Henry George: The Fight for Irish Freedom

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Henry George: The Fight for Irish Freedom*

By ANNA GEORGE DE MILLE

I

The 'Land Question'

IN 1879, THE LAND question in Ireland was a burning topic of the day. The Irish peasants, oppressed by their landlords, most of whom were absentee, were suffering eviction as well as poverty almost to the point of starvation. The Irish National Land League had been formed to "bring about a reduction of rack rents." During that same year Henry George had written an article on the situation which had been published in *The Bee* of Sacramento. Rack rent he had explained as "simply a rent fixed by competition at short intervals. . . . In our agricultural districts, land is rented from season to season to the highest bidder. This is what in Ireland is called rack-rent."[1]

Charles Stewart Parnell, with a background of English conservatism, was president of the League. But it was one of the honorary secretaries, Michael Davitt, who seemed to be the soul of the organization. He proclaimed the principle of "the land for the people." Released after having served seven years in Portland Prison, England, for his adherence to the cause of Irish independence, he visited New York in the summer of 1880. There he met Henry George and read "Progress and Poverty" with an enthusiasm that led him to pledge the Land League to push the book in Great Britain.

George, deeply stirred by the situation in Ireland, started to write an article on the subject for *Appleton's Journal*, but the work grew under his pen until it became a small book of seventeen chapters. He called it "The Irish Land Question: What It Involves And How It Can Be Settled." In it he showed that in order to relieve Ireland of the horror of rack-renting and to give the benefits of their labor to the Irish people, it was necessary to take the annual rental value of the land alone for community needs, using the new source of revenue to relieve industry and thrift from taxation. Under such a system the laborer would get what he created; no one would have an advantage as a mere landholder. And even though the owner of the land be an Englishman living in England, the value of the land of Ireland would accrue to the Irish people as a whole.

* Copyright, 1944, by Anna George de Mille. A section of a previously unpublished study, "Citizen of the World"; see AM. JOUR. ECON. SOCIO., 1, 3 (April, 1942), p. 283 n.

[1] Dec. 21, 1879; ("Written for the Christmas *Bee*"), Henry George Collection, New York Public Library (hereafter abbreviated as HGC), Scrapbook No. 5, TIQB.

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Early in March, D. Appleton & Co. published the little book. George sent a post card to Taylor, reporting, "First edition exhausted the first day and not enough to fill orders that have already come in."[2] Shortly afterwards, editions were printed in London, Manchester and Glasgow. It had splendid reviews everywhere. That in *The New York Times*—a column and a half of small type—began:

> One rises from a reading of this weighty pamphlet with a conviction of the justice of the theory advocated and with admiration for the clearness with which it is stated by Mr. Henry George. He had the advantage of having got rid in "Progress and Poverty"—a masterly book on the reasons for the spread of pauperism in the modern social fabric—of most of the prejudices which beset writers on similar topics.[3]

Meanwhile George's family had left San Francisco and had joined him. They were boarding at Fort Washington, at the northern end of Manhattan Island. Living there afforded a quiet place for work and yet easy access to the center of the city. George's financial burden was lightening: there was a demand for magazine and encyclopedia articles and for his lectures. He made $130 when he spoke in Chickering Hall. Rev. R. Heber Newton, his classmate of Philadelphia day school and Sunday school days, and now rector of All-Souls Episcopal Church, New York, presided. A Brooklyn lecture, arranged by Andrew McLean of *The Brooklyn Eagle*, netted George $200. On this occasion, the corporation lawyer, Thomas G. Shearman, friend and attorney of Henry Ward Beecher, was present. It was the beginning of Shearman's dedication to the cause George stood for. Indeed, he threw himself into the fight with an energy and enthusiasm that made him an inspiration.

George became a member of the New York Free Trade Club, through the introduction of Poultney Bigelow.[4] Soon after joining the club, of which Theodore Roosevelt was at that time a member, George attended one of their dinners. He was disgusted at the timid, reactionary tone of the affair, and wrote to Bigelow: "As you said, only worse! worse!! worse!!! I told them four minutes worth of horse sense, however."[5]

[2] March 16, 1881, HGC.

[3] March 23, 1881, HGC.

[4] Poultney Bigelow is a son of John Bigelow, former United States Minister to France and to Germany. The younger Bigelow had been a fellow-student and intimate friend of Wilhelm Hohenzollern, Crown Prince of Germany and afterward, until his abdication in 1918, Emperor. An enthusiastic convert to the ideas of "Progress and Poverty," Poultney Bigelow translated from the French, for George, excerpts from the writings of the Physiocrats.

[5] May 15, 1881, HGC. See Henry George Jr., "The Life of Henry George," New York, Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1943, p. 351.

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In the early summer he began lecturing for the Irish Land League through New England and Canada but cut the tour short to make a brief business trip to California, for a friend. While in San Francisco he spoke in the same Metropolitan Temple, where three years previously, in an all but empty hall, he had delivered his lecture on "Why Work Is Scarce, Wages Low and Labor Restless."[6] On this occasion the auditorium was packed, the audience most enthusiastic and present were those friends who had had the courage to voice their belief in the "hobby of little Harry George," even before it had received approval from the discerning East. For an hour and a half he lectured without notes on "The Next Great Struggle."

> We are today on the verge of a great movement. An unrest and disquiet pervades the whole world. In France the Commune has wrested victory from defeat. In Germany, under the heel of the man of blood and iron, the social propaganda goes on, and in Russia that enormous military machine is changing into a mighty force for the people. Even now there is a bill in the House of Lords of Great Britain that a few short years ago would have been considered revolutionary. From Scandinavia to Italy all is unrest, commotion, yearning and the presage of coming change. What is it? It is a quickening of the seeds cast here, a renewal of the light focussed here and of the spirit proclaimed in that immortal Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal. . . . But Europe is striving not alone for what we have attained. It is seeking for social and not merely political reform. . . . The same feeling of unrest exists in this country. All was not accomplished when our forefathers instituted the Republic and the ballot. There is other tyranny than that of kings and rulers. . . . Liberty does not exist without social conditions that give liberty. . . . All over the world the struggle is beginning. Upon us devolves as great a duty as devolved upon our forefathers one hundred years ago. The true republic is not yet established, and every true patriot will devote his best efforts to the performance of his duty. Whether the struggle comes with the carol of larks or the beat of war drums, it is coming. Let what may oppose it, let what may stand before it, giant forces are arising which must make their way.[7]

The visit to the scenes of his earlier struggles was indeed a happy one. He enjoyed it the more now that he was able to pay off nearly all the debts he had contracted during the lean times while he was working on his book.

