# 6

GEORGE'S ship touched at Cobh, which then bore the name of Queenstown, and he got off there, though his original intention had been to keep on to Liverpool; he was impatient to get into the thick of things. The Land Leaguers had advance-notice of him through the *Irish World;* and this, combined with his reputation as author of his pamphlet, insured him a rousing welcome to Dublin, whither he went as fast as a train would take him. The first thing in order was the inevitable public speech; four committees promptly waited on him to demand it. The crowd made a great demonstration after his address, attempting to unhitch his cab-horse and drag him homeward through the streets in a sort of triumphal procession. Not knowing the custom, George keenly resented this attention as "undemocratic," which is hardly the word that an informed person would apply in the premises; his use of it shows somewhat, perhaps, how fixed, isolated and mechanical his conception

of democracy was. After this send-off he devoted some days to discharging his duties as a correspondent, making acquaintances, learning his way around in the Irish end of the imbroglio; and then he crossed to London to see what the British end of it was like.

His frame of mind on approaching Ireland was not judicial. Two weeks after leaving the ship, he wrote from Dublin that "I got indignant as soon as I landed, and I have not got over it yet. This is the most damnable government that exists today out of Russia; Miss Helen Taylor says, outside of Turkey." At that time, certainly, the British State was quite open to this charge, as it was in Mr. Jefferson's time, when he declared it to be "the most flagitious which has existed since the days of Philip of Macedon." Yet George might well have asked himself, and so might Mr. Jefferson, whether the British State was not acting pretty strictly in character as a State—whether the French State, the German State, the American State or any other State, would not have behaved quite as damnably if placed in the same circumstances. Here again one sees an occasion which should have moved him to examine the State as an institution; to trace its history as far back

as possible, and consider how the institution originated, and why, and what its invariable primary intention, purpose and function have always been and now are, wherever the State exists. If he had done this, as he might have done if he had kept strictly to his character as a philosopher, it would have brought about some highly important modifications in his work. One would say that a thoughtful perusal of Spencer's *Social Statics* could not well have helped stirring his intellectual curiosity and turning it in this direction; but here, apparently, his bad habit of, as he called it, reading "at" a book, instead of reading it, stood in his way. It would almost appear that he never read anything in *Social Statics* except the brief passage which he cites in *Progress and Poverty;* this being the famous ninth chapter, which expounds "the right to the use of the earth," and which in 1892 Spencer indirectly repudiated.

George had not been many days in Ireland without having it borne in on him that politics, politicians and political organizations in that unhappy country were exactly what they are elsewhere. At the end of a month he wrote that there was a great deal of shillyshallying in the

Land League movement, "more than I thought before coming here; and I think this is especially true of the leaders." He was disagreeably surprised to find that "with very many of those for whom it is doing the most, the *Irish World* is anything but popular; and I have felt from the beginning as if there was a good deal of that feeling about myself." Naturally so; like Strafford in 1633, George and the *Irish World* were for a policy of "Thorough" in dealing with Irish affairs; they were for pushing passive resistance to a finish without compromise, and for sustaining their policy by a campaign of intensive education. In short, they were for principle. The Irish politicians, on the other hand, being politicians, were for only so much principle as could be manœuvred into consistency with a general policy of opportunism. Hence, as George wrote Patrick Ford, the editor of the *Irish World,* "we are regarded as dangerous allies."

This feeling grew in step with the growth of George's popularity. George was inclined at first, and perhaps throughout, to attribute it to jealousy. In one of his early letters to Ford, he wrote that "sometimes it seems to me as if a lot of small men had found themselves in

the lead of a tremendous movement, and finding themselves lifted into importance and power they never dreamed of, are jealous of anybody else sharing the honour." There may have been something in this, but as far as the principal men in the movement were concerned—Parnell, Davitt, Healy, Brennan, O'Kelly, Egan, Dillon —it is highly improbable that there was anything in it; indeed, George specifically exempted Parnell and Davitt from the suspicion of jealousy. The fact is that nothing throws a politician into such an agony of nervous horror as the idea of enforced association with a man of principle; a man to whom expediency means nothing, to whom opportunism is contemptible and compromise is utterly loathsome; and confidential association with George presented precisely this harrowing difficulty.

