

Progress and Poverty:
A Solution to an Enigma
Addressed to the World

I *The Publication of Progress and Poverty*

PROGRESS AND POVERTY was the summing up of Henry George's California experience; and though it was not until the fall of 1879 that it appeared in print, George's diary indicates that a completed manuscript was sent to New York in March of the same year. The diary also tells us that he had "Commenced *Progress and Poverty*" two years before in September, 1877. Much of the United States was then suffering from the effects of an economic depression, a condition that still prevailed generally in 1879. Strikes and riots were not infrequent. In many states troops were under arms, and in California the decline in the shipments of silver from the Comstock Lode and the winter drought led to increased unemployment, reduced wages, and a general decline of stocks. George himself was in debt. During the spring and summer of 1877, he delivered those lectures (including the University of California speech) which no doubt confirmed his long-standing plans to write a book on economic conditions and political objectives.

Essentially fruitless activity with the Land Reform League was the only real interruption in his intense labors on *Progress and Poverty*, since his occasional speeches and lectures served to warm him to his task. For a year and a half at least, he worked steadily on the manuscript. When it was finished in March, 1879, George found that he could not secure a publisher who would agree to publish a long treatise on political economy. Nobody guessed that *Progress and Poverty* was to be the *Uncle*

Tom's Cabin of the 1880's. Certainly for a book on political economy its unparalleled success was not only unanticipated but also astounding. Like Mrs. Stowe's novel, *Progress and Poverty* was addressed to the question of slavery—economic or wage slavery. And the landowner and monopolist were the Simon Legrees of the piece.

According to his diary, George sent a copy of the manuscript of *Progress and Poverty* to Appleton & Co., in New York on March 22, 1879, because he did not believe any of the firms on the West Coast were prepared to handle the book. Also since Appleton published books and series of books on philosophy, science, and economics, like those of Herbert Spencer, whom George had read and considered to have influenced him, he sent the manuscript to the East. However, it was declined, George receiving word by mid-April. Soon Harper's and Scribner's joined Appleton by rejecting it also.

Having taken to heart the advice that it would be impossible to find a publisher willing to print the book unless the author provided the plates himself, George, with no money but with the help of his old partner and friend, Hinton, began setting the type in mid-May. Such an arrangement made it convenient for him to revise his work as the type was being set, and the book's style and organization were generally improved. By the late summer a small "Author's Edition" of five hundred copies was printed and distributed. Sending a copy to his father in Philadelphia, George wrote prophetically and emotionally, "It represents a great deal of work and a good deal of sacrifice, but now it is done. It will not be recognized at first—may be not for some time—but it will ultimately be considered a great book, will be published in both hemispheres, and be translated into different languages. This I know, though neither of us may ever see it here."¹

Two weeks later Appleton wrote George that it had reconsidered and would be willing to publish the book now that the author could supply the plates. George had sent unbound copies of the "Author's Edition" to a number of publishers in both England and the United States as soon as they had come off the press, but Appleton was the only one that made him a proposal. They said they would issue it at once at two dollars a copy with a royalty of fifteen per cent to the author. Appleton scheduled

the New York Edition for the following January (1880). George's relief matched his satisfaction. In a letter to a friend in the East, George wrote about the book with the same confidence he had displayed in his letter to his father:

If the book gets well started, gets before the public in such a way as to attract attention, I have no fear for it. I know what it will encounter; but, for all that, it has in it the power of truth. When you read it in its proper order and carefully, you will see, I think, that it is the most important contribution to the science of political economy yet made; that, on their own ground, and with their own weapons, I have utterly broken down the whole structure of the current political economy, which you so truly characterise. The professors will first ignore, then pooh-pooh, and then try to hold the shattered fragments of their theories together; but this book opens the discussion along lines on which they cannot make a successful defence.²

While awaiting possible publication of *Progress and Poverty* in the spring of 1879, George had begun a weekly called *The State*, which ran only eleven issues and which had to be abandoned in order to give him the necessary time to work on his author's edition through the summer. It was the second paper he had started after having left the *Post*. In 1875 he had begun the *Ledger*, a small morning daily with an illustrated Sunday edition which he also had to abandon because he tried to publish it without seeking advertisements; he had hoped that advertisers would seek out the paper once they recognized its worth. Needless to say, its existence was short-lived.

In *The State* he had written, "Are men free when they have to strain, and strive, and scheme, and worry, to satisfy the mere animal wants of life? Are men free when, pressed by the fear of want, they are forced to starve their higher natures and to tread under foot, in the fierce struggle for wealth, love, honor, justice and mercy?" To these questions he addressed *Progress and Poverty*. "It is the institutions of man, not the edicts of God that enslave men," he wrote. "It is the greed and ignorance of mankind, not the niggardliness of nature that show themselves in poverty and misery, and want-produced vice. Yet while we prate of freedom, we strangle freedom; while we thank God for liberty, we load liberty with fetters."³ Such sentences express the

spirit, style, and diction of *Progress and Poverty*. Henry George's plea for social reform was gaining clarity and strength.

Given the conditions of the time and the hope to which he gave voice, George was soon to find a vast audience ready to listen. His hope and his vision were irresistible, and they reflected the general utopian dreams of many late nineteenth-century essays and books as much as they described the need for social reform that also characterized a large body of the literature of the same period. John Dewey has said that George was "typically American" and that his philosophy was a kind of "Practical Idealism." But though the first description is indeed correct, the second can be misleading. George's philosophy can only be called "Practical Idealism" if one understands, as Dewey does, that it is a *practical* program that depends upon man's good will for its success. That is why George has had many adherents but never the majority of opinion necessary to put his program into action on a large scale. The "Practical" becomes *impractical* if we do not share George's "Idealism." His views require a faith of a very special kind, which he briefly expressed in his lecture on Moses. His economic reforms are part of the "full sweep" of his ideas.

Dewey goes on to say that "In spite, therefore, of the immense circulation of George's writings, especially of *Progress and Poverty* (which I suppose has had a wider distribution than almost all other books on political economy put together), the full sweep of George's ideas is not at all adequately grasped by the American public, not even by that part which has experienced what we call a higher education. Henry George is one of a small number of definitely original social philosophers that the world has produced."⁴ In writing of this "great intellectual loss," Dewey says that he is speaking only of "acquaintance" with George's ideas "irrespective of adoption or nonadoption" of his policies. Dewey's observations are those of a student of social philosophy some fifty years after the fact.

But even if a modern reader were as sympathetic to some of George's views as Dewey was, George's success in his own time was due to facts and factors that are not explicit in his work when it is studied for itself in academic isolation—even by an objective student of political economy. The influence George had upon his readers can never be traced solely to his political

economy. In the 1880's *Progress and Poverty* had the effect of a bible, and George often had the impact of a prophet. Furthermore, accepting George's views, even in part, meant first sharing his informed optimism and his idealism rather than his pragmatism. The practicality of his program, no matter how convincing in and by itself, demanded an idealistic view of man and that was why he was to run afoul of both the political conservative and the doctrinaire socialist.

