, confided that Young was going to want Henry George on his new \$100,000 paper. Young, she wrote, 'thinks there is no one like you, told Greeley they let the very man go they had been looking for for two years, when they let you go.' But Annie's new hope for a fresh start in New York had to die with Mr. Young's stillborn paper; and the next spring, 1870, she thrilled to return to the West coast.

For the husband, the upturn came when to his amusement he was appointed for the period of a friend's illness to be acting editor of the San Francisco *Monitor*, a Catholic weekly. He inserted Irish items from other papers — news stealing again — and wrote 'miscellaneous' editorials. What fun, he reflected, if he could only edit simultaneously an anti-Catholic paper. Then he could print the pieces that did not suit this one and have controversies with him-

self on the two editorial pages. The *Times* and the *Examiner* in pious miniature.

But before long Henry George was voicing on the *Monitor*, as he had in the *Times*, his own preferences. He spoke in behalf of Mayor McCoppin;

and he spoke against the *Bulletin*, in which he now discovered a ‘Hanglo-Saxon’ slant. His reply to that paper, when it deplored the way in which Irishmen were getting into city politics, must be noted, because it gives us his own estimate of the political arena he wished to enter. One-quarter to one-half of San Francisco’s population was Irish, he observed. Yet only 5 native Irishmen held elective offices, out of 52 seats of office; and there were only 40 Irish policemen, as against 46 native Americans and 27 born of other nationalities. This was no time, said the *Monitor*, for a San Francisco Know Nothingism, such as the *Bulletin* was encouraging.

In anticipation of Henry George’s fight of 1886 and 1887 with Archbishop Corrigan, which almost led to the banning of *Progress and Poverty* to Catholic readers, there is rare irony that George now used a tiny Catholic paper to voice for the first time his proposition that every individual has a natural right to land. Of course this was not new as a general idea: labor reformers and others since Jefferson — as Irish as McClatchy of the *Bee*, many of them — had invoked natural-rights doctrine in favor of the homestead policy. And moral law as grounded in universal principles is of the essence of Catholic thought. Nevertheless *Monitor* editorials were George’s first step toward an ultimately radical result — putting philosophical underpinning beneath his protest against land monopolization.

Two editorials in one issue of the *Monitor*, that of 11 September tell the story. Like many another protest of this period, this one took the grievances of Ireland to demonstrate the grievances of the world. Inevitably Irish landlords would have to show cause why they monopolized the soil occupied and worked by millions, George asserted. Their discomfiture would affect other lands. For ‘beneath the Irish land question is the English land question ... What is there in the laws of entail and primogeniture that should set aside the God-given law, that these who toil shall enjoy the fruits of the earth?’ Irish protest was to be read as a sign of class discontent, the world around. ‘The masses are beginning to think — beginning to feel their power and demand their rights; beginning to

unite to obtain them. And sooner or later their just demands must be granted. Speed the day!’

It sounds almost as though Henry George was already at the point of denying that land should be held as private property. The major premises were laid. But when he came to the second editorial of September, 'The Land Question in California,' he steered, more closely than later, by the local markings. Not that he thought that the state was in a unique position; on the contrary, tragically, he said, California was spiraling down the grooves familiar in the course of time. In place of the old world's military conquests and feudal grants, he saw about him 'Combinations of capitalists who have secured principalities for a nominal sum by the location of scrip, and who now demand extortionate prices or grinding rents of the actual settlers.' California's difference from the ancient past, he said, was political not economic. Though the Mother of Parliaments might probably fail to break up land monopoly in the old world, where the cake of custom was very hard, the California legislature could succeed if it would try. Economics poses the problems, politics can solve them. Henry George was one of the earliest industrial-age radicals to say just that.

Specifically, for the one state, he proposed: first, that big land aggregations should bear 'full taxation'; second, that there be set by constitutional amendment a sliding scale of land taxes, higher rates for large estates and lower for small. The two implements were designed, of course, to cut the same way. By keeping assessments at full value, and by raising rates on large aggregations, George hoped to squeeze out the monopolizers, force the land back into public hands, and open it for proprietor-farmers to take over. This is quite different from his ultimate proposals. Yet in boldness, philosophical assumptions, and faith in the power of government, George had made a sizable step into his future; and his pledge for the poor, made in New York, was getting into the stage of the tool blueprints.

Later George looked back on this period, or rather on the entire two years between his return to California and his important writing of 1871, as the passage of a traveler westward across the high plains. A long course lay behind him, and he was pledged to distant goals. Immediately ahead lay the mountains of thought which were the hazard of his journey.

In the period since he had left the *Times*, George's San Francisco contemporaries, whom we have called the Hamiltonians of the state, had themselves ventured a little into the highlands of thought. And, just as the first round of proposals in Hittell's book and in the *Alta* had drawn from George his first sustained economic thinking and criticism, so now a second round from the same side drew him forward again. The propaganda of the California Immigrant Union, very similar to the economic regionalism of Hittell and the *Alta*, yet somewhat different, was more specific than anything else so far in proposing policies for California. This organization requires a short digression.

The Immigrant Union was a brand new body, and its principal spokesman was its president *pro tem*, Caspar T. Hopkins, who was also president of the California Insurance Company and something of an intellectual and writer as well. He never reached Hittell's stature in this respect, but he is referred to as the well-educated son of an Episcopalian bishop and the author of a none-too-successful patriotic textbook in civics; he was an occasional lecturer at the University of California, a founder and writer for the Pacific Social Science Association, and the writer of memoirs. His presidency of the Immigrant Union associated him, not for the first time, with men famous in California history. Among the officers or trustees of the union appeared the following: Charles Crocker of the Central Pacific; A. D. Bell, a manufacturer; Charles Lux, of Miller and Lux, the holders of the hugest ranchlands in the state. Besides these there were a dozen or more others who can be identified as important bankers, merchants, or real-estate men; and on the honorary committee sat Governor Henry Haight, who was president *ex officio*, ex-governors Downey and Stanford, ex-senator Milton Latham, more businessmen, and the consuls of Italy and Peru. Just about all the large-property interests of the state, interests not always too friendly among themselves, and both political parties were represented.

A year earlier Henry George had predicted in the *Overland* that 'the railroad and the consequent great increase of business and population, will not be a benefit to all of us, but only to a portion.' Now the Immigrant Union was dealing with actualities much worse

than George had foreseen. In Mr. Hopkins' words, in a principal piece of propaganda, California was being 'forced to stop and ask what there is in

our civilization that is so shrunken and shrivelled by the magnetic current setting towards us through the iron conductor from the East. We are led for the first time in our existence — hitherto isolated — to look beyond the present moment, to study the past and contemplate the future, in order to derive from the experience of the remaining ninety-nine and a half per cent of the world's population the facts and figures wherefrom to work out our own destiny.'

