

LOOKING over the whole length and breadth of America, then, one saw in the civilization of Philadelphia about the best that Murdstone and Quinion could do. Society there had gone about as far in the way of humanizing itself as the Murdstonian philosophy of life could carry it. Most parts of America, virtually all of it, reflected Murdstone and Quinion at their worst. Murdstone had never gone into Aristotle's doctrine of excess and defect, or considered what he says about virtue residing in a mean; hence practically the whole of American society expressed the Murdstonian philosophy run out into disorder and degeneration through fantastic excess. Whether at its best in Philadelphia, however, or at its worst elsewhere, the civilization of all America was the authentic unalloyed civilization of Murdstone and Quinion; the country knew no other.

While George remained at home he had the advantage, whatever it amounted to, of rubbing elbows with the best that this civilization was

producing, and of profiting, as much as might be, from the impact of its influence during his formative years. Leaving home at the age of sixteen as no better than a wanderer, little better than one of Mr. Murdstone's "workhouse casuals," he met that civilization at its worst and meanest, and saw little of any other phase of it throughout his career. His sojourns in other lands, confined as they were to English-speaking countries, brought him no change of spiritual and cultural environment. Towards the end of his life he and his wife made one rapid tour through Italy, where he wrote a friend that "you would get sick of old masters"; then through Switzerland and France, but only as sight-seers, flitting about at pure hazard, and having, as he said, "a good time in our own way, unknown and unknowing, and working our way by signs, largely," after the approved fashion of the American tourist. Of the actual civilization of the Continent, which was at its very best in his lifetime, he saw nothing and knew nothing. After Philadelphia, his sphere of social experience was limited to California, New York, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia; and there, wherever he went, the civilization surrounding him was none other

than the old familiar civilization of Murdstone and Quinion, and he saw it regularly by its worst side.

One wonders what the balance of gain and loss might have been if this condition had been even ever so little different. The question is an idle one, of course, but the chief interest in a study of George's career is that at every tack and turn one is forced to keep asking it. What might have been the course of his life if, say, he had stuck to his schooling, taken advantage of such cultural opportunities as Philadelphia offered—there were some—and at seventeen, like Mr. Jefferson at the same age, had edged his way into the society of experienced and accomplished men who were resolutely alien to the prevailing civilization? Such alien spirits exist everywhere; there were three even in "Devilsburg," as in his student days Mr. Jefferson used to style the seat of William and Mary College. Philadelphia of the 'fifties and 'sixties had some who were so eminent that Murdstone and his retainers were forced to give them a grudging and perfunctory recognition. Like Fauquier, Small and Wythe at Williamsburg, such men would have been quick to see in Henry George the latent abilities which were

quite beyond the reach of Mr. Creakle's apprehension, and it would be in the nature of things that association with them should mature those abilities and give the best direction to their development; a direction, at all events, which they never had. A like association did just that for Mr. Jefferson, whose abilities were largely of the same order, and whose natural endowment seems to have been no greater than George's, save for the unweariable iron physique which George never had—he died of premature old age, culminating in a stroke of apoplexy when he was fifty-eight years old,

But, to repeat, all speculation on this point is idle, because an insuperable barrier stood in George's way; the barrier of great poverty. Mr. Jefferson came of a rich family; Henry George's family was extremely, even miserably, poor. This is not by any means to say that in the Philadelphia of that day a very poor boy might not manage to go to school, or that poverty would of itself be any bar to association with cultivated people; but the obligations which poverty forced on George made anything of the kind virtually impossible. He was the oldest son in a family of ten children, and the

family's income came to sixty-six dollars per year, per head.