II *The Form and Style of Progress and Poverty*

The fundamental character of *Progress and Poverty* is to be found in its attempt to harmonize the individualism of capitalist economics with the communalistic goals of Christian charity, and the form that it takes is basically related to George's idealistic and pragmatic effort to solve an enigma even greater than that of the ironically parallel advance of poverty and progress which he considered the problem of the times. This duality has been recognized by some of George's best critics who trace his sensitivity to this dilemma to both his heritage and his knowledge of Thomas Henry Buckle's *History of Civilization*, in particular the "Examination of the Scotch Intellect during the Eighteenth Century" to which George refers at the beginning of his refutation of Malthus in *Progress and Poverty* (Book II, Chapter I):

Commenting on Adam Smith, the historian noted that the great economist had written his two treatises from quite separate premises about human nature and had never reconciled them. "In his *Moral Sentiments*, he ascribes our actions to sympathy; in his *Wealth of Nations*, he ascribes them to selfishness." Buckle explains that Smith wrote with one hand as though men lived in great and religious concern with affairs outside themselves, and so evoked the highest principles and the deepest emotions; with the other hand he wrote as though self-seeking were the only motive in the world.⁵

The duality of *Progress and Poverty* is sustained throughout the book's twelve divisions. The "Introductory" section, "The Problem," begins the critique by asserting that the "association of poverty with progress is the great enigma of our times." It is the current form of the "riddle which the Sphinx of Fate puts" to all civilizations. Modern economic theory must deal with the

sharp "contrast between the House of Have and the House of Want"; otherwise "progress is not real and cannot be permanent." The book's "Conclusion," "The Problem of Individual Life," ends with an allusion to "Christian and Faithful" making their way "through the streets of Vanity Fair" while "clanging blows" ring "on Great Heart's armor." The quest for economic and moral justice is none other than that in which the Parsees of old were involved. "Ormuzd still fights with Ahriman—the Prince of Light with the Powers of Darkness."

Like Melville at one moment, like Whitman the next, George seeks to "utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse," yet to sing of the "simple separate person." George creates an analogical structure for *Progress and Poverty* whereby he is able to oscillate continually from socio-economic questions to religio-philosophic truths, and from revolutionary collectivistic reforms to evolutionary individual development. This oscillation is fundamental to the form or structure of George's argument and carries the weight of his pragmatic and idealistic solution to the problem he has posed for the reader. Neither the pragmatic nor the idealistic half of the solution is sufficient in itself—both are necessary. The "Problem" and "The Problem of Individual Life" must be solved together. The final form of the full title of his book indicates what he had in mind with regard to the general problem: *Progress and Poverty/An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions and of Increase Of Want with Increase of Wealth/The Remedy.*

Progress and Poverty is divided into twelve parts: an introduction, ten books, and a conclusion. It is a long critique, and in the twentieth century it has often been condensed. As a rule, these condensations spring from efforts to extract the fundamental ideas of George's theory and to disentangle his hard-headed practicality from his Victorian rhetoric and nineteenth-century idealism at the cost of the over-all effect of the original.

Unlike the true socialist, if George can be called a socialist at all, he is not committed to either Hegelian dialectics or to historical and materialistic determinism. He can believe in progress without absolute assurance, and he can also be pessimistic without despair. Though he incorporates some of Spencer's early ideas on land reform, which twelve or thirteen years later George attacked him for abandoning, he rejects the English

philosopher's Social Darwinism. Though indebted to the tradition of "natural rights," so often associated with Rousseau, George's Christian bias, with its Jeffersonian and transcendental, often Emersonian, vision, is at odds with the agnosticism of the age—at odds with Thomas Huxley as much as with Marx, both of whom were as hostile to George as he was to them. His attack upon Spencer in 1892 and Spencer's opinion of George, together with other politically conservative assaults, indicate how great the personal and philosophical antipathies were. They also indicate how often the supposedly "practical" men—the real pragmatists of the time—gathered together in opposition to George.

Progress and Poverty is as much a book of an American Protestant reformer as it is anything else, and thus he was to have as much trouble with the Roman Catholic Church (though his wife was reared in the Church and though a priest was to be one of his chief supporters in New York) as he was to have with the agnostic materialists. When in the years to come he was to call Spencer the "Pope of the Agnostics," after his long struggle with Rome in the late 1880's, it is easy to see that George had understood that his Christianity and romanticism (or idealism) had been rejected by the materialists as completely as his theories for social reform had been rejected by the largest of Christian churches.

Yet the form and style of *Progress and Poverty*, aside from its arguments, could not be what it is had not George believed in the harmony of a religious commitment and social reform. That is why his lecture on Moses is important to George's writing and to his program. Beyond acknowledging the fact that Moses had led the Jews into a life which was devoted to socio-economic and religio-philosophic unity—a kind of total ethics—George also expressed his belief that in Moses' vision the individual was neither glorified at the expense of others nor determined by his past history of enslavement. Man was not only free to choose, to make history rather than be a victim of it, but he was also free of any kind of determined biological process of evolution. He was chosen by God, not selected by nature. In his own way, George tried to lean politically left and spiritually right.

George's style reflects the time in which he wrote and also his newspaper training. Occasionally it is Emersonian, transcendental, oracular, and aphoristic. He is given to illustrative quota-

tions, eclectic allusions, specific examples, and concrete images. He sermonizes and engages in poetic flights. *Progress and Poverty* was a lively book in its day, and its success was largely due to its rhetorical sincerity. Reading it was like touching a man. It certainly was a kind of "song of myself." It betrays its California origins and its author's heritage, but it is universal in its appeal. And one of the reasons it was a convincing statement of its author's ideas was that its universality was rooted in particulars. George's lucid logic always serves his vigorous analysis. His own commitment is so great that, once the reader accepts his primary ideas, George becomes almost irrefutable. Therefore, despite its vast amount of detail and its lack of twentieth-century tables of statistics, *Progress and Poverty* is still as effective, if not so convincing, as it once was. Its symmetry and basic simplicity gives a kind of literary class that most books on essentially non-literary subjects lack. George is a near perfect illustration of Emerson's aphorism in *The Poet*, "The man is only half himself, the other half is his expression." *Progress and Poverty* is like its author: its argument is only half itself; the other half is its expression.

