CHAPTER V.

KINDLING THE FIRE AT HOME.

1882-1883.

AGE, 43-44.

▲ YEAR before Henry George had sailed away from A New York scarcely noticed. Now he returned to find himself, as he said, "pretty near famous"; the newspapers heralding him, the labor unions crowding spacious Cooper Union for a formal welcome, and men notable at bench and bar, in politics, the ministry and commercial pursuits banqueting him at Delmonico's. Hon. Algernon S. Sullivan was toastmaster at the banquet, with Justice Arnoux, Justice Van Brunt, Henry Ward Beecher, Thomas G. Shearman, Andrew McLean, and Francis B. Thurber among the speakers. Mr. George alarmed his immediate friends by mistaking the hour and arriving late, and amused others by having forgotten to get his shoes polished. But the occasion passed with fine effect, the guest's speech being marked by quiet delivery, yet intense feeling, for he believed this to be but another indication that the world was awakening to the truth. That different feelings were also awakening elsewhere was manifest from the fact that amid the generally favourable notices of the press was one observing that a number of the persons present representing special privileges probably had

no notion of the ideas promulgated by the man they honoured, since they acted like a lot of fat sheep who had without realising their danger invited a wolf into the fold. If Mr. George did not feel the force of this remark at once, he did when, three years later, lines of interest were drawn, and many of those who had fêted him at Delmonico's took front rank among the "Society Savers" arrayed against him. Then he said with a twinkling eye to those about him: "Those gentlemen gave me a complimentary dinner once."

But no matter to what changed feelings some of the banqueters afterwards awakened, the fact of such an event gave evidence, as much as the working men's reception, of a strong tide setting in the direction to which the George ideas pointed, so that it was with a consciousness of rising power that he wrote to Rev. Father Dawson of Ireland (October 23): "I find that the prophet is honoured, even in his own country"; and that he wrote to Taylor at the same time: "It is a good deal like going to sleep and waking up famous."

Charles Nordhoff of the "New York Herald" thought the time had come for Mr. George to be most useful in Congress; that there he could get the best hearing before the country and make his influence felt in tangible laws, primarily towards a liberation of trade, for Nordhoff was a radical free trader. To Nordhoff's letter suggesting that he talk with Patrick Ford about the matter, George replied (October 29): "I think I can be quite as useful outside of Congress as in, and I should not now seek a nomination in any way. So I shall not say anything to the 'Irish World' people about the matter. But I quite as fully appreciate your kindness and your esteem as though I wanted the place."

One of the first things that Mr. George did after get-

ting back was to call upon Rev. Dr. Edward McGlynn and pay his respects. The clergyman was a native of New York, of Irish parentage. At an early age he became a protégé of Archbishop Hughes, who sent him to the College of the Propaganda at Rome to study for the priesthood. He was distinguished as a student and was ordained at twenty-two, becoming at first the assistant, and at thirty, the successor to Rev. Dr. Cummings of St. Stephen's Church, New York. Dr. Cummings was a man of extensive learning and very liberal views. As such he had large influence in the community, an influence which his young successor, with like qualities, acquired and extended. Dr. McGlynn was two years Henry George's senior, and when they met was in his forty-sixth year. A copy of "Progress and Poverty" had been given to him by A. J. Steers, the young man in D. Appleton & Co.'s employ who had helped persuade that house to get out a dollar edition of the book in 1880.

On meeting Dr. McGlynn, Henry George found a large man physically, of urbane manners, many intellectual graces and remarkable conversational gifts; and with those qualities of heart and mind that made him the loved and venerated priest, confessor, adviser, leader—the father—among the poor of a great New York City parish. Dr. McGlynn subsequently speaking of this meeting, said: "Already captured by 'Progress and Poverty,' I was now captured by its author. I found united with his lofty intellect and virile character, the simplicity and sweetness of a child—in fact, that 'something feminine' which a Frenchman has said is to be found in all men truly great." The two men talked simply, yet they understood each other. That meeting began the intimate friendship between "the Priest and the Prophet."