One of the interesting peculiarities of Murdstone's civilization was that it gave involuntary poverty the status of an institution. Poverty existed by divine right, like monarchy in earlier times. Preaching on the text, *The poor ye have always with you*, the Rev. Josiah Jupp argued that we must and should always have them with us, because such is God's will. Hence it did not occur to Murdstone, sitting in his pew, to question the status of poverty or to wonder whether, as a whole, the society which he was organizing and directing would not get on better if so many of its members were not so desperately poor. Charity towards the poor was a religious duty, and right well did Murdstone and his compeers in Philadelphia fulfil it, according to their lights; but any radical interference with the incidence of poverty, any but the most superficial inquiry into its causes, was presumptuous if not impious, and savoured a little of heresy. Those who, like Henry George, had the yoke of poverty laid on them at birth must bear it gladly; the spirit of rebellion, complaint or repining was wicked and against God. Archbishop Cranmer's divines had long ago laid

down the law for them in the Church Catechism, on which they were bred from earliest childhood, that they should "do their duty in that station of life unto which it had pleased God to call them"; and that was that.

So, for a child in Henry George's position, the thing was to get out into the activities of Murdstone's world as soon as possible, and, as Cranmer's divines put it, to learn and labour truly to get his own living, and withal to succour his father and mother; in more modern phrase, to help out the family. This being so, he had little chance for any improving experience which was not pretty strictly practical and vocational. The discipline of Salem House was thought to be quite right for the purpose contemplated; any other discipline, or any extended experience bearing in another direction, might encourage a meditative child to regard the world as "a place for moping and droning in," which would never do. George had already undergone the discipline of Salem House with such indifferent results that anything further of the kind seemed inexpedient in any circumstances, let alone such as were pressing on him to get himself off his family's hands; so he be-

gan to look more or less vaguely about him for something to do.

However little he had profited by Mr. Creakle's régime, it seems to have had the effect of permanently fixing George's views of the nature and purpose of education. All his life he appears to have been pretty strictly a vocationalist. At the age of forty-one, facing the question whether to put his elder son into a newspaper-office or send him to Harvard College, he decided against Harvard, saying that if the lad went there, he would learn a great deal that he must afterwards spend time on unlearning; whereas "going to newspaper-work, you will come in touch with the practical world, will be getting a profession and learning to make yourself useful." At about the same time he wrote his younger son that he had "come to the conclusion that if you can find a place to set type, it will be best for you not to go back to school after Christmas. I don't like your leaving school until you have got further along, but you are getting so old now [the boy was sixteen] that it is important that you should learn to make a living for yourself, for that is by far the most important part of education." All this is precisely in the vein of Mr. Creakle; a great refine-

ment indeed upon Mr. Creakle's truculence, but the principle is exactly that of Murdstone's practical man in education; it is the tap-root of Mr. Creakle's pedagogy.

Moreover, for the ineducable nine-tenths, or more, of the human race, this principle is a sound one. The trouble was by no means that the principle is unsound—quite the contrary—but only that Murdstone and Mr. Creakle claimed too much for it. They made it applicable to the whole of the human race instead of to the vast ineducable majority, and thereby their practical measures tended to leave the small but socially valuable minority somewhat out in the cold. It may be that George was quite right in the disposition he made of his children, but his sweeping statement that learning how to make a living is by far the most important part of education seems to show that it had not occurred to him to differentiate between the needs of the ineducable mass and those of the educable few; and the ground of this failure in discrimination runs straight back to the régime of Mr. Creakle.

This failure begot another, equally serious, the failure to differentiate between education and training. George never perceived that Mr.

Creakle's system, excellent, useful and largely appropriate as it may have been, was not an educational system, though everyone agreed to call it such and believed it to be such. It had nothing to do with education; it was a system of training, perfectly suited in principle to the needs and capacities of the ineducable masses, but as perfectly unsuited to those of the educable few. Hence when George defined "the most important part of education" in rigidly vocational terms, he was unconsciously subscribing to an egregious error.