The Irish leaders smelt this breed of rat in George at the outset; his pamphlet exuded a rank unmistakable stench of it from every page; and when he arrived he found them ready for him. They were polite and pleasant; in fact, they were extremely cordial when circumstances threw him in their company, but they sought no such occasions, and when he brought up the subject of landlordism and the League

movement, they never had anything to say. They treated him to a fine exhibition of that peculiarly seductive indirection and mendacity wherein the cultivated Irishman is so exquisitely accomplished. As time went on, George made it clearer and clearer to the Irish public that he and the politicians were not after the same thing; their views and aims were not his. To them, the Anglo-Irish economic war was an end-in-itself; to him, it was the preliminary skirmish in a world-wide revolutionary struggle. Hence as George's popularity grew, and the disparity of purpose became more and more manifest, the greater grew their uneasiness and apprehension lest this cosmopolitan politician, as latterly some of them called him, should steal their show.

After the murder of the Chief Secretary and his associate in Phœnix Park, on the sixth of May, 1882, the "movement" fizzled out precisely as from the beginning any competent observer of politics, politicians and political methods might have known it would. It ended in one of those compromises which are knaved up out of the obscene freemasonry existing among politicians of all schools and parties, whereby opponents who roundly abuse each

other in public for electioneering purposes, quietly meet in private and talk turkey, with one eye closed. Parnell and Gladstone got together; they were the late Theodore Roosevelt's kind of "practical men." Thereafter George was an excommunicate outcast; even Davitt, the one man who had some sympathetic understanding of what George was driving at, became very fidgety about being seen in his company, and avoided him when he could decently do so.

## II

In Ireland, George thought of himself first and last as a combatant. He wrote Ford that "my sympathies are so strongly with this fight against such tremendous odds of every kind, that it is impossible for me not to feel myself in it." In his own eyes he was not a disinterested observer and reporter, but another Lafayette of old, bent on breaking the bondage of tyranny and oppression which lay so heavy upon the Irish people. In this capacity he committed acts which were thoroughly inconsistent with his actual status as an alien journalist visiting Ireland on sufferance—in theory, a guest of the British State—and therefore under an implied

commitment to abstain from seditious practices. In strict justice, he should have received a severe lesson in the proprieties, but Mr. Gladstone had strong reasons for keeping as far as possible on the blind side of Uncle Sam at the moment—the American State was under heavy pressure from the mass of Irish-American voting-power, and might at any time give way if its susceptibilities were not very carefully managed—so George's activities were not too closely looked into. Twice, indeed, he was arrested and jailed in Ireland, subjected to search, and brought before a local magistrate; but nothing incriminating was found in his possession, and he was released under a sort of Scotch verdict of "not guilty, but don't do it again." One may be of two minds about George's behaviour; certainly it was such as only an enthusiast strongly tinctured with fanaticism would normally exhibit, and no doubt the thought never once crossed his mind that it might be questionable. Whatever the motives of Mr. Gladstone and his associates may have been, they showed great forbearance with George, and so did a considerable section of British society which privately must have regarded him as a most insensitive person and a distressing annoyance.

One who has any acquaintance with England and its ways may see a great deal of humour and no less pathos in the account of George's first visit to London, whither he went from Ireland after a month or so, to carry the war into the enemy's country. Some few who were prominent in British literary and political society were also prominent sympathizers with the Irish movement; George had already met two or three of them in Dublin. These took him up, inviting him here and there in the regular way, to gatherings where seasoned persons of vast experience, daily and hourly in contact with all sorts and conditions of men, might meet him and look him over. One wonders mightily what they made of him. Those who were sensitive to such impressions, such as Bright, Joseph Chamberlain, Walter Besant, must have been struck by the essential goodness which pervaded his presence, his noble single-mindedness and simplicity of heart; and were all the more puzzled, no doubt, to find a way of reconciling this with other qualities which by all accounts he possessed, and indeed gave evidence of possessing. His status in the Irish affair seemed unnatural, anomalous; a Francis doubled by a Spinoza and fused into

a Peter the Hermit was something they were not prepared for; there must be an out about it somewhere. Decidedly the man was an enigma, but he came out of that extraordinary American civilization which seemed to be a breeding-ground of odd monstrosities—one might best perhaps let him go at that for the moment, and see what comes of him.