When he returned to New York he had good news. *Truth,* a one-cent daily, with a circulation of between 75,000 and 100,000, was arranging

[6] March 26, 1878. See A. G. de Mille, "Henry George: The 'Progress and Poverty' Period," AM. JOUR. ECON. SOCIO., Vol. 2, No. 4 (July, 1943), p. 549.

[7] "The Coming Contest, Henry George's Lecture on the Next Great Struggle," *The Daily Examiner,* San Francisco, August 12, 1881.

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to reprint "Progress and Poverty" in installments. George received no compensation for this but he was grateful for another outlet for his message.

The editor of *Truth* was Louis Freeland Post. Although a printer by trade and later educated for and admitted to the bar, Post preferred to devote his mind and pen to the discussion of public questions. He had complained one night of "the deadly dearth of subjects for editorial comments." William McCabe, one of the printers on the paper, asked if he had heard of "Progress and Poverty." Post replied that he had but there was "nothing to it." Retorted McCabe: "Maybe so; but just the same, there are enough editorial subjects in that book to last you a lifetime."[8]

A few days later Post found a copy of "The Irish Land Question" on his desk. He read the book and was convinced by the author's reasoning of the evils of land monopoly. He acknowledged this in an editorial—explaining, however, what he believed to be the weakness and futility of the proposed plan for abolishing the monopoly. After seeing his remarks in print, "its cock-suredness"[9] worried him; he felt impelled to send a copy to Henry George for criticism. But no criticism or defense came back to Mr. Post, only a copy of "Progress and Poverty" with a brief and friendly note from its author, requesting that he "read the book carefully from beginning to end, for it was 'a linked argument.' "[10] Mr. Post did read the book (and in a single day!) and was completely captured. He was responsible for reprinting it serially in *Truth*.

Louis F. Post was ten years younger than Henry George. Short, stocky, with a mop of thick brown hair, his dark eyes sparkling from behind thick spectacles, he exuded strength and moral character. A man of great courage, he was nevertheless extremely tolerant and had the rare gift of trying to find the other fellow right, not wrong; the priceless gift of making you like yourself. His sense of humor and convincing, simple delivery made him a delightful raconteur and speaker. He became one of the social philosopher's staunchest followers and most beloved and trusted of friends.

Another friendship that started at this time was with Francis George Shaw, a man of great culture and beauty of spirit. Henry George wrote of him to Thomas F. Walker:

He is of a wealthy Boston family that has many distinguished members and was himself one of the mainstays of the anti-slavery movement, and

[8] Louis F. Post, "The Prophet of San Francisco," New York, Vanguard Press, 1930, p. 25. See Chapters III, IV and V.

[9] Post, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

[10] *Ib.*, p. 34.

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when the war came, gave to it his two sons, one of them being that Colonel [Bob] Shaw who was "buried with his niggers."[11]

Mr. Shaw had lost hope of solving social problems until he read "Progress and Poverty." It so enthused him that he ordered one thousand copies to be sent to libraries throughout the United States. He wanted his gift to be anonymous. George, however, prevailed upon him to let himself be known, explaining that the knowledge of the identity of the donor would double the value of the donation.

The English papers reported that Alfred Russell Wallace had also been endorsing "Progress and Poverty" and saying it "is undoubtedly the most remarkable and important work of the century."[12] George wrote happily: "So the seed has begun to sprout."

Meanwhile, in the British Parliament, the Liberal Government, headed by Gladstone, was having a difficult time trying to bring order into the chaotic conditions in Ireland. Under guidance from Westminster, Lord Cowper, the Viceroy, and William E. Foster, the Chief Secretary, were both working for justice for the tenants, but they were also trying to repress violence toward landlords by evicted and belligerent tenants. *Habeas corpus* was suspended, and hundreds "suspected" of being connected with the cause of the underdog were thrown into jail without trial. The Irish Land League having openly concentrated its influence in opposition to the tyrannical rule, was under the ban. Michael Davitt, secretary to the League, had been sent back to Portland and Charles Stewart Parnell's liberty was threatened.

In New York, Patrick Ford, editor of *The Irish World and American Industrial Liberator,* was challenging the exploitation of Irishmen, declaring,

> The strength of the Land Agitation in Ireland will be in exact proportion to how much or how little it accepts of the incontrovertible truth that the land of Ireland was not made for the landlord class, or the farmer class, or any other class, but for *all Irishmen.*[13]

Ford asked Henry George to go to Ireland and England to report the political situation for the sum of $60 a week plus transportation expenses for himself and his family. George was delighted: it seemed the best chance he had ever had. So on October 15th, having arranged for his son Henry to work as cub reporter on *The Brooklyn Eagle* and his son Richard

[11] From Dublin, Sept. 13, 1882, HGC.

[12] Quoted by Henry George in letter to Dr. Taylor, Sept. 7, 1881, HGC. See Henry George Jr., *op. cit.,* pp. 353–4.

[13] August 20, 1881.

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to study at the Art Students' League, he and his wife, with their two little girls, set sail for England.

2
The Correspondent

JUST BEFORE Henry George left New York, three Irish Members of Parliament, John Dillon, Charles Stewart Parnell and J. J. O'Kelly, had been sent to jail. Because of this, the American correspondent, instead of going to Liverpool, as he had planned, decided to disembark at Queenstown, to study the Irish problem at first hand. While he was still at sea the Land League, as a protest against the Government for having filled the jails with something like five hundred political prisoners under a "crimes" or "coercion" act, had sent out a "no-rent manifesto," calling upon agricultural tenants to refuse to pay rent until the Government should change its tactics. Whereupon the Government proceeded to suppress the Land League. Patrick Egan, the treasurer, promptly moved to Paris with its war chest. The women, under Miss Anna Parnell, sister of Charles Stewart Parnell, organized the Ladies' Land League, in order to help carry on. Ireland was practically in a state of civil war.

