

IN 1866, the year following the Monroe League's escapade, George graduated up from the composing-room to the editorial department. When the report of Lincoln's assassination came in on 15 April, 1865, he had written a fiery anonymous letter which, to his surprise, his paper used as an editorial; he was then working as a substitute typesetter on the *Alta California*. It attracted attention, and he found encouragement to write odd bits on general subjects, some of them fanciful; he thought of trying his hand at a novel. His ascent of the journalistic ladder began late in 1866; he was then a compositor on the San Francisco *Times*. The editor let him combine some reporting with his typesetting, and occasionally gave him a chance to feel his feet on the editorial page. In a short time he went on as a regular editorial writer; and very soon afterwards he took charge of the paper as managing editor, at fifty dollars a week. This uncommonly rapid climb, accomplished in seven months, determined his activi-

ties for the next nine years, as those of a journalist and publicist.

It was as poor and irrelevant a novitiate for a philosopher as could well be devised. The journalist is incessantly preoccupied with what are, after all, minutiae, and in the nature of his profession he must make as much of them as he can; hence in his own eyes they come to assume a greatly exaggerated importance. The reaction upon his mental processes is therefore dishevelling; the reflective faculty tends to atrophy from persistent disuse. It is necessary to look a little closely into George's journalistic career, first, in order to identify such permanent marks as it made on his later activities, and second, to remark the extraordinary pertinacity with which the saving instinct of the philosopher kept coming to his aid unbidden in the face of all that the practice of journalism could do to repress it. Save him whole and undamaged it did not, and could not; he did not clearly recognize it for what it was; he was quite without preparation for identifying and properly entertaining it. Mr. Creakle had not perceived the real bent of his intellectual curiosity, and his relations with Murdstone's civilization, obviously, had not been such as to disclose that

bent to anyone, even to himself, and still less to afford it encouragement. Yet save him that instinct did, albeit with lamentable disfigurement; and in view of that ultimate partial triumph of instinct, costly indeed, but real, the years devoted to journalism, from 1866 to 1875, may be thought the most important of his life.

As sub-editor and managing editor of the *Times*, he was thrown into professional contact with public affairs. The spirit which he brought to this task was incongruous. As a rule, doing good is not news, and the "scheme of things entire," as presented to an editor's eye, is pretty uniformly sorry; and in consequence the editor is likely soon to grow a protective shell of cynicism. Seeing human nature and its doings chiefly by their worst and weakest side, he becomes content to let the world go its wayward course with no more than a formal and perfunctory expression of disapproval whenever the Mrs. Grundy of publishing-policy suggests that some such expression is appropriate. It is often said that the worst charge against journalism is what it makes of its servants, and in respect of encouraging a drift towards this sort of negative misanthropy, the charge seems well sustained.

George's natural temper was quick, hot, im-

patient; the discipline of Salem House, the hard, dogged, unyielding conventions of life in the family of a vestryman of old St. Paul's, the extremely defective type of religion and morals set forth by the Rev. Josiah Jupp, were by no means the kind of influences likely to modify it and make it amenable to the rule of reason. His more recent circumstances, such as we have seen them to be, would, if anything, tend to exacerbate it and present new objects for its exercise. Murdstone's faulty economic system had denied him all chance for fulfilment of the most moderate desires; in return for unceasing effort, endless willingness, unflagging diligence, it had all but starved him to death, and his wife and babies with him. The temptation to personalize the cause of one's afflictions is always present to human nature; he regarded Murdstone as a heartless and execrable tyrant—and even in the days of his great enlightenment, the vestiges of this repugnance never quite left him. He went into journalism in 1866, carrying the spirit of the crusading reformer; a spirit not a little unintelligent, not a little vindictive. He saw society divided into two classes, the exploiters and the exploited; himself being one of the latter class, he was uncompromisingly on

its side. He was for the rescue of Murdstone's victims; he was for hitting Murdstone's head whenever it appeared; and the newspaper was his weapon.