Others, like Browning and Tennyson, looked on him without interest and passed him by; he did not meet them, though once, at least, they were in the same company throughout an evening. He set great store by the prospect of meeting Herbert Spencer, but when the ailing and crabbed old bachelor-philosopher had with great toil and vexation dragged himself out to an evening party, and the chance came, George was grievously disappointed. The ninth chapter of *Social Statics* had prepared him to find Spencer red-hot on the Irish side, but the old man was not; perhaps out of indifference, perhaps out of sheer perversity, he gave George to understand that he was aggressively on the side of the landlords. They had but few words together, and parted on terms of imperishable dislike and distrust. It is clear from a passage in one of Spencer's later essays in which he

makes George out to be a collectivist, that he never read George's work, for George was one of the most formidable anti-collectivists, as well as the most radical, who ever lived. His work leaves not a shred of plausibility attaching to any of the Protean forms of collectivism now rampant in the world, whether Marxist, Hitlerian, "totalitarian," Fabian, "Christian," or what-you-will; and here he was completely at one with Spencer. He did, unfortunately, advocate the State-socialization of economic rent, as Spencer himself had done in *Social Statics;* it is the only weak spot in George's social scheme, easily amended and therefore unimportant. The only point that a critic ever scored off George was made by the Duke of Argyll on the head of this one weakness. George's closest approach to anything savouring of collectivism, however, was in this advocacy of a national, rather than a local, confiscation of rent; and this was not close enough to be disturbing.

The feud that smouldered between George and Spencer was by no means creditable to either, but it was so amusing in its naïveté and pettiness that one could not take it seriously or regard it as anything but a diverting display of two great men in motley. George thought

Spencer was the victim of a corroding vanity; shortly after their little passage-at-arms he wrote an American friend to "discount Herbert Spencer. He is most horribly conceited, and I don't believe really great men are." George did not have enough of the saving grace of humour to perceive that, on the evidence offered, it would have been perfectly competent for Spencer to think the same thing of him. In Spencer's view, a pernicious foreigner starring it around the country, stirring up the wretched Irish to a fever of treasonable turbulence, and generally laying down the law on matters of purely municipal administration—"a man with a mission," as the *Standard* ironically said, "born to set right in a single generation the errors of six thousand years"—why, to describe such a man as horribly conceited would be the next thing to a compliment.

George held to this view of Spencer throughout. When Spencer made an indirect revocation of the principle which he had laid down forty years before in the ninth chapter of *Social Statics,* George again wrote the same friend that "Spencer is going the way of Comte; going insane from vanity." George promptly attacked Spencer for his supposititious apostasy, in a

sizable pamphlet which provoked a considerable discussion in England, involving persons of prominence in both public life and academic life. Spencer made no direct reply, but he incited his friends to action, denouncing George to them with bitter vehemence. It was a sorry affair on both sides. As a matter of controversy, George had all the best of it; taking his arguments out of Spencer's own mouth, he had an easy victory, so easy that he might have gone to any length of urbanity and amenity without losing ground. His pamphlet was a superb masterpiece of polemics, but almost equally conspicuous for its bad taste and its utter failure in generosity; its flat assertion of interested motives on Spencer's part was wholly gratuitous, wholly devoid of foundation, and as unkind as it was uncalled-for. It at once pitched George's side of the controversy on a plane so low that no self-respecting person could bring himself to meet it. To disqualify Spencer as a sycophant to British landlords, "a fawning Vicar of Bray, clothing in pompous phraseology and arrogant assumption logical confusions so absurd as to be comical"—there is but one word to be applied to an imputation of motive such as this; it is scurrilous.

