

## GLIMPSES OF HENRY GEORGE

(Commemoration address delivered by Miss A. Lambrick at Melbourne, September, 1914)

We stand at times before a great picture and realise that we are too close to perceive its beauty. Would we see it in true perspective we must step further back. It is often so with great men. Standing too close their contemporaries fail to grip their meaning and message, and often the years slip into centuries before their greatness is realised.

Henry George, the man whom it is our privilege to commemorate, lived to realise something of the recognition which was his due. He caught the radiance of the dawn, but did not see the noonday splendour. He was born in Philadelphia, not far from the place where the Americans signed their great Declaration of Independence. It seemed fitting that the man who was destined to give to the world a wider freedom should be born so near that historic spot. Conventionally he was a nobody, born of nobodies, in actuality he was a Right Honourable, born of noble parents, born in the aristocracy of worth and merit, and destined to hold high rank therein. It might be said that at his birth three great ones, Justice, Truth and Love stood by the cradle of the little child, and breathed a benediction:—

Thine is the world of thought, the world of dream,  
Thine to make right the wrong—the slave redeem,  
Thine the true tale to tell of Mother Earth,  
Thine to reveal to man his royal birth.

His childhood was essentially happy. A philosophic lad once pointed to a tree which was gnarled and bent, and said, "someone trod on it when it was a little fellow." And the lives of many great men and women have been marred by the shadows which fell upon them in childhood. But the links of love which bound those in the George home together were strong and true and as a result the rich nature of the lad found full expression. In after years when eminence had been gained his early teachers spoke of his intelligence and originality. "The boy was father of the man." As he developed his reading became cosmopolitan, one might almost say eclectic in character. From the Bible to Byron might seem incongruous to a less versatile mind, but it was suggestive of the universality of the thought which enabled him in after years to embrace all Nature, all classes, to trace the links which bound the whole together, and to realise with Pope,

"All are put parts of one stupendous whole,  
Whose body Nature is and God the soul."

He was not only a great reader but a student of Nature, and the knowledge of the Great Mother's secrets which he possessed enabled him in after years to trace the workings of her principles in the realm of economics. Henry George had no college training—he gained his education in the school of experience and graduated in the university of life. He was a rolling stone from birth. One is reminded of Frances Willard, America's uncrowned queen, who, when a friend oracularly suggested to her, "A rolling stone gathers no moss," replied in true Yankee fashion, "What do I want with moss when I gain momentum?"

We find our hero as cosmopolitan in his employments as in his reading. Seaman, storeman, farm worker, printer, afterwards reporter, journalist, editor. All was grist that came to his mill. But the brilliant writer and thinker was gaining in practical experience what no university could confer, the insight the knowledge of men and things, without which all else was futile. Henry George was studying not the hieroglyphics of a dead language, but living, breathing humanity, and when the time came, with tools sharpened, mentality alert, and observation quickened, he was ready to go forth to battle, not with a visible foe, but with the more subtle forces of injustice and wrong.

He married young, and it must be admitted that the plunge was made under singular difficulties. The Fates at first fought valiantly against the young lovers. But the marriage was one of those rare unions of which novelists write and poets sing—it was a true sacrament. It was not a delirium of passion, quickly over, and nothing but a haunting memory—it was a companionship based on affinity of thought and interests—a comradeship which grew more beautiful with the years—a love which made the sunset of life more radiant than the dawn. The love letters of Henry George to his wife written years after his marriage were as exquisite as those of Browning, Kingsley, or Tennyson.

The charm of his personality lay in the fact that he combined the strength of the man and the tenderness of the woman. Intellect without emotion is unattractive; emotion without intellect is effeminate. In the ideal man or woman is seen the characteristics of each sex, and in the divorce which has existed between them in the popular mind, we can trace the cause of the present sex difficulty. But there was another important factor. Henry George had much of the Christ spirit. He was not a Churchman, but withal deeply religious. The Christ represents the highest manifestation of Wisdom and Love. Wisdom without Love is cold; Love without Wisdom is weak. In the combination we get the truly Christlike character. The Christos permeating the man and the woman in his nature drew men and women to Henry George as the magnet draws the steel.