George left the *Times* in the summer of 1868, and went as managing editor of a newspaper just starting; he lasted only a month or so at this, as he was against the paper's policy. He then went into a scheme for reviving and vitalizing a recent newspaper-venture which had more or less gone by the board. This scheme shortly petered out because it could not get a news-service; the Associated Press would not supply it. The owner sent George to New York to arrange with the Western Union Company for a competing service, but nothing could be done; the Western Union's officials were polite and pleasant, but obdurate. All George got out of the journey was a reunion with his family in Philadelphia—his first, after ten hideous years—and that was inexpressibly saddened for him because his favourite sister, Jennie, was no longer there; she died in 1862. In New York he saw a contrast between wealth and want which impressed him profoundly; his first experience in dealing with "a grinding monopoly" had put him freshly in the frame of mind

to appreciate it, and besides, his ten years in California where as yet that contrast had not appeared, had increased his sensitiveness. The contrast was actually no greater than in Philadelphia, but was more conspicuous; Murdstone and Quinion had always vied with each other in making New York the stage of their most striking exhibitions. George's stay in the East lasted about five months at the most depressing time of year, giving him another disagreeable contrast with Californian conditions; he left California in December, and returned in May.

On his return, finding nothing else to do, he spent some months in miscellaneous activity; he pinch-hit at editorial writing; pinch-hit at editing an Irish Roman Catholic paper; he went back to the composing-room and set type. He could not get some \$700 due him for his wages and expenses in the East; he finally sued for it. Despondency set in again; again it seemed as if Murdstone was going to be too much for him. Presently, however, he got an offer of the editorship of a paper in Oakland, across the bay; he accepted, but not for long, as once more he could not get on with the owners. He then took the editorship of a paper in Sacramento, and this connexion lasted nine

months, during which, as in all his editorships, he had a fine stirring time; so much so that Murdstone, acting through the Central Pacific Railway, quietly bought the paper out from under him. His last venture was in the editorship of an evening paper which, in point of policy, was practically his own; hence it became a typical organ of "reform." It did a great deal of muckraking, handling all manner of abuses, great and small, with sensational vigour. Its independent spirit and truculent virility found a public which at the moment was much in the mood to be gratified by that sort of thing, and it became so successful that it got out a short-lived morning edition under another name. It lasted four years; then a depression came on in the wake of the great Eastern panic of the 'seventies; the mood of the paper's public changed, and George was squeezed out, too disheartened and disillusioned for any further effort. "Not caring," he said, "to ask or to receive any offer of employment from other papers, I wrote to Governor Irwin, whom I had been instrumental in electing a few months before, and asked him to give me a place where there was little to do and something to get, so that I might devote myself to some important writing. He gave

me the office of state inspector of gas-meters, which yielded, though intermittently, a sufficient revenue to live on, and which required very little work."

II

George's editorial experience, however unsatisfactory, did not impair the overwrought expectations which he put upon the newspaper as an influence in enlightening and reshaping its readers' convictions; indeed, it seems rather to have enhanced them. Possibly it is true that this influence was more powerful in former times and in other countries than it was in his own day and place, though one can not be sure that this was ever so, and if it were, he could hardly have known of it. He appears never to have fully grasped the fact that the reading public, in its serious moments, reads newspapers only to find there its own loose prepossessions and prejudices formulated with rigour and expressed with vigour; while in its lighter moments, it reads them for entertainment; thus justifying Bishop Butler in his observation that little of our time is more idly spent than the time spent in reading. George was never far

from journalism. He wrote for newspapers and periodicals all his life, as opportunity offered; twice after 1875 he had a weekly paper of his own editing. In 1879 he brought out a four-page affair called *The State* which did not live to reach a dozen issues; and in 1887, a larger and more elaborate weekly called *The Standard*, which he edited for almost four years.

George's editorial experience in the nine years ending with 1875 also confirmed him in the idea, almost universal at the time, that the quickest and best way, nay, really, the only way, to effect a reform, is through political action. With a specific reform in mind, the thing would therefore be to publicize it as widely as possible, and thrust it into politics as quickly as possible. His subsequent self-imposed discipline as a philosopher somewhat undermined his faith in this method, but such philosophical training as he was able to give himself was perforce too narrow to permit him to renounce it wholly on intellectual grounds; so while his philosophic instinct spoke out against it, his formulations were not definite enough to show him clearly why a sound instinct should do so. Emerson's saying that "the law is only a memorandum"—if, indeed, he ever met it—might

have set his mind moving in another direction; so might Burke's fine saying that "there never was for any length of time a corrupt representation of a virtuous people, or a mean, sluggish, careless people who ever had a good government of any form"; so might Spencer's profound and austere observation that "there is no political alchemy by which you can get golden conduct out of leaden instincts." But the great political superstition which attributes omnipotence to legislative action held sway over the American mind. Any social end was to be gained by the passage of a law, and the final and decisive popular expression of society's need or desire was that "there ought to be a law."