The whole episode is simply so much clear evidence of the supreme silliness of making a system of philosophy the subject-matter of public controversy or a campaign of propaganda. After all, now that the acerbities of debate have been long forgotten and the debaters have long since taken their places in literary history, the two great works still stand untouched; no spate of cavil, prepossession or personal disharmony affects them. The earth moved around the sun as regularly after Galileo's recantation as it did before. The validity of *Social Statics* and of *Progress and Poverty* would remain unimpaired today if their authors had disavowed every line of them. They are, taken together, the complete formulation of the philosophy of human freedom; the one complements the other. Nothing substantial has ever been said against either of them; nothing can be said. Anyone may examine them and make up his own mind about their validity. If and when the moral and intellectual capacities of average humanity permit their general acceptance, they will be generally accepted; and as Homenas said of the Decretals, "no sooner than then, nor otherwise than thus" shall their theory be translated into fruitful practice. Meanwhile, obviously, those

capacities being what they are, any attempt to urge upon the masses of mankind an acceptance of a social theory which they are unable to accept and still less able to assimilate, is to the last degree futile and mischievous.

George resented this limitation with all the force of his ardent humanitarianism, and his career as a propagandist was a continuous course of impassioned, reckless, almost hysterical kicking against its pricks. Spencer's evolutionary doctrine, which he never in the least understood, awoke in him a passion of the *odium theologicum* which would have delighted the heart of his old fundamentalist shepherd, the Rev. Josiah Jupp. In 1880, before the publication of *Progress and Poverty,* he mentions in a letter his desire sometime to write "a dissection of this materialistic philosophy which, with its false assumption of science, passes current with so many." Happily, his friends dissuaded him from this project, telling him frankly that he was not equal to it; he had neither undergone the discipline, nor possessed the information, necessary for such a task. His terms "materialistic" and "the false assumption of science" come straight out of the standard ecclesiastical glossary—one might even go so far

as to say, out of the standard ecclesiastical cant. The Rev. Josiah Jupp could pretty well have got copyright on them. One may quite see how George's view of man's psychical constitution as now existing—the view reflected in *Progress and Poverty*—must have seemed, not to the doctrinaire materialist and mechanist, not to evolutionists like Darwin, Wallace, Youmans, Spencer, but to the strong common sense of a moderate and agnostic Huxley, for example, who said in a letter to Knowles that "it is more damneder nonsense than poor Rousseau's blether." George, however, maintained this view to the end, and in the ehd gave his life for it: a nobler sacrifice was never made, nor a more ill-judged one.

Spencer was, in fact, as sound a humanitarian as George; he insisted, however, that philanthropic activity should be based on the consideration of ultimate good rather than proximate good. Experience has shown beyond peradventure that his criticism of State activity, taking shape in what we now call "social legislation," is abundantly sound. "In our days of active philanthropy," he says in a postscript to his essays on *The Man Versus the State,* "hosts of people eager to achieve benefits for their less

fortunate fellows by what seem the shortest methods, are busily occupied in developing administrative arrangements proper to a lower type of society; are bringing about retrogression while aiming at progression. The normal difficulties in the way of advance are sufficiently great, and it is lamentable that they should be made greater. Hence," he added, with reference to his essays, "something well worth doing may be done if philanthropists can be shown that they are in many cases insuring the future ill-being of men while eagerly pursuing their present well-being."

Spencer also, like George, believed that the moral and intellectual constitution of mankind is indefinitely improvable; and again like George, he was an optimist in regard to this improvement. He based both his belief and his optimism, however, on the postulate of indefinite time, which George did not. The postscript above mentioned shows that he had no illusions about the degree to which that improvement had already advanced, and therein he differed from George; but his optimism remained to guide him to a sound conclusion in respect of the function of a social philosopher in the circumstances. However low the degree

of development in the individual and in society, it remains true that—

> an ideal, far in advance of practicability though it may be, is always needful for right guidance. If, amid all those compromises which the circumstances of the times necessitate, or are thought to necessitate, there exist no true conceptions of better and worse in social organizations; if nothing beyond the exigencies of the moment are attended to, and the proximately-best is habitually identified with the ultimately-best; there cannot be any true progress. However distant may be the goal, and however often intervening obstacles may necessitate deviation in our course towards it, it is obviously requisite to know whereabouts it lies.