There were many calls for lectures and some for arti-

cles from Mr. George's pen, and he was in the midst of his plans when death struck down his friend, Francis G. Shaw, after seventy-two years of usefulness to his kind. To Mrs. George, who was in Philadelphia, her husband hastily wrote (November 8): "I got this morning a letter from Mrs. Lowell saying that her father, Mr. Shaw, was very sick and could not live. I went over there as soon as I could and found he had died last night. I have no sorrow for his sake, but I feel the loss of such a friend and deeply regret that I did not get an opportunity to see him again. Yet this is generally the way our last partings seem to us—partings for a day!"

Beautiful memorial sketches of Mr. Shaw were written by Sydney Howard Gay and George William Curtis and printed for private circulation. Mr. George made the dedication of a new book later in the year the wreath of his lasting tribute, but in the first days he expressed his sentiments to the daughter, Mrs. Lowell (November 15): "There was between us something of that feeling that among the ancients was the closest of ties. I was, in some respects at least, his proxy, his younger man, whom he sent into the struggle he would have made himself; and this thought will always be to me a satisfaction and a strength."

Mr. George made a lecturing trip to St. Louis, Terre Haute and Wheeling, speaking on the land question. When he got back to New York he wrote to Taylor (January 17):

"I have received \$1000, which Mr. Shaw left me. This puts me at ease. I shall use it in the way I know he intended it—to give me leisure to do some writing—and before that is gone I shall have my feet well under me.

"What a curious life mine is—literally from hand to mouth; and yet always a way seems to open.

"I want to do something strong on the tariff; and then a popularisation—in the form probably of question and answer—of our doctrines, with special view to the farmers. And by that time the cheap 'Progress and Poverty' will have told, and I shall have made some paying lecture engagements.

"My article goes in the 'North American Review' next

month (March number).

"Get the 'Modern Review' for January. It is the best review of 'Progress and Poverty' yet."

Note should be taken of the "North American Review" article of which Mr. George spoke. It was entitled "Money in Elections." In it he advocated, as the corrective of purchase and intimidation of voters, the adoption of the Australian secret ballot system. In San Francisco twelve years before he had made the same proposal in the "Overland Monthly," and when in 1886 he became candidate for the New York Mayoralty, this principle formed one of the planks of his platform.

But this "North American" article was now merely by the way. The English cheap edition of "Progress and Poverty" was doing so well that the author was set on a cheap American edition. He thought of importing a duplicate set of the English plates, but abandoned this to put the book in the hands of John W. Lovell, a publisher of standard books in cheap form, who had just started a serial library, with a complete book in each number. They were paper covered, compact, attractive volumes. "Progress and Poverty," like the average number, was sold for twenty cents—more than the English edition, but there were compensating advantages in size and appearance and as to distribution. Mr. George was to get ten per cent.

¹ Signed article by George Sarson, M. A.

royalty, the same as from Appleton for the better edition; but this in effect amounted to very little, for the author gave away so many copies and made such large personal discounts to those who bought quantities for educational purposes, that the Lovell edition brought small return to him, considering the great sale.

"The Irish Land Question" also was put in Lovell's Library, and at ten cents a copy. In order to make it apply to the United States and the world, rather than to Ireland exclusively, the title was modified to "The Land Question," which the book has since carried.

The Land League organisation in the United States had since Parnell's change of policy pretty generally gone to pieces. What remained was used to push the cheap editions of the books. But a far greater agency was found in the Order of the Knights of Labour. This organisation had sprung from a local secret society formed by ten Philadelphia garment cutters in 1869. Not until the close of the seventies did it assume great proportions, and by 1883 it had local assemblies or branch organisations all over the country. Its more recent declaration of principles, though in some respects vague and confused, had a clear central purpose—that of equal rights for all and special privileges to none. Its "fifth demand" ran:

"The land, including all the natural sources of wealth, is the heritage of all the people, and should not be subject to speculative traffic. Occupancy and use should be the only title to the possession of land. Taxes upon land should be levied upon its full value for use, exclusive of improvements, and should be sufficient to take for the community all unearned increment."

While this had for several years been in the declaration of principles, nobody had paid much attention to it as a practical idea, and it had been allowed to lie dormant. But discussion of the Irish land question had, with other things, drawn attention to the land question at home; and T. V. Powderly, Grand Master Workman, made a personal declaration on the question and helped Mr. George, who had joined the order, to get "Progress and Poverty" and "The Land Question" into the local assemblies. George set high value on this and wrote Thomas F. Walker of Birmingham, England (April 21):

"I inclose you a very significant clipping. Powderly is head of the great organisation of the 'Knights of Labour.' Up to this he (as most of the leaders of labour organisations) has considered the land question as of no practical importance. His change will have a very important effect. It is, moreover, only one indication of the general change that is going on.