The Immigrant Union's diagnosis was different from Hittell's, principally because it was quite a bit more critical than his. California's paralysis, said Hopkins, was land speculation. When mining-stock inflation had given way, investors had been 'too impatient to wait the slow gains of mere industry, guiltless of any knowledge of political economy.' They had turned to another gamble: '*Homestead, associations took the place of mining incorporations.*' Though for five months now, 'the iron horse has crossed the Sierras daily, yet the population, the money, does not come to sustain these values.' The fact that millions were wrapped up in the napkin of unproductive real estate — that is, of inflated prices and established monopolies — was preventing California's growth. In later publications the Immigrant Union presented statistics on California immigration from 1862 through 1871 and kept the diagnosis up to date.

To renew the energies of the state's economy, the writings of Hopkins and Alexander D. Bell, and other propaganda of the Immigrant Union, all urged the old idea that California needed more settlers. Hittell himself contributed. The familiar prescription was altered just a little: not just immigrants *and* capital, but immigrants *with* capital. With the adducing of many, many facts and figures, the union proposed that the state set up an official agency — midwestern states had done so — to promote and assist from overseas the right kind of immigration. The best agricultural skills available for developing California's lands, and men and families, mainly from northern Europe, with sufficient credit with which to buy in when they came, were what the Union wanted.

The Immigrant Union thus put itself behind the northern utopia for the state: its goal a society of owner-farmers at center, a diver-

sified commercial, mining, and manufacturing economy surrounding. Asking for immigrants with cash, it was fair-minded enough, on the home front, to ask also that California landholders subdivide and sell their lands at

reasonable low prices. Economically this was logical in the vein of the regional writers: Hittell had asked for low wages and low interest, and this extended the deflationary policy.

There is no need to praise as altruistic the union's exhortation to sell cheap; but a sincere idealism does appear in that part of the propaganda which differed most considerably from the old Hittell and *Alta* line. The Immigrant Union opposed the importation of Chinese laborers. Quite clearly this was President Hopkins' idea, and his feelings resembled Henry George's own. As a Lincoln Republican, and as a writer on civics who believed 'that had the American people, South as well as North, been alike trained in the principles of American government, the Civil War would not have occurred,' Hopkins now pursued a logic like that with which George has made us familiar. He would exclude the Chinese rather than have coolie labor stratified into a permanent peonage in California.

At first survey the program of the Immigrant Union may seem too small-farm-minded to fit comfortably under the designation Hamiltonian, which we applied to the first round of regional economics. But the aim again was a balanced economy, farms and industry and commerce. Furthermore the means, which the Immigrant Union proposed to use, involved the action of the state, and of voluntary groups within the state, in an almost neo-mercantilist pattern. In comparison with the earlier solvers of California's crisis, the union relied much more on economic plan and positive action, and much less on the automatic forces of a *laissez faire* economy.

The scheme as a whole — deny as Hopkins did that it represented any conspiracy of land grabbers — conformed perfectly with the general interests of property. Even the plan of holding down the asking prices of farm lands was a means of sales promotion, and a shoring up of basic values. In these features lay the vulnerability of the plan to attack, from Jeffersonian premises. Given the newness of California values, and their dubious respectability not to say morality, *should* those values have been shored up? Was this

the time for a mercantilistic state policy to be put into action, in California?

It was inevitable that Henry George should want to quarrel publicly and prominently with Immigrant Union economics. What apparently was a chance meeting of late summer, 1869, with the governor of the state, led to opportunities for him to do just that.

The Democratic incumbent of California's highest office at this time was Henry H. Haight, a Yale man and lawyer who might today be ranked no lower than second or third in the short list of California's outstanding liberal governors. The occasion of his and George's striking up an acquaintanceship was a San Francisco meeting of the American Free Trade League. We are free to guess what common interests drew the two together: perhaps the inclination of like minds did it, but not unlikely there was prearranging, say by Mayor McCoppin, or Matthew McCloskey, or James Barry of the *Monitor*. However the contact developed, Professor Destler has neatly caught the symbolism of it, in his essays in *American Radicalism*. The Free Trade League as an American movement derived in part from British example, but its domestic lineage traces back to the '30s, and to the radical, pro-labor, Loco Foco wing of Jacksonism, which centered in New York City. For Governor Haight and Henry George to strike up a connection at the meeting was to illustrate the continuity, here in the West, of post-Civil War protest from a pre-war protest which had occurred a generation distant in time, and a continent's span distant in geography.

Shortly after the meeting, a recommendation by Governor Haight secured George a new editorship. Though this one lasted only from September 1869, to the middle of the next February, and the newspaper was suburban and not important, the event was big enough to restore Henry George to a proper job as editor, and moreover to launch him as a Democratic party newsman and as a political thinker into the bargain. Although not every personality of the Oakland Daily *Transcript* pleased him — the proprietors were a colonel on the governor's staff and a real-estate man — George had enormous enthusiasm for supporting the state administration. Haight was now at the middle point of a four-year term;

and the election of 1871 was coming into sight. His claim to a liberal's loyalty was a big one: principally that he and his party had brought about the repeal of certain railroad subsidies, and by doing so had reversed an ominous trend. The governor had also aligned himself with such projects as providing a state board of health and a fish commission and helping the

state university. He proposed a special auction sale of valuable lands for the university — a truly Henry George way of securing to the state the actual present value of public lands.

So connected, George the editor tackled the state's Hamiltonians once more. Though he took caution, now as before and always, to acknowledge the good that railroads and all manner of new technology were doing California, he directed editorial after editorial to sounding the alarm. The terms of his anxiety were much like Hopkins' own: California was not getting its rightful share of America's immigration and development. Significant of the degree of radicalism George had *not* yet reached, the *Transcript* underwrote the homestead-farm idea for California. The paper followed a new writer, Dr. John Todd, a New England clergyman, in an editorial of 23 December 1869, saying that such settlers as New England dairymen and farmers, men and families who would be content with 'farms' and not demand 'plantations,' would be ideal for the state.

But beyond these obvious stages of agreement, the *Transcript* differed from the Immigrant Union right down the line. All the means the Union proposed the newspaper called expensive and unnecessary. Immigrant aids, from advertising in Europe to travel assistance, could only end, it said, in high and uneconomic charges sure to fall for the most part on the immigrants themselves. Even when Governor Haight made moderate proposals, the *Transcript* was hardly lukewarm. In George's analysis, all the costs of the private operation of the Immigrant Union would be thrust back into the price of the lands the immigrants would buy, and all public costs would come out of the taxpayers. The economic reasoning, which traced the flow of credit in the state's economy, became pretty abstract.