On the Queenstown tender the passenger agent called George aside and offered to change his name on luggage and passenger list. Else, he explained, as George's coming had been cabled to Ireland, the correspondent would certainly be dogged from the moment he landed and possibly be arrested. Henry George, of course, refused the man's kindness. Indeed, upon arrival, he met with no official hostility; on the contrary, he was given a welcome that was only short of a demonstration.

Ireland, with its population of little more than five millions, was being patrolled by fifteen thousand military constables and forty thousand picked troops. "I got indignant as soon as I landed," George wrote, "and I have not got over it yet."[14]

The first thing he did on his arrival in Dublin was to try to interview Dillon, Parnell and O'Kelly.

> I cooled my heels during three days outside Kilmainham Jail, in an attempt to see men who really represent four-fifths of the people of this country, and as after at length getting in, I at length got out again, there were two great Englishmen whom I wished could have been alive to visit the place—Charles Dickens and John Stuart Mill. It would require the pen that described the circumlocution office to fitly describe the officials at

[14] Quoted by Henry George Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 360, from letter to Patrick Ford, written from 37 Gardiner St., Dublin, Nov. 10, 1881, HGC, Book No. 1, p. 5. (Private letters to Ford are recorded in four small red duplicate copybooks in HGC.)

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Kilmainham, and the pains they seem to take to make visits to the suspects, as few and as unpleasant as possible; it would require the author of "On Liberty" to fitly warn his countrymen of what such treatment of *suspected* men really means.[15]

A fortnight later he was able to report:

I have seen the most famous and best loved men of Ireland—the men who are today the real leaders and representatives of the Irish people; but have seen them with the greatest difficulty and under conditions which in other countries surround the worst malefactors. . . .

It was the first time I had ever seen Mr. Parnell. I was most favorably impressed by him. Features and bearing and expression speak a strong, well-poised, and determined character, a man fit to be the leader of men.

Our conversation was exceedingly interesting for a conversation of its kind, but it was an exceedingly provoking kind, for the two warders strained their ears lest anything contraband should be said. . . . But of the things I most wanted to talk to Mr. Parnell, nothing was permitted. . . . No politics of any kind, of any country were to be spoken of, said the warder. . . . So then we spoke of Bishop Nulty, but when I attempted to allude to Bishop Nulty's views, and how he believed there can be no settlement of the Land Question until land is acknowledged as the common property of the whole people, I was peremptorily stopped. There could be no allusion to land, even with the League left out, within the sacred precincts of Kilmainham.

Baffled in all these directions we talked of ancient history and of the persecution of the early Church, of the triumph of Christianity over Paganism, of the course of civilization and the effects upon European thought, of the discovery and settlement of America, of the progress of astronomical science, of the laws of human thought, etc. . . . Not even the gold-banded chief warder, though he looked very uneasy, could sniff "politics" in such topics as these, nor yet when I sought to obtain Mr. Parnell's views on such religious topics as the perseverence of the saints, the relations between faith and works, the final triumph of the right, the ultimate chaining of the devil etc. And so, in a conversation that, understood literally, might have been taken for that of lunatics, I managed to get something of Mr. Parnell's views. He is more than satisfied with the spirit shown by the people, and is confident of success. . . .[16]

Shortly after George had reached Dublin, four committees had waited on him and invited him to deliver a public lecture. Held some weeks later in the historic Rotunda, the meeting was a big success. The enthusiasm so great that it was only by ordering his cabby to whip up the horse and get him away from the crowd that he escaped having his carriage unhitched and dragged by his audience through the streets. He wrote

[15] *The Irish World,* Dec. 10, 1881; HGC.
[16] *The Irish World,* Dec. 24, 1881, HGC.

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Taylor: "I am sorry now that I did not let them do it as it would have compelled the press agents to have taken more notice of it."[17]

Dr. Thomas Nulty, Bishop of Meath—who a few months previously had written a pastoral letter that was a scholarly summing up of the essence of the land question—granted the American an interview. George wrote privately about it to Ford:

My visit to Bishop Nulty was most delightful. Instead of in anything falling below my anticipation he rather exceeded it. Here is a Christian Bishop. He treated me with the greatest honor, and what is more with the greatest frankness and cordiality. I never met a man that seemed to me to more fill the idea of a *Rev. Father in God.* How I wish he were Pope.[18]

To *The Irish World,* George reported the publication of the Bishop's pastoral letter to the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Meath. He quoted from Monsignor Nulty:

". . . I infer that no individual, or class of individuals, can hold a right of private property in the land of the country; that the people of that country, in their public corporate capacity *are,* and always *must be,* the real owners of the land of their country—holding an indisputable title to it, in the fact that they receive it as a free gift from its Creator, and as a necessary means for preserving and enjoying the life He has bestowed upon them."[19]

Commented George:

The individual who has improved land Dr. Nulty declares entitled to the benefit of that improvement, and should be secured in its enjoyment and be entitled to receive either a selling price or rent for it, but the value of the land which arises from the growth of the community and not from what any particular individual has done (that is to say, rent in the strict use of the term) belongs to the whole community and ought to be taken in taxation for the use of the whole community.

In the fact that rent proper—or that value of land which is not due to the individual exertion of the occupier or improver—constantly increases with the growth of society, Dr. Nulty sees—as everyone must see who recognizes the true relation of this fact—a most beautiful relation of creative design. He says:—

"This great social fact, that the people are and always must be the real owners of the land of their country, appears to be of incalculable importance. . . . A vast public property, a great national fund, has been placed under the dominion and at the disposal of the nation to supply itself abundantly with resources necessary to liquidate the expenses of its government. . . ."[20]

[17] Nov. 20, 1881, HGC.
[18] Dublin, Nov. 10, 1881, HGC, Ford letter book No. I, p. 11.
[19] *The Irish World,* Feb. 21, 1882, HGC.
[20] *Ib.*

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George prevailed upon the Ladies' Land League to have Bishop Nulty's article printed and sent broadcast over Ireland. The result was a wide-spread distribution through priests and laity alike. The Tory papers reprinted it as "an outrageous *official* declaration of communism from a Catholic bishop."[21]

The persecution in Ireland continued. The official League paper, *United Ireland*, was seized, but the plates of the number about to be issued were secretly conveyed to George's lodgings and hidden under his bed[22] until they could be packed into a trunk and shipped secretly to England. There the League managers, instead of printing the paper at once, fumbled the matter, losing time and money by getting out one edition in London, another, an entirely different one, in Dublin,[23] and a third, from the Dublin plates, in Liverpool. George was sadly coming to realize that in the Irish movement there was a lack of management and therefore a waste of power and resources; that the men trying to lead were beginning to show jealousies and incapabilities. He still had faith in Parnell, although he did not consider him as strong as Davitt; but he believed Parnell's sister to be an admirable organizer and executive, and that the women's group had been accomplishing very much under great handicaps.

