

From Philadelphia to San Francisco: The Search for a Meaningful Role in Expanding America

HENRY GEORGE lived less than sixty years, but when he died he had become a national hero and an international celebrity. His economic and social theories had reached lands that were only metaphors to Whitman. If the American Dream was ever a reality, it was in the social philosophy of Henry George's rather transcendental political economy that it was made concrete and pragmatic. For the non-American, and for many Americans also, George's ideas were a restatement in applied economics of the meaning of the Declaration of Independence. His major works, particularly *Progress and Poverty*, influenced the economic structure of nations, such as New Zealand, Australia, and Denmark; writers, such as Shaw, Bellamy, Garland, Tolstoy, and Dewey; political figures, such as Sun Yat-sen; and political movements, such as that of the British socialists in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century.

George belonged to both Emerson's America and the ages of Jackson and Lincoln, but he proclaimed the decentralized democracy of Jefferson. In many ways Henry George is America; for, having grown up in Jacksonian and Emersonian times, he lived through the Civil War to survive its divisive effects and to mature as a thinker in an expanding America which was destined to become a world power by the end of the century.

George was born in Philadelphia on September 2, 1839; and his early life foreshadows his destiny as much as it indicates the heritage into which he was born and which sustained him throughout his life. He spoke with the ring of the Liberty Bell in his voice, born as he was within range of its sound. Bernard

Shaw said that George spoke with evangelic earnestness "of Liberty, Justice, Truth, Natural Law, and other strange eighteenth century superstitions; and . . . explained with great simplicity and sincerity the views of The Creator, who had gone completely out of fashion in London in the previous decade and had not been heard of there since. I noticed also that he was a born orator. . . ."¹

Like Thoreau, George "travelled a good deal in Concord," for concord was what he preached and concord was what had impressed itself most clearly upon his mind and character. Of George, it could be said, "he travelled a good deal in Philadelphia."² The "Prophet of San Francisco," first well known in the city named for the saint who preached voluntary poverty rather than poverty amidst progress, was reared in the city in which the Continental Congress had met and in which the government of the United States was first formed, a city named for brotherly love. Like America, George went to the West to grow to maturity only; like America once again, he returned to England and Europe to preach the gospel of the New World to the Old.

I *Henry George's Early Background*

Henry George was born into a low middle-class family of English, Welsh, and Scottish ancestry that had come to America in the eighteenth century. His grandfather was a Yorkshireman who became a British seaman and later an American sea captain, so the lure and lore of the sea came to Henry George naturally. The family was pious and also active in the Episcopal Church, and Henry grew up well-tutored in the Bible and in the Anglican tradition. George came by his religious "bump of reverence"³ as normally as he did his experiences at sea. Nurtured by an environmental and national devotion to individual rights, expressed most powerfully in the Declaration of Independence and in the Constitution and Bill of Rights, Henry George's later social theories were deeply and continually influenced by the moral prerogatives of the Judaic-Christian consciousness. These three early and formative influences—travel, by sea especially; the Judeo-Christian tradition, in particular its moral, natural and supernatural views of man; and the American fight for independence, with its dedication to the republican and democratic

ideals of individual liberty—had a permanent effect upon everything George experienced, thought, or wrote in later life.

Henry George, the second child and first son of Richard S. H. George, grew up in a household that steadily increased in number. Not what could be called well-to-do, the George family never was impoverished, in spite of times when some spartan measures had to be taken. Though George's father had worked for years in the Customs House, at the time of Henry's birth he operated a small bookstore and book publishing business for the Protestant Episcopal Church. The family was then in fairly comfortable means. After spending three years at Mrs. Graham's private school, Henry attended public school. In 1849, a year later, he began at the Episcopal Academy. He did not remain there long, however, and his father placed him in the hands of a tutor to prepare him for high school. Somehow Henry George never seemed satisfied or settled in a formal educational institution, no matter how excellent. In less than five months, Henry George's formal schooling ended, and his working career began. His first position was in a china and glass importing house at two dollars a week. He was still several months short of his fourteenth birthday.