As an editor, therefore, George's mind inevitably gravitated towards this superstitious view of politics. On his return from New York, after his attempts on the Associated Press and the Western Union Company, the first thing he did was to put an anti-telegraph monopoly resolution before the California legislature. It passed, but it did not enforce itself, and Murdstone probably permitted himself the luxury of a grim smile at the young editor's infatuation. Under the influence of the twin superstition

about the curative properties of publicity, George had already tried to air the iniquities of the telegraph-monopoly in the press, sending a printed protest to the newspapers of New York, Philadelphia and other large Eastern cities, as well as to those of California. He had great hopes of this; he wrote a friend in California that "you will hear thunder all around the sky, notwithstanding the influence of the Western Union and the Associated Press." One New York paper printed his communication; the effect on the Western Union Company was as little noticeable as the effect on public sympathy; no one heard any thunder anywhere. George's attacks on the Californian railway-and-express monopolies, published in the New York *Tribune*, were no more effective; they merely got him blacklisted in the *Tribune* office. The paper had contracted with him for some letters describing the route of the great new transcontinental railway. He was to write these letters on his return over the route; he wrote some of them, sent them in, but the new managing editor, Whitelaw Reid, refused to print them and annulled the contract out of hand. Such were the uses of publicity, such was the practical upshot of the superstition about

it as an instrument of reform; a superstition which lurked in the depths of George's *Unbewusstsein* all his days, long after it had been exploded by the operations of his conscious mind. At this time he did not question it, he believed in it implicitly. With what superior worldly-wisdom might Murdstone, if they had been on speaking terms, have taken the young man aside and reminded him of Frederick the Great's saying to another impetuous reformer, "Ah, my dear Sulzer, you don't know this damned human race."

Full of the ardour fomented by these twin superstitions, George tried twice to enter the California legislature. The first time, in 1869, he did not get the nomination; the second time, two years later, he was nominated on the heels of an anti-railway governor who was up for reelection, wearing the Democratic label. George acted as secretary of the convention that year. The whole ticket went to defeat in a landslide. In 1872 he was elected a delegate to the Democratic national convention at Baltimore, which nominated Horace Greeley. He subsequently got the Democratic nomination to the constitutional convention in California, but failed of election. His whole career as a seeker after elec-

tive office in California was that of an also-ran. His party-title was Democratic. All the newspapers he served were Democratic. Civil-War Republicanism was one thing; the best traditions of Philadelphia were in its favour; but the Republicanism of special interests, high tariffs and carpet-baggery was quite another thing, forcing him to conclude that the Republican party, as he saw its performances under Grant (for whom he had voted in 1868), "had served its purpose." In all this he did not perceive that the so-called party-system in government is the fruit of one of Murdstone's happiest inspirations; permitting, as it does, the specious and attractive promise of a reform in flagitious governmental policies and practices, without the performance. Indeed, George never did clearly perceive this, although his philosophical instinct gave him the strongest possible intimations of it in later life. Cleveland's second administration brought him almost in full view of it, but not quite; one could not say that he ever actually took it in.

George fought all manner of battles during his connexion with the editorial side of journalism, but it might be said of him as an old legend said of the Irish, that "they went forth to the

wars, but they always fell." The most conspicuous instance of his being on the winning side was one where he showed what appears at first sight to be a rather striking reversal of form; this was in his vigorous support of excluding Chinese immigration. In an article written to influence Eastern opinion, he gave an extremely bad account of the Chinese immigrants, as "utter heathens, treacherous, sensual, cowardly and cruel. . . . Their moral standard is as low as their standard of comfort. . . . They practice all the unnamable vices of the East, . . . generally apparently cleanly, but filthy in their habits. Their quarters reek with noisome odours, and are fit breeding-places for pestilence."

From what is known about our Chinese settlers at the present time, this seems somewhat *ex parte*. One might suppose, on the other hand, that it may mean no more than that the immigrants in George's day were an uncommonly bad lot, and that George's error lay in bringing an indictment against a whole nation on the strength of a very inferior sample. Mark Twain, however, who encountered those same Chinese, and who was as keen an observer as George, gives a totally different account of

them; and he too wrote with a view to Eastern opinion. He devoted a whole chapter of *Roughing It* to showing that the Chinese were quite what we know them to be today, and ends by saying:

They are a kindly-disposed, well-meaning race, and are respected and well-treated by the upper classes, all over the Pacific Coast. No Californian gentleman or lady ever abuses or oppresses a Chinaman under any circumstances; an explanation that seems to be much needed in the East. Only the scum of the population do it, they and their children; they and, naturally, and consistently, the policemen and politicians likewise, for these are the dust-licking pimps and slaves of the scum, there as elsewhere in America.