George's expression of his own personality is to be found elsewhere than in the expressed argument of the book. At the beginning of every major division in *Progress and Poverty*, George inserts a favorite or appropriate quotation that reflects his own commitment to man's struggle for dignity, freedom, and justice. In this effort to indicate that he is not alone in what he demands, he includes selections from Marcus Aurelius, Edwin Arnold, Whittier, De Tocqueville, Tennyson, Mrs. Browning, Sir William Jones, Ptolemy, Carlyle, Montesquieu, Milton, Isaiah, Themistocles, and others. Many of the same writers are quoted in the text. Strung together, however, the quotations become a small anthology of social commentary by themselves and serve as a kind of esthetic accompaniment to the references to Mill, Malthus, Spencer, Adam Smith, Ricardo and others who are more fully a part of the political and economic arguments in the text.

George's choice of the title *Progress and Poverty* also indicates his newspaperman's sense of the simple yet memorable phrase. His abilities as a promoter of causes and as an effective propagandist, however, were always beyond question. His most formidable opponents always acknowledged that, if nothing else. He knew that his tentatively alternate title, "Political Economy

of the Social Problem" would not do. It had to be "Progress and Poverty," despite the appearance of the alternate title on the flyer he distributed in order to announce his forthcoming "Author's Edition."

No matter what the title or how symmetrical the form, *Progress and Poverty* is a nineteenth-century book. Its style and its length are often too rich, too prolix, and too much for the twentieth-century reader; but then the same has been said of Carlyle, of Emerson, of Ruskin, and, for that matter, of Marx. In its own time, however, it was very widely read—an all-time best seller by modern standards. It is still far from being a dead book. A well-expressed missionary zeal is often irresistible, especially when it seeks to remedy obvious wrongs by a cogent criticism of them. Poverty still afflicts the affluent society almost one hundred years after George had said he had found the remedy. He argued the American Dream, but he also sought its fulfillment.

III *The Content of Progress and Poverty: Argument, Philosophy, and Prophecy*

The argument of *Progress and Poverty*, like the form, is based upon the book's duality and the author's attempt to resolve that duality. It was a duality, however, that the author did not invent but only emphasized. Beginning in the "Introductory" with the assertion "That political economy, as at the present taught, does not explain the persistence of poverty amid advancing wealth in a manner which accords with deep-seated perceptions of men" (12-13),⁶ George devoted the first two books of his critique (one-fourth its entire length) to refutations of (1) the wages-fund theory of employment, and (2) the Malthusian theory of population. He held both theories responsible for society's failure to recognize clearly or deal effectively with the problem of the times.

George attacked the wages-fund theory because it enslaved the wage-earner and empowered the employer by making employment depend upon "existing capital." In a series of propositions that denied "the teachings of the current political economy," George said that wages were paid *after* labor had been performed and *after* the products of labor had been placed upon the market. Therefore, he reasoned, wages were paid by labor

itself out of its own investment of effort and did not reduce the capital funds of the employer. He said that it was the "demand for consumption," or the needs of the people, that really employed labor. Such a point of view led him to deny Malthus' theory of population and to assert subsequently that labor employs capital, capital does not employ labor. This reversal of the normal assumptions of his time became one of the main arguments of Book V, "The Problem Solved."

Essentially, George had reversed himself. He had used the theories he now rejected to support in part his opposition to Chinese immigration. His attack upon them in *Progress and Poverty* was detailed and vigorous. By saying that the wages-fund theory depressed wages to the subsistence level, he cleared the ground for his rejection of Malthus. He argued that the more people that were employed, the greater they increased production and capital. Not only did the quantity of the products increase to fill the demand, but so did the quality. Paid a proper living wage, the wage-earner would consume the products of his own labor and demand more: "If each laborer in performing the labor really creates the fund from which his wages are drawn, then wages cannot be diminished by the increase of laborers, but, on the contrary, as the efficiency of labor manifestly increases with the number of laborers, the more laborers, other things being equal, the higher should wages be" (88).

To George's mind, Malthus flew in the face of logic and observable fact. Famine and underfed peoples were as common in underpopulated areas of the world, such as Brazil, as they were in overpopulated areas, such as Ireland. Vice and misery could be traced to exploitation, to war, to tyranny, and to oppression, but not to overpopulation:

Twenty men working together will, where nature is niggardly, produce more than twenty times the wealth that one man can produce where nature is most bountiful. The denser the population the more minute becomes the subdivision of labor, the greater the economies of production and distribution, and, hence, the very reverse of the Malthusian doctrine is true; and, within the limits in which we have reason to suppose increase would still go on, in any given state of civilization a greater number of people can produce a larger proportionate amount of wealth, and more fully supply their wants, than can a smaller number. (149-50)

Whatever "does produce poverty amid advancing wealth," George concluded, it is not overpopulation. That we do not lack the productive power necessary, he also argued, has been proven by our ability to produce continually all kinds of accumulated wealth through labor alone:

Take wealth in some of its most useful and permanent forms—ships, houses, railways, machinery. Unless labor is constantly exerted in preserving and renewing them, they will almost immediately become useless. Stop labor in any community, and wealth would vanish almost as the jet of a fountain vanishes when the flow of water is shut off. Let labor again exert itself, and wealth will almost as immediately reappear. This has been long noticed when war or other calamity has swept away wealth, leaving population unimpaired. (148)

The groundwork had been laid for his investigation of "The Laws of Distribution" in Book III. Classical economics, dependent upon the Malthusian and the wages-fund theories, could not explain, much less solve, the enigma of poverty amidst progress. Having defined his terms in Book I, George was prepared in Book III to begin discussing immediately the problems of distribution. He had said that the three "factors of production" were land, labor, and capital; and to these were related the three elements of distribution—rent, wages, and interest. Land combined with labor to create wealth. Capital was taken from produced wealth, previously accumulated through labor, and returned to production to create additional wealth. Advantageous sites, as in the mining industries in California, George assigned as rent to the landowner rather than as wage to the worker because they were uncreated wealth:

Land, labor, and capital are the factors of production. The term land includes all natural opportunities or forces; the term labor, all human exertion; and the term capital, all wealth used to produce more wealth. In returns to these three factors is the whole produce distributed. That part which goes to land owners as payment for the use of natural opportunities is called rent; that part which constitutes the reward of human exertion is called wages; and that part which constitutes the return for the use of capital is called interest. These terms mutually exclude each other. The income of any individual may be made up from any one, two, or all three of these sources; but in the effort to discover the laws of distribution we must keep them separate. (162)

George applied "Ricardo's law of rent," describing it as follows: "*The rent of land is determined by the excess of its produce over that which the same application can secure from the least productive land in use*" (168). In recapitulation, therefore, he said that "in algebraic form: $\text{As Produce} = \text{Rent} + \text{Wages} + \text{Interest} \dots \text{Produce} - \text{Rent} = \text{Wages} + \text{Interest} \dots$ Thus wages and interest do not depend upon the produce of labor and capital, but upon what is left after rent is taken out; or, upon the produce which they could obtain without paying rent—that is, from the poorest land in use. And hence, no matter what be the increase in productive power, if the increase in rent keeps pace with it, neither wages nor interest can increase" (171).