In editorials of October, November, and December, however, George made his indictment plain and tough. The Immigrant Union would serve as a front for the land aggregators themselves,

he said; and its operations would add to California's record of speculation and quick profits. Its machinery, if set up, would present the state with a debt-ridden tenantry and would verge close to bringing contract labor to the country. Lands offered at ten dollars an acre, eight times the federal charge for domain lands, and the Immigrant Union's wanting wage

rates to drop the *Transcript* gave as indications that the Union had a strong owning-class bias.

George's own solution was straight anti-monopoly and *laissez faire*. Assess great landholdings at full value, he said as he had said on the *Monitor*; then tax collection would begin the squeeze on aggregators to make them release their holdings at prices low enough to be attractive. Let all taxes except land taxes be reduced. With these charges down the immigrants would come, without state bureaus and outlays, said the *Transcript*: in due time the happy letters of new citizens would supply California's advertising, and the movement of free immigration would flow according to the true drawing power of the state's resources and charms.

The editor of the *Transcript* refused to be appeased by the prolabor plank of the Immigrant Union. The *Alta* and the *Bulletin* were keeping to their old opinion about coolies. There was no real break in the conservative front. George had thought through the Chinese immigration problem first, and he intended to make political capital of the ideas of exclusion. Now he conceived the notion of asking for a statement from the highest possible authority. Writing to John Stuart Mill, he particularly mentioned the old argument addressed to American working men in behalf of admitting the coolies. It was that this form of labor would affect the economy in the same way as new machinery did: the Chinese would do the work Americans disliked to do and raise the standard of living for all. Would the author of the *Principles of Political Economy* be so good as to comment?

On this particular point most definitely, but also in a general way, Mill's long and generous letter, sent from his hideaway at Avignon, put a feather in George's cap. 'Concerning the purely economic view of the subject,' he wrote, 'I entirely agree with you; and it could hardly be better stated and argued than it is in your article in the *New York Tribune*. That the Chinese immigration, if it attains great dimensions, must be economically injurious to the mass of the present population; that it must diminish their wages

and reduce them to a lower state of physical comfort and well being I have no doubt. Nothing can be more fallacious than the attempts to make out that thus to lower wages is the way to raise them, or that there is any

compensation in an economical point of view, to those whose labour is displaced, or who are obliged to work for a greatly reduced remuneration.'

On other points Mill's agreement was less complete. Where George could find nothing but faults in the Chinese as a social group, unsavory and unassimilable in California, Mill made distinctions and discriminations. While acknowledging absolutely that coolies, as found in 'a form of compulsory labor, that is of slavery,' should be excluded, he suggested that it was not justifiable to assume that all Chinese were of that order and kind — especially children exposed in the United States to 'the most potent means that have yet existed for spreading the most important element of civilization down to the poorest and most ignorant of the labouring masses.' Mill phrased as moral problems the questions whether or not 'those who have first taken possession of the unoccupied portion of the earth's surface' have a right to exclude later comers, and in what degree 'the more improved branches of the human species [should] protect themselves from being hurtfully encroached upon by those of a lower grade in civilization.' He ended by saying it seemed that a little sharing in California would represent an improvement for the Chinese, those at home as well as the immigrants, which ought not to be withheld.

George printed the letter in full in the Transcript of 20 November, and, unlike other editorial writing, he signed his comment. He urged that the 'nine-tenths' predominance of the coolie element among the California Chinese justified labor's anti-Chinese attitudes, by Mill's own standards. He yielded little relevance to Mill's hortatory comments. On the point of the Chinese children, though they had good natural capacity, he thought that their living in a miniature China and a sordid one, right in San Francisco — the ugly beginning of today's Chinatown — would prevent them indefinitely from becoming assimilable into the common social and political life. After stating his reservations about Mill's reservation, George added a grateful tribute to the generous economist.

He had brought off a journalistic coup, and more. For the firsttime Henry George stood as a leader for a cause, in his home com-

munity. The San Francisco press took notice. The *Alta* and the *Bulletin* discovered a demagogue in Oakland; and the *Chronicle*, a 'vulgar, self-advertising, showman.' On the other hand, the San Francisco *Call* gave George strong support; and the Sacramento Union, qualified support.

Though five months of the editorial pages of the *Transcript* show George firming up other specific ideas the critique of speculation, and his opposition to the national banking policy, for instance — nothing else equals his pushing of the Chinese problem, or comes near to being as important, in his effort to achieve prominence and recognition.

Indeed he had now fixed on an idea of policy which he was to hold for life as peculiarly his own. Up to a quarter century later, even after Chinese exclusion had become national policy by virtue of acts of Congress, George would be arguing the morals of the matter. At this time his friend and follower of illustrious name, William Lloyd Garrison II, opposed him. That he was a racist, George denied. In his words of 1893: ‘To your proposition that the right to the use of the earth is not confined to the inhabitants of the United States, I must cordially assent. But when you seem to think it follows that, “the humblest Chinaman has as much natural right to the use of the earth of California as yourself, and it is your inalienable right to change your residence to any land under the sun,” I must emphatically deny. Are men merely individuals? Is there no such thing as family, nation, race? Is there not a right of association, and the correlative right of exclusion?’ Thus from March 1869, Henry George’s thought had essayed the burden of asserting nationality while denying monopoly — surely as awkward a burden as a democratic theorist has ever undertaken.

Still separated from his family, still wrestling the problems he had tackled in New York, George had another moment of clairvoyance in Oakland. Though, as in the case of the vision and dedication on the sidewalks, his telling of the story puts no date upon it, about New Year’s 1870, is a likely time. His greeting to the new decade, a New Year’s editorial in the *Transcript*, seems to set the psychological stage: ‘Into the seventies again. A decade most noticeable in the annals of the Republic. God grant that in the years to come the same spirit that animated the fathers may animate the children, that the heritage they bequeathed may be preserved unimpaired.’

This time George was riding in the lovely foothills where the eye is drawn west, above the flats on which Oakland lies, across San Francisco Bay, to the world’s broadest waters beyond the Golden Gate. Especially in

the winter season, when the rains let up, distant objects there seem poignantly sharp and near. This day he was absorbed in his own thoughts. Resting his horse, he 'asked a passing teamster, for want of something better to say, what land was worth there. He pointed to some cows grazing off so far that they looked like mice and said: "I don't know exactly, but there is a man over there who will sell land for a thousand dollars an acre." Like a flash it came upon me that there was the reason of advancing poverty with advancing wealth. With the growth of population, land grows in value, and the men who work it must pay for the privilege. I turned back amidst quiet thought, to the perception that then came to me and has been with me ever since.'