It was impossible for George to reconcile himself to this conclusion; to agree that at the present time, and with the average man's psychical development at its present extremely low level, it is the sole business of the humanitarian and optimistic philosopher to establish those true conceptions, to disengage and exhibit the ultimately-best, to show clearly whereabouts the goal of society lies, and leave the result to be what it may. Yet clearly one may see how far this conclusion is from inducing the "fatalism" which George erroneously attributed to Spen-

cer and his disciples; or from fostering either a Laodicean or a Corinthian type of cultivated inaction. It merely deprecates and disallows action which, however appropriate to conditions as yet non-existent, is distinctly inappropriate to conditions actually existing; and it reminds us that a course of such anticipatory action is bound to end in so worsening existing conditions as to put a realization of the anticipated conditions much further off than it would otherwise be. It counsels inaction where in the nature of things even right action—right, that is, in reference to another set of circumstances than those existing—is inadmissible; and the wisdom of this counsel is invariably justified in the outcome.

## III

Most conspicuously was it justified in the case of George's campaign of propaganda in the British Isles. When the bottom dropped out of the Irish Land League movement, George turned to the idea of pushing *Progress and Poverty* in England. He put in most of the year 1882 at this, so satisfactorily that after a year's stay in America he returned there in 1883 for another visit which amounted to a

protracted tour of lecturing and organizing, lasting somewhat over three months.

His first visit made him better known in England than in America, as was shown by a most amusing and significant incident. When he came back to New York in October, 1882, he found himself quite the man of the hour. The American Irish were in a state of frantic disgust with the Parnell-Gladstone compromise; they had given up a good deal of money and interest for a policy of "Thorough," and when the movement ended in an inglorious fiasco, they felt, not without reason, that they had been betrayed and bilked. The breeze raised in the United States against the partition of Czechoslovakia was a mild zephyr by comparison with the hurricane raised by Irish agitation against the treaty of Kilmainham. Naturally, then, Irish-American appreciation of George as the great apostle and prophet of "Thorough," the one who had manfully stood on the burning deck whence all but him had fled, rose to still greater heights. When his ship came in, the whole sum-total of Irish-led organization in New York City was on hand, electrified with the robust vivacity which Irish enterprise puts into such demonstrations. To get an idea of the

impressiveness of all this, it must be remembered that in those days the whole political organization of the city, and most of its politico-social and politico-economic organization as well, was Irish-led; and that this leadership also commanded the usual numerous retinue of non-Irish hangers-on who followed it for the promotion of their own purposes. So George, finding himself, as he naïvely said, "pretty near famous," was met not only by Irish enthusiasts, but also by uproarious crowds of miscellaneous gentry out of all peoples, nations and languages —Parthians, Medes and Elamites, Jews, Turks, infidels and heretics—all set to do him honour, and withal to show what the American Irish thought of the infamous Kilmainham treaty.

Of all the city's institutions, perhaps the most solidly Irish were the bench and bar; even more solidly Irish then than they are Jewish now. They combined with representative trade and commerce to give George a complimentary dinner at Delmonico's; ten dollars a plate, *vin non compris!* The guests represented everything that was influential, distinguished, accomplished. Hon. Algernon S. Sullivan presided. Rev. Henry Ward Beecher spoke; so did Judge van Brunt, Judge Arnoux, Francis B.

Thurber, and others as prominent. In the simplicity of his heart, when George entered the room and laid eyes on all this array of gorgeousness, he whispered to one of the steering-committee, "How did you ever get them to come?" Really, one must wonder how far *Progress and Poverty* could have got in New York where it had been bought at a great rate for a year, since none of these dignitaries seemed to have the faintest idea of who George was, or what he was, but took him for an Irishman, an Irish patriot who had twice been sloughed up in jail as a British prisoner! Even the newspapers which reported the event at considerable length next morning seemed, with but one exception, as ill-informed. One of George's friends, Mr. Louis F. Post, tells the story that after the dinner at Delmonico's, Recorder Smythe caught him by the arm and asked, "What part of Ireland does this man George come from?"

"He isn't an Irishman," Mr. Post replied. "He was born in Philadelphia, and so was his father before him."

The Recorder looked puzzled, and presently murmured, half to himself and half to Mr. Post, "No-o-o, that can hardly be; I was told that he was born in Ireland."

