

## FOREWORD

TO THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

The fame won by Henry George as writer, economist and philosopher, has not diminished with the years that have passed since his death in 1897. On the contrary, there has been a steadily broadening recognition of his intellectual eminence. Significant of this was the recent Appreciation by John Dewey, the famous American educator and professor of philosophy at Columbia University, which contained these striking statements:

"It would require less than the fingers of the two hands to enumerate those who, from Plato down, rank with Henry George among the world's social philosophers. . . . No man, no graduate of a higher educational institution, has a right to regard himself as an educated man in social thought unless he has some first-hand acquaintance with the theoretical contribution of this great American thinker."

In this fiftieth year after the first publication of "Progress and Poverty" it must appear to that growing body of workers for social justice who in many lands are spreading George's gospel, that there is at this time as great a need as ever for the comprehension of the truth he sought to make plain. For, as in 1879, there is widespread social unrest in the world. Industrial depression and unemployment are conditions common to many lands, and even in the nominally prosperous atmosphere of the United States, vast numbers are compelled to live in poverty or close to its border line. It would appear that in the half century since "Progress and Poverty" was published, there has been little abatement of the social and economic ills that have afflicted

the human family everywhere, and that recur, with unfailling regularity, in cycles that seem unexplainable except to the followers of Henry George. And, at a time when world opinion is demanding that statesmanship shall outlaw war, it is important to recall that the World Economic Conference, held at Geneva in 1927 at the call of the League of Nations, found a definite interdependence of the economic causes of war and industrial depression. It seems like a vindication of the philosophy of Henry George to find that this Conference, to which the representatives of fifty nations were called, unanimously arrived at the conclusion that:

"The main trouble now is neither any material shortage of the resources of nature nor any inadequacy in man's power to exploit them. It is all, in one form or another, a maladjustment; not an insufficient productive capacity, but a series of impediments to the full utilization of that capacity. The main obstacles to economic revival have been the hindrances opposed to the free flow of labor, capital, and goods."

This, in effect, is what Henry George maintained fifty years ago, contrary to the teachings of the accepted political economy.

Greater need than ever exists for a re-examination by mankind of the remedy for the world's social and economic ills that is involved in the fundamental proposals of Henry George—proposals which Tolstoy declared must ultimately be accepted by the world because they are so logical and so unanswerable.

Therefore, the trustees of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, of New York, which was formed to bring about a wider acquaintance with the social and economic philosophy of Henry George, have considered this an appropriate time to produce from new plates this Fiftieth Anniversary Edition of "Progress and Poverty."

## HOW THE BOOK CAME TO BE WRITTEN

In the Introduction to the Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition, Henry George, Jr. told interestingly, as follows, how "Progress and Poverty" came to be written:

Out of the open West came a young man of less than thirty to this great city of New York. He was small of stature and slight of build. His *alma mater* had been the forecastle and the printing-office. He was poor, unheralded, unknown. He came from a small city rising at the western golden portals of the country to set up here, for a struggling little newspaper there, a telegraphic news bureau, despite the opposition of the combined powerful press and telegraph monopolies. The struggle was too unequal. The young man was overborne by the monopolies and his little paper crushed.

This man was Henry George and the time was 1869.

But though defeated, Henry George was not vanquished. Out of this struggle had come a thing that was to grow and grow until it should fill the minds and hearts of multitudes and be as "an army with banners."

For in the intervals of rest from his newspaper struggle in this city the young correspondent had musingly walked the streets. As he walked he was filled with wonder at the manifestations of vast wealth. Here, as nowhere that he had dreamed of, were private fortunes that rivaled the riches of the fabled Monte Cristo. But here, also, side by side with the palaces of the princely rich, was to be seen a poverty and degradation, a want and shame, such as made the young man from the open West sick at heart.

Why in a land so bountifully blest, with enough and more than enough for all, should there be such inequality of conditions? Such heaped wealth interlocked with such deep and debasing want? Why, amid such super-

abundance, should strong men vainly look for work? Why should women faint with hunger, and little children spend the morning of life in the treadmill of toil?