'Like a flash the reason seemed to light my brain,' said Henry George again, about a quarter-century after the event. Although the illumination must have been almost as emotional, certainly more hopeful, than the New York experience, the overtones of mysticism were pretty well absent this time. In his posthumous book he says that the occurrence 'crystallized my brooding thoughts into coherency.' He 'there and then recognized — the natural order — one of those experiences which make those that have not had them feel that they can vaguely appreciate what mystics and poets have called the "ecstatic vision." In his own judgment, George had not had a vision, but a less intense experience which would justify belief in visions.

With a little exercise of the imagination we can try to recapture the milling ideas of a dissatisfied editor, that day as he sought refreshment in the Oakland foothills. We know that the countryside itself seemed to speak to him, and perhaps he felt the same about the broad horizon of Pacific waters. But what about some possible tingling memory of books? Considering that the recognized treatises and handbooks on economics, of that day as now, specified and named the value of desirable land as producing 'economic rent' and that none did so more clearly than John Stuart Mill's *Principles* — it is almost incredible that the Oakland perception came to George without benefit of literature.

There is, indeed, no reason to question George's assertions, late in life, that in 1870 he had taken nothing from either Adam Smith or the French Physiocrats, who are known for assigning high place in the economic process to the land and its tillers. And he might as well have

included in the denials the writings of David Ricardo, the author of the widely accepted law of rent which he himself would soon accept. George, the Oakland editor, deeply read in local affairs, knew very little general economic literature.

Partly on this account, and partly because of the man's transparent sincerity, we read with sympathy George's defense, in his posthumous work, *The Science of Political Economy*, of the independence of the Oakland illumination. 'It is a mistake to which critics who are themselves mere compilers are liable, to think that men must draw from one another to see the same truths or to fall into the same errors. Truth is, in fact, a relation of things which has to be seen independently because it exists independently.' George was always an idealist in the philosophical as well as in the colloquial sense of the word: to him true ideas were real and permanent entities, available to right thinkers and the private property of none.

Yet the unanswered question persists of a present debt to classical economics, not unlikely to John Stuart Mill. All that is certain is that in the East George had read Mill for wage theory, and found what he could use. Certainly the *Principles*, in the early and current editions, contained the prevailing theory of rent; the book even contained a friendly presentation of the notion of land nationalization, which at this very time Mill was beginning to advocate on the ground that rent ought to be a public, not a private, income.² I just hazard the guess that from his reading George had actually picked up some notions of rent theory, that they were in reserve in the back of his mind. He could easily have done this, any reader could, without realizing at first — the British economists themselves did not — that a rent theory drawn primarily from considering English rural landholding might apply more radically to American land, especially land in the vicinity of a rapidly growing city. George could quite naturally have failed to sense at first acquaintance the moral dynamite that resides in rent theory for Americans who — different from the British economists — reject as wrong any preference for a class-structured society.

If the Oakland perception was what it seems — an intense quick operation of mind — then there is no need to blame George very much for denying that he had stolen ideas. If he did not acknowledge handsomely, as

of that date, a debt to Mill, we shall find much quoting and citing of the *Principles* on rent, when he came to write *Progress and Poverty*. But I think he made a contemporary acknowledgment. On 16 July 1870, about half a year after the Oakland vision, George inserted the following clause in a letter to the master himself: 'In an endeavor to account for the continuance of pauperism in England, and the gradual sinking of the working-classes in the older parts of the states, I have come to conclusions which were cleared and strengthened by your works . . .' This is not very definite, but I believe that it is George's thank-you for ideas about rent, concerning which he was not yet ready to say more.

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Henry George had been too big a man for the Oakland *Daily Transcript*, and his enlarging kit of ideas must have made the job in speculator-ridden Oakland doubly incongruous. Fortunately his new friend had another assignment for him. Before spring Governor Haight called him to Sacramento to take charge of the *Reporter*, a Democratic party organ which was being rebuilt out of the *State Capital Reporter*, of which ex-governor Bigler had been editor.

At last after nearly two years, family life could be restored to proper footing. 'My poor darling you have been having a hard time,' wrote Annie, when she received the glorious news. She was inexpressibly glad to be coming back to California; Hasson was helping her plan the trains. This would be their third recourse to Sacramento: the earlier ones had led to happy intervals of their life together. George made this new beginning the occasion of having his brother, John Vallance, come on with Annie and the children.

Though storms loomed ahead, for 1871 would be election year, there were many promising things about the job. George began with a 'fair salary' and a tender of one-fourth of the company's stock. The battle he had first fought for Nugent was now won. Before the end of April the opposition telegraph, which he had predicted, had actually materialized: the Atlantic and Pacific, the system he had used between Harrisburg and Philadelphia, now leased the railroad companies' wires along the transcontinental line. And his friends in New York were more than ready to send the news. Now in the capacity of 'general agent' of the American

Press Association, Hasson wrote: 'Oh Harry ... It's gay. Instead of waiting for the *Sun* to rise, we are beating the Associated Press, especially in foreign news, almost daily.' And when his partner of last year appointed George as California agent of the new association, another friend endorsed the document, 'This appointment is confirmed. Salary sentimental. In time material and practical ... John Russell Young, President.'

The fun spread to California. The San Francisco *Chronicle* had no choice but to join up with the American Press Association, and this put George's old employer, de Young, not his favorite, on a spot. George could 'laugh loud and long' when he heard that the *Chronicle's* proprietor objected to his being California agent for the APA; and he must have had even greater pleasure in learning Hasson had upbraided de Young 'for defaming the man who had done more than any other man on the coast to build up the A.P.A.' But the *Chronicle* came in with the *Reporter*, and George corralled several of the small papers of the inland towns as well. He triumphed as he kept down the total charge for the wire services to \$800 a month, and triumphed again as he assessed the *Chronicle* for \$100. The success of the APA he celebrated in vigorous editorials on the new free trade in news; he savored in irony the complaints of the California AP papers, as they now reduced their prices.

Meanwhile the *Reporter* moved in on a concession, even a monopoly, of its own. The legislature passed a bill — 'your bill,' George's father called it — which authorized the publication 'of certain legal notices in a state paper.' This preference assisted the *Reporter* through and beyond George's term of editorship; later, a Republican legislature repealed it in resentment after a different set of owners and editors had taken over. We do not know how im-

portant or unimportant the subsidy was to the paper's income or George's. However low the estimate, it makes an interesting preliminary to the state appointment, in some degree a sinecure, which was to sustain him after 1875, while he was writing *Progress and Poverty*.