"The 20-cent edition of 'Progress and Poverty' got out in February and is working powerfully. We are gaining rapidly in every direction. It will not be long

now before the movement will show in politics."

Mr. George and his little bunch of immediate friends in New York at this time started an organisation called the Free Soil Society. Besides being fairly descriptive of their purpose—to free the soil from speculation—the name had historical associations, having been used by an aggressive anti-slavery party before the civil war. The new organisation was federal in its plan, starting from local groups. Louis F. Post, formerly of "Truth" but now returned to his law practice, was president; Rev. R. Heber Newton, treasurer; and Charles F. Adams, a young lawyer of brilliant parts, secretary; with John P. Cranford, a prosperous city contractor in Brooklyn; T. L. McCready, A. J. Steers, who had given "Progress and Poverty" to

Dr. McGlynn; several members of the "Irish World" editorial staff, Professor L. E. Wilmarth, Clinton Furbish, William McCabe, John Beverly Robinson, and Henry George, his wife (for women were eligible), his sons and his eldest daughter were of the first members. The object was purely propaganda; the method, all means that would promote thought. The society proved effective for a time in getting together those who were already persuaded; but it brought in few new people and died a quiet death before a great while.

It resulted, however, in some informal, half-past six o'clock dinners in a small restaurant in the wholesale district on Duane Street, New York, kept by a Portuguese named Pedro D. Beraza. These dinners were occasional, and talk was informal. Mr. George, light-hearted and sanguine as a boy, generally sat at the head of the board and passed a question around to each by turn when he wanted an expression of views. They were essentially "experience" meetings. Nor was any allowed to pass without delivering his personal testimony to the progress of "the cause." In those days small events gave the brethren much cheer.

The thousand dollars left by Mr. Shaw enabled Mr. George to commence early in the year on the cherished plan of writing a book on the tariff question. To James McClatchy of the "Sacramento Bee," who in some alarm admonished him not to attempt too much, he wrote (March 28): "Don't be afraid that I shall get out of my depth. I am well conscious of the limits of human effort of which you speak, and there is too much in my own line to do for me to venture beyond it. My real purpose in treating the tariff question is to show workingmen that the question is the land question, and that they are to a great extent wasting their efforts in barking up the wrong tree."

When Mr. George had got well along in the writing two important proposals came to him. One was from Allen Thorndike Rice, proprietor of the "North American Review," for a political and economic weekly paper, to be edited and partly owned by George. The other was for a series of signed articles for "Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper." He wrote Taylor (March 25):

"As to the paper negotiations, they finally came to this. Capitalist to put up \$25,000, to take fifty-five shares of stock, I to have forty-five. I to have control and a salary of seventy-five dollars a week until the thing paid, and then a hundred dollars a week, in addition to the earnings of my stock. They wanted to start on the 15th of May. After a good deal of consideration I refused. I think I shall go into a paper, though, about September or October, and believe I can make a combination that will assure success. This will solve the bread and butter question for good.

"In the meantime I have made an arrangement to write a weekly article for thirteen weeks for 'Frank Leslie,' the articles to be two columns and a half and I to get \$100 for each.

"My free-trade matter I think of selling to a newspaper in the same manner before bringing it out in book form."

So he laid aside work on the tariff book to write the "Frank Leslie" articles. They were intended by the paper's managers to be a counter-attraction, as it were, to a series of articles just started by "Harper's Weekly" from the pen of Professor William G. Sumner of the chair of political economy at Yale. George's articles were to deal with current social questions from his own standpoint, under the title of "Problems of the Time." His purpose was, as he wrote in the preface to their book form afterwards, "to present the momentous social problems of our

time, unencumbered by technicalities, and without that abstract reasoning which some of the principles of political economy require for thorough explanation."