It was when Miss Parnell learned surreptitiously that the Ladies' Land League was to be proscribed, and that one of the Dublin jails was being made ready to accommodate her and her assistant, Nannie Lynch, that the two women lost no time in escaping to England. Beforehand they sent the official records of their organization to Mrs. George for safe keeping. The remaining members of the League importuned Mrs. George to preside over the regular business meeting. Reluctantly she consented although she know nothing of parliamentary procedure and her nervousness was not lessened by the presence of Government detectives, reporters and correspondents. But she carried through, and the facts that Miss Parnell was absent and that an American woman had taken the chair saved the L.L.L. from proscription.

3
Visit to London

KEGAN PAUL, of the London publishing house of Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., reported astonishing success with "Progress and Poverty." The idea of selling an American work on economics had at first seemed impossible to them and they had had difficulty in disposing of the first twenty copies.

[21] Letter to Ford, Dec. 28, 1882, HGC, letter book No. I, p. 74.
[22] *Ib.*, p. 75.
[23] *Ib.*, p. 80.

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Then it began to sell and now they were getting out another edition and expected a quick return. George wrote from London:

> I find I have made a reputation quite out of proportion to the sale of the book. This, when I can utilize it, will be our power.
>
> We are staying here with Miss Helen Taylor. We came to her at her cordial invitation when we first came to London, with the intention of remaining only a few days but she will not let us go. There is much I would like to tell you about her. She is a noble woman, giving her life to good work. And she is not a Malthusian, not a materialist, but rather a mystic.[24]

Helen Taylor, after the death of her mother, had been the companion and confidant of her step-father, John Stuart Mill. It was the habit of man and girl to take long walks together—sometimes for twenty miles. This intimate contact of the young groping mind with the mature intellect of the great economist was an extraordinary education for her. When the Georges became acquainted with her during the Irish struggle she was outwardly a typical English woman of the Victorian era—domestic, soft-voiced and gentle in manner, wearing—when in the house—a white lace cap on her smooth, parted hair. But, the love of her fellow man in her heart, she had the ardour of a crusader, and she had thrown herself deeply into the cause of Ireland. Upon reading "Progress and Poverty" she had become a fervent advocate of Henry George's teachings, saying she believed that, had he lived, John Stuart Mill would have taken a similar stand. She won her way into the lasting affections of her American guests; she was equally at home in talking world politics and economics with the eldest or in teaching the youngest to make, from the tinfoil wrapping of chocolates, tiny spoons with which to shovel sugar in the big silver bowl.

The Georges later were guests of Thomas Briggs and his family in Dulwich, and paid a visit of several weeks to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Myers Hyndman, in their home in Portland Place, London. Hyndman had been a leading writer for the British press, but his devotion to the Irish cause had resulted in his being "boycotted." So ardent a Socialist was he that George felt it "a pity to see a man of such force following so blindly such a superficial thinker as Karl Marx."[25] Hyndman tried in vain to bring George to his viewpoint. He had hoped, as subsequently he related:

> to convert him to the truth as it is in Socialist economics. It seemed to me quite incredible that a man who could go so far as he had gone would not

[24] To Francis G. Shaw, Feb. 11, 1882, HGC.

[25] Letter to Thos. F. Walker of Birmingham, Eng., June 2, 1884, HGC. See George R. Geiger, "The Philosophy of Henry George," New York, Macmillan, 1933, p. 230n.

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traverse with ease the remainder of the distance, and thus obtain a sound conception of the whole subject.[26]

Hyndman had found in the British Museum a copy of a lecture delivered by Thomas Spence in 1775, proclaiming common rights in land and proposing that land values be taken for public purposes. George had never before heard of the existence of Spence. But instead of being disconcerted by the discovery of a predecessor who had anticipated several of his own independently-achieved positions upon the land question, he reasoned that if it could be proved that his own theories were old, they might possibly be accorded quicker recognition. He therefore prevailed upon Hyndman to reprint the Spence lecture, a copy of which he sent to *The Irish World* for publication.

Hyndman, in spite of his Marxism, lived in rather formal style and the informal manners of his American guest often irked him. He relates that George's

indifference to some of our English prejudices were at times rather annoying. On one occasion we were passing the top of Great Portland Street, going home to lunch, when George espied a barrow-load of whelks at the corner being sold by the coster-monger who owned them. "I say Hyndman" quoth George, "I like the look of those whelks." "All right," said I, "if you like them I'll have some sent in for you." "No," was the answer; "I like them here and now." Expostulation was useless. So George consumed his whelks from the barrow while I, got up in high hat and frock coat of non-whelk-eating-at-the-corner civilization, stood by and saw him do it.[27]

He considered that while the economist was "humorous, good-natured and fond of discussion, his was not by any means a first-rate intellect.[28] However George came to consider his host during that visit, history does not state. But the smallest of Hyndman's American guests developed a prejudice against her host. It dated from the time he almost sent her into hysterics by pretending to bite off the toes of her doll.

That same doll, Rose, and "the Babe" or "the Child" as her family called their youngest member, were inseparable. Once when they were staying in Dublin the Babe fell down and broke Rose's crown and even her mother's magic fingers could not heal it. Indeed, Dr. James E. Kelly, a surgeon who called often to talk Irish and world affairs, found that in this case he could not operate successfully. And then the father, entering into the con-

[26] Henry Myers Hyndman, "The Record of an Adventurous Life," New York, Macmillan, 1911, p. 154.

[27] *Ib.*, p. 265.

[28] *Ib.*, p. 267.