George reveals his essentially non-Marxist view by suggesting that workers and investors have a common cause against the landowners, landholders, and land speculators, that workers were not alone in a struggle with the united force of landowners and investors (the "capitalists" of socialism). In fact, George went on to say, the investor was also a kind of wage-earner, just as the laborer was himself an investor: by their combined efforts the value of the land was increased, but only the landowner benefited from the increase.

The chapters on capital and interest in Book III indicate that he takes pains to defend interest-taking, though he had rejected one of the major tenets of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century capitalism: the wages-fund theory of employment. George defended interest on the basis of his California experiences, using the development of the land in the mining industry as an example. Expenses legitimately spent in such betterment of the land deserved a return on the investment costs. To make his position clear, George included a chapter on "Of Spurious Capital and of Profits often mistaken for Interest." Monopolies, such as those in transportation and communication, George characteristically decried. He suggested once again, as he had earlier as a newspaper editor, that they should be owned and operated, if not built, by the government. He defended the "law of interest," defining it as follows: "*The relation between wages and interest is determined by the average power of increase which attaches to capital from its use in reproductive modes. As rent arises, interest will fall as wages fall, or will be determined by*

the margin of cultivation" (203). He compared the "True Statement" on rent, wages, and interest with what he called the "Current Statement" as follows:

The Current Statement

RENT depends on the margin of cultivation, rising as it falls and falling as it rises.

WAGES depend upon the ratio between the number of laborers and the amount of capital devoted to their employment.

INTEREST depends upon the equation between the supply of and demand for capital; or, as is stated of profits, upon wages (or the cost of labor), rising as wages fall, and falling as wages rise.

The True Statement

RENT depends on the margin of cultivation, rising as it falls and falling as it rises.

WAGES depend on the margin of cultivation, falling as it falls and rising as it rises.

INTEREST (its ratio with wages being fixed by the net power of increase which attaches to capital) depends on the margin of cultivation, falling as it falls and rising as it rises. (219)

He summed up his argument by returning to his favorite theme, the land question. "And, hence, that the increase of productive power does not increase wages, is because it does not increase the value of land. Rent swallows up the whole gain and pauperism accompanies progress. . . . To see human beings in the most abject, the most helpless and hopeless condition, you must go, not to the unfenced prairies and the log cabins of new clearings in the backwoods, where man single-handed is commencing the struggle with nature, and land is yet worth nothing, but to the great cities, where the ownership of a little patch of ground is a fortune" (224).

The key to George's critique was his characteristic distinction between used and unused land, land in production and land purposely held out of production by speculators waiting for progress to make them rich through rent. A continual conflict—a kind of economic war—could always be expected between unearned income (rent), which was made at the expense of others, and labor-earned income (wages and interest), which ironically at its own cost gave the land its new and ever-increasing value.

Book IV begins George's program for the confiscation of rent for the benefit of the many instead of the few. This section is

based largely on all the specific attacks he had made on particular persons and interests in his California editorials. However, in *Progress and Poverty*, George impersonalizes his argument. Though a twentieth-century economic critic would produce statistical evidence in support of its ideas and conclusions, George does not. After all, he felt the statistics were self-evident and available to everyone as they had been to him. Instead, he takes a transcendental tone and launches into long paragraphs that describe the "virgin and rich" soil, the glories of "Nature . . . at her very best," and the immigrant's struggle to settle and to build upon the land that has been freely given by nature to him and not to the monopolist. He describes the effect of a new and increasing population on the distribution and creation of wealth and the subsequent increase of rent.

After stressing labor's improvement of the land and the progress that results from its inventiveness, he closes Book IV by returning once again to the causes of "the steady increase of rent, . . . speculation, or the holding of land for a higher price than it would . . . otherwise bring" (255). "The influence of speculation in land in increasing rent is a great fact which cannot be ignored in any complete theory of the distribution of wealth in progressive countries. It is the force, evolved by material progress, which tends constantly to increase rent in a greater ratio than progress increases production, and thus constantly tends, as material progress goes on and productive power increases, to reduce wages, not merely relatively, but absolutely" (259). "If," however, "the corrupt governments of our great American cities were to be made models of purity and economy, the effect would simply be to increase the value of land, not to raise either wages or interests" (254). In Book IV he supports the arguments of Book III by citing and examining actual conditions and by relating them to the laws of distribution that depend upon the conflict between rent *and* wages and interest.

Book V, "The Problem Solved," concentrates on the reasons for recurrent depressions and poverty amid progress by harmonizing the themes and ideas that arise from books III and IV. The first of its two chapters, "The Primary Cause of recurring Paroxysms of Industrial Depression," places the blame not on rent in itself but on captured rent: wealth taken out of production. Land monopoly in particular and all forms of monopoly

in general are said to be the major causes of economic disasters. "The speculative advance in rent, or the value of land, which produces the same effects as (in fact, it is) a lock-out of labor and capital by landowners. This check to production, beginning at the basis of interlaced industry, propagates itself from exchange point to exchange point, cessation of supply becoming failure of demand, until, so to speak, the whole machine is thrown out of gear, and the spectacle is everywhere presented of labor going to waste while laborers suffer from want" (270).

The second chapter, "The Persistence of Poverty amid advancing Wealth," stresses the importance of the land itself: "the habitation of man, the storehouse upon which he must draw for all his needs." Therefore, the monopolizers of land enslave labor. "That as land is necessary to the exertion of labor in the production of wealth, to command the land which is necessary to labor, is to command all the fruits of labor save enough to enable labor to exist" (294). His conclusions are as obvious as they are consistent with his California experiences and his editorial views on land policy. "Material progress cannot rid us of our dependence upon land; it can but add to the power of producing wealth from land; and hence, when land is monopolized, it might go on to infinity without increasing wages or improving the condition of those who have but their labor" (296). The possession of land gives power to the landholder: "Everywhere, in all times, among all people, the possession of land is the base of aristocracy, the foundation of great fortunes, the source of power" (296).

Reaching the mid-point of his critique, and having already made good use of De Tocqueville, George concludes Book V with a literary allusion that is a propagandistic gem, one magnificently apt and powerfully Emersonian: "As said the Brahmins, ages ago—*To whomsoever the soil at any time belongs, to him belong the fruits of it. White parasols and elephants mad with pride are the flowers of a grant of land.*" George's style and argument come together: in order to enjoy its fruits, the people must repossess the land from the new aristocracy of wealth just as surely as they had once taken it from an old aristocracy of birth that had sprung from an even older aristocracy of wealth.