Henry George may have left school for good, but he never stopped reading. And as later in life, Henry George explored the written word from the Bible to the contemporary novel. His studies, however, were not entirely free of all formal patterns of learning, even immediately after leaving high school. The variety of subjects which interested George already indicated his eclectic tastes. Besides reading at the Franklin Institute, he also attended lectures there. His experiences at the Franklin Institute were probably the most important and the most lasting. The institution, named after the archetypal American self-made man, was founded for "the promotion and encouragement of manufactures and the mechanic and useful arts"—the kind of pragmatic appeal to which George would always respond.

To the young George, however, the city's wharves were as captivating as the Franklin Institute. He was often to be found there, and he had heard already from his father the many stories of his grandfather's adventures at sea. It was now 1855, and Henry George at sixteen, in search of himself, was literally to make a passage to India. And though it would have been pre-

mature for Emerson to have written his congratulations to a callow teen-age boy making his first voyage to sea, the father-philosopher of American Transcendentalism and Walt Whitman, its self-appointed poet (that very year publishing the first of the many editions of *Leaves of Grass*), might well have been struck by the symbolic significance of the ship in which Henry George first sailed from New York harbor in April. George's voyage on the *Hindoo* was to begin a series of experiences which were to be his Yale College and his Harvard.

II *Sea Ventures*

Through the intervention of friends of the family and with his father's understanding that his son had inherited his longing for the sea, Henry George left Philadelphia for New York to set sail as foremast boy aboard the Indiaman *Hindoo*. Perhaps, his father thought, such a voyage would exorcise the spirit of the sea that for the time had inhabited his son. During his voyage before the mast, George kept a journal, a habit he had before going to sea. And though the journal was only the record of a boy's first real experiences away from home, the practice it afforded for the setting down of observations and ideas forever stood George in good stead. Despite spelling errors and variations in his hand (hardly unusual for his age and experience), there are many impressive passages, written with expression and economy, in the journal. Besides recording the routine and the disastrous events of the voyage, George was capable of capturing the beautiful. On May 28, 1856, during the return voyage, George in a quick, young, and unpunctuated hand caught the mysterious beauty of the sea:

I witnessed this afternoon, one of the most beautiful rain showers that I have ever seen, it was about 4 p m the sun shining brightly the squall or rather shower came up astern the space over which it extended seemed not above $\frac{1}{4}$ mile in width & its bounds were as clearly marked on the water as those of a sandy beach, where it was raining the sea seemed as though it were molten silver which contrasted so strongly with the deep blue adjoining were [*sic*] the wind curling the tops of the waves made a most beautiful appearance, over the whole was suspended a small but most beautiful rainbow, the shower quickly came on us, but it was light, & as quickly departed.⁴

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The *Hindoo's* arrival in Australia occasioned a rebellion of sorts on the part of the crew. The sailors planned to leave the ship as soon as possible, for the country around Melbourne had become known as a "Land of Promise, where gold was to be had by all." The incident proved in many ways to be a foreshadowing of George's future career: he was several years later—on the West Coast of the United States and Canada—to get the gold fever himself. He was witnessing clearly, perhaps for the first time, a struggle between management and labor; and, like Dana and Melville, he saw firsthand the injustice of the laws of the sea, against which he willingly renewed the struggle in San Francisco in 1873.

For several days the tension aboard the *Hindoo* increased. Finally the Captain agreed to the sailors' demand that the American Consul come aboard to hear their grievances. Sitting upon the booby hatch, "with the shipping articles before him," he interviewed the crew individually. After hearing their complaints of sickness and injury, which could be blamed on the ship's age and condition, and to the bad treatment they had received from the ship's officers—all of which George records in his journal—the Consul found in favor of the Captain. It was agreed that they would be paid and willingly discharged once the cargo of lumber was unloaded. The sailors demanded the promise be put in writing, which the Captain refused to do. Unwilling to work without a written guarantee, the striking sailors were given a month's hard labor on board a prison ship. The Captain proceeded to have the *Hindoo* unloaded at perhaps less cost than the payment of the sailors' wages from New York. Later, with the needed ballast aboard, the Captain had to ship a new crew for the remainder of the voyage to Calcutta and the return to New York. Though the Captain was George's benefactor and a friend of the George family, Henry's sympathies in the journal were clearly with the striking sailors. Henry George's first sea voyage, then almost half over, actually began a greater and longer exploration abroad the more treacherous seas of political economy and labor-management relations.