This could not well be otherwise, for George had never been in circumstances which permitted him to suspect this error, let alone perceive it. Murdstone did not differentiate education from training; if he had interrupted his preoccupations by thinking about the matter at all, he would have thought they were the same thing. Quinion would have been amused by the suggestion that they are not the same thing, and would have asked what of it. Mr. Creakle, glowering in his arm-chair, with his prodigious watch-chain and seals, his cane, his buttered toast, his apoplectic visage, his starting veins, gave forth the doctrine that they are and ever were and ever must be the same thing. What

then was Henry George to think? All over the wide expanse of the Murdstonian civilization in both hemispheres were springing up innumerable institutions, calling themselves educational, which in principle were replicas of Salem House and were administered by old pupils of Mr. Creakle, thoroughly imbued with Mr. Creakle's doctrine; and as we have seen, the Murdstonian civilization is the only one that George ever knew.

At the time when George's sons were born, Ernest Renan was formulating this terrible sentence:

Les pays qui, comme les États-Unis, ont créé un enseignement populaire considérable sans instruction supérieure sérieuse, expieront longtemps encore leur faute par leur médiocrité intellectuelle, leur grossièreté de mœurs, leur esprit superficiel, leur manque d'intelligence générale.

A civilization which, through its foremost exponent, accounts for itself in such terms as these, remained always unknown to George. It is an interesting fact that even in his later years when more doors were open to him, his choice of associates tended regularly towards men who were intellectually self-made. This choice was

apparently deliberate. His biographer says of his friends and counselors in San Francisco, while he was writing his first work on economics, that "not one of them had received a finished education, in the European sense. All were positive, aggressive, independent men, representing distinct opinions, tastes and habits of life. Each had made his way in the community chiefly by the force of his own nature." Throughout his career Henry George remained one of the gentlest, most sympathetic, most affable and least ostentatious of men, but all his actual intimacies were with what we loosely call "men of the people" whose cultural attainments were very limited. His distaste for the typical academic mind was not without reason; it is understandable. He saw the country's institutional life in bondage to the Murdstonian system of ethics, economics and politics; he saw instruction on these subjects thoroughly committed to what someone has wittily called "the hire learning"; and it seemed to him that this tainted the character, not only of all America's academic pursuits, but also of those who would consent to engage in them. He apparently was persuaded that side by side with a perverted system of instruction in ethics, economics and

politics, no instruction on any subject could be respectable. When still a young man, in a lecture before the University of California, he spoke of the "pretentious quackery" surrounding the study of economics, and bore down with great severity upon "the men, and unfortunately they are plenty, who pass through the whole educational machinery, and come out but learned fools, . . . all the more pitiable, all the more contemptible, all the more in the way of real progress, because they pass, with themselves and others, as educated men."

All he said in this strain is very just; but again one must discriminate. It would appear at least possible that George's justifiable dislike and distrust of the typical academic mind spread out into something like a passive general aversion from a cultivated society. Perhaps the circumstances of his career made this inevitable—one cannot say with any certainty—but on the face of it the thing seems unfortunate, for it kept him in habitual association with persons whose range of knowledge, intellectual discipline and cultural attainments were in no way superior to his own; for the most part, indeed, inferior. Thus his experience of men, large as it was, was limited; it was abundant, but not

varied; a great and profitable area of human association remained closed to him, apparently by his own choice. His economic doctrines latterly brought him into collision with some of the ablest men of the century, and in each instance he carried off a hollow controversial victory. One wonders what the result might have been if he had appeared before them, not in the repellent guise of a polemist, propagandist, popular orator and factional fugleman, but in all his natural amiability as a simple fellow-labourer, a fellow-citizen of the great republic of intellect and knowledge, a fellow-philosopher who had worked his way through to the end of a new and far-reaching line of social philosophy.

II

When George got out from under Mr. Creakle's hand at fourteen years of age, he picked up some odd jobs as an errand-boy, packer and minor clerk. After two years of this he went to sea as foremast-boy on a ramshackle old East Indiaman of 600 tons, called the *Hindoo*, for a voyage of fourteen months, touching at Melbourne and Calcutta; and on his re-

turn, at seventeen, his real search for an occupation began.