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sultation, suggested there might be someone on the other side of the Channel who could do so. He was just starting for London on a mission to save some of his Irish friends from jail. Gently he laid Rose inside his bag on a bed of compromising documents and, covering her with the rest of the precious papers, took her away. A couple of days later came a letter to Mrs. George from London:

> I have been spending the afternoon and some cab fare in moving about with Rose. All along Regent St. they wanted ten or fourteen days to fix her, which meant sending her to Paris. I found a place over Waterloo Bridge where they will head her, paint her and put back her old wig for 6/ and have left her, to be done tomorrow afternoon.[29]

Next day he wrote: "Rose looks pretty well; I have sent her back by express so as to console the Babe."[30] And sure enough she arrived completely mended, quite her beautiful self, and was again able to go about everywhere the George family went.

While in London, the Americans were entertained a great deal and met many interesting people. Henry George, usually utterly indifferent to his appearance, looked well groomed in the evening clothes he had had made by a fashionable tailor, before he left New York. They had cost so much he treated them with respect and wore them carefully. And his wife had had made for herself a handsome evening gown of garnet satin and velvet. Against its dark red her beautiful arms and shoulders gleamed white. For less formal affairs was the stiff black silk dress, without which no lady's wardrobe, at that time, was complete.

Most of her own clothes Mrs. George made herself, and all the clothes worn by her daughters. When she found she was to be in London for some time, she went to the English agency of the American company of Wilcox & Gibbs, with the idea of renting a sewing machine.

"We'll let you have it for £5," said the salesman.

"That's far too much," exclaimed Mrs. George. "I own one in the United States for which I paid $85, and I can't afford to pay £5 for renting a duplicate just for a few weeks' use."

"You may *buy* it here for £5, Madam, even though it does cost $85 in your country where it is produced. You Americans, with your protective tariff, are very kind to us!"[31]

This was a poignant lesson in the stupidity of "protection," that Mrs. George quoted many times.

[29] Sept. 7, 1882 (from J. C. Durant's office); in the private collection of the writer.
[30] Sept. 8, 1882 (in the private collection of the writer).
[31] Related to the writer by her mother.

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George wrote to Ford: "I have succeeded once or twice in passing myself off for an Englishman but I can't for an Irishman; my accent betrays me.[32] His wife, however, almost always, while abroad, was taken for an Englishwoman; not only because of her poise but because she did not have the nasal, rasping quality supposed to be typical of "the American voice." Her tones were low in pitch and soft, her enunciation clear. Greatly to her amusement shopkeepers often took her into their confidence; "we'll be getting a 'igher price than this, mum, in the spring, when the Americans 'll be coming h'over."[33]

One night Mr. and Mrs. George were dinner guests at the beautiful home of Walter Wren,[34] celebrated Oxford coach, where they met among other celebrities, Walter Besant. On another occasion they were guests of Sir Francis Jeune (afterwards Lord Chief Justice) and Lady Jeune at one of their famous "small and earlies." It was in reality a large and late, and the crowd so great that it took half an hour to get upstairs to greet the hostess. Tennyson, looking like a dreamer and Browning, looking like a successful business man, were there. But keen as Henry George was about poets, he was more interested in another guest—Herbert Spencer. Although he had once written to his wife: "Instead of trying a novel why not read Herbert Spencer on the chrystalline system, when you want to go to sleep?"[35] He admired the English philosopher, had quoted him in "Progress and Poverty" and had long wanted to meet him. Here at Lady Jeune's the coveted opportunity came.

The two men had hardly exchanged greetings before Spencer asked George what he thought of the situation in Ireland. The American proceeded to condemn the action of the Government and to praise the work of the Land League. He expected that the Englishman who "in 'Social Statics,' *did* condemn private property in land, *did* advocate the resumption of land by the community, *did* unequivocally and unreservedly, and with all his force, declare for what is now called land nationalization"[36] would, like himself, see the solution of the agrarian struggle in Ireland only in terms of the fundamental economic principles that they both had

[32] Dublin, Nov. 22, 1881, HGC. Ford letter book No. I, p. 52.

[33] Related to the writer by her mother.

[34] Letter from his daughter, Mrs. Hildegarde Wren Whittaker, Jan. 19, 1935, to the writer; in the latter's private collection. Crippled by illness in his youth, Walter Wren, a brilliant scholar, had taught, sometimes from his couch, many who became distinguished men of their time, royalty, statesmen, writers and soldiers—among the latter, Allenby.

[35] Letter in private collection of the writer.

[36] "A Perplexed Philosopher," New York, Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1940, p. 80.

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defined. But vehemently Spencer condemned the imprisoned Land Leaguers. "They have only got what they deserve. They are inciting the people to refuse to pay to their landlords what is rightfully theirs—rent." This statement and the way it was made nonplussed Henry George. "It is evident that we cannot agree on this matter,"[37] he replied, and walked away, bitterly disappointed in the man whose work had stirred him.

Joseph Chamberlain, according to his biographer, had read "Progress and Poverty" and had been "electrified."[38] Indeed there was much in common between the great English Liberal and Henry George and the latter, after dining with him and John Bright, as the guests of Walter Wren, wrote of the meeting to Patrick Ford:

> We started in on the Irish affairs with the soup, for Bright asked me point-blank what I thought of what I had seen in Ireland and I had to tell him, though it was not very flattering. We kept it up to half past ten, when Mr. Bright had to go down to the House, but Chamberlain remained until nearly twelve.
>
> Bright has got to the end of his tether, and will never get past where he is now; but Chamberlain is an extremely bright man, and his conversation, which was unreserved, was extremely interesting to me, and would make a most interesting letter if I could use it, which of course I cannot, for to print private conversation with men of his position or even to allude to them in print, without permission, would stamp a man as not fit for decent society.
>
> Chamberlain has evidently been reading *The Irish World* for he alluded to some things in my letters, and he told me laughingly to look out when I went back to Ireland that I did not get reasonably suspected.[39]

While the "no-rent" movement in Ireland was as strong as ever, Parnell and a few of his co-workers had grown weary of the fight. They made a pact with the government to "slow down" the Land League agitation, demanding in exchange that the Government release the suspects and extend the existing Land Act. When Parnell and the two other members of Parliament, O'Kelly and Dillon, were released from Kilmainham jail on May 2d, surprise and happiness were general among the Irish factions. Those on the inside, however, suspected the compromise and George wrote to Ford that instead of expressing joy the members of the Ladies' Land League seemed deeply depressed.