Australia proved not to be the "Land of Promise." Unemployment was widespread. When the *Hindoo* finally went on to Calcutta, Henry George was again made to face the economic facts of life, for India was even more disappointing than

Australia. In the sea journal, he writes: "one feature which is peculiar to Calcutta, was the number of dead bodies floating down [the river] in all stages of decomposition, covered by crows & bromlikites who were actively engaged in picking them to pieces, the first one I saw filled me with horror & disgust but like the natives you soon cease to pay any attention to them."⁵ Poverty and starvation, and human indifference, characterized his ports of call. As one of his biographers remarks, "India was never mystic India to Henry George after his visit; it was an actual grim, and suffering India. And in course of time, when as social critic he was ready to compare people and their problems, having seen the land was to make the literature of India the more fascinating to him, and his argument the more effective."⁶ America was another land of promise, like Australia, and a new India, like the rich and fabled one of old. Was its destiny to be the same? What was the relation between progress and poverty to be? Henry George was one day to investigate the economic problems that beset the West in the hope that its decline would not be like that of the East.

After fourteen months, Henry George returned home to work as an apprentice typesetter. For the time, his confrontation of the exotic was curbed by the ordinary. However, this trade eventually took him into the newspaper world in the years that were to come, an everyday vocation no less important to his future career than those exciting experiences at sea.

During a period in which the slavery issue grew more and more intense, Henry George, once again in Philadelphia, was faced with the problems of the times—low wages and property rights. Though his family was Democrat, Henry was clearly anti-slavery. It was hard for Henry George ever to believe that people could be regarded as private property, especially when one day he was to deny that land itself could be so regarded. Friction at home and on the job, uncertainty about employment, an active interest in books and friends of some radical bent, the reading of Emerson, a flirtation with Swedenborg—all contributed to Henry adolescent restlessness. He was determined to go west. Finally the opportunity presented itself. Again Henry George went to sea, receiving an appointment as ship's steward aboard the Light-House Steamer *Shubrick* through the support of Congressman Thomas B. Florence. On December 22, 1857, the

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Shubrick left for the long trip down the coasts of North and South America. Though George wanted only to go to California, he had to sign the ship's articles for a full year's service.

Once again George kept a journal. The ship, after battling a severe storm off Cape Hatteras, put into St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands and then passed Barbados to Rio de Janeiro. The primary experience of the voyage took place at Montevideo. Retold later in a California sketch under the title "Dust to Dust," the incident involved the failure of a burial at sea, the coffin's mysterious reappearance by the side of the ship, and its subsequent clandestine burial in a little valley near Montevideo without the knowledge of the port officials.

After the impressive passage through the Strait of Magellan, the *Shubrick* touched at Valdivia, Valparaiso, Panama, and San Diego, and arrived at San Francisco on May 27, 1858. Henry George had come for the first time to the city in which he was to become famous and whose prophet he was later dubbed. Though his years before the mast were over, he was still to travel many thousands of miles over land and sea, often before the masthead of a newspaper and eventually flying the flag of his own light-house ship, progress without poverty—the American Dream.

III *Footloose in the West*

The eighteen-year-old young man who came to San Francisco was one who had sailed both east and west, had rounded the Cape of Good Hope and seen Tierra del Fuego, sailed the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, gazed upon the Pacific and knew the greater part of the coastal waters of the New World. He had in two trips almost traveled around the world before he was twenty. One day he was truly to travel west around the world, but that was long after he had become an international hero and a force to be reckoned with in Ireland, England, Europe, and America. Through the help of Ellen George, the wife of his California cousin James, Henry George succeeded in leaving the *Shubrick*, even though he had as yet seven months to serve. He had worked his way to California indeed, for it is clear that he never received his accumulated wages. Though his name does not appear among the deserters of the *Shubrick*, his leave-taking was far from normal.