The fifth article dealt with "The March of Concentration." It spoke of the obvious increase in size of land holdings, incidentally stating that a mere glance at the United States Census reports for 1870 and 1880 showed that the general figures utterly contradicted the deductions that the average size of farms was decreasing, and that the reports were, therefore, unreliable and worthless. This brought to the front the man who had superintended both censuses-Professor Francis A. Walker, who had held the chairs of political economy in two colleges and was author of a text book on the subject. In a curt letter to "Frank Leslie's" he offered if the reports were not clear to Mr. George to supply "a more elementary statement, illustrated with diagrams," in support of the official statement that the average size of farms was decreasing. George at once replied, Walker made a surrejoinder, and George a rebutter, all of which served to show George's keen, analytical powers. The "New York Sun" in subsequently reviewing the case said: "It is amusing because, while there is no lack of suavity and decorum on the part of Mr. George, his opponent squirms and sputters as one flagrant blunder after another is brought forward and the spike of logic is driven home through his egregious fallacies." Nor was the matter cleared up until the Census Bureau explained—what at the time of the controversy it had not realised—that the tables for 1870 were based on improved area and those of 1880 on total area, thus making Walker's comparison of the two censuses impossible. and proving George's charge of carelessness.1

¹ See "Statistics of Agriculture," U. S. Census for 1880, issued 1883, p. xiv.

In the summer Mr. George put the "Leslie" articles together with the view to publication in book form. He made each article a chapter, and added eight more and a conclusion. He named the book "Social Problems" and dedicated it to the memory of Francis G. Shaw, with the quotation from Revelation: "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." With the book he printed as appendices, Mr. Shaw's little tract, "A Piece of Land"; a letter on "The Condition of English Agricultural Labourers," by William Saunders of London; and the Walker Census controversy. The book was put into the hands of Belford, Clarke & Co., publishers, of New York and Chicago, but was not brought out until January.

In April, 1883, a proposal had come before the New York Legislature for the establishment of a State Bureau of Labour Statistics. Before the bill was passed—before he had decided whether or not he wanted it—Mr. George's name was urged by a number of labour unions for the place of Commissioner. But when the bill creating the Bureau was passed, Governor Cleveland appointed a political supporter.

At the end of July Mr. George wrote to Mrs. Lowell in connection with some other matters: "I have met with a loss that bites out a big piece of my work and quite disarranges my calculations as to what I should accomplish. All the manuscript that I have been making for a book to be published this fall has gone—where I cannot tell, but I presume into an ash barrel." It was the free trade book, and was equal to about a hundred printed pages. The family had been boarding on Fourteenth Street, near Seventh Avenue. Thence they moved to a furnished house on Hancock Street, Brooklyn. The manuscript was lost in the Fourteenth Street house, Mr. George

ultimately settling down to the conclusion that he had inadvertently included it in a lot of waste papers that he told a servant to carry off and destroy. This was a loss in several senses. Taylor early in August became his confidant.

"For past two weeks I have been staying home pushing doggedly at work. I find there is considerable I want to add to 'Social Problems,' though for my own exigencies I should hurry it into print. And I have found it hard to make headway. Writing well on exact subjects is of all work the hardest. Yet I should be delighted if I could see my way clear to keeping at it. How blessed are they for whom the pot boils of itself! I have now just \$25 in the world, about half a week's living with economy; no, not that. However, this is no new experience to me.

"That MS. is a very serious loss even in the financial

aspect.

"I shall get out this book, and I have several other

things in mind.

"One suggested to me by William Swinton is to take Smith's 'Wealth of Nations,' cut out the parts not necessary to a clear understanding of Smith's economy (giving a synopsis of such parts), annotate it, and publish at a popular price. I have nearly finished a reading—really the first thorough one I ever gave the book—with this view, and think I could make an exceedingly useful volume, rendering Smith much more intelligible to the general reader, and pointing where he goes astray and all his successors have followed him.

"What do you think of it? Write me how it strikes you. I would give \$20 of my available assets for a good

Saturday afternoon talk with you."

As the latter part of this letter shows, there was no sitting down for repining. And the idea he threw out for an annotated "Wealth of Nations," was later on taken

up and the work begun, though more pressing things prevented it from being carried forward any considerable distance, and it was never finished.

That summer he went with his family and Louis F. Post and family to Budd's Lake in New Jersey for a two weeks' camping trip, which gave him, he told Taylor, "more of a dead rest," than he "had had for years." But he continued (August 12):

"There is, it seems to me, an undertone of sadness in life which engulfs a man—at least a thoughtful man—who does not keep moving. Pleasure is in action—and the highest pleasure in action directed to large and generous social objects. . . .