[37] Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 370.

[38] James Louis Garvin, "Life of Joseph Chamberlain," New York, Macmillan, Vol. I, p. 385.

[39] London, April 22, 1882, HGC. Ford letter book No. III, p. 18. Quoted by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 371.

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But for those in power to treat with and free Parnell, who had been denounced for treason, discredited their policy. Viceroy Cowper and Chief Secretary Foster resigned. On the evening of Saturday, May 6th (1882), when the new Chief Secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and Thomas Burke, the Under Secretary, made their official entry into Dublin, they were assassinated in Phoenix Park by a band of political fanatics, self-termed the "Invincibles." When the news of this deed spread around the world it did much harm to the cause of Ireland.

Davitt, who had been in jail again after his return from America, had been released from Portland Prison, near London, early that day, and George had been with him until late that night. They were to meet again next day but it happened much sooner than they had planned. Very early on Sunday morning George was awakened by a telegram from his Dublin friend, Dr. Kelly, telling of the assassination.

Dressing rapidly, George sped out of his lodgings and awakened a drowsing cabby, who drove him to the Westminster Palace Hotel. "At five o'clock," Davitt relates, "Henry George entered my bedroom with an open telegram in his hand and a scared look in his kindly big blue eyes. 'Get up, old man' were his words. 'One of the worst things that has ever happened to Ireland has occurred.' "[40] And George recounts that when Davitt read the dispatch: " 'My God' was his exclamation, 'have I got out of Portland for this!' And then he added mournfully: 'For the first time in my life I despair. It seems like the curse that follows Ireland!' "[41]

George carried the tragic message further, to Dillon and O'Kelly. Dillon went for Parnell, who joined the others at the hotel. By the afternoon nearly all the Parnellites had gathered there.

> In the meantime, [Davitt says] the manifesto[42] was written by a few of us in the hotel, the last paragraph being added by Mr. A. M. Sullivan as a declaration absolutely necessary to imposing a sentiment of unequivocal sincerity to the terms in which the crime was looked upon and condemned by the Irish people and their leaders. It was sent at once to the press agen-

[40] "Fall of Feudalism in Ireland," p. 357.

[41] *Irish World*, May 9, 1882, HGC. Quoted by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 373.

[42] The Rev. Thomas Dawson, O.M.I., of the House of Retreat, Inchicore, Dublin, Ireland, has disputed George's statement, "the manifesto was written by Davitt." Father Dawson wrote (Sept. 2, 1933): "My recollection [is] that Henry George, as he must have told me himself, was the inspirer and *writer* of the manifesto. He *had* to write it. The Irishmen were so broken that terrible night and day that they could no nothing. . . . The expression 'nobler vision' . . . is evidently George's."

Told that the writer was unable to confirm his belief, Father Dawson, on May 10, 1939, replied, ". . . it is not surprising . . . [Henry George] could not in honor make the fact (if it be a fact) known. . . . And the Irish politicians themselves, however grateful, could *never* wish to reveal (if so it were) that, in doing all that they could, they had only signed."

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cies in Great Britain, cabled to John Boyle O'Reilly of Boston, for the widest publication in America, and wired to Mr. Alfred Webb of Dublin, to be printed as a placard and despatched by Sunday night's last train to every city and town in Ireland, so as to be posted on the walls of the country on Monday morning.[43]

George reported in *The Irish World:*

The feeling of the Irish Members was the same horror and dismay felt by Davitt and expressed in the manifesto. They felt that a great disaster had overtaken their cause and the stigma of a great crime had been laid upon it. . . . Nothing could better have served the purposes of the worst enemies of Ireland, nothing could have given more grief and shame to her best friends than this tragedy.[44]

On that black Sunday night, the Georges were guests at a dinner given by a member of Parliament. The consensus was that there would be violent retaliation against the Irish in England, and therefore the Irish leaders should flee for sanctuary to France. Mrs. George, who regarded moral courage as almost the highest human attribute, took the stand that Davitt "should go to Ireland by the first train, and be a leader to his people in this hour of dismay." Her statement was received with amazement. "But fury and bitterness are running so high—he might be killed by a Government supporter," someone averred. "How could Michael Davitt die better than with his people?" asked Mrs. George.[45] Her husband was to remind her of these words years later.

The London Standard made a direct appeal to Davitt to hand over the assassins—as if he, who had just been released from prison himself, could have known where to lay hands on the criminals! He says: "My friend, Henry George, who was with me when their article appeared, wrote a prompt reply. It appeared in *The Standard* over my name."[46]

Although there was no public disturbance anywhere after the Phoenix Park murders, the government was compelled by public opinion to abandon its proposed leniency. "Gladstone," George wrote five years later, "was not wise enough or strong enough to resist the frantic English demand for repressive measures."[47] The old, dreary round of coercion was begun again, and the grief and abhorrence which had swept over Ireland with the news of the Phoenix Park assassination were quickly forgotten in intensified hatred of English oppression.

[43] Davitt, *op. cit.*, p. 359.
[44] May 9, 1882, HGC.
[45] Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 375.
[46] Davitt, *op. cit.*, p. 361.
[47] "Phoenix Park" in *The Standard*, New York, Vol. 1, No. 16 (April 23, 1887), p. 4, HGC.

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Parnell openly opposed this in the House. In the Land League he quietly did all he could to "slow down" and kill the old movement. In a few months he had swung away from "the land for the people" back to the old, rather vague program of "home rule." George believed he thereby missed the greatest opportunity any Irishman ever had. Davitt, however, stuck to his guns. His seven years of penal servitude, and his year of solitary confinement did not dim his ardor. Unwilling to be a party to Parnell's "Kilmainham treaty," he made this fact clear when he presided over a big meeting in Manchester where George had been invited to lecture. But Davitt spoke so long that he left the guest of honor barely fifteen minutes. Although George hardly did himself justice, any chagrin he might have felt was overshadowed by gratitude for the way Davitt had condemned the "treaty."