After a short, unsuccessful trip north to the Fraser River country in British Columbia where the gold fever was intense, Henry George returned to San Francisco at the end of November "dead broke." Soon, however, he went to work setting type. Several months later, when business fell off in the firm for which he was working, he lost his job and went to Sacramento, picking up odd jobs here and there. Once again back in San Francisco, David Bond, who had secured the typesetting job for George in December, got him another on the *California Home Journal*. The job brought George into contact with literature once again; and as in the winter that had just passed when Henry was living at the "What Cheer House" where he had access to a rather good collection of books, he was able to read widely and intensively. During this period he first gave his wholehearted attention to Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, a book that was to figure continually in George's intellectual interests. Through 1860, George worked as an apprentice printer in anticipation of his twenty-first birthday in September, for then he would be able to claim the earnings of a journeyman and double his twelve-dollar salary. During the next year or two, he had at least six different printing jobs, finally arriving as an embryo newspaperman. However, the years 1860-61 were marked by two important events, one national and the other personal: South Carolina seceded from the Union, precipitating the Civil War; Henry George and Annie Corsina Fox eloped and were married.

In 1861, amidst war and marriage, George invested one hundred dollars in partnership with several others to buy the San Francisco *Daily Evening Journal*. "He pushed," Barker remarks, "for a policy of literary-interest and human-interest journalism, like that to which he was accustomed on the *Home Journal*." By summer, George was very optimistic about the paper's future; circulation was about three thousand. However, by early fall the newspaper was on the verge of collapse and the partnership nearing dissolution. The war was already in progress when George, three months before his marriage, wrote his sister Jennie about his thoughts and beliefs now that he had just passed his twenty-second birthday.

This long "millennial" letter of September 15th describes more accurately than any other document the state of Henry George's mind at this critical juncture in his personal fortunes. It was "a

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season of sorrows . . . Yet," as Barker writes, "the letter is engaging because [George] wrote into it a connected estimate of his roles in life, as citizen, son, and Christian, and as a man of personal ambition."⁸ George's comments about the paper's destiny are clear: "I have felt unsettled and worried about business—hoping that each day would make some change, that I might tell you of. In fact, until a few days past, hardly knowing whether our paper would get through the next day, as I feared something would occur to bring it to a close—and, in truth, feeling something like the sailor in a calm, when wishing for even—Storm or hurricane,/Anything, to put a close/To this most dread, monotonous repose."

It is interesting to note George's affinity for the sea image. He was surely having trouble reconciling his and America's dream of the millennium with the current facts of existence. As he goes on to say, "what a constant reaching this life is, a constant stretching forth, and longing after something. But you know what Emerson in the 'Sphinx' makes his 'Oedipus' say:

'The fiend that man harries
Is love of the best—
Yawns the pit of the dragon
Lit by the rays from the blest.'

After the sea image, he turns to Emerson, and then he continues: "And so it is—and so it will be until we reach the perfect, and that, you and I, and every son of Adam and every daughter of Eve, each for himself, knows we are very far from." This spiritual yearning is everywhere present in *Progress and Poverty*. George often wonders how man and how America is to secure the happiness they pursue, when life and liberty are not the concrete realities that self-evident truths should be. "Our country is being torn to pieces, and ourselves [,] our homes, filled with distress. As to the ultimate end I have no doubt; if civil war should pass over the whole country, leaving nothing but devastation behind it, I think my faith in the ultimate good would remain unchanged, but it is hard to feel so of our individual cases—On great events and movements we can philosophize, but when it comes down to ourselves, to those we love, then we can only feel—our philosophy goes to the dogs. . . ."