It is interesting that the germ of thought which led to his work was imparted by an old miner in San Francisco. Speaking of the expansion of California he said, "As the country grows, as people come in wages will go down." It puzzled the young thinker, but gave him the keynote for reflection, and to that old miner he looked back with gratitude in after years. He began to study social conditions, not only throughout America, but in every part of the civilised world. From all parts there came the same story of industrial depression, of unemployment, of capital lying idle, of suffering and distress among the poor. And the same conditions prevailed under protection as under free trade, under democratic as under autocratic government. Before his mental vision there passed the pictures of the world's drama as of the scenes in a mighty kaleidoscope. Each picture indicated wealth and success, progress and production, discovery and invention. It seemed as if the time had come to which the dreamers of the past had looked forward—when production should be so abundant that childhood would have comfort, youth opportunity, manhood realisation and old age rest. But over each picture there hung deep shadows of poverty, misery, degradation and despair. And in the background of each picture he saw little children ragged, unkempt and hungry, women weak, worn and wasted, men embittered and embittered by the struggle for existence. Truly it was the riddle of the Sphinx. Gradually it dawned on the consciousness of the young enthusiast that here for him lay the quest of the Holy Grail, and that his contribution to Humanity would be laid on the altar of social reform.

For some years he wrote and laboured but the assassination of President Lincoln at the close of the great conflict between the North and South resulted in an article which gave him first rank as a writer. Lincoln had won the love of millions throughout the world for his labours in the emancipation of the slaves, and the seal was set on his work by the crown of martyrdom. Henry George's eulogium on Lincoln might in after years have been written of himself. The same noble aims, the same high ideals, the same passionate love of justice, the same desire to help humanity, characterised alike both writer and subject. One extract will suffice:—

"No common man, yet the qualities which made him great and loved, were eminently common." . . . "In

the hearts of people whose number shall be as the sands of the sea, his memory will be cherished with that of Washington. And to the ends of the earth, from the frozen sea of the north to the ice fields of the south, in every land on which the sun in his circuit shall look down, wherever the standard shall be raised against a hoary wrong his name shall be a watchword and an inspiration."

The old warrior laid down his armour, and the young warrior buckled his on, the one having gained the emancipation of the slaves of a continent, the other setting out to secure the emancipation of the slaves of a world.

By and by there came the revelation which explained the riddle of the Sphinx—that in the monopoly of land, in the locking up of the storehouse of Nature lay the cause of the world's social distress. Sir Isaac Newton found the key to the law of gravitation in the falling of an apple. Henry George found the answer to the social problem in a commonplace conversation. The revelation was swift, clear and incisive. It was not a passing freak of the imagination; a theory to be shattered by the application of mental processes, it was the recognition of a fundamental fact of Nature, the discovery of a law as immutable in its workings as the law of cause and effect. And just as the scientist brings his trained mind to the elucidation of the workings of the law which he has discovered, so Henry George brought his wide experience of men and things to bear on the story of the world's wrongs. It meant a fight against tradition, custom, popular fallacy, vested interests and injustice. But never knight of past century went forth with firmer step or clearer conviction, for he had found the Truth and was out to proclaim it.

His teachings are essentially simple in principle—(a) That all men have an equal right to the use and enjoyment of the great elements of Nature; (b) That every individual has an exclusive right to the product of his own labour.

These root principles lie at the base of all sound economics. They are complementary in character and in no sense antagonistic. Individualism and Socialism, rightly understood, represent truths which act and interact with each other. But the individualism of last century and the socialism of this century represent the abuse of great principles. What is needed is a system which recognises the rights of the individual and also of the community. For just as in religion, superstition and dogma have built up accretions which have choked and hidden its underlying principles, so in economics, "Back to Nature" must be the battle cry of the reformer here as there. All history proves that the monopoly of land has produced poverty, degeneracy and the ultimate decay of nations. Persia perished when one per cent. of the people owned the land. Rome went down when 1800 men possessed all the then known world. Moses saw here the cause of the slavery in Egypt and legislated for the Israelites in such a way that monopoly of land was impossible.