It began at a bad time. Murdstone had never been able to make the economic machinery of his system run evenly; it ran by fits and starts. Apparently there was no way to get it to run evenly. In 1839, the year of George's birth, it was not running at all; the country was at the bottom of the worst depression in its history. Andrew Jackson's fiscal policies had brought about a crash in 1837 which prostrated Murdstone's whole system, financial, industrial and commercial, subjecting it to ten years of most drastic liquidation. Philadelphia was hit especially hard, and the effects of the depression, particularly its moral effect, lasted a long time. Hence even as late as 1856 when another bad panic was about to break, "unemployment" showed a distinct prospect of becoming a permanent problem; wages were low, and work was hard to get.

George's family could not have helped him much at the best of times. His father, like many others, did not fit particularly well into Murdstone's scheme of things; to do so, one had to have a rather special faculty or aptitude, and George's father seems not to have had it. He

was for a time a minor Federal jobholder, a clerk in the Philadelphia custom-house, and as everyone knows, jobholding does not attract persons capable of doing much else, nor is it calculated either to stimulate ambition or to sharpen initiative. He did, however, give it up in 1831, for a partnership in a small concern which published religious literature of the Protestant Episcopal persuasion, and did a considerable trade in Sunday-school books. He carried on this business for seventeen years, and then returned to a clerkship in the custom-house where he managed to weather through the changes and chances of political tenure for fourteen years. He lost his place in 1861, when he was sixty-four, and wrote his son Henry, who was then in California, that "I do not know tonight but that I shall be a pauper tomorrow. . . . If I am discharged, I know not what will become of us." After his dismissal, he appears to have contemplated a turn at the ship-brokerage business with another discharged employé of the custom-house, but there is no record of this enterprise. He lived another nineteen years, however, in good health and with his faculties unimpaired, dying in 1883 at the age

of eighty-five; his wife survived him by one week.

He got a job in a printing-house for his son Henry in 1856, when the latter returned from the voyage to India on the *Hindoo*. Henry stuck at it for seven months and then quit it, dissatisfied; his pay was two dollars a week, and his foreman was tyrannous. His father then got him a chance with another printing-concern which latterly published a notable denominational weekly, the *Episcopal Register*, an organ of the militant Low Church Episcopalian element in the northern states. They made hard terms with Henry, offering him what amounted to a bound apprenticeship of four years with pay starting at \$2.25 a week; he did not take the job. Labour was in a buyer's market with a vengeance, at that period. Henry could turn up nothing permanent, nothing which held any prospect of a future; nor could his father's influence as a vestryman of St. Paul's parish turn up anything for him that was worth having. During his eighteenth year, however, he got enough experience at odd jobs to round him off as a first-class journeyman compositor and a very fair practical printer. He was already near enough an able seaman to be called one; he

could "handle, reef and steer"; in fact, when in that year he shipped on a topsail schooner to try his luck in Boston, the captain paid him off at the full rate of an able seaman, saying he had fully earned it. Thus with two trades at his command, good trades, useful trades and normally not overcrowded, he could find no chance to exercise either of them on terms which would assure him anything even approaching a hand-to-mouth existence.

George was a depression-baby; industrial depression put its mark on him at birth as deeply and indelibly as war puts its mark on a war-baby. As a boy he saw depression and the effects of depression all about him at home, and when the *Hindoo* made her first port at Melbourne, in far-off Australia, there also he saw depression and the effects of depression; he wrote that times were said to be "very hard ashore, thousands with nothing to do, and nothing to eat." On his return home he saw and heard of little else; the subject had taken complete possession of the public mind. One of his juvenile chums even wrote a ramshackle essay on the depression for the "Lawrence Literary Society." He found things no better in Boston; he could get nothing there; and when he came back to Phil-

adelphia from his unsuccessful errand in Boston, he found that conditions had worsened even in the short time he was away. "The times here are very hard," he wrote a friend, "and are getting worse and worse every day, factory after factory suspending, and discharging its hands. There are thousands of hard-working mechanics now out of employment in this city." The lure of gold drew his attention to the west coast, where miners were reported to be taking great fortunes out of the earth with little effort. The great gold-rush to California was over, and one's chances were no doubt not so good as they had been; still, one must go somewhere, and chances looked no better anywhere else that one could hear of. He determined to go, and his only means of going was by working his way. "There is a ship loading here for San Francisco," he wrote, "on board of which I have been promised a berth, but in the present stagnation of business it is doubtful whether she will get off before a month or two, at least." Again the depression! After a good deal of effort, however, he got a place as storekeeper on the lighthouse-tender *Shubrick*, a side-wheeler of some 400 tons, which was fitting out for duty on the Pacific coast; and reaching the coast

meant a five-months voyage from the Philadelphia navy-yard by way of the Straits of Magellan. He sailed late in December, 1857; he was then in his eighteenth year.

