

Tolstoy and George

by ROBERT LILLIENTHAL

From a term paper by a student in the Rudolf Steiner School, New York City

TOLSTOY read Henry George's *Social Problems* and "was struck by the correctness of his fundamental idea." Tolstoy also went on to say with what clearness and simplicity, he thought George had emphasized his point. After reading *Social Problems*, Tolstoy read *Progress and Poverty*, an earlier book by George, which seemed to help him more greatly appreciate and admire the American author.

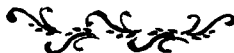
The point upon which these two men were so firmly agreed was that of the single tax system. The drawbacks of this system, if it could be idealistically employed, would be only the downfall of the very wealthy persons, and a more stable society with fewer millionaires. The advantages are many. "There would be no able man who would be deprived of good land. There would be no idle men who over-see other men and take most of the profit for themselves, so that the land would be in the hands of those who work it and not those who do not work. There would be no inspectors and collectors of taxes in factories, or other establishments, but only rent collectors for the land, which can not

be stolen and from which it is very easy to collect the rent. The best reason, Tolstoy felt, was that all people would be on a par with each other. Malice or self-contempt would be felt by none, and it would be better not only for the people but for the country."*

Ernest Howard Crosby visited Tolstoy and when asked if he knew the American author Henry George he replied, no. Tolstoy thought that Crosby must have been an upstart and sent him on his way. Upon returning to America Crosby immediately looked up George. After knowing him for some time Crosby became one of George's ardent advocates and admirers. His writings include many works with George's ideas. Some of them are: *Swords and Plowshares*, *Labor and Neighbor*, and *Garrison the Non-Resistant*.

Leo Tolstoy said: "People do not argue with the teachings of George; they simply do not know it. He who becomes acquainted with it cannot but agree."

*Paraphrased from Letter on Henry George, *Complete Works of Tolstoy*, Vol. XXIII.



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