The longer acquaintance which the country has had with its Chinese immigrants would suggest that this account is the more nearly accurate. George said many years afterwards that his account was "crude," because he "had not then come to clear economic views"; but it does not appear that he ever changed his attitude towards the main issue. In considering his attitude, it must be borne in mind that exclusion of the Chinese was a labour-measure; the hated

monopolists were large employers of low-grade labour, and organized labour feared that Chinese competition would drive wages down. Race-hatred and race-prejudice were the consequence, as they invariably are; there is no known instance of their appearance except where the fear of some form of economic undercutting is present. The labour-issue in California was clearly drawn and deep-cut; it was fought out with all the reckless and passionate violence of the untamed frontier; and George was unreservedly on the side of labour. His early anonymous contributions to the papers he worked for were signed "Proletarian." In the immense excitement over the news that the transcontinental railway was really a fact and not a dream, "after we had shouted ourselves hoarse, I began to think, what good is it going to be to men like me; to those who have nothing but their labour? I saw that thought grow and grow." How far indeed this narrow and sectarian class-concept had to grow, how broadly it had to expand, before the same man could take his stand before an audience and extemporize such an introduction as: "Ladies and gentlemen, I am not for the poor man. I am not for the rich man. I am for man."

III

It grew in a curious fashion. While George was fighting the battle of life as a reforming and crusading editor, pillorying all the abuses which he associated with Murdstone's growing power; while he was supporting the cause of labour at the risk of justice; wholly committed to an irrational faith in political action and involved in the tortuous course of political partisanship: a purblind instinct was working in direct opposition to everything he was doing and believing. It was working to take his attention off the supposititious villainy of Murdstone, and fasten it on the weaknesses of Murdstone's economic system; to show him that the aims of labour were wrongly directed, that persistence in them was ruinous, and that, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a labour-issue—that if Murdstone's system were revamped and put in proper working-order, every so-called labour-problem would disappear; that reliance on a tendentious vehement publicity is self-defeating; that political action is in its nature a preposterously ineffectual instrument of reform, and that faith in it is a benumbing and degrading superstition.

One may say, putting it broadly, that George was unconscious of this instinct's working; that is, he did not recognize the instinct for what it was. All the conditions and circumstances of his life conspired with his natural temper to militate against that clear recognition. This need not have been so; one sees with infinite regret how slight an initial change in his circumstances was needed to avert it; above all, how little insight on the part of Mr. Creakle was needed to avert it. In 1877 George told a story of his boyhood which to any reflecting person must seem the most terrible indictment ever penned against the discipline of Salem House:

When I was a boy I went down to the wharf with another boy to see the first iron steamship which had ever crossed the ocean to our port. Now, hearing of an iron ship seemed to us then a good deal like hearing of a leaden kite or a wooden cooking-stove. But we had not long been aboard of her before my companion said in a tone of contemptuous disgust, "Pooh, I see how it is; she's all lined with wood. That's the reason she floats."

I could not controvert him for the moment, but I was not satisfied, and sitting down on the wharf

when he left me, I set to work trying mental experiments. If it was the wood inside of her that made her float, then the more wood the higher she would float; and mentally I loaded her up with wood. But as I was familiar with the process of making boats out of blocks of wood, I at once saw that instead of floating higher, she would sink deeper. Then I mentally took all the wood out of her, as we dug out our wooden boats, and saw that, thus lightened, she would float higher still. Then in imagination I jammed a hole in her, and saw that the water would run in and she would sink, as did our wooden boats when ballasted with leaden keels. And thus I saw as clearly as though I could have actually made these experiments with the steamer, that it was not the wooden lining that made her float, but her hollowness; or, as I would now phrase it, her displacement of water.