And now the cry was raised that Davitt was trying with Patrick Ford and Henry George to cause a split in the ranks. To Francis G. Shaw, George wrote:

> The truth is that Parnell is tired, that the conservative influences in the management of the League have come out in full force, and that they want to settle the land question before it goes too far. . . .
>
> Michael Davitt is full of the idea of popularizing "Progress and Poverty." That was the first thing he said to me. He had read it twice before, and he read it twice again while in Portland and as you may see from his speeches and letters, he believes in it entirely. He says if a copy of that book can be put in every workman's club and Land League and library in the three kingdoms the revolution will be made. His first act was to demand of Parnell and Dillon £500 to use in the English propaganda, £300 of which he wanted to put in my hands for as many copies of "Progress and Poverty" as it would bring. Parnell and Dillon at first agreed, and he went to Paris to get Egan's consent. Egan refused; but afterwards wrote that what Davitt wanted would have to be granted, and then after the Manchester speech Parnell and Dillon refused.
>
> The fact is that the line is really drawn and the split made, but not publicly. . . . I am glad I have been here if for nothing but my influence on Davitt. But the others taunt him so much with the idea that "Henry George has captured him" that he didn't want me to go down into Galway with him. The Land League leaders—that is the "Parliamentarians" have fought shy of me ever since I have been here.[48]

4

International Incident

THINGS CONTINUED TO BOIL in Ireland. Davitt, in a speech on June 6th that caused a sensation, brushed aside Parnell's objections and came out

[48] From Dublin, May 30, 1882, HGC. Quoted in part by Henry George, Jr., *op. cit.*, pp. 380–1.

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flatly against peasant proprietorship and for "Land Nationalization." This differed from the method that George had advocated for bringing about his dreamed-of reform. He desired the absorption of economic rent through taxation of land values and was absolutely opposed to touching the titles to land. But Davitt's speech had the old lilt—"the land for the people"—and George, knowing it was not yet time to quarrel over the details of method, and realizing that the right principle was being promulgated, was exuberant.

His second Dublin lecture was so well received that the "Kilmainham Treatyites," as the Parnell faction came to be known, began to concentrate on opposing him. They also brought great pressure to bear on Michael Davitt, who had gone to the United States to try to get money for propaganda. George was bitterly disappointed in Parnell's recanting, in Davitt's "apologies," and in the general disinterest of most of the other Irish leaders in what he stood for. He had the friendship, however, of George O. Trevelyan, the new Chief Secretary for Ireland, and the enthusiastic support of Rev. Harold Rylett of Belfast, of Father Thomas Dawson, O.M.I., of Glencree, and Dr. James E. Kelly of Dublin and many other men and women in Ireland.

In England and in Scotland he found enthusiasm for his cause among men like Joseph Cowen, proprietor of *The Newcastle Chronicle;* Thomas F. Walker, a manufacturer in Birmingham, and William Saunders, president of the Central News Agency in London. He was invited to speak in Glasgow at two large meetings which kindled great enthusiasm and are considered by many to mark the beginning of the radical land movement in Scotland.

George had written to Francis G. Shaw:

> "Progress and Poverty" is slowly and steadily making its way—eating in as I am inclined to think no book of the kind ever before did, and the little "Irish Land Question" has certainly produced a considerable effect. And soon now, I think the big discussion is to open and the oxygen blast will be turned on the smouldering fire.[49]

Crossing this letter had come one from Mr. Shaw, enclosing a draft for five hundred dollars. In thanking him George wrote: "You have indeed strengthened me. The $500. seems to me like the fulcrum for a lever that will help move the world."[50]

Nine days later Mr. Shaw wrote again to say that three thousand dollars had been pledged for the circulation of "Progress and Poverty" by some

[49] London, April 28, 1882, HGC.
[50] Dublin, May 26, 1882, HGC.

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one who wished to remain anonymous.[51] With part of this money Mr. Shaw had ordered Appleton to send one thousand copies of "The Irish Land Question" and to follow them with an equal number of the larger book, specially bound, to members of the Society of Political Education.

"The great movement we have so often talked about is coming,"[52] wrote George to Dr. Taylor. For now, thanks to the Shaw money and the co-operation of James C. Durant, who had a printing office in London, a six-penny edition of twelve thousand copies of "Progress and Poverty" was issued and circulated throughout the United Kingdom. A three-penny edition of five thousand copies of "The Irish Land Question" followed. An amusing incident occurred during the preparation of this paper-bound edition of "Progress and Poverty." One day a stranger sauntered into the composing room of the Durant plant. Explaining that he had been a printer, he said he would like to try his hand at the case again. Permission was granted and as he and a man named Boyle set type on the book they chatted. At last Boyle broke in:

"You are an American and a compositor, and from what you've been telling me you've been a sailor and a miner. The man who wrote this book we're working on, was all those things. Can it be that you—are—?"

"Yes," admitted Henry George, "I am!"[53]

In August, 1882, the American set off on a jaunting-car trip to western Ireland to study and write of conditions there. With him went an Englishman, James Leigh Joynes, a master of Eton, who was engaged to write articles for *The Times* of London. They found rural Ireland a peaceful and industrious place, and from his observation of the Irish, George came to believe that there was nowhere a people who would work harder and suffer more for those they love.

They arrived at the small town of Loughree, which swarmed with soldiers and constabulary. As the correspondents drove down the street to the only hotel, the police seemed to start from the houses on each side and follow them.

A month earlier George had written from London to America: "It has been very hard work ever since I have been here. Every word I write or telegraph has been watched on the other side [Ireland] and I have been in a much more difficult place than a mere newspaper correspondent.[54] In-

[51] The donor was subsequently found to be Francis G. Shaw's brother.
[52] London, June 29, 1882, HGC.
[53] Related by Frederick Verinder to the present writer.
[54] July 1, 1882, to F. G. Shaw, HGC.