III

Meanwhile Murdstone had been getting rich by leaps and bounds. Depressions are always a great harvest-time for strong, astute and unscrupulous men, and Murdstone was clawing money with both hands out of the long depression-period into which George was born, and throughout which George's youth was spent. His success had come in for unfavourable notice; there was a strong general impression that Murdstone was overdoing the thing a little, and that some sort of check should be put on his activities. This impression ran back to the time of Jackson's great war on the Bank of the United States, which was the immediate precursor of the depression. Before that time, in a social sense, America was fairly well undifferentiated. Some men were richer than others, but colossal fortunes had not yet appeared, and the rich were unostentatious. Murdstone lived in reasonable simplicity, largely by preference,

but largely also in conformity to the rough and superficial spirit of equality which then prevailed—the spirit expressed in the saying that “in America, one man is just as good as another, or a little better.” Jackson’s administration paraded the raw-head-and-bloody-bones of “the money power,” and spread the fear of it throughout the land. Jackson went out of office in 1836, having destroyed the Bank of the United States; the crash came in 1837, just as his successor took over. The long period of appalling liquidation followed, and was protracted by a violent secondary crash in 1842 and a panic in 1857.

Jackson did not conjure up the demon of “the money power” which he put on display; he found it ready to his hand. The Bank of the United States was in Philadelphia; and quite early in the century a small group of Philadelphians took fright at the impending menace of “the money power,” and started a violent crusade against it; in fact, it was largely, perhaps chiefly, due to their efforts that the Bank’s charter failed of renewal. Thus Henry George’s boyhood was spent where a good deal of polemic talk about the money power was current; especially since the president of the defunct

Bank immediately started another one under a Pennsylvania state charter, and this bank failed in 1842, precipitating the crisis above referred to. True, growing children are inattentive to such matters; they have their own interests to look after. Still, impressions unheeded in childhood often make themselves felt in later life, almost always giving no clear sense of when or how they were originally formed. It seems most improbable that in the great centre of agitation over this subject the life of a child could go on in complete unawareness. It is ten to one that members of the Lawrence Literary Society, which was formed for the study of "poetry, economics and Mormonism," and had already listened to a youthful essay on the depression, heard talk now and then about the menace of the money power, and had mentioned it in meeting.

The Philadelphian crusaders against the money power campaigned in the name of democracy; they thought democracy was imperilled by the weight of Murdstone's bulging pockets. Democracy had but just got over being a term of reproach, and had taken on a certain specious respectability. Politicians no longer execrated the "turbulence," the "excesses," the

“dangers” of democracy, as Hamilton, Madison, Morris, Gerry, Randolph, did so wholeheartedly in 1787. They sang another tune after 1828, for “the filthy democrats” were organized and had votes, and were to be flattered and gulled accordingly. Jackson had led a successful “revolt of the masses,” and democracy was their watchword. It was not a descriptive term; it meant simply nothing, it had always meant nothing; originally a term of inane abuse, it had now become an abracadabra, a conjuring-term for the use of pettifoggers and demagogues in managing their herd. Its actual function was the disreputable one of disguising some special interest, for which the favour of the masses was to be gained. Accepting Dr. Johnson’s sturdy definition of patriotism as the last refuge of a scoundrel, the next to the last has surely been democracy. Nevertheless, after Jackson’s revolt, the word was bandied about from mouth to ear of honest people who gave it all sorts of fanciful meaning in their own minds, or else did not trouble themselves to care whether it had any meaning. George came to maturity in an environment of this illiterate and unconscious ignorance concerning democracy. The pæan of praise to democracy saluted

his birth; and on every side he heard conditions, policies, systems, methods, even codes of conduct and social manners, either commended as democratic or disparaged as undemocratic; and all by people who understood neither what they said, nor whereof they affirmed.