Was this intended in the order of things? No, he could not believe it. And suddenly there came to him—there in daylight, in the city street—a burning thought, a call, a vision. Every nerve quivered. And he made a vow that he would never rest until he had found the cause of, and, if he could, the remedy for, this deepening poverty amid advancing wealth.

Returning to San Francisco soon after his telegraphic news failure, and keeping his vow nurtured in his heart, Henry George perceived that land speculation locked up vast territories against labor. Everywhere he perceived an effort to “corner” land; an effort to get it and to hold it, not for use, but for a “rise.” Everywhere he perceived that this caused all who wished to use it to compete with each other for it; and he foresaw that as population grew the keener that competition would become. Those who had a monopoly of the land would practically own those who had to use the land.

Filled with these ideas, Henry George in 1871 sat down and in the course of four months wrote a little book under title of “Our Land and Land Policy.” In that small volume of forty-eight pages he advocated the destruction of land monopoly by shifting all taxes from labor and the products of labor and concentrating them in one tax on the value of land, regardless of improvements. A thousand copies of this small book were printed, but the author quickly perceived that really to command attention, the work would have to be done more thoroughly.

That more thorough work came something more than six years later. In August, 1877, the writing of “Progress and Poverty” was begun. It was the oak that grew out of the acorn of “Our Land and Land Policy.” The

larger book became "an inquiry into industrial depressions and of increase of want with increase of wealth," and pointed out the remedy.

The book was finished after a year and seven months of intense labor, and the undergoing of privations that caused the family to do without a parlor carpet, and which frequently forced the author to pawn his personal effects.

And when the last page was written, in the dead of night, when he was entirely alone, Henry George flung himself upon his knees and wept like a child. He had kept his vow. The rest was in the Master's hands.

Then the manuscript was sent to New York to find a publisher. Some of the publishers there thought it visionary; some, revolutionary. Most of them thought it unsafe, and all thought that it would not sell, or at least sufficiently to repay the outlay. Works on political economy even by men of renown were notoriously not money-makers. What hope then for a work of this nature from an obscure man—unknown, and without prestige of any kind? At length, however, D. Appleton & Co. said they would publish it if the author would bear the main cost, that of making the plates. There was nothing else for it, and so in order that the plate-making should be done under his own direction Henry George had the type set in a friend's printing-office in San Francisco, the author of the book setting the first two stickfuls himself.

Before the plates, made from this type, were shipped East, they were put upon a printing-press and an "Author's Proof Edition" of five hundred copies was struck off. One of these copies Henry George sent to his venerable father in Philadelphia, eighty-one years old. At the same time the son wrote:

It is with deep feeling of gratitude to Our Father in Heaven that I send you a printed copy of this book. I am grateful that

I have been enabled to live to write it, and that you have been enabled to live to see it. 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—maybe 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. But the belief that I have expressed in this book—the belief that there is yet another life for us—makes that of little moment.

The prophecy of recognition of the book's greatness was fulfilled very quickly. The Appletons in New York brought out the first regular market edition in January, 1880, just twenty-five years ago. Certain of the San Francisco newspapers derided book and author as the "hobby" of "little Harry George," and predicted that the work would never be heard of. But the press elsewhere in the country and abroad, from the old "Thunderer" in London down, and the great periodical publications, headed by the "Edinburgh Review," hailed it as a remarkable book that could not be lightly brushed aside. In the United States and England it was put into cheap paper editions, and in that form outsold the most popular novels of the day. In both countries, too, it ran serially in the columns of newspapers. Into all the chief tongues of Europe it was translated, there being three translations into German. Probably no exact statement of the book's extent of publication can be made; but a conservative estimate is that, embracing all forms and languages, more than two million copies of "Progress and Poverty" have been printed to date; and that including with these the other books that have followed from Henry George's pen, and which might be called "The Progress and Poverty Literature," perhaps five million copies have been given to the world.

HENRY GEORGE, JR.

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