"How it is all passing! I have been lying under the trees thinking of that, and of the infinite mystery with which we are surrounded. What fools are these positivists. Our positive knowledge! More and more certain it seems to me that this life must be only a stage, a passage. You are right, conduct is the one thing."

The problem of individual life—it was the constant problem with Mr. George in the seasons of quietness. Yet the abstraction of the philosopher did not in his case work the result so often shown in history—make the man on the domestic side less attentive and tender, as witness the note written by the husband on the night of October 12 for the wife to find on waking next morning:

"It is twenty-three years ago to-night since we first met—I only a month or two older than Harry, and you not much older than our Jen. For twenty-three years we have been closer to each other than to any one else in the world, and I think we esteem each other more and love each other better than when we first began to love. You are now 'fat, fair and forty,' and to me the mature woman is handsomer and more lovable than the slip of a girl whom twenty-three years ago I met without knowing that my life was to be bound up with hers. We are not rich—so poor just now, in fact, that all I can give you on this anniversary is a little love letter; but there is no one we can afford to envy, and in each other's love we have what no wealth could compensate for. And so let us go on, true and loving, trusting in Him to carry us further who has brought us so far with so little to regret. For twenty-three years you have been mine and I have been yours, and though twenty-three years your husband, I am more than ever your lover."

Just as philosophical meditations did not draw him into forgetfulness of the tender relations of his partnership, neither did his widening fame spoil, or in the least change him. The same directness and simplicity that had characterised the obscure San Francisco editor now distinguished the man whose book was being read in many lands. Take a letter that he wrote to his English friend Thomas F. Walker of Birmingham regarding the British Cabinet Minister, Joseph Chamberlain. Walker wrote of a report that Chamberlain "with one keen question had once 'floored' the author of 'Progress and Poverty.'" Walker afterwards found that the report was mere gossip, but at the time George wrote to him (March 27):

"As for Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, I had the pleasure of meeting him once, dining at the Reform Club on invitation of Mr. Wren with Messrs. Chamberlain and Bright. If Mr. Chamberlain floored me with one keen question, I was certainly ignorant of the fact, and I think he is ignorant of it, too. Mr. Bright left after we got through the dinner, about ten, and then we three adjourned to the smoking room and continued the conversation until midnight. This conversation, which was very interesting to me, was not in the nature of a dis-

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cussion, and I do not think my views upon the land question were even once alluded to, either by me or any one else. I did not attempt in any way to impress my ideas upon Mr. Chamberlain. I was too much interested in finding out what kind of a man he was and what were the opinions of the foremost English Radical leader upon the general course of English politics. We talked mainly of the Irish question, the relation of the Parnellites and the Liberals (this was just before the Kilmainham Treaty, and Mr. Chamberlain intimated that something of that kind was coming) and the democratic feeling in England. Mr. Chamberlain said a great many things which interested me very much. He gave me the English Radical views of the mistakes of the Irish Parliamentarians, and he made a number of very keen observations upon the feeling of the English people, saying among other things that the great lower class had no ill feeling towards the aristocracy, and looked on the display of wealth with admiration rather than envy. He impressed me as a very able man, who had carried into politics keen business sense and power of combination; but nothing of the reformer. My judgment of him was that he was an ambitious man who would go as far towards democracy as was popular, but no farther; and that if he did not get his locks shorn by the fascinations of aristocratic society, might play an important part in English politics in the years to come. I do not think we talked about principles of any kind—as to whether anything was right or wrong. All our talk was of politics, the feelings of the people, what might be and what might not be.

"As for being floored with keen questions, I am perfectly willing, if I ever go to England again, to go into the largest hall that can be filled and to allow any

one to put to me what questions he pleases.

"I was firmly convinced of the truth of the views advanced in 'Progress and Poverty' when I wrote it. I came to them slowly and carefully, and had tried them by every test that I could apply. But I am all the more convinced since I have seen how utterly impossible it

seems to be for any one to controvert or shake them. There is not a single one of all the criticisms of 'Progress and Poverty' that have yet appeared that I have deemed even worth the answering. The points they make are in all cases founded on misrepresentation and are abundantly answered in the book itself."