One asks oneself in amazement how it was possible for Mr. Creakle ever to miss perceiving the bent of a mind like this; and having perceived it, how he could fail to encourage it to the utmost and help create circumstances for its free and undisturbed development. This very moderate amount of insight, however, lay far outside the scholastic equipment of Salem House, far outside George's whole intellectual

environment, early or late. The predominance of the philosophical instinct effected itself gradually, and against all the force of wind and tide. The instinct abdicated at intervals throughout his life, it never scored a complete and lasting triumph, but when one sees what its power and persistence was, and considers the crushing forces which were massed against it, one's emotion falls but little short of reverent wonder.

The first instance where this instinct emerged and took charge of his mental processes on a matter of public policy was not long after he arrived in California. He was then a protectionist, or thought he was, though he had never examined the subject. He said he "had accepted the belief, as in the first place we all accept our beliefs, on the authority of others"; back in Philadelphia his entourage had had it straight from Murdstone that one should be a protectionist. George said further that he remembered how logically he had thought the Confederate cruisers' raids on merchant shipping were a good thing because they gave California the equivalent of a high protective tariff against Eastern industries, thus raising wages and increasing the demand for labour; perfectly good sound doctrine from Murdstone's point of

view. Presently, though, he heard a very able debater give the arguments for protectionism, and they made him a free-trader on the spot. If what the debater said were true, it would logically follow "that the country that was hardest to get at must be the best country to live in; and that instead of merely putting duties on things brought from abroad, we ought to put them on things brought from anywhere; and that fires and wars and impediments to trade and navigation were the very best things to levy on commerce."

George's editorial experience brought him face to face with an accumulation of public questions, each of which seemed universally to be regarded as individual, distinct, unrelated; they were not synthesized under any general philosophy of social organization. The Chinese question stood by itself; so did slavery; so did protectionism; so did unemployment; so did the recurrence of industrial depression; so did the wage-question; and so on. Politics, by fastening now on one and now on another of these questions and bruited them vociferously abroad before the public as "issues," confirmed the tendency to regard each one as a special thing, to be dealt with specifically. Journalism

did likewise. It did not occur to anyone, apparently, to suspect that they might all alike be symptomatic of one fundamental and general disorder, and that they might be correlated accordingly.

This suspicion did not occur to George. In his nine years of editing he too, as much as anyone, had treated each of these public questions as an end in itself. Like any honest editor, he must have felt a vague dissatisfaction at observing that such treatment, even if apparently successful, led only to the raising up of new and unsuspected difficulties, each one in its turn to be posed as an unrelated public question, an unrelated "issue"; and so there was nothing in the method of crusading reform but the prospect of everlasting warfare. Slavery could be abolished *vi et armis*, and so it was; but what then? Telegraph-monopoly might be abolished; but what then? Free trade might supplant protection out of hand; but what then?

George did not rationalize his dissatisfaction in this way, nor could he have done so at the time; his preparation was inadequate to that. The philosophical instinct asserted itself only in setting the dissatisfaction alight and keeping its irritating flame alive. Out of editing and out

of politics; still miserably poor, but with the reasonable prospect of two years' bare living out of a minor political sinecure: he reviewed some of the public problems which had borne so heavily upon him all his life. He considered them with the same philosophical simplicity and directness which he had applied in his boyhood to the problem of the iron ship. In Philadelphia, when he was eighteen, an old printer had told him that in old countries wages are always low, and always high in new countries. He had often recalled that remark, and wondered why it was so; now he would really try to get to the ground of that phenomenon, and find out. A year later, on a topsail schooner carrying him up the coast to his ill-fated store-keeping venture in Victoria, he had heard a miner say that wages would not always be as high in California; "as the country grows, as people come in, wages will go down." He had remembered that also, observed that it was true, and wondered at it. Why should the mere increase of population have that effect, as obviously it did have? Everybody was hoping to see the country grow, everybody devoutly believed that the increase of population was a good thing, everybody was strong for attracting

population, all California was half out of its mind at the prospect of a transcontinental railway because it would bring people in; yet since the overwhelming majority of Californians worked for wages, and since the increase of population drove wages down, how could that increase be a good thing for California? He had asked that question casually, but the answers struck him as no better than the boy's theory of the steamship's wooden lining. He would dig around the roots of that matter, and see what they looked like. Again, he had been born in a depression, and wherever he went, depressions had relentlessly dogged his footsteps; why should there be depressions, and why did they so regularly recur? In the nature of things there seemed no reason for them; the country was rich enough to keep its thin straggling population busy as nailers all the time, and support them handsomely. He had thought, as anybody might, that there was something wrong with Murdstone's system which might account for them, but he had not set himself to discover what was wrong, and why. After seeing the show of poverty and riches which Murdstone and Quinion had put on in New York, he was tempted to think that Murdstone had deliber-

ately planned his economic mechanism to work that way, though he had not seen precisely how he did it. As an editor and publicist-politician, he had hammered Murdstone hard on general principles, but without knowledge of how much blame to assess him, or of the actual reasons for assessing him any blame; he merely followed the immemorial practice of editors and politicians. He would now do his best to temper that practice by injecting into it as much sound knowledge as he could acquire, and as much close reasoning as he could devise.