Like Book V, Book VI, "The Remedy," is also divided into two significant chapters: "Insufficiency of Remedies currently

advocated," and "The True Remedy." This second chapter is only a little over two pages and is by far the briefest in *Progress and Poverty*. In rejecting current remedies, George organizes his argument in terms of six general ideas: (1) greater economy in government; (2) better education of the working classes and improved habits of industry and thrift; (3) combinations of workmen for the advance of wages; (4) co-operation of labor and capital; (5) governmental direction and interference; and (6) a more general distribution of land.

His major views include: (1) opposition to personal income tax because it would discourage incentive; (2) support of trade unions of skilled laborers because they would lower profits and increase wages at the expense of rent—he opposed the large international unions of unskilled labor that the socialists proposed; (3) arguments against the effects of strikes because to him they destroyed "personal freedom." "The man who would fight for freedom, must, when he enters an army, give up his personal freedom and become a mere part in a great machine, so must it be with workmen who organize for a strike. These combinations are, therefore, necessarily destructive of the very things which workmen seek to gain through them—wealth and freedom." Such views and his defense of interest-taking indicate how far removed George was from socialist habits of thought.

Nevertheless, George's sympathies are clear; he is no conservative. His economic romanticism is no more strongly in evidence than in his explicit comments upon socialism and in his emphasis upon the *organic* nature of society as opposed to the mechanistic. Because of this concept, George often compares the current economic conditions he describes to a machine that is not functioning properly. The point is, of course, that the society he seeks cannot be manufactured. "The ideal of socialism is grand and noble; and it is, I am convinced, possible of realization; but such a state of society cannot be manufactured—it must grow. Society is an organism, not a machine. It can live only by the individual life of its parts. And in the free and natural development of all the parts will be secured the harmony of the whole." In an apotheosis, he concludes, "All that is necessary to social regeneration is included in the motto of those Russian patriots sometimes called Nihilists—'Land and Liberty'" (321). He ends *Progress and Poverty* in essentially the same way.

Though "The True Remedy" is only two pages, George, in fact, reduces the chapter to one italicized sentence: "*We must make land common property.*" In "nothing else is there, the slightest hope." With his "remedy" for an already well-described need finally stated, George then prepared to justify it. Books VII and VIII are devoted, respectively, to the "justice" of the remedy and to its "application." Quickly following up his solution, he writes in the first chapter of Book VII that "The equal right of all men to the use of land is as clear as their equal right to breathe the air—it is a right proclaimed by the fact of their existence. For we cannot suppose that some men have a right to be in this world and others no right" (338). In a sense this justification is an outgrowth of his Jeffersonian and Emersonian points of view as much as the inevitable development of his argument. In "The True Remedy," he writes that "The laws of the universe are harmonious," for "if the remedy to which we have been led is the true one, it must be consistent with justice . . . must accord with the tendencies of social development and must harmonize with other reforms" (329). His discussion of "the enslavement of laborers," which he believed was "the ultimate result of private property in land," went so far as to conclude that "Private ownership of land is the nether millstone. Material progress is the upper millstone. Between them, with an increasing pressure, the working classes are being ground" (357). George did not believe that they were the millstones of the gods but the creations of a sick economy.

George does not agree that compensation is justified when the land is made common property, for the private appropriation was originally an unjust social development. Furthermore, it is not a thing of the past: the "robbery" of the land is a continuing injustice which the people as a whole continue to suffer. Therefore, if the landowners wish to retain possession of the land presently held in their names, they must return the rent to the community. That is why he writes in Book VIII that "*It is not necessary to confiscate land; it is only necessary to confiscate rent.*" In any case, the land belongs to the whole community. In confiscating the rent the people are merely reclaiming what has been taken from them unjustly. Such confiscation, therefore, is the righting of a wrong and not an injustice: "I do not propose either to purchase or to confiscate private property in land. The

first would be unjust; the second, needless. Let the individuals who now hold it still retain, if they want to, possession of what they are pleased to call *their* land. Let them continue to call it *their* land. Let them buy and sell, and bequeath and devise it. We may safely leave them the shell, if we take the kernel" (405). The confiscation of rent calls for a reformed system of taxation, and that, in fact, is how George intends to apply his "true remedy":

What I, therefore, propose, as the simple yet sovereign remedy, which will raise wages, increase the earnings of capital, extirpate pauperism, abolish poverty, give remunerative employment to whoever wishes it, afford free scope to human powers, lessen crime, elevate morals, and taste, and intelligence, purify government and carry civilization to yet nobler heights, is—*to appropriate rent by taxation.*

In this way the State may become the universal landlord without calling herself so, and without assuming a single new function. . . . and every member of the community would participate in the advantages of the ownership.

Now, inasmuch as the taxation of rent, or land values, must necessarily be increased just as we abolish other taxes, we may put the proposition into practical form by proposing—

To abolish all taxation save that upon land values. (405-6)

Though the phrase was not used, George had laid down the principles of "the single tax" with which he was forever to be associated.⁷

In the final two chapters of Book VIII, he defended his tax system and tried to show its advantages. Book IX, therefore, carries the discussion of advantages from questions of economic wealth to those of individual and social betterment. In many ways it prepares the reader for George's version of the American Dream and a world-wide utopia. In his last two books and in his conclusion, George makes every effort possible to convince his reader that his reforms will fulfill his dream and bring that utopia into being; but, while Book IX sums up his socio-economic ideas, it is Book X and the conclusion that bear the weight of his religio-philosophic eloquence.

Though George's statements would not have the effect today that they had in 1879—despite current concern with the persistence of poverty—they were extremely convincing. George had

begun his treatise on a moral point, and he skillfully returned to it at the end. Book X goes a long way toward merging his socio-economic and pragmatic ideas with his religio-philosophic and idealistic views. It is a consolidation of the random utopian views George had expressed in many of his *Post* editorials. In fact, with the coda-like "Conclusion," Book X bears comparison with the many utopian romances that were popular in the final decades of the nineteenth century, not to mention books like Blatchford's *Merrie England*. Charles Barker makes a very important observation of the way in which *Progress and Poverty* is brought to a close:

Once more *Progress and Poverty* moves carefully, and keeps a little apart from English thought, and especially from moral tones of social Darwinism. The book goes a certain distance again, indeed, with the age's most prominent social thinker, then qualifies as follows: "That civilization is an evolution—that it is in the language of Herbert Spencer, a progress from indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent, heterogeneity—there is no doubt; but to say this is not to explain or identify the causes which forward or retard it." In complete moral dissent from dominant British and German habits of thought, George entered the opinion that the age's inclination to justify overseas expansion, as though the name of evolution and the science of Darwin made right the exploiting of weak peoples, had encouraged a hateful racism and nationalism.⁸

Because George clearly preferred the organic to the mechanical or automatic, he considered *true* progress, like the "true remedy," to be neither inevitable nor necessary: it was hopefully possible, but it was dependent upon man's moral and intellectual growth. His proposal was neither British nor Germanic: it was American. He makes very cogent historical observations, ones more perceptive than the comment on Spencer which Barker quotes.