No such misapprehensions existed in England. Leading men among the British had a good sound idea of what George was, and in general they took him for what he was. In general, moreover, to their credit be it said, their idea was a fair idea, and their play with him was fair play. Dislike the British as one may, distrust them in their collective capacity as one should, one must with profound respect perceive in their treatment of George a notable instance of "the ancient and inbred integrity, piety, good nature, and good humour, of the people of England"—a characterization which was made, not by one of their own, but by an Irishman, Edmund Burke; and which still remains the truest characterization ever made of that people. There were exceptions in the case of eminent individuals; Spencer was one. Those who took up the cudgels against him often misunderstood both the substance and the incidence of his contentions; Bright did, and so did the Duke of Argyll, Chamberlain, Fawcett, Toynbee, Frederic Harrison, Conybeare. Nor is this to be wondered at when one considers that he appeared before the country as primarily a political proletarian agitator; the only gifts and methods which he put on display were those of

the popular orator, organizer, demagogue. One can only wonder, not that the philosopher was sometimes confused with the spellbinder, but that in the circumstances the distinction between them should ever have been drawn.

Yet drawn it was, and on the whole, quite fairly and carefully drawn, considering that George's public activities so little suggested that it should be drawn, and so strongly suggested that it should not. As a rule, speaking in the phrase of sport, George got a run for his money in England; his intellectual respectability was recognized and appreciated by representative Englishmen—distinctly so, by comparison with the persistent incomprehension and depreciation visited on it by his own countrymen. He was regarded as a serious person, a man of parts, to be dealt with seriously; not to be snubbed, vilified into obscurity, or victimized by a conspiracy of silence. He and his doctrines got, in short, as fair treatment as could reasonably be asked for them, and fairer treatment than a disinterested view of his self-chosen public character would lead one to expect.

## IV

George's plans for circulating *Progress and Poverty* in England were well laid. Unlike Americans, the British public has long been accustomed to paying for political pamphlets and reading them carefully; hence this form of literature is much better prepared and more highly developed there than here where campaign-documents are given away by the cartload and mostly go unread. As a first step, George bought from the Glasgow publishers a set of plates of his pamphlet on the Irish land question, and got out an edition of five thousand, to be sold at threepence (six cents, American money); thinking quite rightly that nothing could better stimulate a popular demand for *Progress and Poverty*. He also arranged for a new imprint of the latter book in the form of an overgrown pamphlet, eighty-eight pages quarto, at twelve cents. The initial expense of this pamphleteering project was met by a gift from a friend in America, which George acknowledged by saying hopefully, "Now we shall start the revolution!"

The book went like wildfire with a speed

that was extraordinary, even considering that the regular edition had done astonishingly well. More than forty thousand copies of the cheap edition were sold in the first year, and naturally the effects were felt throughout the Empire; one house in Melbourne sent in an initial order for thirteen hundred copies. Sales were promoted in the customary ways, by the distribution of samples, circularizing, advertising in the newspapers, although the book was going ahead so fast under its own steam that there seems to have been no need of this pressure. The *Times,* that imposing organ of the Empire's financial and commercial interests, gave it a five-column review, treating it respectfully, ceremoniously and favourably; and this piece of complaisance from the old "Thunderer" set the fashion for other British publications. Meanwhile George was busily lecturing, debating, organizing, forgathering with religionists, humanitarians, philanthropists, doing anything and everything, as he was fond of saying, to "spread the Light." Like his great prototype on the shores of the Mediterranean, he had early in the game—much earlier than St. Paul did—given up hope of the orthodox children of the Covenant. After three months of looking

over the situation, he wrote, "I have little hope of the literary class here—never at all of the men who have made their reputations. It is the masses whom we must try to educate." *Ecce convertimur ad gentes!*—and to this task he applied himself so vigorously that when he left the country he was, with the possible exception of Mr. Gladstone, the most talked-of man in England.

All this took place in 1882, during his first visit, while his status was nominally still that of correspondent for the *Irish World.* After his departure, his influence and prestige grew even faster. *Progress and Poverty* went on selling and being read; Englishmen really read it. The disciples which George had made in England, the organizations he had fostered, pushed the "movement" to even greater prosperity all over the Empire; George became as familiarly and favourably known in the antipodes as he was in Manchester and Glasgow. All kinds of offers came his way. He had an offer of backing to start a paper in London, a proposal to change his citizenship and become a British subject, proposals to write for British periodicals, and he was offered a choice of three or four constituencies in which to run as a candidate for

membership in the House of Commons. Finally it was proposed that the least he could do would be to make a second missionary journey through England and Scotland; and this he did.