For such as these, the word "democracy" was merely the emotional expression of an irrational and extravagant political optimism, released in the eighteenth century by the French Revolution. The philosophy of this optimism, such as it was, was shaped by the speculations of Condorcet, Locke, Mme. de Staël, Rousseau, Price, Turgôt, Priestley, and in this country by those of Mr. Jefferson. In the Philadelphia of the mid-century, America was still popularly regarded as the land of political promise as well as of economic promise. Political experiments which had failed in Europe would succeed here. America's great cardinal experiment, its constitutional system, would prove beyond peradventure that the common run of Americans, high and low, rich and poor, one with another, might safely be trusted with the management of their public affairs; its success would be a brilliant and overwhelming vindication of the practicability of "democracy" as well as of its right-

eousness. America's great example would usher in the tenth and final epoch of human progress as envisaged by Condorcet—the epoch of international equality and of individual equality, in freedom, in opportunity, and in the exercise of natural rights; in a word, the epoch of “democracy” pure and undefiled. Mr. Jefferson's writings—albeit with occasional lapses and questionings—express this spirit of excessive hopefulness on its serious and attractive side. Dickens, who visited the United States in 1842, when Henry George was three years old, and again in 1867 when George was twenty-eight, encountered this spirit of excessive hopefulness on its serious side, and also on its fraudulent and objectionable side as represented by sharking politicians and the jackals of journalism; and he recorded his impressions of both sides in a volume of travel-sketches and in a novel.

Associated with this spirit of eighteenth-century political optimism, and in large measure supporting and promoting it, was the spirit of eighteenth-century optimism concerning the moral constitution of man. Putting the doctrine roughly, George's early environment was one of sincere belief that the moral nature of man is essentially good. Like St. Paul, man always

wants to be better than he is and to do better than he does; and although often led astray by "the suggestions of the flesh and of the current thoughts," by the capricious and unconsidered impulses of primitive desire, his natural disposition is to make a return upon himself and do better. Thus every man is a Jean Valjean at heart; he is indefinitely improvable; no limit can be set to anyone's potential advancement towards perfection. The current type of religion supported this optimism; *estote ergo vos perfecti* could not have been said in vain. The Rev. Josiah Jupp therefore held that if the taint of original sin has been washed away, and the benefit of the Atonement duly arranged for, this optimism is permissible and should be encouraged. Murdstone made no objection; optimism is always a good thing, it helps business and tends to keep people cheerful; therefore he went through the motions of sharing in its spirit, and perhaps, in moments of unusual exaltation, did actually share in it. Nor was this optimism confined to considerations of moral perfectibility. The American system of free public education bore witness to the optimistic belief that intellectually, also, everybody is indefinitely improvable. Mr. Creakle acquiesced

in this optimism, and the discipline of Salem House reflected it to some degree; though as we have seen, its ways of reflecting it were perhaps somewhat tortuous and straitened.

In 1857 Henry George put behind him forever the civilization of Murdstone and Quinion in its most presentable and appetizing development, and went forward to associate himself with the civilization of Murdstone and Quinion in the raw. He left Philadelphia for good and all, never returning save for brief and infrequent visits with his family. He took with him, as part of the general furniture of his mind, certain postulates about the intellectual and moral constitution of man; about the political organization of society; about family life; about the nature and purpose of education. These postulates remained with him throughout his life, unchanged and apparently unexamined. He had not established them by reflective thought, but had absorbed them from his environment, as part of the air he breathed; and it does not appear that he ever questioned their validity. Thus equipped, he arrived at San Francisco on the *Shubrick*, after an uncommonly difficult and perilous voyage, on the twenty-seventh of May, 1858.