On two fronts of his economic thinking especially, the editorship of the Sacramento *Reporter* was just the thing to stimulate George: on the state control of corporate monopolies, and on taxation. Although he had made the vow against poverty in the heat of a personal war on the giant corporation which monopolized transcontinental telegraphy, and the fight

had confirmed his ideas about the need to nationalize at least the one monopoly, George had not given much thought to the public regulation of corporate institutions in any general way. He was always — especially by comparison with latter-day socialists and progressives, men like Henry Demarest Lloyd — to be light on that side. But he was not entirely negligent; and in 1870 he could not avoid that class of public business. With his shoulder next to Governor Haight's, he had no choice except to give California's railroads and railroad policy much fresh attention.

The governor's attack denied any hostility to corporations 'in their proper sphere,' but he was old-line Democrat from first to last. 'We object,' he urged a friend, to the corporations' being turned 'into agencies of public plunder, and we object to placing the government into the hands of their managers and making the people their serfs and tributaries.' To Haight it was 'inexplicable that men claiming to be imbued with the democratic principles of the olden time should fail to denounce and resent this monstrous system of taxing out of existence farmers and small property-holders in order to add to the surplus of those already enriched out of the public treasury and the public domain.' In this line Haight set up his case against railroad subsidies.

George went with him. In the *Reporter* the editor made no effort to build on the archaic idea he had ventured in the *San Francisco Times*: the notion of publicly owned roadbeds and privately owned rolling stock. He took the railroads as consolidated enterprises and tried, as the governor did, to think out ways of bringing them to terms with a people's government. Protesting the subsidies, he admitted that new trackage would be put down less rapidly without them but said that slower growth would be better all round.

When a rival paper said that railroads were 'essentially private property as much so as a wagon, a hotel, or steamboat,' George answered with a justification of state regulation which might equally have served to justify state ownership. 'Railroads are a peculiar species of property, exercising peculiar privileges, and in favor of which certain concessions are made ... No individual can build a railroad without obtaining from the state a grant of rights and powers that do not belong to individuals, and can only be exercised by them by virtue of the authority of the State. And

furthermore, there is this difference between a railroad and other kinds of property. A railroad is from its very nature a monopoly, that is, its existence makes competition impossible. A railroad is not only a common carrier, subject to all the duties of a common carrier, but it is a common carrier with a monopoly of the business. Thus to the other titles by virtue of which the state may control and regulate railroads is added the highest right — the right of necessity.’

This ‘right of necessity’ to regulate corporate monopolies was not theoretically satisfying as a point of rest for a democratic ponderer of the ethics of property. Yet like nearly everything else in George’s mental history in 1869 and 1870, it shows an advance in his apprehending industrial-age problems — in this case the role and sphere of public utilities.

As for taxation, except to protest the complexity and costs of California practice and except for the reformist ideas he had voiced in the *Monitor*, George had not previously had much to say. On the *Reporter* he began lightly, at first with little foreshadowing of his life’s future, praising certain reductions brought about by the Haight administration. Then in the later spring he began to display a large new interest in taxes and related economic theory. All at once general problems of the tax structure, and of the whole distribution and flow of credit through society, became a field for his editorials to explore and estimate. There were ample reasons for this: the Oakland vision, and his criticism of the Immigrant Union, and perhaps some reconsideration of the matter of his 1867 editorials on money and banking all demanded working ideas about distribution. Also he may well have been affected by Governor Haight’s belief that railroad subsidies force money to flow from country to city and from class to class; and perhaps the writings of

his San Francisco contemporary, John Alexander Ferris, affected him. Like Ferris, and like many another Westerner in due time, George envisaged the credit of California as being manipulated and exploited by Easterners and foreigners. The policies that impounded gold in San Francisco, or else drained the treasure east in monopoly charges, were actually ‘taxes,’ said the *Reporter*.

George puzzled and discussed the incidence of taxation on social classes. All citizens are affected by the federal war taxes, he agreed, but the

large payers feel them only as a railroad feels a tax which it passes on in larger fares. Taxes really fall where the tax gatherer never visits, the garrets of the cities, the child laborers at the Massachusetts looms, in the eastern slums 'where the man from the fresh new West cannot go without a sinking and a sickening of the heart.' Taxes are our 'main trouble,' the writer was now beginning to think: they were obstacles to economic flow, and barriers enhancing the line between poverty and riches. Though Henry George's own historic prescription of taxes was far from ready, and he had yet to begin a hard study of state taxation, his critical frame of reference was pretty well established.

In certain aspects of economic questing and answering, Henry George on the *Reporter* changed rather the intensity than the direction of his ideas. Sometimes there was a new dogmatism added, for instance this: '*Free trade is the great NEED of California,*' and 'We believe in the international law of God as Cobden called free trade.' In regard to labor, over and beyond his familiar assertions for the eight-hour day and against Chinese immigration, on the eve of the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune, the editor hinted about possible social revolution. So different from his later sustained war on socialism and general distrust of all forms of European radicalism, his paper now thought a desirable result would follow if a little of labor's international spirit, purified of 'the wildest notions of the continental mechanics,' were to cross the Atlantic. 'We would wish it God-speed,' he said on 24 May 1870. How much George knew in that year, or did not know, about the Marxist International Workingmen's Association is not clear.

George deserves credit for being able to keep his eyes open and to make important and truthful observations about social conditions. On one crucial point, an editorial of the *Reporter* said that, although the wages paid to American working men had increased

of recent years, their real earnings were diverted more to taxes and bought fewer goods and services than in earlier times. This was a hard but not a commonly admitted truth; forty years later a brilliant California-trained academician proved it statistically. And, in another issue, the *Reporter* quarreled with the advice of Greeley's *Tribune*, that unemployed workers should go to the empty lands of the western frontier. Such a step

was desirable but not practical, George countered, speaking against assumptions widely held for more than a century in the United States. How could a laborer out of work move his family to a farm and stand the costs and make the adjustments? Only since about 1930, with the help of a revision in historical studies, has the country learned that the West rarely if ever served as a safety valve for city population pressures, but rather that the cities provided a safety valve for the farm lands when times were hard. In very fact the decade from 1865 to 1875, during which George's talent for interpreting the condition of labor flowered, was economically one of the most adverse in history for American working men.