It cannot be said of the Hindoo and of the Chinaman, as it may be said of the savage, that our superiority is the result of a longer education; that we are, as it were, the grown men of nature, while they are the children. The Hindoos and the Chinese were civilized when we were savages. They had great cities, highly organized and powerful governments, literatures, philosophies, polished manners, considerable division of labor, large commerce, and elaborate arts, when our ancestors were wandering

Progress and Poverty

barbarians, living in huts and skin tents, not a whit further advanced than the American Indians. While we have progressed from this savage state to Nineteenth Century civilization, they have stood still. If progress be the result of fixed laws, inevitable and eternal, which impel men forward, how shall we account for this? (482)

The clarity and essential rightness of his insights into historical processes and the rise and fall of civilizations do George credit, especially when one considers that the popular view of his era tended to place Victorian man at the pinnacle of an ever-developing civilization. It is not easy to refute George's "*universal rule*": "But it is not merely these arrested civilizations that the current theory of development fails to account for. It is not merely that men have gone so far on the path of progress and then stopped; it is that men have gone far on the path of progress and then gone back. It is not merely an isolated case that thus confronts the theory—*it is the universal rule*. Every civilization that the world has yet seen has had its period of vigorous growth, of arrest and stagnation; its decline and fall" (484). Along with his Spenglerian anticipations, George held fast to his idea that "it becomes possible for man to improve only as he lives with his fellows. All these improvements, therefore, in man's powers and conditions we summarize in the term civilization. Men improve as they become civilized, or learn to co-operate in society" (477).

George returns to the manner and message of "Moses" in the last one hundred pages of *Progress and Poverty*. Basing his point of view once again on the living Hebraic vision of equality, freedom, and justice for all men (and contrasting it again with the dead Egyptian past), he says that American democracy and Christian faith are vitally necessary to secure a truly progressive society. The Hebraic-Christian democratic vision almost demands that the land be *common* property and that social classes be dissolved: "Civilization is co-operation. Union and liberty are its factors. [524] . . . the law of human progress . . . proves that the making of land common property . . . would give an enormous impetus to civilization, while the refusal to do so must entail retrogression. A civilization like ours must either advance or go back; it cannot stand still" (527).

George's utopian dream is not a blind one. "How Modern Civilization may Decline," Chapter IV of Book X, is often Orwellian. "Now this transformation of popular government into despotism of the vilest and most degrading kind, which must inevitably result from the unequal distribution of wealth, is not a thing of the far future. It has already begun in the United States, and is now rapidly going on under our eyes" (533). "Whence shall come the new barbarians?", he asks. "Go through the squalid quarters of great cities, and you may see, even now, their gathering hordes!" He asks: "How shall learning perish?" And he prophetically replies: "Men will cease to read, and books will kindle fires and be turned into cartridges!" The optimism of *Progress and Poverty*, which often seems overwhelming, is tempered by a Jeremiah-like prophetic tone. As Emerson suggests it should have, George's goodness has an edge to it—and in public debate it could be cutting.

"The Central Truth," the concluding chapter of Book X, is almost entirely comprised of George's July Fourth, 1877, San Francisco oration on Liberty. Only the first six short paragraphs are new, and they are centered on the "self-evident" truths of the Declaration of Independence to which George again, as always, returns. His apotheosis to Liberty is carried over to the "Conclusion," "The Problem of Individual Life." To this problem of individual life, "the meaning of life—of life absolutely and inevitably bounded by death," he relates equally the facts and themes of his politico-economic critique and the "myth and symbol," "type and allegory" of "ultimate relations"—the Garden of Eden, the laborers in the vineyard. Apprehension of the "primary truth," George believed, was the chief end of all life. His own transcendental gleam did not blind him to the kind of needless suffering that can itself blind the sufferers.

George's attempt to move his reader completely was most successful because he did not hesitate to say that the social organization in its neglect of *all* the people stood in the way not only of spiritual but of material progress. Many who read George's book as a testament of freedom sensed that he wrote not for progress' sake but for their sake. "We are apt to assume," he wrote in Book IX, "that greed is the strongest of human motives, . . . that the fear of punishment is necessary to keep men honest—that selfish interests are always stronger than gen-

eral interests" (457). "Nothing could be further from the truth," he wrote in confrontation of the basic duality of the book. George had always to deal with the alternative motives behind the acts of man which Buckle attributed to Adam Smith: that man acted towards his brother either from sympathy or from selfishness.

But if man were poor, what could he do but seek in every just way to rid himself of his hated impoverished condition. Those who are struggling merely to exist on the animal level cannot afford the luxury of sympathy which seems denied them even by those who can truly afford it. But *want* and the fear of poverty in those who *have* is the real economic basis for self-seeking. The progress of a nation and the poverty of its people make "civilized existence an Ishmaelitish warfare."

Carlyle somewhere says that poverty is the hell of which the modern Englishman is most afraid. And he is right. Poverty is the open-mouthed, relentless hell which yawns beneath civilized society. And it is hell enough. The Vedas declare no truer thing than when the wise crow Bushanda tells the eagle-bearer of Vishnu that the keenest pain is in poverty. For poverty is not merely deprivation; it means shame, degradation; the searing of the most sensitive parts of our moral and mental nature as with hot irons; the denial of the strongest impulses and the sweetest affections; the wrenching of the most vital nerves. (457)

"From this hell of poverty, it is but natural that men should make every effort to escape," says George (458). Since all men tend to admire what they desire, fear of poverty makes them "admire above all things the possession of riches." Naturally, they will live their lives according to "the lesson that society is daily and hourly dinning in the ears of its members": "Get money—honestly, if you can, but at any rate get money!" (459).

George's belief that spiritual progress must accompany material progress is given added emphasis in the "Conclusion." Immortality is not an opiate so far as George is concerned; it is what is at stake. No one who could have insisted so completely as George did that the land was by right the common property of the people could have failed to understand the sacramental meaning of life on the land or of the nature of life itself. George would have understood the teaching of Martin Buber, the modern Jewish theologian, just as well as he had understood

Moses. The conclusion of *Progress and Poverty* is in mood and meaning in harmony with his lecture "Moses," just as the final chapter of Book X is literally his oration on Liberty. The genesis of each characteristic is identical with that which George thought was the "great distinctive feature of the Hebrew religion . . . its utilitarianism, its recognition of divine law in human life." We may recall his comment on the "grand and noble . . . ideal of socialism" that is "possible of realization," the growing social organism that lives "only by the individual life of its parts": "All that is necessary . . . is . . . 'Land and Liberty.'" In beginning with the economic "problem" that beset society as a whole, he had to end with "the problem of individual life." Discussing or attempting to solve one meant discussing or attempting to solve the other. Neither the "dismal science" ("Political Economy") nor the *dismal life* was by divine decree so ordained.