IV

He had already put his finger on what he thought to be one defect in Murdstone's economic system, namely: its sanction of the monopoly of land. His attention had been attracted to this by the rapid growth of huge holdings all around him; holdings which had been given away into private ownership through California's land-policy, which in reckless prodigality was equalled only by that of the nation at large. There was a land-rush towards the prospective railway-terminal as eager as the earlier gold-rush towards the mines; the land-

grants owned by the railway itself were enormous. This made talk; disaffected persons thought this wholesale surrender of territory into the hands of the railway-monopoly was bad, and they said so. George was one of them; his wrath at the railway-company's greed and ruthlessness—added to his conviction that its project boded no good “to men like me; to those who have nothing but their labour”—sharpened his scent for its iniquities. In 1871, therefore, he published a small pamphlet which he entitled *Our Land and Land-Policy, National and State*.

His approach to the subject was once more the approach of a philosopher, direct, simple and logical. Man is a land-animal; he derives his sustenance only from the land; and if he be deprived of access to land, he perishes. Land is one of nature's free gifts, and each one has a right to the use of so much of it as may be needful for supplying all the wants of his existence, in so far as is consistent with maintaining the equal rights of others. The right to property in land differs wholly from the right to labour-made products, inasmuch as land is not a product of labour. “To permit one man to monopolize the land from which the support of others

is to be drawn, is to permit him to appropriate their labour." Therefore a just and equitable land-policy would be to "charge the expense of government upon our lands."

Philosophical though its approach was, the pamphlet was unsatisfactory, and George felt it to be so. He knew it was not only an inadequate expression of what he wished to drive at, but an imperfect expression, an illiterate expression. He simply did not know enough to manage his task competently; he knew no economics, knew nothing of the history of his subject; his mind was moving in a mist towards something uncertainly and vaguely apprehended. Yet by thus feeling his way, he had gone a surprisingly long step forward. His premises were correct; he had a clear glimpse of the true law of wages; and he had a strong intimation that there is a causal relation between land-monopoly and the aggregate of all that is, or can be, comprised in the so-called labour-problem.

So far, his findings, needless to say, were all original, all arrived at by sheer force of logical inference based on observation; but they were by no means new. Others had made the same observations, drawn the same inferences, and had presented their findings in a more orderly

and accurate phraseology; some had gone even farther, arriving at particularized conclusions which George was not to reach until considerably later. In America, the doctrine that the earth belongs only "in usufruct" to those who live on it, had long since been laid down by Mr. Jefferson; a doctrine which he said, "I suppose to be self-evident." Paine elaborated it as George did, drawing the same distinction between law-made property and labour-made property; and instead of George's ambiguous phraseology about "land-taxation" and charging "the expense of government upon our lands," Paine introduced the clear and correct term "ground-rent"; and instead of incurring the confiscatory implications of George's word "tax," he puts it precisely that ground-rent is a debt which every landed proprietor owes to the community, thus leaving clear the distinction between taxing (which in theory may or may not bear on production, but in practice invariably does) and rent-collecting, which does not bear on production. George was vaguely aware of some such distinction, and felt for it fumblingly and in many words; Paine put it clearly in two dozen words. The perception of ground-rent as in its nature public property

appears in William Penn and Peter Stuyvesant; and by a remarkable coincidence, such as occurred between Darwin and Wallace, a few months before George published his pamphlet an humble tailor in Wisconsin, named Edwin Burgess, wrote a series of letters to a newspaper in Racine, in which he made a complete anticipation of George's final proposals for the communal appropriation of economic rent.