Henry George wrote many books, but *PROGRESS AND POVERTY* will ever stand out as his masterpiece. It was not only a classic in economics, but a book through which the seeing eye may trace the invisible behind the visible, and the working of that great law of brotherhood which is the manifestation of the Spirit behind matter, and the fount of altruism. *PROGRESS AND POVERTY* met with a mingled reception. To the Conservatives it was the searchlight of the enemy; to many working men the long-looked for charter of their freedom. Its publication gave the author recognition throughout the world. General Wolfe said on one occasion that he would rather have written Grey's *Elegy* in a Country Churchyard than have scaled the heights of Quebec. There are many who would rather have written *PROGRESS AND POVERTY* than have won the passing honours of place and power. It is the book which is Henry George's true monument, the best loved child of his brain, and his greatest gift to humanity.

Years of work followed its publication, during which its author visited many lands.

His power as a speaker was great, at times reaching the eloquence of a Cobden or a Bright, but always clear, vigorous, logical. It was not his joy to see the battle won, but he lived to see the first fruits of victory in the awakening of many of the people to the truth. But the strain of the years told—and suddenly—the light went out.

The hush of that death chamber filled the world, for one had gone forth whose comradeship was a sacred memory and an inspiration to workers in every land, whose valiant work in the cause of justice had won the admiration both of friend and foe. The Press of the world tendered its encomiums. Said one of them, "Henry George, the idol of his people, is dead. He was more than a candidate for office, more than a politician, more than a statesman. He was a thinker whose work belongs to the world's literature. As a thinker, as a philosopher he was great, but greatest of all as an apostle of the truth as he saw it, an evangelist carrying the doctrine of justice and brotherhood into the remotest corner of the earth." Working men, to the number of 100,000, filed past the mortal remains of the man who had given his life for their sakes. "Never for statesman or soldier," said one of the Press, "was there such a demonstration of popular feeling."

On the stone which his fellow-citizens placed over him are a few lines from his masterpiece, an epitaph more typical of the man than the most brilliant panegyric:—

"The truth that I have tried to make clear will not find easy acceptance. If that could be it would have been accepted long ago. If that could be it would never have been obscured. But it will find friends, those who will toil for it, suffer for it, if need be die for it. This is the power of Truth."

#### WILL THE TAXATION OF LAND VALUES BE OF PERMANENT BENEFIT TO THE WORKERS? By J. Moyle

In these days of highly organised industry and commerce, the division of labour makes it extremely difficult for workers who are far removed from any appearance of working on the land, to realise that, as parts in a long process of production and exchange, every one is just as much a land user as is the man actually at work on the soil.

This same division of labour also obscures the fact that what all workers are really doing is to supply the needs of one another, that they have interests in common, and a common interest in land.

Every worker is vitally interested in the production or supply of the raw material needed, not only for the work in which he himself is engaged, but for everything of which he is a consumer. As all raw material comes from the land, the land itself may be said to be the supreme raw material for every kind of labour.

It is therefore a matter of importance to the workers that there should be free access to a plentiful supply of cheap material. But the conditions prevailing to-day are just the reverse; all that is produced from the land is dear, because land itself is made dear by monopoly and speculation: it is the workers themselves who are cheap and plentiful.

The Capitalist system, against which the workers are now striving, is founded on cheap labour; the only way to get rid of Capitalism is to cut off the supply of cheap labour upon which this monster feeds.

The workers do not realise as they ought to do that their labour value is cheap because land is dear; and that workers will become dear—that is, will command higher wages—only when land is cheap; and that men will be economically free only when land is free.

When land is dear and inaccessible men are forced, by