IV *Contemporary Reactions to Progress and Poverty*

George sent a number of complimentary copies of the "Author's Edition" of *Progress and Poverty* to prominent persons, including William Gladstone and Herbert Spencer in England, the Duke of Argyll in Scotland, and Sir George Grey in New Zealand. Gladstone sent a courteous but neutral acknowledgment which said, in part, that there was "no question which requires a more careful examination than the land question in this and other countries, and I shall set great store on whatever information you may furnish under this head."⁹ The Duke of Argyll, in whom George mistakenly sensed liberal tendencies, graciously acknowledged receipt of the gift; but several years later he and George clashed with international bitterness over the very questions raised in *Progress and Poverty*. Spencer made no reply at all, but some time later both he and George were to denounce one another. Of the four, only Grey responded enthusiastically. "I have already read a large part of the book," he wrote, and "regard it as one of the ablest works on the great questions of the time, which has come under my notice." "It has cheered me much," he went on, "to find that there is so able a man working in California, upon subjects on which I believe the whole future of mankind now mainly hangs."¹⁰

The California papers were, of course, among the first to com-

ment upon the book of their fellow citizen and newspaper colleague, and naturally enough they were divided in their opinions. The *Alta California* said the book would be "dropped out of view in a short time as a blunder of a mind more active than wise."¹¹ But the Sacramento *Record-Union*, in one of the longest of the early reviews, thought it "a very remarkable book" that was "destined to have a very great success."¹² The book was written in a fine style, the *Record-Union* said, and "its sincere sympathy with humanity, its tenderness, its passionate desire for better things" would commend it to the "average mind." The paper, nevertheless, was critical of George's basic ideas and took issue with his attack on Malthus, giving him a chance to reply (on March 13, 1880),¹³ which as always he gladly accepted as another opportunity to spread his gospel. The San Francisco *Chronicle* said that "notwithstanding the comparative obscurity of this writer as compared with Ricardo, Adam Smith, Mill, Spenser [*sic*] and others on the same subject, his volume will attract much attention among advanced minds."¹⁴ Those reviews that were completely favorable were often written by friends and associates, like Dr. E. R. Taylor, who praised the book in the *Californian* after having read it in manuscript while helping to see it through the press.

Most eastern reviews were at first cool and noncommittal, but they generally felt that the book was unusual and provocative. The *Popular Science Monthly*, owned by Appleton, George's publisher, helped to publicize *Progress and Poverty* by first printing in its March, 1880, issue George's University of California lecture, "The Study of Political Economy," and then by saying in its April review that *Progress and Poverty* was a "remarkable answer" and "one of the most important contributions yet made to economic literature." In March, The New York *Sun's* reviewer, M. W. Hazeltine, wrote about the book at great length, saying that George's "conclusions, however strange and revolutionary they may seem in their bearing upon society, will not be rejected by sober and impartial men without mature deliberation." No matter how opposed or antagonistic, he wrote, "they cannot afford to neglect his plea or ignore his argument. . . . Few books have, in recent years, proceeded from any American pen which have more plainly borne the marks of wide learning and strenuous thought, or which have brought to the

expounding of a serious theme a happier faculty of elucidation."¹⁵ George was much moved and gratified by this review, coming as it did almost exactly a year after he had first sent the manuscript to Appleton's.

Other eastern papers began to respond. The radical *Irish World*, with which George in the year to come was to have much to do, gave *Progress and Poverty* a generally favorable review, but it thought George's views were not sufficiently socialistic. The *New York Times*, then a relatively new Republican paper, rejected it almost out of hand. These two reviews indicate to what extremes reactions to George were to go in the future. About the same time the reviews in the *Irish World* and the *Times* appeared, the *Nation* published a concise but serious and detailed review of the book, giving it a thoughtful and scholarly examination. It was, however, a general dissent from George's economic ideas, making little or no comment upon his religio-philosophic views. In this way the *Nation's* review was the very opposite of that of the *Christian Register*, the leading Unitarian journal in Boston, which stressed George's Christian charity and religious concern for "the world's misery." By fall, the *Atlantic Monthly* had joined the steady parade of reviewers by giving it a double review. The two writers, interestingly enough, stressed different sides of the book; and while one argued against the economic analysis, the other faintly praised its suggestions for the betterment of the wage-earner.

The academic and orthodox criticism of George's book was not long in coming, and it was inevitably hostile. Since George had attacked some of the most cherished notions of economic theory, the counterattack was often virulent. Professor W. G. Sumner's review in the June, 1881, number of *Scribner's Monthly* stated that it was unfortunate indeed that the same "respectful attention" was "given to a book like this" that was also given "to the most careful work of a highly trained and scientific observer." The point of view of the entire review was that George was untrained and unqualified for the task he had set himself. In Sumner's opinion, the book misrepresented and misunderstood more than it clarified; and he mourned the fact that "Sociology" was still "the free arena for all the people with hobbies, crude notions, world philosophies, and schemes." In short, Sumner thought *Progress and Poverty* a basically dangerous book. He

certainly did not give it the "sober attention" the New York *Herald* thought it deserved from "our leading political economists"; for Sumner wrote:

It has been declared several times, in regard to Mr. George's "Progress and Poverty," and by various reviewers, that its appearance marks an epoch or constitutes an event. We are cordially of the same opinion, although for a somewhat different reason. Nothing could more distinctly mark the absence of any true body of criticism in social science and political economy than the respectful consideration which has been given to this book. It now appears in paper covers in a popular edition, and is going on its way to propagate still more social folly and prejudice where already there is so much that common sense scarcely has a chance.¹⁶

George's brief and provocative *The Irish Land Question* had just been published, and Sumner condemned it also. Opinions such as these were echoed later by others, especially after George had been to the British Isles and had actively contributed to movements for economic and political reform.

Besides the reviews, the reactions of individuals to George's book indicated that its world-wide fame was already in the making. Dr. Montague Levenson, a student of Mill, called *Progress and Poverty* "the book of the half-century"; and Alfred Russel Wallace, the famous English biologist, who was himself a leading Land Nationalist, said the book was "undoubtedly the most remarkable and important work of the present century."¹⁷ The popularity of *Progress and Poverty* and the fame of its author, however, were yet to reach their peak.

One of George's closest friends of long standing, John Russell Young, who had gone early in 1880 to London with several copies of *Progress and Poverty*, which he distributed to Members of Parliament, tried again unsuccessfully to secure a position for George with the New York *Herald*. Young's reactions to George's character during this period, which he recalled in the New York *Herald* at the time of George's death in the fall of 1897, are particularly illuminating because he was one of the few men long close to George who never fully shared his views: "George never for a moment—never when under the grinding heel of bitter conditions—doubted the truth of his mission to mankind and its ultimate success. The more I studied George

under heavy conditions the more I admired him. His ability and his courage; his honesty, independence, and intellectual power were those of a leader of men. . . . It was the courage which, as has been written, makes one a majority."