In the Eastern hemisphere George had a long line of anticipators, partial or complete, general or special. In 1850 his Jeffersonian doctrine of natural rights went forth to the world anew under the great name of Spencer, for all time the mighty Vauban of individualism. In England, James Mill, Adam Smith and Thomas Spence; in Scotland, Patrick Edward Dove and William Ogilvie, professor at Aberdeen; in mediæval China, the autocratic political reformer Yang-Yen; in Germany, Held, Arnd, Gossen; in France, the school called the *Économistes*, or more commonly called the Physiocrats, which included Quesnay, du Pont de Nemours, Turgôt and the elder Mirabeau; all these were forerunners of George, and their anticipations of his doctrine were extremely close. He took no economic position but that can be

traced back to one or another of them, often to all. The correspondences between his work and Dove's are especially remarkable; Dove published his *Theory of Human Progression* in 1850, and its resemblances to George's work were so many and so lifelike as to lead to a highly plausible but wholly baseless charge of wholesale plagiarism being brought against George in 1889, when his popularity and reputation were perhaps at their peak—or perhaps better, if one can set a time to it, when they were beginning to go rapidly downward to obscurity.

George knew nothing of all this; he wrote under no informative influence except the influence of what he saw going on immediately around him. His pamphlet represented observations on local circumstances and proposals for local application. He did not know that anyone had made precisely similar observations elsewhere, or had offered similar proposals. Such reading as he had done was not in that line; the literature of the subject was probably little available, nor would he have been likely to turn to it. When he returned to San Francisco from Victoria at the age of nineteen, there was a copy of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* on the

shelves in his boarding-house, but though he read most of the books there, he did not read it; in fact, strange as it seems, though after 1875 he had glanced at Smith here-and-there for reference-purposes, he did not actually read him until 1883. Apparently the only reading in economics that he did before the publication of his pamphlet was in John Stuart Mill's treatise; he looked into this while East in 1869, to see what Mill had to say on the subject of wages—it was a matter of reading-up or “cramming” for an article he wrote for the New York *Tribune*. He was always a desultory reader, having never been taught the art and practice of reading; the discipline of Salem House assumed that when one could make one's way with reasonable speed and accuracy down a printed page, one could read, and there was nothing more to be done about it. Mr. Creakle had laid the entire country under the monstrously erroneous belief that any and every literate person can read; and George was a victim of that widespread persuasion.

V

George published his pamphlet in 1871; he gave up regular newspaper-work in 1875. In

the intervening years he added to his equipment as a publicist by cultivating his gifts as a public speaker. He had done a little with it before, in a small way, enough to get more or less used to thinking on his feet, and he rather liked it; besides, now that he had made sure of himself as a writer, he thought it would be a good thing to have at command another effective instrument for impressing the public. Physically, his stage-presence was not striking; he was somewhat undersized, quite bald, with a reddish beard, blue eyes, and a reflective expression. His voice was clear and strong, but pitched unpleasantly high when out of control, and always without any especially attractive musical quality; and his articulation became, with practice, so good that his words could be understood without trouble under ordinary conditions. He had imagination enough to make him, in the best sense, an accomplished rhetorician, able to touch off the enthusiasm of an audience at will; he could have been a great orator of the type of Patrick Henry, relying on sound and style for his effects, rather than on sense and substance. As it was, he became one of the most powerful public speakers of his time. The London *Times*, by no means a prej-

udiced witness, made him out as quite the equal of England's foremost masters in the art of swaying a popular audience, Richard Cobden and John Bright.

In a very real sense, George's conspicuous success in public speaking was a misfortune, for it tended to confirm him in his sense of himself as a man with a preaching mission as well as a philosophic mission, thus heightening his inveterate confusion of the two. Everything which strengthened his urge to spread the Light, to persist in his career as a crusading reformer, a witness-bearer before the multitude, inevitably weakened and repressed the philosophic instinct's clear intimations of what his rightful mission was and of the course he might rightfully take with it; and of all such influences the most potent one, probably, was released by his extraordinary achievements in the field of public speaking.

In 1876 George made a number of speeches; he stumped the state for Tilden in the Presidential election which seated Hayes that year. He also gave a lecture at the University of California. In this way he got his name up, and in the following year he did still more speech-making and lecturing. His political sinecure of

inspecting gas-meters was on a fee-basis, and no longer gave him a living. Whether he had inspected all the meters and thus worked himself out of a job, or whatever the reason was, he found himself considerably in debt; so he took to lecturing in order to eke out his income. In these discourses he took up various aspects of the subject he had treated in his pamphlet of 1871—the subject of what he still loosely called land-monopoly—and thus was continually finding that each one of these aspects, in its relation to the others, would bear much closer inspection than he had given it, and consequently that there was much more to be said on the subject as a whole than he had thought there was.