In the summer of 1870 California events and conditions, which illustrated labor's hard times, gave George a chance to return journalistic attention to the Chinese question, and to bring off a newspaper affair much like his coup while he was running the Oakland *Transcript*. While other wage rates in the state, according to George, were declining a bit, in line with the hopes of the regional economists, wages in the shoe and slipper industry dropped suddenly. This occurred immediately after 500 or so Chinese were employed; and at once a spate of bills to exclude Oriental immigration was brought into the legislature. Simultaneously on the political side, the Fifteenth Amendment now promised equal suffrage to all American-born Chinese. Responding to this convergence of events, the *Reporter* waxed alarmist. It advised the shoemaker's union of San Francisco to expel the coolies from that industry; and it predicted that beginning in the next election — twenty-one years after the Gold Rush — Chinese Americans at the polls would begin a new chapter in the history of corruption. With votes at \$2 apiece, George foresaw the buying of Oriental votes by American employers and more trouble for working men and the labor movement.

Once more George drew strength from John Stuart Mill. Proimmigration newspapers were charging him with having garbled

or otherwise misrepresented the Mill letter, as he had printed it in the Oakland *Transcript*. George laid the matter, with evidence, before the English economist. Again Mill was very gracious: he acknowledged that George had printed his letter accurately and fully; he neither accepted nor debated correction on their points of difference. At about the same time

George had a sympathetic note on the Chinese problem from Horace White. Thus the third round in the issue of exclusion firmed George, gave him an admirable chance to restate his ideas; and, an experienced propagandist now, he identified his case with the Democratic party of California at the official center.

A very large part of the story of George as editor of the *Reporter*, indeed, is his effort to give the party the imprint of his own mind. As we have already seen in the instance of the Immigrant Union, this was partly a business of saying 'No.' The *Reporter* criticized Governor Haight again when the administration showed reluctance to recognize the full force of the Fifteenth Amendment, on ratification. Teaching the Democratic party lessons mainly involved saying 'Yes' to reform, however; and this meant going beyond Governor Haight's own field of fighting the Central Pacific Railroad.

George's central theme of argument in the reform vein of thought was the idea of the unfinished Civil War — the obligation of the country to effect more completely its war ideals. Only the Democratic party could become the vehicle, he said in many an editorial: right ideas of reconstruction should be applied across the land, by no means in the usual terms of Reconstruction in the South. A few lines from the *Reporter* will chart the moral situation as he saw it. 'We have despoiled the South of its state freedoms, now what of our own?' 'Swindle after swindle; corruption after corruption, is constantly coming to light; so tainted has the moral atmosphere in Federal circles become that it is literally thought no harm to steal.' On the Fourth of July only the 'graver thoughts' came to the editorial mind: a present crisis, a 'crucial test of our institutions ... land dearer ... class distinctions sharper ... colossal fortunes ... mammoth corporations ... We have lost that high regard for law.' In this condition, the editor pleaded, the country should not belittle political parties; it should recognize that Democrats and Republicans do stand for different principles. To the Democratic party he credited four attitudes as right: a determination to

limit the federal government; a racism (unqualified and acknowledged, this once) 'that this government was instituted by and for white men and their posterity forever'; faith in free trade and opposition to tariffs; a fixed enmity to all monopolies. Richard Henry George, now signing himself 'Old

Pop,' could hardly have judged more accurately than he did when he wrote about having shown the *Reporter* to some good old Jackson Democrats. 'Many worme congratulations I have received that I have a son so bold to stand so firm for the good old Democratic Principals.'

By all the signs of editorial performance George at midsummer after half a year, was filling to satisfaction the job for which Governor Haight had called him to Sacramento. Yet suddenly, within days of the editorial last quoted, he was out. And very shortly he and his family moved to San Francisco again, for once with money to tide them over.

The story came out later. From San Francisco there appeared, one day, in the office of the *Reporter*, 'an honest old gentleman' who wanted to buy 'a controlling interest in a good Democratic paper.' The bidder denied any wish to change policy and offered good money. George was willing. (What he told Mill, about this time — that he was working out his ideas about the universal causes of poverty — is the only sign he gave, that he had other interests than journalism pressing.) As Governor Haight was out of Sacramento a message was sent; but before his telegram warning against a fast deal came back delayed, the sale had been made. When the smoke cleared away it was proved that the ancient gentleman's bag of twenty-dollar gold pieces had come direct from the Central Pacific office on K Street. Two days after the sale a change of officers took place, and the Sacramento *Reporter* became, and was commonly recognized as, 'the obsequious organ of the Railroad Company.'

Though the ex-editor of the *Reporter* and agent of the American Press Association must have been piqued at being tricked by a railroad henchman, he who had had no money now had some; and no purchase had bought his lasting silence.

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Two years earlier George's article in the *Overland*, 'What the Railroad Will Bring Us,' had epitomized his regional criticism and

utopianism, as first conceived in writing for the *Times*. Now he summed up and moved forward again. This time the product was two pamphlets: one is today a forgotten piece of state-election campaign literature; the other is a minor classic of American criticism.

The first, entitled *The Subsidy Question and the Democratic Party*, consolidated into sixteen closely written pages the ideas he and Governor Haight shared on that bitter question. Written to support the governor's fight for re-election, it used *laissez faire* theory against big business, and in behalf of labor and the small people — the opposite of twentieth-century habits of thought. George demanded, of course, that the railroad companies rely on private resources, with little or no staking by the government. His more doctrinaire ideas he embellished with quotations from the *Democratic Review* of 1837; and the practical results of government handouts and politics he illustrated from unappetizing recent history, especially from the case of the Los Angeles and San Pedro Railroad. Ideological though the pamphlet was, George's detailed use of data and figures made it the most assimilative factual piece of writing in the author's record so far.

Though Governor Haight was defeated by a Republican, Newton Booth, that event did not put the idea of the pamphlet too much on the losing side. In Sacramento the new governor soon developed a strong resistance to monopolies, as surprising to George as pleasing. Concerning this there will be more in the next chapter. Simultaneously in Washington, by 1871 the era of Congress's lavish railroad grants was at last yielding to a period of grant forfeitures. Henry George's policy for railroads must be accounted to have been part of a national reaction.

In the other pamphlet, *Our Land and Land Policy*, George reached a new level of intellectual achievement. A 48-page booklet, as published for 25 cents in San Francisco, 1871, it fills 130-odd pages in good type and modern book form. We have already caught the hint that he was working on the problem of poverty as early as July 1870. He was not yet reading economic literature broadly. Even so, a year of finding materials and establishing perspective, thinking, organizing, and writing would not have been too much for *Our Land and Land Policy* had he given it all his time. It was a first book in a virgin field.