This assessment of George's character has the ring of and, in fact, alludes to the words of Thoreau. George in 1880 was still a prophet keenly aware of his mission who was without a people; and he was also a man with a family who had an economic theory but little or no personal economic stability. Though financial difficulty was nothing new to George, he was clearly intent on surviving as a majority of one who knew he had God on his side. In 1881 on a short trip to California, the "majority of one" was beginning to prevail. At the Metropolitan Temple, where three years before he had spoken to a "beggarly array of empty benches," he now confronted a crowded auditorium. Even the *Alta California*, who had dismissed his book "as a blunder," referred to him as the "author of 'Progress and Poverty,' a book that has made him a great name as a political economist."¹⁸ Now that he had returned to California in modest triumph after having been in the East for a year or so, he was soon to turn to the British Isles in order to follow up in person the appearance there of his recent *Irish Land Question* and of the British edition of *Progress and Poverty*.

Kegan Paul in London, which had agreed in 1880 to publish the English edition of *Progress and Poverty*, brought out the first printing the same year. It was exhausted by early 1881. Because of George's visits to the British Isles in 1881-82 and 1883-84, the book sold at a phenomenal rate, soon going into a special sixpenny edition. Having once thought very little of its possibilities, George's British publisher soon had great expectations for *Progress and Poverty*.

By 1884 all the major British papers and journals of international repute had reviewed *Progress and Poverty*, and George felt that now he was to get the proper judgment, favorable or not, that was generally denied him in the United States. The book was reviewed at length by the *London Times*, as well as by the most famous British periodicals of the nineteenth century: the *Contemporary Review*, *Quarterly Review*, *Edinburgh Review*, and *Nineteenth Century*.

Though *Progress and Poverty* had been reviewed unfavorably

Progress and Poverty

earlier (1881) in England in the *Economist* and in the *Statist*, the *Times* did not comment until George's activities in Ireland had brought him personal notoriety. In September, 1882, the *Times* printed a letter he had written to the paper that called for moderation in Ireland. The *Times* made a long editorial comment on his opinions and activities, which recognized fairly that George was a power on the political scene, but which asserted no sympathy for his program or for his views. The *Times* placed him and the Land Nationalization movement in the same category as it did the socialists and communists. Despite this obviously unfavorable editorial opinion, the formal review of *Progress and Poverty*, including some commentary on *The Irish Land Question* (published in 1881 and selling even better than *Progress and Poverty*), was a fair and almost neutral assessment of the book. With good reason, its conclusions pleased George immensely:

Mr. George's idea will long be found in the book only; nevertheless, "Progress and Poverty" well merits perusal. It contains many shrewd suggestions, and some criticisms of economic doctrines which future writers on political economy must either refute or accept. Mr. George's reading has evidently been wide; he has reflected deeply; he is an acute reasoner, and he is the master of an excellent style. The readers of his book may dissent from his statements and conclusions, without regretting the time they have spent over it; and, if conversant with economic doctrines and interested in the problems of social science, they will find in its pages much to ponder with care and much that is highly suggestive.¹⁹

The earliest and perhaps the most interesting of the reviews in the periodicals was that of Emile de Laveleye in the *Contemporary Review*. Two years before de Laveleye had reviewed *Progress and Poverty* in *La Revue scientifique*. He now tempered his earlier praise (not qualified) by carefully charting what he thought were George's unsocialistic errors, such as the pro-capitalistic justification of interest and investment returns. He also criticized George for what he considered an inadequate argument against the wages-fund theory. He praised George for his attack on Malthusianism and for his application of Ricardo's law of rent.

The *Quarterly Review* printed an out-and-out denunciation of

George's book, written almost as a pronouncement for class prejudice:

If we may credit a leading Radical journal, it [*Progress and Poverty*] is fast forming a new public opinion. The opinion we here allude to is no doubt that of the half-educated; but this makes the matter in some ways more serious. No classes are so dangerous, at once to themselves and to others, as those which have learned to reason, but not to reason rightly. . . . They will fall victims to it [a false economic theory], as though to an intellectual pestilence. Mr. George's book is full of this kind of contagion. A ploughman might snore, or a country gentleman smile over it, but it is well calculated to turn the head of an artisan. . . . It is not the poor, it is not the seditious only, who have thus been affected by Mr. George's doctrines. . . . They have been gravely listened to by a conclave of English clergymen. Scotch ministers and Nonconformist professors have done more than listen—they have received them with marked approval; they have even held meetings, and given lectures to disseminate them. Finally, certain trained economic thinkers, or men who pass for such in at least one of our Universities, are reported to have said that they see no means of refuting them, and that they probably mark the beginning of a new political epoch.²⁰

The review was a call to arms. The reviewer was not interested in "false theories" in and for themselves nor in "How they shake the wise," which he felt was "a matter of small moment." The "great question," he said, was "how they will strike the ignorant." The book and its author were clearly dangerous threats to the established order.

Under the title "The Nationalization of Land," the *Edinburgh Review* reviewed Herbert Spencer's *Social Statics* and *Progress and Poverty* together, though the former had been published in 1850. Again George was praised for his application of Ricardo's law and for his attack on Malthus, but he was sharply criticized for his distributionist ideas and for his land taxation schemes. His work was considered to be a part of the "revolutionary warfare now waged by certain Americans, or Hiberno-Americans, against the institutions of this country, which degrades them to the level of the Socialists of Germany, the Nihilists of Russia, and the Communards of Paris."²¹

All in all, the British reviews treated *Progress and Poverty* as a book that had to be taken seriously and examined thoroughly.

Progress and Poverty

The *Modern Review* even went so far as to say that the book was to be recommended for its timeliness and for its views on land taxation, a strong indication that the reviewer was not a Tory, as were the reviewers in the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review*.

Needless to say, in little more than five years *Progress and Poverty* had become a world book. Reviews, like de Laveleye's in *La Revue scientifique* and the *Contemporary Review*, had appeared in England and on the Continent, the first in France in 1881. One of his German reviewers had said that *Progress and Poverty's* "author is an uncommonly gifted thinker." By 1886 translations had appeared in German, French, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, and Dutch; it was soon translated into Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Russian, Bulgarian, Chinese, and Yiddish. For a 563-page book on political economy (its length in the standard edition), the success of *Progress and Poverty* was unparalleled. The workingmen of many nations responded by willingly reading a long book on a theoretical subject from cover to cover (probably for the first time) because they sensed that at last one of their own was putting their case before the world. Their support was as enthusiastic as it was great in number.