The entire letter expresses the alternate nay-saying and yea-

saying of nineteenth-century British and American writing, reminding the reader of the mingled doubt and belief that is evident in Carlyle, Emerson, Melville, and Whitman. George's dream, which has so much in common with Thoreau's and with America's, is best characterized by his own observations upon his personal and philosophic perspectives. "How I long for the Golden Age—for the promised Millenium [*sic*], when each one will be free to follow his best and noblest impulses, unfettered by the restrictions and necessities which our present state of society imposes upon him—when the poorest and the meanest will have a chance to use all his God-given faculties, and not be forced to drudge away the best part of his time in order to supply wants but little above those of the animal."⁹ By November the partnership in the *Journal* dissolved, and George entered upon a hectic courtship and runaway marriage in the worst of financial straits. For several years George was in many ways "forced to drudge away . . . in order to supply wants but little above those of the animal."

Annie Fox, who had been reared as a Roman Catholic, and Henry George were married in a Methodist Church whose broad-minded minister read the marriage service of the Episcopal Church in which Henry had been reared because it "more nearly approached the Catholic." George had shortly before joined the Methodist Church not so much from religious convictions as from fellowship with ardent Methodists who were his friends and shared his hopes for a better society.

The elopement unfortunately cut off Annie Fox from her family. Lodging in various places in both San Francisco and Sacramento, the war years passed slowly for the Georges. In the fall of 1862, Henry George, Jr. was born. The recent sorrow at the loss of his sister was thus eased some by the birth of his son. George's first biographer, Henry George, Jr., gives us a good account, although secondhand, of his father's reaction to his sister Jennie's death:

. . . springing to his feet and pacing the floor, as was his habit when mentally roused, [George] protested that he could not bring himself to believe that his dear sister was dead; and with the manner of sudden conviction, said that there *must* be, there *is*, another life—that the soul *is* immortal. But his words expressed his longing, rather than his conviction. Immortality he now earn-

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estly wished to believe in. But the theology of his youth did not persuade him, and it was not until many years afterwards when pursuing the great inquiry that produced "Progress and Poverty" that he perceived the "grand simplicity and unspeakable harmony of universal law," that beneficence and intelligence govern social laws, instead of blind, clashing forces; and then faith from reason came and immortality became a fixed belief.¹⁰

The statement on immortality which concludes *Progress and Poverty* is eloquent testimony to the conviction that actually did characterize Henry George's intellectual maturity. The appeal which *Progress and Poverty* had for many people can be traced in part to its transcendental expressions of religious belief as much as to its economic pragmatism.

IV *Burning Issues and the Beginnings of a Newspaper Career*

In 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, two more events figured in the life of the young Henry George: President Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation and Leland Stanford, the president of the Central Pacific Railroad Company, became the Republican Governor of the State of California. As a fellow Republican, George shared the national views of the party; but his ideas and those of Stanford, whatever personal admiration George had for Stanford as a fellow townsman, were inevitably to clash. Several years later when George's views were beginning to crystallize, his opposition to the new western railroad barons was expressed in part in one of his first extended essays, "What the Railroad Will Bring Us" (1868). In 1863, however, Henry George was still struggling to create a system of his own and to live by it. The diary he kept during these years of personal privation records his decision for a career as a writer. By the spring of 1865, he writes, "Concluded that the best I could do would be to go home and write a little. Came home and wrote for the sake of practice an essay on the 'Use of Time,' which occupied me until Annie prepared dinner."¹¹ He was in actuality still a printer, and jobs came and went as he moved from paper to paper in Sacramento and in San Francisco.

George often went through the kind of mental torture which the self-educated man often inflicts upon himself. Writing about

"Time" made him realize how much of his twenty-five years had been spent uselessly. His regret reflects the standards of an age different from today's; for, though George was still to see his way, he had stored up experiences that were to make it possible for him, like Melville,¹² to date his life from his twenty-fifth year. He was unimpressed by the fact that his experiences were in some ways more valuable than a formal education, no matter how much he may have felt the absence of the latter. He decided to "endeavour to acquire facility and elegance in the expression of [his] thoughts by writing essays or other matters which [he] will preserve for future comparison. And in this practice it will be well," he concluded, "to aim at mechanical neatness and grace, as well as at proper and polished language."¹³