The title of it is big enough to be right for the first two-thirds, the remembered portion of the text; it is too modest for the scope of the whole. Beginning with a colored map which indicates by bands across the country the routes of the western railroads and the share of the domain granted them as subsidies — an alarming generosity of the government —

George made a Malthusian- minded presentation of America's dwindling land surplus. He reasoned from the assumption, common in his day and based on population history, that the people would multiply at a rate of about 24 per cent each decade, or would double each quarter-century.³ He took his figures on the domain lands from United States Land Office publications. The two together, population figures *versus* land figures, presented an unfamiliar and an unhappy conjunction.

Though we may bypass his statistics, we must not miss the common sense of his ideas, or the naturalness of his doing what he was doing. He had had an intuition that landholding had everything to do with the distribution of wealth. Very well, he was checking the data and reporting. He wrote in part from his old editorials; he also ventured new vistas of criticism. From the vast totals of Land Office figures, which included desert and waste, he cut down to the size of 450 million acres the actual ungranted and available part of the domain which might still be settled by farmers. This meant 12 acres per American, in 1870; or, according to his population predictions, if distributed among the new Americans of the next decade, 33 acres apiece; or again, 12 acres apiece among the new Americans from 1870 to 1890. Of course his population estimates ran too high. But his essential prophecy was true: America's arable domain land would be dispersed before the beginning of the twentieth century.

In the second chapter George shifted from the general picture of federal resources and federal policy to a detailed analysis of 'The Lands of California.' This was the strongest criticism yet. Where Hittell had been satisfied to find fault mainly with the confusion of titles, George cut deep. In the greatest federal-land state in the union, and a thinly settled one, he found and said that 'a large part

of the farming is done by renters, or by men who cultivate their thousands of acres in a single field.' Remembering his writing for the *Times*, George spoke again of the *pueblo*, and of San Francisco's lost opportunity. It might have been a city of light: 'the size of London, dedicated to the purpose of providing every family with a free homestead,' a city without poverty or crime, he still believed. He reviewed the Mexican-grant problem: he exposed the 'floating grants' and the faked ones; he demonstrated the utter corruption, state government acting as cat's-paw for

speculators, in granting away the so-called 'swamp lands' — often the best river-valley arable there was. 'There never was a cat rolled whiter in meal,' was Horace Greeley's opinion of Congress' policy of giving the 'swamp land' over to state-government control.

The recapitulation of the California chapter presented a parvenu class of 'Marquises, Counts, Viscounts, Lords, and Barons,' all elevated to property and power in twenty years of land grabbing. George named companies and men who are still famous in land engrossment. After the railroads and the individual holders preferred by the railroads, he specified a second group whose aggregations ran to the hundreds of thousands of acres apiece: Miller and Lux, the San Francisco butchers, whose cattle-range holdings exceeded all others; Abel Stearns, of Los Angeles, who had 200,000 acres and sold much; William Chapman of San Francisco, a leading scrip speculator; an ex-surveyor-general of the state and an exsurveyor-general of the United States, each said to have engrossed more than 300,000 acres. Without land monopolization, George reasoned as he had editorialized against the Immigrant Union, California would long since have been heavily populated by farmer- proprietors. But because of it there were instead the speculation, the coolie labor, the tenancy, the empty lands, the California tramps, the 'general stagnation,' the private monopolization of water supplies, and the absentee landlords living so dashingly in San Francisco and Europe.

These two, the first and second, chapters make a devastating indictment of a national policy and a state situation. Except locally, however, the edition caused hardly more than a ripple of policy comment in 1871, no more than the letter against Chinese immigration as printed in the *Tribune*. Major recognition waited for later times; perhaps the first such acceptance was Hubert Howe Ban-

croft's still unequaled history of California, which in a general way seconded Henry George's findings. Today's experts do likewise. Professor Fred A. Shannon, a reviser of the frontier theory of American history, says that George's strictures on land policy have never been refuted; and Professor Gates judges what George said about the grants to railroads to have been 'the best criticism by a contemporary.' This scholar's own critique of America's 'incongruous land system' recognizes the same

incongruities of democracy and land distribution as George himself explored. Could we imagine a Pulitzer Prize committee in General Grant's day, anxious to reward an exposé of corruption and a proponent of reform, we should be free to imagine also Henry George at thirty-two winning national kudos a decade ahead of the public excitement about *Progress and Poverty*.

Yet for the development of an intellect the third, fourth, and fifth chapters of *Our Land and Land Policy* — the part of the book not comprehended by the title and quite naturally not noticed by students of the domain — are more revealing than is the critical realism of the earlier chapters. Facts combined with moral indignation against monopolizers were not enough for this writer. *Why* fight land engrossment? How phrase, how justify the ideas of the Oakland perception? Could he blueprint a course of action which just might make an inspiring and practical land policy for a democracy? These were the problems to which the forgotten one-third of *Our Land and Land Policy* was addressed.

To establish a base for logical reasoning, the author set up textbook definitions and assumptions from classical economics: land, wealth, labor, and so on. Only one of the definitions needs detain us, it is a little special: land is 'that part of the earth's surface habitable by man not merely his habitation but his storehouse upon which he must draw for all his needs, and the material to which his labor must be applied for the supply of all his desires ... On the land we are born, from it we live, to it we return again — children of the soil as truly as is the blade of grass or the flower of the field.' To Henry George, land included *resources and location*, and it had poetic meaning not separate from the economic. These factors blended now into an article of lifelong belief.

So also emerges a second idea — not as sharply and freshly as the wages-fund idea when he was thinking out Chinese immigration, but with similar, and more lasting, utility for reform purposes — the labor theory of value, common to classical economics. Perhaps twentieth-century readers should be warned, as George's contemporaries would not have needed to be. There was nothing unusual that George should insert in his book, quite interstitially and without self-consciousness, that wealth is 'the equivalent of labor,' and that private property in goods is justified because it represents

accumulated toil, either one's own or someone else's for which value has been given in exchange. In 1871 more complicated modern theories of wages and of prices were being developed, but they had not displaced the old labor theory in the economists' kit of tools; and likewise, though Marx had by now used the labor theory in building his system, that system had not been rendered into English speaking — and had not reached Henry George's — awareness. In other words: the labor theory of value was not yet either outmoded or rendered suspect by having kept company with revolution. Like that other commonplace of British middle-class thought, the contract theory of government on which the American Revolution hinged, this theory stated ethical common sense. In the ordinary parlance of the textbooks it was kept reasonably disinfected and unexciting to readers; but the germ of social heterodoxy and protest always lurked in it just the same, not for Marx alone but for any thinker.