On this whirlwind tour of incessant propaganda-work, he had two main objects in view. The first was to make unmistakably clear his attitude towards all the works and ways of collectivism. He did this in so aggressive and workmanlike a style that one wonders anew at Spencer's ludicrous error in classing him with the collectivists. He preached straight individualism by day and by night, in and out of season. On the Marxians led by the brilliant and able Hyndman, he declared open war, no quarter, and no prisoners taken. Socialists and near-socialists of whatever breed or brand went into debate with him only to die a horrible death under torture of the rack and thumbscrew. Never was he worsted, never forced to a tactical retreat. Never had the world seen such a powerful popular exponent of uncompromising individualism, nor has it seen another like him since his day.

His second object was to make clear his policy of "Thorough" in respect of the confiscation of economic rent. There were a good many

middle-of-the-road men in England who were prepared to go part-way with George, indeed who would be glad, some of them, to go all the way with him; but who thought that since the policy of "Thorough" was quite impracticable, half a loaf would be better than no bread. In principle, they would have readily subscribed to Spencer's statement that "the right of mankind-at-large to the earth's surface is still valid; all deeds, customs and laws notwithstanding"; yet they thought that for prudential reasons it was injudicious to avow this statement, with its obvious corollaries and implications, as a practical working-policy. At the same time, they were against the socialists' proposal to have the State take over the land and manage it directly; they were as yet a little too far gone in British tradition to get down such an unprecedented dose of Statism without gagging. Hence they took refuge in various characteristically "liberal" milk-and-bilgewater compromise-measures which aimed at placating everyone without satisfying anyone; such, for instance, as the eminent Alfred Russell Wallace's proposal that the State should buy out the landlords, and then farm out the land to actual users under a system of annual quit-rent.

George was down on all this sort of dilly-dallying, hammer and tongs. Again a simon-pure Spencerian, he was for "Thorough." He was for it undiluted, unadulterated, unscented; he was for it with no paltering, no extenuation, and world without end. He went through England and Scotland, breathing out threatenings and slaughter indiscriminately against the proposals of collectivism and against the wishy-washy suggestions of "liberal" opportunism. The land belonged to the whole people, or it belonged to the landlords. If the latter, either set of proposals was iniquitous, and so was his own. No interference with the landlords' rights of ownership was admissible. If the former, the landlords were usurpers, they should be treated as such, and the people should resume possession. Buying the landlords out, proposing any kind of compensation or recognizing any kind of vested right as established by prescription, was simply compounding a felony. Had not Spencer showered a devastating irony on the whole conception of prescriptive right? "How long does it take," he asked in 1850, "for what was originally a wrong to grow into a right? At what rate per annum do invalid claims become valid? If a title gets perfect in a thousand

years, how much more than perfect will it be in two thousand years?" No; no buying off of landlords or compounding their claims. But as against the collectivists, who were proposing that the State should take over the land itself, and administer it through a bureaucracy—again, No. There were the weightiest objections to such an irrevocable wholesale concession to Statism. Preserve the principle of individualism intact—nay, fortify and brace it—by letting the landlords monopolize all the land they like, and do with it what they like, but confiscate every farthing of the economic rent of that land, twenty shillings in every pound on full market-valuation, one hundred cents in every dollar.

## V

George's inspiriting march of progress brought results beyond his utmost expectation. Circumstances favoured him, as also they favoured the collectivists. The two rival social schemes ran neck and neck in the race for popular suffrage. Conditions were bad in London, and as bad if not a trifle worse in the great industrial towns which William Cobbett, years before, had bluntly called *Hell-holes*. Dis-

content was great, not only among the proletariat, but among that numerous class out of which George himself had but lately risen; a class so miserably poor as to be ranked a grade below the proletarian level. Growing also was the sentiment that something must be done; the earlier apostles of "social reform," Fielding, Dickens, Ruskin, Kingsley, were coming into their own. Philanthropy had a foothold in all classes; it was powerfully stimulated by a great output of exhibitory publications which echoed "the bitter cry of outcast London." Journalistic enterprise of the muckraking order found profit in serving up vivid stories of the vice and crime directly attributable to submergence in an environment "compared with which the lair of a wild beast would be a comfortable and healthy spot." George's efforts contributed directly to the volume of discontent. He had said, "It is the masses whom we must try to educate," and it was towards the masses that his efforts were continuously bent. He steadily incited the masses, as Burke said, "to a better sense of their condition," and did it with such force and earnestness that the masses thronged him, heard him gladly, read his books; and from this ac-

claim he drew an illusory assurance of his exceeding great reward.