Interestingly enough, George turned to writing about the problem of labor; and in correspondence with the *Journal of the Trades and Workmen* he wrote on the printers' union and maritime labor. Soon after his "article about laws relating to sailors," George published a "Plea for the Supernatural" in the *Californian* which was also publishing the work of other young writers, including Mark Twain and Bret Harte. George drew on his sailing experiences aboard the *Hindoo* and the *Shubrick*. The "Plea for the Supernatural" was even republished in the Boston *Saturday Evening Gazette*. And though George's biographers are correct in not taking this essay as a "literal confession of belief,"¹⁴ it is nevertheless interesting to note that the pragmatic and the supernatural were ever present in George's mental make-up. And it is worth remembering that his masterwork, *Progress and Poverty*, is both pragmatic and idealistic, economic and religious, hard-headed and transcendental. For George, the natural and the supernatural were equal parts of the human continuum.

Within a month of the appearance of George's articles in the California magazines of early spring 1865, the Civil War came to an end. On the morning of April 15, 1865, news reached San Francisco that President Lincoln had been assassinated. Amid the riotous turmoil and shocked sorrow, George wrote a lengthy letter to the *Alta California*. Tempted to take part with some of his friends who were vengefully destroying the type and offices of pro-southern newspapers, his frustration at not being able to exercise his passions by physical means forced him to his pen. The letter "Sic Semper Tyrannis!" was printed in a special

edition of the *Alta California* on April 16th. A eulogy of Lincoln, the piece captured the irony of the death in April—"What fitting time! Good Friday! . . ." George proclaimed: "While the world lasts will this scene be remembered. As a martyr of freedom—as the representative of the justice of a great nation, the name of the victim will live forever; and the Proclamation of Emancipation, signed with the name and sealed with the blood of *Abraham Lincoln* will remain a land mark in the progress of the race." He pressed the irony of Booth's alleged words, "*Sic semper tyrannis: the South is avenged!*"

A week or so later, George wrote another letter, more sober and restrained, which was simply entitled *Abraham Lincoln* and which appeared as a front-page editorial in the *Alta California's* regular Sunday edition. Once again George returned to the theme of democratic idealism, "No other system would have produced him [Lincoln]; through no crowd of courtiers could such a man have forced his way. . . . And, as in our time of need, the man that was needed came forth, let us know that it will always be so, and that under our institutions, when the rights of the people are endangered, from their ranks will spring the men for the times." Lincoln was "no common man, yet the qualities which made him great were eminently common."

George's first letter led to his being offered his first full-fledged reportorial job. Besides his assignment to describe the mourning for Lincoln in the city, the *Alta California* also asked him to send back dispatches from Mexico where George was planning to go in what proved to be an abortive expedition in support of Juarez. In some ways George never gave up his romantic revolutionary principles—a state of mind characteristically American. The underdog always won George's sympathies if his cause was just. Soon after the failure of the expedition—the ship was halted by the Coast Guard—George joined the Monroe League, a short-lived organization which supported the point of view of the Monroe Doctrine and republican freedom for Mexico.

Like Milton or any modern supporter of war crimes trials, George later, as a responsible newspaper editor, defended the execution of Maximilian. His voice, that of English liberty and Protestant democracy, was justifying the right of the people to depose its leader, whether king or president. On July 3, 1867, in

a San Francisco *Times* editorial, George wrote that the execution of Maximilian was "a protest against the right of Kings to cause suffering and shed blood for their own selfish ends. . . . It will teach princes and princelings to be more cautious how they endeavour to subvert the liberties of a free people."

Through the next year, much of it spent in Sacramento, George wrote a number of essays, some of which appeared in the Sacramento *Union*. After using his sea experiences for a few more pieces on the supernatural, he turned his attention to labor questions, writing under the apt pen name "Proletarian." His articles were well received, but it was essentially free-lance work. With a wife and three children to support, a steady income was a necessity. In November, 1866, the opportunity finally came: George joined the newly organized San Francisco *Times*. By the next June, he was managing editor. He remained in this position for about fourteen months, and this tenure as an editor marked his first extended experience at what was to be, generally speaking, his life's work.