In *Our Land and Land Policy* Henry George, putting two and two together, began to make history with economic ideas. Value occurs in land, he now said — remember that his definition of land excluded improvements made by man's labor — by reason of scarcity. And value in land means power: the 'power which its ownership gives of appropriating the labor of those who have it not.' An increase in land values, he pushed on, does not increase the wealth of a community; an increase affects the distribution of goods, not their production. It raises social classes. To the owners of land of heightened value, purchasing power does flow; from the users of such land, higher payments are demanded. In such terms, a year and a half or more after the experience, George found formulas and context for the Oakland perception. Weaving his own thought into the web of accepted economic theory, George did the most intelligent thing possible to strengthen his case and to persuade other people of its rightness.

Into the fabric of fact and theory of *Our Land and Land Policy*, moreover, the author assimilated the kind of utopianism he had put into 'What the Railroad Will Bring Us,' and the ideas of the universal rights of men which he had put into the editorials of the *Monitor*. The following will illustrate his blend of religion with economics and politics: 'The right of every human being to himself is the foundation of the right of property. That which a man produces is rightfully his own, to keep, to sell, to give, or

to bequeath, and upon this sure title alone can ownership of anything rightfully rest. But man has also another right, declared by the fact of his existence — the right to use so much of the free gifts of nature as may be necessary to supply all the wants of that existence, and as he may use without interfering with the equal rights of anyone else, and to this he has a title as against all the world. The right is natural; it cannot be alienated. It is the free gift of the Creator to every man that comes into the world — a right as sacred, as indefensible as his right to life itself.’

Lengthening his democratic vistas in the directions he had promised, George discovered that inequality of opportunity in England indicated a diagnosis of that country’s ills. He had been reading parliamentary papers and did not hesitate to judge. ‘Certain it is that the condition of the slaves upon our Southern plantations was not half so bad as that of the monopoly slaves of England.’ He made the diagnosis a dogma: ‘The Almighty, who created the earth for man and man for the earth has entailed it upon all the generations of the children of men by a decree written upon the constitution of all things — a decree which no human action can bar and no prescription determine. Let the parchments be ever so many, or possession ever so long, in the Courts of Natural Justice there can be but one title to land recognized — the using of it to satisfy reasonable wants ...

‘We are not called on to give to all men equal conditions, but we are called upon to give all men an equal chance. If we do not, our republicanism is a snare and a delusion, our chatter about the rights of men the veriest buncombe in which our people ever indulged.’

Doing *Our Land and Land Policy* had taken the author back to first principles, and it had also taken him far into his future of reasoning, preaching, and reforming. Yet a caveat is required: the little book is not, as some have thought, *Progress and Poverty* in miniature; it is the great book in embryo only if the figure of speech allows for change in embryonic growth. The crucial difference is that in 1871 Henry George affirmed the homestead policy as about adequate for implementing American principles of equality. He did separate himself from the 160-acre tradition: 80 or 40 acres now seemed to him a better norm, more naturally what an owner-farmer could cultivate; and, Westerner that he was, he knew that homesteading did not work for cattle and sheep raising.⁴ But the exceptions prove adherence to the homestead rule; and, though George threatened non-

conforming theory on one page — saying that there is ‘in nature no such thing as fee simple in land’ — he said on the next page that ‘it is also true that the recognition of private ownership in land is necessary to its proper use — is, in fact, a condition of civilisation.’

Differing from most land reformers, George was already prepared — though the ‘single-tax,’ properly so called, lay sixteen years in the future — to cope with the owners of land already monopolized. In *Our Land and Land Policy* he first built into extended argument the lesson of history discussed in San Francisco’s *pueblo*-land controversy: that the modern world should take from the Middle Ages the practice of fixing the cost of government on charges made on landholders. And in this connection, in a three-page passage, George began his career-long effort to demonstrate — what he now took from Mill’s *Principles* ⁵ — that a tax on land is the most collectable and the most fair of any tax ever devised.

For immediate action at federal level, *Our Land and Land Policy* recommended that grants from the domain be restricted to farms for proprietor-settlers, according to the terms of his judgment. He thought that railroad lands not yet fully transferred could be recaptured for the public. And, broadening his assault on the col-

lege grants, he assured his readers that ‘the earnings of a self-employed, independent people, upon which the state may at any time draw, contribute the best school fund.’

At state level, *Our Land and Land Policy* proposed cutting down the protection California’s ‘possessory laws’ gave large holdings of dubious title. As before, he urged that the great aggregations be assessed to full value, the same as small. Admitting that these measures would not suffice for his purposes, he declared for an amendment to the state constitution; and, as an immediate step, he called for enacting a very high inheritance tax. To protect the weak, he incorporated his proposition that a minimum exemption from land taxes be allowed every holder.

Refocusing in conclusion, George sketched again the narrowing lines with which he had diagramed the domain in the West and placed them on a larger canvas. According to up-to-the-minute statistics, conditions in the industrial East, especially Massachusetts and New York, looked ominous for working men. So too, Great Britain; and, in France there were the rumblings of revolution. Movingly he cited a famous text for pessimism,

one that became a favorite with him. This was the historian Macaulay's denial of the opinion of that greater historian, Gibbon, that modern civilization would never go down. As Henry George phrased it, the world's danger had returned to just where Rome had known it, 'in the very heart of our great cities,' where 'poverty and ignorance might produce a race of Huns fiercer than any who followed Attila, and of Vandals more destructive than those led by Genseric.' To the California writer this forecast for the twentieth century was a picture beside which his own utopia — a free, developing, egalitarian economy, its settlements not constricted or misshapen, its people confident— offered a vision infinitely luminous.

Read as a whole, the famous criticism of land policy and the little-noticed passages of theory and reform, George's pamphlet reveals previously unrealized capacities for gathering and systematizing information, and like capacity for setting into pattern his proposals and reasons for economic and social change. It displays also the overwhelming contemporaneousness of the author's mental operations. He had the strength, at this stage, of being up to date; he may possibly have fortified himself from articles of 1871 by the Treasury official, E. T. Peters, some of whose statistics he certainly borrowed from official sources. He had a corresponding weakness: the author who knew so little of Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine as to say that the founding fathers of the country had had no ideas like his own about land still had some reading to do to tighten his case.

Yet makers of history are not often writers of it, and George in *Our Land and Land Policy* was arriving as an original thinker. As a critic, as an editor and writer informed on public affairs, as an influence in the Democratic party, as a tractarian he had arrived.