

Tributes to the Memory of Joseph Dana Miller

Spoken at The Bier

By STEPHEN BELL

IN the passing of Joseph Dana Miller we have lost a friend, a brother in our social faith, a valued and wise counsellor, a man of renown, but we are fortunate in having had him so long. He is another of those to whom has been given the vision of the Promised Land, the World as it Ought to Be, the civilization that will be, when mankind has grown up to mental and spiritual maturity, but who has not been permitted to enter it in this life.

For more than half a century he has cherished that vision of the civilization that will be when men have realized the meaning of Lincoln's prayer at Gettysburg—"That this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom" and sought to show it to others—a freedom in which every man shall be free to earn an honest living, in which "Every man may sit under his own vine and fig tree with none to vex him or make him afraid," a freedom in which "They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall *not* build, and another inhabit; they shall *not* plant, and another eat. They shall not labor in vain nor bring forth for trouble, for they are the Blessed of the Lord, and their children with them."

Whatever may be the vicissitudes of fortune which may have overtaken us, whatever may be the conditions in which our lot is cast, to have seen that vision of the World to Be and to have tried to bring its realization nearer is something to make life worth living indeed, and to none of us was that vision clearer than to Joseph Dana Miller, who did what he could to hasten its realization.

My grief at his passing is born of a sense of great personal loss, but it is softened by a feeling of exaltation and thankfulness that I was privileged to know him over a period of forty-five years, and can say,

"He was my friend!"

The Greatest Writer of Georgeism Since 1897

IN December, 1886, I called on Rev. Mr. McCarthy to whom I met in Henry George's campaign that fall. He introduced me to a young man with a rosy, boyish complexion, named Joseph Dana Miller. When I had finished my business with Rev. McCarthy, Joe and I left together. Then he informed me that he was also a Georgeist and deplored his inability to take part in the speech-

making of the campaign. For that reason he was taking lessons in oratory from Rev. McCarthy, for he was convinced that the '86 campaign was the beginning of a great movement that would require many trained speakers. Even then I was doubtful if politics was the way to advance the cause. I am now firmly convinced that that is "how not to do it." I told Joe that of the 68,000 votes cast for George I did not believe a thousand really understood the argument of "Progress and Poverty"; that dissatisfaction of the workingman with both the Democratic and Republican parties accounted for most of George's vote. He was inclined to agree with me but said that in any event trained speakers were required for lecturing and teaching.

With this beginning I looked forward to hearing Joe frequently on the platform and on the banqueting floor but during the ensuing fifty-two years I doubt if he made a dozen speeches. I was fairly active in Single Tax circles; indeed I was drafted as a candidate for a minor judgeship in 1887 when Henry George was a candidate for Secretary of the State of New York, and do not recall that Joe made a single speech during the campaign. George's vote in the entire State of New York was about half that he received in the City of New York the previous year. Those who knew Joe well have no doubt of his reason for not making speeches. Joe was painfully shy and modest and probably suffered when called upon to make a speech.

But those who were privileged to listen to an address from his lips were privileged indeed. Not only did he use Addisonian English but it was shot through with sincerity. He was eloquent; but I think the eloquence was innate and not imparted by his teacher in 1886. I recall one occasion of a dinner the Manhattan Single Tax Club gave to a distinguished foreigner. All of the three or four advertised speakers (of whom I was one) had prepared their addresses. After they had finished there were many cries for Joe Miller, but he shook his head. The toastmaster finally induced him to speak. It was the unanimous verdict (including the advertised speakers) that Joe's address was the hit of the evening.

He was happiest sitting in a shabby little office writing about the philosophy that was religion to him. For relaxation he wrote poetry. All old-timers remember the thrill they got from his ode to George written shortly after the Prophet's tragic death in 1897. It was in the nineties, I believe, that he and others started the *Nation Single Taxer*, which became the *Single Tax Review* and is now LAND AND FREEDOM. Journalism was his vocation for a half century. I can recall but two books I

published. one the "Single Tax Year Book," and the other a volume of his poems.