Of the *Times* period as a preparation for things to come, his son writes that it "related to style in writing and development in thinking. While his style always had been free and natural, he had from the beginning aimed at compactness, and it was to the necessity of re-writing news articles and compressing them into condensed items . . ."15 that proved lastingly invaluable. Besides affecting his style, George's first editorial experiences forced him to examine in detail the social and economic problems of California, including labor supply and wages, land settlement and land policy. Barker sees the later Henry George in one of the *Times* editorials:

"The interests of the State are the interests of its citizens—the greater the rewards which labor receives, the higher the estimation in which it is held, the greater the equality of the distribution of earnings and property, the more virtuous, intelligent and independent are the masses of the people, the stronger, richer, and nobler is the state. Free trade, labor-saving machinery, co-operative organizations, will enable us to produce more cheaply, and with a positive increase of wages; but it would be better for California that she should retain only her present sparse but independent and comfortable population, than that she should have all of England's wealth and millions with all of her destitution

and pauperism." It would be interesting to know what writers or books George had in mind as the sources of his "fundamental principles of political economy." [Mentioned earlier in this editorial debate with the *Alta California*.] Perhaps he had drawn on some ideas of Wells or had been influenced by Henry Carey. His editorial reads more like the 1930s than the 1860s, and more like Henry George's future books than like the British treatises on economics which might have come most readily to hand for reference.¹⁶

George was clearly in the process of working his way back to Jacksonian principles and to the party of his father, as well as looking into the future. Once slavery had been "abolished" and Lincoln was no more, George saw that the Republican Party and policy was to become the enemy of the reform he sought. Like the *Times* itself, however, George was still officially Republican, but *he* was also a radical. Both he and the paper voiced concern that private speculation was destroying American freedom and that the loss of free or public lands for public use would eventually mean the end of political and economic liberty, and the end of equality.

When George left the *Times* in August, 1868, the railroad question was receiving editorial attention. In October, George published a seven-thousand-word article in the *Overland Monthly* entitled "What the Railroad Will Bring Us." It was the lead article in the *Overland's* fourth issue; Noah Brooks was one of the journal's assistant editors, and among its contributors were Mark Twain, Bret Harte, and Joaquin Miller.

"What the Railroad Will Bring Us" summarizes George's political and economic views before he headed east in the employ of the San Francisco *Herald* to do battle with monopoly for the first time. George wrote not only in his usual prophetic style, but he sounded a warning which has since proven to have been justified:

The truth is, that the completion of the railroad and the consequent great increase of business and population, will not be a benefit to all of us, but only to a portion. As a general rule (liable of course to exceptions) those who have, it will make wealthier; for those who have not, it will make it more difficult to get. Those who have lands, mines, established businesses, special abilities of certain kind, will become richer for it and find

increased opportunities; those who have only their own labour will become poorer, and find it harder to get ahead—first because it will take more capital to buy land or to get into business, and second, because as competition reduces the wages of labour, this capital will be harder for them to obtain.

. . . let us not forget that the character of a people counts for more than their numbers; that the distribution of wealth is even a more important matter than its production. Let us not imagine ourselves in a fool's paradise, where the golden apples will drop into our mouths; let us not think that after the stormy seas and head gales of all the ages, *our* ship has at last struck the trade winds of time. The future of our State, of our nation, of our race, looks fair and bright; perhaps the future looked so to the philosophers who once sat in the porches of Athens—to the unremembered men who raised the cities whose ruins lie south of us. Our modern civilization strikes broad and deep and looks high. So did the tower which men once built almost unto heaven.¹⁷

Henry George's style is already marked: the sea metaphor with the effective pun upon "trade," the sense of history, the emphasis upon character and ethics, and the biblical allusion. Henry George very early sided with labor, and sought an increased distribution of wealth. His description of what the railroad would bring, besides its obvious benefits, shows us the soil from which were to grow the vines that were to produce, in turn, the grapes of wrath of the later California of John Steinbeck. The end of the year 1868 brought new challenges and a decade of thought and experience, all of which went into the making of *Progress and Poverty*.