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deed now in Loughree, his position became acute. Later he wrote of it to his wife:

> A lot of police were waiting for us and arrested us [under the Crimes Act] the moment the horse stopped in front of the hotel. Police jumped up [on the jaunting-car] and drove us to the barracks where, in a barred room, each valise was searched, each paper read. It was very funny to see them going through everything like a parcel of monkeys.[55]

He was particularly intrigued by the constable who studied, with intense interest, a manuscript held upside down. In fact, the whole episode struck the American as highly ridiculous. Not so Joynes. He was "indecently disconcerted and frightened"[56] which so amused his traveling companion that the latter forgot to be upset by his own discomfort. . . . "This notion of being arrested and being paraded through the streets as a would-be assassin of land-lords, was evidently more horrible at first blush to my friend than being fired at from behind a stone wall—the danger that his friends had warned him he was risking."[57]

The Magistrate who examined them concluded that there had been some mistake, and after three hours the correspondents were allowed to go free. They spent the night in the hotel, paid a visit to the Prior of the Carmelite Order and to the shops of several "suspects," and drove off in the jaunting-car to the nearby town of Athenry. In this hamlet, too small to support a physician, and getting its whole water supply from one pump, were quartered twenty-six constables and fifty-six soldiers. The two travellers called upon Father McPhilpin, did some sight-seeing, and made for the railroad station. But the American did not take the train to Galway, for the police, who had been loitering about, closed in and arrested him again. Joynes they permitted to go free. George relates:

> The charge against me was being a stranger and a dangerous character who had conspired with certain other persons to prevent the payment of rent. The police surrounded me and forced me into what in some parts of this country would be called the hoodlum wagon. I was carried to the police station under a formidable guard, and after being cross-examined was locked up. . . . I was taken to the mansion of the squire for examination. I shall never forget the contrast it presented with the misery of the village. Well-dressed people were playing lawn tennis on its beautiful grounds. It had stately trees around it and an air of the utmost respectability and comfort. The squire sent me back to the subordinate magistrate and I was recommitted to the lock-up.[58]

[55] Private collection of the writer.
[56] *Ib.*
[57] *The Irish World,* Aug. 22, 1882, HGC.
[58] Meeker notes, Scrapbook 29, Miscellany TIQB, HGC.

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Followed several hours detention, a long examination of papers and a lot of stupid testimony regarding the prisoner's movements. By then, George writes:

I was very hungry, for all I had to eat since morning was a bit of bread and cheese. I had previously suggested to the Court that it should adjourn for supper but it would not. It was near midnight and I was very tired, and if I had to sleep in Galway Jail, as I expected, there was a long ride yet before me, so I said nothing about the effort of kissing a "swear book," nor further bother the inspector.[59]

The magistrate summed up with a justification of the police for having arrested him and then proceeded to discharge him. Whether the decision was due to telegrams which Mr. Trevelyan stated in the House of Commons he had sent to Ireland, or to the judge's native wisdom, George could not determine. He continues:

My papers were restored to me, and as the magistrate expressed a desire to read the whole of "The Irish Land Question," I asked him to accept a copy, and gave one each to the sub-Inspector and the constables who had personally been very polite to me.[60]

Next morning the two correspondents wasted no time climbing into the jaunting-car behind their Irish driver and the fleet little mare. As to further adventure George only indicates

. . . how the police followed us into the wilds of Connemara, and how we lost them by the aid of a horse that could understand Irish, if she could not speak it.[61]

Irish friends who learned of the American's predicament hurried to his wife to apologize and commiserate with her, and were amazed to find her unworried. Her sense of humor was saving her—and besides she had had a note from her husband saying: "Am enjoying the trip and seeing a lot." Reassuring her further he wrote: "Didn't get arrested, much to my disgust, for I want to see this Englishman in jail again."[62]

But because George knew that such treatment as he had experienced could on occasion prove most annoying, when he reached Dublin, he sent a letter of protest to the President of the United States. After he returned to New York he received a communication from Secretary of State Frelinghuysen, who passed on to him "the regret of Her Majesty's Government that this incident should have occurred"[63] and invited him to put in a claim for damages for the arrests. This George declined to do.

[59] *Irish World,* Aug. 22, 1882, HGC.
[60] *Ib.*
[61] *Ib.*
[62] Private collection of the writer.
[63] Department of State, Washington, Oct. 17, 1882.

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The publicity given the arrests in Ireland, the reference to it in the House of Commons, and the spread of the cheap editions of his two books brought Henry George and his theories into the forefront of popular discussion. And when a serious and very laudatory criticism of "Progress and Poverty," occupying nearly five columns, appeared in *The Times*, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co. sold out every copy of the book they had on hand.

Shortly afterward,[64] George made his first address in London in Memorial Hall with Professor Alfred Russell Wallace in the chair. It was a chance hearing of the American at this meeting that changed the life of a young Irishman—George Bernard Shaw—and, as Shaw's biographer Alfred Henderson put it, "fired him to enlist in Heine's phrase 'as a soldier in the Libertarian war of Humanity.' "[65]

A few days after the Memorial Hall gathering, George spoke at another meeting, one that gave him inspiration and satisfaction—a meeting of Church of England clergymen—at which there was three hours of serious discussion.

That same evening he was the guest of honor at a two-shilling workingman's banquet. Then he bade England and the many friends there goodbye. They were eager for him to stay but he told them the movement was strong enough to go ahead without him; he perhaps could be of help but no one man was necessary to it now. And with the glad tidings that another edition of twenty-thousand copies of "Progress and Poverty" was to be printed in a few days, he left for Ireland.

In Dublin a farewell dinner was given him and then, with his family, he sailed, on October 4th, for home.

[64] Sept. 14, 1882.

[65] "Life of George Bernard Shaw," Cincinnati, Stewart & Kidd, 1911, p. 4. "Following the clarion call of Henry George," Shaw said subsequently, in a message to America, "my ambition is to repay my debt to Henry George by coming over some day and trying to do for your young men what Henry George did nearly a quarter of a century ago, for me." *Ib.*, pp. 56, 155. Payment was made in full April 11, 1933, when Shaw stopped twenty-six hours in New York to deliver a 16,000-word lecture at the Metropolitan Opera House. (As Professor George R. Geiger has reported, in "The Philosophy of Henry George," New York, Macmillan, 1934, pp. 233–4, Shaw made the same statement to Hamlin Garland in reply to an invitation to attend a dinner in honor of George's anniversary in New York in 1905; *cf.* the original in HGC. He repeated it in his New York lecture; *cf.* the text in *The New York Times*, April 12, 1933.)

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