Looking back over a perspective of almost sixty years, and asking what actually was the net result of George's efforts to educate the masses, one must answer, Less than nothing. Not only was it that the outcome was purely negative as far as any practical or fruitful acceptance of George's philosophy was concerned, but the only positive effect of his propaganda was indirectly to strengthen the movement towards the collectivism which he abhorred. The British State responded to the popular demand for "social reform" as Prince de Bismarck did in Germany when he took the wind out of the sails of his socialists by lifting the most eligible items out of their programme and administering them himself as a State enterprise. "If something is not done quickly to meet the growing necessities of the case," Mr. Chamberlain said, "we may live to see theories as wild and methods as unjust as those suggested by the American economist adopted as the creed of no inconsiderable portion of the electorate."

So something was done. The British State saw here a capital chance to work "the old trick," as James Madison contemptuously called

it, "of turning every contingency into a resource for accumulating force in the government." Every governmental measure of "social reform" meant more laws, more boards and bureaux, more coercions, controls, supervisions, surveillances, more taxes, and less freedom for the individual. In other words, it meant a progressive conversion of social power into State power, a progressive weakening and depletion of the social structure, a progressive strengthening and enlargement of the State's structure; and to bring this about was precisely the aim of the collectivists. George, by making himself a mouthpiece of proletarian discontent and at the same time persistently proclaiming his faith in political action, encouraged the whole body of "liberal" reformers to demand from the State ever more and more stringent, more inclusive and more highly particularized measures of coercive "social legislation"; and this in turn encouraged the collectivists in their designs for making a clean sweep of all social power by converting it at once into State power. That George himself should not have perceived this unmistakable tendency inherent in his own self-chosen, self-directed activities, is almost incredible. As the Duke of Argyll pointed out

from the eloquent arraignment which George had made in *Progress and Poverty,* George knew as well as anyone the monstrously evil character of the American State; yet it was to this institution that he proposed to commit the collection of the prodigious revenue proceeding from a national confiscation of economic rent, and the administration of this revenue for social purposes! But extraordinary as it seems, George never made even the simplest generalization from his own observations in *Progress and Poverty,* and therefore his achievements in Britain played straight into the hands of the collectivists; their course led straight to Statism.

One must now see that the upshot of the general movement for "social reform" to which George so largely contributed, is precisely what Herbert Spencer forecast in his essay called *The Coming Slavery.* The economic upshot is that as in Rome at the end of the second century, British productive social power has now been so far converted into unproductive State power that there is not enough of it left to pay the State's bills. The moral upshot is that individualism is moribund in England, beyond hope of revival. Its philosophy is forgotten, unread and unknown, and the Englishman rests with what

resignation he can summon, in precisely the condition of State-servitude which Spencer predicted for him.

Such is the great victory of British collectivism at the present time; such is the state of things in which Mr. Hyndman and his associates might well rejoice if they were here to see it; and the state of things most certainly ensuing might perhaps rejoice them even more. All that being as it is, there is an immense pathos in the unfailing note of assurance which runs throughout George's letters from England to friends in America. Hardly had he landed on Irish soil, when he wrote, "It is the beginning of the revolution, sure"; and again, a few days later, "In spite of everything, the *light* is spreading." At the end of his first visit, he wrote, "Sure as we live, we have kindled the fire in England, and there is no human power that can put it out." During his great tour in England, and afterwards to the day of his death, his confidence was unshaken. "The future is ours"; "The cause moves on, no matter who falls"; "Now the currents of the time are setting in our favour"; "All the new forces of our civilization are with us and for us"—so he wrote, and so he believed, to the end.