His shabby little office—about the size of a large closet—in a shabby old building was the mecca of Georgeans from all parts of the world. Nor was the Single Tax the sole topic of conversation. He discussed politics and literature, of both of which he had an unusual grasp. And many a joke would he crack. It is not generally known that he also wrote for a number of humorous papers.

When Henry George's pen dropped from his life-less hand in 1897, Joseph Dana Miller picked it up and worthily wielded it until 1939. That some one half as worthy will use it is the fervent hope of the few remaining 1886-ers as well as of the numerous 1939-ers.

FREDERIC CYRUS LEUBUSCHER.

From Benjamin W. Burger

FIRST came within the ken of Joseph Dana Miller a quarter of a century ago. A few years later, we offered ourselves to the voters of New York City under the Georgeist banner. Joe was almost the last of that devoted group whose high privilege it was to know "The Prophet" in the flesh.

Our friend breathed serenity and charm. In his presence one felt lifted. To him the things of this world were of small moment. Paradoxically, he devoted his life to elucidating the laws which govern the distribution of wealth. He was gifted of tongue; he wrote with vigor and clarity.

Tragedy struck him at life's high tide. Of the beautiful English girl who won his love, he wrote:

"I never met a spirit more serene, nor one whose graces of person were matched by graces of character, and an undefinable flower-like essence which gave to her presence a subtle charm."

Alas, she was not destined long for this life. He penned these tender lines of her:

"Hersê, dear heart, to meet you once again,

Where comes not death nor pain,

And you the same sweet self, with frank brave eye,

That could not look a lie;

The laugh that rang its note of perfect mirth,

And now is done with earth;

Oh, but to meet you—once again to stand

And take your outstretched hand.

May I then hope—oh, light and radiance passed—

To greet you at the last?"

For himself, our friend sought neither fame nor fortune.

Ever, he radiated sweetness and light.

In high degree, he possessed the instinct and feeling of a poet.

"His life was gentle, and the elements

So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up

And say to all the World, 'This was a Man.'"

Little Known Phases and Facts in the Life and Work of Joseph Dana Miller

By JOS. HIRAM NEWMAN

TO record appreciation of a long, personal friendship with Joseph Dana Miller, is a complex task. Simply to refer to him as a gifted writer, thinker and philosopher, is most inadequate. He was the personification of intellectual honesty. In order to characterize him completely, it becomes requisite to consider his personal traits and habits. It has been said, and perhaps with truth, that one must eat, drink, sleep and play cards with a person before testimony of character can be offered. Application of this test with respect to Joseph Dana Miller, must conclude in evidence of true greatness. In a measure, this narration will offer some memories from my long association with him in order to enable others to know him, who were not similarly privileged.

THE SENSITIVE SIDE

His disposition in fortune and adversity was calm enough to be phlegmatic, with a temperament so even that few thought it possible for him ever to show the signs of wrath. Yet, he could readily be wrought up if anyone seriously attacked his sincerity. He was never known to press an idea as the one and only solution to a controversial question; therein lay a force which compelled an admiration for his opinions. He was, perhaps, one of the easiest of persons to get along with in gatherings. Whether at work or at play, he exuberated charm. On personal questions he was apt to be sensitive; his age was one such point. When the publishers of "Who's Who in America" decided that Mr. Miller was sufficiently important to have his name included, they requested him to furnish a biographical sketch, which he did. Because he was peculiarly sensitive about his age, he made no effort to correct the date of birth which they erroneously published as July 1, 1864. In reality that important event occurred in 1861. He died at the age of seventy-seven years.

As is so often the case in the lives of men and women who never married, Mr. Miller remained a bachelor because of an unfortunate occurrence in his youth. The lady of his affections whom he was to marry died before that event could take place. It is quite evident that no one else seemed to him qualified to fill the void; he never thereafter showed any serious interest in any other woman.

He was most fortunate, after the passing of his forebears, in the selection of people with whom to reside. He lived for many years with the Whites in Brooklyn, where he was regarded as a member of the family. Mrs. White, several years his senior, looked after his wants as would a mother. In her husband, Harry White, Joe had a real friend. To the children, Harry, Jr. and Grace,