The reference in this letter to going to England again touched a subject on which some of the British friends kept harping. They had much of that implicit confidence in the cause that Henry George at all times exhibited. Some of them had desired him to remain there in the fall of 1882; and when William Saunders, President of the Central News Agency, crossed to the American side on a business visit a few months later, he offered Mr. George an engagement to start a paper in London, which however George refused. Later still James C. Durant wrote that a lecturing campaign through England and Scotland could be arranged, and this was followed by a formal letter from R. P. B. Frost, Secretary of the Land Reform Union, inviting him to speak under its auspices and guaranteeing his expenses, with prospect of some profits, for he was known to depend upon constant exertions for a living. Mr. George thought this a great chance to push the work. He concluded that he would embrace it so soon as he had "Social Problems" off his hands and an article for the "North American Review." 1

With a feeling of natural pride his thoughts ran from the fame he was getting in the world to the old folks at Philadelphia, the father nearing the completion of his eighty-fifth year; the mother, in her seventy-third year. On the eve of his father's birthday, the son wrote a letter inclosing a little present and telling about the books, the



^{. 1 &}quot;Over-production," "North American Review," December, 1883.

English friends and the lectures, to which came the reply (October 17):

"Yesterday was the anniversary of my birthday. Time goes quickly with Old Dad. I was expecting something from my children and the postman brought six letters for me.

"By-gone days come back to me as if it was only last week when you came to me saying that you would go to California and that you would try your fortune there. I did not object; and now the result has been all I could have wished.

"And then when I opened the letters from your dear wife and children I broke down. The old parental heart gave way and burst."

This was the last letter R. S. H. George wrote to his son. Within a few days he was prostrated with pneumonia and on the 26th died. He was conscious until almost the last and contemplated approaching dissolution with a serene mind. He had all of his children at his bedside and he blessed each by turn, with their marriage partners and children. He had, he said, been favoured above the average. The Scriptures set man's allotted days at three score and ten; his had been above four score. He had had for the most part a peaceful, happy life; and Providence had sent him many loving children. He was now ready, he said, to be gathered to his fathers. And thus like a patriarch of old passed Richard Samuel Henry George. His wife, weakened by grief, was seized with inflammation of the stomach, and of this died one week after her husband, and was buried in the same grave with him in Mt. Maria Cemetery, Philadelphia.

They had died when their son, Henry, was getting, so far as they could see from the quiet Philadelphia home, as much blame as praise from the world. "Progress and

Poverty" had come too late for them. The father read it, and pride of his son's valiant courage and high purpose filled his heart. He saw at once that it was based upon justice and equality, and he pronounced it a great book. But he was in his eightieth year when it was printed. He was living in the past; he did not give enough heed to the pressing, struggling world about him to see the full purpose and strength of the book. It was the brave, sturdy son that he thought of, rather than of the son's book. And to the mother, the son had been still the child, to be encouraged and guided in the moral ways. "I am too old to read the book," she said when it came; and though a calm smile overspread her face at the sound of the public applause of her son, it was sweeter to her devout mind to have him join the morning prayers when the father read as of yore from the Scriptures; or to have him sit with her and the family in old St. Paul's and listen to the preaching of the Blessed Word.

"Their deaths were as beautiful as their lives," Henry George wrote to Dr. Taylor; and death seemed much nearer to him than before. Yet he did not shrink. His heart's most precious desire was at last safe. "Yes, I could die now," he exclaimed one day as he was crossing Broadway with his son, Richard. The street was clear for the moment. He had stopped short in the middle of the roadway and spoke as if musing, his eyes turned upward, as though intently regarding the building tops. "Why do you say that?" asked the son in amazement. The question brought the father out of his reverie with a start. "I was thinking," he answered, walking to the sidewalk, "that I could die now and the work would go on. It no longer depends upon one man. It is no longer a 'Henry George' movement-a one-man movement. It is the movement of many men in many lands. I can help it while I live; but my death could not stop it. The Great Revolution has begun."

But if he felt this way, his friends in the cause felt that there was need of his fiery zeal everywhere. So that in answer to the increasing calls from England he set sail four days before Christmas with his son, Harry, on the City of Richmond of the Inman Line. As when a boy on his first voyage before the mast, he entered in his pocket diary, "East wind and smooth sea."