Hence his dissatisfaction with his pamphlet grew. Towards the end of the year an association of about thirty men was formed in San Francisco to discuss the subject-matter of George's pamphlet, and these discussions helped both to increase George's dissatisfaction and to enlarge the scope of his view. Unfortunately the group at once also took on a proselytizing function, determined that "something must be done about it," which meant, and in the American mind could mean, nothing else but carrying George's doctrine straightway into

politics, half-baked. The group organized itself as the Land Reform League of California, announcing its purpose under a misleading and mischievous description, as "the abolition of land-monopoly." It operated for a time in the futile fashion of Adullamite juntas, and then disintegrated; it was the first of many such to follow.

George lectured under the auspices of the League during 1878, speaking with great emotional force; on the platform he was the embodiment of militancy, comminatory, truculent, purposing first to arouse his hearers' sense of outrage, meanwhile informing them as he went along. He denounced Murdstone with all the vigour of impassioned rhetoric, driving hard at "the selfish greed that seeks to pile fortune on fortune, and the niggard spirit that steels the heart to the wail of distress," and asking, "Shall the ploughers forever plough the backs of a class condemned to toil? Shall the millstones of greed forever grind the faces of the poor?" His rhetoric was magnificent, superb; when one reckons in the carrying power of absolute unquestionable disinterestedness which alike pervaded and enforced it, one may safely say that its like has never been heard in America before

or since. Yet in addition to the main point of fiscal reform which he wished to impress upon his audiences, his rhetoric withal conveyed certain adumbrations of further facts and relations which as yet he did not clearly perceive. While he was absorbed in himself as an agitator, prophet, reformer, coryphæus and herald of a new dispensation, the philosophical instinct was nudging his prepossession with poor and feeble but unmistakable suggestions of another mission which was really his; and for a time the instinct half-prevailed. He never wholly gave himself up to it, but sometimes, as now, he let it have its way provisionally, on the strict understanding that its workings should remain ancillary to his own interpretation of the main purpose of his life.

He was dissatisfied with his pamphlet from the time of its publication. Further thought, discussion, the half-heeded intimations of instinct, had opened many unsuspected gateways of investigation. He must write more; another pamphlet, or perhaps a magazine-article, approaching his subject of "land-monopoly" by way of the phenomenon of industrial depressions. He would try to answer two questions, no more; first, What is the actual cause of recur-

rent industrial depressions?; second, Why is it that increase of wealth is invariably accompanied by increase of want? As far as he knew, no one had yet answered these questions or even made a respectable attempt to do so. All the answers he had heard or heard of were superficial and incompetent; one might as well go back to the Rev. Josiah Jupp's hypothesis, and be done with it. Those social disabilities exist because God wants them to—that explanation at least had the merit of being fundamental and competent, if one agreed to accept it as true. George decided to see what he could do in the way of a better answer. Instinct had somehow managed to get into his head the bare unrecognized suspicion that natural law operates as inexorably in the realm of economics as it does in physics; and instinct now brought this suspicion to the front, and moved him to make it the guiding principle of his projected work.

As soon as he had sketched out his task, he saw that it was a large order, much larger than he thought; yet it had to be done. If he were to be the preacher of a social gospel, that gospel must be formulated with full account of all its ramifications, and it must be air-tight. This

meant that he must for the time being interrupt his career of evangelizing and become *ad hoc* a philosopher. He accordingly did so; during the next eighteen months—from September, 1877, to March, 1879, inclusive—he produced the book which he entitled *Progress and Poverty*.

It is today, in point of circulation, the most successful book on economics ever printed; its sales have run to a total of more than two million copies. In two respects it is unique in economic literature; it is the first and only serious attempt to establish the cause of industrial depressions, and the cause of involuntary poverty; and it is the only book of which the author could say after eighteen years of white-hot controversy, that he had not seen a single objection to any position taken in the book which had not been fully met and answered in the book itself. Its reasoning has never been successfully impugned, and its economic premises are of course beyond question; they are a matter of common observation, common knowledge. Count Tolstoy said most truly that “people do not argue with the teaching of George; they simply do not know it: and it is impossible to do otherwise with his teaching, for he who becomes acquainted with it cannot but agree.”